

# UPSC MONTHLY MAGAZINE

OCTOBER-2017



Next



## Section 375 of IPC

"Sex with minor wife, despite consent, is rape"

### Bharatmala Pariyojana

Connecting India like never before

### India- Afghanistan

India ships wheat to  
Afghanistan via Chabahar

### Global Hunger Index report

India's hunger problem worse than  
North Korea's

### Electric Vehicles

Time for auto industry  
to go all electric

# INCREDIBLE RESULTS

## — IAS 2016 —

8 Ranks  
in Top 50

18 Ranks  
in Top 100

215 Ranks  
In The Final List



**Rank 2**  
Anmol Sher  
Singh Bedi



**Rank 5**  
Abhilash  
Mishra



**Rank 12**  
Tejaswi  
Rana



**Rank 30**  
Prabhash  
Kumar



**Rank 32**  
Avdhesh  
Meena



Ganga  
Singh  
Rank-33



Anu S  
Rank-42



Surabhi  
Gautam  
Rank-50



Manuj  
Jindal  
Rank-53



Tanai  
Sultania  
Rank-63



Parikh  
Mirant Jatin  
Rank-67



Rohit  
Vyas  
Rank-69



Abhishek  
Chourasiya  
Rank-72



Rajarshi  
Shah  
Rank-81



Prateek  
Jain  
Rank-82



Nair Prajit  
Prabhakaran  
Rank-87



Sushil  
Kumar  
Rank-96



Devendra  
Kumar  
Rank-97



Swarn  
Prabhat  
Rank-105



Hirani  
Adityavikram  
Rank-113



Varun  
Singla  
Rank-114



Shaurya  
suman  
Rank-119



Nitish  
Agarwal  
Rank-122



Ann Mary  
George  
Rank-123



Anand  
Shankar  
Rank-127



Rishav  
Kumar Jha  
Rank-128



Prabhat  
Ranjan Pathak  
Rank-137



Akanksha  
Rana  
Rank-163



Padmini  
Solanki  
Rank-170



Amogh  
Gopinath  
Rank-171



Bindu  
Madhav  
Garikapati  
Rank-172



Rahul  
Gupta  
Rank-182



Sagar  
Bagmar  
Rank-186



Abhay  
Soni  
Rank-188



Tare Anuj  
Milind  
Rank-189



Anurag  
Jain  
Rank-198



Arpit  
Vijayvargiya  
Rank-201



Deepak  
Shukla  
Rank-202



Videh  
Khare  
Rank-205



Akhil  
Mahajan  
Rank-213



Nitika  
Pant  
Rank-217



Tuhin  
Sinha  
Rank-219



Keshav  
Kumar  
Rank-222



Keshav  
Kumar  
Rank-230



mohit  
Garg  
Rank-238



Pansuria  
Toral Pravinbhai  
Rank-239



Odke Digvijay  
Govind  
Rank-247



Bogati  
jagadeeswar  
Rank-249



Abhishek  
Surana  
Rank-250



Pushkin  
Jain  
Rank-252



Amit  
Verma  
Rank-253



Shrey Vats  
Rank-260



Suchismita  
Kanungoe  
Rank-261



Sri Hari Prasad  
Gopishetty  
Rank-268



Aditi Mor  
Rank-277



Zade Parikshit  
Sanjayrao  
Rank-280



Prachi  
Ailawadhi  
Rank-290



Guru  
Prasad  
Rank-299



Shashank  
Shekhar Singh  
Rank-306



Aaditya  
Mishra  
Rank-309



Amilineni  
Bhargav Teja  
Rank-314



Aman  
Bishla  
Rank-315



Arihant  
Singhi  
Rank-322



Mitika  
Dahiya  
Rank-325



Ashima  
Mittal  
Rank-328



Aastha  
Suman  
Rank-331



Ankur  
Rank-341



Avneet  
Punia  
Rank-356



S Chitharanjan  
Rank-357



Ranjan  
Rajeev  
Rank-358



Godhani  
Aksharkumar P  
Rank-365



Sumit  
Balecha  
Rank-368



Basuki Nath  
Jha  
Rank-378



Mayank  
Mishra  
Rank-379



Mrinal Prakash  
Mishra  
Rank-380



Kaustuva  
Rank-381



Sambit  
Mishra  
Rank-385

# OUR RESULTS IN THE PAST YEARS

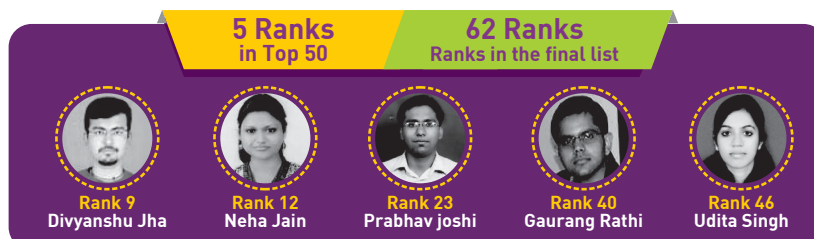
## IAS Result 2015



## IAS Result 2014



## IAS Result 2013



# CONTENT

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGE
1	Polity	4
2	Economy	33
3	Agriculture Related	55
4	International Affairs	58
5	Social Issues	72
6	Environmental Science and Ecology	73
7	Science & Technology	79
8	Internal Security and Defense	86
9	Miscellaneous News	89
10	Practice Questions	90
11	Answers Keys	106
12	Mains Practice Questions	110



# POLITY

## 1. 'Govt. to shame those defecating in the open'

**Context:** Open Defecation free (ODF):

**In news:**

- New novel approach to tackle open defecation.
- The Maharashtra government has put in place a mechanism called 'ODF Watch', where people will be "shamed" if they defecate in the open.
- If people defecate in the open, a whistle will be blown and people will be shamed for not using a toilet
- Three-tier validation process: A three-tier validation process had been adopted where the cities, which became ODF were first inspected by the local administration, then by the State government and lastly a Central agency gave its nod.

## 2. Banks asked to enable core banking in Hindi'

**In news:**

- The Home Ministry has asked all banks, private and public sector, to enable their core banking facility in Hindi. Directives given: banks have been asked to update databases in Hindi and customers should not be compelled to fill forms only in English.
- Key fact: As per Official Languages Act, 1963 there was no provision of punitive action for not using Hindi in official communication but the language could only be promoted through "persuasion and encouragement."
- States are free to choose their language; Hindi-speaking States should also learn other regional languages like Tamil

## 3. Saubhagya scheme

**Context:**

- Current government promised that 18,500 villages would receive electricity in the next 1,000 days.
- Now nearly 14,500 of these villages have been "electrified". But more than a fourth of the households in the "electrified villages" do not have a power connection.
- Saubhagya scheme, launched by the PM should be seen in this context

**Features of Saubhagya Scheme:**

- The scheme changes the metric for measuring progress in electrification from the village to the household-level
- Beneficiaries under the Saubhagya scheme would be identified using the Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 data

- Unelectrified households not covered under the SECC 2011 would also be provided electricity connections under the scheme on a payment of Rs 500, which shall be recovered by discoms in 10 installments through electricity bills.
- Free or subsidised connections will ensure last-mile connectivity, often seen as among the biggest stumbling blocks to electricity access in the country.
- By roping in panchayats and other village-level institutions, it ensure that Saubhagya does not remain a top-down endeavour.

**Challenges ahead:**

- Many parts of the country, people face outages for several hours.
- Ensuring reliable supply requires improving the health of discoms.
- The UDAY scheme, launched in 2015, has made some headway in improving the finances of the state discoms.
- Saubhagya grants them the freedom to lower tariffs to people covered under the scheme. But at the same time, UDAY makes it incumbent on the states to pay for all the future losses of discoms.

**Conclusion**

- Taking electricity to every household is a great idea. It will need to be done without imperiling the health of discoms

## 4. Justice Rohini to head sub-categorisation panel

**In News:**

- President Ram Nath Kovind appointed a commission to examine the sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) to ensure that the more backward among the communities can access the benefits of reservation.

**Key Fact:**

- The five-member panel will be headed by retired Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court G. Rohini.

**Reason:**

- Government's efforts to achieve greater social justice and inclusion for all.
- Sub-categorisation of the OBCs will ensure that the more backward among the OBC communities can also access the benefits of reservation for educational institutions and government jobs.

**Terms of reference:**

- To examine the extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation among the castes or communities included in the broad category of OBC with reference to such classes included in the Central list

- To work out the mechanism for sub- categorization.

## 5. **SC questions Kerala HC annulment of Hindu-Muslim marriage**

### **Context:**

- **Background:** Supreme Court had ordered a National Investigation Agency probe into the alleged conversion and marriage of a Hindu girl to a Muslim in Kerala
- **Present Move by the Supreme Court:** the Supreme Court turned around to question the very annulment of the inter-religious marriage by the Kerala High Court and the legality of the girl's father keeping her in his custody for the past several months

### **In news**

#### **Supreme Court questions the High Court:**

- How it annulled the marriage of a woman, who has reached the age of majority, while exercising writ jurisdiction under Article 226, which is used to challenge violations of fundamental rights, legal rights and other basic rights.
- Necessity of NIA probe?

### **Basic Information:**

#### **Article 226: Power of High Courts to issue certain writs**

(1) Notwithstanding anything in Article 32 every High Court shall have powers, throughout the territories in relation to which it exercises jurisdiction, to issue to any person or authority, including in appropriate cases, any Government, within those territories directions, orders or writs, including writs in the nature of habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibitions, quo-warranto and certiorari, or any of them, for the enforcement of any of the rights conferred by Part III and for any other purpose

(2) The power conferred by clause ( 1 ) to issue directions, orders or writs to any Government, authority or person may also be exercised by any High Court exercising jurisdiction in relation to the territories within which the cause of action, wholly or in part, arises for the exercise of such power, notwithstanding that the seat of such Government or authority or the residence of such person is not within those territories

(3) Where any party against whom an interim order, whether by way of injunction or stay or in any other manner, is made on, or in any proceedings relating to, a petition under clause ( 1 ), without

a) furnishing to such party copies of such petition and all documents in support of the plea for such interim order; and

(b) giving such party an opportunity of being heard, makes an application to the High Court for the vacation of such order and furnishes a copy of such application to the party in whose favour such order has been made or the counsel of such party, the High Court shall dispose of the application within a period of two weeks from the date on which it is received or from the date on which the copy of such application is so furnished, whichever is later,

or where the High Court is closed on the last day of that period, before the expiry of the next day afterwards on which the High Court is open; and if the application is not so disposed of, the interim order shall, on the expiry of that period, or, as the case may be, the expiry of the aid next day, stand vacated

(4) The power conferred on a High Court by this article shall not be in derogation of the power conferred on the Supreme court by clause ( 2 ) of Article 32.

## 6. **Untrained teachers can now access training material**

### **In news**

- Fifteen lakh untrained school teachers have enrolled for a training course with the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) to get themselves trained by 2019 to be able to retain their jobs.
- The NIOS has designed online courses to enable them to acquire a Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El. Ed).
- The course will be offered through 'Swayam', a platform for online education, imparting knowledge through Dish TV
- This is for the first time in the world that such high number of applications have been received for an online course
- About NIOS: It is an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- Background information: Parliament passed an amendment to the Right to Education Act to offer teachers a last window to acquire proper training, something seen as essential to the provision of quality education in government and private schools.
- Key Fact: The highest number of applications has been received from Bihar — over 2.8 lakh — followed by Uttar Pradesh (1.95 lakh), Madhya Pradesh (1.91 lakh), West Bengal (1.69 lakh) and Assam (1.51 lakh)

## 7. **SC issues notice on donations to parties**

### **In news:**

- The Supreme Court asked the Centre and the Election Commission to respond to a petition challenging the various amendments made through Finance Act 2017 and Finance Act 2016 in various statutes, saying these changes have opened the floodgates for unlimited corporate and foreign donations to political parties.
- A petition was filed by the Association for Democratic Reforms and Common Cause seeking to strike down the amendments made to the Companies Act, the Income Tax Act, the Representation of the People Act, the Reserve Bank of India Act and the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act.

### **Petition contention:**

- The amendments, introduced as money Bills, legitimise electoral corruption, while ensuring complete non-transparency in political funding
- The amendments in question have opened the floodgates to unlimited corporate donations to political parties and anonymous financing

by Indian as well as foreign companies which can have serious repercussions on the Indian democracy]

- The said amendments have removed the caps on campaign donations by companies and have legalised anonymous donations
- The Finance Act of 2017 has introduced the use of electoral bonds, which is exempt from disclosure under the Representation of the People Act, 1951, opening doors to unchecked, unknown funding to political parties.
- The Finance Act, 2016 has also amended the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), 2010, to allow foreign companies with subsidiaries in India to fund political parties in India, effectively, exposing the Indian politics and democracy to international lobbyists who may want to further their agenda

#### **8. Convicts too must breathe fresh air, maintain family ties, says Supreme Court**

##### **Context**

- Supreme Court has said that Convicts too “must breathe fresh air” and be allowed to maintain social ties provided they show a tendency to reform
- The court favoured a “humanistic approach” while dealing with pleas for parole or furlough to those serving long jail terms

##### **Supreme Court observations**

- A bench of Justices asked the government to update its rules, framed way back in 1955, on granting of parole and furlough, saying these were skeletal in nature.
- It referred to one of the objectives of awarding punishment and said it was about reformation of the convicts
- However a person must remain in jail for the period of sentence awarded to him or her.
- Thus, redemption and rehabilitation of such prisoners for good of societies must receive due weightage while they are undergoing sentence of imprisonment.

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

##### **‘What is a parole?’**

- A parole can be defined as conditional release of prisoners on good behaviour, with regular reporting to the authorities for a set period of time

##### **What is Furlough?**

- Furlough, is a brief release from the prison which is given in cases of long-term imprisonment.

#### **9. India's new gene is called plutocracy**

##### **Context**

- Stampede at Mumbai's Elphinstone Road train station, which claimed 27 lives, shows India's policy bias towards the rich and powerful.
- India has often been called a plutocracy for its manifest disposition towards the rich and the powerful

##### **Plutocracy:**

- Plutocracy can be defined as rule by the wealthy and the powerful, where policies and systems are designed to deliver greater benefits to the wealthy and powerful.
- Consequently, plutocracy eats away at the core of any democratic system

##### **Examples**

- Government's penchant for bullet trains versus apathy towards basic infrastructure for daily commuters
- In India's consumer price index (CPI) greater weightage has given to items of expenditure consumed by higher income groups. This has enormous implications because RBI has selected CPI as its chosen benchmark for inflation targeting.
- Plutocracy is also characterized by suborning of national institutions. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are perhaps the best examples
- Plutocracy can also be identified in the way institutions behave
  - SBI decided to penalize customers who failed to maintain the monthly average balance in their savings bank account
  - The SBI example shows how policy moves when it does not take into account customer profile, feasibility options or its impact on various income groups
- Demonetization is another example of how an autarchic policy decision affected livelihoods for a wide spectrum of the population

##### **Prevailing inequality in India**

- A recent paper by Lucas Chancel and Thomas Piketty shows how the top 10% grew at a much faster rate than the average, while income growth of the balance 90% fell below average
- Post the 1980s, the top 1% in India have seen their incomes and wealth grow at a much faster rate than the balance 99%.
- According to Credit Suisse's Global Wealth Report 2016: India's top 1%, which owned 36.8% of the country's wealth in 2000, now owns close to 58% of the wealth.
- An Oxfam 2017 report showed that 57 Indian billionaires own as much as the bottom 70% of the population

## 10. India slammed for slavery, we need to counter: IB to Govt.

### In News:

- According to a secret note, "global documentation on slavery is increasingly targeting India as home to the highest number of slaves in the world,"
- The note cautions that the slavery documentation by International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Walk Free Foundation (WFF), "has enough potential to substantially harm India's image and exports and impact its efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goals"

### Background:

- The IB note was prepared within a week of the ILO-WFF releasing their latest report "Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage"
- Since 2013, successive global slavery surveys have found India to be the country with the highest number of people working in modern slavery
- But the IB has recommended a strong campaign to "discredit" the information and a diplomatic offensive against it

### Indian Exports:

- Recent anti-slavery laws in the US and UK "make it mandatory for businesses to declare that none of their suppliers are violating slavery norms"

### IB against the reports (by ILO-WFF):

- The IB note blamed these "questionable statistics" on the uneven sample size
- For example, 17,000 respondents were surveyed in India while the next highest sample size was only 2,000 for nine countries such as Russia, Bangladesh and Pakistan
- In other survey countries, typically, 1,000 face-to-face interviews were conducted

### IB's recommendation

The IB has recommended a three-pronged strategy:

- (1) counter "motivated" advocacy with a credible slavery estimation through a much larger sample survey
- (2) "discredit" WFF's questionable estimate, through a rejoinder from Indian Statistical Institute
- (3) intervene diplomatically to force ILO to dissociate from WFF, a private foundation

## 11. Prescription post Section 66A: 'Change law to punish hate speech online'

### Context

- Recommendations of the expert committee constituted by the centre after the Supreme Court struck down the controversial section 66A of the Information Technology Act, 2000.

### Committee:

- The committee was headed by former Law Secretary T K Vishwanathan.
- The report was submitted to the Union Home Ministry.
- Mandate: Study domestic and international cyber laws and propose a legal framework in order to deal with online hate speech and incitement of violence
- Recommendations: The Indian Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code and the Information Technology Act should be amended to include stringent provisions

### Recommendations of the committee:

- No need to re-introduce Section 66A but strengthen IPC instead.
- Indian Penal Code, 1860; Prohibiting incitement to hatred: Amend IPC section 153 C to include in communication "spoken or written words, signs, visible representation, information, audio, video, or combination of both, transmitted, retransmitted through any telecommunication service, communication device or computer resource".

### Punishment: up to 2 years or fine of Rs 5000 or both.

- Causing fear alarm or provocation of violence in certain cases: Amend IPC section 505A, punishment of any person or group of persons who intentionally, on grounds of religion, race, caste or community, gender, sexual orientation, place of birth, residence, language, disability or tribe, uses any means of communication to communicate.

### Punishment: up to 1 year or fine of Rs 5000 or both.

- Amendment in Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973: create a post of State Cyber-Crime Coordinator (not below rank of Inspector General of Police) and District Cyber-Crime Cell
- Amending the Information Technology Act, 2000: Amending section 78 allows a police officer not below the rank of Sub-Inspector to investigate any offence under this Act as young SIs are better equipped and trained in dealing with these crimes.
- A renovated section 66A has not been recommended in the IT Act, 2000. This is because the IT Act is basically commercial in nature and hence punishments have been recommended in the IPC.
- **Important observations:** In recommending specific changes the committee said
  - i) Only that speech should be accounted as relevant which relates to "religion, race, caste, community, sex, gender, place of birth, residence and language."
  - ii) Online speech would be criminalised "only both, when it advocates hatred and causes the incitement of an offence".

### Way forward:

- Section 66A was struck down as unconstitutional by the Supreme Court on the ground that it violated the basic freedom of expression of the citizens. There is need to balance the liberty of citizens while tackling



the issues of hate speech, online harassment-hatred and national security.

- The real purpose of the committee would be served only when the Parliament takes actions on these recommendations by keeping in mind the spirit of the 2015 Supreme Court judgement.

## **12. Now, SC Collegium to make judges' appointments transparent**

### **Context**

- Appointment of judges

### **In News:**

#### **SC's move to ensure transparency**

- According to the SC's decisions, recommendations on judicial appointments, elevations and transfers will be posted on the court website
- As a start, the Supreme Court has posted online detailed reasons for its October 3, 2017 recommendations for judicial appointments to the Madras HC and the Kerala HC
- Details are now available online under the tag "Collegium Resolutions"

### **Transparency:**

- The information posted online will "indicate" reasons for the recommendation or rejection of a name for judicial appointment, transfer and elevation to HCs and the SC

### **Background**

- Collegium system was being criticised for its opaque mode of functioning while recommending judicial appointments
- Recently, a controversy came after the public uproar over the resignation of Karnataka HC judge shortly after his transfer to the Allahabad HC
- The mode of functioning of the Collegium had seen criticism, for the first time, from within the Collegium itself in the form of Justice Chelameswar

### **Judges opinion:**

- Proposal to upload the Collegium recommendations indicating reasons had to face strong objections from within the judicial community itself
- One of the objections include that posting such information online would cause judicial candidates acute embarrassment and loss of face in case of rejection of their names by the Collegium

## **13. 'Why can't hanging be stopped?'**

### **Context:**

- Supreme Court questions the government: Why can't hanging as a means of causing death to condemned prisoners stop?

### **In News:**

#### **Supreme Court's observation:**

- The condemned should die in peace and not in pain.
- A human being is entitled to dignity even in death.
- The government should look to the "dynamic progress" made in modern science to adopt painless methods of causing death.

## **14. No rash of conversions in Kerala, State govt. tells SC**

### **Context**

- The Hadiya case: involving the alleged conversion of a Hindu woman to Islam and her marriage to a Muslim man

### **In News:**

- Centre's National Investigation Agency (NIA) claims in the Supreme Court that the Hadiya case, involving the alleged conversion of a Hindu woman to Islam and her marriage to a Muslim man, is part of a 'pattern' of religious conversions and radicalisation in the southern State.
- The Pinarayi Vijayan government in Kerala rejected the claims made by the NIA.
- In an affidavit filed in the Supreme Court, the Kerala government said the investigation conducted by the State police had not revealed any offences which warranted an NIA probe.
- The State also questioned the sudden transfer of the case to the NIA, saying the State Police Chief had already entrusted the investigation to the Additional Director General of Police (Crimes) and directed to constitute a Special Investigation Team
- Supreme Court's present stand: "We will hear logical and legal arguments on two issues —can the HC nullify a marriage exercising jurisdiction under Article 226 and was an NIA probe necessary,"

### **Basic Information:**

Article 226. Power of High Courts to issue certain writs

(1) Notwithstanding anything in Article 32 every High Court shall have powers, throughout the territories in relation to which it exercises jurisdiction, to issue to any person or authority, including in appropriate cases, any Government, within those territories directions, orders or writs, including writs in the nature of habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibitions, quo warranto and certiorari, or any of them, for the enforcement of any of the rights conferred by Part III and for any other purpose

(2) The power conferred by clause (1) to issue directions, orders or writs to any Government, authority or person may also be exercised by any High Court exercising jurisdiction in relation to the territories within which the cause of action, wholly or in part, arises for the exercise of such power, notwithstanding that the seat of such Government or authority or the residence of such person is not within those territories

(3) Where any party against whom an interim order, whether by way of injunction or stay or in any other manner, is made on, or in any proceedings relating to, a petition under clause ( 1 ), without

(a) furnishing to such party copies of such petition and all documents in support of the plea for such interim order; and

(b) giving such party an opportunity of being heard, makes an application to the High Court for the vacation of such order and furnishes a copy of such application to the party in whose favour such order has been made or the counsel of such party, the High Court shall dispose of the application within a period of two weeks from the date on which it is received or from the date on which the copy of such application is so furnished, whichever is later, or where the High Court is closed on the last day of that period, before the expiry of the next day afterwards on which the High Court is open; and if the application is not so disposed of, the interim order shall, on the expiry of that period, or, as the case may be, the expiry of the aid next day, stand vacated

(4) The power conferred on a High Court by this article shall not be in derogation of the power conferred on the

Supreme court by clause ( 2 ) of Article 32

#### **15. Insurer can't deny claim on grounds of delayed filing, says Supreme Court**

##### **In news:**

- The Supreme Court has ruled that insurance claims cannot be denied to a person merely on the grounds of delay in filing the claim, holding that "mechanical" denials on technical bases will cause people to lose confidence in the industry.
- The Supreme Court set aside the verdicts of various consumer courts, including the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC), which had ruled that insurance companies could deny the benefit of cover for delay in filing the claims.
- Judgment: "It is true that the owner has to intimate the insurer immediately after the theft of the vehicle. However, this condition should not bar settlement of genuine claims, particularly when the delay in intimation or submission of documents is due to unavoidable circumstances. The decision of the insurer to reject the claim has to be based on valid grounds. Rejection of the claims on purely technical grounds in a mechanical manner will result in loss of confidence of policyholders in the insurance industry,"
- The verdict would bring big relief to people who fail to file insurance claims immediately after their vehicles are damaged in accidents or stolen

#### **16. Draft policy for abolishing Haj subsidy**

##### **In news:**

##### **Key highlights of a proposed Haj policy drafted by a committee appointed by the Centre**

- Abolishing subsidy for Haj pilgrims and
- Allow muslim women devotees above 45 to travel in a group of at least four without a male.
- Women below 45, however, will have to be accompanied by male Mehrams, according to the policy.
- It also proposes to increase the quota for Mehrams from 200 to 500

##### **Key Points:**

- The proposed Haj Policy 2018-22, by a panel headed by former secretary Afzal Amanullah, also recommends bringing down the number of embarkation points (EPs) from which pilgrims can take flights to Saudi Arabia from the present 21 to nine.
- The policy has been drafted in light of a 2012 Supreme Court order asking the Centre to abolish the subsidy gradually by 2022
- India has an annual Haj quota of 1.7 lakh devotees
- **Practice at present:** Till now, women devotees could not travel without a male Mehram. The term Mehram refers to a male a woman cannot marry at any time in her life (i.e. father, brother or son, etc). The cut in funds meant for subsidy will be used for educational empowerment and welfare of Muslims.

#### **17. Ex-SC judges could soon be appointed NHRC chiefs**

##### **Context:**

- Appointment of National Human Rights Commission chiefs..

##### **In news**

- The Home Ministry has moved the Cabinet to amend the recruitment process of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

##### **Key Changes:**

- Retired Supreme Court judge could also be considered for the Chairperson's position, currently reserved for former Chief Justices of the Supreme Court.
- Similarly, an amendment for appointment of members is also being considered. The members could be picked from a pool of retired Chief Justices of High Courts. Currently, a serving or retired SC judge is considered.
- The State Human Rights Commissions are also expected to see a change in the appointment procedure. Retired High Court judges could also be considered for the post of State Human Rights Commission chairperson, which is currently held by retired Chief Justices of High Courts.

**Key Fact:**

- The NHRC was constituted under the Protection of Human Rights Act in 1993. The Act was last amended in 2006.
- The Commission consists of a chairperson, one member who is or has been a Judge of the Supreme Court, one member who is or has been the Chief Justice of a High Court and two members to be appointed from among persons having knowledge of, or practical experience in, matters relating to human rights.
- The chairperson and members are appointed by the President on recommendations from a six-member committee chaired by the Prime Minister

**What next?**

- Once the Cabinet approves them, an amendment to the Protection of Human Rights Act would have to be ratified by Parliament.

**18. All parties need to be on board for simultaneous polls: Election Commission****Context:**

- Simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly polls..

**In news****The Election Commission opinion:**

- All political parties need to be brought on board before such an exercise is carried out.
- Simultaneous elections will give enough time for incumbent government to formulate policies and implement programmes continuously for a longer time without interruptions caused by imposition of model code of conduct.
- Conducting the polls together would be possible only when necessary changes in the Constitution and Representation of the People Act are carried out."

**Situation at present:**

- Existing legal and constitutional provisions mandates that elections are to be held within six months ahead of the end of the term of a State Assembly or the Lok Sabha

**Requirement to hold simultaneous polls**

- Requirement of 24 lakh each Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) Machines.
- Two sets of EVMs — one for Lok Sabha and another for the Assembly polls

**The Niti Aayog's "Three Year Action Agenda, 2017-18 to 2019-20" report:**

- The Niti Aayog has also favoured conducting synchronised two-phase Lok Sabha and Assembly elections from 2024 in "national interest".
- All elections in India should happen in a free, fair and synchronised manner to ensure minimum "campaign mode" disruption to governance

**19. SC brings back ban on firecrackers in Delhi-NCR region****In News:**

- The Supreme Court suspended the sale of firecrackers in Delhi and NCR till November 1, 2017 in a bid to test whether a Deepavali without firecrackers this year will have a "positive effect" on the health of citizens and a steadily deteriorating air quality.
- November 2016 decision: suspend sales of firecrackers "to test itself to find out whether there would be a positive effect of this suspension, particularly during Deepavali period."
- **Key Points:**
  - Adverse effects of burning of crackers during Deepavali have been witnessed year after year.
  - The air quality deteriorates abysmally and the city chokes.
  - It leads to closing the schools and the authorities are compelled to take various measures on emergent basis, when faced with a "health emergency"
- **Sulphur in fireworks should not be permitted:** Sulphur on combustion produces sulphur-dioxide and the same is extremely harmful to health. The CPCB has stated that between 9 p.m. to midnight on Deepavali day, the levels of sulphur-dioxide content in the air is dangerously high.

**20. MP govt announces Rs 2 lakh aid for widow remarriage****In News:**

- Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has announced a slew of measures for women in the state, including a financial assistance of Rs two lakh for remarriage of widows.
- The Below Poverty Line (BPL) status would no longer be required for availing the widow pension in the state.
- Chouhan also announced a relaxation in the physical fitness parameters for female candidates appearing for a police constable recruitment test.
- Sanitary napkins would be made available at 50 per cent rates in the predominantly tribal blocks of the state.
- Seeking to ensure the safety and security of girls: school buses in the state would be equipped with CCTV cameras to prevent untoward incidents like eve-teasing.
- Laws ensuring due share to women in ancestral properties would be strictly implemented

**21. Matrimonial disputes should be heard in camera: SC****In News:**

- The head of the Indian Council of Medical Research, Dr Soumya Swaminathan, has become the first Indian on the global leadership team of the World Health Organisation

### **Quantitative evaluation of the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY)**

- One of the main objectives of any health insurance scheme is to provide financial coverage (or risk protection) by reducing such burden while enhancing use of healthcare
- RSBY has not been able to reduce out-of-pocket payment for healthcare for the poor, and they face the catastrophic impact of such payments

### **India and RSBY:**

- Outpatient care comprises up to 70% of total healthcare utilization in India and 60% of total health expenditure
- It has by far been excluded from RSBY coverage
- Because OP is not covered, people could delay seeking care until they are more severely ill, which is costly both from the perspective of costs and health
- Despite rising healthcare costs, the scheme continues to be capped at Rs 30,000 since 2008
- For a family of 4 or 4.5 persons, this is grossly inadequate

### **Positive impact of the scheme:**

- One positive impact of the scheme was in non-medical spending
- The poor increased their household consumption level, or non-medical spending, after RSBY intervention
- This can be called "virtual income transfer"

### **Other schemes:**

- An evaluation of the Yeshasvini scheme in Karnataka by researchers from Delhi University reported an over 70% reduction in out-pocket spending and a 30% reduction in borrowings
- Evaluating the Rajiv Aarogya scheme in Andhra Pradesh in 2012, the nonprofit think tank Centre for Global Development found reduced inpatient out-of-pocket spending among enrolled families in phase I of the study, but relatively small impacts on outpatient out-of-pocket spending, and catastrophic payments

### **Basic Information:**

#### **Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY)**

- RSBY, a tax-financed health insurance that is managed through private insurance companies, was introduced in 2008 for inpatient care to Below Poverty Line (BPL) families
- The scheme aims to provide health insurance coverage to the unrecognized sector workers belonging to the BPL category and their family members shall be beneficiaries under this scheme
- Scheme enables them to receive inpatient medical care of up to ₹30,000 per family per year in any of the empanelled hospitals

- The scheme has won plaudits from the World Bank, the UN and the ILO as one of the world's best health insurance schemes

## **22. Passive euthanasia already a law, says govt.**

### **In News:**

### **Government response to the Supreme Court Constitution Bench:**

- Passive euthanasia, the act of withdrawing life support to a terminally-ill patient, is already the law of the land.
- Aruna Shanbaug case: The government pointed out that the Supreme Court itself, in 2011, had issued comprehensive guidelines allowing passive euthanasia in the tragic case of the bed-ridden former Mumbai nurse Aruna Shanbaug.
- The government said it was finalising a draft law on passive euthanasia called 'The Management of Patients With Terminal Illness – Withdrawal of Medical Life Support Bill', which was drawn up in line with the recommendations of the Law Commission of India that life support can be withdrawn for patients in persistent vegetative state (PVS) or suffering an irreversible medical condition.
- Centre's objection: The Centre, however, objected to legalising the concept of 'Living Will' — an advance written directive to physicians for end-of-life medical care.
- Reason: this may lead to the abuse and neglect of the elderly, especially if they were financially well-off. The government pointed out that the living will was a concept which contradicts a person's instinctive urge to survive.

### **Social and philosophical aspects**

Forcing a person to take medical treatment against their will is also a social issue

- On one hand, country is short of medical facilities etc, and on other hand, we force those who are in a hopeless situation to take treatment
- This also raises a "philosophical question" on whether a person can refuse treatment
- An individual who refuses to undergo treatment may become a burden on the resources of the state

### **Way forward**

- As laid down in the Shanbaug case, the way ahead was to allow medical boards to decide whether to allow passive euthanasia or not

### **Basic Information:**

#### **Passive euthanasia:**

- Passive euthanasia is the acts of hastening the death of a terminally-ill patient by altering some form of support and letting nature take its course.
- Passive euthanasia can involve turning off respirators, halting medications, discontinuing food and water so the patient dies because of dehydration or starvation.



- Passive euthanasia can include giving the patient large doses of morphine to control pain in spite of the likelihood that the painkiller can cause fatal respiratory problems.
- Active euthanasia: Active euthanasia involves helping the patient to die on the basis of a request by either the patient or those close to him or her, usually direct family members

#### **Living Will:**

- A Living Will is a document that allows a person to explain in writing which medical treatment he or she does or does not want during a terminal illness.
- A terminal illness is a fatal illness that leads ultimately to death.
- A Living Will takes effect only when the patient is incapacitated and can no longer express his or her wishes. The will states which medical treatments may be used and which may not be used to die naturally and without the patient's life being artificially prolonged by various medical procedures

### **23. Sex with minor wife, despite consent, is rape: Supreme Court**

#### **Context:**

- Exception 2 to Section 375 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC): allowed the husband of a girl child — between 15 and 18 years of age — blanket liberty and freedom to have non-consensual sexual intercourse with her. Her willingness or consent was of no concern.
- The husband in such cases was not punished for rape.

#### **In news:**

#### **The Supreme Court's historic verdict**

- Sexual intercourse by a man with his wife, who is below 18 years of age, is rape.
- A girl child below the age of 18 cannot be treated as a commodity having no say over her body or someone who has no right to deny sexual intercourse to her husband
- Human rights of a girl child are very much alive and kicking whether she is married or not and deserve recognition and acceptance
- The court, however, refrained from dealing with the issue of marital rape of a woman aged above 18
- The exception clause to rape, carved out in the IPC, created an unnecessary and artificial distinction between a married girl child and an unmarried girl child
- The clause took away the right of a girl child to bodily integrity and reproductive choice. It had even the effect of turning a blind eye to trafficking of the minor girl children in the guise of marriage
- **Exception 2 to Section 375 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code & statutory rape :** The exception had

remained an anomaly because Section 375 itself mandated that sex with a girl below 18 years of age, with or without her consent, was **statutory rape**. An unmarried girl child can prosecute her rapist, but a married girl child aged between 15 and 18 could not even do that

#### **Expert opinion:**

- With this judgment, considered by experts as trigger to declaring child marriage void ab initio, the court ended the decades-old disparity between Exception 2 to Section 375 IPC and other child protection laws.
- These include the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2006, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act and Juvenile Justice Act, all which define a "child" as someone who is below 18 years of age

#### **What is the conflict between IPC 375 and POCSO Act?**

- Almost every statute in India recognises that a girl below 18 years of age is a child and it is for this reason that the law penalises sexual intercourse with a girl who is below 18 years of age.
- Exception 2 to Section 375 of the IPC: if a girl child between 15 and 18 years of age is married, her husband can have non-consensual sexual intercourse with her, without being penalised under the IPC, only because she is married to him and for no other reason.

#### **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act:**

- PCMA makes child marriage only voidable, that is, the burden is placed on the child bride to approach a court to declare her marriage a nullity.
- She has to do this within two years of attaining majority that is by the time she is 20 years old.
- If not, the marriage continues.

#### **Will previous cases of child marriages/rape be reconsidered?**

- The judgment will have "prospective effect" meaning it will not apply to past cases
- Cognizance of such offenses can be taken only in accordance with the provisions of section 198(6) of the Criminal Procedure Code
- The provision says that court shall not take cognizance of an offense under Section 376 IPC "if more than one year has elapsed from the date of commission of the offense"

#### **Does this judgment apply to women above 18 years of age also?**

- The SC bench clarified that it was not making any observation on "marital rape" of a woman who is 18 years of age and above as the issue was not before the court
- The question whether marital rape should be criminalized is pending before the Delhi High Court

where the Centre has filed an affidavit opposing this saying that doing so may destabilize the institution of marriage apart from being an easy tool for harassing husbands

#### **24. 'Living Will' can take effect only if a medical board certifies a person condition is irreversible: Supreme Court**

##### **Context:**

- The Supreme Court is hearing a petition by NGO Independent Thought to legalize euthanasia and the concept of 'Living Will'.
- Five-judge Constitution Bench, headed by Chief Justice, is debating on when exactly a person's 'Living Will' or advance directive for end-of-life medical care should take effect.

##### **In news:**

- **Court's observation:** A person's advance directive to withdraw medical care to allow him to die with dignity should take effect only when a medical board affirms that his condition is beyond cure and irreversible.
- The Bench said it would lay down guidelines for drafting living wills and how it can be authenticated. It has reserved the case for judgment.
- Advance directives may be approved by a magistrate. The magistrate has to examine that the person executing the 'Living Will' is of sound mind. That he has taken informed consent
- Example: If a man is admitted to a hospital and he goes into coma. The hospital informs the medical board, which takes a fair, informed and impartial decision that his medical condition is beyond cure. This decision is taken by the medical board on the touchstone of modern technology.
- Two-fold test as to when a 'Living Will' would come into effect:

When the medical condition of the patient has become irreversible.

When the prolongation of his life can be done only at the cost of pain and suffering which is at a level inconsistent with his advance directive.

##### **Government's response**

- The legalization of 'advance directives' would amount to waiving of the paramount fundamental right to life enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- Government was opposing the concept of 'Living Will' as a principle of public policy. It said the State's primary obligation is to sustain life and not legalise a person's wish to die.
- The government had said the passive euthanasia is the law of the land, with thousands of cases in which doctors withdraw life support after getting the informed consent of the relatives

##### **Gian Kaur judgment of 1996**

- The court observed that right to live with dignity also includes right to die with dignity, to approve of passive euthanasia

#### **25. SC lauds Karnataka for declaring child marriage void**

##### **In news**

- The Supreme Court lauded Karnataka for its pioneering act of amending the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) to make child marriage automatically void.

##### **Amended PCMA**

- In Karnataka, the husband of a girl child would be liable for punishment for child marriage under the amended PCMA The Supreme Court
- For penetrative sexual assault or aggravated penetrative sexual assault under the POCSO Act; and
- If the husband and the girl child are living together in the same or shared household for rape under the IPC

##### **Highlights of a study published by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights and Young Lives based on the 2011 Census:**

- Over 20% girls in this country are married before attaining the age of 18.
- More than one out of every five marriages violates the provisions of the PCMA and the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955

#### **26. Reconsider new Haj policy, urges Rajasthan body**

##### **Context:**

- The new Haj policy for 2018-22.

##### **In news:**

##### **Reforms recommended:**

- The reduction of embarkation points for Haj pilgrimage from the existing 21 to only nine across the country.
- Abolishing subsidy for Haj pilgrims and allowing women above 45 years of age to travel in a group of at least four without a male.

##### **Rajasthan pilgrims against the recommendations made**

- Reason: termination of flights from Jaipur. The Haj flights from the State capital had started in 2005 after a seven-year-long agitation.
- The termination of flights from Jaipur would put the pilgrims to a great inconvenience, as they would be required to travel to either Delhi or Ahmedabad to board the special flights. It will impose an additional expenditure and cause a great difficulty to old and infirm pilgrims.
- Allowing women to travel without a male companion was against the principles of Shariah

## 27. **Lawyers as Seniors: Supreme Court frames rules for itself, 24 High Courts**

### **Context:**

- Days after it announced that it would put online reasons behind appointments and transfer of judges, the Supreme Court took another step towards transparency, this time in its process of designating senior lawyers.
- It laid down guidelines for itself and 24 High Courts to govern the exercise of designating lawyers as seniors and ordered setting up of a permanent committee headed by the Chief Justice of India assisted by a secretariat

### **The permanent Committee:**

- The permanent committee will comprise the Chief Justice of India and two senior most companion judges, Attorney General of India and a representative from the bar nominated by the first four members.
- For the HCs, it will have the Chief Justice of the respective HC and the Advocate General of the state in place of CJI and Attorney General.
- The Committee will interview the candidate and make an overall evaluation on the basis of his/her number of years of practice, judgments (reported and unreported) which indicate the legal formulations advanced by the Advocate concerned in the course of the proceedings of the case, pro bono work done by him/her, domain expertise of the applicant in various branches of law and publications by the advocate.
- After a name is considered and approved by the permanent committee, it will be put before the Full Court which will include SC/HC judges as the case may be and will further decide to accord senior designation to an advocate either unanimously or by majority, through secret ballot.
- The Full Court may also recall the senior designation of a lawyer if it feels he is guilty of conduct that disentitles him to the same

### **The Permanent Secretariat**

- The applications including proposals from the judges will be submitted to the permanent secretariat
- It will compile the relevant data and information with regard to the reputation, conduct, integrity of the Advocate(s) concerned including his/her participation in pro bono work; reported judgments in which the concerned Advocate(s) had appeared; the number of such judgments for the last five years.
- It will also publish the proposal of designation of a particular Advocate in the official website of the Court concerned inviting the suggestions and views of other stakeholders in the proposed designation.
- The cases will then be put up before the Permanent Committee for scrutiny

### **The Senior Advocate**

- Supreme Court rules say that the Chief Justice and the judges may with the consent of the advocate,

designate an advocate as senior advocate if – In their opinion by virtue of his ability; standing at the Bar or special knowledge or experience in law distinction

## 28. **Supreme Court refers case of ban on women's entry into Sabarimala temple to Constitution Bench**

### **In News:**

### **Case transferred from three-judge Bench to Constitution Bench:**

- The Supreme Court referred to a five-judge Constitution Bench the question whether the fundamental right of women to pray at the place of their choice can be discriminated against solely based "on a biological factor exclusive to the female gender."
- Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court will scrutinise the age-old practice in Kerala's famed Sabarimala temple of restricting entry for women aged between 10 and 50 — that is, those who are in the menstruating age.
- **The Supreme Court questioned:** How a temple managed by a statutory board — the Travancore Devaswom Board — and financed out of the Consolidated Fund of Kerala and Tamil Nadu "can indulge in practices violating constitutional principles/morality."
- **Temple authorities' response:** justified the restriction, saying it is a practice founded in tradition

### **Constitution Bench to decide:**

- Whether the practice of excluding such women constitutes an "essential religious practice."
- Whether a religious institution can exclude women as part of its right to manage its own affairs in matters of religion.
- Whether the ban qualifies as an "essential religious practice" of the Hindu faith, over which the court has no jurisdiction.
- Whether Ayyappa devotees form a separate religious denomination by themselves.
- If a temple managed by a statutory board can 'indulge' in the practice of banning women from entry on moral grounds

### **Key Fact:**

Rule 3 (b) of the Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship (Authorisation of Entry) Rules, 1965: allows a 'religious denomination' to ban entry of women between the age of 10 to 50 years.

## 29. **SC asks Centre to set up expert panel to check Blue Whale game**

### **In News:**

- The Supreme Court asked government to set up a panel of experts to block virtual dare games like Blue Whale Challenge which has allegedly led to several suicidal deaths.

- The apex court also sought the government's response on a plea seeking to firewall such life threatening/violent games existing in the cyber world like 'Choking game', 'Salt and Ice Challenge', 'Fire Challenge', 'Cutting challenge', 'Eyeball challenge' and 'Human Embroidery game'.
- **What is a Firewall?** Firewall is a system designed to prevent unauthorised access to or from a private network by controlling incoming and outgoing network traffic.
- **The Blue Whale Challenge:** The Blue Whale Challenge is reportedly a suicide game in which the player is given certain tasks to complete over a period of 50 days and the final task leads him or her to commit suicide. The player is also asked to share photos after finishing each challenge.

### 30. SC does a re-think on dowry harassment ruling

#### In News:

#### Previous verdict:

- On July 27, the Supreme Court had concluded that Section 498A (dowry harassment) of the Indian Penal Code has come under much abuse.
- Dowry complaints are being filed in the heat of the moment by women over trivial issues
- Innocent relatives, including parents of advanced age, siblings and grandparents, suffer harassment
- The judgment directed 'Family Welfare Committees' to sift the genuine cases of dowry harassment from the trivial ones
- Police would take action only on the basis of the committee's report
- These committees were directed to be made up of social workers, homemakers, retired persons and other citizens
- No arrest should normally be effected on dowry harassment complaints until the committee confirms the genuineness

#### Absolute U-turn:

- Two months after the Supreme Court stopped immediate arrests of accused in dowry harassment cases, the court did a re-think, saying its order dilutes the right of a woman to seek justice against the evil of dowry

### 31. PM Modi to inaugurate first ever All India Institute of Ayurveda

#### In News

- The first ever All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), modelled on the lines of AIIMS, will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the national capital on 'Ayurveda Day' on October 17.
- Set up as an apex institute under the Ministry of AYUSH, the AIIA will bring in the synergy between

traditional wisdom of Ayurveda and modern diagnostic tools and technology

### 32. Kancha Ilaiah case: We're not here to ban books, says Supreme Court

#### Context

- The petition filed by advocate took exception to a particular chapter in a book titled 'Post-Hindu India' called 'Hindutv-Mukt Bharat'.
- The book is critical about the caste system prevailing in India, especially in the Arya Vysya community

#### Supreme Court Observation

- "Any request for banning a book of the present nature has to be strictly scrutinized because every author or writer has a fundamental right to speak out ideas freely and express thoughts adequately. Curtailment of an individual writer/author's right to freedom of speech and expression should never be lightly viewed,"
- It is not up to the Supreme Court to use its powers to ban books, which are a free expression of a writer's thoughts and feelings about the society and world he lives in. Courts cannot be asked to gag free expression.
- The Supreme Court has always placed the fundamental right to free speech at the highest pedestal.
- This is what the Supreme Court recorded in its two-page order while dismissing a petition to ban a book written by writer and activist Professor Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd called Samajika Smugglurlu Komatollu

### 33. Pro bono criterion for judges too?

#### Context:

- Supreme Court's guidelines: a lawyer should have fought a certain number of cases pro bono or free of cost in order to be designated as a senior lawyer

#### In News:

- **Government's decision:** a lawyer's pro bono record should be considered while elevating him or her as a judge.

#### Idea needs to be approved by the collegiums:

- Judges to higher courts are appointed by the Supreme Court collegium, — made up of the top five judges of the apex court — and the Law Ministry only has to give its concurrence
- So, the idea has to be first approved by the collegium before it can be implemented.

### 34. Debate over proxy voting for NRIs gains steam

#### Context

- The Central government is planning to amend the **Representation of People Act** to provide proxy voting right to Non-Resident Indians (NRIs).
- The Central government will have to tackle a series of challenges in States with a relatively significant NRI population.



- **Statement issued by External affairs minister:** NRIs could cast their votes by issuing an authorisation letter to their kin.

#### In News

#### Issues:

- The Election Commission of India would have to evolve a mechanism to ensure that he or she is voting as per the desire of the NRI.
- The Voter Verifiable Paper Trail would be insufficient to address such concerns. Having a foolproof verification system is not an easy task either.
- The commission would have to define whether the proxy could be an immediate family member, wife, husband, ward or parent of the NRI.
- It would also have to fix the number of votes a proxy could cast in an election.
- The Centre might be planning to amend the Act to incorporate such provisions. At present, the Act permits a person to cast only one vote and that needs to be rectified.
- Safeguards against impersonation need to be put in place

#### Key Fact:

- Kerala, Punjab, and Gujarat are the three States that have a major expatriate population and the experiment would have considerable impact on the election process in these States

### **35. Supreme Court to hear plea against linking Aadhaar to bank accounts, phones**

#### Context:

#### Linking of Aadhaar

- A bank account and mobile phone connection is the personal property of an individual.
- Compelling citizens to part with their biometric details compromises India's international law obligations. It goes against the very concept of the expression 'limited government', which means the State cannot act against the spirit and the assurance of the Constitution

#### In News

- The Supreme Court will hear a petition challenging the government move to link bank accounts and mobile phones with Aadhaar numbers, saying it violates the fundamental right to privacy and equates citizens, including the elderly, women and students, with money launderers"

#### Petition:

- The petitioner has challenged **Rule 2(b) of the Prevention of Money-laundering (Maintenance of Records) Second Amendment Rules, 2017** for mandatory submission of Aadhaar number for individual clients, companies, partnership firms and trusts for opening of bank accounts, maintaining existing bank accounts, making financial transactions of and above ₹50,000 and crediting foreign remittance

into 'small accounts'.

- **Directives issued:** Existing bank account holders have been directed to furnish Aadhaar numbers by December 31, 2017.
- Non-compliance incurs the same liability as Section 5 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (for involvement in money laundering), that is rendering the **concerned bank account in-operational**
- Present and potential bank account holders, who do not wish to part with their biometric information, are therefore treated on par with alleged offenders under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)
- The petition also challenges the Department of Telecom circular, which makes it mandatory for all mobile phone holders to link their mobile phone numbers with Aadhaar
- **Violative of Article 300A:** The mobile phone circular is violative of Article 300A of the Constitution which protects a person's right to not be deprived of property
- Besides, both the provision and the circular are violative of the **Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016** which limits the purpose of the Aadhaar number to receipt of a public subsidy, benefit or a service

### **36. Plea seeks proportional seats for STs**

#### In News:

- The Supreme Court has asked the Centre to respond to a petition seeking **proportional representation of the Scheduled Tribes (ST)** in the Lok Sabha and legislative assemblies of West Bengal and Sikkim.
- Petition filed by an organisation, Public Interest Committee For Scheduling Specific Areas (PICSSA).
- Petition contention: despite the constitutional and statutory requirements, the Centre, ECI and these State governments have failed to ensure proportional representation to the Scheduled Tribes.
- Articles 330 and 332 of the Constitution deal with reservation of seats for SCs and STs in the Lok Sabha and the Legislative Assemblies.
- **As per SC&ST Orders** (Amendment) Act, 2002, several tribes, communities, parts and groups have been included in the lists of Scheduled Tribes
- Clearing out of Long Pending Cases
- Lower courts in Kerala, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, and Chandigarh have disposed of almost all cases that had been pending for a decade or more

#### Basic Information:

Article 330. Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People

(1) Seats shall be reserved in the House of the People for

(a) the Scheduled Castes;

(b) the Scheduled Tribes except the Scheduled Tribes in the autonomous districts of Assam; and

(c) the Scheduled Tribes in the autonomous districts of Assam

(2) The number of seats reserved in any State or Union territory for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes under clause ( 1 ) shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats allotted to that State or Union territory in the House of the People as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the State or Union territory or of the Scheduled Tribes in the State or Union territory or part of the State or Union territory, as the case may be, in respect of which seats are so reserved, bears to the total population of the State or Union territory

(3) Notwithstanding anything contained in clause ( 2 ), the number of seats reserved in the House of the People for the Scheduled Tribes in the autonomous districts of Assam shall bear to the total number of seats allotted to that State a proportion not less than the population of the Scheduled Tribes in the said autonomous districts bears to the total population of the State Explanation In this article 332, the expression population means the population as ascertained at the last preceding census of which the relevant figures have been published: Provided that the reference in this Explanation to the last preceding census of which the relevant figures have been published shall, until the relevant figures for the first census taken after the year 2000 have been published, be construed as a reference to the 1971 census

#### **Article 332. Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assemblies of the States**

(1) Seats shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, except the Scheduled Tribes in the tribal areas of Assam, in Nagaland and in Meghalaya, in the Legislative Assembly of every State

(2) Seats shall be reserved also for the autonomous districts in the Legislative Assembly of the State of Assam

(3) The number of seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assembly nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats in the Assembly as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the State or of the Scheduled Tribes in the State or part of the State, as the case may be, in respect of which seats are so reserved bears to the total population of the State

(4) The number of seats reserved for an autonomous district in the legislative Assembly of the State of Assam shall bear to the total number of seats in that Assembly a proportion not less than the population of the district bears to the total population of the State

(5) The constituencies for the seats reserved for any autonomous district of Assam shall not comprise any area outside that district

(6) No person who is not a member of a Scheduled Tribe of any autonomous district of the State of Assam shall be eligible for election to the Legislative Assembly of the State from any constituency of that district

### **37. SC seeks views on guidelines for abortion**

#### **In News**

- The Supreme Court has sought a response from the government on framing of guidelines for setting up a permanent mechanism for termination of pregnancy beyond 20 weeks in exceptional cases.
- **No amendment:** The court, however, refused to amend the 1971 Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act which prohibits termination of pregnancy beyond 20 weeks, saying that the issue fell within the legislative domain.

#### **Petition:**

- Seeks amendment of the 1971 Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act for abortion of fetuses older than 20 weeks involving rape survivors and women with abnormal fetus
- The plea also sought constitution of a committee for setting up a permanent mechanism for expedient termination of such pregnancies under safe medical facilities with adequate inputs from an association of professionals and experts

#### **Basic Information:**

#### **What is MTP Act, 1971?**

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

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

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

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

- Foetal abnormalities show up only by 18 weeks, so just a two-week window after that is too small for the would-be parents to take the difficult call on whether to keep their baby.

- Even for the medical practitioner, this window is too small to exhaust all possible options before advising the patient.
- There is an urgent need to empower women with sexual rights, legal protection against sex crimes and sex choices both in their own interest and for the sake of reducing the fertility rate as a whole.
- The lack of legal approval moves abortion to underground and they are done in unhygienic conditions by untrained, thus, putting thousands of women at risk

### 38. **Plea to ensure OROP for retired judges**

#### **In News:**

- A former Madras High Court judge has approached the Supreme Court for implementation of the 'One Rank, One Pension' norm for retired High Court judges.

#### **Petitioner contention:**

- There is disparity in the pension paid to those appointed from the Bar and those promoted from the subordinate judiciary
- The petitioner has sought a direction from the Court to the Centre to evolve a formula "to obviate the disparities in the pension payable to judges drawn from subordinate judiciary and the judges drawn from the Bar in tune with 'One Rank, One Pension' norms laid down by the Supreme Court in the 2014 judgment in Ramakrishnam Raju's case
- Discrimination: there is no difference in the pay, allowances and perks between judges irrespective of the number of years of service put in and irrespective of the source from where they were drawn, it is highly unreasonable to make a classification between the judges drawn from the Bar and judges drawn from the subordinate judiciary for the purpose of pension, thereby creating discrimination
- Null and Void: The petition also asked the Supreme Court to take the initiative to declare the provisions relating to pensions payable to retired high court judges in the 1954 Act as a "null and void" and rectify all the anomalies in the Act

#### **2014 Judgment:**

- When persons holding constitutional office retire from service, making discrimination in the fixation of the pensions depending upon the source from which they were appointed is in breach of Article 14 and 16(1) of the Constitution of India. One Rank, One Pension must be the norm in respect of a constitutional office

### 39. **SC allows TN to increase Mullaperiyar water level**

#### **Context:**

- Mullaperiyar water level issue

#### **In News:**

- The Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the law passed by Kerala in 2006, constituting the Dam Safety Authority to prevent the State from raising the water level in the Mullaperiyar dam from 136 ft to 142 ft.

- A major victory for Tamil Nadu

#### **Judgment:**

- Restrained Kerala from enforcing its law on Tamil Nadu
- By enacting the law and fixing the storage height of the dam at 136 ft, Kerala had nullified the 2006 judgment and usurped judicial power and thus interfered with the judicial functioning
- The Bench appointed a three-member committee with chairman of the Central Water Commission as the chairperson and representatives from the States of Kerala and Tamil Nadu to supervise and ensure that the water level in the Mullaperiyar dam was raised up to 142 ft

#### **Important observations:**

- Constitution envisaged separation of powers among the Executive, Judiciary and Legislature and one should not encroach into the domain of the other. Independence of the judiciary and courts alone would ensure rule of law.
- Legislation could be invalidated on the ground that there was a breach of separation of powers in enacting the law, though the Legislature might have the competence to do so
- The Legislature could only amend the law but could not invalidate a judgment or a decree passed by the court. The law enacted by Kerala legislature was an attempt to interfere with the judicial functioning, the Bench said and struck the law as unconstitutional and void

#### **Background information:**

#### **2006 judgment:**

- On a suit filed by Tamil Nadu, the apex court in 2006 permitted the State to raise the water level from 136 ft to 142 ft.
- Within 15 days of the verdict, Kerala enacted a law and constituted Dam Safety Authority to prevent Tamil Nadu from raising the water level beyond 136 ft.
- In April 2006, Tamil Nadu filed a fresh suit to declare the law as unconstitutional. On Wednesday, after eight years the apex court decreed the suit in favour of Tamil Nadu

#### **Mullaperiyar Dam:**

- The Mullaperiyar Dam or Mullaiperiyar Dam is a masonry gravity dam on the Periyar River in the Indian state of Kerala
- It is located 881 m (2,890 ft) above mean sea level, on the Cardamom Hills of the Western Ghats in Thekkady, Idukki District of Kerala, South India.
- It was constructed between 1887 and 1895 by John Pennycuik and also reached in an agreement to donate water eastwards to the Madras Presidency area (present-day Tamil Nadu).
- The Periyar National Park in Thekkady is located around the dam's reservoir.

- The dam is located in Kerala on the river Periyar, but is operated and maintained by Tamil Nadu state.
- Bone of Contention: For Tamil Nadu, the Mullaperiyar dam and the diverted Periyar waters act as a lifeline for Theni, Madurai, Sivaganga and Ramnad districts, providing water for irrigation and drinking, and also for generation of power in Lower Periyar Power Station. Tamil Nadu has insisted on exercising its unfettered rights to control the dam and its waters, based on the 1886 lease agreement. Kerala has pointed out the unfairness in the 1886 lease agreement and has challenged its validity. However, safety concerns posed by the 119-year-old dam to the safety of the people of Kerala in the event of a dam collapse, have been the focus of disputes from 2009 onwards. Kerala's proposal for decommissioning the dam and constructing a new one has been challenged by Tamil Nadu.

#### 40. Need to implement progressive Acts: CIC

##### In News:

- **Strengthening of governance:** Chief Information Commissioner of India Rajiv Mathur called for immediate implementation of the **Whistleblowers' Protection Act, the Lokpal Act and the Lokayukta Act**, which would strengthen governance systems further.
- Issue: Although progressive legislations such as the Whistleblowers' Protection Act, the Lokpal Act and the Lokayukta Act have been enacted, the rules for these Acts have not been framed. As a result, neither the Union government nor States are executing these Acts

#### 41. Carry oxygen cylinders on all trains: SC to Railways

##### In News:

- The Supreme Court has made it mandatory for the railways to keep oxygen cylinders in all trains to ensure that the life-saving gas could be provided to travellers suffering from respiratory problems in case of emergency.
- The Supreme Court also directed the railways to take assistance of doctors from AIIMS to explore ways to put in place a system in moving trains to provide medical treatment to travellers if they take ill.
- The court passed the order on an appeal filed by the Centre challenging the Rajasthan high court's order directing the railways to provide a team of one medical officer, one nurse and one attendant in all long-distance trains to cater to the medical needs of passengers

#### 42. Kerala HC on 'love jihad': Bust institutions indulging in forcible religious conversion or re-conversion.

##### Main observation by Kerala High Court::

- The court, while condemning any kind of violence against couples of inter-faith marriages, said, "This is a free democratic country and once a person becomes a major, he or she can marry whoever he/she likes."

##### Key points:

- The Kerala High Court ordered the state police to bust any institution that indulges in forcible religious conversion or re-conversion of an individual
- The court additionally said inter-religious marriages must be encouraged and that love cannot be bound by religion
- "We caution that every case of inter-religious marriage shall not be portrayed on a religious canvass and create fissures in the communal harmony otherwise existing in the God's own country – Kerala

##### What is the case all about?

- The High Court bench was hearing a habeas corpus petition filed by Anees Hameed, a Muslim man from Kannur, who had alleged that his wife Sruthi, a Hindu, was forcibly confined and tortured at a yoga centre near Kochi.
- Sruthi had openly testified in court that the people who ran the yoga centre tried to force her to abandon her marriage to Anees, whom she had met while studying at a college in Kannur
- The couple had fallen in love and got married against the wishes of the girl's parents
- The court allowed the couple to decide their future course of action without interference from their parents

#### 43. Punjab approves hike in OBC income limit

##### In News

- Punjab government has approved an increase in the gross annual income limit for the creamy layer of the Other Backward Classes and Backward Classes from ₹6 lakh to 8 lakh
- The decision is in line with the Central government's directive to ensure greater social justice and inclusion of members of the Other Backward Classes and Backward Classes in the matter of reservation
- The Union Cabinet had, in August this year, decided to raise the income limit from ₹6 lakh to ₹8 lakh per annum for determining the creamy layer among the Other Backward Classes

##### Fourth revision

- This was the fourth revision of the creamy layer, which was fixed at ₹1 lakh in 1993 and subsequently hiked to ₹2.5 lakh in 2004, ₹4.5 lakh in 2008 and ₹6 lakh in 2013
- The move is reported to be aimed at ensuring more equitable distribution of reservation benefits among the OBCs



**44. Young lawyers make a plea for audible justice****Context:**

- Justice should not only be done, but also seen to be done.
- A group of young lawyers and law students believes it should also be heard. And heard clearly

**Whistle for public Interest (WHIP)**

- A group of practising lawyers and law students who use the Right to Information Act of 2005 to promote transparency and accountability, said court proceedings are hardly audible for lawyers, litigants and even the media present in the courtrooms as judges do not switch on the microphones kept before them

**In News:****What the statute says?**

- Under the "open court" system of administration of justice, the public should get reasonable access to courtrooms so that they could hear as well as watch the proceedings
- Section 153 B of the Civil Procedure Code and Section 327 of the Code of Criminal Procedure mandate "public access" to court proceedings

**WHIP request:**

- They want Supreme Court judges to use the microphones installed on their desks in courtrooms. Not using microphones has no "rationale" and amounts to "wastage of public money,"

**45. Govt. to boost rural employment****In News:**

- The Rural Development Ministry is in the midst of examining proposals that promises to leapfrog job creation for the rural youth.

**Out of the box suggestions**

- Migrant tracking system, low-cost accommodation for urban workers, and changing the word "labour" to "professional workers,"
- The Ministry's flagship skill development programme — Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gramin Kaushal Yojana — needs to "reinvent itself to reach the next level."
- Link skill to entrepreneurship development and do not over-emphasize wage employment.
- Rural digital index on the same lines of smart city index.
- **Cluster approach:** Experts have suggested a cluster approach, where villages with similar socio-economic conditions should be clubbed and every village should have a gram vikas prerak (village development motivator), and call the **"bottom of the pyramid as the foundation of the pyramid."**

**46. Centre pushes for cash-free campuses****In News:**

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development aims to make financial transactions completely digital in all higher education institutions.
- The higher education regulators — University Grants Commission (UGC) and All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) — are also being taken on board to help facilitate the transition.
- The move will bring within the digital ambit all such institutions — public and private — including Central and State universities, IITs, NITs, business schools, etc.
- Eventually, the Centre aims to fully digitise all campus processes — including admissions, assistance, assessments, result declaration, admission, etc. — with all these processes going on an integrated IT platform.

**Vittiya Saksharta Abhiyan (VISAKA)**

- The Centre had launched the Vittiya Saksharta Abhiyan (VISAKA), meaning financial literacy campaign, for digital financial literacy early in 2017, enrolling lakhs of volunteers from among students to train families in their neighbourhood to conduct financial transactions digitally through the BHIM app.
- They were also asked to go to major markets, talk to shopkeepers, vendors and merchants' associations to help shift to digital transactions.

**47. Rajasthan to shield public servants from probes**

- The Centre had launched the Vittiya Saksharta Abhiyan (VISAKA), meaning financial literacy campaign, for digital financial literacy early in 2017, enrolling lakhs of volunteers from among students to train families in their neighbourhood to conduct financial transactions digitally through the BHIM app.
- They were also asked to go to major markets, talk to shopkeepers, vendors and merchants' associations to help shift to digital transactions

**48. Rajasthan to shield public servants from probes****Context**

- The government in Rajasthan has promulgated an ordinance providing for prior sanction for investigation against public servants, judges and magistrates for acts done "in discharge of official duties".
- Though the ordinance was promulgated last month and published in the official gazette, it came to light on Friday.
- The State government may initiate a move to convert it into an Act during the Assembly session beginning on October 23

**The Ordinance:**

- The ordinance has virtually shielded public servants from police investigations
- It gone a step ahead by restraining the public and the media from disclosing the identity of government officials until the sanction to proceed with the probe is obtained
- The sanctioning authority may take up to six months for taking a decision.
- While amending Sections 156 and 190 of the Criminal Procedure Code, the ordinance lays down that if the sanctioning authority does not take a decision within six months, the prosecution sanction would be deemed to have been issued.
- Anyone found violating the restriction on printing, publishing or publicising the names, photographs and details of public servants, judges and magistrates for whom the sanction is yet to be granted, will be punished with two years' imprisonment and fine, according to Section 5 of the ordinance.

**The issues with the ordinance:**

- According to the opposition this ordinance will protect criminal and corrupt officials.
- It would create a cover for wrongdoing by government officials and encourage others to indulge in corruption.
- But the government has reiterated that the new provisions had been made to protect honest public servants acting in good faith.

**49. PUCL demands repeal of ordinance on immunity to public servants****Context:**

- Rajasthan has **promulgated an ordinance** providing for prior sanction for investigation against public servants, judges and magistrates for acts done **"in discharge of official duties"**

**In news:**

- The People's Union for Civil Liberties demanded repeal of a controversial ordinance which has made public servants immune against investigation and barred the media from disclosing their names until prior sanction is granted for their prosecution.
- The PUCL has also decided to challenge the ordinance in the Rajasthan High Court.

**PUCL remarks on the ordinance passed:**

- The ordinance is an attempt to silence the media and prevent the judiciary from exercising its function of setting the criminal law in motion
- The amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code and Indian Penal Code brought through the ordinance went against the Supreme Court's ruling in Lalita Kumari's case, 2014. The judgment had dealt with both cognisable and non-cognisable offences committed by public servants. The apex court's Constitution Bench had held that an FIR has to be

lodged and investigation initiated by the police officer on the complaint about a cognisable offence. In the cases of non-cognisable offences, the investigating officer is empowered to initiate a preliminary enquiry and seek the court's direction to obtain sanction for prosecution.

- The amendments, were superfluous and unnecessary as Section 197 of Cr.P.C. already provides protection to public servants by making it mandatory for a court to take cognisance against them after getting the government's sanction. Instead of cognisance, the amendment refers to the word "investigate".

**50. Ensure State panels for women are set up: SC****In News:**

- The Supreme Court has asked the Centre if state commissions for women (SCW) actually exist.
- The top court raised the question as it dealt with the issue of precarious conditions faced by destitute widows living in Vrindavan and other places across the country.
- The court, which is hearing a matter pertaining to the condition of such widows, told the Centre that if SCWs did not exist in the States, then the State governments concerned should be asked to ensure setting up of such panels

**'No access to justice'**

- Supreme Court observation: the ostracised destitute widows belong to the "socially disadvantaged class" of society and were not treated with the dignity they deserve in the shelter homes in Vrindavan and elsewhere. It had equated them with socially underprivileged groups who have no real access to justice, are voiceless and needed to be empowered.

**51. 'Why exempt CBI from RTI Act?'****In News:**

- A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court for an early hearing of a petition challenging a 2011 government notification, which includes the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on the list of "intelligence and security organisations" exempted from disclosing information to the public under the Right to Information Act.

**The Petition**

- According to the petition 2011 notification including the CBI in the Second Schedule of the Right to Information (RTI) Act of 2005 was arbitrary, especially when the organisation was only an investigating agency and not a security or intelligence organisation.
- It is alleged that it will scuttle the RTI appeal pending before the Chief Information Commissioner, in regard to the Bofors-Quattrocchi case in which order was passed by the Central Information Commission directing the CBI to provide the requisite papers to the petitioner.
- Also, by issuing the notification and placing the CBI in the Second Schedule, the government appears to be claiming absolute secrecy for the CBI without the

sanction of the law.

### **The Impact of the 2011 Government notification**

- Such an administrative decision has a profound impact on the citizens of India inasmuch as it restricts their fundamental right to information.
- By this notification the government could keep adding organisations to the Second Schedule, which do not meet the express criteria laid down in Section 24(2) of the RTI Act and ultimately render the RTI Act ineffective

### **52. U.P. plans to digitise medical college records**

#### **In News**

- The Uttar Pradesh government is planning to start an 'E-hospital' facility at State-run medical colleges.
- The six medical colleges of Kanpur, Jhansi, Agra, Meerut and Gorakhpur, and the Laxmipat Singhania Institute of Cardiology in Kanpur, have been picked for the implementation of the new facility under the first phase.
- **E-hospital facility to include:** Case histories of patients, and information related to hospital staff and stocks of medicines.
- Apart from E-hospitals, the government has also formed a **Medical Education** Strategy Cell (MESC), the first of its kind in the State, to create a roadmap for phase-wise improvements in the medical education sector

### **53. Centre eases norms for sewage plants:**

#### **In News:**

- New Plan: The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has relaxed standards for upcoming sewage treatment plants (STP), including those to come up on extremely polluted stretches of the Ganga

#### **Earlier standards:**

- As per 2015-proposal the standard set for STP's was higher: they would have to ensure that the biochemical oxygen demand (Bod) — a marker for organic pollutants — in the treated water had to be no more than 10 mg/litre.

#### **New notification issued:**

- A notification by the Union Environment Ministry this month has junked the 10 mg/litre target.
- It says that STPs coming up after June 2019 — except in major State capitals and metropolitan cities — need only conform to 30 mg/litre of BoD.
- These include proposed STPS to treat sewage in stretches of the river downstream of Haridwar, including Kanpur and Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh.
- New STPs in State capitals, however, have to cap BoD at 20 mg/litre.

#### **Why such a move to ease the norms?**

The 10 mg criteria was impractical and required advanced technology that was too costly for most States

#### **Basic Information:**

### **Biochemical oxygen demand**

- Biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), also called biological oxygen demand) is the amount of dissolved oxygen (DO) needed (i.e., demanded) by aerobic biological organisms to break down organic material present in a given water sample at certain temperature over a specific time period.
- The BOD value is most commonly expressed in milligrams of oxygen consumed per litre of sample during 5 days of incubation at 20 °C and is often used as a surrogate of the degree of organic pollution of water.
- BOD can be used as a gauge of the effectiveness of wastewater treatment plants.

### **Why is BOD important?**

- Biochemical Oxygen Demand is an important water quality parameter because it provides an index to assess the effect discharged wastewater will have on the receiving environment.
- The higher the BOD value, the greater the amount of organic matter or "food" available for oxygen consuming bacteria.
- If the rate of DO consumption by bacteria exceeds the supply of DO from aquatic plants, algae photosynthesis or diffusing from air, unfavourable conditions occur
- Depletion of DO causes stress on aquatic organisms, making the environment unsuitable for life. Further, dramatic depletion can lead to hypoxia or anoxic environments.
- BOD is also used extensively for wastewater treatment, as decomposition of organic waste by microorganisms is commonly used for treatment.

### **54. National anthem in movie halls: SC asks why do people have to wear patriotism on sleeve**

#### **In News:**

- SC Judge Justice D Y Chandrachud was critical of last year's apex court order making it mandatory for movie halls to play the national anthem before the start of a film.
- Justice Chandrachud who was part of a three-judge bench which heard a petition filed by a film society seeking recall of its November 30 order making it mandatory for movie halls to play the anthem

### **Suggestion from the Chief Justice of India.**

- Chief Justice Misra said the court may modify its earlier order and replace the "shall" in it with "may"
- Appearing for the Centre, Attorney General too agreed with this
- But Venugopal opposed the recall of the entire order saying the singing of the anthem was a "unifying factor" in a country as diverse as India

## 55. HC orders penal action over manual scavenging

### Context:

- The Madras High Court took serious note of a photograph published in The Hindu on October 3, of people involved in manual scavenging at Pondy Bazaar, and directed Additional Advocate General to ensure that those responsible were taken to task, and apprise the court of the action taken

### In News

- The High Court Bench directed the State government to file a status report on steps taken by it so far for rehabilitation of people involved in manual scavenging in accordance with the provisions of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act of 2013.

### Basic Information

#### Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act of 2013:

#### Key Provisions:

- The employment of manual scavengers, the manual cleaning of sewers and septic tanks without protective equipment, and the construction of insanitary latrines is prohibited.
- It provides for rehabilitation of manual scavengers and their alternative employment.
- Each local authority, cantonment board and railway authority is responsible for surveying insanitary latrines within its jurisdiction. They shall also construct a number of sanitary community latrines
- Each occupier of insanitary latrines shall be responsible for converting or demolishing the latrine at his own cost if he fails to do so, the local authority shall convert the latrine and recover the cost from him.
- The implementing authorities shall be District Magistrate and the local authority.
- Offences under the act shall be cognizable and non-bailable, and may be tried summarily.

## 56. Centre tweaks groundwater extraction rules for industry

### Context:

- Uniform regulatory framework on groundwater use across the country.

### In News:

- New proposal: the Centre has come out with draft guidelines which stipulate existing and new industries, infrastructure and mining projects have to obtain a 'no-objection certificate' (NOC) from district and state-level authorities for drawing groundwater.
- The draft guidelines exempt farmers from obtaining NOCs. It calls for medium and large farmers to adopt water conservation measures.

### Conservation fee:

- The draft also proposes to levy a new water conservation fee based on quantum of groundwater

extraction in lieu of existing provision of creating recharge mechanism, including construction of artificial recharge structures, by those undertaking projects

- The proposed fee is based on water use quantity and groundwater capacity of particular area zone.
- The amount, therefore, varies from Rs 1 to Rs 6 per cubic metre.
- The funds raised through this new fee will be used by states for effective ground water management.

### Present Scenario::

- At present, the Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA) has been granting NOC for withdrawal of water by industries, infrastructure, and mining projects

### Basic Information:

- Central Ground Water Authority has been constituted under Section 3 (3) of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 to regulate and control development and management of ground water resources in the country

## 57. New policy on the cards to boost medical tourism

### Context

- India is considered a preferred destination for cardiology, orthopaedics, transplant and ophthalmology in curative care, it also enjoys high credibility in wellness and prevention and alternative medicine.

### In News:

- The government plans to bring out a policy to promote India as a **key destination for medical tourism**.
- The proposed policy aims to promote integrated treatment with allopathy, ayurveda, **yoga, unani, siddha and homoeopathy** (AYUSH) streams.
- The Union commerce ministry, along with ministries of tourism and health, has already launched a portal, [www.indiahealthcaretourism.com](http://www.indiahealthcaretourism.com), in three languages - Arabic, Russian and French— to provide comprehensive information to medical travellers.
- Medical tourism in India is projected to be a **\$9 billion** opportunity by 2020. Currently, medical tourism industry is pegged at \$3 billion. Globally, the medical tourism market is estimated at around \$40-60 billion

### Key Facts

- India is emerging as one of the most credible destinations worldwide for curative treatment
- With the given scale of healthcare infrastructure and projected growth, India can further strengthen its standing among the currently popular medical value tourism destinations such as Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and Mexico
- A latest knowledge paper by FICCI and Quintiles IMS shows over 5,00,000 foreign patients seek treatment in India each year.



- SAARC countries such as Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Maldives are the major sources of medical value travel, followed by African countries such as Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya.
- **Reasons:** Proximity, cultural connect and connectivity are the key reasons for inflow of patients to India from these regions.

#### **Measures implemented to promote medical tourism:**

- The process to issue medical visas has been made much more efficient, thus reducing the time taken in visa procurement
- The scope of e-tourist visa has been expanded to include short- term medical treatment.
- Separate immigration counters and facilitation desks have also been set up at major Indian airports to boost the medical travel industry.

### **58. The gown and the Bench**

#### **Context:**

- New permanent committee and guidelines for designating lawyers in the SC and HC as senior advocates.

#### **Guidelines issued by the Supreme Court:**

- The SC has laid down guidelines for designating lawyers in the SC and HC as senior advocates
- Now, applications will be examined by a permanent committee known as the Committee for Designation of Senior Advocates
- The committee will publish the names of candidates on the respective courts' websites to ensure transparency
- Current system: Until now, the judges of the SC and HC had the sole discretion of according this status to advocates

#### **The Constitution (99th Amendment) Act, 2014 and the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act, 2014**

- The opaque system and unsatisfactory selection, transfer, and elevation of judges to the SC caused disquiet and led to the passing of the acts
- The acts sought to give politicians and civil society a final say in the appointment of judges to the highest courts
- In 2015, a Constitution Bench of the SC declared these unconstitutional on the ground that the composition of the NJAC did not provide adequate representation to those from the judiciary
- It is in this context that one has to welcome the permanent committee

#### **Composition of the permanent committee**

- It will consist of the
  - (1) Chief Justice of India,
  - (2) Two senior-most judges of the Supreme Court/ High Courts,

(3) The Attorney General of India/ the Advocate General of State, and

(4) A member of the Bar to be nominated by the above four members

- The committee will have a permanent secretariat
- All applications for designation of senior advocate will be submitted to the secretariat
- The secretariat will compile all the relevant information with regard to the reputation, conduct, integrity, participation in pro-bono work, reported judgments in which the advocate has appeared, etc. of the candidates
- The committee will examine each candidate's case, interview the candidate, and make its assessment based on a point-based format

#### **Concerns:**

- There may be some reservation on the aspect of publishing names on the official website of the court and inviting suggestions as in the recent past
- There have been reports of motivated complaints and objections
- The secretariat should not be dragged into the jumble of investigating frivolous complaints or objections

#### **The way forward**

- This institutional mechanism and selection criteria seem suited to substitute the existing collegium system
- The executive and the legislature could also seriously consider introducing a new version of the NJAC which incorporates the salient features of this institutional mechanism
- The sooner the judiciary adopts such a mechanism for judges too, the better it is for the institution

### **59. SC bans use of pet coke in National Capital Region**

#### **In News**

- The Supreme Court directed the prohibition of industrial use of pet coke and furnace oil in NCR regions from November 1, 2017.
- The order follows the recommendation of the **Supreme Court-appointed Environment Pollution Control Authority (EPCA)** to ban the sale, distribution and use of furnace oil and pet coke in the NCR.
- Their use is already prohibited in Delhi

#### **Basic Information:**

##### **Petroleum coke:**

- Petroleum coke is a by-product of the oil refining process. As refineries worldwide seek to operate more efficiently and extract more gasoline and other high value fuels from each barrel of crude oil, a solid carbon material known as petcoke is produced

##### **Harmful effects of use of furnace oil and pet coke**

- Petroleum coke, also called pet coke or petcoke, is a solid carbon material that resembles coal; it is a

product of oil refining

- Petroleum coke or Pet Coke is used by industries as fuel and contains various dangerous chemicals and heavy metals such as Chromium, Vanadium, etc
- Pet coke also has high Sulphur contents which on burning releases large amounts of Sulphates into the atmosphere
- These harmful chemicals cause air pollution and lead to various health risks

#### **Environment Pollution (Prevention & Control) Authority (EPCA)**

- It is a Central Government constituted committee for the National Capital Region in compliance with the Supreme Court order dated January 7, 1998
- It was constituted under subsection (1) and (3) of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 by MoEFCC
- This authority was constituted with sole objective of assisting SC for protecting and improving the quality of environment and preventing, controlling and abating air pollution in Delhi NCR

#### **60. Procedure to remove ECs vague, says petition in SC**

##### **Context:**

- Ambiguity on the removal procedure of the Election Commissioners might affect the functional independence of the EC

##### **In News:**

- A petition was filed in the Supreme Court pointing out the vagueness in the procedure for removal of Election Commissioners, saying it affects the panel's autonomy

##### **Petition contention:**

- Proviso to Article 324(5) of the Constitution safeguards the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) from arbitrary removal
- The CEC can be removed from office only by the order of the President, just like a judge of the Supreme Court. However, the same constitutional provision is silent about the procedure for removal of the two Election Commissioners. It only provides that they cannot be removed from office except on the recommendation of the CEC
- The petition, seeks to provide Election Commissioners with the same protection against arbitrary removal as the CEC
- The plea also sought direction to the Centre to provide an independent secretariat to the Election Commission

##### **Key Fact:**

- The CEC and the Election Commissioners have a tenure of six years, or up to the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier, and enjoy the same status and receive salary and perks as available to apex court judges.
- The CEC and the Election Commissioners enjoy the same decision-making powers

#### **61. Government plans to amend Hindu Adoptions Act to check adoption under personal law**

##### **Context:**

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development is set to initiate amendments to **the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956 (HAMA)** so as to disallow any further adoptions under the personal law and instead bring it under the purview of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

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

- A study that showed that among the adoptable 48,000-odd children across child care institutions, only 2,000 are linked to adoption agencies under JJ Act, half of them are children with special needs.
- The Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) presently has a waitlist of more than 17,000 prospective parents.
- There cannot be two parallel systems as it makes it very difficult to check instances of child trafficking.
- The adoption provisions under HAMA need to be repealed so that adoptions happen only through JJ Act

#### **THE HINDU ADOPTIONS AND MAINTENANCE ACT, 1956 (HAMA)**

- HAMA allows couples from Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Sikh communities to adopt children of parents belonging to these communities through a simple agreement.
- Adoptions under HAMA are between two individuals and it is very difficult to monitor cases of misuse, selling or trafficking of children.
- The JJ Act states that nothing in this Act shall apply to the adoption of children made under the provisions of the HAMA.
- Another recent study, by CARA, showed the extent of unregistered adoptions under HAMA.
- For Example-In Delhi less than 50 adoptions were officially registered in a year under HAMA, but 3,200 stamps were sold for the stated purpose of adoption where the deeds were simply notarised

##### **What is the problem?**

- As per the adoption regulations of the JJ Act, all child-care institutions were to be registered with CARA within six months of the legislation coming into force in January 2016.
- Twenty months later, 10 per cent of the total institutions are both linked to adoption agencies and registered under the Act.
- The recent ministry study found that there are 9,400 child-care institutions across the country, over half of which are unregistered.
- The ministry will issue an ultimatum to all child-care institutions asking them to register under the JJ Act by December 31, else shut down operations.

- This is aligned with May 2017 order by a Supreme Court bench in a case regarding exploitation of children in a Tamil Nadu orphanage that held that all child-care institutions have to be registered under JJ Act by the year end.
- Many institutions hold on to the children as their funding agencies give them grants based on the number of children with them

## **62. Don't deny PDS foodgrains to non-Aadhaar beneficiaries, Centre tells States**

### **Context:**

- A 11-year-old Jharkhand girl recently died of alleged starvation after being allegedly denied PDS ration

### **In News:**

#### **New instructions issued by the Centre:**

- The Union government has instructed the States not to deny the public distribution system (PDS) benefits to anyone who does not have Aadhaar or has not linked his ration card to the number and warned of strict action on violation of the directive.
- The Centre also asked the State governments not to delete eligible households from the list of beneficiaries for non-possession of Aadhaar

#### **Maintenance of separate record:**

- Cases like those without Aadhaar, Aadhaar not linked to ration card, or failure of biometric authentication — where benefits are being extended, will have to be recorded separately as "exceptions" by the fair price shop dealer.
- Further, the States will have to devise a mechanism of monthly audit and inspection, including field verification of such "exceptions" to guard against any "misuse"

### **Basic Information:**

#### **Public Distribution system:**

- Public distribution system (PDS) is an Indian food security system. Established by the Government of India under Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution and are managed jointly by state governments in India, it distributes subsidized food and non-food items to India's poor. This scheme was launched in June 1947
- Major commodities distributed include staple food grains, such as wheat, rice, sugar, and kerosene, through a network of fair price shops (also known as ration shops) established in several states across the country. Food Corporation of India, a Government-owned corporation, procures and maintains the PDS

## **63. Rajasthan Assembly passes bill raising OBC quota to 26%**

### **In News:**

- The Rajasthan Assembly passed a bill which increases reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBC) in the state from 21 per cent to 26 per cent.

- The decision grants five per cent reservation to the five "most backward" OBC communities, which includes Gujjars and four other communities that were earlier grouped as the special backward classes (SBC).

### **Basic Information:**

#### **Mandal Commission:**

- The The Mandal Commission was established in India on 1 January 1979 by the Janata Party government under Prime Minister Morarji Desai with a mandate to "identify the socially or educationally backward."
- It was headed by Indian parliamentarian B.P. Mandal to consider the question of seat reservations and quotas for people to redress caste discrimination, and used eleven social, economic, and educational indicators to determine backwardness
- In 1980, the commission's report affirmed the affirmative action practice under Indian law whereby members of Other Backward Classes (OBC), were given exclusive access to a certain portion of government Jobs and slots in public universities, and recommended changes to these quotas, by 27%.

## **64. The identity puzzle**

### **Context:**

- Draft of the DNA Based Technology (Use and Regulation) Bill, 2017

### **Key Points and Issues:**

- The Law Commission of India submitted the draft to the government in July
- Given that there are no appropriate legal mechanisms with regard to identifying missing persons, victims of disasters, etc. The DNA Bill seeks to regulate human DNA profiling and establish standard procedures for DNA testing

### **DNA profiling board:**

- The Law commission has recommended constitution of a statutory body called the DNA profiling board and a DNA data bank
- Functionality: The profiling board will undertake functions such as laying down procedures and standards to establish DNA laboratories and granting accreditation to such laboratories.
- And advising the concerned Ministries/ departments of the Central and State governments on issues relating to DNA laboratories
- It will also be responsible for supervising, monitoring, inspecting and assessing the laboratories
- The Board will frame guidelines for training the police and other investigating agencies dealing with DNA-related matters
- Its functions also include giving advice on all ethical and human rights issues relating to DNA testing in consonance with international guidelines
- It will recommend research and development activities in DNA testing and related issues

- DNA profiling will be undertaken exclusively to identify a person and will not be used to extract any other information

#### **DNA data bank:**

- The Bill has also recommended the setting up of a DNA data bank both nationally and on a regional basis in the States
- The data bank will primarily store DNA profiles received from the accredited laboratories
- And maintain certain indices for various categories of data such as crime scene index, suspects index, offenders index, missing persons' index and unknown deceased persons' index
- With a view to assisting families of missing persons on the basis of their bodily samples and substances
- Strict confidentiality will be maintained with regard to keeping records of DNA profiles and their use

#### **Other facts related to the Bill:**

- The DNA profiles shall be shared with and by foreign governments or government organisations or agencies only for the purposes enumerated in the Act
- Punishment: Violators of the provisions will be liable for punishment of imprisonment which may extend up to three years and also a fine which may extend up to Rs. 2 lakh

### **65. Centre keen on having court administrators**

#### **In News:**

- The Union Law Minister has written to the Chief Justices of all the High Courts to seek their views on developing a permanent cadre of administrators for court management and administration.
- The move is aimed at allowing the judiciary to devote more time on judicial work and free them from administrative, managerial and financial work.
- Tasks assigned: these managers are meant to assist the Registrars in High Courts and Judges in District Courts in administrative tasks.

#### **Present Scenario:**

#### **Judges overburdened:**

- The situation is particularly bad in **lower judiciary** where judges are burdened with substantial administrative work.
- Key Fact: As per the **Indian Judiciary Annual Report 2016**, pendency of cases across district courts is a staggering 2.81 crores and as many as 5,000 judges' posts are vacant.
- Administrative work only added to the workload of existing judges. 13th Finance Commission recommendations: creation of the post of Court Managers in every district court and High Court.
- **Problems associated with creation of separate posts:** Recruitment on contract basis, low remuneration package, reluctance on the part of the judiciary to accept Court Managers to participate in the judicial process have been identified as some of

the reasons for failure to attract suitable candidates.

### **66. Air programme on dangers of Blue Whale game: SC tells DD**

#### **Context:**

- Supreme Court views on Blue Whale game.

#### **In News:**

- Declaring the Blue Whale online game a threat to life, the Supreme Court directed public broadcaster Doordarshan to conceive a cautionary and educational programme about the dangers of the online game which goads players, mostly students, to commit suicide.
- The Supreme Court gave the public broadcaster a week's time to prepare the programme and air it on prime time for an appropriate duration, possibly not less than 10 minutes.
- **The court also directed the competent authority in the government to see to it that private channels also telecast the programme.**
- **Motive behind the programme:** The idea behind the programme is to make parents and children aware of the dangers of online games like Blue Whale. The message of the programme should be that children should not be trapped into the game.

### **67. SC questions Centre on judicial posts**

#### **Context:**

- Judicial appointments to the Supreme Court and the high courts.
- Six of the 24 high courts have been without regular Chief Justices for months.
- Key Fact: Judicial vacancies continue to be a formidable problem across the 24 high courts. Out of an approved total strength of 1079 high court judges, there are 387 vacancies as of October 1, 2017.

#### **Background Information:**

- The Constitution Bench's historic decision, in October 2015: strike down the government's National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) law. The NJAC law had given politicians an equal say in judicial appointments to constitutional courts.
- December 2015: five-judge Constitution Bench, tasked the Centre with the drafting and finalisation of the MoP (Memorandum of Procedure).
- Decisions taken: Over a year and 10 months after a Constitution Bench placed its faith in the government to iron out the dos and don'ts of judicial appointments to the Supreme Court and the high courts, the Centre is yet to deliver

#### **The Supreme Court wants to know the reasons:**

- The Supreme Court issued notice to the Attorney-General of India, to explain why the finalisation of the Memorandum of Procedure (MoP) for appointment of judges to the Supreme Court and the high courts



continues to "linger".

- The Supreme Court also wants Attorney General, to address it on the delay in appointment of "regular" Chief Justices to various high courts.
- The apex court underlined that the "arrangement" of Acting Chief Justices in high courts should not continue for more than a month

#### **Basic Information:**

- **Amicus curiae:** An amicus curiae (literally, "friend of the court") is someone who is not a party to a case and is not solicited by a party, but who assists a court by offering information that bears on the case. The decision on whether to admit the information lies at the discretion of the court

### **68. Centre can now shift troops from Bengal**

#### **Context:**

- The Union Government had appealed to the Supreme Court against a recent Calcutta High Court order restraining it from withdrawing troops deployed in the two districts (Darjeeling and Kalimpong) of West Bengal

#### **In News:**

#### **Supreme Court observation:**

- "Law and order is your problem," the Supreme Court told the Mamata government.
- It allowed the Centre to withdraw seven companies of the Central police forces stationed in the restive Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts of West Bengal for deployment in poll-bound States.
- Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat go to the polls in November and December.
- The Supreme Court ordered to withdraw seven companies of the Central police forces from the two districts, while eight of the total 15 deployed there stay back.
- Why troops were deployed? The districts of Darjeeling and Kalimpong, had witnessed a spate of violence following the resurgence of the Gorkhaland movement

#### **Calcutta High Court orders:**

- Calcutta High Court had ordered Center not to withdraw troops deployed in the two districts

#### **Centers argument:**

- If all 24 High Courts start dictating to us where and where not to deploy troops, there will be utter confusion. Deployment of troops is the executive's exclusive domain

#### **Proceedings stayed in Calcutta High Court:**

- The Supreme Court stayed the proceedings in the Calcutta High Court and recorded that the Supreme Court would comprehensively hear the issue.
- The Supreme Court would decide on two issues: whether courts can intervene in the placement of

troops; and whether courts can intervene with the government in the placement of forces in order to protect the lives of citizens

### **69. Panel to review orders of additional judges**

#### **Context:**

- Practice of evaluating the judicial performance of additional judges.

#### **Background information**

##### **• Procedure:**

A candidate is first appointed as additional judge of a High Court.

He or she serves a probationary period before being appointed a permanent judge

- **October 2010 guidelines:** the Supreme Court had issued guidelines for constitution of Judgment Committees by Chief Justices of High Courts for assessment/evaluation of judgments of Additional Judges of high courts for the purpose of determining their suitability for appointment as permanent judges.
- **On March 3, 2017,** the Supreme Court Collegium withdrew the guidelines issued earlier.
- The government had recently urged the Collegium to have a relook at its decision to end the practice of evaluating the judicial performance of additional judges.
- **Practice revived:** Chief Justice Misra's Collegium, which met on October 26, unanimously found that there is indeed a "necessity" to assess the judgment of Additional Judges before they are made permanent.
- The Collegium has, however, tweaked their predecessor's guideline to ensure that "peers are not judged by peers" and appointed the panel.

### **70. Give verdict copy in the vernacular: Kovind**

#### **In News:**

- President Ram Nath Kovind suggested that a system be evolved for providing certified copies of High Court judgments translated in local or regional languages of the litigants
- Copies of the translated judgments could be provided in 24 or 36 hours after the verdict was pronounced
- The President pointed out that the High Courts delivered judgments in English, "but we are a country of diverse languages. The litigant may not be conversant with English and the finer points of the judgment may escape him or her. The litigating parties will thus be dependent on the lawyer or another person to translate the judgment. This can add to time and cost".
- It was important not only to take justice to the people but also to make it understandable to the litigating parties in a language they know

## 71. Before polls were called, Gujarat pushed terror Bill

### In News:

- Days before the Gujarat Assembly elections were announced, the State government renewed its bid to revive the controversial Gujarat Control of Terrorism and Organised Crime (GCTOC) Bill, 2015, which authorises police officers to tap phones and submit the conversations as evidence in court.
- The Bill includes provisions to file a charge sheet within 180 days instead of the usual 90 and proposes stricter conditions for granting bail.

### Inter-ministerial review:

- The Union Home Ministry has sent the Bill for inter-ministerial consultations, the fifth time since it was first conceived in 2003 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the Chief Minister of Gujarat.
- Former President Pranab Mukherjee had refused to clear the Bill, following which the Home Ministry recalled it in January 2016.
- The Ministry asked the State government for clarifications, and Gujarat had sent a fresh proposal this September.

### Earlier attempts:

- The earlier GUJCOC Bill was reintroduced as GCTOC Bill in 2015. The same year the Information and Technology Ministry objected to the provisions that allowed "authorisation of interception of telephonic conversations and their admissibility as evidence in the court of law"
- As per norms, agencies such as the Research & Analysis Wing (RAW), the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, the Enforcement Directorate and the police can tap phones only with the permission of the Union Home Secretary.
- The Bill in its earlier form was rejected thrice by two former Presidents — the late A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in 2004 and by Pratibha Patil in 2008 and 2009
- One of the provisions to which objections were raised by the Centre was Section 25, which provided immunity to the State from any legal action for "anything which is in good faith done or intended to be done in pursuance of this Act."

## 72. Set up centres for vulnerable victims under all High Courts: SC

### Vulnerable witnesses deposition centres:

- Supreme Court observation: Vulnerable witnesses in criminal cases, often minor survivors of rape or victims of sex abuse, should testify without fear or intimidation in a conducive environment.
- Concerned at the trauma these victims of crime face in conventional courtrooms, the Supreme Court has ordered the setting up of at least two vulnerable witnesses deposition centres in the jurisdiction of every High Court across the country within the next three months.

- The order upholds the right of vulnerable witnesses to be protected while testifying in court and is in consonance with international norms in these matters

### The case of vulnerable victims:

- Vulnerable witnesses are often treated like any other witness of the State in a criminal trial.
- Victims often end up being ill-treated by the very system they had approached in the hope of justice.
- Delay and intimidating questions during trial in a hostile environment lead to fewer convictions.

### Guidelines for Recording the Evidence of Vulnerable Witnesses in Criminal Matters:

- The Supreme Court suggested that other high courts should adopt the Delhi HC's 'Guidelines for Recording the Evidence of Vulnerable Witnesses in Criminal Matters,' with required modifications.
- The Delhi HC's guidelines are filtered from the best practices followed by other countries and the police and precedents of the apex court and high courts.
- The practices include a screen or some arrangement by which the victim does not see the body or face of the accused; reducing cross-examination questions to writing and handing them over to the judge to be put to the victim in a language that is clear and not embarrassing; and sufficient breaks for victims of child abuse or rape while testifying.

## 73. Law panel wants more autonomy for tribunals

### Context:

- Highlights of the report titled 'Assessment of Statutory Frameworks of Tribunals in India,' submitted to the Law Ministry, by the Law Commission of India

### Law commission of India recommendations:

- **Key Fact:** the disposal rate of the tribunals in comparison to the filing of cases per year had been remarkable — 94% — the pendency remains high.
- Appointments to tribunals and their functioning should remain independent of the executive's influence
- A Committee led by the Chief Justice of India should be in charge of the appointments of Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Judicial Members of the various central tribunals, which form a pillar of the country's justice delivery system.
- Every order emanating from the tribunal or its appellate forum, wherever it exists, attains finality
- Reappointment of chairman and others compromises the independence and fairness of the tribunal.
- The Commission has suggested a common nodal agency, possibly under the Law Ministry, to both monitor the working of the tribunals and to ensure uniformity in the appointment, tenure and service conditions for the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and members.

- **Present context:** As of now, tribunals function under the very government department which may be a litigant before them, and probably, against which they may have to pass orders

#### **HC power to review**

- In a marked departure from its earlier stand, the Commission recommended the restoration of the High Courts' power of judicial review over the decisions of the tribunals.
- It said parties should be allowed to challenge a tribunal order before the Division Bench of the high court having territorial jurisdiction over the tribunal or its appellate forum.
- Present Context: Presently, parties are deprived of an opportunity to move high courts concerned against the orders of some tribunals and have to move the Supreme Court directly.

#### **Location of the Tribunal:**

- The Commission said tribunals must have benches in different parts of the country so that people of every geographical area may have easy access to justice
- Ideally, the benches of the tribunals should be located at all places where the high courts situate. In the event of exclusion of jurisdiction of all courts, it is essential to provide for an equally effective alternative mechanism even at grass root level. This could be ensured by providing State-level sittings looking to the quantum of work of a particular tribunal. Once that is done, the access to justice will stand ensured.

### **74. Five-judge statute Bench to decide on Aadhaar validity**

#### **Context:**

- Validity of the Aadhaar scheme.

#### **In News**

- The Supreme Court decided to constitute a **five-judge Constitution Bench** to hear petitions from November against the validity of the Aadhaar scheme.
- The decision to set up a five-judge Bench comes despite Justice Rohinton Nariman's separate judgment in the nine-judge Bench declaring **privacy as a fundamental right**.

#### **Historic judgment**

- The nine-judge Bench of the Supreme Court came out with the historic judgment in favour of the common man's fundamental right to privacy against state intrusions.
- The nine-judge Bench verdict has a crucial bearing in the Aadhaar petitions, which have argued that Aadhaar's use of biometric details like fingerprints and iris scans isolate bodily and informational privacy.

#### **Petitioner's contentions:**

- The petitioners argue that mandatory requirement of Aadhaar for these schemes "constrict rights and freedoms which a citizen has long been enjoying unless and until they part with their personal biometric information to the government".

- The petitions have termed the Aadhaar Act of 2016 as unconstitutional and contrary to concept of limited and accountable governance

#### **Basic Information:**

#### **Justice K. S. Puttaswamy vs Union Of India case:**

- A landmark case by the Supreme Court of India which holds that the right to privacy is protected under Article 21 and Part 3 of the Constitution. It also mentioned that it won't be an Absolute right and will have some reasonable restrictions in matters of national security and mutual interest of the citizens and the state.
- India is the only country with Right to Privacy as a Fundamental right under its Constitution

#### **A. P. Shah panel- Nine point code:**

- The group led by former Delhi High Court chief justice A P Shah was set up by the Planning Commission to identify privacy issues and prepare a document to facilitate the proposed Privacy Act.
- The group was set after concerns were raised about the impact on privacy of individuals with the emergence of several national programmes such as Aadhar, NATGRID, DNA profiling, Reproductive Rights of Women, privileged communications and brain mapping, most of which will be implemented through information and communication technology (ICT) platforms

#### **Nine National Privacy Principles:**

- A data controller should give prior notice of collection and information to all individuals before taking consent.
- Individuals should be given choice to opt in/out with regard to providing personal information.
- Data collectors should only collect personal information necessary for the purpose identified.
- If there is change of purpose, it must be notified to the individual. After use in identified purpose, data should be destroyed.
- Individuals should have access to personal information for seeking correction, changes, deletion, etc.
- Personal information to third parties should only be disclosed or made public after giving notice and seeking informed consent.
- Data collectors should ensure security safeguards against loss, unauthorized access, destruction, use, etc.
- For openness, information should be made in an intelligible form, using clear and plain language, available to all individuals.
- Data controller should be accountable for complying with privacy measures such as external, internal audits and extending necessary support to privacy commissioners

## 75. Centre gets SC to freeze hearing on Article 35A

### Context:

- The Supreme Court hearing on the petitions against Article 35A of the Constitution.
- A writ petition filed by NGO, We the Citizens, which challenged the validity of both Article 35A and Article 370.

### In News:

- The Centre convinced the Supreme Court to defer hearing on petitions challenging the special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Centre's response:** it has appointed an interlocutor to commence talks with stakeholders in the State. . The interlocutor has started talks with stakeholders. If the court hears this case, it will affect dialogue process
- The government has appointed Dineshwar Sharma, a former Intelligence Bureau director, as interlocutor

### Article 35A:

- Article 35A is a provision incorporated in the Indian Constitution giving the Jammu and Kashmir State Legislature unlimited discretionary power to decide who are the '**permanent residents**' of the State and grant them special right and privileges in State public sector jobs, acquisition of property within the State, scholarships and other public aid and welfare programmes.
- The provision mandates that no act of the State legislature coming under the ambit of Article 35A can be challenged for violating the Constitution or any other law of the land.
- Article 35A was incorporated into the Constitution in 1954 by an order of President Rajendra Prasad on the advice of the Jawaharlal Nehru Cabinet.
- The Presidential Order was issued under Article 370 (1) (d) of the Constitution. This provision allows the President to make certain "exceptions and modifications" to the Constitution for the benefit of 'State subjects' of Jammu and Kashmir.
- So Article 35A was added to the Constitution as a testimony of the special consideration the Indian government accorded the 'permanent residents' of Jammu and Kashmir

### Contention:

- Parliament was not consulted when the President incorporated Article 35A into the Constitution through a Presidential Order issued under Article 370.
- **Article 368** (i) of the Constitution mandates that only Parliament can amend the Constitution by introducing a new Article

### Basic Information:

#### Article 368. Power of Parliament to amend the Constitution and procedure therefor:

(1) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, Parliament may in exercise of its constituent power amend by way of addition, variation or repeal any provision of this

Constitution in accordance with the procedure laid down in this article

(2) An amendment of this Constitution may be initiated only by the introduction of a Bill for the purpose in either House of Parliament, and when the Bill is passed in each House by a majority of the total membership of that House present and voting, it shall be presented to the President who shall give his assent to the Bill and thereupon the Constitution shall stand amended in accordance with the terms of the Bill: Provided that if such amendment seeks to make any change in

(a) Article 54, Article 55, Article 73, Article 162 or Article 241, or

(b) Chapter IV of Part V, Chapter V of Part VI, or Chapter I of Part XI, or

(c) any of the Lists in the Seventh Schedule, or

(d) the representation of States in Parliament, or

(e) the provisions of this article, the amendment shall also require to be ratified by the Legislature of not less than one half of the States by resolution to that effect passed by those Legislatures before the Bill making provision for such amendment is presented to the President for assent

(3) Nothing in Article 13 shall apply to any amendment made under this article

(4) No amendment of this Constitution (including the provisions of Part III) made or purporting to have been made under this article whether before or after the commencement of Section 55 of the Constitution (Forty second Amendment) Act, 1976 shall be called in question in any court on any ground

(5) For the removal of doubts, it is hereby declared that there shall be no limitation whatever on the constituent power of Parliament to amend by way of addition, variation or repeal the provisions of this Constitution under this article.

## 76. Law panel moots life term for torture

### In news:

- Law Commission of India in its 273rd Report recommended the implementation of '**United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment**' through Legislation.
- The Commission also submitted a draft **Prevention of Torture Bill** for the consideration of the Government.
- The Commission submitted that there has to be some effective mechanism to protect the interests of the victims of torture, the complainants and the witnesses against ill-treatment, threats or physical and mental violence.
- **Highlight:** "Torture has been a contentious issue having a direct bearing on the **right to life and liberty of an individual**. The Commission is of the opinion that such heinous acts must be curbed through strong legislation providing stringent punishment, will act as a deterrent".



- Based on the analysis of various aspects of torture, the Commission has prepared a draft Bill titled **"The Prevention of Torture Bill, 2017"**. The Commission made the following recommendation to the Government. While deciding on as to what amounts to torture by a public servant, the Commission has suggested definition of 'torture' wide enough to include inflicting injury, either intentionally or involuntarily, or even an attempt to cause such an injury, which will include physical, mental or psychological injury.

(i) **Ratification of Convention against Torture**

In order to tide over the difficulties faced by the Country in getting criminals extradited, in the absence of an anti-torture law; and to secure an individual's right to life and liberty, the Commission recommends consideration of the Convention Against Torture for ratification and in the event, the Central Government decides to ratify the Convention, then the Prevention Of Torture Bill 2017 may be considered.

(ii) **Amendment to Existing Statutes**

The commission has come to the conclusion that the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872 require amendments to accommodate provisions regarding compensation and burden of proof, respectively.

**Criminal Procedure Code, 1973**

The Commission recommends amendment to section 357B to incorporate payment of compensation, in addition to payment or fine, as provided under section 326A or section 376D of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

**Indian Evidence Act, 1872**

**Requires insertion of section 114B**: this will ensure that in case a person in police custody sustains injuries, it is presumed that those injuries have been inflicted by the police, and the burden of proof shall lie on the authority concerned to explain such injury.

(iii). **Punishment for acts of torture**: In order to curb the menace of torture and to have a deterrent effects on acts of torture, the Commission recommends stringent punishment to the perpetrators of such acts. The draft Bills provides for punishment extending up to life imprisonment and fine.

(iv) **Compensation to victims**

The Courts will decide upon a justifiable compensation after taking into account various facets of an individual case, such as nature, purpose, extent and manner of injury, including mental agony caused to the victim. The Courts will bear in mind the socio-economic background of the victim and will ensure that the compensation so decided will suffice the victim to bear the expenses on medical treatment and rehabilitation.

(v) **Protection of Victims, Complainants and witnesses**

The Commission recommends that an effective mechanism must be put in place in order to protect the victims of torture, the complainants and the witnesses against possible threats, violence or ill treatment.

# ECONOMY

## 1. Reducing food waste top priority for India: Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal

### In News:

- India has made it a huge priority to reduce its massive food waste, Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal has told American industry leaders, seeking their investment and technology in this regard.
- India aims to partner with U.S. industry by borrowing best practices, technology and innovation, in exchange for providing U.S. companies with untapped investment opportunities in India.

### Key fact:

- India, one of the world's largest producers of food, is also the largest producer of milk and the second largest producer of fruits and vegetables.
- India is currently only processing 10% of its food, resulting in enormous food waste

## 2. National Telecom Policy: 'Guiding principles prepared'; Cabinet note likely by January

### In News:

- Telecom Commission, has defined the guiding principles for the National Telecom Policy (NTP) which include
- The policy will look to ensure financial stability and sustainable growth of the sector so that adequate investments can come for all the new technologies
- DoT's apex decision making body also cleared the recommendations of raising the deferred spectrum payment period from 10 years to 16 years
- The telecom commission also approved replacement of the PLR with MCLR for the delay in payments by operators on licence fee and spectrum usage charges.
- The DoT has sought legal opinion on amending the spectrum trading guidelines which could be of huge advantage to smaller operators

### Basic Information:

#### Marginal Cost of funds based Lending rate (MCLR)

- It refers to the minimum interest rate of a bank below which it cannot lend, except in some cases allowed by the RBI. It is an internal benchmark or reference rate for the bank.
- MCLR actually describes the method by which the minimum interest rate for loans is determined by a bank – on the basis of marginal cost or the additional or incremental cost of arranging one more rupee to the prospective borrower

## 3. India's external debt rises 3% to \$485.8 billion

### In News:

- India's external debt has increased three per cent to \$ 485.8 billion at June-end over the previous quarter.
- It is mainly due to increase in inflow of foreign portfolio investment into domestic capital market's debt segment.
- It was partly due to valuation loss resulting from the depreciation of the US dollar vis-a-vis the rupee and other major currencies.
- According to the RBI, commercial borrowings continued to be the largest component of external debt with a share of 37.8 per cent, followed by NRI deposits and short-term trade credit.
- US dollar denominated debt continued to be the largest component of India's external debt followed by the Indian rupee, SDR, Japanese yen and Euro

### Basic Information:

#### External Debt

- External debt is owed to creditors outside the country. The outsider creditors can be foreign governments, International Financial Institutions such as World Bank, Asian Development Bank etc., corporate and foreign private households.
- External debt may be of several kinds such as multilateral, bilateral, IMF loans, Trade credits, External commercial borrowings etc.
- When the non-resident Indians park their funds in India, it is also a type of external debt and is called NRI deposits. If the external debt is denominated in Indian Rupee, it is called Rupee Debt

### Special Drawing Rights:

- The SDR is an international reserve asset, created by the IMF in 1969 to supplement its member countries' official reserves.
- Its value is based on a basket of 4 key international currencies, and SDRs can be exchanged for freely usable currencies.
- SDRs are the IMF's unit of account restricted to its members.
- Today the SDR basket consists of the euro, Japanese yen, pound sterling, and U.S. dollar

## 4. World Bank warns of learning crisis in education in countries like India

### In News:

#### World Bank group report:

- It has warned of a learning crisis in global education particularly in low and middle-income countries like India

- The report underlines that schooling without learning is not just a wasted development opportunity, but also a great injustice to children worldwide
- Report: World Development Report 2018: 'Learning to Realise Education's Promise'

#### **The report:**

- According to the report, India ranks second after Malawi in a list of 12 countries wherein a grade two student could not read a single word of a short text
- India also tops the list of seven countries in which a grade two student could not perform two-digit subtraction
- This learning crisis is widening social gaps instead of narrowing them

#### **Recommendations:**

- The report recommends concrete policy steps to help developing countries resolve this learning crisis in the areas of stronger learning assessments
- How? using evidence of what works and what doesn't to guide education decision-making
- And mobilising a strong social movement to push for education changes that champion 'learning for all'.

### **5. Fiscal deficit hits 96.1% but Modi govt confident of meeting target**

#### **In News:**

- India's fiscal deficit touched 96.1% of the Budget estimate for FY18 at the end of August
- Possible reason : The fiscal deficit has been higher than in the previous years because of the quick start to spending facilitated by the early presentation of Budget on February 1
- According the data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) , April-August fiscal deficit is substantially higher than 76.4% for the year-earlier period

#### **Government's opinion:**

- According to government, it will meet the fiscal deficit target for the year
- The target is 3.2% of GDP, or Rs 5.47 lakh crore
- In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit for April-August was Rs 5.25 lakh crore

#### **Targets achievement:**

- The government is considering ways of reviving growth, which slumped to its lowest in three years in the June quarter
- The government has already allocated large sums to a few of its key schemes to ensure there was no delay due to funds
- The revenue deficit was 133.9% of budget estimate against 91.7% last fiscal
- With this big spending (allocations) done, the fiscal situation should start to improve as revenues pick up pace in the second half of the financial year

### **6. The way forward for the electric vehicle push**

#### **Shift to electric vehicles:**

- Global weather disasters and the pollution levels of major Indian cities are clear indications that the costs of pollution are beginning to spiral out of control for citizens and economies alike.
- The climate change disruption holds both-
- Positive-There is a need to drastically reduce CO2 footprint per capita and this calls for forward-thinking nations to develop new technologies in energy-efficient products and services.
- Negative- Those nations not able to develop new technologies will not only harm us all but be ultimately left behind from a technology and business perspective

#### **Indian Scenario**

- India's announcement to move from fossil fuel-driven vehicles to electric vehicles is positive.
- Over the last 30-40 years, India has developed the capability to engineer and build globally competitive vehicles based on internal combustion engines (ICEs). Via joint ventures, technology licences and technology transfer, Indian manufacturers and suppliers have built full-fledged capabilities in ICEs.
- This ensured personal mobility for the Indian middle class at price points that are unmatched globally.
- Investment in ICEs has helped to increase exports, create highly skilled and well paid jobs.

#### **Risks involved:**

- Technology transfer and joint ventures have to be encouraged to ensure indigenization of technology. Industry must play as much a leading role in electric vehicles as it does today in ICEs to ensure employment, capability building and tax revenue.
- Localization is crucial to avoid replacement of an oil import bill with a battery import bill or rather dependency on Gulf states to China.
- The government needs to support relevant volumes in chosen segments, e.g., via public tenders, incentives or access restrictions. Without a reasonable visibility of volumes, businesses will not invest.
- Policy clarity -While a number of green technologies can be pursued, the practical reality of the Indian automotive industry is that resources for investment are limited
- Policy consistency- Long-term investments are required; sudden policy changes that alter business case assumptions can drive companies into ruin.
- Technology risks such as liability issues around battery swapping, unstable battery technology, recycling of batteries and infrastructure requirements need to be assessed in detail.
- Life-cycle greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have to be considered when comparing battery electric vehicles with fossil fuel vehicles.

- GHG emissions during battery production and recycling must be
- The cases such as rural vs metro needs, 2-/3-wheeler vs 4-wheeler applications—will have to be studied in detail

#### **Way Forward.**

- The case studies of the US, Germany, France, Japan, Korea and China show, a strong automotive industry creates disproportionate benefits in technology, capability, taxes and employment for the country of origin of manufacturers and suppliers.
- In an environment, where job creation is falling far short of population growth, active development of a high-paying sector is paramount.
- The need for a transition to electric vehicles in India is undeniable but it has to gradual rather than binary.
- The Indian industry need to rework their strategies and re-allocate investments.
- The full force of India's engineering and entrepreneurial talent will only be brought to bear with consistent cooperation between industry and government

### **7. A 'Sudarshan Chakra' solution for PSU banks**

#### **Context**

- The scale of the NPA problem at PSU banks is much larger than was thought, and the downturn in the Indian economy has also made the need for corrective measures more urgent
- Issues related to NPAs in Public Sector Banks

#### **How to solve the problems?**

#### **Four "R"s which are said to be the key to solving the problems of the banks**

##### **Recognition**

- The RBI's asset quality review has revealed that the gross NPA ratio of both public and private sector banks is higher than was earlier thought
- But in the PSU banks, it is alarming at about 12%
- And this is an underestimate, because it does not include assets that are "stressed" but not yet NPAs

##### **Resolution of problem loans**

- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) is a major reform
- Once an account is referred by a creditor under the IBC to the National Company Law Tribunal
- And is admitted, the powers of the management and the board are transferred to an independent insolvency professional (IP)
- The IP then looks for someone willing to take over the project on suitable terms
- If no one is willing to take over, or the banks don't accept the debt reduction implied by the package, the company is simply liquidated

- The process changes the incentive structure facing bank managements by giving them a legally sanctified method of determining what is a reasonable haircut (haircut means cut in actual price of the project)
- Since the alternative is liquidation, they (bank) should be willing to accept any haircut that gives them more than they would get from liquidation
- The process will certainly clean up the books of the banks over the next 12 months or so
- But it will also mean acceptance of large losses and a corresponding depletion of capital

#### **Recapitalization**

- In 2015, the finance ministry had estimated that the PSU banks needed Rs2.4 trillion of capital
- Of this capital Rs1.1 trillion was to come from the market, Rs60,000 crore from retained profits, and the remaining Rs 70,000 crore from the budget
- But this is clearly insufficient because the NPA situation has turned out to be much worse than expected
- Fitch Ratings has estimated that Indian PSU banks will need as much as Rs4 trillion of capital by end of March 2019 to meet the capital requirements under Basel III
- The scope for using public funds to recapitalize the PSU banks can only be judged on the basis of a holistic view of the many other demands for government expenditure
- We cannot keep stimulating the economy through increased government expenditure
- And without a clear view of how much of the capital requirement of the PSU banks has to be met from the budget

#### **Reforms**

- Reforms in PSU banks are expected to make the banks more efficient
- The idea of merging PSBs, is not reform at all
- Merging strong banks with other banks will do nothing to improve the average balance sheet
- The most important reform will be to reduce the government's equity to 33% in selected PSU banks
- This would allow the stronger PSU banks to raise additional capital from the market, including from possible strategic investors (who could be offered seats on the board)
- The inclusion of strategic investors, with representation on the board, may make it easier to raise capital without burdening the budget

#### **Way forward:**

- If the budget is under stress, all PSBs need not be recapitalized to ensure targeted growth in lending
- Weak banks that have eroded their capital very substantially should be subjected to the RBI's "prompt corrective action" discipline



- This will allow healthier banks to expand and occupy the lending space created

#### **8. Small firms with poor financials in vulnerable position: RBI report**

##### **Context:**

- RBI study has said liquidity starved small and medium-sized firms with poor financials are in a "vulnerable situation" and they need funding sources in arresting the non-performing assets (NPAs)

##### **In News:**

##### **RBI Study Highlights:**

- Small company's profits got a big beating in the wake of demonetisation and implementation of GST
- In response to the banking stress, Small and medium-scale firms with sound financial health have shifted to non-bank funding through bonds and CP (commercial paper)
- Corporate bond, ECB and CP market have allowed firms to diversify their funding sources
- The ability to substitute the sources of financing is important to shield the economy from adverse real effects of a financial crisis
- Bolstering the funding sources is also likely to be important in arresting the next wave of NPA
- It is found that small and medium-scale firms with good financial health are more likely to substitute bank credit with non-bank credit in response to the banking stress.
- Rising NPA levels have curtailed the supply of bank credit as banks are rebuilding capital or keeping aside larger share of loanable funds against future possible losses

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

##### **External commercial borrowing**

- Any money that has been borrowed from foreign sources for financing the commercial activities in India are called External Commercial Borrowings.
- The Government of India permits ECBs as a source of finance for Indian Corporates for expansion of existing capacity as well as for fresh investment.
  - \* Economic union
  - \* Economic and monetary union
  - \* Complete economic integration

#### **9. India GDP to hit \$6 trillion by 2027: Morgan Stanley report**

##### **Context:**

- Morgan Stanley report prediction
  - \* India is likely to be the world's fastest-growing large economy in the next 10 years, driven by digitisation, favourable demographics, globalisation and reforms

- \* According to the global financial services major, the trend line in India's annual GDP growth has been accelerating to 6.9% in 2000s, from 5.8% in the 1990s, and this momentum is likely to continue in the next decade as well.

- \* Morgan Stanley expects digitisation will provide a boost of 50-75 bps to GDP growth and forecast that India will grow to a \$6-trillion economy by 2026-27

#### **10. Extra capital into PSBs: Recapitalisation bonds being considered**

##### **In News:**

- The government is discussing infusion of an additional capital in public sector banks (PSBs)
- Reasons: to provide capital (to PSBs) without disturbing the fiscal deficit figures.
- Government's proposal: Discussions are underway to raise capital support by another 20,000-25,000 crore for the PSBs
- This addition will be in addition of the Rs 10,000 crore provided in the current financial year's Budget for PSBs' capitalization
- The extra capital is expected to be generated through sale of non-core assets of the banks and equity infusion by the government via the recapitalisation bond
- With enough liquidity in the banking system post-demonetisation, lenders are expected to buy these bonds
- And the money so raised can be used to provide capital to government banks

##### **Proposed Bond:**

- The annual interest on these bonds and the principal on redemption will be paid by the Central government
- And the funds so raised are to be used to capitalize the PSBs

#### **11. India gets first-ever U.S. crude shipment**

##### **Context:**

- Indo-U.S. trade

##### **In News:**

- The first ever shipment of U.S. crude oil of 1.6 million barrels, purchased by state-run Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), was received at Paradip Port
- The shipment is a part of recent commitments to purchase U.S. oil by IOC, Bharat Petroleum (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum (HPCL).
- The inclusion of the U.S. as a source for crude oil imports by India's largest refiner will go a long way in mitigating the risks arising out of geo-political disruptions.
- The new arrangement will also usher in price stability and energy security for India, which is witnessing robust growth in demand for petroleum products.

**Bilateral trade boost**

- U.S. crude oil shipments to India have the potential to boost bilateral trade by up to \$2 billion

**12. From textiles to I-T: Wave of job losses hits new and old economy****Context:**

- Indian Economy: Series of job losses witnessed by the economy in multiple sectors in the last 2 years

**Reasons:**

- There is hardly any growth in private investment, private consumption and exports.
- The growth in economy is fuelled by government spending only.

**Scenario in textile sector-**

- Exports and production is down due to slump in both external and domestic demand
- Demonetization and transition to GST has hit small players
- Labor issues and cost of production is also causing structural issues in the sector
- Most of the units that have been shut in the sector belong to power loom textile
- The government does not capture data from the small and medium scale textile sectors; hence the distress in these areas is not visible.

**Important observations-**

- Capital goods firms are struggling as most of the downstream sectors are saddled with excess capacity and low demand.
- Labour bureau's Quarterly Employment Surveys (QES) are also showing downslide in employment growth because of the layoffs in IT/BPO and financial services sector, which were earlier the key drivers of growth in these surveys.

**Textile Workers Rehabilitation Fund Scheme (TWRFS)**

- The scheme was introduced in the year 1986
- Aim: to provide relief to workers rendered jobless due to permanent closure of non-SSI (Small Scale Industry) textile mills in private sector
- Relief: workers who have suffered job loss are given wages for three years on tapering basis
- This scheme has been merged under Rajiv Gandhi Shramik Kalyan Yojana in 2017

**Rajiv Gandhi Shramik Kalyan Yojana (RGSKY)**

- Introduced in 2005
- This is an unemployment benefit scheme when the unemployment is caused due to closure of a factory or permanent invalidity arising out of non-employment injury
- The unemployment benefit is provided for the period of 12 months

- This also covers medical care for the beneficiary and the beneficiary's family

**Basic Information:****New Economy and Old Economy:**

- Old Economy includes industries embedded in the industrial revolution and the mass production of physical goods. Eg Energy, automobile, steel etc
- New economy is the result of the transition from a manufacturing-based economy to a service-based economy. Eg. IT and IT-es industry
- Capital goods are goods that are used in producing other goods
- Meaning of excess capacity and low demand: when a factory is not utilising its full capacity due to low demand then there is bound to be stress in the sector
- **Private Investment:** the investment coming in from private players in the economy to purchase assets eg. Roads built by private players, spectrum sale etc
- **Private consumption:** it is the consumption of goods and services by private households.

**13. WEF's India summit starts today****In News:**

- World Economic Forum's 33rd India Economic Summit will kick off on Wednesday, in partnership with industry body CII.
- The theme of the conference is 'Creating Indian Narratives on Global Challenges'.
- The summit would discuss issues such as climate change, infrastructure and gender parity, besides demonetisation and the GST

**14. Coal fired projections: on the draft energy policy****Key Points:**

- Niti Aayog's Draft Energy Policy (DNEP) predicts that between 2017 and 2040, there will be a quantum leap in the uptake of renewable energy together with a drastic reduction in fossil fuel energy intensity.
- With economic and population growth, India's annual per-capita electricity consumption is expected to triple, from 1075 kWh in 2015-16 to over 2900 kWh in 2040.
- The DNEP assumes 100% electrification throughout India in the near term
- The government will invest \$2.5 billion to provide electricity connections to every home in India by the end of 2018.
- But the DNEP fails to consider several critical issues involved in the ongoing energy transition.

**Drawback of DNEP**

- Despite the fact that existing coal plants are running at low efficiencies (at merely 60% plant load capacity utilization) because of weak industrial growth in last 3 years, the DNEP relies on coal power to sustain the nation's base load requirement to meet rising energy demand.

- It proposes that coal will fuel 67% of India's power generation in 2022.
- It is contrary to the India's claim that it will make a big push for renewables, it will continue to rely on coal for its baseload generation. While renewables grow, coal power grows too.
- This duality is possible because India did not commit to any actual reductions in its greenhouse gas emissions at the Paris climate meeting in 2015.
- Even this target India will need only 741 million tonnes of coal by 2022 however the Ministry of Coal has ambitious target of 1.5 billion tonnes by 2020.
- The DNEP is silent on the fate of the new allottees of coal mines. The concern is what would they do with their coal if they can't generate power with it.
- Generation of power is licence free under the Electricity Act of 2003, so private miners do not need any licence to set up generating plants. All they need is a connection to the grid. Since the grid is State-owned, the Central government has adequate leverage to defer or delay connections.
- The DNEP acknowledges increased oil and gas consumption in India decreased refining of oil and production of gas. Thus, India's energy security does require a large strategic storage of oil to contain any vagaries in international supply chain.
- But this strategic storage of oil does not tackle the systemic causes of this high dependence on oil.
- The peaking of India's oil demand could have been envisaged but has not been identified in the DNEP. But it recognises that by 2040, India's oil import dependence may reach 55% from the current level of 33%. To curtail this import dependence DNEP promotes use of public transportation and railways to reduce oil consumption.
- Unless electric transport is carefully planned, India's dependence on imported oil is likely to continue.

#### **Way Forward**

- The drafting committees need to examine the paradigm shifts occurring in storage and electric vehicles to promote new technologies in renewable energy, such as smart grids, smart homes, battery storage and concentrated solar heat and power.
- New institutions, organisations and funding mechanisms for promoting renewable technologies need to be created not later than this year's end.

#### **15. RBI holds interest rates, warns against fiscal laxity**

##### **In News:**

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) kept interest rates unchanged citing concerns about upward risks to inflation and cautioned the government against steps to relax fiscal discipline to spur growth as such a move could potentially adversely impact the deficit and add to inflationary pressure.

- Repo rate fixed at 6%.
- **Forecast by the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC):** current fiscal year in gross value added (GVA) terms to 6.7% and also raised its projected range for CPI inflation in the second half to 4.2-4.6%.
- The MPC also observed that headline inflation rose by two percentage points since the August policy review.

#### **16. RBI flays banks for keeping rates high**

##### **Context:**

- An internal RBI group also suggested switching over to an external benchmark in a time-bound manner so that better rates are available to borrowers.
- The group was constituted by RBI to study various aspects of the MCLR system from the perspective of improving the policy transmission.

##### **In News:**

- The Reserve Bank flayed lenders for keeping interest rates high and flagged concerns over base rate and marginal cost of fund-based lending rate (MCLR), saying these have not improved monetary transmission.
- **The RBI study group observations:**
  - \* Internal benchmarks such as the base rate/MCLR have not delivered effective transmission of the monetary policy.
  - \* Arbitrariness in calculating the base rate/MCLR and spreads charged over them has undermined the integrity of the interest rate setting process.
  - \* The base rate/MCLR regime is also not in sync with global practices on pricing of bank loans.
  - \* Proposed three possible external benchmarks to which such lending could be tied to going forward.
  - \* Suggestion: the interest rate resets, which are right now at an annual frequency, creating potentially a one-year lag in transmission, can be changed on all floating rate loans to quarterly resets so that transmission would be much faster once the monetary policy changes

##### **Background Information:**

- RBI introduced MCLR on April 1, 2016 after finding that the then prevailing base rate had failed to achieve the objectives of easier and faster policy transmission.
- The MCLR was introduced to calculate the benchmark lending rate in another attempt to make banks pass on policy rate cut benefits to borrowers quickly and in a more transparent manner
- MCLR is calculated after factoring in banks' marginal cost of funds (largely, the interest at which they borrow money), return on equity (a measure of banks' profitability), and negative carry on account of cash reserve ratio.

- Before the MCLR was rolled out, the banks were following a more rigid base rate system, which came into force on July 1, 2010 replacing the banks' prime lending rate.
- Under the base rate and BPLR, banks were following individual methodologies for computing the minimum rate at which they could lend. Under the MCLR, RBI asked all banks to follow the marginal cost of funds method to arrive at their benchmark lending rate

#### **17. Kotak-led panel wants MD, CEO roles split; 6 independent directors on board**

##### **Context:**

- The SEBI panel on corporate governance led by Uday Kotak has proposed some important changes

##### **In News:**

- These changes include splitting the posts of chairman and managing director and amending rules on independent directors, disclosures, and accounting and auditing practices
- Currently, of the 50 companies on the benchmark Nifty, at least 12, including Reliance Industries, ONGC and Wipro, have the same person occupying both posts

##### **Date of implementation:**

- Listed companies with more than 40% public shareholding should separate the roles of chairperson and MD or CEO from April 1, 2020
- SEBI may consider extending the requirement to all listed entities by April 1, 2022

##### **Concerns expressed:**

- Some experts said splitting the two roles shouldn't be made a legal requirement
- **Reason:** Splitting of CMD role would mean two power centres instead of one but if enforced into a law, the chairman can just appoint a person who agrees with them as MD
- According to some experts, such a thing cannot be forced and should be recommended as best practice rather than be made into a legal provision

##### **Other recommendations:**

- The panel has also made several recommendations to strengthen the role of directors
- Companies would need to induct at least six directors, up from the current minimum of three under the **Companies Act**, with at least one **independent woman director**
- The panel has also recommended increasing the number of board meetings held every year
- And an age limit for non-executive directors and capped the number of directorships that an individual can hold

#### **18. Noose tightens around 5,800 shell firms**

##### **Context:**

- Shell companies and the menace of black money generation

##### **In News:**

- The government has collected startling data on multiple accounts of 5,800 shell companies
- These 5,800 companies are from those 200,000 companies which were struck off by the registrar of companies (RoC)
- The government had asked for data from banks about over 200,000 companies whose accounts were frozen
- The data from 13 banks reveals that 5,800 companies have more than 12,000 accounts
- The companies deposited and withdrew huge amounts from banks post-demonetisation, while they had meagre deposits before November 8, 2016
- According to an official statement these companies, deposited more than Rs 4,570 crore in their accounts and withdrew Rs 4,552 crore, post-demonetisation
- Before demonetisation, these companies had a balance of Rs 22.05 crore, in banks

##### **Steps taken by government:**

- The investigative agencies have been asked (by the government) to complete necessary investigation in a time-bound manner
- The government also disqualified a number of directors associated with these companies. There are around 100,000 directors

#### **19. Jobs big worry as economy remains in 'pessimistic zone', show RBI surveys**

##### **Context:**

- Recently released RBI's Consumer Confidence Survey and other important surveys.

##### **Survey:**

- Consumer Confidence Survey is a survey undertaken by the RBI.
- It obtained responses on household perceptions and expectations on the general economic situation, the employment scenario, the overall price situation and their own income and spending.
- It was conducted in six metropolitan cities- Mumbai, Kolkata, New Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru.

##### **Key Highlights:**

- The survey indicated that more people see consumer confidence declining, business sentiment in manufacturing dipping, inflation on the rise and growth sliding.
- There are two sub-indices in the survey- Current Situation Index (CSI) and Future Expectations Index (FEI)



- The CSI slipped further into the pessimistic zone, reflecting deterioration in sentiments on the employment scenario, the price level and income. Same was the case with the FEI which slipped relative to its previous reading in June 2017.
- There are five main variables in the survey on which responses from public were sought. These are Economic situation, Income, Spending, Employment and Price level.
- 40.7 per cent of respondents say the economic situation has worsened in September 2017 as against 25.3 per cent in the same period last year. The response for "one year ahead expectation" shows a decline to 50.8 per cent on the issue of economy "will improve" — down from 66.3 per cent in December 2016. The response for the current perception on the general economic situation showed 34.6 per cent saying "improved" as of September 2017, down from 44.6 per cent in September 2016.
- Employment prospects have been the biggest cause of worry for respondents. 7 per cent of respondents believed current perception about employment has "worsened", which is much higher than the 31.4 per cent in November 2016.
- The perception of people on income levels has also come down to 26.6 per cent in September 2017 from 37.3 per cent in November 2016
- Despite gloomy sentiment on income, more than 80 per cent of respondents reported increased spending over the past year, which could partly be attributed to higher prices.

#### **Key Highlights from other surveys:**

- RBI's Survey of Professional Forecasters on Macroeconomic Indicators, said that forecasters have moderated their growth expectation for 2017-18 and 2018-19 in view of tempered assessment of private consumption demand and industrial growth.
- Real gross domestic product (GDP) and real gross value added (GVA) are likely to grow by 6.8 and 6.6 per cent, respectively, in 2017-18 and at 7.4 per cent each in 2018-19.
- The survey also says headline Consumer Price Inflation and Core Inflation are going to grow to 5.0% and 4.9% in Q2 in 2018-19.
- On the external front: improvement in external trade in both this as well as next year.
- In another survey- Industrial Outlook Survey of the Manufacturing Sector for Q2 of 2017-18- business sentiment in the manufacturing sector has worsened.

#### **20. IMF lowers India's growth projection, attributes it to demonetisation, GST**

##### **International Monetary Fund (IMF) predictions:**

- In the latest World Economic Outlook released on October 10, IMF has projected India to grow at 6.7% in 2017 and 7.4% in 2018.

- Reasons: The report cited "lingering impact" of demonetisation and the Goods and Services Tax for the expected slow down during the current and the next year.

#### **World economy is picking up steam:**

- The IMF has revised upwards "global growth projections to 3.6% for this year and 3.7% for next.
- Pickups in investment, trade, and industrial production, coupled with strengthening business and consumer confidence, are supporting the recovery

#### **21. No respite for Indian banks as bad loans hit record \$146 billion**

##### **Context:**

- Indian banks' sour loans hit a record 9.5 trillion rupees (\$145.56 billion) at the end of June.

##### **Key Fact:**

- Asia's third-largest economy is no nearer to bringing its bad debt problems under control.

##### **In news:**

- A review of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data obtained through right-to-information requests shows banks' total stressed loans - including non-performing and restructured or rolled over loans - rose 4.5 percent in the six months to end-June. In the previous six months they had risen 5.8 percent.
- The bulk of India's sour loans are in the state banks and stem from lending to large conglomerates, especially in steel and infrastructure.

##### **Key Fact:**

- Stressed loans as a percentage of total loans reached 12.6 percent at end-June, according to the RBI data, the highest level in at least 15 years.
- According to RBI data, new loans grew at just about 5 percent in the year to March, the lowest growth rate in more than six decades. Several banks have already cut back their loan books to conserve capital.

##### **Negative impact:**

- The stubborn bad debt problem has eaten up bank profits and choked off new lending, especially to smaller firms.
- Banks are having to take higher provisions to account for more defaulters being pushed into bankruptcy. And margins are likely to be squeezed further by proposed new rules to encourage commercial banks to pass on central bank interest rate cuts.

##### **Bank Recapitalization:**

- Fitch Ratings estimates Indian banks will need \$65 billion of additional capital by March 2019 to meet Basel III global banking rules.
- Moody's expects the top 11 state lenders alone will need nearly \$15 billion. The government has just \$3 billion left in its budget for bank recapitalization.

## 22. Stressed companies to delay investment recovery by 2-3 yrs: India Ratings

### Context:

- Report by India Ratings limited on the stressed assets scenario in the Indian industry.
- **Main theme:** Stressed corporates could derail the overall investment recovery for another two-to-three years in the wake of moderate consumption demand, global overcapacity and working capital disruptions due to the goods and services tax.
- The main concern expressed by the report is decline in capital expenditure in the Indian industry.

### Key Findings:

- There are 75 stressed corporates who constitute 20 per cent of the total capital expenditure spending over FY12-17.
- These corporates are from key investment-linked sectors, such as metals and mining, infrastructure, and power.
- The majority of stressed corporates would require another 4-5 years to deleverage (the process of reducing the level of one's debt by rapidly selling one's assets) to a sustainable level of 4-5 times from their current leverage of 9-10 times

### Reasons:

- Key Areas of Stresses: There are pockets of stress within sectors, especially infrastructure, metals and power (particularly thermal) owing to high leverage and weak cash flow.
- These sectors witnessed a significant decline in capacity utilisation.
- Corporates are likely to show an unwillingness to invest in long-term projects due to muted demand and significant leverage, despite a low interest rate environment.

### Way forward:

- The core sectors need to focus on selling stressed assets and equity infusion in order to make efforts in incurring capital expenditure.

### Basic Information:

- **Capital Expenditure:** Money spent by a business or organization on acquiring or maintaining fixed assets, such as land, buildings, and equipment.
- **EBITDA:** Earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) is a measure of a company's operating performance. Essentially, it's a way to evaluate a company's performance without having to factor in financing decisions, accounting decisions or tax environments

## 23. Skill development: CCEA approves two World Bank-backed schemes

### In News:

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs(CCEA) has approved two World Bank supported schemes of Rs 6,655 crore aimed at skill development in India
- The schemes are aimed to set up national bodies for accreditation and certification which shall regulate accreditation and certification in both long- and short-term Vocational Education and Training

### About the Schemes:

- **Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP)** is a Rs 4,455-crore centrally sponsored scheme, including Rs 3,300 crore loan support from WB
- Skill Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement (STRIVE) is a Rs 2,200-crore central sector scheme, with half of the scheme outlay as WB loan assistance

## 24. The challenge of managing currency

### Context:

- Steps to manage the currency volatility.
- Excessive exchange rate volatility could affect investment and growth possibilities in tradable sectors.
- Capital flows: Capital flows refer to the movement of money for the purpose of investment, trade, including the flow of capital within corporations in the form of capital spending on operations and research and development (R&D)

### Background information:

- The latest World Economic Outlook report by the IMF shows that it has been tough for the central banks to manage currency market.
- The exchange rate volatility has become a significant problem from the year 2013 when the US Federal Reserve hinted that it could reduce its interest rates. This led to sudden capital outflow from the emerging markets including India. In 2015, the devaluation of renminbi also had a similar effect on the international economy although India was insulated from this shock.
- Capital flows are fairly volatile, non-intervention from the central bank can affect economic activity and could be a potential source of risk to financial stability.

### Way forward measures:

- The central bank should continue to intervene in the market to protect the competitiveness of the rupee. This means the RBI should undertake purchase of foreign currencies.
- Now that India has adequate reserves, the government and the RBI should review the composition of foreign flows. Equity investment is more stable compared to debt which sometimes flows in only because of interest rate arbitrage.

**Basic Information:**

- **Current Account Deficit:** A capital account deficit shows that more money is flowing out of the economy along with increase in its ownership of foreign assets and vice-versa in case of a surplus.
- **Real Effective Exchange Rate:** The real effective exchange rate (REER) is the weighted average of a country's currency relative to an index or basket of other major currencies, adjusted for the effects of inflation.
- **Market intervention by the RBI:** Purchase of foreign currencies will lead to decrease in supply of the same. This will increase the rupee supply in the market and help appreciation of foreign currencies leading to increase in competitiveness of Indian rupee.

**25. PM's advisory council acknowledges slowdown****Context:**

- Recently reconstituted Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (PMEAC) and its key areas of focus.
- The council acknowledged the slowdown in the economy

**Key Points:**

- **Top priority:** Accelerating growth and employment over the next six months would be the top priority of the recently reconstituted Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (PMEAC).
- The five-member Council was unanimous that the government shouldn't stray from the path of **fiscal consolidation**, thus ruling out a fiscal stimulus to reverse the downturn in the economy
- The committee had reached a consensus on the fiscal consolidation policy being followed by the government.
- The committee has identified major priorities for accelerating economic growth over the next six month. The priority areas include economic growth, employment and job creation, informal sector and integration, fiscal framework, monetary policy, public expenditure, institutions of economic governance, agriculture and animal husbandry, patterns of consumption and production, and the social sector.
- **Economy Track Monitor:** Committee highlighted the need for effective tracking of key economic parameters, through possible mechanisms for instituting an Economy Track Monitor, using lead indicators and triggers for action, based on informed assessment and analysis.

**Basic Information:**

- **Fiscal Consolidation** refers to the policies undertaken by Governments (national and sub-national levels) to reduce their deficits and accumulation of debt stock.

- **Fiscal Stimulus:** An increase in public spending or a reduction in the level of taxation that might be performed by a government in order to encourage and support economic growth. Most government bailout packages offered to various business types can be considered a form of fiscal stimulus.

**26. Cabinet nod for natural gas cargo-swap deal with Japan****In News:**

- The Cabinet approved a cargo-swapping arrangement with Japan as part of a broader bilateral pact to create a gas exchange that could reduce India's logistical costs for natural gas import.
- As the world's largest importer of gas, Japan has pacts for supply with Qatar. India is having similar pacts with Australia.
- What is the deal all about? As part of the gas exchange, India will have a provision that will allow the swapping of these gas contracts which will save [on] transport costs. So, that India can get gas from Qatar instead of Japan and Japan can source our quantum from Australia.
- It is purely for logistics costs. It is a swapping of cargo and not of contracts, so the tariff at which the LNG is bought will not change.

**27. Why the economic slowdown, and how to fix it?****Context:**

- Increased spending by the government and lowering of interest rates by the RBI.
- Fiscal stimulus is the only logical way to pull the economy out of slowdown.

**Current state of the economy:**

- Data from 107 companies from the organised sector (excluding IT & financial services) indicate that number of persons employed by them has decreased by 2% between Mar-2016 and Mar-2017.
- The latest RBI Consumer Confidence Survey concludes that there is significant dip in the consumer confidence and business sentiment in manufacturing.

**The slowdown periods:**

- The period 2003/04-2007/08 witnessed the most rapid sustained GDP growth in India at 8% per annum, riding on the boom in the world economy.
- Then came the bust, as growth dropped to 3.9% in 2008-09.
- Surprisingly, GDP growth rose to 5% per annum during 2009/10-2010/11. This recovery was attributable to counter-cyclical macroeconomic policies among other things.
- But the resilience did not last long. Growth slowed to 4% per annum during 2011/12-2013/14, as fiscal imbalances mounted, inflation quickened, and the current account deficit in the balance of payments widened.

- In 2015-16 and 2016-17 the GDP growth rate averaged 7.5% owing to one thing only- sharp drop in world oil prices, from more than \$110 per barrel to less than \$50 per barrel. This led to decrease in current account deficit and fall in inflation.

#### **Reasons:**

- Demonetisation and introduction of GST have led to decrease in output in mainly unorganised sectors. But these are not the real reasons for the current slowdown in the economy.

#### **Structural reasons:**

- **Rural distress:** GDP per capita in the agricultural sector has been less than one-tenth GDP per capita in the non-agricultural sector for 25 years. Employment creation is negligible. The outcome is rural distress.
- **Low share of manufacturing:** The share of manufacturing in GDP and employment is lower than it was 25 years ago. India's share in industrial production and manufactured exports in the world economy has declined steadily.
- Thus, GDP growth is supported largely by the services sector, while employment growth in the economy has been sustained essentially by construction activities and the informal services sector both of which have been hurt by demonetization.
- RBI's reluctance to cut interest rates: Between 2013-14 and 2015-16, the RBI repo rate, which sets interest rates in the economy, was reduced by a mere 1.25 percentage points although inflation came down by almost 5 percentage points in terms of the consumer price index. The opportunity to stimulate investment by dropping interest rates sharply was missed out altogether
- Appreciation of rupee leading to erosion of export competitiveness: Between January 2014 and June 2017, the rupee appreciated by 10% in nominal terms and 15% in real terms.

#### **Remedial measures:**

- Government should undertake fiscal stimulus by increasing spending and reviving demand. The government need to break free from the 3.5% fiscal deficit target and increase it to 4.0%. It is to be noted that borrowing is bad for the economy only when it is used for paying debts. But if it is used for creation of infrastructure and investment then it is actually good for the economy.
- RBI should lower the interest rates by 2 percentage points: It has to be noted that the inflation in economy was controlled not due to lowering of interest rates but because of the fall in global crude oil prices.

#### **Basic Information:**

- **Fiscal Deficit:** A Fiscal Deficit occurs when government's total expenditures exceed its total revenues (excluding borrowings).

- **Fiscal Stimulus:** Increasing government spending on infrastructure etc in order to lift investor sentiment, increase money supply in the market and increase demand in the economy.
- **Expansionary monetary policy:** This refers to a monetary policy by a central bank in which interest rates are cut in order to ease money supply in the economy.

### **28. To reverse women leaving the workforce, policies must change behaviour before they change beliefs**

#### **Context:**

- In most countries, higher numbers of educated women have resulted in the improvement of their societal status and economic participation
- But in women's participation in economic sector is very low

#### **Women participation in economic spheres:**

- Only 27 per cent of working-age women in India work
- The number fell sharply in the last decade from 43 per cent to 27 per cent
- Nepal and Bangladesh are way ahead, leaving only the Arab countries and Pakistan behind India

#### **The World Bank report, 'Precarious Drop: Reassessing Patterns of Female Labour Force Participation in India'**

- According to the report, participation of women in economic sector depends on their marital-status, age, education, family labour composition and whether in rural or urban India
- Stability in family income levels also lead to women dropping out of the workforce
- Other factors include lower levels of job creation, availability of very low paying jobs in the informal sector, poor infrastructure, safety issues, and boys outnumbering girls in technical and professional education
- The study concludes that "education skilling and legal provisions may not be sufficient"

#### **Acceptable norms:**

- In a heterogeneous country like India, 'acceptable' norms of work may differ based on income, caste, rural/urban and informal/formal sector
- One belief is allpervasive: women are primarily homemakers and men breadwinners

#### **Key points:**

- Research in neuroscience states that deep-seated 'typical' beliefs regarding race, caste, gender and other social categories get embedded or hardwired in the brain
- Inaccurate to start with, the brain finds it difficult to 'unlearn' them even when the reality has changed. It interprets new data in a biased manner to confirm originally held beliefs (confirmatory bias)



**Can behavioural changes counter these stereotypes?**

- Research in behavioural design provides evidence that this is indeed possible and has been successfully pursued in many countries
- There are 'behavioural insights' groups advising governments in the US, Britain, Australia and Germany

**Misguided policies**

- Government and corporate sector policies, instead of taking steps to encourage and hasten this permeability, have been misguided
- The flawed legislation introduced recently increasing maternity benefits from three to six months is a case in point
- For ensuring that women don't opt out of work, it reinforces gendered norms and unwittingly places women at a disadvantage
- What could have helped instead is a combination of maternity and paternity leave, on a 'use it or it lapses' basis

**The way forward**

- Involving women in the decisionmaking process and in leadership roles, rather than providing benefits passively, can have far-reaching benefits
- Behavioral design, when complemented by a judicious mix of legislation and incentives, can go a long way in resetting norms sooner

**29. GoM on composition scheme holds first meeting****Context:**

- With only over 15.50 lakh businesses out of 98 lakh registered under the GST regime opting for the composition scheme, the GST Council decided to set up the GoM to examine ways of making it more attractive.

**In News:**

- Within a week of being set up, the group of ministers (GoM) on making the GST composition scheme more attractive held its first meeting.

**Tasks assigned to the GoM:**

- The GoM has also been tasked with revisiting the tax structure of different categories of restaurants with a view to rationalising or reducing the rates.
- The GoM will examine whether the AC restaurants pass on the benefit of cost reduction under GST to consumers and if they are not, whether they should be disallowed input tax credit claims
- To make the composition scheme more attractive, the GoM would look into whether turnover of exempted goods can be excluded from the total turnover threshold for levying tax under the composition scheme.
- It will also consider whether the scheme can be extended to taxpayers dealing in inter-state supplies of goods.

- The panel will look at whether the manufacturers opting for the scheme can be given the benefit of input tax credit.

**Key Fact:**

- Businesses with turnover of up to Rs 1 crore can opt for the composition scheme and they can pay taxes in the range of 1-5 per cent and file returns quarterly.
- Currently, GST is levied at 12 per cent on non-AC restaurants while it is 18 per cent for air-conditioned ones.
- The tax rate for traders of goods in the composition scheme is 1 per cent, while it is 2 per cent for manufacturers and 5 per cent for restaurants.

**Basic Information:****Composition Scheme under GST**

- Goods and Services Tax has brought in a new regime of business compliance in India. Large organizations have the requisite resources and expertise to address these requirements. On the flip side, many startups and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) may struggle to comply with these provisions. To resolve such scenarios, the government has introduced Composition Scheme under GST, which is merely an extension of the scheme under VAT law.
- When opting for the Composition Scheme under GST, a taxpayer will be required to file summarized returns on a quarterly basis, instead of three monthly returns (as applicable for normal businesses)

**Who can opt for Composition Scheme?**

- Businesses dealing only in goods can only opt for composition scheme. Services providers have been kept outside the scope of this scheme. However, restaurant sector taxpayers may also opt for the scheme.

**30. Information utility under the IBC****Context:**

- **Nationale-Governance Services Ltd (NeSL)** became India's first information utility (IU) for bankruptcy cases under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016.
- NeSL is owned by State Bank of India and Life Insurance Corporation Ltd., among others.
- Recently, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) eased ownership norms for setting up such utilities.

**What is an information utility?**

- Information utility is an information network which would store financial data like borrowings, default and security interests among others of firms.
- The utility would specialise in procuring, maintaining and providing/supplying financial information to businesses, financial institutions, adjudicating authority, insolvency professionals and other relevant stake holders.

**Why is it important? How useful is it?**

- The objective behind information utilities is to provide high-quality, authenticated information about debts and defaults, as per the report of the Working Group on Information Utility published by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.
- Information utilities are expected to play a key role as they allow storage of financial information of registered users and expeditiously process and verify information received.
- Moreover, the database and records maintained by them would help lenders in taking informed decisions about credit transactions.
- It would also make debtors cautious as credit information is available with the utility.
- More importantly, information available with the utility can be used as evidence in bankruptcy cases before the National Company Law Tribunal.

**What are the key challenges for these utilities?**

- While the onus is on financial creditors, operational creditors and corporate debtors to provide the required information, procuring authentic information might be a challenge due to the sensitivity involved. There may also be resistance in sharing information. Since it is a digital database, there is the risk of exposure to data piracy and data theft.

**31. Universal Basic Income is not feasible for India****IMF opinion on UBI**

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has added its bit to the ongoing debate on Universal Basic Income in India.
- The latest Fiscal Monitor of the IMF, in its analysis, used fiscal space equivalent to the cost of the public distribution system and energy subsidies in 2011-12
- It showed that this can finance an annual Universal Basic Income of Rs 2,600 per person
- It is equivalent to about 20% of that year's median per capita consumption, with the estimated cost at about 3% of the gross domestic product (GDP)

**Is UBI idea new to India?**

- The basic idea of Universal Basic Income is not new for India
- The erstwhile Planning Commission had worked on it in the early 1960s

**Why UBI debate started?**

- Economists in the Union finance ministry published an excellent chapter on Universal Basic Income in the 2016-17 Economic Survey
- A large proportion of the population in India still lives below the poverty line and a number of government programmes providing subsidies and support to the poor are marred by inefficiencies
- There are leakages in the system, and often, people who actually need government support are left out

- Universal Basic Income is seen by many as an alternative to the existing system of subsidies, which is often associated with systemic inefficiencies

**Reason's India not opting for Universal Basic Income:****Fiscal capacity**

- The Economic Survey calculations showed that a 75% universality rate with an annual Universal Basic Income of Rs 7,620 per year at 2016-17 prices will cost about 5% of the GDP
- Economists calculated that an inflation-indexed Universal Basic Income of Rs 10,000 at 2014-15 prices—about three-quarters of that year's poverty line—will cost about 10% of the GDP
- Thinking: It is often assumed that resources can be raised by rationalizing subsidies and capturing a part of the revenue foregone on account of various tax exemptions, including in the personal income tax
- Reality: The revenue forgone in most cases is optical and the result of poor design. In any case, a part of it is now out of the system with the implementation of the goods and services tax
- Further, politically, it will be extremely difficult to roll back subsidies in order to create fiscal space for Universal Basic Income

**Can create distortions in the labour market**

- A steady, permanent and guaranteed income without any work is likely to affect labour mobility and participation
- It is also likely to increase wages, as has been witnessed after the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
- Problem: Higher wages without a commensurate increase in productivity will affect India's competitiveness
- This could also have longer-term implications in terms of higher inflation and lower growth

**Nature of Indian politics**

- It is highly likely that political parties, in order to improve their chances in elections, would want to increase the amount of Universal Basic Income
- Or try to bring back subsidies in some form or the other, which will have fiscal implications
- India still has to prove that it can actually run balanced budgets for an extended period
- The political class always has this temptation to declare premature victories and give away fiscal gains

**Need of the hour:**

- India needs rationalization of subsidies, better targeting and operational efficiency
- It needs to move to cash transfers at an accelerated pace with the use of Jan-Dhan, Aadhaar and mobile
- This will help reduce costs and spare resources for capital spending to augment growth

- As history has shown, the best way to pull people out of poverty is sustained higher growth

### 32. Time for auto industry to go all electric

#### Context:

- Electric Vehicles (EVs) and how government is planning to achieve its targets related to EVs.

#### Key Points:

- The government has been working to effect a radical shift in India's energy production and consumption patterns to reduce dependence on fossil fuels
- According to last year's National Electricity Plan (NEP3) forecast, India will achieve (ahead of schedule), the target of renewable energy being 40% of total power production by 2030
- The target was declared at the Paris Climate Change Conference in 2015

#### NITI Aayog's report on mobility transformation

- The government intends that all vehicles sold in India by 2030 should be electric
- A recently released NITI Aayog report on mobility transformation outlines a feasible and phased approach to achieve this goal
- It presents the government's vision of a shared, electric and connected mobility paradigm where mobility is a service based on an electric vehicle (EV) fleet, enabled by the convergence of
  - \* Low-cost technologies,
  - \* Smart designs,
  - \* Business model innovation and supportive policies
- The Central government is calling global tenders for the first 10,000 electric cars, of which a pilot phase of 500 cars has already been awarded to Tata Motors Ltd and Mahindra & Mahindra
- Among the states, the Karnataka government has taken the lead in formulating India's first comprehensive EV policy
- The policy will support a complete ecosystem from manufacturing to deployment of charging stations

#### Why EVs are not popular in India?

- Due to range anxiety, high capital cost and long charging time, despite the obvious benefits of very low running costs and zero emission

#### Government's plan for Public Transport

- Coming to public transport, despite a sharp increase in private vehicle ownership over the last decade, India still relies heavily on public transport
- The government plans to make public transport more economical and environment-friendly by promoting electric buses
- However, the current generation of electric buses with traditional battery technology are prohibitively expensive at four to five times the cost of a diesel bus

#### How to counter challenges related to EVs?

- One way is "Battery swapping"
- To help bring down the capital cost of electric buses, experts are recommending two things among the various solutions being looked at
  - \* reducing the battery size and
  - \* adopting "swappable" battery technology,
- It will help in bringing down the upfront capital cost while reducing the operational cost and charging time
- The Indian auto industry is actively working in this direction as it helps state public transport agencies to induct electric bus fleets without incurring too much additional expenditure

#### Benefits of connected vehicles

- The government's agenda also focuses on developing an ecosystem to support the EV industry
- It will enable various stakeholders to stay connected, enabling a high-functioning, EV-driven public transport system
- For example, an electric bus heading for the last stop can signal EV taxis in the area about how many passengers it will be offloading
- This ensures optimum onward journey options for the disembarking passengers
- Or EVs can communicate with refuelling stations about battery requirements, so there is never a danger of getting stranded
- These connected vehicles are also a necessary step towards the inevitable progression to autonomous vehicles

#### The Way Forward

- The auto industry has been growing at a steady pace and India is now becoming an export hub for small and medium-sized cars
- This leaves the auto industry well-placed to go all out on electric
- This is an opportune time for the auto industry to embrace the government's EV push and collaborate with technology and mobility solution providers to capitalize on this opportunity
- It will hugely benefit the nation, economically and environmentally

### 33. Centre taking steps to formalise gold trade

#### Context:

- The Centre is taking steps for greater formalization of the gold trade with an eye on the future.
- In accordance with these steps, the country unveiled its first commodity options trading in the gold on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

- The gold option contract, with gold (1 kg) futures as underlying, expiring on November 28, 2017 and January 29, 2018 were made available for trading.
- As an introductory measure, no transaction fee is being charged on this product till December.
- This marks an important evolution in the trading of the yellow metal itself.
- Options trading hedge all risks for those dealing in gold.
- Given that Indians were big buyers of gold there are expectations that the new product would be extremely successful and with appropriate policy measures it will help formalize the gold trade.

#### **Benefits to the consumers:**

- They are in consonance with the business environment for the future, the more it formalises, the better it is for consumers, jewellers and traders.
- The European-styled gold options are hedger-friendly and physically settled, which means on exercise at expiration, the options position develops into corresponding underlying MCX one kilogram gold futures position at the strike price of the exercised options.
- By hedging risk of rise in gold prices using 'Gold Call Options Contract,' a jeweller would not only be protected against price rise, but also would benefit from fall in gold prices.
- Similarly by hedging risk of fall in gold prices using a 'Gold Put Options Contract,' a jeweller would not only be protected against price fall, but would benefit from rise in gold prices.
- Gold is the first product for options trading that SEBI had permitted after modern commodity derivatives trading started 14 years ago.
- The Finance Ministry had set up a committee for suggesting measures to transform India's gold market.

#### **SEBI and the integration of commodity markets**

- There has been a very conscious effort by the government and SEBI to develop and integrate commodity markets in a phased manner.
- The introduction of options gives a strong impetus towards systematic development and transformation of commodity derivatives market in India, ushering in a new era in price risk management in response to stakeholder expectations.
- To further strengthen the market, a panel had been constituted in NITI Aayog to integrate spot and derivative market.
- The gold option is as an extremely low-cost product.

#### **Options Trading in other commodities**

- As per the SEBI rule, options trade is allowed in a commodity which has certain volumes in futures trade.

- Around 7-8 commodities like cotton, CPO, crude, silver, zinc and copper are there which also qualifies and after 3-6 months a decision will be taken to introduce options trading in them.

### **34. Outstanding credit grows 14.6% in 1 year; non-food loans fall to 13.6%**

#### **Context:**

- Outstanding credit loans, bonds and commercial papers (CPs) grew 14.6 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) between September 30, 2016 and September 30, 2017.
- But in the same period last year the growth had been lower at 13.8 per cent.

#### **The growth in other areas:**

- The growth in non-food credit in the fortnight to September 29, 2017, was slightly lower at 13.6 per cent y-o-y.
- The net corporate bonds outstanding as at the end of September, was also up by 18 per cent as per latest data released by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi).
- Data from RBI showed that the net outstanding on commercial papers stood has also increased from last year.

#### **Why is there growth in outstanding credit ?**

- With banks increasingly participating in the bond markets, the share of bonds in total credit is rising.
- Higher-rated corporates have in recent days chosen to borrow from the markets rather than from banks as the former route has turned out to be cheaper.
- Bankers and sector analysts have in recent days made a case for measuring credit growth in terms of outstandings on loans as well as bonds as better-rated corporates are borrowing increasingly from the money markets.
- Between June 2016 and June 2017, around Rs 40,000 crore had moved from the bank's loan book to the markets.
- A large portion of it about 70 per cent of it is in the CPs, or commercial papers. These commercial papers swing between the loan book and the markets, depending on the price, availability, etc.

### **35. MPC minutes spotlight risks to inflation; signal RBI may stay on 'hold'**

#### **MPC Meeting:**

- A majority of the members of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) monetary policy committee flagged an increase in inflation risks.
- The central bank held its key policy interest rate at 6%.
- It also observed that a deceleration in retail inflation had been temporary as headline inflation.



**Headline inflation close to 4%:**

- It is important to recognise near and medium-term risks to the inflation outlook
- There is a need to be vigilant on account of uncertainties on the external and fiscal fronts; this calls for a cautious approach.

**The inflation outlook for the coming months**

- It is time to be in readiness to raise the policy rate to suppress the underlying drivers of inflation if they strengthen further
- CPI inflation was likely to moderate to about 3% in October.
- But this would be driven by food prices, while core inflation was likely to stay above 4% amid rising risks of fiscal slippage.

**36. U.S. starts anti-dumping probe into PTFE resin from India****In News:**

- The U.S. has initiated anti-dumping duty investigations against import of polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) resin from India and China.
- The probe is being started to determine whether imports of PTFE resin from China and India are being dumped in the U.S., and a countervailing duty investigation to determine whether producers of PTFE resin in India are receiving alleged unfair subsidies.
- **'Alleged margins':** The PTFE is mostly used as a non-stick coating for utensils. The department has stated that the estimated dumping margins alleged by the petitioner range from 23.4%-408.9% for China and 15.8% to 128.1% for India.

**Investigations:**

- In the anti-dumping investigations, it said the department would determine whether imports of the resin from China and India were being dumped in the American market at less than fair value.
- In the countervailing investigation, it will determine whether Indian producers of PTFE resin are receiving unfair government subsidies.
- If the department establishes that the products are being dumped, they can impose duties on those imports.

**Anti-dumping investigation:**

- Countries initiate anti-dumping probes to determine if the domestic industry has been hurt by a surge in below-cost imports. As a counter-measure, they impose duties under the multilateral WTO regime.
- Anti-dumping measures are taken to ensure fair trade and provide a level-playing field to the domestic industry.
- They are not a measure to restrict imports or cause an unjustified increase in cost of products.

**37. All major ports to get LDB services: official sources****Context:**

- The **Logistics Data Bank's (LDB)** services will soon be extended to all major ports in India.
- **The LDB project's objective:** to ensure greater efficiency in the country's logistics sector through the use of information technology.

**In News:**

- Discussions between the Government and the Indian Ports Association (IPA) in this regard have begun.
- The IPA is the apex body for India's major ports under the shipping ministry's supervisory control. Until now, the LDB project covered only the country's western logistics corridor.
- As part of the LDB project, each container is attached to a Radio Frequency Identification Tag (RFID) tag and tracked through RFID readers. This, in turn, helps importers and exporters to track their goods in transit

**Background information:**

- The LDB project was unveiled in July 2016 as an important 'ease of doing business' initiative to boost the country's foreign trade and bring about greater transparency.
- It helps reduce the overall lead time of container movement, besides bringing down transaction costs that consignees and shippers incur.
- The project is implemented through a Special Purpose Vehicle called Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Logistics Data Services Ltd. (DLDSL) — jointly (50:50) owned by the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) Trust and Japanese IT services major NEC Corporation.
- The LDB project covers "the entire movement through rail or road till the Inland Container Depot and Container Freight Station."
- The DLDSL so far provides "container tracking services to around 70% of the container traffic in India."
- The services include providing users the 'average delivery time' as well as notifications through SMS and email.
- The LDB project also provides other services such as 'congestion and bottleneck analysis' as well as 'performance bench-marking' that aids the users to pinpoint supply chain inefficiencies, and in turn help improve the system

**38. Must link all bank accounts with Aadhaar: RBI****Context:**

- The government had earlier this year made Aadhaar mandatory for opening bank accounts as well as for any financial transaction, including mutual fund investments.
- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, in Budget 2017, had mandated seeding of Aadhaar number with Permanent Account Number (PAN) to avoid individuals using multiple PANs to evade taxes.

**In News:**

- RBI clarification: Millions of bank account holders across the country will have to compulsorily link their accounts to their Aadhaar number by December 31, 2017 under the Prevention of Money-laundering (Maintenance of Records) Second Amendment Rules, 2017 published in the Official Gazette on June 1, 2017.
- The union government has said it would extend until December 31 the deadline to furnish Aadhaar to avail benefits of social welfare schemes.
- Petition before Supreme Court: A petition before the court argues that the directive to link Aadhaar violates the fundamental right to privacy and equates citizens with money launderers.
- World Bank report says the dormancy rate in India is quite high, at 43 per cent.

**Prevention of Money-laundering:**

- The Prevention of Money Laundering (Maintenance of Records) Rules, 2005, mandated quoting of Aadhaar along with PAN or Form 60 by individuals, companies and partnership firms for all financial transactions of Rs 50,000 or above.

**39. Govt permits banks to sell more small savings schemes****In New**

- In order to encourage savings, the government has allowed banks, including top three private sector lenders, to accept deposits under various small savings schemes like National Savings Certificate (NSC), recurring deposits and monthly income plan
- Until now, most of the small savings schemes were sold through post offices

**Key Points:**

- According to a recent government notification, banks can also sell National Savings Time Deposit Scheme 1981, National Savings (Monthly Income Account) Scheme 1987, National Savings Recurring Deposit Scheme 1981 and NSC VIII issue
- So far, these banks were allowed to receive subscription under Public Provident Fund, Kisan Vikas Patra-2014, Sukanya Samriddhi Account, Senior Citizen Savings Scheme-2004
- On the basis of the decision of the government, interest rates for small savings schemes are to be notified on a quarterly basis since April 1, 2016
- These schemes have a higher interest rate than that offered by banks on normal savings account
- Increased outlets for selling small savings scheme would result in higher mobilization under the scheme

**40. Govt. may have to foot bill for rail safety fund****Context:**

- The Ministry of Railways may ask the Finance Ministry to fund its share of the railway safety fund that is, Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh (RRSK) this year as the public utility is has an earnings shortfall of at least ₹10,000 crore in 2017-18.
- The actual income of the Indian Railways was 8.45% lower than the targeted earnings.
- Although the Railways' passenger and goods earnings had increased this year compared with the last year, its sundry earnings had declined sharply by during this period.
- Income from non-fare revenues, including land lease, advertising, PSU dividends and catering department, form part of the sundry earnings.

**Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh- The Safety Fund**

- Finance Minister had announced the setting up a special safety fund with a corpus of more than ₹1 lakh crore over a period of five years in Budget 2017-18.
- In the first six months of the current financial year, the Indian Railways had utilised a quarter of the safety fund.
- The Finance Ministry advised the Ministry of Railways to prioritise deploying RRSK funds on areas that reduce chances of human error and ensure training of safety staff.

**Basic Information:****Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh**

- It has been set up on the recommendations of a high-level safety review committee under Dr. Anil Kakodkar.
- The fund is utilised for track improvement, bridge rehabilitation, rolling stock replacement, human resource development, improved inspection system, and safety work at level crossing, among other things.
- It is a non lapsable safety fund over a period of five years.
- The Finance Ministry would contribute ₹15,000 crore annually towards the fund, the Ministry of Railways would fund the balance ₹5,000 crore every year.

**41. RBI to make LEI must for cos with over Rs 5 crore exposure****In News:**

- The RBI is set to make Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) compulsory for companies having aggregate fund-based and non-fund based exposure over Rs 5 crore
- Banks will be required to capture this number in the Central Repository of Information on Large Credits (CRILC) database that captures details of loan above Rs 5 crore
- Past decisions of the RBI on LEI: RBI has made LEI mandatory for transactions in interest rate, forex and credit derivative market

**Benefits of the LEI number**

- It will enable banks to effectively monitor debt exposure of companies having businesses in multiple sectors and dealing with large number of banks and NBFCs
- It will make it easier for banks to detect frauds and willful defaulters and prevent ever-greening of loans
- The need for such a system was felt after the 2008 global financial crisis and global body, the Financial Stability Board, worked on the global structure of the LEI system
- It would also enable banks in preventing multiple loans to companies against the same collateral

**Who can issue the LEI number?**

- Firms can obtain their LEI code from Legal Entity Identifier India Ltd.(LEIL)
- The LEIL is a wholly owned subsidiary of Clearing Corporation India Ltd.
- LEIL is accredited by the Global Legal Entity Identifier Foundation (GLEIF) and recognised by RBI as issuer of LEI under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007
- Apart from the LEIL, any local operating unit accredited by GLEIF can issue LEI numbers.

**Basic Information:****What is an LEI?**

- The Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) is a global reference number that uniquely identifies every legal entity or structure that is party to a financial transaction, in any jurisdiction
- It is a unique 20 digit alphanumeric code that is assigned to a legal entity

**Purpose:**

- The global LEI system has been set up by regulatory authorities, including G20 and the Financial Stability Board, to address the global financial crisis
- The LEI is designed to enable the identification and linking of parties to financial transactions in order to manage counter party risk
- Its goal is to improve measuring and monitoring of systemic risk and support more cost-effective compliance with regulatory reporting requirements

**42. 2.11 lakh crore for PSU banks to boost lending****In News:**

- India's total external debt for the financial year 2016-17 stood at \$471.9 billion, declining 2.7% from the previous year's level.

**Why?**

- PSBs are saddled with high, non-performing assets and facing the prospect of having to take haircuts on loans stuck in insolvency proceedings.

**Importance:**

- The move is vital for the slowing economy, as private

investments remain elusive in the face of the "twin-balance sheet problem" afflicting corporate India and public sector banks reflected in slow bank credit growth.

- Experts' opinion regarding recapitalization:
- Recapitalization of banks is critical for revitalizing India's growth momentum at a time when the global economy is recovering.

**Funding patterns:**

- Budgetary provisions of ₹18,139 crore and the sale of recapitalization bonds worth ₹1.35 lakh crore.
- The balance would be raised by the banks themselves by diluting the government's equity share.
- CRISIL's assessment of capital requirement:
- CRISIL's assessment of capital requirement for public sector banks to meet Basel III requirements is in the range of ₹1.4-1.7 lakh crore which will be met by the government's relief package

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**Basic Information:****Non Performing Assets:**

NPA is a loan or an advance where...

- Interest and/ or installment of principal remain overdue for a period of more than 90 days in respect of a term loan.
- The account remains 'out of order' in respect of an Overdraft/Cash Credit (OD/CC).
- The bill remains overdue for a period of more than 90 days in the case of bills purchased and discounted.
- The installment of principal or interest thereon remains overdue for two crop seasons for short duration crops.
- The installment of principal or interest thereon remains overdue for one crop season for long duration crops.
- The amount of liquidity facility remains outstanding for more than 90 days, in respect of a securitisation transaction undertaken in terms of guidelines on securitisation dated February 1, 2006.
- In respect of derivative transactions, the overdue receivables representing positive mark-to-market value of a derivative contract, if these remain unpaid for a period of 90 days from the specified due date for payment.

**Categories of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs)**

Based upon the period to which a loan has remained as NPA, it is classified into 3 types:

- Substandard Assets: An asset which remains as NPAs for less than or equal to 12 months.

- **Doubtful Assets:** An asset which remained in the above category for 12 months.
- **Loss Assets:** Asset where loss has been identified by the bank or the RBI, however, there may be some value remaining in it. Therefore loan has not been not completely written off.

#### 43. **5.35 lakh crore for new road project**

##### **In News:**

- **BharatMala Pariyojana:** The Centre announced a ₹5.35 lakh crore road construction package, called BharatMala Pariyojana
- The Union Cabinet approved 34,800 km of roads nationwide, including in border and coastal areas.
- **BharatMala Pariyojana:** new umbrella programme aimed at optimizing the efficiency of movement of goods and people across the country
- The BharatMala project will include economic corridors (9,000 km), inter-corridor and feeder route (6,000 km), national corridors efficiency improvement (5,000 km), border roads and international connectivity (2,000 km), coastal roads and port connectivity (2,000 km) and greenfield expressways (800 km).
- Further, the remaining road projects of 10,000 km under the National Highways Development Project will form a part of the programme.
- The project will be executed through the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), **National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL)**, Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways and State Public Works Department (PWDs).
- **Under the programme, roads will be built along the borders with Nepal and Bhutan,** bottlenecks on the existing Golden Quadrilateral highway network will be removed. Also, road connectivity to small industries will be ensured and manufacturing centres will be connected with national highways.
- **Funding pattern:** The BharatMala project will be funded in a three-pronged manner – market, private investment and asset recycling of NHAI's toll assets
- **Advantages:** With this program, India could get the much-needed cost competitiveness in the manufacturing sector by bringing down the logistics cost which is currently one of the highest amongst the emerging markets and way above that prevalent in developed economies.

#### 44. **India, U.S. to take up 'high tariff', visa curbs in Washington meet**

##### **In News:**

##### **India-U.S. Trade Policy Forum (TPF):**

- Scheduled to be held in Washington DC on October 26
- Agenda: ways to iron out irritants including 'visa curbs' of the U.S. and India's 'high tariffs' on manufactured products and 'restrictions' on e-commerce, as well

as steps to expedite the conclusion of negotiations on a bilateral social security pact (or totalisation agreement).

##### **Concerns of India and the U S:**

- The TPF, which is the main forum to resolve bilateral trade and investment issues, is also likely to take up the 'challenges' that American innovative industries face due to India's 'weak' Intellectual Property Rights regime.
- It would also discuss the 'non-tariff barriers' of the U.S. that are adversely impacting India's agriculture, pharmaceuticals and other industrial exports.

##### **Why is USIBC and US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) important?**

- Industry bodies including USIBC and USISPF are working with the governments of both the countries on mechanisms to ensure greater engagement at the State-level, instead of focusing entirely on the Central/Federal-level discussions.

#### 45. **Deadline for mandatory linking of Aadhaar to govt schemes extended to March 31, 2018: Centre to SC**

##### **Context:**

- Aadhaar linking to avail benefits of government schemes.

##### **Deadline extended:**

- The deadline for mandatory linking of Aadhaar to avail benefits of government schemes has been postponed to March 31, 2018, the Centre informed the Supreme Court.
- Union government will take no coercive action against those who do not have Aadhaar and they will not be denied social welfare scheme benefits till March 31.

##### **Key Fact:**

- Aadhaar is a 12-digit biometric identity.
- **Coverage:** As many as 135 schemes (of 35 ministries) including the free cooking gas (LPG) to poor women, kerosene and fertilizer subsidy, targeted public distribution system (PDS) and MGNREGA will be covered by the extension

##### **Petitions pending before the Supreme Court:**

- Challenges the constitutional validity of the decision to make linking of mobile numbers and bank accounts with Aadhaar a must.

##### **Contention raised:**

- The issue of mandatory linking of Aadhaar with bank accounts and mobile number is illegal
  - Non-linking of Aadhaar with bank account would make citizens liable for prosecution under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.
- Supreme Court is still hearing a petition to make the unique ID mandatory for availing of government benefits.



**46. Going back to the basics**

Highlights of a report by The World Bank: "Learning to Realize Education's Promise"

- **Main theme:** focus on education
- **Important highlights:**

**First: The report makes a moral case for education**

- It does it with a rights-based approach
- And sub-sections titled 'Education as freedom'; 'Education improves individual freedoms'; 'Education benefits all of society'

**Second: Early childhood development**

- One of the most important sections is not about education but about early childhood development
- The report discusses the far-reaching impact of poverty and chronic malnutrition on the physical and mental development of children
- The effects of stunting in the early years on physical, cognitive and socio-emotional development prevent children from learning well in later years
- The report points out that in low-income countries, stunting rates among children under-five are almost three times higher than in the richest
- Reduction of child stunting should be one of the major moral imperatives before nations today

**Third: Role of technology**

- It is good to see that technology is not regarded as a panacea in itself
- But as something that has the potential to enhance learning and that the teacher-learner relationship is at the centre of learning

**Fourth: issue of public vs private schools**

- The report acknowledges firmly that on the issue of public vs private schools, the results are still mixed
- There is no consistent evidence that private schools deliver better learning outcomes than public schools, or the opposite

**Fifth: Shortage of teachers**

- While school enrolments have increased significantly, massive teacher shortages persist

**Sixth: Other related issues behind learning crisis**

Beyond reading and arithmetic, any meaningful assessment of learning should also consider aspects such as comprehension, problem solving, critical thinking, and innovation

Beyond merely increasing assessment it is equally important to fund

- 1) The sector better;
- 2) improve teacher training;
- 3) support the continuing professional development of teachers;
- 4) And help teachers to help the poorest children to learn

**The way forward**

- One would have liked to see greater focus on the continuing problems of access and equity, which are still the biggest problems in education. If there is one aspect of education which needs to be quantified and measured in order to make our education systems function better for all children, it is equity

**47. BharatMala will put more freight on roads****Positive impacts of the newly launched BharatMala initiative:**

- The road construction programme, BharatMala, will connect 550 districts to national highways against 300 districts at present.
- Around 50 economic corridors to be constructed against the existing six.
- 70-80% total freight will move on national highways against 40% freight at present.
- BharatMala is a biggest infrastructure programme that will give priority to tribal and backward areas and border regions.

**48. Capital infusion to be credit positive for public sector banks, says Moody's**

Moody's remark on government's decision to recapitalize Public Sector Banks:

- The Centre's decision to infuse ₹2.11 lakh crore into public sector banks will be credit positive and the amount is large enough to comprehensively address their weak capital profile

**Key Fact:**

- For the 11 rated public sector banks by Moody's, the rating agency estimates that their external capital requirements over the next two years would be about ₹70,000 crore to ₹95,000 crore.
- This estimate factors in the capital requirements for compliance with Basel-III norms and for conservative recognition and provisioning of their asset quality problems.

**49. Centre to aid offshore e-commerce play****In News:****Indian e-commerce sector expansion:**

- The Union government is working on a new policy to expand the footprint of the Indian e-commerce sector to tap potential markets outside the country, including Africa and Southeast Asia.
- This is part of efforts to achieve the target of making India a trillion-dollar digital economy in the next seven years.
- Currently, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology is looking at tapping markets such as Southeast Asia, West Asia, SAARC countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, the Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and BRICS partners (Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa).
- Key Fact: The e-commerce economy is currently pegged at \$30 billion, and the government expects it

to grow at \$150 billion by 2024-25.

#### **New plans on the anvil:**

- The government is also working on a strategy to make India a hub for data analytics, cloud computing and financial technology, besides encouraging development of Internet of Things, to push the digital economy.
- Data Protection Act: the Data Protection Act, the draft of which is likely to be ready by December 2017, will provide a policy framework on digital economy, including social media.

#### **50. 'India has to spend 50 lakh cr on infra'**

##### **Context:**

- Infrastructure sector has suffered in India due to under-investment for a long time

##### **Infrastructure Yearbook 2017:**

- A book released by rating agency Crisil.
- Highlight: India would need to spend about ₹50 lakh crore between fiscal 2018 and 2022 to build its infrastructure in a sustainable manner
- For years now, the government has been doing the heavy lifting in terms of infrastructure investments. However, having only the public investment cylinder firing is not good enough. Accelerating private sector investments is an essential complementarity, and the other cylinder that needs to fire.

##### **Crisil Infralnvex**

- A new index launched by Crisil
- It is an 'investability' index that would track, measure and assess the development, maturity and investment attractiveness of infrastructure sectors.
- Attractive sector: The Crisil Infralnvex scores for 2017 show power transmission sector the most attractive to invest in currently, followed by roads and highways, and renewable energy.

##### **NITI Aayog to devise new strategies:**

- NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant pitched for channelling insurance and pension funds for financing infrastructure projects as also for a complete re-examination of the viability gap funding (VGF) scheme.

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

##### **Viability gap funding**

- Viability Gap Funding (VGF) Means a grant one-time or deferred, provided to support infrastructure projects that are economically justified but fall short of financial viability.
- The lack of financial viability usually arises from long gestation periods and the inability to increase user charges to commercial levels.
- Infrastructure projects also involve externalities that are not adequately captured in direct financial returns to the project sponsor. Through the provision of a catalytic grant assistance of the capital costs, several

projects may become bankable and help mobilise private investment in infrastructure.

- Government of India has notified a scheme for Viability Gap Funding to infrastructure projects that are to be undertaken through Public Private Partnerships.
- It will be a Plan Scheme to be administered by the Ministry of Finance with suitable budgetary provisions to be made in the Annual Plans on a year-to-year basis.
- The quantum of VGF provided under this scheme is in the form of a capital grant at the stage of project construction. The amount of VGF will be equivalent to the lowest bid for capital subsidy, but subject to a maximum of 20% of the total project cost. In case the sponsoring Ministry/State Government/ statutory entity propose to provide any assistance over and above the said VGF, it will be restricted to a further 20% of the total project cost.
- Support under this scheme is available only for infrastructure projects where private sector sponsors are selected through a process of competitive bidding. The project agreements must also adhere to best practices that would secure value for public money and safeguard user interests. The lead financial institution for the project is responsible for regular monitoring and periodic evaluation of project compliance with agreed milestones and performance levels, particularly for the purpose of grant disbursement. VGF is disbursed only after the private sector company has subscribed and expended the equity contribution required for the project

#### **51. NITI bats for divesting 34 sick PSUs**

##### **In News:**

- Government think-tank NITI Aayog has recommended strategic disinvestment of 34 sick public sector units
- Earlier, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) had asked the think tank to look into the viability of sick state run companies.
- The Centre plans to raise funds to the tune of Rs. 72,500 crore through stake sale in PSUs this fiscal, including Rs. 46,500 crore from minority stake sale

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

##### **Strategic disinvestment:**

- In strategic disinvestment the government sells major portion of its stake to a strategic buyer and also gives over the management control.
- Under it, the strategic Partner, may hold less percentage of shares than the government but the government loses management control.
- The Finance Ministry has empowered the NITI Aayog to advise the government on the strategic disinvestment of the CPSEs.
- The procedure for strategic sale will be prepared by Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM).

## 52. 'Decision on fishing subsidies certain in WTO's Dec. meet'

### **Context:**

- WTO's Ministerial Conference meeting at Buenos Aires (Argentina) in December 2017.
- **Expected agreement:** An agreement on elimination of 'harmful' fisheries subsidies is likely to be the only major outcome at the forthcoming meeting, according to the head of the principal United Nations (UN) agency handling issues related to trade, investment and development

### **Key fact:**

- "Harmful fishing subsidies (globally) that contribute to overfishing are estimated to be as high as \$35 billion."

## 53. India to leapfrog 30 places in business ease rank

### **In News:**

- India will leapfrog 30 places to the 100th position out of 190 countries in the World Bank's Doing Business Report, high-level sources have confirmed.
- The report is expected to be released on October 31 "India will hit a century."

### **Key Point:**

- This huge jump in the country's ranking is thanks to reforms in areas such as 'starting a business', 'dealing with construction permits', and 'resolving insolvency', where it was placed a lowly 155, 185 and 136 respectively last year.
- India was ranked a poor 130 overall last year, up by just one place from 131 the previous year.
- On the future prospects for India, the source said: If India maintains this momentum, it can jump to a rank in double digits next year," adding that Mumbai and Delhi — the two cities covered in the Report — had responded well to the government's call for improvement. The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion systematically worked with the line ministries and State governments to "get things done on the ground.
- The **World Bank's 'distance to frontier' score** — which "measures the distance of each economy to the 'frontier' that represents the best performance observed on each of the indicators across all economies in the Doing Business sample since 2005 — showed that India's score gradually improved from 48.77 in 2010 to 55.27 in 2017

# AGRICULTURE RELATED

## 1. A normal but good-in-parts monsoon

### Context:

- Indian monsoon.

### In News:

- A second normal southwest monsoon in a row, is a good thing in today's rather gloomy economic environment

### Key Fact:

- But the rains this time have not been as good as last year
- Rainfall during the 4-month season turned out 5.2 per cent below its long period average (LPA)
- This was unlike in 2016, when the overall gap vis-à-vis the LPA was only 2.6 per cent and the rains were more evenly distributed across the monsoon
- This year's output of kharif foodgrains at 134.67 mt, to be marginally lower than the record 138.52 mt for 2016-17

Kharif oilseeds output may also fall from 22.40 mt to 20.68 mt, as per the ministry's first advance estimates.

## 2. From Plate to Plough: What Gujarat did yesterday

### Context:

- Gujarat agricultural model from 2003 to 2014

### Agriculture Growth of Gujarat from 2003 to 2014

- Gujarat's agri-GDP registered an unprecedented growth of 8 per cent per annum during 2002-03 to 2013-14, way more than the all-India figure of 3.3 per cent per annum
- Gujarat's agri-growth was even higher than that achieved by Punjab during the Green Revolution's

### Expectations from the Gujarat model

- When Modi became the prime minister in May 2014, one was expecting that the "Gujarat model" would be extended to many states, with the fine-tuning to suit each state's requirements
- But the growth of all-India agri-GDP in the first three years of NDA rule has come down to 1.8 per cent

### Is deficient rain the reason behind this situation?

- Deficient rain in 2014-15 and 2015-16 is of course one factor behind this poor performance
- But there were bumper harvests in 2016-17, yet farmers suffered due to a collapse in agri-prices
- The advance estimates of 2017-18 do not indicate much recovery
- Reasons behind Gujarat's excellent agri-performance during 2003 to 2014

### First

- The Atal Bihari Vajpayee government's bold decision to allow the commercial use of Bt cotton became a catalyst for change, from which Gujarat benefited the most
- From nowhere in 2002, Bt cotton spread to more than 90 per cent of the area under cotton in Gujarat by 2014

### Second

- China is taking over Syngenta for \$43 billion to access the best technologies for its farmers
- While the Centre is creating conditions that may force companies like Monsanto to quit
- This government is literally reversing the benefits that the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government bestowed to farmers

### Third

- Gujarat government at that time provided basic infrastructure to farmers — irrigation, power and roads enabled the easy adoption of Bt cotton, and benefited other crops and the livestock sector as well
- Currently, Gujarat has one of the best road-network in the country, of which 89 per cent are pucca/surfaced roads

### Fourth

- Good marketing institutions propelled Gujarat agriculture, especially its dairy industry
- The AMUL model of directly buying milk from farmers' cooperatives and processing and distributing it through millions of outlets ensures that farmers receive 75-80 per cent of the consumers' price
- This model is worth extending to other commodities, especially fruits and vegetables, bypassing the mandi system

### The way forward

- Enable farmers to access best technologies and best markets at home or abroad
- Invest in basic infrastructure that can give access to water for irrigation, power and rural roads
- Create AMUL type institutions for other commodities to enable farmers to access high share of consumers' price
- Export bans or high minimum export prices for agri-products are anti-farmer

## 3. Is 'deep sea fishing' the silver bullet?

### Context

- Steps taken by the government of India and the state of Tamilnadu to promote deep sea fishing.



**Issue:**

- The main issue is to do with the oversized fleet of Tamil Nadu trawlers that fish regularly in Sri Lankan waters, often damaging the boats and gear of small-scale Tamil fishers from the Northern Province of Sri Lanka.
- The Sri Lankan government has not only passed a legislation banning trawling but its navy has also been vigilantly patrolling the International Maritime Boundary Line.

**A new strategy:**

- The plan is to remove as many trawl vessels from the Palk Bay as possible. And replace them with deep sea vessels that fish in the Bay of Bengal and Gulf of Mannar, in 2017-2020.
- The plan in the Palk Bay is to extract 2,000 trawlers from the bay. Each vessel will cost Rs 80 lakhs of which only 30 per cent (10% upfront+ 20% loan) is to be paid by the trawl owners, while rest will be paid by state and central government as subsidy.
- The Central and Tamil Nadu governments are jointly providing finance for the project.
- The new replacement tuna long liner boats cannot trawl or operate in the Palk Bay.
- The government is now creating a new deep-sea fishing harbour at Mookaiyur, located just south of the Palk Bay in the Gulf of Mannar, where many of these vessels are likely to be berthed.
- Priority is to be given to owners who have had their boats apprehended or damaged in Sri Lanka

**Challenges:**

- There is a question whether there are sufficient stocks of fish in the adjacent waters of the Bay of Bengal and Gulf of Mannar to make deep sea fishing economically viable for a large and new fleet of vessels.
- Are the trawl owners interested: do Palk Bay trawl fishers, who are used to one-day fishing, have sufficient skills and an interest for deep sea fishing.
- The question of what will become of trawl crews (who might not have the required skills for deep sea fishing) remains largely unaddressed, potentially jeopardising the local economy of the region.
- The main concern for the trawl owners is whether deep sea fishing is a sound investment or not.
- Some fishermen have doubts about the high operational costs of deep sea fishing and the loan repayment schedule.
- Equally of concern is the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department's capacity to monitor, control and carry out surveillance (MCS) of the process of decommissioning.

**Way forward:**

- Whether deep sea fishing will reduce the Palk Bay fishing conflict depends entirely on the downsizing of the existing trawl fleet. This means actual implementation of rules on the ground is the most important thing to look into.
- Various other solutions such as buy-backs, alternative livelihoods and skill development need to be rolled out with a simultaneous focus on a strong MCS system. Only then can this intransigent fishing conflict be finally resolved.

**Basic Information:**

- **Trawling:** Trawling is a method of fishing that involves actively dragging or pulling a trawl through the water behind one or more trawlers. Trawls are fishing nets that are pulled along the bottom of the sea or in midwater at a specified depth.
- **Deep Sea Fishing:** Deep sea fishing is a form of angling that requires deep waters and usually takes place further away from land. The water depth should be at least 30 meters to be considered deep sea fishing territory.

**4. Retrench India's farm economy to sustain it****Context:**

- In 2007-08, Madhya Pradesh government announced a bonus of Rs 150 above the minimum support price (MSP) per quintal of wheat
- Predictably, a large segment of farmers in the state shifted to the crop
- The bonus was stopped in 2014
- Farmers who had shifted production were not pleased
- It fed into the resentment that would eventually erupt in widespread farmer agitations in the state this year

**Incentives for agriculture**

- The Indian state has often played the same role in the agricultural sector
- Its policies have created artificial incentives that are unsustainable, an inefficient drain on public funds, or both

**Scheme by MP government**

- The **Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana** will replace government procurement with compensatory payments
- This will be when market prices are below the MSP
- It is being implemented as a pilot scheme for eight crops

**Hope from the scheme**

- The hope is that this will sidestep the implementation shortcomings of the procurement system
- These extend from the lack of government storage facilities and supply chain logistics
- Also, the fact that despite the government declaring MSPs for 25 crops, it largely procures only rice and wheat

- It will be less distortionary, freeing up space for the market to set rates

#### **Reality check**

- The knowledge that the government will make up the shortfall will incentivize traders to set rates well below the MSP
- The scheme has a two-month window, which means that the rush to sell in that period will also push prices down

#### **Need for government intervention**

- The agricultural sector is one of the handful where inelastic demand for the products, the deleterious public effects of supply shocks and inherent risks for suppliers mandate a government role

#### **Agricultural reforms: What is needed?**

#### **Truly transformative agricultural reforms will require work on three levels**

##### **The first level is mandi system**

- With the 2003 and 2017 versions of the model Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act, governments have attempted to liberalize this system, providing for private markets and integrated state markets
- This was a step towards a national market facilitated by the National Agriculture Market (eNAM)
- The problem with this is that it still operates within the mandi system
- Solution: Government needs to get out of the business altogether—and that is only possible with a switch from the public distribution system to direct benefit transfers

##### **The second level of reforms should be aimed at inputs**

- The Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana aims to extend irrigation cover to all forms and maximize water-use efficiency over a period of five years
- In a water-stressed yet groundwater-dependent country like India, this is only possible with comprehensive rural electrification, allowing for techniques such as drip irrigation
- The other major reform needed here is access to formal credit
- The current dependence on informal credit leaves farmers beholden to middlemen and traders who are often the credit suppliers, thus undercutting the farmer's bargaining power

##### **The third level of reforms should be reduction in number of people participating in Agriculture**

- As per the last Agriculture Census, the average farm holding in India is a minuscule 1.15 hectares
- Their number has been on the rise since the 1970s and is expected to touch 91% by 2030
- There is no feasible way to make such a fragmented agricultural economy workable
- For a sustainably healthy agricultural economy,

the number of people participating in it must be drastically reduced

- Measures such as enabling large-scale contract farming and corporate farming will help here—but the only genuine solution is job creation in non-agricultural sectors

# INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

## INDIA - U.S

### 1. U.S. backs sale of fighters to India

#### In News:

#### Key Points:

- The new U.S. policy in Afghanistan is an “opportunity” for India-U.S.-Afghanistan cooperation on security as well as development issues.

#### MoU on technical and training cooperation

- The MoU is an important step in the security sector.
- India's support has been comprehensive here and has always looked at the priorities and the wishes of the Afghan government and people.

#### India-Afghanistan-U.S. trilateral emerges as an axis:

- India has been helping Afghanistan for the past 16 years in many ways.
- The United States has been helping Afghanistan for the past 16 years.
- Cooperation had a security element throughout, like the helicopters India transferred, or training Afghan troops..

### 2. US firms approach USTR against India's medical price control measures

#### Context:

- Recent reports indicate that the lowering of prices on medical devices which are only one component of overall procedure costs are not being passed along to patients.

#### Contentions of American Companies:

- American companies producing medical devices and health information systems have approached the US Trade Representative against India's move to implement price controls on coronary stents and knee replacement implants that they say denying them equitable market access.
- In a petition, the Advanced Medical Technology Association (AdvaMed) requested the US Trade Representative (USTR) to suspend or withdraw India's benefits under Generalised System of Preferences (GSP).
- They are deeply concerned about recently implemented price controls on coronary stents and knee replacement implants in India that have slashed prices by as much as 85 per cent and 70 per cent respectively, followed by signals that price caps for additional life-saving and life-improving medical devices may be forthcoming.

### Impact of price control by India on various medical devices

- Recent reports indicate that the lowering of prices on medical devices which are only one component of overall procedure costs are not being passed along to patients, which needs to be corrected.
- Price controls may also block innovations and limit patient access to the best available care.
- The failure to implement a mutually acceptable alternative could deter global organisations from making their latest products available to India's health care providers and patients, make Indian innovators less competitive in global markets, negatively impact future investment in India, and ultimately harm patients.

#### What India needed?

- Since induction in 2013, the aircraft has become the mainstay of India's humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts.

#### Importance:

- The proposed sale will improve India's capability to meet the current and future strategic airlift requirements.
- India lies in a region prone to natural disasters and will use the additional capability [aircraft] for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief

### 3. Rex Tillerson to have big regional agenda during India visit.

#### Context:

- Rex Tillerson visit to India.
- The Afghan-Pakistan situation and Indo-Pacific cooperation could eclipse bilateral concerns

#### In news:

Expected matters to be discussed:

- Regional issues could take precedence over bilateral ones Washington's new South Asia policy with respect to Pakistan and Afghanistan and prospects for more cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.
- The possibility of an India-Pakistan dialogue will be discussed
- Mr. Tillerson will also brief his Indian counterparts on the outcome of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group [U.S.-China-Afghanistan-Pakistan] meeting on talks with Taliban that took place in Oman on October 16 Pending bilateral issues to be discussed: enhancing trade, the U.S.'s pitch to sell India UAV drones, F-16s and F-18s, and the outstanding decisions on the “foundational agreements” in defence.

## INDIA - AFRICA

### 1. Raja Mandala: India and Djibouti's geopolitical scrum

#### Context:

- Recent visit of President to the 'Horn of Africa' region and diplomatic issues related to it.

#### Horn of Africa

- The four different states constituting the Horn Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti along with Yemen across the Red Sea have long been described as one of the world's pivotal regions

#### In News:

- Due to President Ram Nath Kovind's recent visit to Djibouti and Ethiopia
- It is President's first visit abroad
- The visit suggests India is finally giving importance to the extraordinary geopolitical significance of the region
- Kovind is India's first president to visit Djibouti

#### Djibouti:

- Its population is less than a million and its land is largely barren
- Djibouti's location at the confluence of the Red Sea with the Indian Ocean and the crossroads connecting Africa, the Middle East and Asia
- The geographical position made it a very attractive piece of geopolitical real estate
- India's Diplomatic relations with Djibouti

#### India & Djibouti:

- The president's visit suggests Delhi is now ready to end its prolonged neglect of Djibouti and re-engage the region strategically
- Like in so many areas, China's strategic advances in the Horn have helped put Djibouti back on India's political radar

### 2. India's relations with the African countries:

- Things began to change in the 1990s as Delhi turned to economic globalisation
- Growing commerce resulted in intensifying India's focus on Africa as a major economic partner
- India had declared that its national interests were no longer limited to the Subcontinent but stretched from the "Aden to Malacca"
- Also, at the Africa summit in India during 2015, most participating leaders wanted an expansion of security and defence cooperation with India

#### China's influence in the region

- China's infrastructure development in the Horn preceded the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative

- One of the biggest infrastructure projects in the region has been the 750 km-long rail link between landlocked Ethiopia and Djibouti
- Military influence: China has secured the rights to a base in Djibouti that can host up to 10,000 soldiers until 2026
- This is the first ever foreign military base for China

#### The way forward

- Many regional powers are now trying to shape the strategic landscape of the Horn through military bases and armed interventions
- India is somewhat late in joining the scramble for political influence in this critical corner of the Indian Ocean
- The President's visit will hopefully lay the foundations for a comprehensive engagement with Djibouti and

## INDIA - MYANMAR

### 1. Can India protect Rohingya women and children, SC asks govt

#### Context:

- Deportation of Rohingya's

#### In news:

- The four different states constituting the Horn Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti along with Yemen across the Red Sea have long been described as one of the world's pivotal regions

#### In News:

- Supreme Court question to government:** Can India live up to its international commitments and protect a large section of humanity comprising Rohingya women, children, the sick and the old who are "really suffering"?
- Government claims:** the crisis over its move to deport 40,000 Rohingya was not "justiciable", that is, outside the domain of the judiciary.
- But the court rejected this stand outright

### 2. Freemovement along Myanmar border

- The Centre is putting in measures to facilitate free movement of Indian and Myanmar citizens within 16 km along the Myanmar border.
- The Home Ministry held consultations with four States — Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh — on the Free Movement Regime (FMR).
- In June, the Ministry had constituted a committee to examine various methods to curb the misuse of free movement along the Myanmar border, a friendly country, with which it shares unfenced borders and unhindered movement of people across the border.

#### Parallel discussion:

- Parallel discussion involving the Ministry of External Affairs and their counterparts in Myanmar was on to allow Indian nationals going and staying in Myanmar under the bilateral agreement for up to 72 hours.



- Present situation: While India allows Myanmarese nationals to stay for 72 hours without visa, Myanmar allows stay only up to 24 hours

### 3. India for constructive approach to Rohingya crisis

#### Context:

#### In news:

#### India's observations:

- 'Constructive' approach is the need of the hour to deal with the exodus of the Rohingya.
- The displaced members of the community will have to return to their place of origin in the Rakhine province of Myanmar.

#### Basic Information:

#### Rohingya Crisis

- The Rohingya people are a Muslim minority group residing in the Rakhine state (in the south western Myanmar), formerly known as Arakan and are considered to be a variation of the Sunni religion.
- The 1982 Citizenship Law denies the Rohingya Muslims citizenship despite the people living there for generations. They are considered "stateless entities".
- They are regarded as mere refugees from Bangladesh, face strong hostility in the country.
- United Nations classifies them as one of the most persecuted refugee groups in the world.
- To escape the dire situation in Myanmar, the Rohingya try to illegally enter Southeast Asian states like Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia, begging for humanitarian support from potential host countries.
- As per the United Nations refugee agency from August almost 400,000 Rohingya have crossed Naf river over to Bangladesh from the northern Rakhine state in Myanmar, putting Bangladesh under immense strain.
- The dominant group, the Rakhine, rejects the label "Rohingya" and has started to persecute the Rohingya.
- The latest surge follows attacks on police posts by an extremist Rohingya group, Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA).
- People from all over the world started calling this crisis and bloodshed "campaign of ethnic cleansing."

## INDIA - BANGLADESH

### 1. India set to sign \$4.5 billion LoC deal with Bangladesh

#### Context:

- Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley visit to Bangladesh.
- India and Bangladesh will be signing the third line of credit (LoC) agreement involving \$4.5 billion to be spent on infrastructure and social sector development.
- 'Joint Interpretative Notes on the Agreement between India and Bangladesh for the Promotion and Protection of Investments' would also be signed.

### 2. 'More check-posts to come up on Bangladesh border

#### In news:

- The Home Ministry will move a Cabinet note to construct seven integrated check-posts (ICPs) along the Bangladesh border to give a fillip to trade and business with the neighbouring country.
- In all, 13 such check-posts have been planned, seven of them along the Bangladesh border.
- **Key Fact:** The project was envisaged in 2007. A separate body — the Land Port Authority of India (LPAI) — was constituted in 2011 to boost trade via the land border points.
- Eventually, 19 ICPs are expected to come up along the Bangladesh border. Besides the seven in West Bengal, three will be in Assam, two in Meghalaya and seven in Tripura.
- An ICP has several facilities such as passenger terminal building, currency exchange counter, Internet hubs, cargo process building, cargo inspection sheds, warehouse, cold storage, quarantine laboratory, clearing agents, banks, vehicle scanners, isolation bay, parking and cafeteria.
- ICPs help put in place a system to secure the country's borders against hostile elements. It also facilitates trade and commerce and boosts revenue.

### 3. Not just strategic ties with Dhaka: Sushma

#### Context:

- External Affairs minister visit to Bangladesh.
- India is following a policy of neighbours first, and among the neighbours Bangladesh is foremost.
- Bilateral relations between India and Bangladesh have gone beyond a strategic partnership.

#### In news:

- External Affairs Minister highlights India's willingness to resolve all irritants in ties with Bangladesh with sincerity.
- Inaugurated 15 Indian-assisted development projects worth about \$8.7 million.
- The development projects, worth about \$8.7 million, include installation of 11 **water treatment plants** in the southwestern coastline of Pirozpur, 36 community clinics and reconstruction of Dhaka's historic Ramna Kali Temple destroyed by invading Pakistani troops in the 1971 liberation war.

## INDIA - EUROPEAN UNION

### 1. Partners, naturally

#### Context:

- The Indo-Europe relationship.

#### India-EU relations:

- Work of both go from fighting climate change and terrorism to cooperating on cyber security and digital

**14th EU-India Summit:**

- India and EU will work to strengthen their excellent partnership
- EU message to India will be that Europe is open for business and will continue to remain so

**EU and India:**

- The EU is the world's biggest open market and the world's second largest economy
- EU is the largest trading partner for 80 countries, including India
- EU's economy is growing faster than that of the United States and eight million new jobs have been created
- EU already trade more than 100 billion euro worth of goods and services every year with India

**European Investment Bank in India:**

- The European Investment Bank has now set up an office in New Delhi
- European loans have helped to finance the construction of the Lucknow Metro and solar power schemes across the country

**Way forward:**

- EU-India Free Trade Agreement should resume
- Europe will support India's ambitious goals through investment and expertise in green buildings, renewable energy, waste management and air pollution
- Indian scientists have received research grants to work with their European counterparts on medical breakthroughs or cutting-edge technologies and will continue in future

**2. Navigating a Changing World****Context:**

- Obstacles in the trade pact between India and the EU.

**Change in global dynamics:**

- Brexit
- Elections in Germany and France
- Visible rifts between eastern and western countries on what constitute core EU values
- Election in the US and consequent retreat of the US from its leadership of the west

**Key Points:**

The reference to India and EU as "world's largest democracies"- Such a statement is generally made with reference to sovereign countries. Interestingly, EU per se is not a sovereign country but a group of sovereign countries. Such a mention is more notable this time in light of the U.S.'s uncertain position on the international stage and EU's need for a stronger union post Brexit.

The countries have reiterated their commitment for a "Rules based" and "Multipolar" world-

- Rules based world: This term assumes significance on the backdrop of the US going back on its promises on Paris climate agreement and the probability of the same on the Iran Nuclear deal
- Multipolar world: The reference to multipolarity is a recognition that there is more than just one chair at the top table, not just with the U.S.'s shifting position but also due to Russia and China's ascent.

The India-EU joint statement on terrorism this year called for "decisive and concerted actions" against Hafiz Saeed, Dawood Ibrahim, Lashkar-e Taiba and other purveyors of terror; this will further bolster India's efforts to call out Pakistan on the issue of sponsoring terror.

**Roadblocks in talks on BTIA:**

- Recent summits have been conspicuous by the absence of talks on the BTIA (Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement). There is disagreement on whether the protection of foreign investments will be part of the BTIA or dealt with in a stand-alone treaty
- Indian demand for liberalising the access to natural persons- India wanting a greater ease of movement of temporary skilled workers to provide services in the EU and the EU wanting greater market access for its automobiles and its wines and spirits. Wanting an open market for automobiles and liquor but unduly restricting the movement of natural persons (with barriers in terms of salary thresholds, recognition of qualifications, visa fees, social security and so forth) seems to be a case of double standards.
- EU not granting "data secure" certification to India – a condition that facilitates the cross-border transfer of personal data. India does not have a stand-alone law on data privacy and this could be acting as a barrier too as EU is very seriously taking steps to secure digital data privacy of its citizens.

**Way forward:****Convergence of values and interests:**

- EU is India's largest trade partner (over 100 billion Euros in bilateral trade of goods and services last year). EU, like India, is also wary of China's political and economic dominance.
- Uncertainty over EU's future in the next decade: With Brexit and other important developments, there is no clarity about what presence will EU have in the next decade. Hence, cementing trade ties with India will help strengthen EU's economic future.
- "Data secure" certification: India needs to enact a strong Data Privacy Law which protects the digital data privacy of its citizens. This is necessary to protect the economic interests of the Indian IT industry.
- India is right to strike a hard bargain as far as the temporary movement of skilled workers is concerned. The EU and other developed countries have been historically reluctant about moving forward on this and the issue has become more challenging with the rise of populism and protectionism in Europe.

### 3. India, European Union restart talks on civil nuclear agreement

#### In News

- India and European Union have restarted negotiations on a civil nuclear agreement that was virtually stalled after being signed way back in 2009.
- European Union experts from Brussels held discussions with officials from department of atomic energy in Mumbai.
- **Moving beyond their stalled free trade agreement:** With Europol beginning a working relationship with India's NIA to tackle terrorism and track terror groups that might target either side, there is a greater emphasis on security, counter-terrorism and foreign policy between India and EU, indicating the two are moving beyond their stalled free trade agreement.
- India-EU civil nuclear agreement: focuses on nuclear safety and "non-power technologies in the areas of water, health care and medicine, environment, etc."
- New interest in cooperating on maritime security: EU has asked India to escort World Food Program (WFP) ships through the Indian Ocean as they travel to African states with food aid, recognising India's capacities and intentions of being a security provider in the Indian Ocean

## INDIA - CHINA

### 1. Doklam hangover? China deploys almost 1,000 PLA troops at standoff site, indicates tension not over yet

#### Context:

- More than five weeks after India and China stepped back from a standoff at Doklam on the Sikkim border, Indian soldiers remain on high alert with around 1,000 Chinese troops still present on the plateau, a few hundred metres from the faceoff site.
- But, India does not expect another "flashpoint" at the same site between the two countries.

#### Key Points:

- The presence of People's Liberation Army (PLA) was also acknowledged by Air Chief Marshal B S Dhanoa recently and it has subsequently thinned in the area after the process of "disengagement" began but one PLA battalion remains on the plateau.
- The deployment is expected to be reduced by two-thirds to brigade-level in the coming weeks.
- The Chinese have not dismantled any of their tents, temporary construction in the vicinity and they still have road construction equipment and other stores.
- But everything is under surveillance by the Indian Army.
- Indian soldiers returned to their posts at Doka La but their numbers have since been strengthened.

- The tracks leading to Doka La were improved during the faceoff, leading to enhanced logistics supply lines.
- Road construction equipment, such as bulldozers and JCBs, have also been kept on location.

### 2. Post-Doklam, the healing touch of yoga

#### Key Points:

- China's Minzu University is offering the country's first master's degree in Yoga.
- Significance: It appears to be a clear signal that soft power is being deployed to reactivate China-India ties in the aftermath of the tense Doklam standoff.
- The programme is being sponsored by the China-India Yoga College at the University, and India's Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana.
- The three-year course includes two years in China and a final year in India.
- Classes will cover lessons on yoga asanas, yoga physiology, yoga anatomy, yoga therapy as well as meridian theory.
- The curriculum includes courses in Hindi and Sanskrit.

### 3. Eye on China, foreign secy S Jaishankar in Seychelles for infrastructure pact

#### Context:

- Unannounced visit to the seychelles

#### In news:

- India had sent Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar on an unannounced visit to the seychelles
- Possible reasons behind this move: Due to concerns arise from China's moves and increasing presence in Seychelles and to iron out differences over the development of infrastructure in Seychelles

#### Seychelles response:

- Seychelles has said it would like to take a "relook" at the agreement between the two countries to build military infrastructure on Assumption Island
- The agreement was signed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Seychelles in 2015
- Officials in Seychelles have said the agreement does not have legal backing on their side, whereas it has legal basis in India
- To avoid returning to the negotiating table, Jaishankar met Seychelles President Danny Faure and discussed the hurdles that have come up in recent months

#### Particulars of the agreement:

- The agreement will enable India to help Seychelles build military infrastructure for the Seychelles People's Defence Forces (SPDF) on Assumption Island
- The infrastructure also includes residential barracks for SPDF's Coast Guard and fixing up the jetty and existing airstrip for the SPDF

**Concerns of India over China's presence in Seychelles**

- According to Indian intelligence reports, there has been a sharp spike in the number of Chinese visitors in Seychelles over the last six years — from about 500 in 2011 to over 15,000 in 2016

**Background information:****India's relations with Seychelles:**

- The two countries have an established relationship in defence and maritime security, through which India helps to patrol the waters of Seychelles and gives equipment to the island nation's defence forces
- In recent years, India has agreed to help Seychelles map its hydrology reserves, launched a coastal surveillance radar project and boosted security cooperation with the nation
- India will also give a second Dornier maritime patrol aircraft

**4. In bluntest ever remarks, US talks up India to counter China****Highlights of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson address to the Washington think-tank:**

- United States and India are "two bookends of stability on either side of the globe,"
- Trump administration bluntly proposed that Washington and New Delhi work together in the Indo-Pacific region to counter the disruptive force that China has become.
- Trump's America sought to woo New Delhi to counter Beijing's growing assertiveness in the region and beyond.
- "The United States seeks constructive relations with China. But we won't shrink from China's challenges to the rules-based order, or where China subverts the sovereignty of neighboring countries, and disadvantages the US and our friends".
- In this period of uncertainty and angst, India needs a reliable partner on the world stage. U.S wants to make clear: with our shared values and vision for global stability, peace and prosperity, the United States is that partner."
- China's provocative actions in the South China Sea directly challenge the international law and norms that the United States and India both stand for.

**Beacons of the Indo-Pacific:**

- The world's center of gravity is shifting to the heart of the Indo-Pacific.
- The United States and India - with our shared goals of peace, security, freedom of navigation, and a free and open architecture - must serve as the eastern and western beacons of the Indo-Pacific.
- We need to collaborate with India to ensure that the Indo-Pacific is increasingly a place of peace, stability, and growing prosperity - so that it does not become a region of disorder, conflict and predatory economics.

**Warning to China's client:**

- Tillerson also issued a blunt warning to China's client state Pakistan, saying "states that use terror as an instrument of policy will only see their international reputation and standing diminish" and "it is the obligation, not choice, of every civilized nation to combat the scourge of terrorism" and the United States and India are leading that regional effort together.

**5. China to block UN ban on Masood Azhar, yet again****In News:**

- **Citing a lack of "consensus,"** China has said that it is once again not designating Masood Azhar, head of Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammad, as an international terrorist.
- The Chinese position, expressed by its Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying, came ahead of Thursday's meeting of the 1267 **committee of the United Nations Security Council**, where Azhar's status would be discussed.

**Background Information:**

- China had repeatedly imposed a "technical hold" on India's application for banning Azhar, who has been accused of masterminding last year's attack on an Indian Air Force base.
- In January, the United States filed a fresh application, backed by Britain and France after India's filing on Azhar's listing had lapsed last year.

**INDIA - SRILANKA****1. Nepal Eminent Persons Group seeks review of 1950 friendship treaty with India****2. India, Sri Lanka housing project deal in Hambantota****In news:**

- The government had **appointed Eminent Persons Group (EPG)** to review the **1950 India-Nepal Friendship Treaty**.
- The group held discussion on "regulation" of movement of people across the border.
- Nepali sources confirmed that at the latest meeting of the EPG held on 8 October, the Nepali delegation brought proposals seeking changes required in the friendship treaty and the need for border policing to stop cross border crimes and trafficking.
- **Group's mandate:** To take a serious look at a possible review of the friendship treaty which was concluded decades ago.



- Better border policing: The border between two sides is already delineated and the border posts are already in place but many of these markers are damaged indicating poor maintenance. There is an urgent need to police the border better to stop cross border crime and ensure regulated movement of people.

## INDIA - SRI LANKA

### 1. India acts against bottom trawling

#### Context:

- Bottom trawling by Indian fishermen had emerged as a major issue because of the disruptive impact it left on the coastal communities of Sri Lanka.
- Earlier in July, Sri Lanka banned bottom trawling, increasing the chances of interception of more Indian bottom trawlers.

#### In news:

- India informed Sri Lanka that it has taken measures to stop bottom trawling by its fishermen in the waters near the Sri Lankan coastline.
- During a weekend meeting of the Joint Working Group (JWG) in Delhi, officials expressed satisfaction over the release of Indian fishermen by Colombo, and reiterated the need to bring the rest of them back to India.

#### Initiatives taken by the Government of India to end bottom trawling:

- Recent initiatives taken by the Government of India to end bottom trawling in the **Palk Bay area** include the launch of a programme on diversification of bottom trawlers into deep-sea fishing vessels for tuna long lining under the **Blue Revolution Scheme**, construction of **Mookaiyur** and **Poompuhar fishing harbours**, and capacity-building programmes for fishermen of the Palk Bay area in deep sea tuna long lining.
- Besides, fresh registration for bottom trawlers in the Palk Bay area has been banned by the Government of Tamil Nadu.
- India has informed that schemes promoting **seaweed farming** and sea-cage farming have begun in the **Palk Bay area** to wean away fishermen from **deep-sea trawling**.

### 2. India, Sri Lanka housing project deal in Hambantota

#### Context:

- Sri Lanka signed an agreement with India to build 1,200 houses in the southern port city- Hambantota..
- Hambantota is a Sinhala dominated area.
- Of the 1,200 houses to be built, 600 will be constructed in the Southern Province, while the remaining would be built across Sri Lanka, through one model village in each of the country's 25 districts.

#### Background information:

- The coastal city of Hambantota gained strategic significance after President Rajapaksa built a massive port and an airport with huge Chinese loans.
- In July this year, his successor government sold a majority stake of the port to China to service an outstanding \$8-billion debt it owes China, fanning concerns of countries with competing strategic interests, particularly India and the U.S.

## INDIA - IRAN

### 1. U.S. wants to deprive Iran of Indian energy market: Tehran's envoy to New Delhi

#### In news:

- Iranian Ambassador said that U.S. was trying to ensure that India reduced oil imports from his country
- It is working to deprive Tehran of the Indian energy market
- This is after the U.S. announcement of a tougher line on Iran, even imposition of possible new sanctions

#### Key Points:

- India has cut its oil imports from Iran by approximately 20% in 2017, though its global imports have risen by 5.4%
- The Petroleum Ministry says India has been trying to "diversify" its imports so as to get more competitive rates
- One major development is India's decision to import its first shipment of crude oil from the U.S., giving rise to speculation that New Delhi's new policy will come at the cost of imports from Iran

#### Effect on India-Iran relations

- He said that U.S. President Donald Trump's policy shift would not affect the India-Iran relationship
- Development of the Chabahar port project will remain on track

#### Other projects

- The **India-Afghanistan-Iran trilateral agreement** for **Chabahar** should be ratified by the Iranian parliament in the next few months
- India committed about \$1.6 billion to build the **Chabahar-Zahedan** railway line, which will facilitate trade to Afghanistan along with Chabahar port

### 2. Spain sacks Catalonia's government

#### In news:

- The Catalan parliament had voted in the afternoon to make a unilateral declaration of independence
- The Madrid government sacked Catalonia's President and dismissed its parliament on October 27, hours after the region declared itself an independent nation.
- Central government ministries will take over the Catalan administration.

- A new regional election will be held in Catalonia on December 21.
- Several European countries, including France and Germany, and the United States also rejected the independence declaration and said they supported Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's efforts to preserve Spain's unity.

### 3. Tokyo for quadrilateral talks

#### Context:

- Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono declared in a media interview that Tokyo would call for a **quadrilateral dialogue** with Australia, India and the U.S.
- **External Affairs Ministry** response: India is "open" to work with partner countries for regional issues that are "relevant".
- **Key Facts:** India did the trilateral meeting with Russia and China on the topic of Asia-Pacific last year. India also did an India-Sri Lanka-Maldives trilateral on security matters

### 4. Act on terror, or we'll do it our way, US tells Pakistan

#### Context:

- US Secretary of States Rex Tillerson, visit to Pakistan.

#### In News

- The United States issued its direst warning to Pakistan to roll up terrorist groups operating in the country and end the establishment support for such groups, warning that if Islamabad chose not to act, Washington will find ways to achieve its objectives.
- American support to Pakistan was "conditions-based"
- Dismissing Pakistan's bogus narrative - largely for its domestic consumption - that India and US are backing terror groups in Afghanistan that are attacking Pakistan, Washington wanted Pakistan to show the same commitment it made to defeat militant groups domestically to those threatening Afghanistan or India.
- The US fears for Pakistan's own future if the country remains in denial about its continued support to terror groups. Pakistan keeps repeating the claim that it has taken a lead role in the war on terror and has suffered as a consequence, although its establishment still nurtures US and UN designated terrorists such as Hafiz Saeed, Maulana Masood Azhar, and Dawood Ibrahim

### 5. India turns down Pak. offer of talks on transit trade to Afghanistan

#### In News

- India has rejected an offer from Pakistan for talks on transit trade to Afghanistan.
- According to sources, the offer was made by the Pakistan Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed when he met President Ashraf Ghani on October 1 in Kabul.

- During discussions on the renewal of the **Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA)**, that lapsed in 2015, President Ghani repeated concerns that trade with India over the Wagah border had been blocked by Pakistan, despite being agreed to in the APTTA.
- Days later, Indian officials at the **SCO Afghanistan-Contact group** meeting in Moscow, told the Afghan delegation that it would not take up the offer for talks.
- Pakistan has consistently refused to allow any Indian goods to travel over land Afghanistan, insisting that India use the sea-route via Karachi.
- Exasperated by Pakistan's refusal to allow the truck trade, President Ghani has said repeatedly that he would cut off Pakistan's access to Central Asia and issued a decree cancelling permission for Pakistani trucks to transit through Afghanistan.

#### New routes:

- India and Afghanistan are now working on strengthening alternative routes, including the air cargo corridor launched in June this year, and the Chabahar sea route.

### 6. India ships wheat to Afghanistan via Chabahar

#### In News

- India began shipment of wheat to Afghanistan through the **Iranian port of Chabahar**.
- A press release from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) noted that the consignment would be the first to use the new route via Chabahar to access Afghanistan.
- The transfer was part of India's commitment to send **1.1 million tonnes** of wheat to **Afghanistan** on grant basis.
- The move is significant as it indicates India remains firm in delivering on its **regional commitment through partnership with Iran**, despite Tehran's ongoing tension with the United States.

#### Chabahar port:

- Operationalisation of the Chabahar port is an alternative, reliable and robust connectivity for Afghanistan.
- Operationalisation will open up new opportunities for trade and transit from and to Afghanistan and enhance trade and commerce between the three countries (India, Iran and Afghanistan) and the wider region

#### Earlier instances:

- India had earlier sent goods through the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas in 2003 as Pakistan had not eased land access to Afghanistan.

#### India & Afghanistan:

- India to continue its support for reconstruction, capacity-building and socio-economic development of Afghanistan under the framework of the New Development Partnership.

**Basic Information:****TRILATERAL AGREEMENT FOR TRANSPORT AND TRANSIT CORRIDOR:**

During the visit of Prime Minister to Iran in May 2016, India, Iran and Afghanistan signed a Trilateral Agreement to establish an International Transport and Transit Corridor through the Chabahar port.

**WORLD AFFAIRS****1. Gathering clouds over West Asia****Context:**

- The US-Iran nuclear deal

**Present scenario in West Asia:**

- In the Levant, regional powers are scrambling to fill the vacuum created by the steady dismantling of the Islamic State's caliphate across Syria and Iraq.
- Kurds have held an independence referendum which has drawn ire of their Iraqi, Turkish and Iranian neighbors.
- Turkey's relations with the Europe are growing sourer every day.
- **Qatar crisis**– A crisis within the **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)**, pitting Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates against Qatar, has entered its sixth month, with no sign of resolution.
- UK, France, Germany and the EU all have expressed their categorical support to the nuclear deal.

**The EU and Iran :**

- EU-Iran trade is 30 times larger than **US-Iran trade** and it has increased by 95% the first half of this year itself.
- European banks, manufacturers and energy companies have also signed dozens of major agreements with Iran over the past year.
- EU has jurisdiction over the SWIFT network for cross-border banking transactions of which Iran is also a member.

**Certification:**

- Under U.S. law, the president must certify to Congress every 90 days that Iran is complying with the terms of the nuclear agreement. The next deadline is October 15. On this day the US must certify Iran's compliance.
- If it refuses to do so then it might pave the way for the US Congress to re-impose sanctions on Iran.

**Reactions from around the world:**

- Europe would most likely take legal and diplomatic steps to protect its substantial commerce with Iran, even at the cost of a transatlantic crisis.
- China, Iran's main trading partner, and Russia, Iran's military ally in Syria, would defy U.S. sanctions with even greater enthusiasm.

**Reactions from Iran:**

- Even if the deal collapses Iran is unlikely to expel inspectors (inspecting its nuclear reactors) entirely, as it did in 1997, or pull out of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This is because such actions would undercut Iran's profession of peaceful intent and it stands to lose the moral high ground.
- **The bargaining chip:** Iran would try to restart accumulating centrifuges and nuclear fissile material that it had halted owing to an interim deal in 2013.
- It is difficult to gauge the future path of Iran's segmented leadership which is divided between an elected president and an autocratic supreme leader.
- The erratic and impulsive behaviour of the US President makes things more unpredictable.
- Iran's Shia militia could unleash war against US troops in Iraq and expand support to Afghan insurgents.
- Saudi Arabia-Iran tensions and the probability of US-Russia confrontation in the West Asia would increase dramatically.
- Pulling out of the Iran-US nuclear deal would be detrimental to the credibility of future US diplomacy.

**Implications for India–**

- India's ambitious Chabahar project, scheduled for completion next year, could face fresh obstacles.
- Iran- Pakistan relations may shift unpredictably.

**Conclusion:**

- Tehran would have to have to balance the support it has garnered from the Europe while bargaining with the US, such that it would not provoke Europeans into siding, reluctantly, with Washington, and that it may push the U.S., Israel, or both, into a preventive war.
- In short, it would be virtually impossible to rebuild today the broad, multinational sanctions regime that helped push Iran to the negotiating table during 2013-15. Hence, it is better to persuade Iran that its economic integration into the world economy could continue regardless and therefore it should abide by the deal.
- The US must not risk its diplomatic credibility and push the West Asian region into spate of war which is still trying to recover from the gradual fall of the ISIS.

**2. US resumes premium processing of all H1B visa categories****H1B Visa:**

- It is a visa which allows US employers to employ foreign workers in specialised areas of work that require theoretical and technical expertise.
- As mandated by the US Congress (part of Parliament of the US) every year USCIS (United States Citizen & Immigration Service) can issue a maximum of 65,000 H1B visas and 20,000 to those who have earned higher education in STEM subjects (Science, Tech, Engg. and Maths) from a US higher educational institution.

- H1B visas for academic and research institutes are exempted from the Congressional mandated limit.

#### **Issue:**

- The premium processing or expedited processing (processed within 15 days) of H1B visas was suspended in April to handle huge rush in applications.
- The Trump administration believes that the H1B visas have been misused by companies to replace American workers.

### **3. India extends \$4.5 billion loan to Bangladesh**

#### **Context:**

- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley's two-day visit to Dhaka.

#### **In News:**

#### **India operationalized a \$4.5 billion line of credit—its third and largest ever—to Bangladesh.**

1. The announcement of the line of credit was made during the visit of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India in April.
2. It is seen as part of India's larger strategic move to wean Dhaka away from China, the biggest supplier of defence equipment to Bangladesh for many years now
3. The signing of the third line of credit agreement will enable the implementation of 17 pre-identified projects of developmental priority to Bangladesh in key sectors such as power, railways, roads, shipping, ports, etc.
4. Like the earlier ones extended by India to Bangladesh, this line of credit will also be provided at a concessional interest rate of 1% per annum, with repayment over a period of 20 years including a five-year moratorium
  - India also signed a Joint Interpretive Note with Bangladesh to update the Bilateral Investment Promotion Agreement to the new investment framework.

#### **Key Points:**

- China has been making inroads into countries in India's neighbourhood—with major infrastructure projects, development aid and financial assistance.
- India's ties with Bangladesh have improved dramatically in recent years after India signed the land boundary agreement in June 2015—hanging fire since 1974. The conclusion of the pact was seen as a major confidence-building measure between the two neighbours.
- India sees Bangladesh and Myanmar as important neighbours, sharing borders with both countries. Insurgents operating in India's northeast have taken shelter in both countries in the past, using bases there for hit-and-run operations. India has viewed with concern increasing Chinese aid and infrastructure assistance to both countries—fearing a heightening of Beijing's profile and a waning of its own influence in its periphery.

### **4. Trump set to decertify Iran nuclear agreement**

#### **Context:**

- The Iran nuclear deal between Tehran and six world powers reached in 2015 appears to be in jeopardy as President Donald Trump is unlikely to issue a certification mandated by a U.S law for the country's continuing participation in the agreement.

#### **In News:**

- The President's view that Iran is not in compliance with the deal, also called the the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), is at odds with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the other five signatories to the deal — Russia, China, France, Germany and U.K.
- The IAEA and these five countries maintain that Iran is in full compliance.
- Mr. Trump appears to be going by the advice of a segment of the Republican Party and two key American allies in region, Israel and Saudi Arabia, both bitter opponents of the deal negotiated by the Barack Obama administration.
- The deal has provisions to deal with an Iranian breach, but does not foresee an American non-compliance.

#### **Four points:**

- Under the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015, the President is required to issue a certification to Congress every 90 days that makes a determination on four points — that
  - a) Iran is fully implementing the JCPOA
  - b) Iran has not committed a material breach
  - c) Iran has not taken any action that could significantly advance a nuclear weapons programme, and
  - d) Suspension of sanctions is appropriate and proportionate to the measures taken by Iran and vital to U.S. national security interests.

#### **What next if the President denies the certification?**

- When the President refuses to certify, the onus is on the U.S Congress to decide the course of action.
- The Congress will get 60 days to decide whether or not to reimpose the sanctions on Iran, lifted as part of the nuclear deal.
- For now, supporters of decertification argue that this move could open the path for a stronger deal that could be negotiated

### **5. Ukraine seeks Indian peacekeepers**

#### **In News:**

- Ukraine has asked for Indian peacekeepers to help contain the conflict with Russia in the eastern part of the country.
- Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin said he expects India to "definitely" play a role in the peacekeeping mission which will soon come up for discussion at the UN Security Council (UNSC).



**Key Points:**

- India's role in peacekeeping commended
- Mr. Klimkin, is on a three-day visit to India, held extensive discussions with his counterpart, Sushma Swaraj, for the **upcoming inter-governmental commission dialogue between two sides.**
- Mr. Klimkin said discussion on India's participation in the peacekeeping mission was at a preliminary level and further consultations were needed to fine-tune the composition of the mission.

**Differing views with respect to location of troops:**

- Ukraine insists that the troops should be stationed at the original Ukraine-Russia border, Russian sources indicated that Moscow would prefer the troops to be placed at the 'Line of Contact' between Ukraine and the rebel held territory.

**6. Rex Tillerson may club India, Pak for visit****In News:**

- U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is expected to visit India "later in October".

**Key Points:**

- Mr. Tillerson will become the fourth senior U.S. official to visit New Delhi after the Trump Administration took over.
- Mr. Tillerson is expected to travel to both India and Pakistan on the same visit, indicating a sharp shift from precedent.
- **Previously:** During the Bush and Obama administrations, U.S. officials had avoided clubbing visits to New Delhi and Islamabad because of India's sensitivities over a **"hyphenation"** of the U.S.'s relations with India and Pakistan.

**New Afghan policy:**

- The U.S. Secretary of State's visit to India is likely to highlight growing ties between New Delhi and Washington, and growing cooperation between them on Afghanistan.

**7. U.S. pulls out of UNESCO accusing it of 'anti-Israel bias'****In News:**

- The United States announced its withdrawal from the **U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)**, accusing it of "continuing anti-Israel bias". The U.S. withdrawal will take effect on December 31, 2018 and until then it will remain a full member of the body
- **Key Fact.**
- **Desire to remain as a non-member observer state:** The United States indicated to the Director-General of UNESCO its desire to remain engaged with UNESCO as a non-member observer state in order to contribute U.S. views, perspectives and expertise on some of the important issues undertaken by

the organisation, including the protection of world heritage, advocating for press freedoms, and promoting scientific collaboration and education.

- **Back in History:** The U.S. had earlier once withdrawn from the UNESCO, in 1984, under President Ronald Reagan who accused it of favoring the Soviet Union. Under President George W. Bush, Washington rejoined the organisation in 2002

**Israel and UNESCO:**

- Israel and UNESCO have a contentious relationship, and Israel recalled its ambassador to UNESCO in 2016, accusing it of ignoring Jewish views of the heritage of the region.
- UNESCO declared the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron a Palestinian World Heritage Site

**Basic Information:****The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):**

- UNESCO is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) based in Paris.
- Its declared purpose is to contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through educational, scientific, and cultural reforms in order to increase universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and human rights along with fundamental freedom proclaimed in the United Nations Charter.
- It is the successor of the League of Nations' International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation.
- UNESCO has 195 member states and ten associate members.
- UNESCO pursues its objectives through five major programs: education, natural sciences, social/human sciences, culture and communication/information.
- Projects sponsored by UNESCO include literacy, technical, and teacher-training programmes, international science programmes, the promotion of independent media and freedom of the press, regional and cultural history projects, the promotion of cultural diversity, translations of world literature, international cooperation agreements on secure the world cultural and natural heritage (World Heritage Sites) and to preserve human rights, and attempts to bridge the worldwide digital divide.
- It is also a member of the United Nations Development Group

**8. Fatah, Hamas sign reconciliation accord****In News:****Deal signed:**

- Hamas and Fatah signed a reconciliation deal
- This deal came after Hamas agreed to hand over administrative control of **Gaza**, including the key **Rafah** border crossing

**Modalities:**

- The deal was brokered by Egypt
- It will bridge a bitter gulf between the Western-backed mainstream Fatah party and Hamas, an Islamist movement designated as a terrorist group by Western countries and Israel
- The agreement calls for Mr. Abbas's presidential guard to assume responsibility of the Rafah crossing on November 1
- And for the full handover of administrative control of Gaza to the unity government to be completed by December 1

**Background:**

- Hamas and Fatah agreed in 2014 to form a national reconciliation government but the deal soon dissipated and Hamas continuing to dominate Gaza

**Analysts opinion:**

- According to the analysts, the deal is more likely to stick than earlier ones given Hamas's growing isolation and realisation of how hard Gaza was to govern, after its economy damaged by border blockades and infrastructure shattered by wars with Israel

**Basic Information:**

**Hamas:** Hamas is a Palestinian Sunni-Islamic fundamentalist organization

- It has a social service wing, Dawah, and a military wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades
- It has been the de facto governing authority of the Gaza Strip since its takeover of that area in 2007
- During this period it fought several wars with Israel
- It is regarded, either in whole or in part, as a terrorist organization by several countries and international organizations, most notably by Israel, the United States and the European Union

**Fatah:**

- Fatah, formerly the Palestinian National Liberation Movement, is a Palestinian nationalist political party and the largest faction of the confederated multi-party Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)
- Fatah is generally considered to have had a strong involvement in revolutionary struggle in the past and has maintained a number of militant groups
- Fatah had been closely identified with the leadership of its founder Yasser Arafat, until his death in 2004. Since Arafat's departure, factionalism within the ideologically diverse movement has become more apparent
- In the 2006 parliamentary election, the party lost its majority in the Palestinian parliament to Hamas.
- However, the Hamas legislative victory led to a conflict between Fatah and Hamas, with Fatah retaining control of the Palestinian National Authority in the West Bank

**Rafah Border Crossing**

- The Rafah Border Crossing or Rafah Crossing Point is the sole crossing point between Egypt and Gaza Strip
- It is located on the Gaza–Egypt border, which was recognized by the 1979 Israel–Egypt Peace Treaty
- The original crossing point was named Rafah land port
- Only passage of persons takes place through the Rafah Border Crossing
- All traffic of goods is diverted to the Kerem Shalom border crossing

**9. Cross-border terror: India to speak up at Bahamas meeting****Context:**

- Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting
- Venue: islands of the Bahamas.

**Key Points:**

- India will strongly articulate the need to strengthen counter terrorism measures and prevent radicalisation of youth through information and communication technology (ICT) at the Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting .

**Main Agenda:**

- Addressing the issue of using ICT and social media platforms to recruit terrorists and radicalise youth is also part of the agenda.
- Cyber crimes, climate change, the practice of child marriage, and the need for effective laws, to deal with these issues are also important items on the agenda.

**10. India plans a riposte to slavery report****In News:**

- After sending a rebuttal to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) challenging India's ranking in a global slavery report, India will build pressure on the global body to distance itself from the Australia-based NGO-Walk Free

**Foundation.**

- It was the WFF, founded by Australia's mining mogul Andrew "Twiggy" Forrest, that had compiled the report.
- As per the report, the highest number of people, 17,000, were surveyed in India and it was placed in a cluster of 53 countries like Honduras, Belize, Iraq, Pakistan and China.
- Indian security agencies informed the Prime Ministers Office (PMO) that though the methodology of sampling was not clear, the WFF's entire focus was on India and had **"enough potential to substantively harm India's image and kill its exports market"**.
- The PMO was warned that there was **"evidence of rising interest of private and multilateral institutions in highlighting human trafficking and forced labour as modern-day slavery, with India being the largest hub of slaves"**.

**Point-wise rejoinder**

- The Centre has tasked the **V.V. Giri National Labour Institute**, an autonomous body under the Labour and Employment Ministry, to prepare a point-wise rejoinder to the 'modern slavery' report.
- The Labour Ministry shot off a strong letter to the ILO regarding its report titled '**Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage 2017**'. The report released on September 19 did not contain any India-specific findings, barring one mention that 17,000 people were interviewed for the survey.

**11. Pak govt drops terrorism charges against Hafiz Saeed****In news:**

- Pakistani authorities withdrew **terrorism charges** against Hafiz Saeed and his group **Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD)**, paving way for the possible release of the UN, US and Indian designated terrorist for his involvement in 2008 Mumbai attacks.

**Key Fact:**

- Saeed and JuD were already banned by the UN while U.S. has put \$10 million bounty on his arrest
- Saeed challenged his detention in the Lahore High Court alleging that his arrest was due to U.S. pressure and that he had never been charged for any crime.
- No formal charges have been filed against Saeed so far by Pakistani authorities..

**12. India seeks flexible LNG deals, IEA says it's happening****In news:**

- **International Energy Agency notes:** Liquid gas contracts are shedding their rigidity and becoming more flexible as regional systems gradually merge into an interlinked global market in an oversupplied situation.

**Key points:**

- Flexible contract regime will help optimise cost of supplies and allow countries such as India to rapidly develop a gas-driven economy as part of strategy to reduce carbon footprint
- Till now liquid gas trade has been confined to regional contracts with rigid terms, often biased in favour of the seller and offering little legroom for buyers. This is changing in the wake of fall in gas prices in tune with drop in oil prices and rise of the US **fracking industry**.
- The renegotiations have made gas more affordable for India and will result in huge savings to the economy.

**Basic Information:****International Energy Agency**

- The **International Energy Agency (IEA)** is a Paris-based autonomous intergovernmental organization established in the framework of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1974 in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis.
- The IEA was initially dedicated to responding to

physical disruptions in the supply of oil, as well as serving as an information source on statistics about the international oil market and other energy sectors.

- **The IEA acts as a policy adviser to its member states, but also works with non-member countries, especially China, India, and Russia.**
- The Agency's mandate has broadened to focus on the "3Es" of effectual energy policy: energy security, economic development, and environmental protection. The latter has focused on mitigating climate change. The IEA has a broad role in promoting alternate energy sources (including renewable energy), rational energy policies, and multinational energy technology co-operation.

**What is 'Fracking'**

- Fracking is a term used for hydraulic fracturing, which is the process of creating fractures in rocks and rock formations by injecting specialized fluid into cracks to force them to open further. The larger fissures allow more oil and gas to flow out of the formations and into the wellbore, from where they can be easily extracted.
- Fracking has resulted in many oil and gas wells attaining a state of economic viability due to the level of extraction that can be reached, and has allowed drilling firms access to previously difficult-to-reach sources of oil and gas

**13. Spain moves to suspend Catalonia's autonomy****Context:**

- Spain said it will move to seize some of the Catalan regional government's powers after its leader warned that he could declare independence, escalating the country's worst political crisis in decades.
- The central government in Madrid had given separatist leader Carles Puigdemont time until 10:00 am to say whether or not he was declaring a breakaway state in the semi-autonomous region following a chaotic referendum on October 1.
- Prime Minister of Spain had warned he would trigger Article 155 of Spain's Constitution a never before used measure allowing it to impose direct rule over the wealthy northeastern region unless Mr. Puigdemont backed down

**Impact of this decision:**

- There are fears that such a move, allowing Madrid to potentially suspend Mr. Puigdemont's government and take over its police force, could spark unrest in a region where even Catalans who oppose independence cherish their autonomy highly.
- The separatist leader responded that Catalan lawmakers could vote to declare secession unilaterally if Madrid triggers Article 155.
- Article 155 a process that would take several days to restore legality in the region.
- The Catalonia crisis has prompted a series of huge street rallies, worried investors and added to the woes of a European Union already grappling with Brexit.

- Catalonia's 7.5 million residents are fiercely attached to their own language and culture but are divided on whether to break away from the rest of Spain.
- But according to the separatist leader his regional administration has a mandate to declare independence from what he says was a 90% "Yes" vote on October 1.
- But turnout was given as only 43%.
- Many voters who oppose independence stayed away from a referendum that had been declared illegal by Spain's Constitutional Court

no evidence of a material error or fraud related to the prior determinatio

#### 14. U.S. makes H-1B visa renewals tougher

##### Context:

- Fresh changes in rules notified by the **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)** for renewal of non-immigrant visas will severely impact **H-1B visa holders**
- Increasing restrictions on H-1B visa programme remains a point of concern in the India-US relations, as a majority of these guest workers are Indians.

##### New rules notified:

- "The updated guidance instructs officers to apply the same level of scrutiny when reviewing nonimmigrant visa extension requests even where the petitioner, beneficiary and underlying facts are unchanged from a previously approved petition. While adjudicators may ultimately reach the same conclusion as in a prior decision, they are not compelled to do so as a default starting point as the burden of proof to establish eligibility for an immigration benefit always lies with the petitioner,"

##### Key Points:

- Updated guidance provides clear direction to help advance policies that protect the interests of U.S. workers.
- The new rules are in line with the Donald Trump administration's **Buy American, Hire American policy**.

##### Three types of status updates issued by USCIS:

- An H-1B worker goes to the USCIS for three types of changes to his status - amendment, transfer and renewal.
- \* Amendments are sought when an H-1B employee changes the location within the same company;
- \* transfer is sought when he moves from one company to another, and
- \* A renewal is sought at the expiry of the visa, which is usually issued for three years at the beginning.
- Adjudicators must thoroughly review the petition and supporting evidence to determine eligibility for the benefit sought
- The previous policy — which has been in force for 13 years — instructed officers to give deference to the findings of a previously approved petition, as long as the key elements were unchanged and there was



# SOCIAL ISSUES

## 1. Chanting mantras, breaking barriers: Kerala's first Dalit priest takes charge

### In News:

- Yedu Krishnan scripted history by becoming the first Dalit priest in Kerala to assume duties at the sanctum sanctorum of the Manappuram Lord Shiva Temple at nearby Thiruvalla.
- Yedu Krishnan is among six Dalits out of the 36 non-Brahmins recommended for appointment as priests by the Kerala Devaswom Recruitment Board.

# ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

## 1. India among the worst affected by climate change:

### IMF study

#### In News:

- According to a study of the IMF, countries in the tropics will be the worst affected as a result of global warming
- The report says, for the median emerging market economy, a 1°C increase from a temperature of 22°C lowers growth in the same year by 0.9 percentage point (see figure given below)

### Affect on India and its neighbors

- India is one of the worst affected, with its per capita output expected to fall
- Other countries in the region, such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia will be similarly affected

### Affects on Developed Nations

- The impact of most developed nations, located in the temperate zone, is negligible
- The overall impact on China's growth, too, is estimated to be negligible
- On the other hand, some northern nations such as Russia, Norway and Canada will see their growth improve

## 2. India's greenhouse gas emissions up by 4.7% in 2016

### Context:

- Report by PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency
- The report's data is based on the Emission Database for Global Atmospheric Research (EDGAR) produced by the European Union

### In news:

- **Highlights of the report:**
- Trends in global CO<sub>2</sub> and total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions show that India's emissions have gone up by 4.7% in 2016
- For most major GHG emitters in the world, the emission figures have gone down, barring India and Indonesia

### Other GHG emitters:

- The report shows that emissions in the U.S. saw a fall of 2%, the Russian Federation 2.1%, Brazil 6.1%, China 0.3%, and, the United Kingdom 6.4%

### Non-CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

- In 2016, the five largest emitting countries and the European Union accounted for 68% of total global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and about 63% of total global GHG emissions

- Most of the emissions consist of CO<sub>2</sub>, about 72%
- But methane, nitrous oxide and fluorinated gases also make up substantial shares of 19%, 6% and 3%, respectively
- The combined share of non-CO<sub>2</sub> greenhouse gas emissions is about 28% in total GHG emissions, but it varies for the largest countries:
- 11% for Japan
- 31% for India
- 20% for China
- 23% for the US
- 25% for Russia

### Basic Information:

#### Greenhouse gas

- A greenhouse gas is a gas in an atmosphere that absorbs and emits radiation within the thermal infrared range. This process is the fundamental cause of the greenhouse effect.
- The primary greenhouse gases in Earth's atmosphere are water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and ozone.
- Without greenhouse gases, the average temperature of Earth's surface would be about -18 °C (0 °F), rather than the present average of 15 °C (59 °F).
- In the Solar System, the atmospheres of Venus, Mars and Titan also contain gases that cause a greenhouse effect

## 3. 16 balsam species found in 5 years in Arunachal

### Key Points:

- Impatiens walongensis, a new species of balsam was discovered from Arunachal Pradesh's Anjaw district, one of India's easternmost.
- Since 2013, at least 16 new species of plants under the genus Impatiens, commonly referred to as balsam, have been discovered from Arunachal Pradesh.
- Balsam varieties are facing a threat to their habitat from fast-changing landscape of the region.
- Impatiens shows high endemism..

## 4. Odisha hikes compensation for deaths caused by wild animals

### In News:

- The State government has decided to increase the ex-gratia compensation for human deaths caused by wild animals to Rs. 4 lakh from the existing Rs. 3 lakh
- Ex gratia means 'done from a sense of moral obligation rather than because of any legal requirement'
- Reason: Because the man-animal conflict is on rise in Odisha

**Key Points:**

- According to the State Forest and Environment Department, increasing biotic and anthropogenic pressure on forests are affecting the biodiversity and the habitat as a whole
- As a result animals stray out of the forest towards human habitation in search of food, water or use these areas as routes to access other wilderness area to meet their ends

**5. The wrong approach to environmental regulation****Context:**

Recent SC order banning the sale of firecrackers in Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR), which has expectedly turned into a controversy

**Two Issues:**

a) The scope of the state's regulatory power vis-à-vis a religious celebration: On this account, the matter is relatively clear

- The bursting of firecrackers releases a heavy dose of carcinogens in the atmosphere, presenting a public health challenge for the entire city
- As soon as it is clear that bursting of firecrackers by one person presents a health challenge to another, any argument of religion cannot reign supreme in a constitutional, secular republic

b) The agency of the state that such regulation should vest with

- The more difficult question is the choice between regulation
- The decision requires numerous inputs from scientific organizations, regulatory institutions, public policy experts and civil society
- Since a court of law does not have in-house expertise in these domains, it should leave such matters to the executive
- The Supreme Court delivered its arguments in the broader framework of the "right to breathe clean air" and the "right to health"
- But it went about dismissing the commercial considerations of the firecracker industry.
- These considerations could have equally been framed in terms of the right to livelihoods of thousands who depend heavily on the sale of firecrackers during Diwali

**Creditability of SC:****Bans are rarely effective**

- It is difficult to imagine that no firecracker sale will happen in the entire territory of Delhi and NCR as a result of the SC order
- If the police fail to enforce the order, the credibility of the SC, particularly in cases of environmental regulation, will suffer immensely

**Dealing of this matter by the SC**

- The manner in which the SC has dealt with this particular case also raises a number of concerns
- It first passed an order on 11 November 2016 (after Diwali) banning the sale of firecrackers
- Then it partially lifted the ban on 12 September 2017
- To make matters worse, the court has ordered suspension of all the temporary licences issued after its 12 September 2017 verdict which allowed the grant of these licences
- **Not a new issue:** In an earlier instance, the SC had increased the entry tax on trucks entering Delhi without factoring in the demand elasticity of goods (carried in those trucks) transported to Delhi

**The way forward**

- The elected government is in the best position to elicit scientific and economic inputs and take a call, even if it involves expending political capital
- The governments at the Centre and the states should involve different agencies like the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation and the pollution control boards and invest in setting regulatory standards
- This can solve environment issues, better than Judiciary

**6. Melting ice making Greenland sea less saline****Context:**

- Over the years, the dramatic meltdown of ice in the Arctic Ocean has received great attention and is easy to observe through satellite images.
- Scientists from Aarhus University in Denmark have unveiled the long-term impact of the melting of the Greenland ice sheet.

**Study highlights:**

- Melting ice is causing coastal waters in Greenland to become less saline, which may in turn affect marine life as well as the global ocean currents that keep Europe warm.
- **Impact on fjords:** The observed increase in freshwater content will affect the conditions in all Greenland fjords.
- **Kay fact:** glaciers have been observed to melt and retreat and the researchers know that today's meltdown of the Greenland ice sheet has more than doubled compared with the period 1983-2003.
- **Clear tale:** Now, unique annual measurements made within the framework of the 'Greenland Ecosystem Monitoring Program' since 2003 in northeast Greenland tell a clear tale — fresh water from the ice sheet accumulates in the surface layers of the surrounding sea and flows into the Greenland fjords.
- Measurements show that the surface water layers became up to 1.5 per mill less saline. This equivalent to an increase in freshwater content from about one metre in 2003 to almost four metres in 2015

**Basic Information:**

- A fjord is a deep, narrow and elongated sea or lake drain, with steep land on three sides. The opening toward the sea is called the mouth of the fjord, and is often shallow. The fjord's inner part is called the sea bottom. If the geological formation is wider than it is long, it is not a fjord.

**7. Sawfish more threatened than tigers, say scientists****Key Points:**

- The sawfish, included in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 enacted to save them from exploitation, have been sighted off the Indian coast less than 10 times in over a decade and they appear to be more threatened than tigers and elephants.
- A statement issued by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute said the sawfish may be the most endangered fish species in India.

**Only five species**

- There are only five species of the sawfish ever identified — dwarf sawfish, knifetooth sawfish, smalltooth sawfish, largetooth sawfish and green sawfish.
- Sawfish are elasmobranchs, meaning their skeleton is made of cartilage. They are closely related to sharks and have shark-shaped bodies and, hence, are also called flat sharks.

**8. 'Govts slept over alert on illegal cotton seeds'****Context:**

- US giant Monsanto, which sells genetically modified seeds in India, had informed the Centre about the illegal sale and cultivation of herbicide tolerant (HT) variety cotton in 2008.
- Centre failed to take any actions to prevent the same.

**In news:**

- In a letter dated 2008, Monsanto had said that HT cotton was being "grown without the statutory approval of GEAC. The farmers were being offered cotton seeds with HT trait at a premium without valid documents and safety assessment which may impact the produce".

**Key Fact:**

- Currently, HT cotton is grown in about 8.5 lakh hectares in four major cotton-growing states of the country - Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. HT cotton packets did a business of Rs 472 crore this season.
- Today, desperate farmers, looking for lower input costs, are willing to pay Rs1200-1,500 per packet for HT seeds, when the price for Bt cotton at Rs 800 per packet.

**9. Fiji to sell world's first climate-change 'green' bonds****In News:**

- Fiji will issue a **\$50 million "green" bond** to help combat the effects of global climate change, the first developing country to do so

**Usability of the fund raised:**

- The bond will be the first to earmark the cash raised to address the issue, according to the World Bank.
- The country will also use some of the proceeds to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions.

**Key Fact:**

- The Pacific Island nation is seen as particularly vulnerable to climate change, with some of its 300 low-lying islands susceptible to rising seas.
- Poland and France have also issued sovereign green bonds to raise funds for renewable power, subsidize energy-efficient buildings, tree planting and other environmental projects.
- The global "green" bond market is expected to reach \$134.9 billion in 2017, according to the World Bank.

**10. Air quality nosedives in spite of a quieter Deepavali****Context:**

- This year's Deepavali was the quietest in recent history, but the low-key celebrations across the country didn't stop pollution levels from spiking sharply.

**Key Facts:**

- In Chennai pollution levels inched up to that of Delhi, a city where smog and pollution touch toxic highs during this season.
- Other cities in the south, such as Bengaluru and Hyderabad, also witnessed a sharp rise in air pollution.
- The **Air Quality Index (AQI)**, a six-rung classification scale that rates air quality from 'good' to 'severe', downgraded air quality in Chennai from 'satisfactory' on to 'poor' and 'very poor' in the days leading up to Deepavali.
- The primary pollutant in both cities was **PM 2.5**, or particles that are smaller than **2.5 microns** and linked to respiratory illnesses.
- Reasons: Experts suggest that the weather conditions, which slowed the speed of winds in the Bay of Bengal, resulted in the high levels of pollutants enveloping Chennai

**Basic Information:****'The National Air Quality Index' (AQI):**

- 'One Number- One Colour-One Description' for the common man to judge the air quality within his vicinity.
- The formulation of the index was a continuation of the initiatives under Swachh Bharat Mission envisioned by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.



- There are six AQI categories, namely Good, Satisfactory, Moderately polluted, Poor, Very Poor, and Severe. The proposed AQI will consider eight pollutants (PM10, PM2.5, NO2, SO2, CO, O3, NH3, and Pb) for which short-term (up to 24-hourly averaging period) National Ambient Air Quality Standards are prescribed.
- Based on the measured ambient concentrations, corresponding standards and likely health impact, a sub-index is calculated for each of these pollutants. The worst sub-index reflects overall AQI. Associated likely health impacts for different AQI categories and pollutants have been also suggested, with primary inputs from the medical expert members of the group

### 11. New species of large gecko discovered

#### Key Point:

- New Lizard in Eastern Ghats
- A team of scientists' has found Geckos(a new species) from the Eastern Ghats
- The Kanger valley rock gecko Hemidactylus kangerensis is the newest addition to India's lizard species
- According to a paper published in the taxonomic journal Comptes Rendus Biologies, researchers of the National Centre for Biological Sciences has discovered the gecko from Chhattisgarh's Kanger Ghati National Park
- According to the researchers, the discovery highlights the need for dedicated surveys across the Eastern Ghats, where biodiversity has not been quantified too well

### 12. Arctic sea ice waning faster than predicted, says study

#### Context:

- Climate Change and its impacts.

#### Highlights of the study by University of Calgary, Canada:

- Arctic sea ice, a key indicator of climate change, could be dwindling faster than predicted.
- Research undertaken by the Cryosphere Climate Research Group under the Department of Geography at the university has found that satellite measurements over the years have overestimated the thickness of Arctic sea ice by as much as 25% because of the presence of salty snow

#### Impacts:

- Dwindling ice cover hastens the warming of oceans, and has an impact on weather phenomena like the El Nino that influences the Asian monsoon.
- The thinning ice would make it difficult for animals like polar bears and seals and organisms like phytoplankton to survive

#### Basic Information:

#### Cryosphere:

- There are places on Earth that are so cold that water is frozen solid.
- These areas of snow or ice, which are subject to temperatures below 32°F for at least part of the year, compose the cryosphere.
- The term "cryosphere" comes from the Greek word, "krios," which means cold.
- Ice and snow on land are one part of the cryosphere. This includes the largest parts of the cryosphere, the continental ice sheets found in Greenland and Antarctica, as well as ice caps, glaciers, and areas of snow and permafrost. When continental ice flows out from land and to the sea surface, we get shelf ice.
- The other part of the cryosphere is ice that is found in water. This includes frozen parts of the ocean, such as waters surrounding Antarctica and the Arctic. It also includes frozen rivers and lakes, which mainly occur in polar areas.
- The components of the cryosphere play an important role in the Earth's climate. Snow and ice reflect heat from the sun, helping to regulate our planet's temperature. Because polar regions are some of the most sensitive to climate shifts, the cryosphere may be one of the first places where scientists are able to identify global changes in climate

### 13. Four Asian vulture species now on highest protection list

#### In News

- Several species of vultures, including four that have India on their migratory routes, were awarded the highest protection by the **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals**.
- **The whale shark**, which inhabits the Indian Ocean, got global protection too. However, the proposal to extend additional protection to the **chinkara or Indian gazelle** was withdrawn.
- The convention in Manila concluded with approvals for protection of 34 species in submissions made by 24 countries **from Asia, Africa, the Americas, Europe and Oceania**.
- The Asian vultures that are set to get collaborative international protection are the **red-headed vulture, white-rumped vulture, Indian vulture and slender-billed vulture**.
- **Threats:** They are faced with threats such as poisoning, hunting, collision with electricity cables and habitat degradation.
- A subspecies of the **black noddy, the yellow bunting and the lesser and great grey shrike** are the other avians on the protected list.
- Lions, chimpanzees, giraffes and leopards were marked out as species that needed additional protection

**Marine Species:**

- Widespread over-fishing is driving many shark species, including the whale shark, to extinction. India is among 121 nations whose waters are home to sharks threatened with near extinction. The major threats are bycatch in nets and vessel strikes.
- Proposals for conservation of the blue shark and common guitarfish have also been accepted.
- A resolution to develop and manage protected area networks within the ASEAN region has been adopted.
- Proposals submitted by Mongolia to protect two of Central Asia's rarest species, Przewalski's horse and the Gobi bear, also got the nod.
- The Caspian seal has also been identified for conservation. It is the only marine mammal found in the world's largest inland sea, where its migration is prompted by ice formation and foraging

**About the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals:**

- The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals -- more commonly abbreviated to just the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) or the Bonn Convention -- aims to conserve terrestrial, marine and avian migratory species throughout their range. It is an international treaty, concluded under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme, concerned with the conservation of wildlife and habitats on a global scale
- Since the Convention's entry into force, its membership has grown steadily to include over 120 Parties from Africa, Central and South America, Asia, Europe and Oceania.
- The Convention was signed in 1979 in Bad Godesberg, a suburb of Bonn (hence the name), and entered into force in 1983. The depositary is the government of the Federal Republic of Germany.
- The CMS is the only global and UN-based intergovernmental organization established exclusively for the conservation and management of terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory species throughout their range. CMS and its daughter agreements determine policy and provide further guidance on specific issues through their Strategic Plans, Action Plans, resolutions, decisions and guidelines. All maintain on their websites a list of all decisions taken, guidelines issues and Action Plans adopted by the Member States

**14. Climate change taking a toll on global health: Lancet****Key highlights of the New research paper-**

- "The Lancet Countdown: Tracking Progress on Health and Climate Change" published by The Lancet:
- The Lancet report talks of the various ways climate change has started affecting the health of people across the planet.

- On an average there has been a 5.3% fall in productivity for rural labour estimated globally since 2000, as a result of rising temperatures around the world.
- In 2016, this took more than 9,20,000 people globally out of the workforce, with 4,18,000 of them in India alone.
- China, Bangladesh, India and Indonesia are the countries that have registered the highest number of deaths linked to air pollution

**Anthropogenic effect**

- The research builds on the work of the 2015 Lancet Commission on Health and Climate Change, which concluded that anthropogenic climate change threatens to undermine the last 50 years of gains in public health.
- The report said that over one billion people globally will be faced with a need to migrate within 90 years, due to a rise in sea level caused by ice shelf collapse, unless action is taken.
- The research found that 87% of a random sample of global cities are in breach of WHO air pollution guidelines.
- The world has seen a 46% global increase in weather related disasters since 2000, the report pointed out. The total value of economic losses resulting from climate-related extreme weather events was estimated at \$129 billion in 2016

**Key Findings**

- "The findings show that climate change is affecting the health of all populations, today. These impacts are disproportionately felt by communities least responsible for climate change and those who are the most vulnerable in society."

**15. Pondicherry Shark, Red Sea Torpedo and Tentacled Butterfly Ray may have become extinct, fear scientists.****In News:**

- Three marine species, the Pondicherry Shark, the Red Sea Torpedo and the Tentacled Butterfly Ray might have become possibly extinct in the oceanic waters of the Arabian Seas Region (ASR) since no evidence of its existence has surfaced in the last three decades.
- Scientists are also worried about the possible disappearance of other species from the region even before they were known to science.
- The first ever assessment of the conservation status of sharks, rays, and chimaeras (collectively called chondrichthyans) in the region has left the scientists grim-faced as 78 of the 153 species revived were found fighting for survival
- **Critically Endangered:**
- The Guitar fish found in coastal waters of Kerala and Tamil Nadu and
- The Ganges Shark found in Arabian Sea

- **Arabian Seas Region** The ASR covers the waters of the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, Sea of Oman, and the Persian Gulf. The region is also bordered by 20 countries including India, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel and Pakistan.
- Key Fact: India has banned the exploitation and trade of 10 species of sharks and rays. In 2015, India even banned the export and import of shark fins of all species.

**Reasons:**

- By-catch was found to be the biggest threat to the majority of chondrichthyan fishes besides the "pressure from artisanal and industrial fisheries."
- Increasing decline in the extent and quality of habitat as a result of coastal development and other anthropogenic disturbances, particularly for those critical habitats that many species depend on coral reefs, mangroves, sea grasses pose a serious threat to the survival of many species

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### 1. 'Unexpectedly' strong solar storm sparks global aurora on Mars

#### In News:

- An unexpectedly strong solar storm hit Mars this month, sparking a global aurora and doubling radiation levels on the red planet.
- The solar event on September 11 sparked an aurora more than 25 times brighter than any previously seen by the MAVEN orbiter, which has been studying the Martian atmosphere's interaction with the solar wind since 2014.
- It produced radiation levels on the surface more than double any previously measured by the Curiosity rover's Radiation Assessment Detector (RAD) since that mission's landing in 2012. The high readings lasted more than two days

### 2. New nanotube material may help create hypersonic aircraft

#### In News:

- Scientists have identified an extremely lightweight material- boron nitride nanotubes (BNNTs), that can withstand a high temperature and stress, a step towards developing hypersonic aircraft able to travel at five to 10 times the speed of sound.
- **Advantages:** this discovery could lead to a drastic decrease in flight times.
- **Key Fact:**
- Carbon nanotubes have been used in planes for their strength – they are stronger than steel – and their ability to conduct heat. However, BNNTs are the wave of the future when it comes to air travel.
- While carbon nanotubes can stay stable at temperatures up to 400 degrees Celsius, BNNTs can withstand up to 900 degrees Celsius
- BNNTs are also able to handle high amounts of stress and are extremely lightweight
- Withstanding high temperatures is an important requirement for any material meant to build the world's next super planes

### 3. Mergers of neutron stars are factories of heavy chemical elements

#### In News:

- European Southern Observatory (ESO) has announced the first direct, visual identification of the source of a gravitational wave
- Detected by the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) on August 17
- This is the first time that such an event has been seen, rather than detected, and the output of numerous telescopes, terrestrial and in orbit, compared to identify a single source

- Radiations were detected in optical/near-infrared wavelengths as the counterpart of a gravitational wave source

#### Nobel Prize for LIGO scientists

On October 3, LIGO founders Rainer Weiss, Barry C Barish and Kip S Thorne were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics for detecting gravitational waves in 2015, generated by the collision of two black holes

#### What led to this finding?

- In August this year LIGO, together with the Virgo observatory in Italy, detected waves from the cataclysmic merger of two neutron stars, designated GW170817
- Soon after, the Fermi space telescope detected a burst of gamma rays from the same region of space, which is a signature of massive stars in collision
- The ESO then organized the astrophysical equivalent of a manhunt, marshaling its own resources and those of allied organizations
- Its Vista, VST and La Silla telescopes in Chile, along with the US DECam telescope, located the source of light near the galaxy NGC 4993 in the constellation Hydra
- The signal was picked up in Hawaii and over the following weeks, about 70 observatories watched the event unfold when they were on the dark side of the earth
- The Hubble Space Telescope tracked it, too

#### What do the observations tell?

- The observations place the electromagnetic source at 130 light years away, which matches with the distance to GW170817
- It confirms that when neutron stars collide into a kilonova — a body 1,000 times brighter than the average Nova — it produces a gamma-ray burst and gravitational waves
- This enormous exercise has joined the dots between various forms of imaging events and objects in deep space
- Also, ESO's experiment has established a much more important principle — that it is now possible to correlate the findings of instruments looking into the sky in different spectra

### 4. Come 2019, the kilogram will get a new measure

#### Key Points:

- Reference used at present: For 125 years, a salt-shaker-sized cylinder housed at the Bureau International des Poids et Mesures (BIPM), Paris and weighing exactly a kilogram served as the definition of the measure. The cylinder is made of 90% platinum and 10% iridium



- However, an international conference of heads of metrology institutes decided, on October 19 in Sevres, France, that the kilogram will no longer be pegged to this cylinder

#### **No more artefacts**

- In essence, the units were freed from being defined on the basis of artefacts, as these being objects, were subject to wear and tear and sources of eventual error.
- The new artefacts, according to the International Committee for Weights and Measures, ought to derive from the constants of nature that are all interdependent.
- These include constants such as the Planck constant — the ratio of the electromagnetic radiation from a photon to its frequency — and the charge of an electron.
- Until this month, the kilogram was the only one among the units still pegged to a real object and now — after a formal vote in 2018 — the world is set to redefine the kilogram in terms of the Planck constant, the second and the metre.

### **5. India's infant mortality rate declines 8% in 2016**

#### **In News:**

#### **Decline in infant mortality rate (IMR)**

- India has attained an 8% decline in the IMR in 2016 from a year ago
- According to the Sample Registration System (SRS) bulletin, IMR has declined to 34 per 1,000 live births last year from 37 per 1,000 live births in 2015
- The Bulletin is released by the Office of the Registrar General
- It attributed the improvement to countrywide efforts to expand health services coverage, including reproductive, maternal and newborn health services

#### **Key points:**

- IMR declined in 29 states and Union territories, was stable in two states and increased in five states and Union territories
- The highest decline of 7 points was reported by Chandigarh and the highest increase of 6 points was reported by Arunachal Pradesh

### **6. 'Hypertension high in Kerala, low in Bihar'**

#### **Context:**

- Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) have become a growing threat to global health.
- A recent study done to assess the diet and nutritional status of urban population has pointed out that the increase in incidence of NCDs can be attributed to change in food habits, sedentary behaviour and unhealthy lifestyles, among other risk factors.
- The survey was carried out by National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau during 2015-16 by researchers from the National Institute of Nutrition.

#### **In News:**

- Study: 'Diet and Nutritional Status of Urban Population in India and Prevalence of Obesity, Hypertension, Diabetes and Hyperlipidaemia in Urban Men and Women',
- Highlights:
- The prevalence rates for non-communicable diseases as well as stunting, under-nutrition and obesity in children under 5 years in the 16 States surveyed are as below:

#### **Hypertension:**

- Kerala has the highest prevalence of hypertension (31.4% women and 38.6% men) as well as high cholesterol in urban men and women.
- Lowest level of hypertension in Bihar (22.2% men and 15.7% women).

#### **Diabetic:**

- Puducherry tops the list of States with the highest prevalence of diabetic men and women (42%), followed by Delhi (36%), Karnataka and Kerala (33% each). Diabetics were the highest in the age group of 60-70 and lowest in the age group of 18-30.

#### **Obesity:**

- The Southern States were among the 10 with the highest prevalence of obesity among urban adults. Puducherry topped with almost 60% women and 42% men being overweight.
- Tamil Nadu was close behind with 54% men and 38% women recorded as obese. Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh recorded high levels of obesity among its urban men and women.

#### **Lifestyle practices:**

- Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala were among the top six States which had the most tobacco smokers among urban men

#### **Underweight Children:**

- While U.P. had the highest (43.6%) proportion of underweight children followed by Madhya Pradesh (32.3%), Puducherry had the lowest (14.2%)

### **7. Many Indians skip nutritious food**

#### **Context:**

- A nation-wide study carried out by the National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (NNMB) to assess urban nutrition

#### **In News**

#### **Highlights:**

- A great diversity in food consumption in 16 States in the country
- Indians consume far less than the recommended quantum of several micro-nutrients and vital vitamins.
- Andaman and Nicobar Islands reported the highest intake of flesh foods, including meat and fish, Odisha has the highest consumption of green leafy vegetables

(GLV). On an average, while the recommended dietary intake of GLV is 40g/CU/day, the consumption in the country is 24g/CU/day

- Madhya Pradesh has the lowest intake of flesh foods and Kerala consumes the least green leafy vegetables.
- If Madhya Pradesh has a sweet tooth with the highest intake of sugar and jaggery, Odisha and Assam have the highest intake of salt. Rajasthan is high on the intake of fats and oils as well and milk and milk products.
- Disturbing trends: While the average intake of cereals and millets was found to be 320g/CU/day, which is lower than the recommended dietary intake (RDI), the intake of pulses and legumes was about 42g/CU/day. This is on par with the suggested level of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)

## 8. Health ministry approves new tuberculosis drug

### Context:

- New Drug against Tuberculosis

### In News:

- The technical group on tuberculosis in the ministry of health has given approval to 'Delamanid'
- The 'Delamanid' is in its phase 3 clinical trials
- Health Ministry will initially conduct a trial with this drug on over 400 patients in a controlled manner
- New Drug will be included in the **Revised National TB Control Program (RNTCP)** from this month in parallel to Bedaquiline
- Key Fact: increasing number of multi-drug resistant (MDR) and extensive drug resistant (XDR) tuberculosis cases in India

### Government's expectations from the 'Delamanid'

- Delamanid has proved effective in many clinical trials in South Africa and Japan
- Taking a cue from this, government are expecting that over 70-80% patients will respond to tuberculosis treatment

## 9. WHO releases new guidelines to manage obesity in children

### Context:

- Childhood obesity a "Global epidemic"
- The World Health Organization (WHO) has released new guidelines on how trained professionals can better identify youngsters in need of help

### In News:

- India has the second highest number of obese children in the world after China, according to a study published in The New England Journal of Medicine in June this year.
- Key Point: Doctors say identification of obesity in children is the main issue as often parents think a chubby child is a healthy child

### Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI):

- The WHO guidelines titled "**Assessing and managing children at primary healthcare facilities to prevent overweight and obesity in the context of the double burden of malnutrition**" provides updates for the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI).
- The guideline includes counselling, dieting and assessment of eating habits along with the usual weight and height measurements

### Double-burden of malnutrition:

- In 2016, one half of all children overweight or obese lived in Asia and one quarter lived in Africa.
- Paradoxically, overweight and obesity is found in populations where under-nutrition remains common — this phenomenon is sometimes termed as 'double-burden of malnutrition'

### Key Fact:

- A study published in **Paediatric Obesity** says India will have over 17 million children with excess weight by 2025.
- **Reasons for the increasing trend of Obesity among children:** urbanisation, increased income, availability of fast foods, educational demands, television viewing and gaming have led to a rise in the consumption of foods high in fats, sugar and salt and low physical activity

### What needs to be done?

- **Diagnose at early stage:** Early prevention is the need of the hour to avoid an entire generation from falling prey to heart ailments, hypertension and diabetic complications.

## 10. Underweight and obese children: Alarm bells ring at both ends in India, Lancet study raises concern

### Highlights of a study in the Lancet:

- The study was released on World Obesity Day on October 11
- The study looked at BMI (body mass index) trends in 200 countries from 1975-2016
- **Obese Population:** It has found that the number of obese girls in age group 5-19 has risen from 5 million to 50 million in 40 years. And that of boys from 6 million to 74 million.
- **Underweight Population:** The researchers say that if current world trends continue, "obese" will soon be more common than "underweight"

### Scenario in India:

- India has among the largest shares of underweight children and teenagers
- And at the other end, it is part of a trend that has seen the number of obese under-20s worldwide rising tenfold in 10 years
- In India, the prevalence of obesity is between 1-2 %

- The prevalence of mild to severe underweight under-20s in India is 22.7% among girls and 30.7% among boys

#### **Obesity among children:**

- The middle class and upper middle class in India have fewer children and tend to overfeed them under the pretext of pampering
- As per the Lancet study, the percentage is between 1-2 in India but these will increase as social structures are changing in India

### **11. Idli, dosa help fight mineral deficiency**

#### **In News:**

#### **Highlights of a study published last month in Current Science by scientists of the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research.**

- South Indian food items like idlis and dosas help in the body's absorption of minerals such as iron and zinc.
- Why?: This is because these dishes have undergone fermentation, soaking, and germination, which reduces phytates, leading to enhanced bioavailability
- A large number of Indians have trouble absorbing iron and zinc from food, this is mainly due to vegetarian food habits.
- The high content of phytates (anti-oxidants in cereals, legumes and oilseeds) in Indian foods slows down the absorption of iron and zinc. This causes deficiencies even in people whose diet may contain abundant quantities of these minerals

#### **Suggestions:**

- Research efforts should focus on bioavailability (absorption by the body) rather than biofortification, as food sources already supply enough iron and zinc.
- The absorption efficiency of these minerals among most Indians eating phytate-rich foods was below 10%. It should rise to 25% and above. This does not mean that people should quit vegetarian food, but they should adjust diets to reduce phytates.
- The problem of phytates could also be overcome by eating fruits like guava and amla, and meat, poultry or fish

### **12. India's hunger problem is worse than North Korea's: global hunger index report**

#### **Context:**

- Recently released report of the International Food Policy Research Institute.
- The report talks about the global hunger problem.

#### **Basics:**

**Global Hunger Index:** The GHI score is a multidimensional index composed of four indicators

- Proportion of undernourished in the population,
- Prevalence of child mortality,
- Child stunting, and
- Child wasting

**Scores and indication:** On the severity scale, a GHI score of less than 10 means "low" prevalence of hunger while a score of more than 50 implies an "extremely alarming" situation

#### **Key Highlights of Global Hunger Index report:**

- India ranks 100 among 119 countries. It has a score of 31.4 on the Global Hunger Index (GHI). India is at the high end of the "serious" category.
- More than one-fifth of Indian children under five weigh too little for their height and over a third are too short for their age
- Comparison with other nations: Although India ranks above Pakistan, it performs dismally with other such as Nepal (72), Myanmar (77), Bangladesh (88), Sri Lanka (84) and China (29).
- India is the world's second largest food producer, yet it is also home to the second highest population of under-nourished in the world.
- According to the GHI report, more than a fifth (21%) of children in India suffer from wasting (low weight for height)—up from 20% in 2005-2006.
- India's poor score is one of the main factors pushing South Asia to the category of the worst performing region on the GHI scale this year.
- Best performers amongst Developing nations: Chile, Cuba and Turkey have a GHI score of less than 5 and ranked the best among developing nations.
- Worst performers: Nations like Chad and Central African Republic fare the worst with a score of 43.5 and 50.9, respectively.

### **13. 7 deadly pesticides world has banned used in India**

#### **Context:**

- Recent deaths of farmers due to pesticide poisoning in Yavatmal and other districts of Maharashtra have opened up a debate over the rationale of using all such pesticides in India which are either banned or restricted elsewhere in the world due to their high toxicity

#### **In News:**

- The Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment has come out with a list of seven extremely or highly hazardous pesticides which continue to be used in India despite these being banned in many countries.
- The think tank questioned the central committee, headed by IARI scientist Anupam Verma, which had in 2015 reviewed the use of these pesticides but preferred not to ban them immediately.
- Seven hazardous pesticides are on the list of 18 Class-I (classified as extremely/highly hazardous), which accounted for nearly 30% of the total pesticide use in India in 2015-16.
- Though the central committee had reviewed use of 66 pesticides and recommended ban on 13 of them from 2018 and phasing out of six others by 2020, allowing the use of others in the list till the next review is something which bothers researchers and farm experts.

- Referring to international code of conduct on pesticide management, the CSE flagged a provision which says all pesticides whose handling and application require the use of personal protective equipment that is uncomfortable, expensive or not readily available should be avoided, especially in the case of small-scale users and farm workers in hot climates.
- The think-tank said that the pesticides such as **Monocrotophos, Oxydemetonmethyl, Acephate and Profenophos** were believed to be responsible for the deaths and illness in Maharashtra.
- Pesticides like **Monocrotophos and Oxydemeton-methyl** are considered Class-I pesticides by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Class-I pesticides can be banned in several countries

#### 14. **Most pollution-linked deaths occur in India Highlights of the report by The Lancet Commission on pollution and health:**

- Number of deaths in 2015: 2.51 million, India had been ranked the No.1 in pollution related deaths.
- China recorded the second highest number of such deaths (1.8 million).
- India accounted for about 28 per cent of an estimated nine million pollution linked deaths worldwide in 2015.
- Leading cause of deaths** in 2015: air pollution accounting for 6.5 million premature deaths.
- Among the world's 10 most populous countries, the largest increase in numbers of pollution related deaths were seen in India and Bangladesh. But the absolute number of air pollution deaths in Bangladesh was only 0.2 million.
- The number of water pollution deaths in China was only about 34,000, compared to 0.64 million in the case of India.
- In the case of air pollution, the number of deaths in India from ambient air pollution was 1.09 million, while deaths from household air pollution from solid fuels were 0.97 million.
- In the case of water pollution, 0.5 million deaths were caused by unsafe water source, while unsafe sanitation caused 0.32 million deaths.
- Several cities in India and China recorded average annual concentrations of particulate matter PM<sub>2.5</sub> pollution of greater than 100 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, and more than 50% of global deaths due to ambient air pollution in 2015 occurred in India and China

#### **Pollution and diseases:**

- Deaths from air pollution were a result of diseases such as heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).
- Pollution has been responsible for the most non-communicable disease deaths.
- Pollution is responsible for more deaths than a high-sodium diet (4.1 million), obesity (4.0 million), alcohol (2.3 million), road accidents (1.4 million), or child and maternal malnutrition (1.4 million).

- Pollution was also responsible for three times as many deaths as AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria combined

#### **Background information:**

- The Lancet Commission on pollution and health is a two-year project in which more than 40 international health and environmental authors were involved

#### 15. **Hungry for publicity**

##### **Context:**

- India ranks 100th out of 119 countries on the global hunger index – behind North Korea, Bangladesh, and Iraq but ahead of Pakistan
- The report ranked 119 countries in the developing world, nearly half of which have 'extremely alarming', 'alarming' or 'serious' hunger levels

##### **Key Stats:**

- Absolute poverty in India in 2011/12 came out to be around 12 percent, not 23 percent as officially reported (Tendulkar poverty line)
- The difference between 23 and 12 percent is the difference in measurement of consumption measured on a 30-day recall basis for food rather than the more accurate seven-day recall basis

##### **IFPRI's Hunger Index**

- IFPRI hunger index is not a hunger index at all
- It is an index about child mortality, and stunting, and wasting, and undernourishment of children

##### **Addressing hunger:**

- A definition of hunger is needed to evaluate policies to alleviate hunger
- The conventional approach is to measure hunger via calorie consumption
- However, the caloric equation (poverty means low consumption of calories) has long been given up as an indicator of hunger, or much else

##### **Problem in India:**

- Malnutrition affects stunting and weight and despite having considerably higher per capita income, India has the same IFPRI nutrition (reported as hunger) status as sub-Saharan Africa
- There is a genuine nutrition absorption problem in India
- The most likely cause of this is bad sanitation, a large component of which is open-defecation
- In the Indian environment, access to water and toilets, breastfeeding (to impart immunity in an unhealthy environment), access to sound health advice/treatment, the prevalence of vaccination and availability of vitamin supplements are indicators of bad health, malnutrition etc

##### **Strategy to address the issue:**

- In 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi started the drive to stop open defecation and said that we needed to do so from the ramparts of the Red Fort



- A few years from now, the large role played by toilet construction, and adoption, in increasing nutrition efficacy in India to East Asian levels will be visible

#### 16. Has hunger increased in India in recent years?

##### Context:

- India's ranking in Hunger Index

##### In news:

- India has ranked at the 100th position among 119 countries in its 2017 **Global Hunger Index (GHI) rankings**
- India has had a higher rank in previous versions of these rankings
- GHI is done by the Washington-based **International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)**

##### Inference:

- These findings have created an impression that the prevalence of hunger has increased in India in recent years
- A closer look at the numbers suggests that such conclusions are unwarranted
- To start with, the numbers reflect under-nutrition rather than hunger
- And even on that score, India's performance, has been improving over the past decade although its nutritional indicators still appear poor compared to those of its peers

##### Basis of GHI 2017 rankings

- The 2017 GHI rankings are based on the percentage of under-nourished population and three health indicators for children aged less than five years

1) Wasting (low weight for height)

2) Stunting (low height for age) and

3) Mortality

- The GHI can take values between zero to hundred
- Zero would indicate absence of any of the indicators, while hundred would indicate the worst possible situation

##### Reduction in India's GHI score

- The reduction in the GHI score is not surprising given what the statistics from the **Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the National Family and Health Survey (NFHS)**
- FAO data shows that prevalence of undernourishment has been decreasing in India over the past decade

#### 17. 43 urban health centres go to pvt hands

##### In news:

- The Rajasthan health department has signed a MoUs with private players for operating urban primary health centres (PHC) in the state.
- Health department has handed over 43 urban PHC to 14 private players for operating it.

- These PHCs will be operated on **public private partnership (PPP) mode**.
- The responsibility of functioning of PHCs for which MoU had been signed will be of the private players.
- In the urban PHCs, the facilities of free medicines schemes, free diagnostic test schemes, immunization would remain available like they were available earlier

#### 18. Scientists link new virus to kala-azar

##### In news:

- Researchers have stumbled upon tantalizing evidence of an unknown virus that may be responsible for the persistence of kala-azar or visceral leishmaniasis.
- Historically, the parasite *Leishmania donovani* is believed to be responsible for the dreaded infection. People get infected when bitten by an insect called the sandfly, which harbours the disease-causing parasite.
- **New discovery:** a group of scientists from West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh said that another parasite-*Leptomonas seymouri* may also be involved in the spreads of the disease.
- **The fact is still not clear:** Scientists are still not clear how the parasites cause the infection and how they manage to hide within the body.

##### Endemic to subcontinent

- Kala-azar is endemic to the Indian subcontinent in 119 districts in four countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal)
- India itself accounts for half the global burden of the disease.
- If untreated, kala-azar can kill within two years of the onset of the ailment, though the availability of a range of drugs has meant that less than one in 1,000 now succumb to the disease.

##### Basic information:

##### About Kala-azar:

- Visceral leishmaniasis (VL), also known as kala-azar, black fever, and Dumdum fever, is the most severe form of leishmaniasis and, without proper diagnosis and treatment, is associated with high fatality.
- Leishmaniasis is a disease caused by protozoan parasites of the *Leishmania* genus.
- The parasite migrates to the internal organs such as the liver, spleen (hence "visceral"), and bone marrow, and, if left untreated, will almost always result in the death of the host.
- Signs and symptoms include fever, weight loss, fatigue, anemia, and substantial swelling of the liver and spleen.
- This disease is the second-largest parasitic killer in the world (after malaria), responsible for an estimated 200,000 to 400,000 infections each year worldwide

**19. Introduce eggs, milk in mid-day meal, ICDS diet: NHRC****In news:**

- Stressing that food being served under the mid-day meal scheme and Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) do not guarantee the protein intake as envisaged, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has recommended to state governments and the Ministry of Women and Child Development to introduce eggs and milk as part of the meal in all states.
- The recommendation was made during a conference organised by the NHRC on the implementation of the National Food Security Act, 2013 on Friday.
- Malnutrition continues to haunt India despite economic growth and the mid day meal scheme and the ICDS are the two biggest nutrition programmes.
- While the meal is supplied in schools, the ICDS aims at providing supplementary nutrition through anganwadi centres to children aged below 6 years, besides pregnant and lactating women

**The recommendations of the NHRC**

- For the ICDS scheme, it has been recommended that adequate food testing facilities be created preferably at the district level by all states through the public health department, universities and colleges.
- For the meal scheme, it was recommended that social audit and evaluation by a third party be conducted annually for each district and the reports be published on state portals.
- It also said that no child should be deprived of the meal because of non-linking of Aadhaar.
- The NHRC also questioned the state governments whether they have strictly followed Supreme Court orders banning contractors in supplying nutrition under ICDS and also whether adequate funds have been made available for full implementation of the Maternity Benefit Scheme or not.
- Moreover, experts said cash transfers instead of hot cooked meals may be counterproductive and must not be encouraged as cash can be used for other expenditure.
- Citing Kerala and Tamil Nadu as examples, the states were asked to resolve infrastructural gaps in terms of buildings, kitchens, drinking water supply and toilets within three years, by sourcing funds from different schemes and departments.

**20. Fewer TB deaths in India: WHO****Context:**

- World Health Organisation (WHO) report related to TB cases in India

**In News:**

- Death from tuberculosis in India saw a 12% decline from last year.
- The number of new cases saw a 5% increase.
- With 1.7 million new cases in 2016, **India continued**

**to be the largest contributor to the global burden with up to a quarter of the 6.3 million new cases of TB** (up from 6.1 million in 2015).

- In spite of this year's dip, India accounts for about 32% of the number of people worldwide who succumbed to the disease

**Key fact:**

- Rise in cases was due to greater surveillance and the dip in mortality from 480,000 to 423,000 in 2016, due to improved drug management.
- Globally, the TB mortality rate is falling at about 3% per year.
- TB incidence is falling at about 2% per year and 16% of TB cases die from the disease

**Key Inference:**

- "Overall, the latest picture is one of a still high burden of disease, and progress that is not fast enough to reach targets or to make major headway in closing persistent gaps,"

# INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE

## 1. Maoists raising new group: official

### In News:

- A senior Home Ministry official said that there were reports, that Maoists were attempting to raise a new armed group-**'Vistara platoon,'** along the **Madhya Pradesh-Maharashtra-Chhattisgarh** trijunction as they continue to face the heat at their stronghold in **Bastar**.
- The new unit, 'Vistara platoon,' was trying to gain a foothold at the trijunction, which has less deployment of security forces than the seven districts in the Bastar division of Chhattisgarh.
- **Motive:** This is possibly a strategy, so that security forces lower their guard in Bastar and concentrate on this area instead

## 2. Submarine Khanderi begins sea trials

### In News:

- The second **Scorpene Khanderi** has began its sea trials.
- Khanderi, named after an island fort of Maratha ruler Chhatrapati Shivaji, was launched in January and had undergone some testing.
- The Navy formally took delivery of the first **submarine Kalvari** on September 21 and is awaiting its induction. The remaining three are in various stages of outfitting and expected to roll out tentatively in nine month intervals.
- The Mazagaon Docks Ltd. (MDL) is constructing six Scorpene conventional diesel-electric submarines under Project-75 with technology transfer from Naval Group, formerly DCNS of France, under a \$3.75-billion deal signed in October 2005. However, the project has seen steep delays and all six submarines are expected to be inducted by 2020-21.
- The Navy has recently issued the Request For Information (RFI) for procurement of a new line of submarines under Project 75I under the Strategic Partnership model estimated to cost over ₹50,000 crore

## 3. India to build more roads on China border

### In News:

- The Ministry of Defence has decided to significantly enhance infrastructure along the Sino-Indian border including near Doklam, where the militaries of both sides were engaged in a two-month standoff.
- The decision was taken at the Army's commanders conference from October 9 to 15 which extensively deliberated on the recent face-off with China, besides analysing all possible security challenges on the northern border, according to official sources.

- Four passes Niti, Lipulekh, Thangla and Tsangchokla have been decided to be connected by 2020 on priority

## 4. India in elite group with stealth ship

### In news:

- India is rapidly marching towards indigenisation and the commissioning of the **third Kamorta class Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) stealth corvette- INS Kiltan**, is a classic example of that.
- **Uniqueness:** This ship is unique, as about 81% is built indigenously and is the first built by India that has a superstructure made up of carbon fibre composite material. This makes it a stealth corvette and makes India one among the few nations that have this technology or this class of ships.
- **Built by:** Garden Reach Ship Builders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata.

### Key features:

- The carbon composite material gives it an extra stealth edge and also lowers the top weight and maintenance cost.
- The installed propulsion and auxiliary systems provides very low radiated underwater noise feature, required for anti-submarine warfare.
- The enhanced stealth features include 'X' form of Hull, full beam superstructure, inclined ship sides and use of Infra Red Signature Suppression (IRSS)

### Prelims related facts:

### World Monuments Fund (WMF)

- World Monuments Fund (WMF) is a private, international, non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of historic architecture and cultural heritage sites around the world through fieldwork, advocacy, grant making, education, and training.
- Founded in 1965, WMF is headquartered in New York, and has offices and affiliates around the world, including Cambodia, France, Peru, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. In addition to hands-on management, the affiliates identify, develop, and manage projects, negotiate local partnerships, and attract local support to complement funds provided by donors.
- Every two years WMF publishes the World Monuments Watch (formerly the World Monuments Watch List of 100 Most Endangered Sites). Since the first list was compiled in 1996, this program has drawn international attention to cultural heritage sites around the world threatened by neglect, vandalism, armed conflict, commercial development, natural disasters, and climate change. Through the World Monuments Watch, WMF fosters community support for the protection of endangered sites, and attracts technical and financial support for the sites

## 5. India eyes military expansion

### Key points:

- India's plan of Military expansion
- India is working on expanding the military effectiveness of its outpost at the juncture of Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea
- This includes creation of military infrastructure for greater naval presence in the islands which dominates the strategically important Malacca Strait

### Possible reasons behind these steps

- The military focus is on countering the increasing Chinese presence in the region, which has been a cause of concern
- Chinese submarines have been sighted in the area and have also been docked at bases in Pakistan and Sri Lanka

### Extension of airstrip at INAS Baaz

- INAS Baaz is the naval aviation base on Campbell Bay on the Great Nicobar island
- It is currently being extended from 3,050 feet to 10,000 feet
- The extension is scheduled to be completed by 2021
- It will allow the Navy to place its modern P-8I surveillance aircraft at INAS Baaz
- The Navy currently operates its eight P-8I aircraft (procured from the US in 2013) from INS Rajali in Tamil Nadu
- If the P-8I aircraft shift to Campbell Bay, our surveillance reach will get multiplied by thousand miles

### Importance of INS BAAZ:

- Baaz gives us that flexibility which will cover South China Sea
- Moreover, Baaz is adjacent to Malacca straits, an area of immense strategic interest to us

### Other developments

- The Navy also plans to commission its second Floating Dry Dock Navy (FDDN)
- It will allow more naval ships to be maintained and serviced in the islands
- The Navy is also in the process of constructing three forward operating bases (FOBs) in the islands — at Diglipur, Kamorta and at Campbell Bay
- It will allow its Khukri class corvettes to be distributed across various locations in the archipelago

## 6. Law And Immunity:

### Context

- An expert committee submitted an interim report on 'How to police cyberspace' to the Union Home Ministry.
- The report recommended amendments to the Indian Penal Code (IPC)

### Key Points:

### The recommended amendments to the Indian Penal Code (IPC) are noteworthy for two reasons

- One, they bring within the ambit of IPC (through amendments to Sections 153 and 505) any visual, audio, video, verbal or written communication, transmitted or retransmitted through any telecommunication service, device or computer
- They propose that any speech that is disparaging, offensive, indecent, abusive, hate, gravely threatening — and so interpreted — be criminalised

### New avatar of Section 66A

- Section 66A of the IT Act may have been struck down in the Shreya Singhal case
- But this is its new, more astute avatar with a better operating legal-ware
- It seeks to add yet another speech-control legislation to the plethora of existing penal codes
- These are Sections 295A, 124A, 153A, 505 that target acts ranging from malicious, to seditious, to disruptive of public order or morality, to violent, to plain mischievous

### Governments' dubious records on free speech

- There have been many cases where on one or the other pretext of public order, morality, derogatory speech, slander, and defamation was used to outlaw advocacy, mirth, caricature and the worst of all crimes, dissent
- It chooses to turn a deaf ear to posts, threats, and tweets that are deeply offensive, obscene, misogynistic and violently communal
- It chooses to remain unmoved by any civic or national imperative when the target of vicious trolling are journalists, film-makers, authors, writers, painters, common people who are just doing their jobs as citizens
- It even chooses to use an ordinance, as in Rajasthan, to outlaw the investigation into the conduct of judicial or political power

### Freedom of speech

- It is nobody's case that the freedom of speech is an absolute freedom
- But our constitutional commitment to free speech demands that it cannot be suppressed unless the situations created by allowing the freedom are pressing and the community interest is endangered
- This "danger" cannot be remote, hypothetical, or stemming from a poor appetite for mirth and scorn
- It should have, as the Supreme Court said in Shreya Singhal case, a proximate and direct nexus with the expression



**Controlled speech adds to impunity of political power**

- The trade-off between free speech and public order/morality has never hurt political dispensations
- The more controlled speech is, the greater has been the immunity and impunity of political power

**Free speech is signal of healthy democracy**

- We need to remember that free speech preconditions the realisation of many of our claims and entitlements
- Less of it translates into less democracy in general

**7. Best defense technology offered****In news:**

- U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said that his country would provide India the best technologies for its military modernisation, which include offers to supply

**F-16 and F-18 fighter jets.**

- Statement issued by Mr. Tillerson: "The U.S. supports India's emergence as a leading power and will continue to contribute to the Indian capability to provide security throughout the region,"

**8. Army finalizes plan to modernize weapons****Context:**

- Modernization of weapons.

**In News:**

- The Army has finalized one of its biggest procurement plans for infantry modernization under which a large number of light machine guns (LMGs), battle carbines and assault rifles are being purchased at a cost of nearly ₹40,000 crore to replace its ageing and obsolete weapons.
- **Security threats:** The world's second largest standing Army has been pressing for fast-tracking the procurement of various weapons systems considering the evolving security threats.
- The Army has also finalised the specifications for a **new 7.62 mm assault rifle**, and the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), the defence ministry's highest decision making body on procurement, is expected to give the go-ahead for the much needed procurement soon

## MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

### 1. NMDC planning to exploit beach sand in Krishna, Guntur

#### In News:

- The National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) is contemplating exploring minerals available along the coast of Krishna and Guntur districts.
- The Geological Survey of India has confirmed the presence of beach sand minerals —ilmenite, rutile, zircon, garnet and sillimanite — on the coastline of the two districts and its feasibility is under study.
- In beach sand mining, the sand collected from the beach is dumped in the same area after extracting the minerals without leading to any adverse impact on the coast

#### Basic Information:

##### National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC):

- Incorporated in 1958 as a Government of India fully owned public enterprise. NMDC is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Steel, Government of India.
- Since inception involved in the exploration of wide range of minerals including iron ore, copper, rock phosphate, lime stone, dolomite, gypsum, bentonite, magnesite, diamond, tin, tungsten, graphite, beach sands etc.
- NMDC is India's single largest iron ore producer, presently producing about 30 million tones of iron ore

## PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. The Nahar Wildlife Sanctuary (NWS) is located in which state?

- A. Rajasthan
- B. Assam
- C. Haryana
- D. Kerala

2. The most important source of information about the agrarian conditions during Mughals is\_\_?

- A. Ain-i-Akbari
- B. Akbarnama
- C. Muntakhab-ul-Lubab
- D. Tarikh-i-Ferishta

3. Which among the following is known as the earliest example of Panchayatana style of temple?

- A. Dashavatara temple at Deogarh
- B. temple at Pathari
- C. Shatrughneshwara temple at Bhubaneswar
- D. Lakshmana temple at Sirpur

4. With respect to the President of India, which among the following statements is / are correct?

- 1. A person who has been president of India is eligible for immediate re-election
- 2. A person can not hold the office of president of India for more than two consecutive terms

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

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

5. Which among the following in India are known for substantial coral reef formations?

- 1. Gulf of Mannar
- 2. Gulf of Kachchh
- 3. Andaman and Nicobar
- 4. Lakshadweep Islands

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

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

6. Consider the following statements

- 1. Irrawady Dolphin is an oceanic dolphin
- 2. IUCN has classified Irrawady Dolphin as Vulnerable in the Red Data List.

Identify the correct statement

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

7. Consider the following statements

- 1. Nilgai is the largest Indian Antelope
- 2. Nilgai is not indigenous to Indian Subcontinent.
- 3. IUCN has classified Nilgai as Vulnerable in the Red Data List.

Identify the correct statement

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

8. Consider the following statements

1. MIKE stands for Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Emu.
2. MIKE comes under CITES.
3. MIKE was started in South Asia in the year 2013

Identify the correct statement

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

9. Which country to host 2017 Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)? Bill, 2015?

- A. Kazakhstan
- B. Uzbekistan
- C. Tajikistan
- D. Kyrgyzstan

10. Baburnama was written in which language?

- A. Para-Mongolic
- B. Chagatai Turkic
- C. Hijazi Arabic
- D. Bahrani Arabic

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

- A. Bahubali
- B. Buddha
- C. Natraja
- D. Mahavir

12. The power to enlarge the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of India with respect to any matter included in the Union List of Legislative Powers rests with

- A. The President of India
- B. The Chief Justice of India
- C. The Parliament
- D. The Union Ministry of Law

13. The Basic Structure of our Constitution was proclaimed by the Supreme Court in

- A. Keshvananda Bharati Case
- B. Minerva Mills Case
- C. Golak Nath Case
- D. Gopalan Case

14. "Athletes' foot" is a disease caused by

- A. Bacteria
- B. Fungus
- C. Protozoan
- D. Nematode

15. The Supreme Court's power to hear Inter-State Water Disputes can be classified under its

- A. Original Jurisdiction
- B. Appellate Jurisdiction
- C. Writ Jurisdiction
- D. Advisory Jurisdiction<sup>2</sup>

16. Consider the following statement with reference to Rajiv Gandhi Shramik Kalyan Yojana

1. RGSKY is an unemployment benefit scheme
2. Under RGSKY unemployment benefit is provided for the period of 12 months
3. RGSKY also covers medical care for the beneficiary and the beneficiary's family

Identify the correct statements

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

17. Consider the following statements

1. Khanderi is a Scorpene class submarine
2. Khanderi is an armoured tank
3. Khanderi is named after an island fort of Maratha ruler Chhatrapati Shivaji

Choose the correct answer

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



18. Consider the following statements with reference to Textile Workers Rehabilitation Fund Scheme

1. The main aim of the scheme is to provide relief to workers rendered jobless due to permanent closure of non-SSI (Small Scale Industry) textile mills in private sector
2. Under the scheme workers who have suffered job loss are given wages for two years on tapering basis
3. This scheme has been merged under Rajiv Gandhi Shramik Kalyan Yojana in 2017

Identify the correct statements from the options given below

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

19. Which of these is/are mandatory qualification(s) to contest for the office of Vice-President of India?

1. She must be a citizen of India or a person of Indian Origin (PIO) residing in India since last ten years.
2. She must have completed 35 years or age.
3. She must not hold an office for profit.
4. She must have served as a Member of Parliament (MP) or a member of Legislative Assembly in India

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

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

20. 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.

21. Consider the following statements:

1. The objective of the National Food Security Mission is to increase production of rice, wheat and pulses only
2. Production of horticulture crops have outpaced the production of food-grains consistently since 2012-13

Which of the above is/are correct?

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

22. Recently Lok Sabha passed the Motor Vehicles Amendment bill, the power to make such laws by Parliament, is under which list of constitution of India

- A. Union List
- B. State List
- C. Concurrent List
- D. None of the Above

23. India Water Stewardship Network and Alliance for Water Stewardship is a network created by

- A. U.N
- B. W.H.O
- C. WWF
- D. IMF

24. Keibul Lamjao, world's only floating national park is located in which

- A. Assam
- B. Tripura
- C. Manipur
- D. Arunachal Pradesh

25. Contamination of drinking water with which of the following causes Blackfoot disease (BFD)?

- A. Nitrates
- B. Arsenic
- C. Mercury
- D. Cadmium

26. Miyako Strait connects
- East China sea to Pacific Ocean
  - South China sea to Pacific ocean
  - Pacific ocean to Arctic sea
  - Sea of Japan to Pacific Ocean
27. SHAKTI, a scheme recently approved by the Union Cabinet, is
- A rural women-empowerment initiative by inculcating in them a habit of savings and proper utilisation of financial resources
  - A special loan scheme aimed at supporting entrepreneurship among urban women by providing certain concessions
  - A campaign to convince state governments to devolve 'ownership' of planning and development functions in panchayat samitis and gram panchayats
  - A new coal allocation policy for the power sector
28. Consider the following statements
- Hodaigiri is the harvest dance associated with Reang tribes.
  - Jhum cultivation is one of the primary occupations of Reang tribes.
  - Majority of Reang population are literates.
- Choose the correct statements
- 1 and 3
  - 1 and 2
  - 2 and 3
  - All are correct
29. The 2017 bilateral maritime exercise "SIMBEX-17" has started between India and which country?
- Sri Lanka
  - South Africa
  - South Korea
  - Singapore
30. Mixed Cropping is the practice of
- Growing two or more crops simultaneously on the same piece of land.
  - Growing crops and rearing livestock simultaneously
  - Growing different crops on a piece of land in a pre-planned succession
  - Growing fodder crops along with livestock
31. The sands on the beaches in Kovalam are partially black in colour due to the presence of
- Ilmenite
  - Monazite.
  - Both A and B
  - Neither A nor B
32. Hawah Beach is found in which state?
- Kerala
  - Tamil Nadu
  - Andhra Pradesh
  - Goa
33. Which of the following parts of constitution explicitly mentions that India is a secular state? :
- Preamble
  - Fundamental Rights
  - Directive Principles of state policy
  - The Union
34. With reference to the State Legislative Council in India, which among the following statements is / are correct?
- The Legislative Council is a continuing House & two-third of the members retire in two years.
  - Members of local bodies elect one-third of the total number of members of the legislative council
  - If a state legislative council is to be created or abolished, a resolution to that effect is to be first passed by the State legislature by a two-third majority
- Choose the correct option from the codes given below:
- Only 1 & 2
  - Only 2 & 3
  - Only 1 & 3
  - 1, 2 & 3

35. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has recently approved the membership of which of the following nations?
- Taiwan, Ukraine and Tonga
  - Ukraine, Argentina and Japan
  - Japan, Colombia and United States
  - Argentina, Madagascar and Tonga
36. Sparkle in the toothpaste comes from?
- Fluoride
  - Mica
  - Calcium Silicate
  - Calcium Carbonate
37. Strait of Dover is often seen in news, where it is located?
- Between Continent Europe and Britain
  - Between Gibraltar and Morocco
  - Between Russia and Sakhalin Island
  - None of the above
38. Which among the following country has signed but not ratified The World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control
- U.S
  - U.K
  - India
  - Pakistan
39. The Rail Development Authority will be responsible for
- Setting efficiency and performance standards for rail operations
  - Suggesting on passenger and freight fares
  - Ensuring fair play and level playing field for stakeholder investment
- 1 and 2
  - 1 and 3
  - Only 2
  - All are correct
40. Consider the following statement with reference to Phytoid waste water treatment technology
- It involves a constructed wetland exclusively designed for the treatment of municipal, urban, agricultural and industrial wastewater.
  - Technology developed by National Environmental Engineering Research Institute
- Select the correct answer using the code given below:
- 1 only
  - 2 only
  - Both 1 and 2
  - None of the above
41. Which of the following launched India Innovation Index ?
- NITI Aayog
  - Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP)
  - Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)
  - All of the above
42. In India, which one of the following states has the largest inland saline wetland?
- Gujarat
  - Haryana
  - Madhya Pradesh
  - Rajasthan
43. NNP at factor cost is
- GNP at market price – depreciation
  - NNP at market price – Indirect taxes
  - NNP at market prices+ subsidies
  - NNP at market price- indirect taxes+ subsidies.
44. Which of the following is the top level organizational structure of WTO?
- General Council
  - Ministerial Conference
  - Dispute settlement body
  - Goods council

45. Which if these is NOT one of the major styles or schools of ancient Indian art?
- Amravati
  - Mathura
  - Gandhara
  - Sarnath
46. Identify the correct statement with reference to K9 Vajra
- It is a Submarine
  - It is an artillery gun
  - It is a naval ship
  - None of the above
47. Shaphee Lanphee, a traditional textile fabric, is a GI product from which of the following states?
- Assam
  - Manipur
  - Jammu & Kashmir
  - Andhra Pradesh
48. The states in India which require Inner Line permit are:
- Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland
  - Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and J & K
  - Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Tripura
  - Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Assam
49. The Indra Exercise is a joint military exercise between India and
- Japan
  - Sri Lanka
  - Mauritius
  - Russia
50. India's first micro forest will be built in which state?
- Madhya Pradesh
  - West Bengal
  - Uttar Pradesh
  - Chattisgarh
51. 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?
- Rohu
  - Rayichapalu
  - Catla
  - Tengra
52. Consider the following statements
- The Guitar fish is native to coastal waters of Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
  - The Ganges Shark is native to Arabian Sea
  - Both Guitar fish and Ganges shark falls under Critically Endangered species category
- Choose the correct options
- 1 only
  - 1 and 2 only
  - 1 and 3 only
  - All are correct
53. The Arabian Seas Region covers the waters of
- Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, Sea of Oman, and the Persian Gulf
  - Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea and Sea of Oman
  - Red Sea, Arabian Sea, Sea of Oman, and the Persian Gulf
  - None of the above
54. Consider the following statements
- Carbon nanotubes have been used in planes for their strength – they are stronger than steel and their ability to conduct heat
  - Carbon nanotubes can stay stable at temperatures up to 400 degrees Celsius.
  - 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 options
- 1 only
  - 1 and 2 only
  - 1 and 3 only
  - All are correct
55. The city liveability Index which was in news recently is intended
- To measure the quality of life in 116 major cities including capital cities and those with population over one million.
  - To measure the quality of life in 116 major cities including capital cities and those with population over five million.
  - To measure the quality of life in 116 major cities including capital cities and those with population over ten million.
  - None of the above



56. 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

57. 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. Only 2
- C. 1 and 3
- D. All are correct

58. Choose the correct circuits that comes under thematic tourism circuit - Swadesh darshan Scheme

- 1. North-East India Circuit
- 2. Buddhist Circuit
- 3. Himalayan Circuit
- 4. South Indian Circuit

Choose the correct statement

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

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

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

60. Consider the following statements about Vikramshila University :

- 1. It was centre of Buddhist learning centre.
- 2. It was established by King Dharmapala of Pala dynasty.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

61. Consider the statements about BS Standards :

- 1. The standards, based on European regulations were first introduced in 2000.
- 2. Since October 2010, Bharat Stage (BS) III norms have been enforced across the country.
- 3. In 13 major cities, Bharat Stage IV emission norms have been in place since April 2010.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

62. The Government of India has recently announced the sale of "Government of India Floating Rate Bonds 2024". With reference to government securities, consider the following:

- 1. Floating Rate Bonds are sold by the Reserve Bank of India.
- 2. RBI issues Cash Management Bills (CMBs) to meet long-term borrowing needs of the Government of India.
- 3. Treasury bills are short term debt instruments issued by the Government of India

Select the correct answer using the codes below:

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

63. The year of 2017 marks 25 years of dialogue partnership between India and ASEAN and 15 years of summit-level interaction. With reference to India-ASEAN relations, consider the following:

1. India's relationship with ASEAN is a key pillar of our Act East Policy.
2. AFTA is a free trade area among the member states of the ASEAN and India.
3. India and ASEAN are yet to upgrade their relationship to a 'strategic partnership'

Select the correct answer using the codes below.:

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

64. Universal suffrage (voting rights to all eligible) was granted to women all over India in

- A. 1950 once Indian republic was formed
- B. Morley-Minto Act
- C. Government of India Act, 1935
- D. 1939 General elections

65. With reference to the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), consider the following statements:

1. President of India serves as the Director General (DG) of NDRF.
2. NDRF was established under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.
3. It is housed directly under the Prime Minister's Office and functions from there.

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

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

66. Which of these is/are mandatory qualification(s) to contest for the office of Vice-President of India?

1. She must be a citizen of India or a person of Indian Origin (PIO) residing in India since last ten years.
2. She must have completed 35 years or age.
3. She must not hold an office for profit.
4. She must have served as a Member of Parliament (MP) or a member of Legislative Assembly in India.

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

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

67. Identify the correct statement with reference to INS Aridhaman

- A. It is a Submarine
- B. It is an artillery gun
- C. It is a naval ship
- D. None of the above

68. Section 139AA inserted in the Income Tax Act, which was in news recently deals with?

- A. Provision of Aadhaar being mandatory for getting a PAN.
- B. Provision of Aadhaar being mandatory for getting a GST number.
- C. Provision of Aadhaar being mandatory for getting IT rebates.
- D. None of the above

69. Recently government of India issued Guidelines on Fair Trade Practices Related to Charging of Service Charge from Consumers by Hotels and Restaurants, Identify the correct statement with reference to that guidelines.

- A. Consumers are not given the right to decide service charge.
- B. Hotels and restaurants to decide how much service charge is to be paid by the customer.
- C. It is mandatory for the consumers to give a tip to the waiter or waitress.
- D. None of the above

70. As per article 110 of the Constitution of India , who endorse the money bill?

- A. Speaker of Lok Sabha
- B. Chairman of Rajya Sabha
- C. President of India
- D. Finance Minister

71. How many times money bill gets endorsed by the Speaker of the House

- A. Once
- B. Twice
- C. Thrice
- D. None of the above

72. Kiltan is

- A. A Submarine
- B. A Helicopter
- C. An anti-submarine warfare class stealth corvette
- D. An army tank

73. As per Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971, abortion in India is legal only up to

- A. Twenty weeks of pregnancy
- B. Twenty four weeks of pregnancy
- C. Eighteen weeks of pregnancy
- D. None of the above

74. Consider the following statements

- 1. National e-Governance Services Ltd (NeSL) became India's first information utility (IU) for bankruptcy cases under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016.
- 2. NeSL is owned by State Bank of India and Life Insurance Corporation Ltd., among others.
- 3. Information utility is an information network which would store financial data like borrowings, default and security interests among others of firms.

Choose the correct answer from the options given below

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

75. Consider the following statements with reference to the Composite scheme under the GST regime

- 1. Businesses dealing only in goods can only opt for composition scheme
- 2. Services providers have been kept outside the scope of this scheme.
- 3. Restaurant sector taxpayers may also opt for the scheme.

Choose the correct statements from the options given below

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

76. With reference to Departmental Standing Committees, which of the following statements is/are correct?

- 1. The main objective of such committees is to secure more accountability of the Executive to the Parliament, particularly financial accountability.
- 2. Each such committee consists of members only from the Lok Sabha.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

77. Consider the following statements

- 1. Mullaiperiyar Dam is a masonry gravity dam on the Periyar River in the Indian state of Kerala
- 2. The dam is being operated and maintained by Tamil Nadu state.

Choose the correct answer

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

78. Consider the following statements

1. World Monuments Fund (WMF) is a private, international, non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of historic architecture and cultural heritage sites
2. WMF publishes the World Monuments Watch two year once.

Choose the correct answer from the options given below

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

79. Choose the correct answer from the options given below

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

80. The Central Information Commission is a

- A. Constitutional body
- B. Regulatory body
- C. Statutory body
- D. None of the above

81. "JIGYASA", recently seen in news is a

- A. Interstellar exploration programme of ISRO
- B. Student- scientist connect programme
- C. Earth core drilling programme of Ministry of Earth Sciences
- D. Biodiversity documentation programme in the western Ghats

82. 'Solar Briefcase' an initiative to provide electricity in remote areas, has been launched by which state government

- A. Karnataka
- B. Uttarakhand
- C. Maharashtra
- D. Tamil Nadu

83. The 5th edition of India Water Week (IWW-2017) has launched in which city?

- A. Jaipur
- B. New Delhi
- C. Chennai
- D. Bangalore

84. The Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary (AWS) is located in which state?

- A. West Bengal
- B. Assam
- C. Kerala
- D. Tripura

85. "Mitra Shakti 2017" is a joint training exercise between India and which country?

- A. Japan
- B. South Korea
- C. Sri Lanka
- D. Maldives

86. The theme of the 2017 International Day of the Girl Child (IDGC) is

- A. The Power of Adolescent Girl: Vision for 2030
- B. Empowering Adolescent Girls: Ending the Cycle of Violence
- C. Empower Girls: Before, during and after crises
- D. Girls' Progress = Goals' Progress: What Counts for Girls

87. Recently, which particular country issued the "green bond" to combat the effects of global climate change?

- A. Japan
- B. China
- C. India
- D. Fiji

88. Consider the following statements

1. International Energy Agency is an organization that comes under U.N. body
2. India is a member of International Energy Agency

Choose the correct options

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



89. Mundaka Upanishad, the Mandukya Upanishad and the Prashna Upanishad are associated with which of the following Vedas?
- A. Atharva-Veda
  - B. Rig-Veda
  - C. Sama-Veda
  - D. Yajur-Veda.
90. Bank Rate is defined as the rate at which:
- A. RBI lends short term loans to commercial banks
  - B. A commercial bank can lend to its customers
  - C. RBI lends long term loans to commercial banks
  - D. The commercial banks are able to borrow overnight funds from RBI
91. Consider the following statements about National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR):
1. It works for the conservation and utilization of livestock and poultry genetic resources
  2. It designs methodologies for ex situ and in situ conservation of farm animals
- Choose the correct options
- A. 1 only
  - B. 2 only
  - C. Both 1 and 2
  - D. Neither 1 nor 2
92. 'Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana' has been launched for
- A. Providing housing loan to poor people at cheaper interest rates
  - B. Promoting women's self-help groups in backward areas
  - C. Promoting financial inclusion in the country
  - D. None of the above
93. In the 'Index of Eight Core Industries', which one of the following is given the highest weight?
- A. Coal production
  - B. Electricity generation
  - C. Fertilizer production
  - D. Steel Production
94. Which one of the following issues the 'Global Economic Prospectus' report periodically?
- A. The Asian Development Bank
  - B. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
  - C. The US federal Reserve Bank
  - D. The World Bank
95. The area known as 'Golan Heights' sometimes appears in the news in the context of the events related to
- A. Central Asia
  - B. Middle East
  - C. South-East Asia
  - D. Central Africa
96. In India, the steel production industry requires the import of
- A. Saltpetre
  - B. Rock phosphate
  - C. Coking coal
  - D. All of the above
97. The National Nutrition Week will be observed throughout the country from 1st to 7th September. Consider the following statements with respect to it
1. The theme of the National Nutrition Week for 2017 is "Optimal Infant & Young Child Feeding Practices: Better Child Health".
  2. The basic objective of this annual event is to intensify awareness generation on the importance of nutrition for health.
- Choose the correct statement:
- A. 1 only
  - B. 2 only
  - C. Both 1 and 2
  - D. None of the above

98. Consider the statements about classification MSME sector.

1. In 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

99. 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

100. With reference to unique BRICS countries initiatives, consider the following statements:

1. BRICS Network University (NU) is an open educational project and does not involve establishment of rigid organizational forms such as a secretariat.
2. BRICS Think Tanks Council (BTIC) comprises research organizations from BRICS countries including Observer Research Foundation (ORF) from India.

Which of the above is/are correct?

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

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
3. Coal, fertilizer, electricity, pharmaceuticals, natural gas, refinery products, steel, and cement are the Eight core industries.

Choose the incorrect statements from the option given below

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

102. Consider the following statements

1. NHB Residex is a set of benchmarks that aims to track housing price indicators across Indian cities
2. NHB Residex is designed by a technical advisory committee comprising Government representatives, lenders and property market player

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

103. Consider the following statement with reference to constitution of DNA profiling board, intended by The DNA Based Technology (Use Regulation) Bill, 2017

1. The board is supposed to be the regulatory authority that will grant accreditation to DNA laboratories.
2. Board will advise central and state governments on all issues relating to DNA laboratories.
3. Board will be the authority to make recommendations on ethical and human rights, including privacy, issues related to DNA testing.

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

104. Consider the following statements

1. SWAYAM stands for Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds.
2. SWAYAM is a programme of Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
3. SWAYAM is an Indian electronic e-education platform which proposes to offer courses from the high school stage to Post-Graduate stage in an interactive electronic platform.

Choose the incorrect statements from the option given below

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

105. How do District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs) help in the reduction of rural poverty in India?

1. DRDAs act as Panchayati Raj Institutions in certain specified backward regions of the country.
2. DRDAs undertake area-specific scientific study of the causes of poverty and malnutrition and prepare detailed remedial measures.
3. DRDAs secure inter-sectoral and interdepartmental coordination and cooperation for effective implementation of anti-poverty programmes.
4. DRDAs watch over and ensure effective utilization of the funds intended for antipoverty programmes.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

106. Zero defect zero effect scheme is associated with which sector

- A. Agriculture
- B. MSME (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises)
- C. Heavy Industries
- D. Service sector

107. Consider the following statements with reference to The National Company Law Tribunal

1. NCLT is a quasi judicial body
2. NCLT is a constitutional organization
3. NCLT is a statutory organization.
4. The NCLT was established under the Companies Act 2013.

Choose the correct statement

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

108. Shanghai cooperation organization (SCO) is headquartered in which city?

- A. Shanghai
- B. Beijing
- C. Xinxiang
- D. Kabul

109. Identify the correct statement

1. Raja Ampat is known for one of the world's most biodiverse marine habitats.
2. Raja Ampat lies in eastern part of Indonesian group of archipelago.

Choose the correct statement

- A. Only a
- B. Only b
- C. Both a and b
- D. Neither a nor b

110. Consider the following statements:

1. Chakmas and Hajongs were originally residents of the erstwhile West Pakistan
2. The Chakmas follow Hinduism, whereas Hajongs follow Buddhism.

Identify the correct statements from the option given below

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

111. The states in India which require Inner Line permit are:
- Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland
  - Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and J & K
  - Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Tripura
  - Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Assam
112. The Indra Exercise is a joint military exercise between India and
- Japan
  - Sri Lanka
  - Mauritius
  - Russia
113. Under a bilateral mechanism established in 2006, China is expected to share hydrological data with India with respect to which river
- Brahmaputra
  - Sutlej
  - Both A and B
  - Neither A nor B
114. Consider the following statements
- Article 164, provided for limiting the number of ministers in the state cabinet.
  - Article 164 was inserted in the Constitution based on the recommendation of the National Commission for Review of the Working of the Constitution headed by former Chief Justice of India, M.N. Venkatachaliah
- Choose the correct statement
- 1 only
  - 2 only
  - Both 1 and 2
  - Neither 1 nor 2
115. The Ratapani Tiger Reserve (RTS) is located in
- Madhya Pradesh
  - Manipur
  - Gujarat
  - Karnataka
116. Recently, which of the following commodity exchange has launched India's first commodity options in gold?
- National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange Limited (NCDEX)
  - Multi-Commodity Exchange of India Ltd (MCX)
  - National Spot Exchange Limited (NSEL)
  - Indian Commodity Exchange Limited (ICEX)
117. The first-ever International tri services joint exercise "INDRA – 2017" has started between which of the following countries?
- India and Japan
  - India and Russia
  - India and U.K
  - India and U.S
118. Hemoglobin in humans has the highest affinity for which of the following gases?
- Methane
  - Carbon Monoxide
  - Nitrous oxide
  - Carbon dioxide
119. Shaphee Lanphee, a traditional textile fabric, is a GI product from which of the following states?
- Meghalaya
  - Manipur
  - Mizoram
  - Tripura
120. Consider the following statements with reference to recently launched BharatMala Pariyojana
- A new umbrella programme aimed at optimizing the efficiency of movement of goods and people across the country.
  - It aims to build 34,800 km of roads nationwide, including in border and coastal areas.
  - Under the programme, roads will be built along the borders with Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar.
- Choose the correct statements from the options given below
- 1 and 3 only
  - 1 and 2 only
  - 3 and 2 only
  - All are correct

121. Which of the following straits connect Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic Ocean?

- A. Strait of Gibraltar
- B. Dover Strait
- C. Bosphorus Strait
- D. Strait of Hormuz

122. Khardung La mountain pass is located in which Indian state?

- A. Himachal Pradesh
- B. Sikkim
- C. Jammu & Kashmir
- D. Uttarakhand

123. India to sign pact with which country for setting up flexible LNG market?

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

124. Consider the following statement with reference to Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

- 1. Headquarters of SCO is in China
- 2. SCO is an outcome of The Shanghai Five grouping established in 1996 by Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
- 3. Presently, it has three observers Afghanistan, Belarus, and Mongolia

Choose the correct answer

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

125. Who was the President of the Executive Council of the Interim Government of India?

- A. Viceroy and Governor-General of India
- B. Jawaharlal Nehru, Interim Prime Minister
- C. Secretary of State
- D. Speaker, Constituent Assembly

126. Which among the following are the 'Credit-Rating Agencies' of India?

- 1. CRISIL
- 2. CARE
- 3. ICRA
- 4. ONICRA

Choose the correct answer

- A. 1 and 3
- B. 1, 2 and 3
- C. 1, 3 and 4
- D. All of them

127. The State Election Commission can be removed from office:

- A. Only by the Governor
- B. In the same manner and on the same grounds as a Judge of the High Court
- C. Only by the President on the advice of the Chief Justice of the concerned State
- D. In the same manner as the Vice-President of India

128. Pakistan has raised objections in the past to India's hydroelectric project on the Kishanganga. The Kishanganga is a tributary of river

- A. Indus
- B. Jhelum
- C. Chenab
- D. Ravi.

129. Consider the following statements.

- 1. Bromeliads can be found at altitudes from sea level to 4200 meters, from rainforests to deserts.
- 2. Pineapple is a bromeliads

Choose the correct statements

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

130. Consider the following statements 1 only

- A. Bharat Net project aims to deploy high speed optical fiber cables across tier-3 cities
- B. Bharat Net project aims to deploy high speed optical fiber cables across metropolitan cities
- C. Bharat Net project aims to deploy high speed optical fiber cables across Tier-2 cities
- D. None of the above



131. The Catalonia region, often seen in news belongs to which part of Spain?
- North Western
  - North Eastern
  - South Eastern
  - South Western
132. The Naf River acts as a natural international frontier between
- Southeastern Bangladesh and western Myanmar
  - Southwestern Bangladesh and western Myanmar
  - Northeastern Bangladesh and Western Myanmar
  - None of the above
133. Operation Insaniyat refers to
- Humanitarian assistance to Bangladesh on account of influx of refugees
  - Humanitarian assistance to Syria on account of civil war crisis.
  - Humanitarian assistance to African Nations.
  - None of the above
134. Consider the following statements:
- Government of India has notified a scheme for Viability Gap Funding to infrastructure projects that are to be undertaken by Public sector alone.
  - Viability Gap Funding is administered by the Ministry of Finance with suitable budgetary provisions to be made in the Annual Plans on a year-to-year basis
- Choose the correct statements from the options given below
- 1 only
  - 2 only
  - Both 1 and 2
  - Neither 1 nor 2
135. The summoning of Parliament for a session within six months from the date of last sitting of each House is
- Optional
  - Mandatory
  - Left to the discretion of the President
  - Left to the discretion of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Chairman of the Rajya Sabha
136. The nature of the winter rainfall in north western India is :
- convictional
  - orographic
  - monsoonal
  - cyclonic
137. Dear Money Policy implies:
- high price level
  - large money supply
  - high production
  - high interest rates
138. What is meant by "The Forty" or "Chalisa"?
- The cream of Afghan nobles
  - The pick of the intellectuals among the Khaljis
  - (The select body of the Turkish Aristocracy
  - The ulema or the Muslim divines
139. Probiotics are
- Bacterial products having healing or curative power
  - Fungal products having healing or curative power
  - Archaea products having curing or healing power
  - None of the above
140. Consider the following statement with reference to Brain corals
- Brain corals are slow-growing species of coral which often act as foundations for reefs.
  - Brain corals do not possess biological brains
  - Brain corals are found in Caribbean, Atlantic and Pacific Oceans
- Choose the correct statements
- 1 and 3
  - 2 and 3
  - 1 and 2
  - All are correct

# ANSWER KEYS

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

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

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

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

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

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

Question No	Answer Keys
151.	A
152.	D
153.	C



# MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

## Paper- 1

**Topic: The Freedom Struggle – its various stages and important contributors /contributions from different parts of the country.**

1. How different would have been the achievement of Indian independence without Mahatma Gandhi ? Discuss.
2. Discuss the contributions of MaulanaAbulKalam Azad to pre- and post-independent India.

**Topic: Topic: empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism.**

3. What is the basis of regionalism? Is it that unequal distribution of benefits of development on regional basis eventually promotes regionalism? Substantiate your answer.
4. How do the Indian debates on Secularism differ from the debates in the West?

**Topic: Impact of Globalization on Indian Society**

5. Discuss impact of globalization on farming sector in India
6. To what extent globalisation has influenced the core of cultural diversity in India? Explain.

**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. The effective management of land and water resources will drastically reduce the human miseries. Explain.
8. Growing feeling of regionalism is an important factor in the generation of demand for a separate state. Discuss.
9. How does the cryosphere affect global climate
10. With suitable examples, discuss how droughts impact socio-economic life of people in India's hinterlands.

**Topic: Social Issues**

11. "Conventional wisdom suggests that economic reforms succeeding liberalization policy of government in early 1990s should have reduced gender discrimination—but that hasn't really been the case". Discuss?

**Topic: Women Issues**

12. Discuss the role of Women in the freedom struggle especially during the Gandhian Phase.

**Topic: Women Issues**

13. Early Buddhist Stupa-art, while depicting folk motifs and narratives, successfully expoundsBuddhist ideals. Elucidate

**Paper- 2**

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

1. Did the Government of India Act, 1935 lay down a federal constitution? Discuss.
2. Discuss the possible factors that inhibit India from enacting for its citizens a uniform civil code as provided for in the Directive Principles of State Policy.
3. "Democracy is not a mirror held up to society but a hammer with which to shape it then only fraternity can be made; as declared by the Constituent Assembly; the most important ingredient of democracy". Elaborate the statement by giving relevant cases and examples.
4. Under the Indian Constitutional and Legal framework, what constitutes Hate speech? How does it violate Fundamental Right to Equality enshrined under Article 14?
5. Why are the tribals in India referred to as 'the Scheduled Tribes'? Indicate the major provisions enshrined in the Constitution of India for their upliftment.
6. Examine how Aadhaar's design protects individual's identity and privacy?
7. Exercise of CAG's powers in relation to the accounts of the Union and the States is derived from Article 149 of the Indian Constitution. Discuss whether audit of the Government's policy implementation could amount to overstepping its own (CAG) jurisdiction.
8. The Supreme Court of India keeps a check on arbitrary power of the Parliament in amending the Constitution. Discuss critically.
9. "Independence of the judiciary and courts alone would ensure rule of law". Analyze.
10. Examine the functioning of Judicial Review in the Indian Political system?
11. "Codifying checks and balances in respective police Acts will bring assurance against illegal orders by the political establishment to the police". Discuss.
12. 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.
13. "Free speech is signal of healthy democracy". Comment
14. Examine the scope of Fundamental Rights in the light of the latest judgement of the Supreme Court on Right to Privacy.

**Topic: Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary Ministries and Departments**

15. Discuss the functions and importance of departmentally related parliamentary standing committees to India's parliamentary democracy.

**Topic: Parliament and State Legislatures – structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these**

16. The effective Administration rests on Ordinance Route rather Than Ordinance Raj. Discuss.
17. There is no necessary connection between religion and personal laws on the one hand and Civil Laws and Personal Laws are different on the other. In this context discuss the need for Uniform Civil Code and the different challenges associated with this..
18. "We need an external, independent body to determine parliamentary salaries" Examine?

**Topic: Health Issues**

19. "A child bride is more than doubly prone to health problems than a grown-up woman," Discuss.

**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.**

20. Has the formation of linguistic states strengthened the cause of Indian unity?

**Topic: India and its neighborhood- relations.**

21. "Currently, India gets 70-80% of its medicines and medical devices supplies, including raw material for pharmaceuticals (Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient) from China. This poses a major risk of severe drug shortage if India's diplomatic relations with China worsen" Examine.

22. "Increasing cross-border terrorist attacks in India and growing interference in the internal affairs of member-states by Pakistan are not conducive for the future of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)." Explain with suitable examples.

23. What is Conference of Governors? What is its importance?

**Topic: pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.**

24. "The role of pressure groups in India is marked by a number of remarkable features distinct to the Indian Political System". Comment.

25. Indo-Pacific region has assumed great geopolitical significance in the present context. Comment.

26. Who are the Rohingyas? What should India do as an aspiring superpower to control the spread of the agony?

**Topic: Schemes related**

27. With a brief background of quality of urban life in India, introduce the objectives and strategy of the 'Smart City Programme.'

**Paper- 3****Topic: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.**

1. The nature of economic growth in India is described as jobless growth. Do you agree with this view? Give arguments in favour of your answer. (Mains 2015)
2. Discuss the effects of minimum wages on employment?
3. What do you mean by Hyper-globalization? Discuss how hyper-globalisation has led to a "virtuous cycle of economic expansion"?
4. How globalization has led to the reduction of employment in the formal sector of the Indian economy? Is increased informalization detrimental to the development of the country?
5. "Success of 'Make in India' programme depends on the success of 'Skill India' programme and radical labor reforms." Discuss with logical arguments.
6. "Recapitalization of the public sector banks is the most effective way to provide a much-needed fiscal stimulus to the economy and revive growth" Comment.

**Topic: Major crops cropping patterns in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related**

7. What is water-use efficiency? Describe the role of micro-irrigation in increasing the water-use efficiency.

**Topic: Investment models.**

8. Adaptation of PPP model for infrastructure development of the country has not been free from criticism. Critically discuss the pros and cons of the model.

**Topic: Science and Technology**

9. What do you know by Internet –of –things? Discuss its various applications in everyday life

**Paper- 4****Part-1: Theory**

1. Critically analyze the various ethical issues associated with euthanasia?
2. Critically analyze the various ethical issues involved in the Medical termination of pregnancies Act, 1971.
3. Explain how ethics contribute to social and human well-being.
4. What do you understand by the following terms in the context of public service? a) Integrity b) Perseverance c) Spirit of service d) Commitment e) Courage of conviction f) Personal opinion

**Part-2: Case Studies**

You are recently posted as district development officer of a district. Shortly thereafter you found that there is considerable tension in the rural areas of your district on the issue of sending girls to schools.

The elders of the village feel that many problems have come up because girls are being educated and they are stepping out of the safe environment of the household. They are of the view that the girls should be quickly married off with minimum education. The girls are also competing for jobs after education, which have traditionally remained in boys' exclusive domain, adding to unemployment amongst male population.

The younger generation feels that in the present era, girls should have equal opportunities for education and employment, and other means of livelihood. The entire locality is divided between the elders and the younger lot and further sub-divided between sexes in both generations. You come to know that in Panchayat or in other local bodies or even in busy crossroads, the issue is being acrimoniously debated.

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One day you are informed that an unpleasant incident has taken place. Some girls were molested, when they were en route to schools. The incident led to clashes between several groups and a law and order problem has arisen. The elders after heated discussion have taken a joint decision not to allow girls to go to school and to socially boycott all such families, which do not follow their dictate.

I. What steps would you take to ensure girls' safety without disrupting their education?

II How would you manage and mould matriarchic attitude of the village elders to ensure harmony in the inter-generational relations? (250 words)

One of the scientists working in the R & D laboratory of a major pharmaceutical company discovers that one of the company's bestselling veterinary drugs, B has the potential to cure a currently incurable liver disease that is prevalent in tribal areas. However, developing a variant of the drug suitable for human beings entailed a lot of research and development having a huge expenditure to the extent of 50 crores rupees. It was unlikely that the company would recover the costs as the disease was rampant only in poverty-stricken area having very little market otherwise.

If you were the CEO, then—

(a) Identify the various actions that you could take;

(b) Evaluate the pros and cons of each of your actions.

If You are a young, aspiring and sincere employee in a Government office working as an assistant, to the director of your department. Since you've joined recently, you need to learn and progress. Luckily your superior is very kind and ready to train you for your job. He is a very intelligent and well-informed person having knowledge of various departments. In short, you respect your boss and are looking forward to learn a lot from him.

Since you've good tuning with the boss, he started depending on you. One day due to ill health he invited you at his place for finishing some urgent work. You reached his house and you heard shouting noises before you could ring the bell. You waited for a while. After entering, boss greeted you and explained the work. But you were constantly disturbed by the crying of a woman. At last, you inquired with the boss but his answer did not satisfy you. Next day, you were compelled to inquire further in the office and found out that his behavior is very bad at home with his wife. He also beat up his wife.

His wife is not well educated and is a simple woman in comparison to her husband. You see that though your boss is a nice person in the office, he is engaged in domestic violence at home. In such a situation, you are left with the following options. Analyze each option with its consequences

I. Just ignore thinking about it because it is their personal matter.

II. Report the case to the appropriate authority.

III. Your own innovative approach towards the situation. (250 words)

You are the Executive Director of an upcoming InfoTech Company which is making a name for itself in the market.



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