

## Pulwama Terror Attack

Bloodshed, Martyrdom and India's Options to isolate Pakistan



Forest's  
Right  
Act

Wildlife Protection  
Vs  
traditional Rights.

National  
Security  
Act

Should preventive  
detention be a part of  
Modern Democracy?

India  
Saudi  
Relations

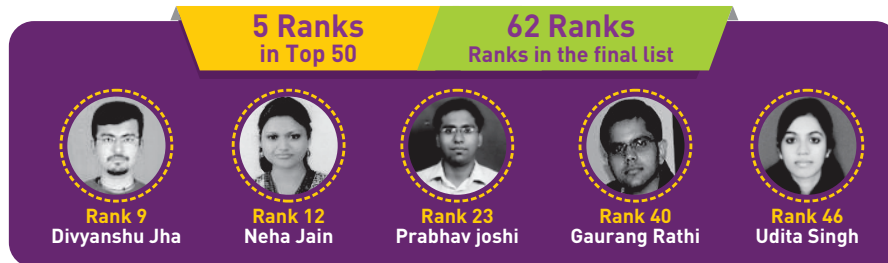
Unraveling  
the  
Journey

Pradhan Mantri  
Kisan Samman  
Nidhi Scheme

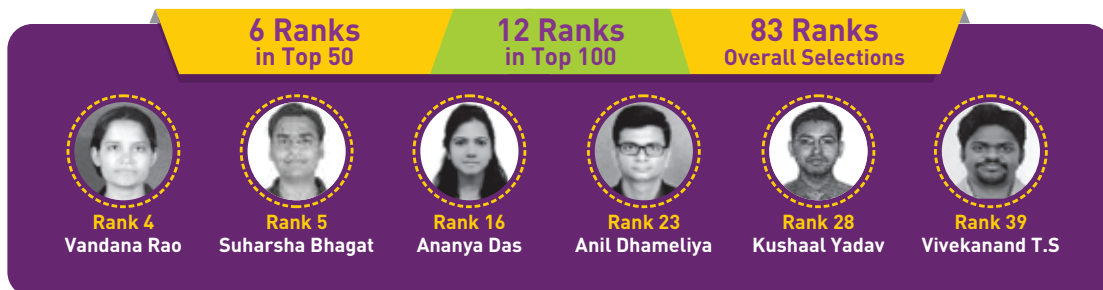
Panacea for  
Farmers'  
Suicide?

# RESULTS

## Incredible results in IAS 2013



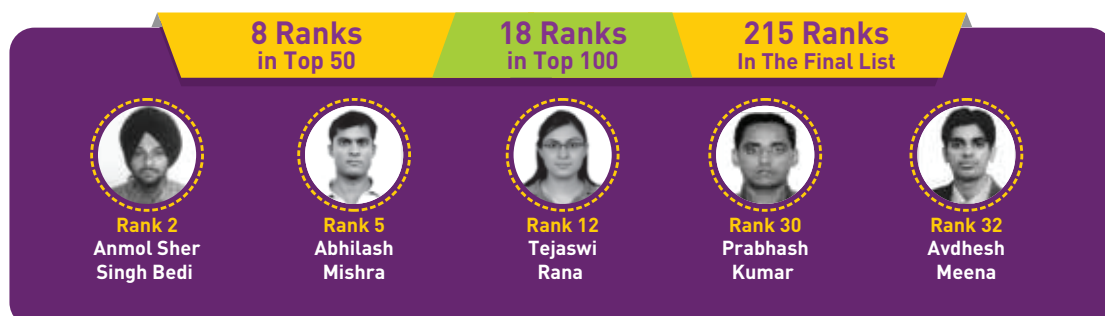
## We broke our past record in IAS 2014



## We did it again in IAS 2015



## And we've done it yet again in IAS 2016





# And we've done it yet again in IAS 2017

**5 Ranks  
in Top 10**

**34 Ranks  
in Top 100**

**236 Ranks  
In The Final List**



**Rank 3**  
Sachin  
Gupta



**Rank 6**  
Koya sree  
Harsha



**Rank 8**  
Anubhav  
Singh



**Rank 9**  
Saumya  
Sharma



**Rank 10**  
Abhishek  
Surana



Ashima  
Mittal  
Rank-12



Abhijeet  
Sinha  
Rank-19



Varjeet  
Walia  
Rank-21



Keerthi  
Vasan V  
Rank-29



Utsav  
Gautam  
Rank-33



Gaurav  
Kumar  
Rank-34



Abhilash  
Baranwal  
Rank-44



Vikramaditya  
Singh Malik  
Rank-48



Vishal  
Mishra  
Rank-49



Sambit  
Mishra  
Rank-51



Bodke  
Digvijay Govind  
Rank-54



Akshat  
Kaushal  
Rank-55



Jagdish  
Chelani  
Rank-57



Hirani  
Adityavikram  
Rank-60



Swapneel  
Paul  
Rank-64



Jyoti  
Sharma  
Rank-75



Pushp  
Lata  
Rank-80



Amol  
Srivastava  
Rank-83



Prateek  
Jain  
Rank-86



Amilineni  
Bhargav Teja  
Rank-88



Sangh  
Priy  
Rank-92



Rahul  
Shinde  
Rank-95



Kathawate  
Mayur Ashok  
Rank-96



Vaibhava  
Srivastava  
Rank-98



Videh  
Khare  
Rank-99



Plash  
Bansal  
Rank-112



Shilpa  
Singh  
Rank-116



Deepanshu  
Khurana  
Rank-120



Saurabh  
Sabhlok  
Rank-124



Abhimanyu  
Manglik  
Rank-128



Akash  
Bansal  
Rank-130



Abinash  
Kumar  
Rank-139



Sameer  
Saurabh  
Rank-142



Jyeshtha  
Maitrei  
Rank-156



Aaditya  
Mishra  
Rank-158



Ram  
Prakash  
Rank-162



Mainak  
Ghosh  
Rank-183



Archi Virendra  
Chandak  
Rank-184



Ankit  
Yadav  
Rank-191



Saurabh  
Gupta  
Rank-192



Kritika  
Jain  
Rank-197



Nahar Pranay  
Prakash  
Rank-199



Siddhant  
Jain  
Rank-201



Shubham  
Agarwal  
Rank-202



Nikita  
Khattar  
Rank-208



Kruti M  
Patel  
Rank-218



Smit  
Lodha  
Rank-219



Deepesh  
Kedia  
Rank-221



Ankit  
Jain  
Rank-222



Saurabh  
Baranwal  
Rank-235



Rajat R  
Chaturvedi  
Rank-237



Harsh  
Singh  
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Ghuge Rohan  
Bapurao  
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Bharat  
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Dinesh Kumar  
Yadav  
Rank-257



Govind  
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Shanu  
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Sanjay  
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Nikhil  
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Tuhin  
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Vijaypal  
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Shubhank  
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Shakti Mohan  
Avasthy  
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Lavanya  
Gupta  
Rank-298



Jagtap Gagdish  
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Amandeep  
Dhanoa  
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Aman  
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# POLITY

## 1. Interim Budget

### Constitutional Mandate

- Article 266 of the Constitution mandates that parliamentary approval is required to draw money from the Consolidated Fund of India.
- When the Union government needs to withdraw any money from the Consolidated Fund of India to cover its expenditure for paying salaries, ongoing programmes in various sectors etc it has to seek approval from Parliament.

### National Interim Budget

It refers to the budget of a government that is going through a transition period. The transition period here goes with Elections.

- The budget usually for the Govt is granted for one financial year which starts from April of the current year to March of next year with due approval by Parliament
- If for any reason the government is not able to present a full budget before the financial year ends, it will need parliamentary authority for incurring expenditure in the new fiscal year until a full Budget is presented.
- Through the interim Budget, Parliament passes a vote-on-account that allows the government to meet the expenses of the administration until the new Parliament considers and passes the Budget for the whole year.
- In an election situation, the vote-on-account is usually for a four-month period.

### Principles of Parliamentary Democracy

- The government cannot present a full budget because in such a short session, there's no time to debate proposals in Parliament.
- Also, it is ideally the new government's prerogative to decide how it'll raise and spend money.
  - \* The newly formed government cannot be burdened by the previous government's budgetary allocations

### How is it different from vote on account?

- An Interim Budget is not the same as a 'Vote on Account'.
- While a 'Vote on Account' deals only with the expenditure side of the government's budget, an Interim Budget is a complete set of accounts, including both expenditure and receipts.
  - \* An Interim Budget gives the complete financial statement, very similar to a full Budget.

- While the law does not debar the Union government from introducing tax changes, normally during an election year, successive governments have avoided making any major changes in income tax laws during an Interim Budget

### Concerns

- The announcement of a string of populist measures in the interim Budget has been accompanied by a breach of propriety associated with the exercise ahead of the general election
- There are significant changes in the tax code that it proposes and with the retrospective effect on welfare schemes too, this may violate norms of neutral elections. If all this was necessary, why was it not done last year or the year before?
  - \* There were changes made to the Income Tax Act in previous interim budgets also, but that they were small in nature. This has a broader base.
  - \* Since this will need changes to the income tax, will this be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance before the Income Tax Act is amended is another question? The convention is that it is [referred], but it is up to Parliament to decide whether or not it should be.
- A government is entitled to present only five Budgets, one a year. The sixth one is conventionally a vote on account to prevent a government shut down during the period from the end of the financial year to when the next government presents its Budget.

## 2. Ladakh gets divisional status

### Context

- Jammu and Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik granted Ladakh a divisional status, thus creating three administrative units of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh in the State.

### Details

- The governor exercised powers conferred in Section 5 of Land Revenue Act, the State Government of Jammu and Kashmir issued a notification of creation of Ladakh as 3rd Division in the state.
- Earlier, Ladakh was a part of the Kashmir division.
- The move leaves the Kashmir valley geographically the smallest division at 15,948 sq. km, Jammu division at 26,293 sq. km and Ladakh, the biggest division, at 86,909 sq. km.
- Ladakh will now get its own Divisional Commissioner and Inspector General of Police.

- A committee headed by the principal secretary of planning will also be set up to finalize the details of the staffing, posts, responsibilities and location of the offices.

#### Why was this move taken?

- During the winter months, the entire Ladakh region remains cut-off from the rest of the country for almost six months. The remoteness and inaccessibility of the area makes it eligible for establishing a separate division

#### Concerns

- The Governor's decision has fuelled demands for similar status to Pir Panjal and Chenab Valley regions.

### **3. Mayawati to pay for statues says SC**

#### Context

- The Supreme Court indicated its "tentative view" that Bahujan Samajwadi Party leader Mayawati will have to pay back to the public exchequer the money she spent on erecting statues of herself and party symbol 'elephant' in public parks across Lucknow and Noida.

#### Background

- Between 2007 and 2012 when Mayawati was the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, the government had built memorials for Dalit leaders, including the founder of Bahuj Samaj Party Kanshi Ram, and of herself besides the party's election symbol – elephants.
- The memorials and statues were built at a cost of over Rs 2,600 crore in Lucknow, Noida, and a few other places in the state.

### **4. Mysore Paints and Varnish Limited (MVPL)**

- It is the only company in India authorized to produce indelible ink, which is used in elections to prevent people from voting multiple times
- In 1962, it was selected to manufacture indelible ink, which was first used in the third general election in India
- The manufacturing process is a closely guarded secret and is based on a chemical formula devised by the National Physical Laboratory of India.

#### Other countries

- The ink is also exported to countries like Thailand, Singapore, Nigeria, Malaysia and South Africa
- It has also started manufacturing marker pens containing this ink for easy usage and this has also been used in elections held in Afghanistan

#### **Invisible ink- Indelible ink's new challenger**

- In India, we are proud to display our voter's ink, but apparently in some countries people don't want to display such a mark.

- So MVPL asked Delhi-based National Physical Laboratory (NPL) to come up with an alternative.
- NPL has worked out a pilot project where this mark when applied on the finger, doesn't leave a trace — it merely glows a bright orange when a low-intensity beam of ultraviolet light is shone on it

#### How does it work?

- The ink works on the well-known principle of fluorescence — certain materials emit a characteristic glow when exposed to ultraviolet light.
- Commercial UV markers or inks respond to a very broad spectrum of UV light.
  - \* The NPL ink, however, glows only when exposed to a narrow band of frequencies of ultraviolet (UV) light.
- So, along with the ink, supply of an inexpensive LED (costing no more than ₹30) that would emit a specific frequency of UV,

#### Significance

- The NPL's invisible ink experiment is linked to a larger project of creating security inks that could be used to make bank notes and documents, such as passports, more secure.

### **5. National Security Act**

#### Preventive Detention

#### History

- Preventive detention laws in India date back to early days of the colonial era when the Bengal Regulation III of 1818 was enacted to empower the government to arrest anyone for defence or maintenance of public order without giving the person recourse to judicial proceedings.
- Further, British government enacted the Rowlatt Acts of 1919 that allowed confinement of a suspect without trial.
- There was also Rule 26 of the Rules framed under the Defence of India Act 1939, again a war time legislation, which allowed the detention of a person if it was "satisfied with respect to that particular person that such detention was necessary to prevent him from acting in any manner prejudicial" to the defence and safety of the country

#### Laws

#### List I—Union List

- Pre Preventive detention for reasons connected with Defence, Foreign Affairs, or the security of India; persons subjected to such detention.

#### List III—Concurrent List

- P Preventive detention for reasons connected with the security of a State, the maintenance of public order, or the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the community; persons subjected to such detention.

**Ankul Chandra Pradhan Vs. Union of India (1997) - SC**

- The object of Preventive Detention is not to Punish but to intercept to prevent the Detenu from doing something prejudicial to the State.
- The satisfaction of the concerned authority is a subjective satisfaction in such a manner.

**Current procedure followed**

- Normally before a preventive detention case is brought before the High Court, a three member Advisory Board headed by a sitting High Court Judge is constituted by the government to examine whether the detention is justified or not.
- Surprisingly, the proceedings of the Board are confidential except for that part of the report which expresses the opinion of the Board.
- But what is more appalling is the denial of the detenu's fundamental right to be represented by a professional lawyer before the Board. This is a blatant violation of human rights and goes against Article 22(1) of the Constitution, which says "No person who is arrested shall be detained in custody without being informed, as soon as may be, of the grounds for such arrest nor shall he be denied the right to consult, and to be defended by a legal practitioner of his choice."
- Thus in a majority of cases the Advisory Board upholds the detention due to lack of proper legal representation on behalf of the detenu.

**Process**

- Article 22 provides that the Detenu under the preventive detention law shall have the right to have his representative against his detention reviewed by an advisory board.
- If the advisory board reports that the detention is not justified, the Detenu must be released forthwith.
- If the advisory board reports that the detention is justified, the Government may fix the period for detention.
- The advisory board may conclude its proceedings expeditiously and must express its opinion within the time prescribed by law. Failure to do that makes the detention invalid.

**Details of NSA****Background**

- Post-independence India got its first preventive detention rule when the government of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru enacted the Preventive Detention Act of 1950. The NSA is a close iteration of the 1950 Act.
- After the Preventive Detention Act expired on December 31, 1969, the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, brought in the controversial Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) in 1971 giving similar powers to the government.

- Though the MISA was repealed in 1977 after the Janata Party came to power, the successive government, led by Mrs. Gandhi, brought in the NSA.

**Features**

It was promulgated on September 23, 1980, during the Indira Gandhi government and its purpose is "to provide for preventive detention in certain cases and for matters connected therewith". It applies to the entirety of India, except Jammu and Kashmir.

As per the National Security Act, the grounds for preventive detention of a person include:

- Acting in any manner prejudicial to the defence of India, the relations of India with foreign powers, or the security of India.
- Regulating the continued presence of any foreigner in India or with a view to making arrangements for his expulsion from India.
- preventing them from acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of the State or from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order or from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the community it is necessary so to do.

The order can also be made by the District Magistrate or a Commissioner of Police under their respective jurisdictions, but the detention should be reported to the State Government along with the grounds on which the order has been made. No such order shall remain in force for more than twelve days unless approved by the State Government.

**Penal Provisions Normal Circumstances**

- In the normal course, if a person is arrested, he or she is guaranteed certain basic rights. These include the right to be informed of the reason for the arrest.
- Section 50 of the Criminal Procedure Code (Cr.PC) mandates that the person arrested has to be informed of the grounds of arrest, and the right to bail.
- Sections 56 and 76 of the Cr. PC also provides that a person has to be produced before a court within 24 hours of arrest.
- Additionally, Article 22(1) of the Constitution says an arrested person cannot be denied the right to consult, and to be defended by, a legal practitioner of his choice. But none of these rights are available to a person detained under the NSA.

**Penal Provisions under NSA**

- A person could be kept in the dark about the reasons for his arrest for up to five days, and in exceptional circumstances not later than 10 days.
- Even when providing the grounds for arrest, the government can withhold information which it considers to be against public interest to disclose.

- The arrested person is also not entitled to the aid of any legal practitioner in any matter connected with the proceedings before an advisory board, which is constituted by the government for dealing with NSA cases.

### Stats

- As per a Law Commission report from 2001, more than 14 lakh people (14,57,779) were held under preventive laws in India.

### Examples

- Three men were arrested in Madhya Pradesh for cow slaughter by booking them under the National Security Act
- There was the 10 month long detention of Chandrasekhar Azad from November 2017 to September 2018.

### Concerns

- One must note that preventive detention was a tactic of the colonial order to suppress the activities of nationalists fighting for freedom
- In the normal course of things preventive detention laws should have lapsed after India attained Independence; but perhaps as the Republic of India had its birth amidst the ravages of civil commotion involving huge loss of lives and property, the framers of our Constitution decided
  - \* Assuming that the situation in the country at the time of Independence warranted such legislation, there is still no compelling wisdom in allowing these laws to continue particularly when the circumstances identified in the aforementioned Entries do not exist today.
  - \* Moreover, in the absence of proper safeguards, preventive detention has been grossly misused, particularly against the Dalits and the minorities.
- Detainee under preventive detention doesn't enjoy any of the personal liberties granted by Articles 19 or 21 of the Indian constitution.
- Today it is being used by our 'democratic' government against the people that fight for their right to live a life free from pollution, Ex: anti-Sterlite protests in Tuticorin
- The act crushes dissenting voices and targeting "political activists and trade unionists".
- The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), which collects and analyses crime data in the country, does not include cases under the NSA in its data as no FIRs are registered. Hence, no figures are available for the exact number of detentions under the NSA.

### Hetchin Haokip vs State of Manipur- SC

The Section 3 in the National Security Act, 1980

(4) When any order is made under this section by an officer mentioned in sub-section (3), he shall forthwith report the fact to the State Government to which he is subordinate together with the grounds on which the order has been made and such other particulars as, in his opinion, have a bearing on the matter, and no such order shall remain in force for more than twelve days after the making thereof unless, in the meantime, it has been approved by the State Government:

- A three-judge Bench of Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra and Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and D.Y. Chandrachud said "any delay between the date of detention and the date of submitting the report to the State Government, must be due to unavoidable circumstances beyond the control of the detaining authority and not because of administrative laxity".
- \* The detaining authority must furnish the report at the earliest possible
- \* Whether there were administrative exigencies which justify the delay in sending the reports must be explained by the detaining authority

### Conclusion

- As the existing laws are more than sufficient to deal with any offence, the government must seriously consider abolishing all preventive detention laws which have consistently exposed not only the shabby investigative skills of the sponsoring authority, but also their illogical and mechanical application by the detaining authority.

## **6. Public Safety Act**

### Context

- National Conference leader Omar Abdullah announced he will withdraw the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act or PSA if his party returns to power

### Details

- It allows the government to detain a person without trial for a period of three to six months.
- The Act was first promulgated in 1978 by the Sheikh Abdullah government as an administrative detention aimed at keeping timber smugglers "out of circulation".
- Originally, it allowed the government to detain any person above the age of 16 without trial for a period of two years.

### Who passes orders under the Act, and on what basis?

- The detention order under the PSA is issued by the district magistrate (deputy commissioner) concerned, after police recommendation.
- Police prepare a case file or 'dossier' against the accused and submit it to the deputy commissioner, detailing why a person needs to be detained under the Act.



- It is up to the deputy commissioner to accept or reject the recommendations, and accordingly, pass an order for detention under the PSA or to return the file.
- In most cases, district magistrates pass detention orders without questioning the police dossier.

#### Why are courts often not a solution?

- Though a person detained under the PSA can approach the high court to get relief, usually the government resorts to what has come to be called "revolving door detention".
- So, the moment the high court has ordered him released, the government slaps the PSA against him again in another case, and the cycle continues.

#### Stats

- According to the 2010 Amnesty report 'A Lawless Law: Detentions under the Public Safety Act', at least 10,000-20,000 people have been detained under this preventive detention law since it was enacted in the 1970s.
- In 2016 600 detention orders were issued
- Hurriyat leader Masarat Alam has been booked under the PSA for 17 consecutive times.

#### Concerns

- Over the past three-and-a-half decades, the government has frequently used the Act against political opponents.
- Many in rural areas are uncertain about how to go about seeking legal redressal and instead approach the local MLA-> getting appointments, convincing the case of family member, providing evidences leads to undue delay.
- For those who seek the legal route, there are practical difficulties in making the journey to Srinagar during the unrest when buses are not running, especially when curfew is enforced.
- Another concern is the constant use of the PSA where it deliberately targets young people, with little regard to whether they are minors or not.
  - \* Even minors wearing lattoo, shoes were booked under the PSA on the grounds that their appearance is like that of militants
  - \* It allows the police to get away with shoddy work like repeating the same wording for various orders or showing the same weapons seized.

#### What amendments were made to the law in 2011?

Following criticism from human rights groups, the law was amended

- The changes include raising the minimum age of a person who could be detained under the PSA from 16 to 18 years, and

- Reducing the maximum detention period from one year to three months in case of public disorder, and from two years to six months in cases where the security of the State is involved.
- However, in both the situations, there is a provision for revision and the detention period can be extended to one year and two years respectively.

#### Conclusion

- The state in acting arbitrarily and arresting anyone it views as dangerous. Absurd and vague allegations are made.
- Instead of using institutional procedures and human rights safeguards of the ordinary criminal justice system, the law is used loosely against political activists, members of political groups, young people and dissidents against whom there would be insufficient evidence
- Thousands languish in jail. Even for those released, the possibility of re-detention hangs like a sword over their heads. This erodes credibility and belief in the criminal justice system.

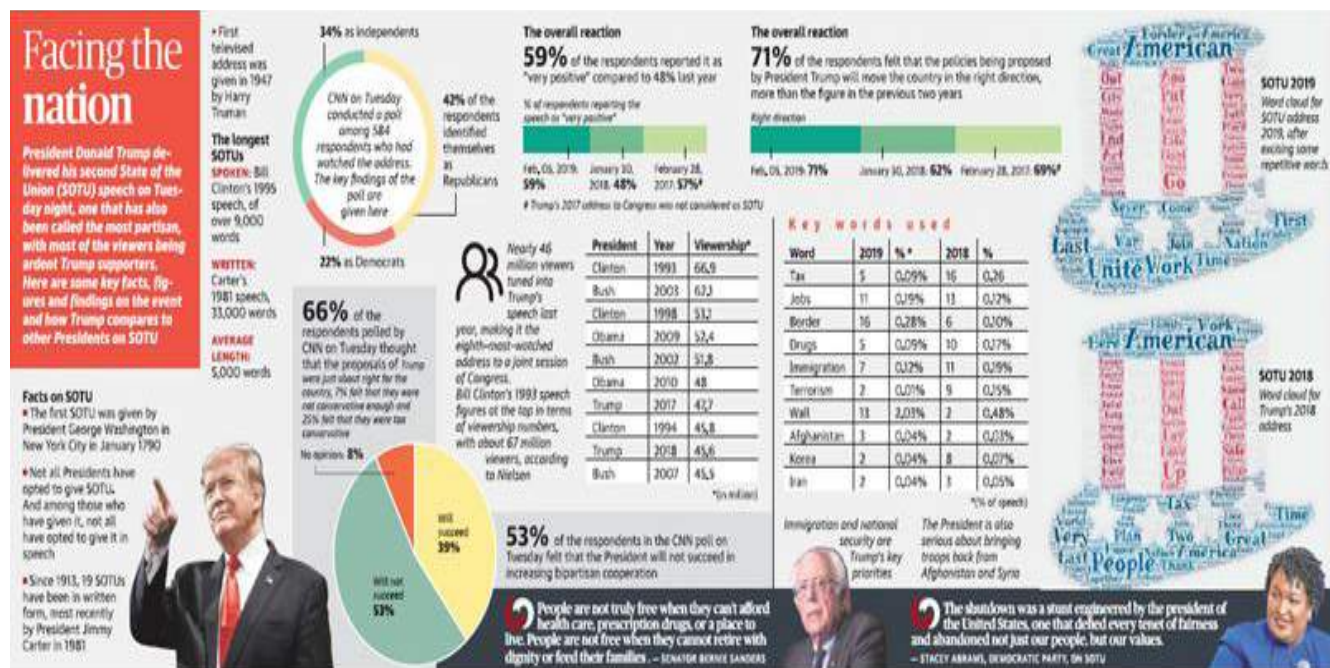
### **7. State of the Union Address (SOTU)**

- It is an annual message delivered by the President of the United States to a joint session of the United States Congress at the beginning of each calendar year in office
- The message typically includes a budget message and an economic report of the nation, and also allows the President to propose a legislative agenda and national priorities
- The address fulfills the requirement in Article II, Section 3 of the U.S. Constitution

#### Article Two of the United States Constitution

- Article Two of the United States Constitution establishes the executive branch of the federal government, which carries out and enforces federal laws.
  - \* Article Two vests the power of the executive branch in the office of the President of the United States, lays out the procedures for electing and removing the president, and establishes the president's powers and responsibilities
- Section 3: Presidential responsibilities
  - \* He shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient; he may, on extraordinary Occasions, convene both Houses, or either of them, and in Case of Disagreement between them, with Respect to the Time of Adjournment, he may adjourn them to such Time as he shall think proper; he shall receive Ambassadors and other public Ministers; he shall take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed, and shall Commission all the Officers of the United States.

- Article One of the United States Constitution establishes the legislative branch of the federal government, the United States Congress. Under Article One, Congress is a bicameral legislature consisting of the House of Representatives and the Senate.



## 8. Tele-Law and Nyaya Bandhu: Mobile Applications.

### Context

- National Department of Justice Launches Tele-Law: Mobile Application & Dashboard and Nyaya Bandhu (Pro Bono Legal Services) Mobile Application.

### About Tele-law:

- Department of Justice has partnered with NALSA and CSC e-Governance Service India Limited for mainstreaming legal aid to the marginalised communities through Common Services Center (CSC).
- Tele-Law means the use of communications and information technology for the delivery of legal information and advice. This e-interaction between lawyers and people would be through the video-conferencing infrastructure available at the CSCs.
- The concept of Tele-Law is to facilitate delivery of legal advice through a panel of lawyers stationed at the state Legal Services Authorities (SALSA) and CSC. The project initiates to connect citizens with lawyers through video conferencing facilities by the Para-Legal Volunteers stationed at identified 1800 panchayat.

### About Nyaya Bandhu:

- Nyaya Bandhu (Pro Bono Legal Services) Legal services programme was launched by Minister for Law & Justice.

- An initiative of the Department of Justice, the programme is aimed at fulfilling the Department's critical mandate of enhancing "access to justice" for marginalised sections of the society and the State's constitutional obligation of providing "free legal aid" for all.
- The programme seeks to put in place an institutional structure which will promote pro bono culture in India.
- On one hand, the programme would facilitate delivery of quality legal assistance to the marginalised communities, on the other hand it would ensure that lawyers who volunteer their valuable time and service, towards this public service, are duly recognized for their contribution.
- Based on the premise of using technology to enhance access to justice for all, the Nyaya Bandhu app will allow marginalised individuals (referred to as "Applicants"), seeking quality legal advice and counsel, to connect via a mobile application with "Advocates" who have volunteered their time and services on this platform.

## 9. Post-retirement government appointments of Judges needs regulation

### Context

- Supreme Court judge AK Sikri had got an offer from the central government for a post-retirement assignment at the London-based Commonwealth Secretariat Arbitral Tribunal while being a judge of the court.

- He turned down the offer and substantially redeemed the judiciary's and his own honour
- However, this is an issue that recurs frequently.

#### Examples from the past

- For example, the case of the late Justice M.C. Chagla. Both he and the former Attorney General of India, M.C. Setalvad, were members of the First Law Commission.
- Speaking as members of the Law Commission they had categorically denounced the proclivity of judges accepting post-retirement jobs sponsored by governments and called for an end to it.
- Unfortunately, in his post-retirement assignments, Justice Chagla violated the very same principle he had supported.
  - \* After retirement, he accepted a government appointment to serve as Indian Ambassador to the U.S. (1958-61) and later as Indian High Commissioner to the U.K (1962- 1963).
  - \* Soon after this he was asked to be minister for education in Nehru's cabinet, which he again accepted.
  - \* He served as Education Minister (1963-66) and then as Minister for External Affairs (1966-67).
- In 1970, retired Chief Justice of India M Hidayatullah contested for the office of Vice-President and won.
- In 1973, Justice KS Hegde resigned as a judge of the Supreme Court, got elected as a member of the Lok Sabha and became its Speaker in 1977.

#### Current Stats

- In a study, the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy pointed out that as many as 70 out of 100 Supreme Court retired judges have taken up assignments in the National Human Rights Commission of India, National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, Armed Forces Tribunal, and the Law Commission of India, etc.
- Justice A.K Goel was appointed chairman of National Green Tribunal on the same day of his retirement as Supreme Court judge
- Justice R.K Agrawal was appointed as the chairman of the National Consumer Redressal Commission (NCDRC)
- Justice Antony Dominic was appointed chairman of the State Human Rights Commission by the Kerala government, within a week of his retirement as chief justice of the Kerala high court
- Chief Justice of India P. Sathasivam was appointed as governor of Kerala in September 2014.
  - \* The first episode of a Supreme Court judge being made a governor is that of Justice Fathima Beevi, who was appointed Governor of Tamil Nadu in 1997.

#### Judges who did not accept post retirement jobs

- Justice Chelameswar declared that he will not take up any post-retirement assignment given by the government.
- Justice Kurian Joseph has also made open his reluctance to accept such jobs.
- According to them, the judiciary and executive should remain mutual watchdogs rather than mutual admirers, and post retirement offers can lead to erosion of judicial independence.

#### Rojer Mathew v. South Indian Bank Ltd.

- It is currently going into the issue of tribunalisation of the judiciary and its challenges to the independence of the judiciary —
- In this case senior counsel Arvind P. Datar, amicus, has observed: "The Tribunals should not be haven for retired persons and appointment process should not result in decisions being influenced if the Government itself is a litigant and appointment authority at the same time. There should be restriction on acceptance of any employment after retirement"

#### Merits of Post retirement of Judges

- Valuable experience and insights that competent and honest judges acquire during their period of service cannot be wasted after retirement.
- Unlike abroad, a judge of the higher judiciary in India retires at a comparatively young age and is capable of many more years of productive work. So utilizing their services is good for clearing the backlog of cases and adding knowledge to the system.

#### Concerns

- The appointment of judges to new jobs as soon as they retire compromises the independence of the judiciary
- This certainly casts a cloud over judicial decisions rendered during their tenure in cases involving stakes of the respective governments, as the executive has a major say in appointments to quasi-judicial bodies.
- Judges accepting jobs under the executive certainly creates situations of conflicts of interest. It tends to undermine public faith in judicial independence.

#### Some Suggestions

- Justice S.H. Kapadia and Justice T.S. Thakur that no judge should accept any salaried job under any government at least for a cooling period of three years from his or her retirement.
- Arun Jaitley, in his capacity as leader of the opposition in the Rajya Sabha in 2012, had advocated a cooling off period for judges



- There has to be a mechanism to channelise the potential of retired judges back into the system. At present, most statutory commissions/tribunals require to be headed by retired judges of the Supreme Court or high courts.
- Therefore, the viable option is to expeditiously establish, through a properly enacted statute, a commission made up of a majority, if not exclusively, of retired judges to make appointments of competent retired judges to tribunals and judicial bodies.

### **Conclusion**

- It is true that judges cannot legislate. However, where a void is found in the legal framework that requires immediate attention, and legislative intervention is not likely to emerge immediately, the Supreme Court is empowered to provide an interim solution till legislation is passed to address the hiatus.
- This process the top court has followed, to cite an instance (there are others), in the Vishaka case, where it laid down guidelines to deal with sexual harassment in workplaces till a law was passed by Parliament.
- It is desirable the Supreme Court invokes that methodology now and puts in place a process to regulate post-retirement appointments for judges.
- Such a process must sufficiently insulate the judiciary from the charge of being a recipient of government largesse.

## **10. Judges must give their reasons in writing for recusing themselves**

### **Introduction**

- The judges of higher courts in India are supposed to dispense justice fairly and fearlessly
  - \* This is regardless of their prejudices and preferences they inherit from their upbringing or criticism they may face from losing parties.
- An unfortunate trend has, however, set in recent times when judges prefer to sit out, incensed by insinuations or scared of losing their high moral ground.

### **Definition**

- Recusal is to remove oneself as a judge in a particular proceeding, usually because of conflict of interest.

### **Judges who excused oneself from hearing a case**

- Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi disqualified himself, purportedly because he was set to be a part of the selection committee tasked with choosing a new CBI Director. He then assigned a bench presided by Justice A.K. Sikri to hear the case.
- Justice Sikri too recused, on grounds, that he was part of a panel that removed the previous CBI Director Alok Verma from his post
- Justice N.V. Ramana recused himself for apparently personal reasons.

\* "Nageswara Rao is from my home state and I have attended his daughter's wedding," he told the petitioner's counsel.

- Challenging the appointment of M. Nageswara Rao as interim director of the Central Bureau of Investigation — three judges recused themselves.
- Justice U.U. Lalit recused himself from hearing the dispute over land in Ayodhya after senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan pointed out that the judge had appeared for former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Kalyan Singh in a related contest.

### **Questions unanswered**

- When must a judge disqualify herself from hearing a case?
- Must decisions of this gravity be left to the wisdom of individual judges?
- Under what circumstances does a decision of recusal transgress a judge's general responsibility to sit and deliver impartial justice?
- Should not a judge who disqualifies herself be compelled to deliver an order explaining her reasons for recusal?

None of these orders of recusals was made in writing, and, by themselves, the professed oral reasons for the decisions do not quite point to why the judges ought to have thought themselves incapacitated.

### **Obligations on the judges**

By the very nature of their job, judges are required to remain unruffled by the noise of their surroundings, believe in their intellectual integrity and deliver judgements after analysing evidences dispassionately. Nation looks upon them to ensure that only truth triumphs, unaffected by their religion, caste, education, upbringing, friends, family, ideological persuasions and how others would react.

- In taking oath of office, judges, both of the Supreme Court and of the high courts, promise to perform their duties, to deliver justice, "without fear or favour, affection or ill-will".
- An unwarranted recusal, much like a failure to recuse when faced with genuine conflicts of interest, denigrates the rule of law.
- To withdraw from a case merely because a party suggests that a judge do so impairs judicial fairness. It allows parties to cherry-pick a bench of their choice.
- While "fear and favor", as Stephen Sedley, a former judge of the Court of Appeal of England and Wales, has written, are "enemies of independence, which is a state of being", affection and ill-will "undermine impartiality, which is a state of mind".
  - \* The purpose of recusal, Mr. Sedley added, is to underpin these twin pillars of independence and impartiality. A decision, therefore, on a demand for a judge's disqualification is an especially solemn one.

**Some exceptions can be taken up**

These exceptions can be on following scenarios:

- Bias of prejudice
  - \* It typically means the judge has acted/ taken a stand or publicly spoken in a way that prevents him or her from treating the party in a fair and impartial manner.
- Where a judge has appeared for one of the litigants at some stage in the same dispute.
  - \* A judge's fairness and impartiality may be compromised when he or she has had a business or professional relationship with a party.
- In cases where the judge was a party's business partner or attorney, as well as in cases where the judge was a member of a law firm representing a party, the potential for bias or prejudice is almost always too great to permit the judge to preside over the case.
- In disputes where a judge has a financial interest in the litigation, where a judge owns shares in a company which is party to the case, the fact of owning shares is, in and of itself, considered a disqualification.
  - \* This rule is derived from an 1852 House of Lords judgment, which held that Lord Cottenham ought not to have delivered a verdict in a case where he owned shares in one of the parties to the litigation.
- Judge's family member's economic interest in the case.
  - \* The judge is related to a party or spouse of either party (usually) within three degrees of kinship.
  - \* Sometimes a judge or one of his or her immediate family members will have an economic interest in the subject matter of the case, one that could be significantly impacted by the outcome of the proceedings
- No person should be a judge in her own cause.

**What should be done?**

Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India (2015)

- Judge's family member's economic interest in the case.
  - \* "Where a judge has a pecuniary interest, no further inquiry as to whether there was a 'real danger' or 'reasonable suspicion' of bias is required to be undertaken," he wrote. "But in other cases, such an inquiry is required, and the relevant test is the 'real danger' test."
- Even with this formulation, what constitutes real danger of bias remains a matter of construal. And whether an individual judge should be allowed to decide for herself on pleas of recusal is equally a point of contention

\* For when judges choose without a rational motive, without expressing their decisions in writing, they hurt the very idea of judicial rectitude.

- Ultimately, a mistaken case of recusal can prove just as destructive to rule of law as those cases where a judge refuses a recusal despite the existence of bias. We mustn't allow recusals to be used as a tool to manoeuvre justice, as a means to picking benches of a party's choice, and as an instrument to evade judicial work.
- Judicial impartiality is a significant element of justice. Judges should decide legal disputes free of any personal bias or prejudice. As a result of a conflict of interest, a judge may be unable to maintain impartiality in a case and thus should be disqualified. Even where a judge is impartial, but appears not to be, recusal is necessary and this should be structured.

**Conclusion**

- As the Constitutional Court of South Africa held, in 1999, "the nature of the judicial function involves the performance of difficult and at times unpleasant tasks," and to that end judicial officers "must resist all manner of pressure, regardless of where it comes from. This is the constitutional duty common to all judicial officers. If they deviate, the independence of the judiciary would be undermined, and in turn, the Constitution itself."

It needs to be understood that judgements have no colour and judges must exhibit a yogi's detachment. The seat they occupy gives them zero immunity from recusal, irrespective of price they have to pay

**11. Dealing with the thought police****Background**

- In February 2019 an Additional Sessions Judge in Punjab sentenced three young men to life in prison.
- They were convicted under provisions of the Indian Penal Code concerning "waging war against the government of India".

**What did they do?**

- They did not commit any physical violence, and nobody was harmed in any way.
- They were not caught in possession of weapons.
- They were not overheard planning any specific terrorist attack, nor were they on their way to commit one when they were apprehended.
- What did happen was that the men were caught with literature supporting the cause of Khalistan, a few posters that did the same, and some Facebook posts (whose content we do not know) on the subject.



**Concerns**

- The first—and most glaring—aspect of the judgment is its apparent disregard for the Constitution. At the heart of the Constitution's fundamental rights is Article 19, which guarantees, among other things, the freedom of speech and association.
  - \* Of course, the state may impose "reasonable restrictions" upon these fundamental freedoms, in the interests of, for example, the security of the state.
- The Supreme Court has articulated the precise circumstances under which a restriction on the freedom of speech or association is "reasonable". After the famous 2015 judgment in *Shreya Singhal*, in which Section 66A of the Information Technology Act was struck down, the position of law has been clear:
  - \* Speech can be punished only if it amounts to direct incitement to violence.
  - \* Everything short of that, including "advocacy" of any kind, is protected by the Constitution.
  - \* 1. Possess literature or books about a banned Organisation?
  - \* 2. Express sympathy with its aims?
  - \* 3. Met other, "active" members?
- In *Balwant Singh v. State of Punjab* (1995), the Supreme Court had set aside the sedition convictions of two men who had raised pro-Khalistan slogans outside a cinema hall in Punjab, in the immediate aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination.
  - \* The Additional Sessions Judge ignore Supreme Court precedent on free speech and association and Supreme Court precedent on the interpretation of anti-terror legislation, he also—staggeringly—managed to ignore categorical precedent on the issue of pro-Khalistani speech!
- Use of words like Anti National and Urban Naxal are not mentioned in Law books. It is used to vilify political opponents.
  - \* When this percolate into law-enforcement and legal discourse, personal liberty is at stake.
  - \* Additional Sessions Judge does not use either of these specific terms, his entire judgment, however, is of a piece with this governing philosophy, where conjecture, association, and innuendo take the place of rational analysis.
- The American judge, Louis Brandeis, memorably observed, "If there be time to expose through discussion the falsehood and fallacies... the remedy to be applied is more speech, not enforced silence." The Indian Supreme Court's "incitement to violence" standard responds to this basic insight about civil liberties in a democracy.

**Conclusion**

- Therefore in adjudicating cases involving the life and personal liberties of citizens, courts must take special care to ensure that the temptation to get carried away and forget what the Constitution commands is held firmly in check.

**12. Legitimacy of the basic structure – On Basic Structure of India's Constitution****Context:**

- There have been protests over the rule's legitimacy in certain quarters in response to challenges made to the recently introduced 103rd Constitutional Amendment, which provides for reservations based on economic criteria in government jobs and education. The Act amends Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution, by adding a clause which allows states to make "special provision for the advancement of any economically weaker sections of citizens.

**Background:**

Basic Structure of the Constitution:

- The basic structure doctrine is an Indian judicial principle that the Constitution of India has certain basic features that cannot be altered or destroyed through amendments by the parliament.
- However, the word "Basic Structure" is not mentioned in the constitution of India.
- In 1967, the Supreme in *Golaknath v. State of Punjab* held that Fundamental Rights included in Part III of the Constitution are given a "transcendental position" and are beyond the reach of Parliament. It also pronounced any amendment that abridges a Fundamental Right as unconstitutional.
- By 1973, the basic structure doctrine triumphed in Justice Hans Raj Khanna's judgment in the landmark decision of *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala*. Previously, the Supreme Court had held that the power of Parliament to amend the Constitution was unfettered. However, in this landmark ruling, the Court adjudicated that while Parliament has "wide" powers, it did not have the power to destroy or emasculate the basic elements or fundamental features of the constitution.
- The basic structure doctrine has since gained widespread acceptance and legitimacy due to subsequent cases and judgments.
- Some of the features of the Constitution termed as "basic" are listed below:
  - \* Supremacy of the Constitution
  - \* Rule of law
  - \* The principle of Separation of Powers
  - \* The objectives specified in the Preamble to the Constitution
  - \* Judicial Review
  - \* Independence of Judiciary

- \* The “essence” of Fundamental Rights in Part III etc..

### Editorial Analysis:

It has now been more than 45 years since the Supreme Court ruled in *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala* that Parliament’s power to amend the Constitution was not unlimited, that the Constitution’s basic structure was inviolable. But as entrenched as this doctrine might now be, it remains, to some, a source of endless aversion.

- The common criticism is that the doctrine has no basis in the Constitution’s language.
- The phrase “basic structure”, it’s argued, finds no mention anywhere in the Constitution.
- What’s more, beyond its textual illegitimacy, its detractors also believe the doctrine accords the judiciary a power to impose its philosophy over a democratically formed government, resulting in something akin to what Union Minister Arun Jaitley once termed as a “tyranny of the unelected”.
- Unquestionably, some of this censure is a result of the Supreme Court’s occasionally muddled interpretation of what the Constitution’s basic structure might be. But to reject the doctrine altogether because the judiciary sometimes botches is not the right approach. For not only is the basic structure canon legally legitimate, in that it is deeply rooted in the Constitution’s text and history, but it also possesses substantial moral value, in that it strengthens democracy by limiting the power of a majoritarian government to undermine the Constitution’s central ideals.
- Ever since the Constitution was first amended in 1951, the true extent of Parliament’s power to amend the document has been acutely contested.

### Interpreting ‘amendment’:

- If Parliament’s powers are considered infinite, the parliamentary executive can be removed, fundamental rights can be abrogated, and, in effect, what is a sovereign democratic republic can be converted into a totalitarian regime.
- In *Kesavananda Bharati*, it was this formulation that shaped Justice H.R. Khanna’s legendary, controlling opinion. The judge said: “Any amending body organized within the statutory scheme, howsoever verbally unlimited its power, cannot by its very structure change the fundamental pillars supporting its Constitutional authority.”
- According to him, what could emerge out of an amendment was only an altered form of the existing Constitution and not an altogether new and radical Constitution.
- This interpretation, as Sudhir Krishnaswamy has shown, in some depth, in his book, *Democracy and Constitutionalism in India*, is compelling for at least two reasons. First, it represents a careful reading of the text of Article 368, and, second, it delivers an attractive understanding of the moral principles that anchor the Constitution.

- Article 368 grants Parliament the power to amend the Constitution, making it clear that on the exercise of that power “the Constitution shall stand amended”. Therefore, if what has to remain after an amendment is “the Constitution”, naturally a change made under Article 368 cannot create a new constitution.
- Such an interpretation is also supported by the literal meaning of the word “amendment”, which is defined as “a minor change or addition designed to improve a text”. Hence, for an amendment to be valid, the constitution that remains standing after such a change must be the Constitution of India; it must continue to possess, in its essence, those features that were foundational to it even at its conception.

### Questions to ponder:

Were an amendment to be introduced relinquishing control over India to a foreign power, would it not result in the creation of a constitution that is no longer the Constitution of India? Would not such an amendment strike at the root of the Constitution’s Preamble, which, in its original form, established India as a sovereign democratic republic?

On any reasonable analysis it ought to, therefore, be clear that the basic structure doctrine is not only grounded in the Constitution’s text and history, but that it also performs an important democratic role in ensuring that majoritarian governments do not destroy the Constitution’s essential character.

- It must be remembered that constitutions are not like ordinary laws. Interpreting one is always likely to be an exercise fraught with controversy.
- But such is the nature of our political design that the court, as an independent body, is tasked with the role of acting as the Constitution’s final interpreter, with a view to translating abstract principles into “concrete constitutional commands” as Justice Robert H. Jackson of the U.S. Supreme Court once wrote.
- It may well be the case that the basic structure doctrine is derived from the abstract. But that scarcely means it doesn’t exist within the Constitution.

### Conclusion:

- Parliament The basic structure doctrine has been applied by the judges every now and then. It has till date proved to be a very effective tool in deciding the validity of the constitutional amendments. The doctrine, however, had not yet been defined in any of the judgements adequately and sufficiently. There are many things which are basic to the constitution and they cannot be decided beforehand. While the idea that there is such a thing as a basic structure to the Constitution is well established its contents cannot be completely determined with any measure of finality until a judgement of the Supreme Court spells it out. Nevertheless the sovereign, democratic and secular character of the polity, rule of law, independence of

the judiciary, fundamental rights of citizens etc. are some of the essential features of the Constitution that have appeared time and again in the apex court's pronouncements.

### **13. Why no experts on RTI panels, asks Supreme Court?**

#### **Context**

- The Supreme Court has questioned the Central Information Commission (CIC) as to why Right to Information bodies were almost completely manned by bureaucrats.

#### **Details**

- The Right to Information Act of 2005 mandates that people with wide range of experience and from various fields should serve as information commissioners.
- But the SC said only retired bureaucrats are appointed

#### **Interpreting 'amendment':**

- \* Justice Sikri pointed out that out of 280 applications received for the post of information commissioners at the CIC recently, 14 were shortlisted, and they were almost all bureaucrats.
- The apex court directed the government to look beyond bureaucrats and appoint professionals from "all walks of life," including eminent persons with wide knowledge and experience in law, science and technology, social service, management, journalism as Information Commissioners.

# ECONOMY

## 1. 1st Aqua Mega Food Park

- Union Cabinet Minister of Food Processing commissioned Godavari Mega Aqua Food Park at Tundurru Village in West Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh.

### Godavari Mega Aqua Food Park

- Godavari Mega Aqua Food Park Pvt Ltd (GMAFP) India's First Aqua Food Park is set up at Bhimavaram of West Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh.
- Conceptualized as a Hub & Spoke Model, the Mega Food Park is constructed with its Core Processing Center (CPC) at Tundurru Village in Bhimavaram region acting as the Hub and the Spoke comprises of Two Primary Processing Centers (PPC) at Amalapuram in East Godavari District (PPC1) and Karlapalem in Guntur District (PPC2) along with the 9 Collection Centers (CC), one each in the 9 coastal districts of the state of Andhra Pradesh.
- Godavari Mega Aqua Food Park will provide a platform and establish backward and forward linkages covering the entire aqua food processing value chain, quality assurance, food safety and implementation of best practices in post-harvest management.

## 2. Angel tax rules for start-ups changed

- According to the new rules, investments up to ₹25 crore in companies that are less than 10 years old and with a total turnover of less than ₹100 crore will be exempted from the new angel tax instead of the existing cap of ₹25 crore.
- Further, investments made by listed companies with a net worth of at least ₹100 crore or a total turnover of at least ₹250 crore will be fully exempt from the tax; so will investments made by non-resident Indians.
- An eligible start-up would be one that is registered with the government, has been incorporated for less than 10 years, and has a turnover that has not exceeded ₹100 crore over that period.

### Steps that needs to be taken by the start ups

- In order to register with the government as a start-up, the company will also have to make an online application to the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
- This application will have to be accompanied by a copy of the Certificate of Incorporation or Registration, a write-up about the nature of the business highlighting how it is working towards innovation, development or improvement of products or processes or services, or its scalability in terms of employment generation or wealth creation.

- For being eligible for exemption under Section 56(2) (viib), a startup should not be investing in immovable property, transport vehicles above Rs 10 Lakh, loans and advances, capital contribution to other entities and some other assets except in the ordinary course of its business

Once the signed declaration and accompanying documents are submitted to the DPIIT, the body will decide on the eligibility of the start-up and then communicate a list of eligible start-ups to the Central Board of Direct Taxes.

### Significance

- The easing of the outdated angel tax rules will definitely make life easier for start-ups, which are in desperate need for capital to fund their growth and other business requirements.
- Further, since the new rules are set to be applied retrospectively, many young companies that have received notices from the Income Tax Department in the last few years will be relieved by the latest tweak in the rules.

### Concerns

- Companies wishing to make use of the latest exemption, for instance, will first need to be registered with the government as start-ups.
- To be classified as one, a company needs to attest to conditions such as that it has not invested in any land unrelated to the business, vehicles worth over ₹10 lakh, or jewellery.
- These requirements, while probably aimed to prevent money-laundering, can lead to considerable bureaucratic delays and rent-seeking
- Also, the new rules for the angel tax, though less stringent than before, can cause the same old problem of arbitrary tax demands for companies that do not fall under the defined category of start-ups.
- The taxes to be paid are still supposed to be calculated by the authorities based on how much the sale price of a company's unlisted share exceeds its fair market value.
- It is impossible to know the market value, let alone the fair market value, of shares that are not openly traded in the marketplace. So tax authorities with ulterior motives will still possess enough leeway to harass start-ups with unreasonable tax demands. Unless the government can address the arbitrary nature of the angel tax, the damage to investor confidence may remain.

### 3. **Asian Infrastructure Finance 2019 report**

#### Context

- China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) expects the cost of infrastructure financing in India to increase over the next one year.

#### Details

- The bank, in its Asian Infrastructure Finance 2019 report, said it sees slowing global economy, higher borrowing costs and geopolitical tensions leading to greater uncertainty among investors.
- The bank expects a marginal increase in the cost of infrastructure financing cost in India, it also noted that geopolitical shocks or commodity price fluctuations could intensify any increases in cost of financing even further
- It said the reliance on government funding through EPC and annuity-based infrastructure financing models in India reflects the weak balance sheets of some domestic commercial banks.

### 4. **Aviation Conclave 2019**

- It has theme of "Flying for All"
- This Conclave was about the future of Indian aviation – bringing together industry leaders, government and regulators for setting the tone and propelling us to realize our Vision-2040
- Over 30 industry leaders participated in 5-key sessions covering the Drone-Ecosystem Policy Roadmap, Roadmap for Manufacturing Aircraft and associated equipment, including Regional Transport Aircraft, in India, the Project Rupee Raftaar- Aircraft Financing and Leasing from India, the National Air Cargo Policy, and the Mission to transform Indian Airports into Next-Gen Aviation Hubs.

### 5. **Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2018**

#### Context

- The Union Cabinet approved the official amendments to an Act that classifies any deposit scheme not registered with the government as an offence and bans it

#### Stats

- As per RBI data, during July, 2014 to May, 2018, 978 cases of unauthorised schemes were discussed in State Level Coordination Committee (SLCC) meetings in various states and were given to the respective law enforcement agencies in the states.

#### Details

- The Cabinet has given its approval to move official amendments to the Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2018, pursuant to the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Finance

- A deposit-taking scheme will be considered unregulated if it is not registered with regulators such as Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), RBI, SEBI, among others.
- It bans Deposit Takers from promoting, operating, issuing advertisements or accepting deposits in any unregulated scheme
  - \* "Deposit Takers' include all possible entities (including individuals) receiving or soliciting deposits, except specific entities such as those incorporated by legislation"
- The principle is that the Bill would ban unregulated deposit taking activities altogether, by making them an offence ex-ante rather than the existing legislative-cum-regulatory framework which only comes into effect ex-post with considerable time lags
- The Bill creates three different types of offences:
  - \* running of unregulated deposit schemes,
  - \* fraudulent default in regulated deposit schemes
  - \* Wrongful inducement in relation to unregulated deposit schemes.
- Penalties could involve jail term as well as the sale of the offenders' assets to pay back the defrauded party within set timelines.

#### Significance

- The amendments will further strengthen the Bill in its objective to effectively tackle the menace of illicit deposit-taking activities, and prevent such schemes from duping poor and gullible people of their hard-earned savings

#### Challenges in implementation:

The passing of tough laws may just be the easiest of battles in the larger war against illicit deposit schemes.

- \* For one, policymakers will have to make sure that the bureaucrats responsible for the on-ground implementation of the ordinance are keen on protecting the savings of low-income households.
- \* There must also be checks against persons in power misusing the new rules to derecognise genuine deposit schemes that offer useful financial services to customers in the unorganised sector. In fact, in the past there have been several cases of politicians acting in alliance with the operators of fraudulent deposit schemes to fleece depositors of their hard-earned money.
- \* Another potential risk involved when the government, as in this case, takes it upon itself to guarantee the legitimacy of various deposit schemes is that it diverts depositors from conducting the necessary due diligence before choosing to deposit their money.



**Conclusion:**

- While the intent of the ordinance, which is to protect small depositors, is indeed commendable, the benefits that depositors will eventually derive from the new legislation will depend largely on its proper implementation. New rules on unregulated deposit schemes need to be backed up with proper checks.

**6. Bhavantar Yojana**

- The congress government in Madhya Pradesh has put on hold the Flat Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana until its review is done
- This is a scheme to provide deficiency price payment wherein the farmer is paid compensation in case the market prices fall below the MSP, but the payment was capped to the modal price (average price fixed based on the prices in the surrounding mandis)
- Some of the issues with the scheme are
  - \* The farmers were supposed to register by submitting multiple paperwork
  - \* Only around 45% of the land was covered/registered under the scheme in Kharif 2017 season. Means majority of the farmers had to sell their produce at prices lesser than the MSP announced by the government and did not receive any kind of deficiency payment
  - \* The market/realised prices dropped to a very low level. There were allegations that the producers/farmers had connived with the buyers and shorted the prices. The state government has lost around ₹ 200 Cr in such cases. Having said so, various experts have countered the point by saying the supply of Urad and soya increased as a result of the harvesting season which led to dip in the prices of both
  - \* Due to such issues and the central government hesitating to share the financial burden, the state government later excluded some of the crops from the scheme
  - \* The government in the Kharif season 2018 introduced Flat Bhavantar Yojana - wherein a flat bonus payment of ₹ 500 per quintal of soya bean and maize was fixed

**7. External Benchmarking****Background**

- All loans such as for car and home disbursed from April 1, 2016 are linked to marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR). The MCLR-based regime had replaced the earlier base rate regime to provide transparency in the transmission of monetary policy decisions.
- MCLR is an internal benchmark rate that depends on various factors such as fixed deposit rates, source of funds and savings rate.

- The price of loan comprises the MCLR and the spread or the bank's profit margin.

**The problem with MCLR-based system**

- The biggest problem with the current system is the lack of required transmission of policy rates.
  - \* They are insensitive to changes in the policy interest rate or repo rate
  - \* When the RBI cuts repo rate there is no guarantee a borrower will get the benefit of the rate cut or that it will be transmitted down to him.
  - \* Due to internal benchmarking of loan price, policy rate cuts often don't reach the borrowers.
- Secondly, the MCLR system is opaque since it's an internal benchmark that depends on the way a bank does its business.
- Banks deviated in an ad hoc manner from the specified methodologies for calculating the base rate and the MCLR to either inflate the base rate or prevent the base rate from falling in line with the cost of funds.
- Borrowers, who have taken loans on a floating rate basis, suffer an immediate increase when interest rates are hiked by the RBI but do not get much relief when rates go down. This makes a mockery of the very concept of 'floating' rates.
- Dr Janak Raj Committee in its report, "Internal Study Group to Review the Working of the MCLR System" had provided a shocking account of how wide and deep banking malpractices are with regard to floating rate loans.

**How the new system will work?**

- Under the new system which will come into effect from April 1, 2019, banks will have to link their lending rates with an external benchmark instead of MCLR.
- The RBI has given these options to banks: RBI repo rate, the 91-day T-bill yield; the 182-day T-bill yield; or any other benchmark market interest rate produced by the Financial Benchmarks India Pvt. Ltd.
- One of these benchmarks will be used to decide the lending rate in addition to the spread, Banks will be free to decide their spread value but it will have to be fixed for the tenure of the loan.
- However, it can change if the credit score of the borrower changes. The interest rates under the new system will change every month.

**How it will benefit borrowers?**

- First, it will help better transmission of policy rate cuts which means an RBI rate cut will immediately reach the borrower in the current system in which internal benchmark is not influenced solely by the policy rate cut but depends on a variety of factors.
- Second, it will make the system more transparent since every borrower will know the fixed interest rate and the spread value decided by the bank.

- \* It will help borrowers compare loans in a better way from different banks.
- Under the new system, a bank is required to adopt a uniform external benchmark within a loan category so that there is transparency, standardization and ease of understanding for the borrowers.
- \* This would mean that same bank cannot adopt multiple benchmarks within a loan category.

#### Concerns

- Bankers have cautioned that the external benchmarking of new floating rate loans by banks may bring volatility in interest rates, leading to frequent changes in customers' monthly instalments.
- The lack of depth in T-Bill and CD (Certificate of Deposit) markets can make such benchmarks potentially susceptible to manipulation

### **8. Gems and Jewellery Domestic Council**

#### Context

- The Commerce Ministry announced the formation of a Domestic Council for Gems & Jewellery to bring the industry's domestic business stakeholders under one umbrella so that they could evolve a unified approach to promote growth in the sector.

#### Details

- The basic objective of the government is make this unorganised sector organised and structured so that additional 3 million jobs can be created.
- The share of jewellery in gem & jewellery exports is low and the council will look into increasing this share
- This Council will help in tapping new opportunities in the already existing large domestic market
- The first priority of the Domestic Council should be to uplift the living standards of artisans. It is also imperative for industry to have one voice across all segment
- Further, with a view to strengthen the Gems & Jewellery industry in the country, the Government has taken a number of steps such as establishment of Special Notified Zone (SNZ); setting up of Common Facility Centres for gem and jewellery sector; announcement of separate ITC HS Code for lab-grown diamonds; and providing financial assistance for participation in international fairs, organizing buyer-seller meets, creation of export related infrastructure, etc. under various schemes of the Department of Commerce to boost the industry.

### **9. International IP Index**

- It is published by U.S. Chamber of Commerce Global Innovation Policy Center (GIPC)

- The report ranks economies based on 40 unique indicators that benchmark activity critical to innovation development surrounding patent, trademark, copyright, and trade secrets protection.
- The Index provides a guidebook for policymakers who wish to bolster economic growth, job creation, innovation, and creativity through a strong IP framework
- It is a blueprint for countries seeking to become true knowledge based economies through an effective intellectual property (IP) architecture.

#### 2019 Feb

- India has climbed eight places to rank 36th in the latest annual International Intellectual Property (IP) Index
- In 2018 International Intellectual Property Index, India was ranked 44 out of 50 countries.
- In the first edition of the report in 2014, which is prepared by Global Innovation Policy Center (GIPC) of the US Chambers of Commerce, India had ranked last in the ranking of 25 countries.
- In 2017, India ranked 43 out of 45 countries

#### How did India's ranking improve?

- The increase in India's ranking is a result of specific reforms that better align India's IP environment with the international IP system, including
  - \* its accession to the WIPO Internet Treaties,
  - \* the agreement to initiate a Patent Prosecution Highway (PPH) with Japan,
  - \* a dedicated set of IP incentives for small business, and administrative reforms to address the patent backlog
- India also invested considerable energy into decreasing pendency rates for patent and trademark applications
  - \* more staff have been hired and resources invested into modernising and improving the administrative capacities of the Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trademarks (CGPDTM)

#### Other countries

- The US tops the list of 50 global economies with 42.66 points out of 45, followed by the United Kingdom (42.22), Sweden (41.03) and Germany (41.00). China is ranked 25th with 21.45 points and India has jumped eight position to be ranked 36 with 16.22 points.
- Neighbouring Pakistan is at 47th spot with 12 points and Venezuela is at the last place with 7.11 points.

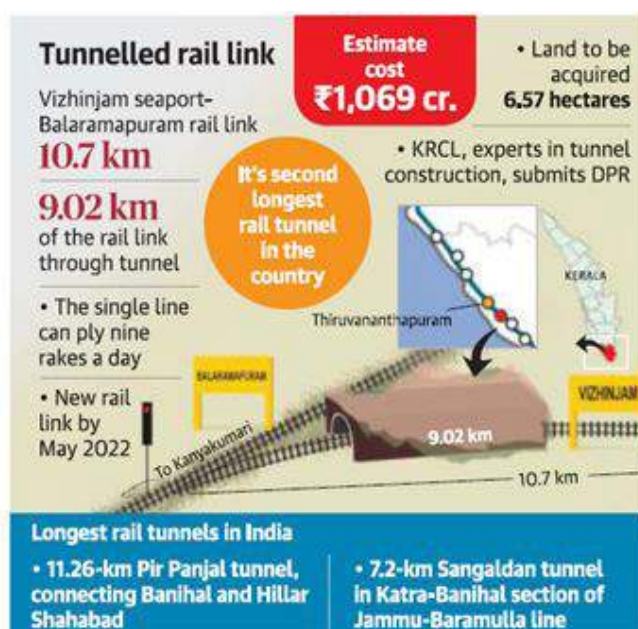
## 10. International Vision Zero Conference

- The conference provides a forum for promoting safety and health at work by exchanging knowledge, practices and experience.
- The concept of 'Vision Zero' is expected to leverage the efforts of the Government of India to raise the occupational safety and health standards in the country so as to improve the occupational safety and health situation.
- The concept of Vision Zero is based on four fundamental principles viz. life is non-negotiable, humans are fallible, tolerable limits are defined by human physical resistance, and people are entitled to safe transport and safe workplaces.
- The Vision is based on principles of Controlling Risks, Ensuring Safety and Health in Machines, Equipment and Workplaces and Skill Upgradation of Workforce.

### Significance

- Keeping in tune with the changing industrial scenario, the recommendations of the conference was very vital in achieving sustainable economic progress, in consonance with the changing requirements of safety, health and environment aspects in the country.

## 11. Kerala to get country's 2nd longest rail tunnel



## 12. Khadi Gramodyog Vikas Yojana.

### Context:

- Cabinet approves continuation of Khadi Gramodyog Vikas Yojana from 2017-18 to 2019-20.
- To bring in a new component of 'Rozgar Yukt Gaon' to introduce enterprise-based operation in the Khadi sector and to create employment opportunities for thousands of new artisans in the current and next financial year (2018-19 and 2019-20)

### Details of Rozgar Yukta gaon:

- Rozgar Yukta Gaon (RYG) aims at introducing an 'Enterprise-led Business Model' in place of 'Subsidy-led model' through partnership among 3 stakeholders-KRDP-assisted Khadi Institution, Artisans and Business Partner.
- It will be rolled out in 50 Villages by providing 10,000 Charkhas, 2000 looms & 100 warping units to Khadi artisans, and would create direct employment for 250 Artisans per village.
- Under the Village Industry verticals, special focus shall be on Agro-based and food processing (Honey, Palmgur etc.), Handmade Paper and Leather, Pottery and Wellness and Cosmetics sectors through Product Innovation, Design Development & Product Diversification.

## 13. Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan

### Context:

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister has approved launch of Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan with the objective of providing financial and water security to farmers.

### The proposed scheme consists of three components:

- Component-A: 10,000 MW of Decentralized Ground Mounted Grid Connected Renewable Power Plants.
- Component-B: Installation of 17.50 lakh standalone Solar Powered Agriculture Pumps.
- Component-C: Solarisation of 10 Lakh Grid-connected Solar Powered Agriculture Pumps.

### Significance of scheme:

- The Scheme will have substantial environmental impact in terms of savings of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. All three components of the Scheme combined together are likely to result in saving of about 27 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emission per annum.
- Further, Component-B of the Scheme on standalone solar pumps may result in saving of 1.2 billion liters of diesel per annum and associated savings in the foreign exchange due to reduction of import of crude oil.
- The scheme has direct employment potential. Besides increasing self-employment the proposal is likely to generate employment opportunity equivalent to 6.31 lakh job years for skilled and unskilled workers.

## 14. LADIS – Least Available Depth Information System

### Context:

- Inland Waterways Authority of India launches portal for real-time information on available depth on stretches of National Waterways

**Details**

- LADIS will ensure that real-time data on least available depths is disseminated for ship/barge and cargo owners so that they can undertake transportation on NWs in a more planned way.
- The portal being hosted on IWAI's website [www.iwai.nic.in](http://www.iwai.nic.in) has been developed in-house
- Initially LAD information will be available for NW-1, NW-2, Indo-Bagladesh Protocol route and NW-3, along with the date of survey. The facility will be expanded to other NWs also.
- IWAI has designed LADIS to facilitate the day to day operations of inland vessels plying on National Waterways and to avoid any hindrance in service and operation.
- It will enhance credibility and efficiency of information sharing to achieve seamless operations on National Waterways, besides pre-empting problems that may occur during movement of vessels.

**Why was it required?**

- An assured depth of waterway is required for seamless movement of vessels.
- If real time information is made available regarding LADs in stretches of various NWs, it will help transporters by guiding them on the suitability of time of movement.

**15. Liquidity Premium**

- Also known as the illiquidity premium, this refers to the additional return that an investor can earn from any investment that cannot be immediately liquidated for cash in the market.
- Risk-averse investors generally try to avoid investing in highly illiquid assets like real estate due to the time it takes to sell these assets.
- This causes successful investors in illiquid assets to earn a much higher return than other investors who prefer to invest only in highly liquid assets.
- By the same logic, since most investors would be willing to invest in highly liquid assets, the returns from such investments generally turn out to be lower than the returns from illiquid investments.

**16. Mega Silk Event****Context**

- Ministry of Textiles, in association with Central Silk Board, is organizing an event, Surging Silk - Accomplishment and way forward, in New Delhi

**Details**

- The event is being organized to highlight the growth of silk industry in India over the past 4 years.

- It focusses on distribution of Buniyaad Tasar Silk Reeling Machines to women reelers from tribal areas, as part of total eradication of the age old practice of thigh reeling
- In order to eradicate thigh reeling practice in tasar silk sector and to ensure rightful earning to the poor rural and tribal women reelers, Central Silk Technological Research Institute has developed a machine in association with an entrepreneur from Champa, Chhattisgarh
- The machine developed is known as Buniyaad Reeling machine. This machine will improve the quality and productivity of tasar silk yarn and reduce the drudgery of women.

**Significance**

- Women reeler using the traditional method earns approximately Rs.125/- per day while a tasar reeler using Buniyaad reeling machine can earn Rs.350/- per day.
- The machine is available with solar power and pedal attachments.

**E-cocoon**

- It is a mobile application for quality certification in silkworm seed sector.

**17. Millet Village scheme****Context:**

- The Kerala Agriculture Department is earmarking farm space in more districts for growing nutrient-rich millets with 'super food' and 'eat smart' strategies forming the main ingredients of the latest dietary mantras.
- The Kerala government moves to expand the Millet Village scheme.

**Details**

- Kerala government formulated a special scheme to promote the cultivation of cereals such as millet, ragi, bajra and maize by setting up a millet village at Attappady.
- The project aimed at protecting seeds of traditional varieties of millets and ensures food security and livelihood for tribals.

**Why millets?**

- Millets are naturally rich in nutrients such as iron, zinc and calcium, among others.
- Earlier these grains were addressed as coarse cereals, now, they have been renamed as nutri-cereals.
- It requires minimum inputs and is an economically viable option if marketing avenues are created.



- Millets can grow in poor soil conditions with less water, fertiliser and pesticides.
- They can withstand higher temperatures, making them the perfect choice as 'climate-smart' cereals.
- As against the requirement of 5,000 litres of water to grow one kilogram of rice, millets need hardly 250-300 litres.
- Millets are being seen as a solution to lifestyle disorders.
- As urban consumers cope with a range of lifestyle-related disorders, these grains are gradually gaining in popularity.

#### **Benefits:**

- Small millets such as kodo and kutki, among others, have a cultivation history of 3,000-5,000 years and were major food crops once upon a time.
- They might prove to be a potential new tool for the government to fight socio-economic issues such as malnutrition and rural poverty while addressing sustainability concerns.
- Millets are grown in about 21 States. There is a major impetus in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana.
- The government has been trying to push millets in Manipur, Meghalaya and Nagaland, because it is a major staple diet for the tribes in that region.

#### **The National Millet Mission**

- The Millet Mission, under the National Food Security Mission, is expected to be rolled out in April 2019
- To achieve nutritional security the Centre has been promoting millets on a 'mission mode'.
- The Centre's Millet Mission will focus on developing farm gate processing and empowering farmers through collectives, while focusing on value-addition and aggregation of the produce.
- To ensure that farmers have access to better quality seeds, the mission proposes to create seed hubs across the country and focus on crop improvement.
- In 2016-17, the area under millets stood at 14.72 million hectares, down from 37 million ha in 1965-66, prior to the pre-Green Revolution era.
- This decline was largely due to change in dietary habits (induced by a cultural bias against millets post-Green Revolution), low-yield of millets, and conversion of irrigated area towards rice and wheat.

### **18. National Electronics Policy**

#### **Context**

- The Union Cabinet approved the National Electronics Policy 2019. The first electronics policy came in 2012.

- It is aimed at achieving a turnover of \$400 billion (about ₹26 lakh crore) for the electronics system design and manufacturing (ESDM) sector by 2025, while generating employment opportunities for one crore people.

#### **Details**

- The policy has introduced "easier to implement" incentive schemes
- It includes an interest subvention scheme and credit default guarantee, to replace some of the existing ones under the National Electronics Policy 2012.
- The government proposes to create a fund to provide default guarantee of up to 75% to banks for plant and machine loans of up to ₹100 crore.
- The scheme will be on the pattern of credit guarantee being provided by SIDBI for the SME sector
- It has also proposed a sovereign patent fund to acquire intellectual property for chips and chip components.

#### **Significance**

- The policy will enable flow of investment and technology, leading to higher value addition in the domestically manufactured electronic products and increased manufacturing of electronics hardware for local use as well as exports
- Under the policy, the government aims to push manufacturing of strategic electronics required by defence
- The National Electronics Policy 2019 proposes to boost mobile manufacturing in the country to 1 billion units thereby reduce on outward flow of money

### **19. Pahari Dam Modernization Project**

- Pahari Dam is a water storage dam situated on Dhasan River in Jhansi district.
  - \* The Dhasan River is a right bank tributary of the Betwa River
  - \* The river originates in Begumganj tehsil of Raisen district in Madhya Pradesh

#### **Significance**

- The project will benefit farmers by reducing the water leakage from the dam and make more water available for the farmers.

### **20. Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Scheme**

#### **Background**

- Farmers' income in India is falling due to a decline in international prices and domestic food inflation, and fragmented landholdings.
- There is a need for providing structured income support to the poor farmer families in the country, for procuring inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, equipment, labour, etc., and to meet other needs



- Such support will help them in avoiding indebtedness as well and falling into the clutches of money lenders.

### Stats

- The agriculture sector employs over 50% of the workforce either directly or indirectly, and remains the main source of livelihood for over 70% of rural households.
- However, the droughts of 2014 and 2015, ad-hoc export and import policies, lack of infrastructure, and uncertainty in agricultural markets have adversely affected agricultural productivity and stability of farm incomes.
- Consequently, agriculture growth rates have been inconsistent in the last five years — 5.6% in 2013-14, (-) 0.2% in 2014-15, 0.7% in 2015-16, 4.9% in 2016-17 and 2.1% in 2017-18. This is a major concern.
- PM-KISAN is aimed at boosting rural consumption and helping poor farmers recover from distress.

### Details

- It is aimed at providing income support to vulnerable landholding farmers.
- Under this programme, vulnerable landholding farmer families, having cultivable land up to 2 hectares, will be provided direct income support at the rate of ₹6,000 per year,
  - \* This income support will be transferred directly into the bank accounts of beneficiary farmers, in three equal instalments of ₹2,000 each
- The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare will transfer the benefit directly into the accounts of the beneficiaries. The amount will be credited into the account of the beneficiary within 48 hours of its release by the government.

### Significance

- The scheme will benefit about 12 crore small and marginal farmers and will come into effect retrospectively from December 1, 2018
- Eminent agriculture scientist M.S. Swaminathan welcomed the interim Budget proposal of direct income support to farmers
  - \* The provision of direct income support to farmers will enable them to purchase the inputs needed for a technological upgrading of farm operation
- The merit of cash transfers over loan waivers and subsidies lies in their potential greater efficiency in enabling poor households to directly purchase the required goods and services as well as enhance their market choices.

### Concerns

- The Central scheme's payout is lower than what is being given by two States which already implement similar schemes:

- \* Telangana's Rythu Bandhu scheme, an agriculture investment support scheme for agriculture and horticulture crops, the Telangana government is providing farmers Rs. 4,000 per acre per season for purchase of inputs like seeds, fertilisers and pesticides, twice a year, for rabi and kharif seasons.
- \* Odisha's KALIA scheme, which is giving ₹10,000 a household a year to small landholders as well as landless tenant farmers.
- Given that India's poverty line is ₹32 per person per day in rural areas and ₹47 in urban areas, according to the Rangarajan Committee, the income support of ₹17 a day for a household, which is the amount offered by PM-KISAN, is largely insufficient for even bare minimum sustenance of vulnerable farmers.
  - \* Therefore, to be effective, any cash transfer scheme should first ensure that there is enough cash provided to help bring an affected community out of poverty.
  - \* Therefore, the impact of a welfare measure such as PM-KISAN can only be realised through financial support that provides farmers with adequate purchasing power to meet their daily basic necessities.
- Moreover, given the volatile market and price fluctuations in different regions, it is important to index the cash transfers to local inflation.

### Implementation issues

- The results of a joint study conducted by NITI Aayog and the Union government's Department of Food in 2016 suggest that the government's pilot programmes to replace subsidised food grains with cash in three Union Territories (Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Puducherry) have failed due to data inconsistencies.
  - \* While 50% of the people received less cash, 17% received more than they were entitled to.
- While cash transfers to households may appear simple, the scheme requires significant implementation capabilities.
  - \* In a country where a majority of the States have incomplete tenancy records and land data are not digitised (for instance, in Jharkhand, Bihar, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu), identification of beneficiaries is daunting.
- In the absence of updated land records and complete databases, the scheme may end up benefitting only those who hold land titles and not the small, marginal or tenant farmers who are the most vulnerable.

### Imagining a New India

- It is time for a New India. This New India requires modern irrigation facilities. It needs seeds and scientific and modern technological knowledge that can help and guide in reducing costs.

- It needs a rapid transition to cost-effective organic farming.
- It needs timely delivery of inputs and transport systems to enable commercialization of agricultural products and activities. It does not need doles.

### **Conclusion**

- PM-KISAN is an ambitious scheme that has the potential to deliver significant welfare outcomes. However, the current top-down, rushed approach of the government ignores governance constraints.
- An alternative bottom-up strategy and well-planned implementation mechanism would allow weaknesses to be identified and rectified at the local level. The most effective modalities can then be scaled nationally and ensure success.

## **21. Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan Scheme**

### **Background**

- Half of India's GDP comes from the sweat and toil of 42 crore workers in the unorganised sector working as street vendors, rickshaw pullers, construction workers, rag pickers, agricultural workers, beedi workers, handloom, leather and in numerous other similar occupations.
- The Government must provide them comprehensive social security coverage for their old age
- Therefore, in addition to the health coverage provided under 'Ayushman Bharat' and life & disability coverage provided under 'Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana' and 'Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana'

### **Details**

- It is designed to ensure a fixed monthly pension of ₹3,000 per month for informal sector workers above the age of 60.
- An unorganised sector worker joining pension yojana at the age of 29 years will have to contribute only Rs 100 per month till the age of 60 years
- A worker joining the pension yojana at 18 years, will have to contribute as little as Rs 55 per month only.
- The government will match the monthly contributions with an equal contribution of its own.
- The Shram Yogi Mandhan scheme is aimed at achieving that, and therefore includes all informal sector workers with an income of less than ₹15,000 per month.
- According to the government, this works out to 10 crore people.

### **Concerns**

- Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Mandhan could possibly come at the expense of an existing pension scheme — the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) — announced last year to benefit more than three crore poor senior citizens, disabled people, and widows.

- The NSAP had originally been allocated ₹9,975 crore in the 2018-19 Budget, which was reduced to ₹9,200 crore in the Interim Budget 2019-20, which is a drop of ₹775 crore.

### **Will the scheme work?**

- Social sector workers have pointed out that creating a voluntary contributory pension scheme for informal sector workers is not likely to work as their salaries are low.
- The argument is that they already pay large amounts as indirect taxes.

### **What lies ahead?**

- The government is silent on what happens to the scheme if an informal sector worker misses a contribution.
- Does the worker become disqualified from the scheme?
- If so, what happens to the amount already contributed?
- Will the government refund the worker that amount, or will that amount be forfeited?
- Another matter to be considered is what happens to a worker who transitions to the formal workforce.

## **22. Public Credit Registry (PCR)**

- A public credit registry is an information repository that collates all loan information of individuals and corporate borrowers.
- A credit repository helps banks distinguish between a bad and a good borrower and accordingly offer attractive interest rates to good borrowers and higher interest rates to bad borrowers.

### **Significance**

- PCR will address issues such as information asymmetry, improve access to credit and strengthen the credit culture among consumers.
- It can also address the bad loan problem staring at banks, as corporate debtors will not be able to borrow across banks without disclosing existing debt.
- A PCR may also help raise India's rank in the global ease of doing business index.
- Access to credit information, including debt details and repayment history would drive innovation in lending.
  - \* For example, currently most banks focus on large companies for loans and consequently the micro, small and medium enterprises are left with limited options for borrowing.
  - \* With satisfactory payment history and validated debt details made available, it will increase the credit availability to micro, small and medium enterprises along with deepening of the financial markets. This will support the policy of financial inclusion.

**Why PCR is necessary?**

- Credit information is now available across multiple systems in bits and pieces and not in one window.
- Data on borrowings from banks, non-banking financial companies, corporate bonds or debentures from the market, external commercial borrowings (ECBs), foreign currency convertible bonds (FCCBs), masala bonds, and inter-corporate borrowings are not available in one data repository.
- PCR will help capture all relevant information about a borrower, across different borrowing products in one place.
- It can flag early warnings on asset quality by tracking performance on other credits.

**PCR in other countries**

- PCR in other countries now include other transactional data such as payments to utilities like power and telecom for retail consumers and trade credit data for businesses.
- Regularity in making payments to utilities and trade creditors provides an indication of the credit quality of such customers.

**'High Level Task Force on Public Credit Registry (PCR)**

- It was headed by YM Deosthalee
- "With a view to remove information asymmetry to foster the level of access to credit, and to strengthen the credit culture in the economy, there is a need to establish a PCR," said the report of the panel

**23. PCS1x****Context:**

- PCS1x is an upgraded version of the e-commerce portal Port Community System (PCS). It has been developed in record time by the Indian Ports Association, based on feedback from stakeholders using PCS.

**Background:**

- PCS has played a vital role in enhancing 'Ease of Doing Business' in the maritime sector by facilitating a transparent and paperless system for electronic submission of trade document, resulting in faster turnaround time and dwell time.
- Digitization in EXIM trade, of which PCS is a part, has played a major role in improving India's world ranking in 'Ease of Doing Business'

**About PCS1x:**

- PCS 1x is a new generation system with a user-friendly interface that brings together various stakeholders of the maritime sector, and facilitates Government-to-Business, Business –to-Government and Business-to-Business transactions within the required legal framework.

- It ensures extreme levels of cyber security.
- The architecture of PCS is built on 'open platform' technology to integrate / latch on to any new concept or module available in the industry without disturbing the current ecosystem. This is a unique feature which provides unlimited landscape for growth and expansion.

**Importance of the platform:**

- The platform allows improvement in payment cycle, transparency of transaction cycles, detailed tracking of vessels and berthing schedules.
- It can be integrated with Gate system with RIFD, can produce E-copy of reports and notices and be used for cargo/truck trailer tracking.
- It also allows better stakeholder coordination

**24. Rail Drishti Dashboard****Context:**

- PC Minister of Railways has launched Rail Drishti dashboard, encompassing all the digitisation efforts in Indian Railways and promoting transparency and accountability.

**Significance:**

- It brings information from various sources on a single platform and gives access to key statistics and parameters to every citizen of the country.
- This dashboard can be accessed using a desktop/laptop or a mobile device such as a phone or tablet. The application is mobile optimized for ease of use of public.
- The available information has been categorized under 15 user friendly sections on the Dashboard:
  - \* At a glance
  - \* Services
  - \* Trains on run
  - \* Irctc kitchens
  - \* Grievances
  - \* Achievements
  - \* Station images
  - \* Heritage
  - \* Shramik kalyan
  - \* Bills
  - \* Freight earnings
  - \* Freight loading/unloading
  - \* Passenger earnings
  - \* Expenditure
  - \* Sugam – the freight app

## 25. **Rashtriya Gokul Mission**

- Potential to enhance the productivity of the indigenous breeds of India through professional farm management and superior nutrition is immense. For this it is essential to promote conservation and development of indigenous breeds.
- The “Rashtriya Gokul Mission” aims to conserve and develop indigenous breeds in a focused and scientific manner

### **Objectives**

- To undertake breed improvement program for indigenous cattle breeds so as to improve genetic makeup and increase the stock
- To enhance milk production and productivity of indigenous bovines
- To upgrade nondescript cattle using elite indigenous breeds like Gir, Sahiwal, Rathi, Tharparkar, Red Sindhi
- To distribute disease free high genetic merit bulls of indigenous breeds for natural service

### **Components**

- Establishment of village level Integrated Indigenous Cattle Centres viz Gokul Gram
- Strengthening of bull mother farms to conserve high genetic merit Indigenous Breeds
- Establishment of Field Performance Recording (FPR) in the breeding tract.
- Assistance to Institutions/Institutes which are repositories of best germplasm
- Implementation of Pedigree Selection Programme for the Indigenous Breeds with large population
- Establishing Gopalan Sangh- Breeder's Societies
- Distribution of disease free high genetic merit bulls for natural service.
- Incentive to farmers maintaining elite animals of indigenous breeds
- Award to Farmers (Gopal Ratna) and Breeders' Societies (Kamadhenu)
- Organization of Milk Yield Competitions for indigenous breeds
- Organization of Training Programme for technical and non technical

## 26. **Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog**

### **Context:**

- The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for establishment of Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog for Conservation protection and development of cows and their progeny.

### **Background:**

- The creation of Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog for the conservation, protection and development of cows and their progeny will provide the policy framework and direction to the cow conservation and development programmes in the country and for ensuring proper implementation of laws with respect to the welfare of cows.

### **Impact of Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog:**

- The setting up of Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog will lead to conservation, protection and development of cattle population in the country including development and conservation of indigenous breeds.
- It will result in increased growth of livestock sector which is more inclusive, benefitting women, and small and marginal farmers.
- The Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog will work in collaboration with Veterinary, Animal Sciences or Agriculture University or departments or organizations of the Central/State Government engaged in the task of research in the field of breeding and rearing of cow, organic manure, biogas etc.

## 27. **Regional Standards Conclave Held in Odisha**

### **Context:**

- 12th Regional Standards Conclave was organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in collaboration with the Department of Commerce, Government of India, the MSME Department of the Government of Odisha, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), National Accreditation Board of Certification Bodies (NABCB), the Export Inspection Council (EIC), and Centre for Research in International Trade (CRIT).

### **About BIS:**

- BIS has its Headquarters at New Delhi and its 05 Regional Offices (ROs) are at Kolkata (Eastern), Chennai (Southern), Mumbai (Western), Chandigarh (Northern) and Delhi (Central).
  - \* BIS is the National Standard Body of India established under the BIS Act 2016 for the harmonious development of the activities of standardization, marking and quality certification of goods and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
  - \* BIS has been providing traceability and tangibility benefits to the national economy in a number of ways – providing safe reliable quality goods; minimizing health hazards to consumers; promoting exports and imports substitute; control over proliferation of varieties etc. through standardization, certification and testing.



**About National Accreditation Board For Certification****Bodies (NABCB):**

- NABCB a constituent Board of the Quality Council of India (QCI), is the national accreditation body, which provides accreditation to Certification as well as Inspection Bodies in accordance with ISO Standards, international requirements/ guidelines and NABCB Accreditation Criteria.
- \* The National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies provides accreditation to Certification and Inspection Bodies based on assessment of their competence as per the Board's criteria and in accordance with International Standards and Guidelines.
- \* It is the third accreditation body in the Asia-Pacific region (other two being the accreditation bodies of Hong Kong and Mexico)

**Benefits of accreditation:**

- Attestation of competence by an authoritative body
- Recognition of technical competence
- Customer confidence and satisfaction
- Minimizes risks
- Avoids re-testing/inspection and reduces costs
- Increased efficiency
- Marketing advantage and increased business
- International recognition

**The Export Inspection Council (EIC)**

EIC was set up by the Government of India under Section 3 of the Export (Quality Control and Inspection) Act, 1963 (22 of 1963), in order to ensure sound development of export trade of India through Quality Control and Inspection and for matters connected thereof.

EIC is an advisory body to the Central Government, which is empowered under the Act to:

- Notify commodities which will be subject to quality control and/ or inspection prior to export,
- Establish standards of quality for such notified commodities, and
- Specify the type of quality control and/or inspection to be applied to such commodities.

**28. Road Safety Week****Background**

- According to the Union health ministry, India has just 1% of total vehicles in the world but accounts for 6% of the total road accidents.
- Road traffic crashes are among the major causes of disability, morbidity and mortality in India.

- \* Millions lose their life and millions get injured in road accidents globally; mainly, due to lack of awareness about traffic rules or a behavior of flouting them.

- Therefore, to make people more aware of the traffic rules and to persuade them to follow rules while on road; the Road Safety Week is observed annually.

**Details**

- It is a national event aimed at raising public awareness about traffic rules and ultimately to reduce casualties due to road accidents
- The Road Safety Week observance is being initiated by the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways
- People are encouraged about how to drive on road by organizing variety of programmes related to the road safety.

**Context**

- The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, has announced the observance of 30th Road Safety Week Campaign from 4th to 10th February 2019.
- The theme for this year campaign is Sadak Suraksha – Jeevan Raksha"

**Other Initiatives****National Programme for Trauma Care**

- In a bid to minimise death and disability due to road injuries the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoH&FW) is implementing this program
- Under the programme, trauma-care facilities are being strengthened in the existing government hospitals, near the State and National Highway.
- It will have focus on improving pre-hospital, hospital and rehabilitative services for injury victims.
- The Union health ministry is exploring methods such as air ambulances, providing relief in remote areas and well- equipped mobile clinics, etc.

**SukhadYatra App and Toll-Free Emergency Number**

- SukhadYatra mobile application
  - \* It provides information on toll gates.
- The key feature of the app includes a provision for the user to enter road quality-related information or to report any accident or pothole on the highway.
- Toll-free number 1033
  - \* It will enable users to report an emergency condition, or highway-related feedback, across the highway.
  - \* The service has also been integrated with ambulance / tow away services along the roads.



## 29. Sela Tunnel Foundation

### Context

- Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of Sela Tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The Sela pass tunnel will be constructed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).

### Significance

- It will provide all weather connectivity to Tawang Valley for civilians as well as security forces throughout the year.
- The tunnel will reduce travel time to Tawang by an hour
- The Central government emphasized that the tunnel will ensure the swift and fast movement of army troops in Tawang which is a strategically-located district located near the border of China.
- It will boost tourism and related economic activities in the region.
- The Sela pass tunnel will also provide a great boost to road-networks and infrastructure in the region

## 30. Sikaria Mega Food Park

- It is Tripura's 1st mega food park
- The mega food park has been set up in 50 acre of land
- The food park has such facilities as a fully-operational dry warehouse and material handling of 5,000 MT

### Significance

- The park will also provide direct and indirect employment to 5,000 people and benefit about 25,000 farmers in the CPC (central processing centre) and PPC catchment areas.

## 31. Srinagar- Alusteng – Drass- Kargil – Leh transmission line

### Context:

- The Prime Minister dedicated the 220 kV Srinagar-Alusteng – Drass- Kargil – Leh Transmission System to the Nation, a step that would ensure quality power supply to Ladakh round the year.

### Details

- Built at a height of around 3000-4000 meters, this approx. 335 km long transmission line has been constructed by POWERGRID.
- In this project, the four new State-of-the-Arts 220/66 kV Gas Insulated Sub-stations built at Drass, Kargil, Khaltsi and Leh will help to ensure 24x7 quality power in all weather conditions.

- Funding provisions have been in the ratio of 95:05 (95% Govt. of India share and 5% J&K state share).

### Benefits to the region:

- The implementation of this project was also aimed to supply power to the people of Ladakh in harsh winters and evacuation of surplus power of Kargil & Leh Hydel stations of NHPC in summers.
- It is a flagship project of Government of India, under Prime Minister's Reconstruction Plan for J&K ( PMRP J&K) scheme which was aimed to improve reliability & quality of power supply in Ladakh region of J&K by connecting with National Grid.
- The project will meet the power demand of Ladakh region at economical rates.
- This would give huge boost to the tourism sector and enhance socio-economic development of Ladakh.

## 32. States ranking on Start-up initiatives:

### Context:

- Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has released second edition of Startup Ranking for 2019.

### Details:

- The Startup Ranking framework aims to rank the States/UTs for establishing a robust ecosystem for supporting Startups.
- The framework also encourages States and UTs to identify, learn and replicate good practices from each other.
- The Ranking Framework 2019 comprises of 7 pillars and 30 action points.
- The pillars will assess States'/UTs efforts across institutional support, simplifying regulations, easing public procurement, incubation support, seed funding support, venture funding support and awareness and outreach related activities.
- The ranking exercise aims to evaluate measures taken by States/UTs during the assessment period
- DPIIT also proposes to recognise States and UTs for their exemplary performance in seven pillars of the ranking framework.
- As part of the Ranking 2019 exercise, DPIIT will recognize innovative Startup programs and initiatives from State/UT Governments.

### Benefits of Start-up ranking:

- The launch of the ranking framework in 2018 galvanized the States/UTs into action, thereby giving impetus to the Startup movement across the country.
- Till date, 25 States and UTs have launched their dedicated Startup policies to incentivize Startups in their jurisdiction.

- The Startup Ranking 2019 is expected to take forward the Startup ecosystem in the country and give impetus to the vision of India becoming a Startup Nation.

### 33. Subarnarekha Port



#### Subarnarekha River

- It flows through the Indian states of Jharkhand, West Bengal and Odisha.
- The Subarnarekha River rises near Nagri village in the Ranchi District of Jharkhand at an elevation of 600 m.
- Its principal tributaries joining from right are the Kanchi, the Karkari and the Kharkai.
- As per tradition, gold was mined near the origin of the river at a village named piska near Ranchi. This is why it was named Subarnarekha, meaning "streak of gold"

#### Context

- Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik laid the foundation stone of the Subarnarekha port in Balasore district of Odisha.

### 34. SWAYATT and Start-up Runway

#### Context

- Union Minister of Commerce & Industry launched SWAYATT and Start-up Runway.

#### What is SWAYATT?

- SWAYATT is an initiative to promote Start-ups, Women and Youth Advantage Through transactions on Government e Marketplace (GeM). This will bring together the key stakeholders within the Indian entrepreneurial ecosystem to Government e-Marketplace the national procurement portal.

#### What is Start Up Run Way?

- GeM Start-up Runway seeks to align certified Start-ups with Government procurement orders and contracts, to enable Start-ups in scaling operations from ideation to growth stage in minimal time, and spur hyper-local job-creation and wealth-generation and for achieving socially-inclusive economic growth.

- Start-up Runway will enable Start-ups to conduct market trials with government buyers, seek time-bound feedback and gain realistic product, price comparison and market valuation from potential buyers and investors.
- GeM Start-up Runway seeks to support technology development, spur research and innovation by ensuring a conducive policy environment for industrial diversification and value addition to commodities, and aligns with Government's philosophy to turn Job-seekers into job-creators.
- GeM Start-up Runway will address goals and objectives under United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.

### 35. Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB)

- It is a joint initiative of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supporting countries in building tax audit capacity.
- TIWB Programmes complement the broader efforts of the international community to strengthen co-operation on tax matters and contribute to the domestic resource mobilisation efforts of developing countries.

### 36. Technology Support and Outreach (TECH-SOP)

- It is a program of Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises
- The objective of the programme is to educate MSMEs and enhance their awareness about latest technological innovation available and sensitize them on the role of technology in creating competitiveness and opportunities.
- TECH – SOP is an initiative of the MSME Ministry to bridge the gap between research and development institutions and MSMEs so that they can use latest technologies and become a part of global value chain.
- A "India Green Tech Open Challenge" was also launched to encourage MSMEs to adopt sustainable and green technologies so that they remain competitive in the long run

### 37. Unemployment data

#### Context

- The National Sample Survey Office's (NSSO) periodic labour report which has not been released but was leaked says country's unemployment rate hit a 45-year high of 6.1 per cent in 2017-18

#### Stats

- The NSSO findings reportedly said that unemployment was last this high in 1972-73
- The leaked report further said that unemployment was higher in urban areas (7.8 per cent) as compared to 5.3 per cent in rural areas.

- \* Within this, it stood at 17.4% for rural males and 13.6% for rural females. In urban India, joblessness was at 18.7% among males and a huge 27.2% among females.
- The data reportedly showed that the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR), the measure of people working or looking for jobs, declined from 39.5% in 2011-12 to 36.9% in 2017-18.

#### **Niti Aayog**

- The NITI Aayog debunked claims of a news report said the report of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), cited as the source for the report, was in fact a draft and not approved by the government.

#### **Concerns**

- The government's failure to release the NSSO report was the latest sign of a complete lack of transparency regarding jobs data
- There has been a rise in unemployment and a decline in the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) post demonetisation
  - \* The LFPR is a measure of people looking for jobs. So, if this is declining while unemployment is growing, it means that there is a very real and serious crisis in jobs.
- PC Mohanan and J.V. Meenakshi of the National Statistical Commission (NSC) who unexpectedly quit, said they resigned from the central panel because they were unable to discharge their duties in the commission.
- A key role of the NSC, set up in 2006, is to verify whether data being put in the public domain are reliable and adequate. Information has been collected and disseminated by successive governments under laid-down schedules, earning Indian data greater global trust than most other emerging market peers, especially China.

#### **Similar controversies over official data in the past**

First, suppression of results seems to be a problem common to all political parties.

- Census 2011 data on religious distribution of the population was not released until 2015. It is widely believed that these data were ready before the 2014 election, but the United Progressive Alliance government was worried about inciting passions
- Similarly, the UNICEF conducted the Rapid Survey on Children (RSOC) 2013-14 on behalf of the Ministry of Women and Child Development but the report was held up by the new government, allegedly due to the fear that it showed Gujarat in poor light.

#### **Issues with Data Collection**

- There is lack of investment in data collection itself, as is the case with the National Sample Survey, or the NSS's Employment-Unemployment surveys (not conducted since 2011-12), forcing public policy to rely on non-comparable statistics from other sources such as the data from the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).
- These episodes are likely to recur, and hence, we need a more comprehensive strategy for dealing with them.

#### **Way forward**

- The only solution is to recognise that we need more openness about data coupled with deeper analysis, allowing us to draw informed and balanced conclusions.
- Understaffed and underfunded statistical services cannot possibly have sufficient domain expertise to undertake substantively informed analyses in all the areas for which statistical data are required.
- A better way of building a robust data infrastructure may be to ensure that each major data collection activity is augmented by an analytical component led by domain experts, recruited from diverse sources, including academia.

#### **Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS)**

- It is an International Monetary Fund (IMF) standard to guide member countries in the dissemination of national statistics to the public.
- Data dissemination standards enhance the availability of timely and comprehensive statistics, which contributes to sound macroeconomic policies and the efficient functioning of financial markets
- SDDS subscription indicates that a country meets the test of "good statistical citizenship."
- Subscribing countries commit to:
  - \* Disseminate the data required by the SDDS punctually and with the prescribed periodicity and timeliness on a national webpage
  - \* Certify the accuracy of the metadata on an annual basis.
- Monthly measurement of unemployment rate is one of the requirements of the SDDS of the IMF.

#### **With respect to India**

- The SDDS — India was one of the early signatories — was established in 1996 to help countries access the international capital markets by providing adequate economic and financial information publicly.
- India complies with many requirements of the SDDS, but it has taken an exception with respect to the measurement of unemployment.
- The Government of India does not produce any measure of monthly unemployment rate, nor does it have any plans to do so.

- \* Official plans to measure unemployment at an annual and quarterly frequency is in a shambles.
- \* This does not bely India's claims to be the fastest growing economy and as the biggest beneficiary of a famed demographic dividend.

### 38. Women Livelihood Bond

#### Context

- World Bank, UN Women, and Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) have joined hands to launch a new social impact bonds exclusively for women, called Women's Livelihood Bonds (WLBs), with an initial corpus of Rs 300 crore.

#### Details

- The bonds, which will have a tenure of five years, will be launched by SIDBI with the support of World Bank and UN Women.
- SIDBI will act as the financial intermediary and channel funds raised to women entrepreneurs through participating financial intermediaries like banks, NBFCs or microfinance institutions.
- The WLBs will be unsecured, unlisted bonds and offer fixed coupon rate of 3 per cent per annum to bond investors.
- The proposed bond will enable individual women entrepreneurs in sectors like food processing, agriculture, services and small units to borrow around Rs 50,000 to Rs 3 lakh at an annual interest rate of around 13-14 per cent or less.

#### Significance

- The new bonds will not only enable women self-help groups to graduate from 'group borrowing' to 'individual borrowing' but will also allow them to shift from development assistance towards more market-financed programmes

### 39. Various programs/schemes for promotion of grid interactive renewable energy

#### Background:

- The Government is implementing various programs/schemes for promotion of grid interactive renewable energy such as solar, wind, bio-power and small hydro power in the country.
- It also has set a target of installing 175000 MW of renewable energy capacity by the year 2022 which includes 100000 MW from solar, 60000 MW from wind, 10000 MW from bio-power and 5000 MW from small hydro power.

#### Details of major steps taken to attract investment in the renewable energy sector are as follows: –

- Waiver of Inter State Transmission System (ISTS) charges and losses for inter-state sale of solar and wind power for projects to be commissioned up to March, 2022.
- Permitting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) up to 100 percent under the automatic route.
- Notification of standard bidding guidelines to enable distribution licensee to procure solar and wind power at competitive rates in cost effective manner.
- Declaration of trajectory for Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO) up to the year 2022.
- Implementation of Green Energy Corridor project to facilitate grid integration of large scale renewable energy capacity addition.

### 40. In Northeast, air links shrinking (Infrastructure: Airways)

#### A Brief Look at the UDAN Scheme:

- UDAN is an innovative scheme to develop the regional aviation market. It is a market-based mechanism in which airlines bid for seat subsidies.
- This first-of-its-kind scheme globally will create affordable yet economically viable and profitable flights on regional routes so that flying becomes affordable to the common man even in small towns.
- The scheme UDAN envisages providing connectivity to un-served and under-served airports of the country through revival of existing air-strips and airports. The scheme would be in operation for a period of 10 years.
- UDAN has a unique market-based model to develop regional connectivity.
- Interested airline and helicopter operators can start operations on hitherto un-connected routes by submitting proposals to the Implementing Agency.
- The operators could seek a Viability Gap Funding (VGF) apart from getting various concessions.
- All such route proposals would then be offered for competitive bidding through a reverse bidding mechanism and the route would be awarded to the participant quoting the lowest VGF per Seat.
- The operator submitting the original proposal would have the Right of First Refusal on matching the lowest bid in case his original bid is within 10% of the lowest bid.
- The successful bidder would then have exclusive rights to operate the route for a period of three years. Such support would be withdrawn after a three year period, as by that time, the route is expected to become self-sustainable.



- The UDAN is likely to give a major fillip to tourism and employment generation in the hinterland.
- Through introduction of helicopters and small aircraft, it is also likely to significantly reduce travel timings in remote and hilly regions, as well as islands and other areas of the country.

#### **Editorial Analysis:**

- It is important to note that the day Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation for the first civilian airport in Arunachal Pradesh, Jet Airways operated its last flight on the Guwahati-Aizawl route.
- As a matter of fact, by withdrawing from Mizoram, Jet Airways joined an expanding list of flight operators that have suspended operation from new and existing routes in the geographically challenged northeastern region.
- Critics have opined that this has undermined India's ambitious flagship regional connectivity scheme UDAN, an acronym for the Hindi phrase Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik meaning 'let the common man fly.'

#### **Why was the flight terminated?**

- Mizoram's Lengpui Airport, 32 km from the capital Aizawl, took a little more than two years to be completed in February 1998.
- It soon became the busiest airport in the region after the ones in Assam's Guwahati, Manipur's Imphal and Tripura's Agartala.
- However, the airlines began withdrawing operations for reasons such as safety, maintenance and viability.
- If an accident made Northeast Shuttles stop its Cessna flights in 2011, losses made Kingfisher Red withdraw a year later in 2012.
- Air India ended its Guwahati-Aizawl flights as did SpiceJet in less than a year after its inaugural flight in October 2016.
- Jet Airways, once the only private airline flying to and from northeastern India, withdrew from Aizawl on February 10.
- The airline attributed it to non-viability of the route because of fuel price rise, a depreciating rupee and a difficult pricing environment.

#### **Is only Mizoram affected?**

- Jet Airways withdrew from Imphal and Assam's Silchar and Jorhat, along with Aizawl. Much before the first round of UDAN was launched in April 2017, private airlines had withdrawn from Nagaland's Dimapur.
- The Hyderabad-based Air Deccan, which won exclusive rights in the UDAN bidding to connect Meghalaya capital Shillong to Aizawl, Agartala, Silchar, Dimapur and Imphal, operated only 10 flights to Agartala and Dimapur in May 2018.

- The Delhi-based Zoom Air operated between Assam's Tezpur and Kolkata for only three months, till July 2018, before withdrawing owing to "technical issues."
- And from September 1, 2018, SpiceJet suspended its operation from Agartala, six years after Jet Airways and a few other small airlines had withdrawn.

#### **Has the demand gone down?**

- Viability is often cited by airlines, despite a passenger occupancy rate of 60-70% in most flights, and more people in the region flying than ever before.
- While some of the smaller airports have flights connecting Kolkata and Delhi, the withdrawal of service to and from Guwahati — the hub of communication — is expected to affect tourism, a sector that has capitalised on peace in the region.
- Further, Airlines and the Airports Authority of India (AAI) agree that the passenger volume has doubled in the last five-six years from Guwahati and other popular airports in the region. But improved road and rail connectivity, they said, have become a bane for smaller airports.
- For instance, a two-hour drive brings a passenger from Shillong and an overnight train trip brings one from Dimapur to Guwahati.

#### **Where is connectivity headed?**

- The Ministry of Civil Aviation announced the opening of 92 air routes in the region in the second round of UDAN in November 2017.
- Bidders snapped up six airports – Rupsi, Jorhat, Lilabari and Tezpur in Assam, and Tezu and Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh — and 12 routes, of which only two are operational.
- In May 2018, Air India started a flight between Guwahati and Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh with VIPs, including Chief Minister Pema Khandu, on board.
- The militarily strategic airport of Pasighat, which allows Sukhoi 30 to land and take off, has had very few civilian flights.
- AAI officials say UDAN, in its current form, is difficult for smaller airlines to sustain.
- Aviation experts say the scheme has not been able to add wings because it is aimed more at reaping political benefits than increasing connectivity.
- Furthermore, it does not have enough incentives for airlines to ignore the issue of viability.

### **41. Conference on the Future of Indian Banking**

#### **Context:**

- NITI Aayog co-hosted a conference on "The Future of Indian Banking" with the Foundation for Economic Growth and Welfare (EGROW Foundation).

**Aim of the conference:**

- The conference aimed to increase and elevate the discourse on the banking sector in India, and help develop insights to inform the continued evolution of the Indian banking sector for optimally supporting the growing credit needs of the Indian economy.

**Key messages from the deliberations:**

- Technology has become critically important for banking already and will continue to become more important in future. This will serve to bring banking closer to the customer, including those in rural areas, and also bring tremendous efficiencies with greater speed of service at much lower cost.
- Appropriate skilling of banking human resources is necessary to keep pace with best credit practices and new technology-based banking paradigm. In addition, banking staff needs to be trained to prepare for a larger role of banking in expanding the Indian economy.
- The banking industry has to be continuously prepared for fraud and rising cyber security risks.
- The banking industry requires a suitable vigilance mechanism for trustworthy banking but with a clear mandate to distinguish between deliberate action, criminal negligence, error in judgment or unforeseeable business risk.
- There may be a need to think again in terms of specialised and sector based banking.
- Public sector banks have consistently supported social banking, unlike private and foreign banks. Public sector banks should continue to do so.
- To compete effectively globally there is a need for bigger banks in India.
- There is a need for more research on banking sector issues, specific to the Indian context.

#### **42. "Reforms in Exploration and Licensing Policy for enhancing domestic exploration and production of oil and gas"**

**Context:**

- The Union Cabinet has approved the Policy framework on reforms in exploration and licensing sector for enhancing domestic exploration and production of oil and gas.
- Through this policy, a transparent, investor friendly and competitive policy framework is envisaged to accelerate exploration activities and provide impetus to expeditious production of oil and gas.

**Objective:**

- The objective of the Policy is to attract new investment in Exploration and Production (E&P) Sector, intensification of exploration activities in hitherto unexplored areas and liberalizing the policy in producing basins.

**Details:**

The policy reforms focus on four major areas.

- Firstly, increasing exploration activities in unexpected areas. In basins where no commercial production is there, exploration blocks would be bid out exclusively on the basis of exploration work programme without any revenue or production share to Government.
- Secondly, to incentivize enhanced gas production, marketing and pricing freedom has been granted for those new gas discoveries whose Field Development Plan (FDP) is yet to be approved. Fiscal incentive is also provided on additional gas production from domestic fields over and above normal production.
- Thirdly, to enhance production from existing nomination fields of ONGC and OIL, enhanced production profile will be prepared by both PSUs. For production enhancement, bringing new technology, and capital, NOCs will be allowed to induct private sector partners.
- Fourthly, measures will be initiated for promoting ease of doing business through setting up coordination mechanism and simplification of approval of DGH, alternate dispute resolution mechanism etc.

#### **43. Success of e-NAM depends upon the APMC reforms**

- e-NAM was launched in April 2016; the prime objective was to ensure that the farmers/producers get the maximum possible returns by selling their produce to any buyer across the country.
- 585 APMC mandis from 16 states and two UTs have been connected through e-NAM.
- The platform has been used so far only to sell the produce within the states.
- The cross-state sales has been announced between Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh; and between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.
- Some changes that are needed to ensure the success of e-NAM are
  - \* Single trading license are held valid only in 10 states
  - \* States have been unwilling to alter the market levies (if done it would lead to loss of revenues)
  - \* Many mandis have not put in place appropriate sorting, grading, packaging etc infrastructure in place

- A fundamental fault of the e-NAM has been that it mandates that the business be conducted through APMCs, which are well known for their inefficiencies and malpractices, which may creep into the e-NAM model as well. A way forward would be to allow that trade on e-NAM to be done either through a public or a private market

#### **44. Regulating the NBFCs**

- The NBFCs are regulated by RBI, SEBI, IRDA, PFRDA, NHB, ministry of corporate affairs (nidhi companies), state government (chit funds) etc
- RBI is regulating over 10000 active NBFCs of which 275 are Systemically Important (SI)
- DHFL is regulated by NHB (National Housing Board)
- Worldwide regulating the NBFCs is a hot topic
  - \* In case of China the recent instability in the market was because of the surge of P2P lending between 2013 to 2016 which was unsupervised. China has tightened the regulation of P2P from 2016 and the number of P2P firms declined from 1500 to 50 by the time the whole process was completed
  - \* In US the regulation is decentralized multiple organizations are involved
  - \* In UK it is more centralized by prudential authority and a conduct authority
  - \* Australia follows a twin peak model wherein the Reserve bank of Australia acts as a lender of last resort and coordinates with Prudential Regulation Authority which supervises banks, insurance companies etc
- The time has come for India to consider a better regulation of NBFCs with the IL&FS, DHFL issue still afresh. The FSLRC (Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission) has already given recommendations regarding this in 2013
  - \* SEBI, IRDA, PFRDA, FMC (already merged with SEBI) be merged to form UFA (Unified Financial Authority)
  - \* For taking care of systemic risk it recommended a strong legal framework to the FSDC (FSDC was recommended by Raghuram Rajan Committee in 2008 and would consist of all the regulators, including the government of India. It is charged with coordinating prudential stability)

#### **45. GST reforms needed**

- GST was implemented two years; the supporters have stated that it has
  - \* Reduced the number of indirect taxes
  - \* Eased the inter-state transportation etc

- On the other hand, certain expert have pointed out the issues such as
  - \* Online invoice making for every transaction
  - \* Multiple monthly filing of returns
  - \* Implementation issues
  - \* Issue of e-way bills
  - \* One third of GDP is not covered so far
- The original outcomes that were promised were
  - \* GDP growth to jump by 1.5% to 2% on account of efficiency gains, lower logistics costs, impact of access to a large national market to MSMEs
  - \* Lower inflation on account of removal of cascading impact
  - \* Revenue buoyancy on account of higher compliance (expected revenue increase was 14% per annum, so far it has been around 8%)
- Way forward
  - \* Include all the items such as petrol, diesel, real estate etc under GST. This will lead to expansion of tax base and also improve the GST collections. Apart from this, the RNR (Revenue Neutral Rate) can be 12% with higher revenues (presently it is 18%)
  - \* Zero rate the exports (which is the practice around the world). Presently the exporters pay the tax, which is refunded later, this system imposes certain problems on the exporters
  - \* Eliminate the e-way bill system and have GST registered logistics company as a part of the triangle (suppliers and buyers). This would make receipt matching easier. Apart from this, it would also not require any kind of vehicle checking, inspections etc
  - \* Lower rate of 12% will lead to more compliance and revenue buoyancy. This would also reduce the tax burden on the poor (spend majority of their income on consumption)
- 2% of the 12% be carved out for third tier of governance (this would require a constitutional amendment)

#### **46. Inflation pressure eases**

##### **Why has inflation been falling?**

- Experts point out that inflation at both the retail and wholesale levels has been falling for the last 4-5 consecutive months.
- Inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which captures retail inflation, and the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) has been falling in general for the last year or so.

- The CPI, for example, was as high as 5.21% in December 2017, following which it fell quite steadily (except for a mid-year blip in 2018) till it reached 2.05% in January 2019, the lowest it has been in 19 months.
- The WPI has similarly seen an overall decline, but has been more volatile than the CPI.

#### **What is the main reason why inflation has been falling?**

- The main reason why inflation has been falling is the drop in global oil prices. After rising in the middle of 2018 to average \$80 a barrel in October 2018, the Indian basket of crude oil prices fell to \$57 a barrel in December 2018. It was \$59 in January 2019. Prices in February 2019 have been slightly higher than that, but the increase is not much.

#### **What does this mean for the economy?**

- The nature of the Indian economy is such that a change in oil prices has knock-on effects on almost every sector such as food, manufacturing, transport and infrastructure.
- Any sector that uses fuel or energy as an input is affected by global oil prices because India is still overwhelmingly dependent on imported oil to meet its needs.
- When global oil prices fall, inflation falls across the board, most notably in energy-intensive sectors. And within this, falling prices in each of these sectors have an impact on the other sectors dependent on them.
- For example, falling inflation in the transport sector means that every sector that needs to transport goods will also benefit.
- Another aspect of falling inflation is that the Reserve Bank of India has more leeway to go easy on interest rates, one of its key inflation targeting tools.
- It is important to note that in its last Monetary Policy Review, the central bank cut the benchmark interest rate by 25 basis points. Some experts feel there is scope for even more cuts.
- Politically, low and falling inflation is always to the benefit of the government.
- This is especially noteworthy in the run-up to the general election. In contrast, the CPI inflation averaged about 7.6% in the three months leading up to the 2014 elections.

#### **Why do WPI and CPI inflation diverge?**

- Economists have pointed out the divergence for quite some time now. The main reason behind it is that the two indices measure different products and assign each of the categories different weights in the calculation of the overall index.
- This divergence has intensified since the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax because the new tax system affects retail inflation far more than it does wholesale inflation, since it is included in the final price of the product.

#### **What is the outlook ahead?**

- The outlook on oil prices is a stable one. The consensus is that crude oil prices will remain in the range of \$55-65 a barrel for the next three to four quarters. Given how important this is for inflation in India, experts feel retail inflation will remain subdued at 2-3% and wholesale inflation at 3-4% in the near future.

#### **47. '95% of registered realty firms have no PAN'**

##### **Context**

- In an audit of assessments made by the Income Tax Department on the real estate sector, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) found that a whopping 95% of the companies registered with the Registrar of Companies (RoC) did not have a permanent account number (PAN).
- In an analysis of the data of the RoCs in 12 States, the CAG also noted that there were several companies that the tax net had failed to capture and that the department had no mechanism to ensure that all the registered companies had PAN or that they filed their income tax returns (ITR) regularly.

##### **Permanent Account Number**

- PAN is a 10-digit alphanumeric number used for keeping a track of financial transactions
- It is issued to all judicial entities identifiable under the Indian Income Tax Act, 1961.
- It is issued by the Indian Income Tax Department under the supervision of the Central Board for Direct Taxes (CBDT) and it also serves as an important proof of identification



# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## 1. Abu Dhabi adds Hindi as third language in courts

### Context

- Abu Dhabi will include Hindi as the third official court language after Arabic and English

### Details

- The move focuses on helping Hindi speakers learn about the procedure of litigation, their duties and rights without any language barrier

### Stats

- Official figures indicated that immigrants consist of two-thirds of the approximate nine million population of the UAE
- The Indian community in the country is 2.5 million, 30 per cent of total population, making it UAE's largest expatriate community.

## 2. Beirut Declaration

- At the conclusion of the Arab Economic and Social Development Summit Arab leaders have agreed a 29-item economic agenda in addition to encouraging the safe return of Syrian refugees to their homeland
- The 20 countries taking part in the summit issued a joint statement called the Beirut Declaration
- It called for the establishment of an Arab free trade zone and the international community to support countries hosting refugees and displaced people.

## 3. Chagos Islands Dispute

### Context

- The International Court of Justice in The Hague ruled that the United Kingdom must cede control over the Chagos Islands, an Indian Ocean archipelago that was separated from Mauritius several years before Mauritius gained independence in 1968.

### Judgment

- The 13-1 verdict, while nonbinding, was an embarrassing defeat for the U.K
- The International Court of Justice was almost unanimous in its finding that the actions by the British government were in breach of the islanders' right to self-determination under international law.
- The detachment of the Chagos archipelago had not been based on a "free and genuine expression of the people concerned".
- The continued British administration of the islands is therefore "a wrongful act", and the UK has an obligation to return control of the Islands to Mauritius "as rapidly as possible".

### Background

- Official • Passed from colonial power to colonial power – Holland then France – the islands fell under British control in the early 19th century.
- During this time Britain brought several hundred people from Mozambique and Madagascar to the islands to work on British-owned coconut plantations.
- Britain continued its administration of the islands – as part of the greater colony of Mauritius – until the 1960s, by which time the decolonisation process had begun to gain momentum.
- With the adoption of the 1960 Colonial Declaration, Britain readied itself for the inevitable independence of Mauritius.

### How UK took over the Islands?

- In 1964, the UK began to discuss the future of the Chagos Islands with the US, which had expressed an interest in establishing military facilities on the island of Diego Garcia
  - \* The Chagos Islands are home to the U.S. military base of Diego Garcia, under lease from the United Kingdom
- The agreement to allow Britain to administer the Chagos islands came in 1965, three years before Mauritius gained independence.
  - \* Mauritius says Britain had made it a pre-condition for independence
  - \* Then using a combination of diplomatic pressure and bullying, Britain convinced the government of Mauritius to hand the islands over to British control, something the Mauritian government claimed it had "no choice" over.
- Between 1967 and 1973, the entire population of the Chagos Archipelago was either prevented from returning or forcibly removed and prevented from returning by the UK.

### UK's Response

- It said the ICJ's is an advisory opinion it will examine, and stressed the security significance of the islands.
  - \* The defence facilities on the British Indian Ocean Territory help to protect people here in Britain and around the world from terrorist threats, organised crime and piracy.
- In 2016, Britain extended the lease to the U.S. till 2036 even as it said it would return the islands to Mauritius when no longer needed for defence purposes.

**Conclusion**

- At the very least, Britain should show it respects the court's view and Mauritius's sovereignty, and make significant concessions — starting with matters ranging from fishing rights to compensation for the Chagossians, who have suffered through all of this.
- The ICJ 'opinion' draws the line on what is expected from Britain for it to be a global nation in tune with the new world order.
- It announces that the world has moved on from passive acceptance of the injustices of empire.

**4. Cutlass Express****Context**

- INS Triakand, a front-line warship of the Indian Navy, participated in a multinational training exercise 'CUTLASS EXPRESS – 19'

**Details**

- Cutlass Express is an exercise sponsored by U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM), and conducted by Naval Forces Africa (NAVAF) to assess and improve maritime law enforcement capacity, promote national and regional security in eastern Africa, inform planning and operations, and shape security force assistance (SFA) efforts.
- The aim of the exercise was to improve law enforcement capacity, promote regional security and progress inter-operability between the armed forces of the participating nations for the purpose of interdicting illegal maritime activity in the Western Indian Ocean.
- During the exercise, Naval, Coast Guard and Marine Police personnel from a number of East African countries were jointly trained by mentors from USA, India, and Netherlands, with support of international organisations like the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), Combined Maritime Force (CMF) and European Naval Forces (EUNAVFOR).
- The participating nations will be testing their ability to combat illicit trafficking, piracy, illegal fishing, as well as conduct search and rescue operations.

**5. e-Visa regime Liberalized by Govt**

- The e-Tourist Visa which was introduced in September 2014 with 46 countries has now been made applicable for 166 countries. Recently, government has made series of amendments in e-visa regime, liberalizing it further and making it more tourist friendly.
- The Ministry of Tourism has been working very closely with Ministry of Home Affairs for easing of the Visa Regime in the country over a period of time.

**Important modifications made are highlighted as under:**

- Duration of stay in India of e-Tourist and e-Business Visas is maximum upto 1 Year with multiple entry subject to the stay stipulations.

- Also, the existing restriction of allowing foreigner for a maximum of three times has also been removed

**Changes in e-Tourist Visa**

- On e-Tourist Visa continuous stay during each visit shall not exceed 90 days in case of nationals of all countries who are eligible for grant of e-visa except nationals of USA, UK, Canada and Japan.
- In case of nationals of USA, UK, Canada and Japan continuous stay during each visit shall not exceed 180 days.
- In all cases no registration will be required.

**Changes in e-Business Visa**

- Continuous stay during each visit shall not exceed 180 days in case of nationals of all countries who are eligible for grant of e-visa
- No registration will be required if the stay is for a period of less than 180 days.

**Other changes:**

- e-Visa is valid for entry through 2 (two) more designated Airports (Bhubaneswar and Port Blair) raising the total number of such airports to 28.
- Attending Destination wedding under normal e-Tourist visa or Tourist visa- No separate category of Destination Wedding Visa
- Foreign nationals who fall sick during their stay in India can now avail medical treatment without converting their visa into Medical Visa. This would take care of sudden medical emergencies.
- Visa-on-Arrival facility extended to the nationals of Republic of Korea.

**6. Free Movement Regime (FMR)****Introduction**

- India's 1643 kms border with Myanmar, touching four states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram. Myanmar border is peaceful and friendly yet it is very sensitive

**History**

- The formation of Myanmar as a separate State in 1935 and decolonization of the sub-continent in 1947 divided ethnic communities living along the Indo-Myanmar border.
- These communities, particularly Nagas, found the newly created boundary to be inconsistent with the traditional limits of the region they inhabited. And they felt a deep sense of insecurity because they became relegated to the status of ethnic minorities on both sides of the border.
- The affected people mainly are Konyak, Khiamniungan and Yimchunger Nagas who inhabit the areas of Eastern Nagaland in India and the Naga Self Administered Zone (NSAZ) in Myanmar.

**What is it?**

- To address their concerns and enable greater interaction among them, the Indian and Myanmar governments established the Free Movement Regime (FMR), which allowed Nagas to travel 16 kilometres across the border on either side without any visa requirements.
- They can stay up to 72 hrs with effective and valid permits issued by the designated authorities on either side.

**Merits**

- The people living in the Eastern districts of Nagaland and in the areas of NSAZ in Myanmar have close family ties and engage in cultural and economic exchanges.
- From the Myanmar side, a lot of villagers come to the Indian side to buy basic essentials.
- Taking advantage of the FMR, a sizeable number of students from NSAZ also study in schools on the Indian side of the border.
- It helps genuine people living in the close proximity of the border.

**Concerns**

- The FMR has been misused by locals to smuggle contraband in their head loads, which are not subject to inspection and fake Indian currency notes.
- Militant groups have been using the porous border for moving cadres and war-like stores.
- Taking advantage of the free-movement regime, occasionally they enter India, commit crimes and escape to their relatively safer hideouts.
  - \* Along with other active Indian insurgent groups, the NSCN-Khaplang (NSCN-K), which had unilaterally abrogated the ceasefire with the Government of India (GoI) in 2015, maintains its camps and training bases in NSAZ.
- All these groups have benefited from the open border in terms of carrying out illegal activities including launching strikes against Indian security forces
- China has also been reportedly aiding some of these groups.
- Indian insurgent groups in the region are also known to collaborate with Myanmar insurgent groups like the United Wa State Army (UWSA), Kachin Independent Army (KIA), among others.

**7. Heading towards strategic instability****Introduction**

- There is a revolution in military affairs that has attracted the attention of strategic analysts and policy planners across the world.

- The current focus in military thinking across the world is increasingly moving away from traditional heavy-duty military hardware to high-tech innovations such as artificial intelligence (AI), big data analytics, satellite jammers, hypersonic strike technology, advanced cyber capabilities and spectrum denial and high-energy lasers.
- In the light of the unprecedented capabilities that these technologies offer, there is also an increased focus on developing suitable command and control as well as doctrinal concepts to accommodate and calibrate them.

**Steps taken by the Govt**

- In 2018, the government decided to set up three new agencies — the
  - \* Defence Cyber Agency,
  - \* Defence Space Agency
  - \* Special Operations Division — in order to address the new age challenges to national security.
- While this is indeed a useful step in the right direction, it is also important to note that the constitution of these agencies is a far cry from the crucial recommendations given by the Naresh Chandra Task Force and the Chiefs of Staff Committee, both of which had suggested the formation of three separate joint commands to deal with new challenges to India's national security in the cyber, space and special operations domains.

**1. Cyber Agency**

- Armed Forces are alive to cyber threats which necessitated a cyber agency
- The facility once operational will pool in resources from all three wings of the defence services, namely the Army, Navy and Air Force, to address all threats in the cyber domain.
- This will be the first ever dedicated cyber wing in the army will have close to a 200-strong staff from the tri-services.
- They will serve under the command of the Chairman, Chief of Staff Committee and work closely with the National Cyber Security Advisor.
- To begin with, the Defence Cyber Agency will be based out of the Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) Headquarters and later dedicated units will come up with the Army commands.

**2. Space Agency**

- China has demonstrated its offensive capabilities in the space. It has demonstrated its capability to destroy a target in space.
- It used a long-range missile interceptor, identified as the DN-3, to accomplish the mission.

- \* Earlier in 2010, China used a midcourse interceptor to destroy a target missile roughly 62 miles above the earth's surface.
- \* China is the second country after the US to have demonstrated this capability.
- The Space agency will deal with issues such as these and work in close coordination with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

### 3. Special Operations Division

- It will have commandos from the Indian Army, Navy and the Indian Air Force.
- They will train together to deal with various exigencies when the need arises.
- The Army, Navy and Indian Air Force all have Special Forces – Para-Commandos, Marine Commandos and the Garud Commandos. However, these train separately and largely operate in silos.
- The Para- Commandos and the Marine Commandos will form the core of the Special Forces Agency.

### Technological upgradation disturbs stability

The arrival of these technologies might deeply frustrate strategic stability as we know it given their disruptive nature.

- Strategic stability usually refers to a state of affairs in which countries are confident that their adversaries would not be able to undermine their nuclear deterrent capability.
- The most important being the issue of survivability of a state's nuclear arsenal and its ability to carry out a second strike after a first attack.
  - \* Once accuracies get better, hypersonic glide vehicles replace conventional delivery systems, real time tracking and surveillance make major strides, and AI-enabled systems take over, survivability of nuclear arsenal, which lies at the heart of great power stability, could take a severe beating.
- There was, for instance, an assumption that the naval leg of a nuclear triad is the most survivable part since it is hidden away in the depths of the ocean away from the adversary's gaze.
  - \* However, the potential ability of deep-sea drones to detect ballistic-missile armed nuclear submarines or SSBNs may make this assurance a thing of the past thereby frustrating traditional calculations.

### Concerns

- Now add the arrival of these new technologies to the emerging strategic competition among great powers.
  - \* The U.S.'s withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty is perhaps an indication of a potential arms race in the offing.

- There is an inherent paradox vis-à-vis high technology-enabled military systems.
  - \* While on the one hand, it is imperative for states to redesign their systems in the light of these new technologies, especially the digital and cyber components, this also makes the cyber- and digital-enabled systems vulnerable to covert cyberattacks
- More so, given that such surreptitious attacks might take place in the early stages of a conflict, ensuing confusion and scare might lead to uncontrolled escalation with little time for assessment and judgement
- The biggest fear about these technologies, the implications of which we don't fully understand yet, is their potential to increase the risks of intentional and inadvertent nuclear use.
- Therefore, the possibility of emerging military technologies prompting inadvertent escalation and conflict cannot and should not be ruled out.

### Chinese capabilities

China has emerged as a key actor in the field of emerging military technologies. This is something that will concern New Delhi in the days ahead.

- Some analysts believe that Beijing is in the lead position in emerging technologies with potential military applications such as quantum computing, 3D printing, hypersonic missiles and AI.
- If indeed, Beijing continues to develop hypersonic systems, for instance, it could potentially target a range of targets in the U.S.
- While the Chinese focus is evidently on U.S. capabilities, which China interprets as a potential threat, this is not without latent concerns for New Delhi. India might, in turn, consider developing some of these technologies which will create dilemmas for Islamabad.
- The cascading strategic competition then looks unavoidable at this point, and that is worrisome. And yet, it might be difficult to avoid some of these developments given their dual use

### Conclusion

- It is in this context that we must revisit the government's decision to set up the agencies to address cyber and space challenges.
- Moreover, reports indicate that the Space Command will be headed by the Air Force, the Army will head the Special Operations Command, and the Navy will be given the responsibility of the Cyber Command.
- If indeed that happens, their effectiveness in terms of tri-service synergy will be much less than anticipated.
- Even more so, given that the higher defence decision-making in the country is still civil services-dominated, despite the recent attempts to correct it, the effectiveness of these agencies will remain weak.



## 8. IMBEX

- India-Myanmar bilateral Army exercise
- The aim of this joint training event is to train the Myanmar delegation for participation in UN peacekeeping operations.

## 9. India-Africa Field Training Exercise (IAFTX)

- It aims at synergizing humanitarian mine action and joint peace operations.
- The joint training exercise is being conducted with more than a dozen African countries & India.
- The IAFTX-2019 is a positive step towards growing political and military ties with the member nations of African continent and will boost the already strong strategic cooperation between the countries.

## 10. India Saudi Relations

### Context

- Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman (MBS) of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia landed in New Delhi on his first State Visit to India.

### Diaspora Relations

- The 2.7 million strong Indian community is the largest expatriate group in Saudi Arabia.
  - \* They send remittances of over US \$11 billion annually.
  - \* The Kingdom also facilitates Hajj pilgrimage to over 1,75,000 Indians every year.

### Strategic Partnership

- The Riyadh Declaration of 2010 had forged a Strategic Partnership between India and Saudi Arabia.
- Relations between the two countries are rooted in strong historical and civilisational links.
- Saudi Arabia has identified India as one of the eight strategic partners with whom it intends to deepen partnership in areas of political engagement, security, trade and investment, and culture.
- As part of this engagement, the two sides are finalizing the setting up of a Strategic Partnership Council at the Ministerial level.

### Security Cooperation

- During Modi's 2016 visit, a MoU on cooperation in the exchange of intelligence related to money laundering and terrorism financing was signed.
- New Delhi says Riyadh has shown greater understanding of India's terrorism-related concerns, and has agreed to work with India in countering the global menace.
- In the MBS visit to India, he said that his country would share intelligence with India and other countries that were willing to fight terrorism

### Defence Cooperation

- Cooperation in the defence sector will continue to be an important area of India-Saudi ties.
- A MoU on Defence Cooperation was signed in 2014 during the visit of the Crown Prince Salman.
- The two sides are exploring the possibility of elevating this engagement with Joint Production and Joint Exercises, in particular Joint Naval exercises.

### Trade and Energy

- Bilateral trade was US \$27.48 billion during the last financial year 2017-18, making Saudi Arabia India's 4th largest trading partner, recording about 10% growth compared to 2016-17.
- Saudi Arabia is the key pillar of India's energy security, being a source of 17% or more of crude oil and 32% of LPG requirements of India.
  - \* Recently, Saudi ARAMCO, in partnership with ADNOC of UAE, has agreed to partner in Ratnagiri Refinery and Petro-Chemical project Ltd., a Joint Venture of US\$ 44 billion.
  - \* The Indian partners are IOC, BPCL & HPCL. India hopes to transform this buyer-seller relationship in energy to a broad-based partnership.

### Other Areas

- Other areas of interest for joint collaboration are fertilisers, food security, infrastructure, renewable energy, etc.
- In a recent meeting that a NITI Aayog-led delegation had with their Saudi counterparts, areas such as information and communications technology, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, electronic and manufacturing facilities, and housing were identified as potential areas of enhanced cooperation.
- Saudi Arabia itself is undertaking large development projects including Smart City, Red Sea Tourism Project, and Entertainment City, in which Indian companies will be looking to participate.
- The countries are also looking for greater collaboration in the area of civil aviation, where there is considerable potential for enhanced links, especially in the context of increasing trade and tourism.

### Pakistan-Saudi Arabia

#### Afghanistan Angle

Pakistan is far too important to Saudi Arabia for internal security reasons

- Afghanistan has been a point of strategic convergence for Pakistan and Saudi Arabia going back to the 1980s
  - \* During this period Saudis used Pakistan as a channel for material assistance to the Islamist forces fighting the Soviet Union and its proxy government in Kabul.

- Pakistan is providing capacity to militaries across the Gulf, but particularly Saudi Arabia.
  - \* Pakistani soldiers who are serving in the Kingdom go as high as 65,000.
- Its military officials have also helped in Security design of Saudi Arabia
- With U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and the consequent expansion of Taliban influence very much on the cards, Pakistan's strategic value as the Taliban's patron has grown exponentially.

#### Iran Angle

- Iran is Saudi Arabia's chief adversary in West Asia. The Saudi-Iranian rivalry is being played out across the region, from Syria to Yemen.
  - \* Saudi Arabia perceives Pakistan as a major asset it can use to check the spread of Iranian influence after the American withdrawal.
  - \* It sees Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan and Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa as more amenable to Saudi persuasion.
- Pakistan's relationship with Iran is further going to deteriorate. This is due to recent terrorist attack in the Sistan-Baluchistan Province that killed 27 Revolutionary Guards, it is likely to move further into the Saudi orbit.
  - \* Increasing Sunni fundamentalism, bordering on Wahhabism, in Pakistan also makes it a natural ideological ally of Saudi Arabia and an ideological foe of Shia Iran.

#### USA Angle

- Pakistan has recently strained its relationship with US over Pakistan's support to terrorist groups targeting U.S. forces in Afghanistan that led to stern rebukes from Mr. Trump and suspension of American military aid to Pakistan.
- Pakistan on its part perceives MBS as a valuable interlocutor on its behalf with the U.S. because of his excellent rapport with U.S. President Donald Trump.

#### Aid bailout

- Over and above the \$6 billion already promised by Saudi Arabia, MBS has promised a further \$20 billion in Saudi investment in Pakistan.
  - \* A large part is earmarked for investment in the construction of an oil refinery in Gwadar on the Makran coast, which is being developed as a strategic port by China and features prominently in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) plan.
  - \* There is also oversight to ensure investments are "sustainable and will actually have returns in the future."

- Saudi's economic bounty matters greatly to Pakistan, which is in dire economic straits and has been forced to turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for loans that are bound to come with strict conditionalities.
- On Imran Khan's request MBS ordered the "immediate release" of more than 2,000 Pakistani prisoners incarcerated in the Kingdom.
- The Saudi Foreign Minister's statement in Islamabad during MBS's visit that Riyadh is committed to "de-escalating" tensions between India and Pakistan over Kashmir must not be read as an endorsement of the Indian stand but as an attempt to intervene in the dispute rather than accept its bilateral nature.

### **11. Iran revolution**

#### Context

- Iran marks 40th anniversary of Islamic revolution
- Domestically, the event is also known as Ten-Day Dawn to commemorate the period of violent protests following the February 1, 1979, return of Khomeini from exile. It also marks the official end of the 2,500 years of the Persian Empire.

#### Details

- It was a series of events involving the overthrow of the monarch of Iran, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, and replacing his government with an Islamic republic under the Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a leader of one of the factions in the revolt
- Demonstrations against the Shah commenced in October 1977, developing into a campaign of civil resistance that included both secular and religious elements

#### Effect of Iranian Revolution

After the system of despotic monarchy had been overthrown, the economy and the apparatus of government had collapsed; military and security forces were in disarray.

- Polity – The Constitution provides political legitimacy to "God" and the divine law given in the Koran.
  - \* What began as an authentic and anti-dictatorial popular revolution based on a broad coalition of all anti-Shah forces was soon transformed into an Islamic fundamentalist power-grab.
- Society – The Islamic Revolution of 1978-1979 brought a one hundred percent reversal in the trend of secularization which the country was experiencing. In fact, Islam became the official new state ideology of the clerical fundamentalist elites.
  - \* Such a clear emphasis on Islam as the centre of governance has profound effects on Iran's societal fabric. The 1979 Islamic Constitution resulted in a shift of the legal system from a secular to religious orientation.

- Women Rights– From 1979 to 1994 more than one thousand women have been stoned to death in Iran. This is just one example of the extra-or quasi-judicial activity taking place in the legal process.
  - \* In fact, when the new government achieved power, women were once again subjugated and restricted to the confines of their homes. In every aspect of their lives, women were discriminated against.
  - \* Women in the last couple of years have come out against the mandatory headscarf, challenging religious orthodoxy.
- Marriage – Men can legally have affairs through the institution of sigheh or temporary marriage.
  - \* Men can obtain a unilateral divorce from their wife or wives. The marriage age for females has been lowered to nine and in some instances to seven.
  - \* The reproductive policies of the new regime declared contraception and any form of family planning as being against Islam. Mothers no longer have equal rights in terms of child custody.
- Since its inception, the Islamic Republic was dogged by tensions between two concepts of sovereignty — the divine and popular.
  - \* The concept of popular sovereignty — derived from the indivisible will of the Iranian nation— is inscribed in Article 6 of the Islamic Republic's Constitution. The article mandates popular elections for the presidency and parliament.
  - \* But the concept of divine sovereignty, which is derived from God's will through the medium of the imam, is bestowed on the existing "faqih" as the rightful ruler of the Shi'ite community.

#### Iran's cycle of wars and investments in social sectors

- Over these years, Iran saw an eight-year-long war with Iraq, near-total isolation in West Asia, and economic hardships.
  - \* The American support to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iran in 1980 augmented anti-Western sentiments and further helped the clergy-dominated regime to consolidate its power in the country.
- The Iranian regime turned some of these challenges into opportunities — as in the case of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war — and made substantial changes in certain sectors.
  - \* For example, the investments made in education and health care have seen positive results.
  - \* As of 2015, the literacy rate among Iran's adult population was 93%. More than 60% of university students in Iran are women.
  - \* Access to health care has also improved for large sections of society.

#### Economic hardships

- The Trump administration pulled the U.S. out of the nuclear deal and reimposed sanctions on Tehran.
- The U.S. has also joined hands with Iran's rivals, such as Saudi Arabia, to scuttle the country's regional ambitions, while Israel is repeatedly bombing Iranian positions within Syria.
- Within Iran, the regime is facing repeated protests as economic sufferings mount.

#### Youth Population and their wants

- Today, more than 60 per cent of the Iranian population is under the age of 30. The image of Iran as a monolith does not reflect the mindset of those who have been fighting for change since the past 40 years.
- For nearly six million educated youngsters — many of whom have left Iran for the US, Canada, Australia and different parts of Europe — lack of jobs and the absence of social freedoms and everyday opportunities are the principal reasons of discontent and rebellion.
- In the past 10 years, many protests in Iran — notably the Green Movement of 2009 — were products of the activities of the urban middle-class youth
- The turmoil in Iranian cities has largely been driven by disaffected young people in rural areas and small towns. They see it as a chance to express their frustration with the country's economic problems, which are fallout of Iran's financial and military involvement in the conflicts in Syria and Yemen.

#### What should Iran do?

- American sanctions will only multiply Iran's economic woes. Tehran will have to deal with the U.S.'s unilateral and hostile policies with help from other countries.
- But it should also fix its system, tackle corruption and hold government departments accountable for the decisions they take.
- It is also time for the government, which is celebrating the anniversary of the fall of a despotic monarch, to rethink its approach towards dissent and personal freedoms.

### **12. Iran role in Afghanistan**

#### Introduction

- Iran is not a newcomer to regional diplomacy in Afghanistan. First and foremost, India should try to discourage the U.S. from dealing with Iran, Russia and China as enemies.

- In fact, U.S. President Donald Trump's perception of all three as foes is at odds with America's earlier engagement with them to end its military campaign in Afghanistan.

#### Clash of the adversaries

U.S.-Iran ties have often been fractious.

- As the U.S. imposed sanctions on Iran after 2005, Iran saw the Taliban countering American influence on its borders and gave them arms.
- Iran continues to oppose the U.S.'s presence in Afghanistan, largely because it fears that American troops in Afghanistan could be used against it.
- To allay Iranian fears, Afghanistan recently said that it would not allow the U.S. to use its bases in the country to conduct any act of aggression against Iran.

#### 6+1 group

- It includes representatives from Afghanistan, China, India, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, and the U.S.
- The 6+1 process assumed that each of these countries was essential to the achievement of a political settlement in Afghanistan.
- In this regard, Regional powers could put their weight behind a negotiated settlement that will ensure Afghanistan's stability.
  - \* Iran, Russia and China — and the Central Asian states with which India and Afghanistan wish to cooperate in countering terrorism — fear that continued instability in Afghanistan could spill over into their countries

#### India can explore the Iranian diplomatic options to secure Afghanistan.

- On good terms with Tehran, New Delhi would gain by developing the Chabahar port in southern Iran.
- And looking beyond Chabahar, India, Iran and Russia were the founding countries of the International North-South Transport Corridor project — as long ago as 2002.
  - \* The corridor is intended to increase connectivity between India, Iran, Russia, landlocked Afghanistan and Central Asia — and Europe. It would also advance their trading interests.
- India could remind Washington about the past coincidence of American and Iranian interests on Afghanistan.
  - \* Together with the U.S. and India, Iran supported the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001.
  - \* Iran has previously supported the installation of Hamid Karzai as President and favoured the exclusion of the Taliban from his government.

- The U.S. and Iran could be advised of the mutual, and regional, advantages of improving ties. Such advantages could range from stability in Afghanistan, and beyond, to increased trade prospects, especially in South and West Asia.

#### How would it help both Iran and USA?

- Iran could gain by strengthening trading ties with a secure Afghanistan.
  - \* In 2017 it supplanted Pakistan as Afghanistan's largest trading partner. At a time when Iran's economy is weighed down by American sanctions, it would want to build up trade ties with neighbouring states.
- The U.S. would also gain. After all, Iran is the geopolitical hub connecting South, Central and West Asia and the Caucasus.
  - \* The Strait of Hormuz, that crucial conduit, links Iran westwards to the Persian Gulf and Europe, and eastwards to the Gulf of Oman, South and East Asia.
  - \* Moreover, an improvement in U.S.-Iran relations would be welcomed by America's European allies, who are opposed to Washington's unilateral sanctions on Iran.

#### Conclusion

- The U.S. should not lose the chance to act in concert with Iran to improve Afghanistan's security. And, as the U.S. airs the idea of withdrawal from Afghanistan, now is the right time for India to act as the honest broker between them and to play a larger role in regional security.
- The status of India and Iran as regional powers as well as the stability of South, Central, and West Asia would simultaneously be enhanced.
- It is to be hoped that Mr. Trump's display of America's "superpower" in opposition to Iran — and Russia and China — will not block such an opportunity to stabilise Afghanistan.

### **13. Iran to promote Chabahar as curbs will hit main port**

#### Context

- With U.S. sanctions threatening Iran's main port of Bandar Abbas, the Iranian government is planning to promote the Chabahar port being developed by India in a major conference, highlighting the potential of the Indian Ocean port beyond India-Afghan trade alone.

#### Details

- The idea is to promote Chabahar as a hub where big ships can enter, offload to smaller ships that can go easily to other ports as well
- This would be developed for oil refineries, petrochemical and steel factories, and other projects



### Railway from Chabahar to Zahedan

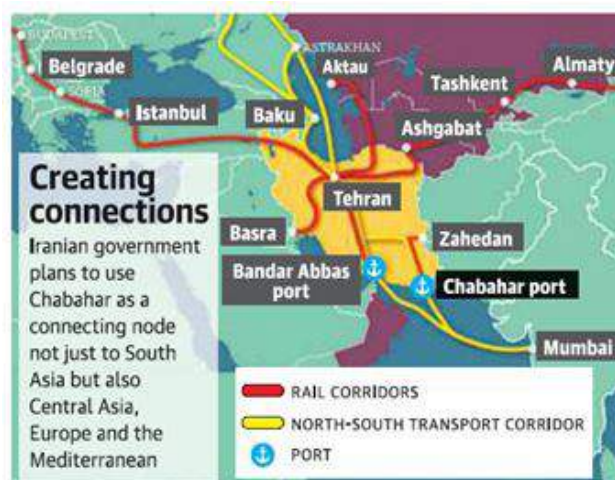
- India has committed to building the 500-kilometre \$1.6 billion railway from Chabahar to Zahedan, which are both in the Sistan-Baluchistan province, and an MoU worth \$2 billion was signed by the Railway Ministry
- In addition, Iran is planning a second airport near Chabahar and the development of a free trade zone, while energy infrastructure of a gas pipeline has been already built up to 200 km of Chabahar.

### What is to India from this?

The event will also bring into focus a tightrope India must walk, to achieve the triple aims of

- with the U.S. tensions with Iran on one side,
- trade with Afghanistan, bypassing Pakistan
- Posing a counter to the China-Pakistan developed Gwadar port nearby.

India feels U.S. has to understand the value of the Chabahar facility not just for trade with Afghanistan, but for soft aid and humanitarian relief for Iranians



## 14. India-Norway Ocean Dialogue

### Context

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister has approved the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Norway on India-Norway Ocean Dialogue.

### What are the benefits?

- It promotes cooperation in the areas of mutual interest pertaining to the development of blue economy. Norway is a global leader in the area of Blue Economy and has cutting-edge technologies and expertise in areas such as fisheries, hydrocarbons, renewable energy, sustainable harnessing of ocean resources and maritime transport.

- The MoU contribute to create opportunities for collaboration in areas such as exploitation of hydrocarbons and other marine resources, as well as management of ports and tourism development for the mutual benefit of all stakeholders within the framework of the Joint Task Force (JTF).
- It contributes to the objective of Food Security through infusion of new technologies in fisheries and aquaculture. Further, offer a platform for businesses in both countries to execute profitable ventures.
- Scientists and researchers collaborate on studying ocean ecosystem also in the context of the Arctic region.

## 15. Know India Programme (KIP)

- KIP is an engagement programme for Diaspora youth (between the age of 18-30 years) of Indian origin to introduce them to India and promote awareness about different facets of Indian life, our cultural heritage, art and various aspects of contemporary India.
- This programme is open to youth of Indian origin (excluding non-resident Indians) with preference to those from Giritiya countries (Mauritius, Fiji, Suriname, Guyana, T&T, Jamaica etc.).
- The programme has been in existence since 2003.

### Main elements of KIP

- Understanding of India's political system, economy, society, and developments in various sectors etc.
- Visit to places of historical, cultural, religious importance.
- Familiarisation with art, music and culture of India.
- Visit to industrial sites.
- Visit to a village.
- Interaction with non-profit organizations.
- Meetings with senior leadership/officials in India.
- Visit to a select state in India for 10 days.

### Arrangements:

- The Ministry of External Affairs will take care of participants only for the duration of the program. If participants wish to arrive in India early or stay extra, they will have to make their own arrangements.
- The participants are provided local hospitality e.g. boarding/lodging in budget hotels and Internal transportation in India.
- Indian Missions/ Aboard Posts will arrange for return air tickets before participants leave for India, after getting 10% of total air fare from them.

- Gratis visa shall be granted to selected participants by the Indian Missions/Posts abroad.

## 16. Parmanu Tech 2019

### Context:

- The 'Parmanu Tech 2019' conference organised by the Ministry of External Affairs and Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), the conference discussed issues related to Nuclear Energy and Radiation Technologies.

### During conference, following were discussed:

- Health care: Nuclear Medicine and Radiation therapy – Care to cure, with themes including Cancer care (TMH), Radio-pharmaceuticals & RIA kits, Gamma Chambers, Blood irradiators, Bhabhatron, Brachytherapy, Stereotactic Neurosurgery and international cooperation, etc.
- Food Preservation, Agricultural & Industrial Applications: From farms to factories – Serving the National Cause, with themes including Nisargruna, Food Irradiator, improved seeds varieties, water purification technologies, urban waste management technologies, industrial application of radioisotopes and radiation technologies particularly in petroleum industry for monitoring process lines, breakdown maintenance, dredging operations in sea ports, non-destructive techniques, technologies developed by ECIL and Heavy Water Board.
- Showcasing India's capabilities in Nuclear Energy: Energy Security with environmental responsibility – the Onward March, with themes including Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP) and India's Nuclear power programme.

### About GCNEP:

- Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP) established at Jhajjar, Haryana, in September 2010. With a vision to promote safe, secure and sustainable nuclear energy for the service of mankind through global partnership. GCNEP is the sixth R&D unit under the aegis of Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).

### Objectives of the GCNEP:

- Development of enhanced nuclear safeguards to effectively and efficiently monitor nuclear materials and facilities.
- Promoting the development of advanced, more proliferation-resistant nuclear power reactors.
- Training manpower in the field of Nuclear Security and Radiological Safety.
- Educating in the field of Advanced Nuclear Energy Systems, Isotopes and Radiation Technologies, nuclear forensic.
- Establishing accreditation facilities for radiation monitoring.

## 17. Sampriti

- It is a military exercise by Bangladesh and India.
- It is hosted alternately by both countries.
- The exercise is aimed to strengthen and broaden the aspects of interoperability and cooperation between the Indian and Bangladesh Armies.
- The exercise will involve tactical level operations in a counter insurgency and counter terrorism environment under the UN mandate.
- In addition to understanding each other in tactical level operations, emphasis will also be laid for greater cultural understanding to strengthen military trust and cooperation between the two nations.

## 18. Seoul Peace Prize

- The Seoul Peace Prize was established in 1990
- It is awarded on biennial basis
- The Seoul Peace Prize was established to reflect the wishes of the Korean people and to crystallize their desire for everlasting peace on earth.
- It was initially established to commemorate the success of the 24th Olympic Games held in Seoul, Republic of Korea – an event in which 160 nations from across the world took part, creating harmony and friendship and a worldwide atmosphere of peace and reconciliation.
- Previous winners of the award include former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and international relief organisations like Doctors Without Borders and Oxfam.

### What do the Seoul Peace Prize winners get?

- The awardee receives a diploma, a plaque and honorarium of US\$200,000.
- The two-page, traditionally padded certificate has the emblem of the Seoul Peace Prize printed on the left side.
- The text of the certificate appears on the right side, in both Korean and English.
- The gold-plated, crystal plaque is fashioned after the traditional Taegeuk (two comma-shaped symbols united in a perfect circle) design.

### Context

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi awarded the Seoul Peace Prize 2018
- Modi who is the fourteenth recipient of the award, received an honorarium cash prize of \$200,000 that he gave away to the Namami Gange Programme
- It was awarded in recognition of his dedication to improving international cooperation, raising global economic growth, accelerating the Human

Development of the people of India by fostering economic growth in the world's fastest-growing large economy and furthering the development of democracy through anti-corruption and social integration efforts.

## 19. Taliban Reconciliation Process

### Context

- Talks was facilitated by Russia in Moscow with mainstream Afghan politicians with Taliban leaders

### Background

- The U.S. and Russia have accepted the idea that peace in Afghanistan is not possible without major concessions to the Taliban, including dialogue without insisting on a cessation of violence.
- The U.S. and Russia have, in separate processes, agreed to sidestep the Ashraf Ghani regime in Kabul, and accepted the Taliban's condition that it will not negotiate with the elected Afghan government at this stage.
- The current talks with the Taliban are not within the "red lines" agreed to by all stakeholders in the past:
  - \* they are not Afghan-led, owned or controlled,
  - \* the Taliban has not abjured violence, or
  - \* Sworn allegiance to the Afghan constitution before joining talks.

### Current discussion involving US, Taliban and Russia

- The U.S. has managed to bring senior Taliban leaders to the table, and is discussing the contours of its ultimate withdrawal from the Afghan war.
- The Taliban has unequivocally renounced ties with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, and committed to preventing Afghan soil from being used by foreign terrorists.
- Russia has hosted conferences where Taliban leaders sat down with members of the Afghan High Peace Council and senior Afghan politicians, including some contesting in this year's presidential elections.

### Role of India

- India's principled position that it will not directly or publicly talk to the Taliban until it engages the Afghan government remains valid, it is necessary that India stays abreast of all negotiations and isn't cut out of the resolution process.
- A robust channel should be open between Indian intelligence agencies and all important groups in Afghanistan, including the Taliban, in order to ensure that Indian interests, development projects and citizens are kept secure
- New Delhi must intensify its dialogue with regional and global stakeholders, and impress upon them that any dialogue with the Taliban must not come at the cost of the hard-fought victories of the Afghan people in the past two decades:

- \* on establishing constitutional democracy and the rule of law, and
- \* securing the rights of women and minorities.

### India doesn't gain from talks with Taliban now: ex-Envoy Amar Sinha

Amar Sinha, former Ambassador to Afghanistan and member of the National Security Advisory Board

- Firstly, India lacks access and equity with the Taliban
- Secondly, the Taliban's policies are too heavily governed by Pakistan and until those ties are loosened, it will be pointless for India to make a move.
  - \* It will also be pointless to go ahead of the government in Kabul or public opinion in Afghanistan, because our biggest asset is the goodwill India has in the Afghan mind. Even the Taliban recognises that.
- He further says India must engage Afghanistan through SAARC and evolve a policy for post-U.S. pullout.

## 20. Bill to counter exploitation by NRI spouses

### Context

- In a bid to counter growing incidents of exploitation of Indian women by NRI (Non Resident Indian) spouses, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj introduced a Bill in the Rajya Sabha

### Details

- The Bill is an outcome of a joint initiative of the
  - \* Ministry of External Affairs,
  - \* Ministry of Women and Child Development,
  - \* Ministry of Home Affairs and
  - \* Ministry of Law and Justice.
- According to the new Bill, a marriage between an NRI and an Indian citizen will have to be registered within 30 days from the date of marriage.
  - \* This would provide better enforcement of rights of the deserted spouse under various family laws.
- It envisages - registration of marriages by non-resident Indians; Amendment of the Passports Act 1967 and Amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure 1973
- Similarly, the Amendment to the Passport Act would empower the Passport Authority to impound or revoke the passport of NRI, if it is brought to his notice that the NRI has not registered his marriage within 30 days from the date of marriage.
- The Amendments to CrPC, 1973 would empower the Courts for the issuance of summons, warrants through the specially designated website of the Ministry of External Affairs.

- \* It also provides provisions for attachment of properties belonging to the NRI, if he does not appear before the Court and is declared as Proclaimed Offender by the Court.
- The Bill was necessitated by the MEA looking at the numerous complaints received from Indian nationals mostly women deserted or harassed by their non-resident Indian spouses.

### **Significance**

- The Bill proposes to offer greater protection to Indian women married to NRIs and serve as a deterrent to NRIs against harassment of their spouses.
- This would provide much-needed relief to all Indian women married to NRIs worldwide

## **21. Trump's Emergency**

### **What is considered a national emergency?**

- The Bill • What constitutes a national emergency is open to interpretation, but generally, it is seen as an event that threatens the security of the people of the United States.
- According to the Congressional Review Service, a 1934 Supreme Court majority opinion characterized an emergency in terms of "urgency and relative infrequency of occurrence as well as equivalence to a public calamity resulting from fire, flood, or like disaster not reasonably subject to anticipation."

### **What powers does a president have when a national emergency is declared?**

- Through federal law, when an emergency is declared, a variety of powers are available to the president to use. Some of those powers require very little qualification from the president for their use.
- Under the powers delegated by such statutes, the president may seize property, organize and control the means of production, seize commodities, assign military forces abroad, institute martial law, seize and control all transportation and communication, regulate the operation of private enterprise, restrict travel, and, in a variety of ways, control the lives of United States citizens
- However, under the National Emergencies Act, the president must name the specific emergency power he is invoking.

### **Examples from the past**

- Since the National Emergencies Act became law, presidents have declared at least 58 states of emergency, excluding weather-related events
- The power to declare a national emergency is an extraordinary power, which has in the past been used for grave situations like the 9/11 terrorist attacks.
- In 2009, President Barack Obama declared a national emergency amid the outbreak of H1N1, better known as swine flu and allowed the waiving of some rules such as privacy laws.

### **How can he get funds for a wall by declaring a national emergency? Where does the money come from?**

- According to U.S. law, a president can divert funds to a federal construction project during a declared national emergency.
- In the case of the border wall, the money could come from the budget for the Department of Defense under something called "un-obligated" money. Under federal law, un-obligated money in the Department of Defense's budget may be used by the military to fund construction projects during war or emergencies.

### **Can Congress get around it?**

- Congress can end a president's call of a national emergency with a joint resolution. A joint resolution is a legislative measure that requires the approval of both the House and the Senate.
- The resolution is submitted, just as a bill is, to the president for his or her signature, making it a law.

## **22. Wrong on the Rohingya**

### **Who is a refugee? (UN Definition)**

- A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence.
- A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.
- Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.

### **Who is an internally displaced person?**

- An internally displaced person, or IDP, is someone who has been forced to flee their home but never cross an international border. These individuals seek safety anywhere they can find it—in nearby towns, schools, settlements, internal camps, even forests and fields. IDPs, which include people displaced by internal strife and natural disasters, are the largest group that UNHCR assists. Unlike refugees, IDPs are not protected by international law or eligible to receive many types of aid because they are legally under the protection of their own government.
- Countries with some the largest internally displaced populations are Colombia, Syria, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia.



**Who is a stateless person?**

- A stateless person is someone who is not a citizen of any country. Citizenship is the legal bond between a government and an individual, and allows for certain political, economic, social and other rights of the individual, as well as the responsibilities of both government and citizen. A person can become stateless due to a variety of reasons, including sovereign, legal, technical or administrative decisions or oversights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights underlines that "Everyone has the right to a nationality."

**Who is an asylum seeker?**

- When people flee their own country and seek sanctuary in another country, they apply for asylum – the right to be recognized as a refugee and receive legal protection and material assistance.
- An asylum seeker must demonstrate that his or her fear of persecution in his or her home country is well-founded.

**What is the 1951 Refugee Convention?**

- The 1951 Geneva Convention is the main international instrument of refugee law. The Convention clearly spells out who a refugee is and the kind of legal protection, other assistance and social rights he or she should receive from the countries who have signed the document.
- The Convention also defines a refugee's obligations to host governments and certain categories or people, such as war criminals, who do not qualify for refugee status.
- The Convention was limited to protecting mainly European refugees in the aftermath of World War II, but another document, the 1967 Protocol, expanded the scope of the Convention as the problem of displacement spread around the world.

**Editorial Analysis:****What's in the news?**

- Recently, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) called for a report from India on the deportation of a group of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar in October 2018.
- Some experts point out that India's repatriation of the refugees contravenes international principles on refugee law as well as domestic constitutional rights.

**A Look at the Global framework:**

- Refugee law is a part of international human rights law.
- In order to address the problem of mass inter-state influx of refugees, a Conference of Plenipotentiaries of the UN adopted the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1951.
- This was followed by the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1967.

- One of the most significant features of the Convention is the principle of non-refoulement. The norm requires that "no contracting State shall expel or return a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion."
- This idea of prohibition of expulsion lies at the heart of refugee protection in international law.
- It is often argued that the principle does not bind India since it is a party to neither the 1951 Convention nor the Protocol.
- However, the prohibition of non-refoulement of refugees constitutes a norm of customary international law, which binds even non-parties to the Convention. According to the Advisory Opinion on the Extraterritorial Application of Non-Refoulement Obligations, UNHCR, 2007, the principle "is binding on all States, including those which have not yet become party to the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol."
- Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

**What does the Constitution of India say?**

- Moreover, Article 51 of the Constitution of India imposes an obligation on the state to endeavour to promote international peace and security.
- Article 51(c) talks about promotion of respect for international law and treaty obligations.
- Therefore, the Constitution conceives of incorporation of international law into the domestic realm. Thus the argument that the nation has not violated international obligations during the deportation is a mistaken one.

**Domestic obligations**

- The chapter on fundamental rights in the Constitution differentiates citizens from persons. While all rights are available to citizens, persons including foreign citizens are entitled to the right to equality and the right to life, among others.
- Some experts opine that the Rohingya refugees, while under the jurisdiction of the national government, cannot be deprived of the right to life and personal liberty.
- The Rohingya are "among the world's least wanted and most persecuted people," according to a BBC report. In Myanmar, they are denied citizenship, the right to own land and travel, or to even marry without permission, says the report.
- According to the UN, the Rohingya issue is one of systematic and widespread ethnic cleansing by Myanmar.

- Therefore, the discrimination that the Rohingya face is unparalleled in contemporary world politics.

**The Indian Perspective:**

- In National Human Rights Commission v. State of Arunachal Pradesh (1996), the Supreme Court held: "Our Constitution confers... rights on every human being and certain other rights on citizens. Every person is entitled to equality before the law and equal protection of the laws. So also, no person can be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law. Thus the State is bound to protect the life and liberty of every human-being, be he a citizen or otherwise..."
- Some experts have opined that India lacks a specific legislation to address the problem of refugees, in spite of their increasing inflow

**The Foreigners Act, 1946, fails to address the peculiar problems faced by refugees as a class. It also gives unbridled power to the Central government to deport any foreign citizen.**

- Further, the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill of 2019 strikingly excludes Muslims from its purview and seeks to provide citizenship only to Hindu, Christian, Jain, Parsi, Sikh and Buddhist immigrants persecuted in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- It is important to note that the majority of the Rohingya are Muslims.
- Some experts point out that this limitation on the basis of religion fails to stand the test of equality under Article 14 of the Constitution and offends secularism, a basic feature of the Constitution.

# SOCIAL ISSUES

## 1. Assam to cut pay of staff who neglects parents

### Context

- The Assam government has formed a three-member commission for hearing cases under a pay-cut policy envisaged to make its employees take care of their dependent elderly parents and physically challenged siblings.

### Background

- Geriatric care was linked to the State government employees' pay from the 2018-2019 fiscal.
- The policy, enforced on October 2 2018, where an employee would be liable to part with 10-15% of his or her pay if found guilty of ignoring their dependent parents and physically challenged siblings.
- The deducted money would then be transferred to the bank account of a parent or sibling.
- A few employees do turn a blind eye to the sufferings of their parents. The PRANAM Act was thus a welcome piece of law requiring a neglected parent to lodge a complaint in order to receive sustenance money from the pay of his or her ward.

### PRANAM (Parents Responsibility and Norms for Accountability and Monitoring)

- Commission is headed by Chief Commissioner V.B. Pyarelal. Former MLA Alaka Desai Sarma and social worker Jugabala Buragohain are the two Commissioners.
  - \* the policy acts as a deterrent for employees who have been ignoring their parents and physically challenged siblings
  - \* Such a law would be introduced to ensure parents are cared for.
- The Commission's job would be to weigh each complaint, hear both parties and decide whether or not an employee deserves to be penalised.

## 2. Indian Sign Language Dictionary

### Context

- The second edition of the dictionary was released which listed 6,000 words in Hindi and English along with their corresponding graphic representation.
- First edition of the Indian Sign Language Dictionary was released in 2018

### Details

- It will bridge the communication gap with the hearing impaired population in the country.

- The aim of the dictionary is to help spread the use of Indian Sign Language which will result in better education and employment opportunities for hearing and speech impaired persons.
- The Dictionary has been made with the involvement of the hearing and speech impaired community by giving due consideration to their suggestions and understanding.
- The sign language dictionary is being developed in both print and video format.

### Why is an Indian Sign Language Dictionary so important?

- India is an extremely diverse country and according to the 2001 Census, there are 50,71,007 deaf people and 19,98,535 with speech disability in India.

### Who developed the sign language dictionary?

- The dictionary has been developed by the Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC), under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD).

## 3. Jiban Sampark

- Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced "Jiban Sampark" project in partnership with UNICEF India to generate awareness about the development and welfare initiatives of state government among the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups of the state.
- The Jiban Sampark's focus areas will include skill development, empowering communities, cooperation and innovation among the groups of 75 tribal communities in the country, 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups residing in remote and far off areas of 12 district in Odisha

## 4. "Magnitude of Substance use in India" report.

### Context:

- NDDTC, AIIMS submits report "Magnitude of Substance use in India" to M/O Social Justice & Empowerment.
- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has conducted a "National Survey on Extent and Pattern of Substance Use in India" through the NDDTC of AIIMS, New Delhi during 2018 which provides data at the National level as well as at the State level.

### Substance categories studied:

- Alcohol, Cannabis (Bhang and Ganja/Charas), Opioids (Opium, Heroin and Pharmaceutical Opioids), Cocaine, Amphetamine Type Stimulants (ATS), Sedatives, Inhalants and Hallucinogens

**Major findings of this Survey at the National level as well as at the State level are as follows:**

**Alcohol:**

- At the national level, about 14.6% of people (among 10-75 year old) are current users of alcohol, i.e. about 16 Crore people. Prevalence is 17 times higher among men than women.
- Among people consuming alcohol in India, Country liquor ('desi') (about 30%) and spirits (IMFL – Indian Made Foreign Liquor) (about 30%) are the predominantly consumed beverages.
- About 5.2% of Indians (more than 5.7 crore people) are estimated to be affected by harmful or dependent alcohol use. In other words, every third alcohol user in India needs help for alcohol related problems.
- States with the high prevalence of alcohol use are Chhattisgarh, Tripura, Punjab, Arunachal Pradesh and Goa.
- States with high prevalence (more than 10%) of alcohol use disorders are: Tripura, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, and Arunachal Pradesh.

**Cannabis:**

- About 2.8% of Indians (3.1 Crore individuals) report having used any cannabis product within past 12 months (Bhang – 2% or 2.2 crore people; Ganja/Charas – 1.2% or 1.3 Crore people).
- About 0.66% of Indian (or approximately 72 lakh individuals) need help for their cannabis use problems.
- Though bhang use is more common than ganja/charas, prevalence of harmful/dependent use is proportionately higher for ganja/charas users.
- States with the higher than national prevalence of cannabis use are Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Sikkim, Chhattisgarh and Delhi.
- In some states the prevalence of cannabis use disorders is considerably higher (more than thrice) than the national average (e.g. Sikkim, Punjab).

**Opioids:**

- At the national level, the most common opioid used is Heroin, (current use 1.14%) followed by Pharmaceutical opioids (current use 0.96%) and then Opium (current use 0.52%).
- Of the total estimated approximately 60 lakh people with opioid use disorders (harmful or dependent pattern) in the country, more than half are contributed by just a few states: Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat.
- In terms of percentage of population affected, the top states in the country are those in the north east (Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Manipur) along with Punjab, Haryana and Delhi.

**Sedatives and Inhalants:**

- About 1.08% of 10-75 year old Indians (approximately 1.18 crore people) are current users of sedatives (non-medical, non-prescription use).
- States with the highest prevalence of current Sedative use are Sikkim, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram. However, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat are the top five states which house the largest populations of people using sedatives.
- In terms of absolute numbers, states with high population of children needing help for inhalant use are: Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Delhi and Haryana.

**Access to treatment Services:**

- In general, access to treatment services for people affected by substance use disorders is grossly inadequate.
- Just about one in 38 people with alcohol dependence report getting any
- Only about one in 180 people with alcohol dependence report getting inpatient treatment / hospitalization for help with alcohol problems.
- Among people suffering from dependence on illicit drugs, one among 20 people has ever received inpatient treatment/ hospitalization for help with drug problems.

**5. Mala Arayas Tribe**

- It is classified as a Scheduled Tribe in Kerala
- Mala Araya means King of the Hills.
- Mala Arayans reside generally on the western slopes of the higher range of mountains

**Makaravilakku**

- Makaravilakku is an annual festival held on Makar Sankranti in Kerala
- The name refers to the lighting of a bright "vilakku" (lamp)
- This is celebrated in the month of January when the Sun moves from dhanu rasi (Sagittarius) to Makaram rasi (Capricorn)

**6. Muzaffarpur Shelter Case**

- Muzaffarpur Shelter Home Rape case refers to a shelter home that ran under an non-governmental organization called "Sewa Sankalp Evam Vikas Samiti" at Muzaffarpur, Bihar, where cases of sexual abuse, rape and torture were reported
- Young girls were forced to dance to vulgar songs, sedated and raped
- Girls who resisted were beaten and tortured



- The sexual exploitation of dozens of girls in the government-run shelter over a period of 10 years was revealed in a social audit report by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences or TISS.

The sordid tale of exploitation at the girls' shelter in Muzaffarpur, Bihar, is not a case of a rare systems failure, unfortunately. Abuse and exploitation, especially of women and children, in such shelters have been reported with depressing frequency. While those responsible must be prosecuted and punished to the law's full extent, we need a robust system of oversight and accountability to prevent recurrence.

#### Strategies to counter abuse

- A viable multi-layered oversight system involving the government, particularly the women and child departments in the states, and the district administration is required.
- The local community must be actively involved in these homes and shelters, to provide another level of continuous oversight.
- No shelter should operate without a licence.
  - \* A charter of basic facilities and requirements must be developed and implemented, as part of the licence.
  - \* Ideally, women should be tasked with running these homes and shelters.
  - \* Thorough background checks of staff must be mandatory.
  - \* Counsellors, doctors and nurses should have routine access, over and above regular inspections.
- The local administration must be made accountable for the proper running of these homes.
- Central to ensuring that these homes/shelters do not become centres of abuse is the involvement of the local community. Active linkages with local schools, women's self-help groups, community businesses and colleges must be encouraged.
- These engagements will help create a web of informal oversight, which are likely to prove more effective than official supervision.

#### Conclusion

- Ensuring that vulnerable women and children are protected is central for a strong and progressive community. Protecting the vulnerable and penalising those who prey on them must be part of citizen sensibility.

#### **7. Sarthi Sandesh Vahini**

- The 'Sarthi Sandesh Vahini' is a mission started by the Uttar Pradesh state family welfare department with an aim to spread awareness regarding family planning in urban and rural areas.

- Under this campaign, vehicles will provide family planning information to the viewers through various documentaries and films.

#### **8. Swachh Shakti-2019**

- It is a national event which aims to bring in to focus the leadership role played by rural women in Swachh Bharat Mission.
- Women Sarpanches and Panches from all over the country attended the event which was an event aimed at empowering the women.
- The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation in association with the Govt. of Haryana is organizing the Swachh Shakti-2019.
- Best practices from grass root level in the rural areas for Swachh Bharat will be shared by them. The event will showcase the achievements of Swachh Bharat and the recently conducted Swachh Sunder Shauchalay

#### **9. Telangana villagers ostracised for ignoring caste while voting**

##### Context

- Some villagers have been ostracised by their community leaders for not casting votes in favour of contestants hailing from their own community in the recently-held gram panchayat elections in various parts of integrated Karimnagar district of Telangana.
- Expressing concern over the incidents, Lok Satta Udyama Samstha Karimnagar district president N. Srinivas said that ostracisation of the people for not casting vote for community candidates was against the democratic rights of the people.

##### Social Boycott

- A social boycott is an act of voluntary and intentional abstention from dealing with a person, organization, as an expression of protest, usually for social, political reasons.
- In India, it is frequent that particular Individual or group of Individual's are boycotted by other set of majority in the name of caste, religion, rituals, and traditions.
- It was categorically stated that social boycott for reasons such as religious rituals, inter-caste marriage, lifestyle, dress or vocation are happening.
- The Maharashtra Prohibition of People from Social Boycott (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2016 – the first law that treats social boycott as a serious crime. The law disallows social boycott in the name of caste, community, religion, rituals or customs.

##### How to overcome the challenges?

- A social movement to spread awareness needs to be taken up

- The attitude of the people needs to be addressed. This can be done through regular awareness weeks in schools, colleges, specialised training workshops and so on
- The administration should make a concerted effort to popularise the achievements of people who broke this barrier and were successful in their lives.
- Experts opine legal mechanisms are only a part of the solution. The masses need to be educated through workshops, celebrating Anti-boycott weeks etc
- The sensitivity training needs to be imparted to the administration at all levels
- The registration of cases needs to be tracked using technology like CCTNS projects so that Police do not use their discretion to avoid registering cases.
- Various stakeholders like NGO's Media groups, public policy advocacy groups need to be engaged meaningfully to ensure effective implementation of the act
- To address the various layers of exclusion as mentioned above, a comprehensive anti-discrimination law is required, on the lines of the Civil Rights enactments in the United States and the United Kingdom

#### **10. Various women safety initiatives will be launched by Union Home Minister**

##### **Context:**

- The Union Home Minister launch various initiatives for women safety. These initiatives will include launch of Emergency Response Support System, Investigation Tracking System for Sexual Offences (ITSSO) and Safe City Implementation Monitoring Portal.

##### **Emergency Response Support System (ERSS)**

- The Union Home Minister will launch the Emergency Response Support System (ERSS). The ERSS is a pan-India single number (112) based response system for persons in distress.
- Under this system, all the states have to set up a dedicated Emergency Response Centre (ERC).
- It will have a team of trained Call-takers and Dispatchers to handle emergency requests relating to assistance from Police, Fire & Rescue, Health and other emergency services.

##### **Investigation Tracking System for Sexual Offences (ITSSO)**

- The ITSSO is meant for Law Enforcement Agencies in the country.
- The Investigation Tracking System for Sexual Offences (ITSSO) is an online module available to law enforcement agencies at all levels- National, State, District and Police Station that allows State to undertake real-time monitoring and management for completion of investigation in rape cases in 2 months.

- It leverages the existing CCTNS data base, which covers nearly 15000 police stations in the country.
- ITSSO would greatly strengthen States ability for analytics and prognosis for timely investigation and prosecution in rape cases.

##### **Safe City Implementation Monitoring (SCIM) portal**

- In order to instil sense of security in women in metro cities, Government has identified eight cities for implementation of Safe City projects.
- The cities are Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow & Mumbai. The projects are funded under Nirbhaya Fund scheme.
- The projects have been prepared jointly by Municipal bodies and City Police and reflect integrated action for safety of women.
- Safe City projects involves creation of on-ground assets, resources & behaviour change programs for safety of women. The projects will supplement existing assets and meet citizen demands for safe eco-system for women in these cities.

##### **Important features of the Safe City projects include:**

- Identification of crime Hot-spots in each city.
- Saturating such Hot-spots with increased CCTV surveillance.
- and drone-based surveillance also being deployed in few cities as per requirement.
- Setting up women police out-posts for facilitating ease of access by any aggrieved woman to report incidence or seek assistance.
- Patrols by Women police in vulnerable areas.
- Setting up Women Help Desks in Police Stations with facility for trained Counsellors.
- Augmentation of existing women support centers like Asha Jyoti Kendra or Bharosa centers etc.
- Implementing Safety measures in buses, including Cameras.
- Improving Street Lighting in identified Hot Spot areas.
- setting up Toilets for women.
- Undertaking social awareness programmes on women safety and gender sensitivity.

#### **11. Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative**

- It is an effort aimed at helping 50 million women in the developing world, including India, get ahead economically over the next six years.
- The initiative will involve the State Department, the National Security Council and other agencies.
- It aims to coordinate current programs and develop new ones to assist women in areas such as job training, financial support, and legal or regulatory reforms.

**12. Zeliangrong**

- It is one of the major indigenous Naga community present in the state of Assam, Nagaland and Manipur
- The term "Zeliangrong" refers to the Zeme, Liangmai and Rongmei Naga tribes combined together.
- The Zeliangrong belong to the larger Southern Mongoloid population and their language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family of languages

# SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

## 1. **BEL Launches Atmospheric Water Generator safe Drinking Water**

### Context:

- Bharat Electronics has unveiled its new product, the Atmospheric Water Generator (AWG), an innovative solution to meet the ever-increasing need for drinking water worldwide, at Aero India 2019.
- The Atmospheric Water Generator is being manufactured by BEL in collaboration with CSIR-IICT and MAITHRI, a start-up company based in Hyderabad.

### How does it work?

- BEL's Atmospheric Water Generator employs a novel technology to extract water from the humidity present in the atmosphere and purify it.
- It uses heat exchange for condensing the atmospheric moisture to produce pure, safe and clean potable water.
- The AWG comes with a Mineralisation Unit, which is used to add minerals which are required to make the water potable.
- The AWG is configurable in static and mobile (vehicular) versions and is available in 30 litres/day, 100 litres/day, 500 litres/day and 1,000 litres/day capacities.

### Significance

- The Atmospheric Water Generator can be used to provide drinking water in community centres and public places like health care centres, schools, colleges, offices, railway stations, bus stands, airports, sea ports, off-shore oil rigs, military establishments, remote field areas and remote establishments and residential complexes.

## 2. **Foundation day of Department of Biotechnology**

### Context

- Department of Biotechnology in the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India, celebrated its 33rd Foundation Day with the theme as "Celebrating Biotechnology: Building Indian as an Innovation Nation".

### Key missions at the foundation day ceremony

- This included Atal Jai Anusandhan Biotech Mission - Undertaking Nationally Relevant Technology Innovation (UNaTI), which is expected to transform Health, Agriculture and Energy sectors during the next 5 years.

### This mission includes

- GARBH-ini - A Mission to promote Maternal and Child Health and develop prediction tools for pre-term berth,

- IndCEPI - A Mission to develop affordable vaccines for endemic diseases
- Development of Biofortified and Protein Rich wheat - contributing to POSHAN Abhiyan,
- Mission on Anti-Microbial Resistance for Affordable Diagnostics and Therapeutics and
- Clean Energy Mission - Innovative Technology interventions for Swachh Bharat.

## 3. **GSAT-31**

### Context:

- India's latest communication satellite GSAT-31 was successfully launched from French Guiana

### Details

- GSAT-31 is the 40th communication satellite of India. It will replace the InSAT satellite which is nearing the end of its life.
- Weighing about 2,535 kg, the GSAT-31 will provide continuity to operational services on some of the in-orbit satellites.
- This satellite will augment the Ku-band transponder capacity in Geostationary Orbit
- GSAT-31 has a unique configuration of providing flexible frequency segments and coverage. It will provide communication services to Indian mainland and island

### Uses

- GSAT-31 will be used for supporting VSAT networks, Television uplinks, Digital Satellite News Gathering, DTH-television services, cellular backhaul connectivity and many such applications.
- The satellite also provides wide beam coverage to facilitate communication over large oceanic region, comprising large parts of Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean, using a wide band transponder.

## 4. **Helicopter SATCOM Solutions**

### Context

- Navratna Defence PSU Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Hughes India have entered into a Teaming Agreement for design, development, supply, installation, integration and commissioning of Satellite Communication solutions for helicopters under the Ministry of Defence.

### Details

- The Teaming Agreement will enable MoD's strategic users to get enabled with helicopter-based Satellite Communication links for real-time and assured communications using ISRO's Ku band satellites.



**BEL**

- It is a Navratna defence PSU with expertise in the design, development, engineering and manufacture of Radar & Weapon Systems, Network Centric Systems and Communications systems, Electronic Warfare & Avionics, Naval Systems, Electro-optics products, Tank Electronics & Gun Systems, Satcom Systems, Homeland Security & Smart City solutions, Strategic Components and select civilian products.

**Hughes India**

- It is a majority owned subsidiary of Hughes Network Systems, LLC, USA (Hughes). Hughes is the world's largest provider of broadband satellite networks and services. Hughes India is the largest satellite service operator in India providing a comprehensive range of broadband networking technologies, solutions, and services for businesses and governments.

**5. Radio Astronomy**

- Radio astronomy is the detection of radio waves emitted by celestial objects.
- Radio astronomy allows scientists to detect radiation produced when massive celestial objects interact.
- The radio signals collected by the LOFAR telescope have traveled billions of light years before reaching Earth.

**LOFAR**

- Operated by ASTRON in the Netherlands, the LOFAR telescope is a network of radio antennas in the Netherlands, Germany, the UK, France, Sweden, Poland, Ireland and Italy, all connected by high-speed fiber optic cables.
- LOFAR consists of a vast array of omnidirectional antennas using a new concept in which the signals from the separate antennas are not combined in real time as they are in most array antennas.
- The electronic signals from the antennas are digitized, transported to a central digital processor, and combined in software to effectively create a virtual radio telescope dish measuring 1,900 kilometers in diameter.

**Context**

- Astronomers using Low Frequency Array (LOFAR) telescope took a view at a segment of sky over the northern hemisphere, and found 300,000 previously unseen light sources
- This new map of the night sky charts hundreds of thousands of previously unknown galaxies discovered using a telescope that can detect light sources optical instruments cannot see.

**Significance**

- The discovery of the new light sources may also help scientists better understand the behaviour of one of space's most enigmatic phenomena.

- The new observation technique would allow astronomers to compare black holes over time to see how they form and develop

**6. Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR)****Context**

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully flight tested the second indigenously developed 'Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR)' propulsion based missile system from ITR, Chandipur, Odisha

**Details**

- It will pave the way for development of long-range air-to-air missiles in the country
- The ramjet propulsion system used in the SFDR acts as an oxidizer and the solid propellant reacts as air flows through a solid propellant duct.
- Unlike conventional rockets that carry propellant and oxidizer, Ramjet uses the air as an oxidizer just like a jet engine. Therefore the weight of the fuel required is eliminated.
- The SFDR propulsion is designed in such a way that it allows for an up and down throttling.
  - \* This further lets the missile to amplify its speed until it reaches the terminal phase of the flight.
  - \* The speed increases until the point when sharp turns are required to search for highly manoeuvring targets.

**Background**

- The first flight of SFDR, developed under a joint Indo-Russian R&D project, was tested in 2018. It had achieved the speed of Mach 3.
- The Indian SFDR will be used as variants of missiles such as the advanced version of ASTRA.

**Significance**

- It has inherent simplicity, reliability, light weight, and high-speed flight capability not possible with other air-breathing engines
- The present lot of missiles, which use a booster/sustainer configuration with solid or liquid propellants, have limitations against maneuvering targets, since conventional missiles, at the terminal stage, cannot provide enough energy to maintain their speed in order to hit the targets.
  - \* SFDR technology will exceptionally enhance endgame maneuverability at the terminal stage when the seeker is locked onto a target.
- SFDR propulsion is a key technology for the development of extended range missiles such as surface-to-air and long-range air-to-air missiles.

## 7. Signal chip unveils India's first indigenous semiconductor chips for 4G/LTE and 5G NR modems

### Context

- Bengaluru-based fab-less Semiconductor Company, Signalchip launched India's first semiconductor chips for 4G/LTE and 5G NR modems.

### Details

- The company launched four chips as part of its SCBM34XX and SCRF34XX/45XX series, code-named 'Agumbe'.
- The chips are optimally designed to support evolving network architectures like Open RAN/CRAN with flexible interface configurations.

### Significance

- It will have huge implications for India's data security and data sovereignty, besides the positive economic implications.

## 8. The Table that defines chemistry turns 150

### Context

- The majestic table of elements that hangs on the walls of chemistry classrooms across the world has turned 150 years old in 2019.
- The United Nations General Assembly and UNESCO have decided to celebrate 2019 as the "International Year of the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements (IYPT2019)".

### Periodic Table and Mendeleev

- The Periodic Table of Elements was written by Dmitri Ivanovich Mendeleev on 17th February 1869.
- Mendeleev was not the first one to create a table of elements. Earliest of such efforts was due to the father of modern chemistry, Antoine Lavoisier in 1789 who classified them in terms of their properties. John Newlands introduced the concept of octaves in chemistry, wherein properties repeat for every eighth element. There were other attempts too. However, the proposal of Mendeleev was unique.
- Mendeleev's finding was that the elements, if arranged according to their atomic weights, exhibit an evident stepwise variation of properties. Today, all the 118 elements are put in the periodic table based on the periodic law.
- Mendeleev put emphasis on chemical properties. As a result, in a few cases systematically increasing atomic weights did not match well with chemical properties. He hesitatingly placed tellurium before iodine with a question mark, although tellurium is heavier than iodine. Today we know that his placing was indeed justified.

- The element 101 is named as Mendelevium (Md). Although narrowly missed the Nobel Prize of 1906, he became one of the 15 scientists to be remembered with an element, a more illustrious recognition considering that 181 have won a Nobel Prize in chemistry so far.

# SECURITY AND DEFENSE

## 1. AK-103 Assault Rifles

- The AK-103 will be bulk produced by the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) with technology transfer from Russia.
  - \* OFB was set up by the government to produce small arms and ammunition which is why it is easier for them to absorb technology as they already produce a lot
- The major objective of going with this program is it also gives enhancement to Make in India program as there is technology transfer
- These rifles are easy to use, maintenance cost is less and it can be used in all weather conditions
- It also has the option of knife bayonet
- It can be carried easily by the Soldiers



## 2. All CAPF ranks deployed in J&K can avail flights

### Context

- According to an order by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) all ranks of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) deployed in the Kashmir Valley will be entitled to commercial flight services to either join duty or while proceeding on leave
- This includes their journey for joining duty, transfer, tour or going on leave.

### Current Status

- Only officers in the rank of inspectors and above were given this facility,
  - \* But from now on all personnel in the ranks of constable, head constable and assistant sub-inspectors will be eligible.

### Details

- The MHA order said it "has approved the entitlement of air travel on Delhi-Srinagar, Srinagar-Delhi, Jammu-Srinagar and Srinagar-Jammu sectors to all the personnel of the Central Armed Police Forces."
- The MHA said the new facility is in addition to the existing air courier services for CAPFs where an entire aircraft is booked for the force personnel from either Delhi or Jammu to Srinagar and back.

### Stats

- As many as 65,000 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel are deployed in the State as part of 65 battalions apart from units of the Border Security Force, Indo-Tibetan Border Police, Central Industrial Security Force, Sashastra Seema Bal and the National Security Guard.

## 3. Assam Rifles granted power to arrest anyone in the Northeast

### Context

- Amid rising unrest in the Northeast, the Union government has empowered Assam Rifles personnel to arrest anyone and search a place without warrant in the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, and Mizoram.

### Why was it necessary?

- Earlier, Assam Rifles was making arrests only in areas where the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act was in effect.
- They were finding it difficult to make seizures and arrest in Mizoram, which doesn't have AFSPA. This is done to basically correct that anomaly.
- As per law, they have to hand over the suspects to the local police within 24 hours

### Details

- According to a Home Ministry notification, "an officer of the rank corresponding to that of the lowest rank of members of the Assam Rifles" has been given these powers under the Code of Criminal Procedure.
- Assam Rifles personnel will exercise these powers and discharge their duties "under sub-section(1) of section 41, sections 47, 48, 49, 51, 53, 54, 149, 150, 151 and 152 of the CrPC within the local limits of the area
- Section 41 of the CrPC states that any police officer may, without an order from a magistrate and without a warrant, arrest any person.
- Section 47 gives powers for search of place entered by person sought to be arrested.

- Section 48 says a police officer may, for the purpose of arresting without warrant any person whom he is authorised to arrest, pursue such person into any place in India.
- Section 49, the person arrested shall not be subjected to more restraint than is necessary to prevent his escape.

#### 4. **Exercise Topchi**

- It is an Annual Exercise where army showcases its Artillery Power

##### Current Context

- In addition to the gun fire, the display of rockets, missiles, surveillance and target acquisition radars, remotely piloted aircraft and hi-tech equipments.

#### 5. **EY's 'Global Information Security Survey 2018-19'**

##### Context

- According to EY's 'Global Information Security Survey 2018-19 — India edition', Organisations in India consider careless or unaware employees as the biggest vulnerability that exposes the firms to cyberattacks

##### Details

- A maximum of about 32% respondents cited careless or unaware employees as their topmost vulnerability with the most increased risk exposure over the last 12 months.
- Other vulnerabilities cited include outdated security controls (21%), unauthorised access (19%), related to cloud computing use (8%), related to smartphones/tablets (8%) and related to social media (8%) and related to Internet of Things (4%).
- The report added that 87% of the organisations in the technology sector, and 70% of the organisations in the telecom sector regard careless employees as the most likely source of attack.

#### 6. **HELINA (Helicopter launched Nag)**

- HeliNa is an air-to-land helicopter-launched version of Nag anti-tank guided missile with a hit range of 7-8 km
  - \* Nag missile has a maximum range of 4 km, the HeliNa has an extended strike range of about 8 km
- It is developed by the DRDO
- It is guided by an Infrared Imaging Seeker (IIR) operating in the lock-on before-launch mode and helps in further strengthening the defence capabilities of the country.
- All parameters of the flight test were monitored by the telemetry stations, tracking systems and the helicopters deployed by the Army.

- Once inducted in the Armed forces, HeliNa missile will be integrated with the weaponised version of the Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) Dhruv, HAL built combat helicopter Rudra and Light Combat Helicopter (LCH).

#### 7. **Hoveizeh Cruise Missile**

- It is a long-range ground-launched cruise missile launched by Iran
- The missile has a range of over 1,350 km, can fly at a low altitude, has high precision and accuracy, and is capable of heavily destroying ground targets

#### 8. **India to have own DNS for safe browsing**

##### Context

- The government will soon roll out a public Domain Name Server, or DNS, for India aimed at providing a faster and more secure browsing experience for Internet users in the country, while ensuring that citizens' data is stored locally.

##### Details

- A DNS is like a directory for the Internet. It helps to convert domain names that are easy for people to remember into IP addresses, which are used by computers/machines to communicate. If the DNS is either slow or fails to work, users will not be able to locate web addresses.
- The main aim of bringing our own public DNS is to ensure availability, particularly for smaller Internet Service Providers (ISPs) who don't have credible DNS. Bigger ones usually have their own DNS
- Pointing out that there were other open DNS servers, including Google Public DNS, the government's system would prevent users from visiting malicious websites.
- The roll-out, which will be executed by the National Informatics Centre – the technology arm of the government, will be completed in the next four to six months.
- NIC is already using the public DNS within the government network.

#### 9. **Naval Airfield Integrated Security System**

##### Context

- To strengthen the perimeter security of its air stations, the Navy has finalised a ₹700 crore contract with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) for establishing an upgraded Naval Airfield Integrated Security System.

##### Details

- After terrorists attacked the Pathankot Air Force Station, the system was formulated as a comprehensive project for upgrading the security of naval airfields



- The request for information went out in March 2016 for the project to be implemented at six major air stations.

#### 10. NSCN (I-M) appoints chairman after 3 years

##### Context

- The Isak-Muivah faction of National Socialist Council of Nagaland or NSCN (I-M), once the fountainhead of extremism in the Northeast, has appointed a chief almost three years after the death of its founder-chairman Isak Chishi Swu.

##### NSCN

- Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland, was formed to advance the Naga cause for sovereignty.
- This organisation has operations in the Naga inhabited regions of India & Myanmar, with easy cross border access.
- This group has had major splits. Issac-Muivah faction (NSCN – IM) is currently involved in peace talks with the Indian government, while the Kaplang faction with its major operations in Myanmar is designated as a terror outfit by India.

##### Greater Nagalim

- A "Greater Nagalim" comprising "all contiguous Naga-inhabited areas", along with Nagaland. That included several districts of Assam, Arunachal and Manipur, as also a large tract of Myanmar. The map of "Greater Nagalim" has about 1,20,000 sq km, while the state of Nagaland consists of 16,527 sq km.



#### 11. Pulwama Terror Attack

##### Context

- A convoy of vehicles carrying security personnel on the Jammu Srinagar National Highway was attacked by a vehicle-bound suicide bomber in Lethpora near Awantipora, Pulwama district, Jammu and Kashmir
- The attack resulted in the death of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel
- The responsibility for the attack was claimed by the Pakistan-based Islamist militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed

##### Issue Area

- The matter of extreme concern is that a suicide bomber could time his attack to hit a security convoy.
  - \* How is it that a plan to carry out such a major attack, by a local who was on the radar of the local police and other agencies, on a national highway in a troubled State went undetected?
  - \* Why is that 78 buses with CRPF jawans were allowed to travel in one convoy?
  - \* 1. The attack occurred on the Jammu-Srinagar highway, which is the only major artery leading into the Valley. This is used by civilians as well as the security forces.
  - \* 2. To close off the highway whenever it is being used by security forces is simply not feasible. It would have an adverse impact on the state's economy.
  - \* 3. This compulsion created the opportunity for the explosive-laden SUV to drive alongside and jam into one of the CRPF vehicles.
- The use of a suicide bomber for the operation, and that too, a local youth, is ominous. It represents a deliberate escalation and points to growing radicalisation of Kashmiri youth.
- The attack has raised concerns on intelligence gathering, dissemination and coordination in the Valley
  - \* The agencies are inundated daily with a large volume of information picked up from human and electronic sources, including communication intercepts.
  - \* Intelligence alerts may be issued on this basis but alerts are not the same as precise intelligence indicating the place, time and nature of a planned attack and who may be intending to carry it out.
  - \* Being aware of the very real limitations, technical and political, under which security forces operate, one must be prepared to deal with a likely breach.
- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence noted that 68% of our equipment in the defence forces was in the 'vintage category'.

**What could have been done?**

- Could the troops have been moved by air instead? Yes, but this would have been a major expense and if included in the SOPs for the future, will necessitate a huge increase in the security budget.

**Pakistan needs to act**

- The JeM's leaders are roaming about freely in Pakistan. This is unacceptable. They must be taken to task immediately and there should be a clampdown on other terror organisations as an emergency measure.
- If Pakistan truly desires peace with India, it needs to play its part honestly. Pakistan should realise that it would be doing a favour to its citizens by cracking down on terror organisations that are thriving on their soil.
- And why has Pakistan still not invited India's National Investigation Agency to investigate the Pathankot terror attack even though India had allowed the visit of the Pakistani team to Pathankot in 2016? Pakistan needs to take action against the terror elements on its soil, now.

**Challenges**

- In the aftermath of Pulwama, Our first challenge is to go after the perpetrators.
- Our second challenge is to ensure that the threat of such attacks in the future is minimised.
- Our third challenge is to ensure that the culture of restraint and proportionate response by our men on the ground does not break down.
- It is not possible to dissuade the separatists/jihadis from the path of violence.
- It is not possible to coercively or diplomatically change the mindset of the generals and mullahs in Pakistan who provide them with basic support.
- It is not possible to seal the border completely to prevent crossing of militants and weapons.
- It is not possible to ensure that "fidayeen" attacks and the resultant loss of life can be prevented in totality.

**Way forward**

- Our reaction when such disaster happens should be balanced and nuanced.
- Morale should not be undermined by the failure to prevent one such incident when many more successes have been achieved.
- Additional measures should be put in place but only after careful evaluation rather than as a knee-jerk reaction. Nor should additional measures put even more onerous restrictions on normal daily civilian life.

- While the state has to deal with such violence and restore safety and security, the only sustainable answer is addressing, through constitutionally-mandated political processes, underlying political, economic and social grievances that are drivers of these multiple mutinies.
- It is vital that an urgent review be undertaken of the quality and timeliness of intelligence inputs and the standard operating procedures (SOP) being followed by the armed police force convoys; especially if different from the army's.

**Conclusion**

- We must also acknowledge that external forces will continue to exploit the disturbed situation in Kashmir to undermine India's security. What we need is a strategy which takes into account both the domestic and external dimensions of the Kashmir issue.
- Unless a security perspective is accompanied by a willingness to use democratic political processes to chart a path towards normalcy in the state, the precious lives sacrificed by the security forces will continue to be in vain.

**Jaish-e-Mohammed**

- It is a Pakistan-based Deobandi jihadist group active in Kashmir
- The group's primary motive is to separate Kashmir from India
- It has carried out several attacks primarily in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir
- Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is said to have created Jaish-e-Mohammed by working with several Deobandi terrorists associated with Harkat-ul-Mujahideen
  - \* As a member of the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Azhar had also fought in the first Afghan war, and the JeM is believed to have participated in Taliban operations against US forces.
- The links between the JeM and the Taliban are well-known.

**Previous Attacks**

- In December 1999, Harkat terrorists hijacked the Indian Airlines Flight 814 scheduled to fly from Kathmandu to Delhi, and diverted it to Kandahar
  - \* After they slit the throat of a passenger, the Indian government agreed to their demands and released Maulana Masood Azhar, Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar, three Harkat operatives previously imprisoned in India
  - \* The released prisoners were escorted to Pakistan by the ISI, and Masood Azhar was chosen to head the new group Jaish-e-Mohammed.

- In December 2001, JeM and LeT militants launched a fidayeen attack on the Indian Parliament waging a battle with the security personnel.
  - \* According to the UNSC, al Qaeda, Taliban and other extremist organisations provided finances to Maulana Masood Azhar to set up the JeM.
- Its comeback to the Valley in 2015 coincided with the taking shape of a new, indigenous militancy in J&K, which had its origins in the 2008 Amarnath land row, followed by the 2010 anti-Machil protests, and the 2012 hanging of Afzal Guru.
- Its operations since then have included the terrorist strike at Pathankot Air Force base and the attack on the Uri Brigade headquarters.
- The unrest in the Valley since the 2016 killing of Hizbul Mujahideen militant, Burhan Wani, gave the JeM the foothold it had been looking for since 2001.

#### Why is it being revived?

- The reason for Jaish-e-Mohammad coming to the forefront (of the militancy in the Valley) may be due to increased and repeated international scrutiny of LeT and its chief
- 2017 witnessed heavy losses to terrorist outfits especially LeT and Hizb as their top commanders were killed. The Pakistan based handlers... have started reviving Jaish cadres in valley and main motive of carrying fidayeen type attacks is to push security forces on backfoot in order to give some breathing space to Hizb and LeT

#### There are three dimensions to the suicide attack by Masood Azhar's Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM)

- The first dimension is Kashmir related. The Pulwama tragedy signals a significant escalation in terrorism in the Kashmir Valley.
  - \* Given the type (Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device-VBIED), target and the scale of the attack, it seems obvious that this was done at the behest of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).
  - \* The motivation would have been to refocus attention on the Valley after a spate of successes by the Indian security forces in neutralising terrorists, to provide a higher degree of visibility to the JeM, and to show the attack as being carried out by a local Kashmiri. However, it is obvious that while a local Kashmiri youth was the trigger, he was merely cannon fodder.
- The second dimension is Pakistan-related and has two sub-dimensions.
  - \* First, it announces the arrival of Lt General Asim Munir, the new DG ISI, on the Pak-sponsored terror firmament.
  - \* Second, it is now emerging that Bajwa, who completes his three-year tenure as army chief in November, is interested in an extension.

- The third dimension is regional. Pakistan has declared victory prematurely in Afghanistan.
  - \* Buoyed by the US's desperation to exit Afghanistan and hence its renewed dependence on Rawalpindi, Pakistan has concluded that relations with the US are back on an even keel.
  - \* Combined with its "all-weather" friend China, and the recent cozying up to Russia, Pakistan feels that it has covered all its bases.
  - \* This is all the more so because it's failing economy has got a shot in the arm through bail-out packages from Saudi Arabia and UAE.

#### Why China is shielding the Jaish-e-Mohammad?

- China is protecting its "all weather" ally in South Asia
- To sustain its business interests in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)
  - \* Chinese firms have invested close to \$40 billion in around 45 CPEC projects, about half of which are nearing completion. China is determined to protect this gigantic investment of money, personnel and time.
  - \* Access to the sea through Gwadar will remove the need for it to take the long route west through the Straits of Malacca and around India, and dramatically increase its proximity to the oil shipping lanes through the Strait of Hormuz.
  - \* Good relations with Pakistan, and international protection for ISI proxies like Jaish provide China with insurance against terrorist attacks on CPEC infrastructure and the thousands of Chinese working on them.
- The Chinese military had trained the mujahideen against the Soviets, and China subsequently made a deal with the Taliban (many of whom, including Mullah Omar, were former mujahideen commanders) that "as long as they don't support the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, they won't harm them".
- To make things difficult for its Asian rival India
  - \* India is part of a short list of economic giants who have refused to participate in the BRI.
  - \* New Delhi's opposition stems from the CPEC, which runs through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. And since China views India as a competitor, Beijing looks to tie down New Delhi to South Asia using issues like Azhar.
- Making a point to western powers led by the United States.

#### United Nations Security Council resolution 1267

- Under this the Council designated Osama bin Laden and associates as terrorists and established a sanctions regime to cover individuals and entities associated with Al-Qaida, Osama bin Laden and/or the Taliban wherever located

- The sanctions regime has been further strengthened and modified by a number of subsequent resolutions
- The measures to be implemented by countries according to the resolutions include asset freeze, travel ban and arms embargo in respect of individuals designated by the UN Sanctions Committee.
- Following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the UN further strengthened the sanctions regime by adopting the UNSCR 1373 (2001), which requires countries to put in place mechanisms enabling the designation of terrorists and persons associated with terrorism at national level and the consequent application of freezing measures

### **Geneva Conventions**

- Adopted first in 1864 for the "Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field," the Geneva Conventions, understood in the present form, evolved through centuries as an agreement that extensively defines the basic rights of the civilian and military personnel imprisoned during the time of a war.
- The first Geneva Convention came about due to the efforts of Swiss businessman and founder of the Red Cross society Henry Dunant after he published a book proposing the establishment of an organisation for relief work and humanitarian aid in wartime.
- Thereafter, up to 1949, the conventions were updated several times. At present, the conventions comprise four treaties that mark out the benchmark of international law for humanitarian treatment in the event of a war and a total of 196 countries have ratified it

### **Prisoners of War (POWs)**

- The rules protecting prisoners of war (POWs) are specific. They were first detailed in the 1929 Geneva Convention and later amended in the third 1949 Geneva Convention following the lessons of World War II.
- According to rules, the status of POW only applies in international armed conflict.
- "POWs are usually members of the armed forces of one of the parties to a conflict who fall into the hands of the adverse party," the Convention states.
- It says POWs cannot be prosecuted for taking a direct part in hostilities.
- "Their detention is not a form of punishment, but only aims to prevent further participation in the conflict. They must be released and repatriated without delay after the end of hostilities. The detaining power may prosecute them for possible war crimes, but not for acts of violence that are lawful under International Humanitarian Law," it says.
- The rules specify that POWs must be treated humanely in all circumstances.

- "They are protected against any act of violence, as well as against intimidation, insults, and public curiosity," the Geneva Convention states.

### **What rights is a PoW entitled to?**

- Article 14 of the Convention lays down that PoWs are "entitled to in all circumstances to respect for their persons and their honour".
- In captivity, a PoW must not be forced to provide information of any kind under "physical or mental torture, nor any other form of coercion". Refusal to answer questions should not invite punishment. A PoW must be protected from exposure to fighting. Use of PoWs as hostages or human shields is prohibited, and a PoW has to be given the same access to safety and evacuation facilities as those affiliated to the detaining power.
- Access to health facilities, prayer, recreation and exercise are also written into the Convention. The detaining power has to facilitate correspondence between the PoW and his family, and must ensure that this is done without delays. A PoW is also entitled to receive books or care packages from the outside world.

### **Protocols**

- Protocol I expands protection for the civilian population as well as military and civilian medical workers in international armed conflicts.
- Protocol II elaborates on protections for victims caught up in high-intensity internal conflicts such as civil wars. It does not apply to internal disturbances such as riots, demonstrations and isolated acts of violence.
- In December 2005, a third Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions was adopted that provides for another distinctive emblem: the red crystal. The red crystal is an optional emblem, equal in status to the red cross and red crescent.

### **The four Geneva Conventions**

- Convention I: This convention protects wounded and infirm soldiers and ensures humane treatment without discrimination founded on race, color, sex, religion or faith, birth or wealth, etc.
  - \* The convention prohibits torture, assaults upon personal dignity, and execution without judgment. It also grants the right to proper medical treatment and care.
- Convention II: This agreement extended the protections described in the first convention to shipwrecked soldiers and other naval forces, including special protections afforded to hospital ships.
- Convention III: One of the treaties created during the 1949 convention, this defined 'Prisoner of War,' and accorded such prisoners proper and humane treatment as specified by the first convention.



- \* Specifically, it required POWs to give only their names, ranks, and serial numbers to their captors. Nations party to the convention may not use torture to extract information from POWs.
- Convention IV: Under this convention, civilians are afforded the same protections from inhumane treatment and attack afforded to sick and wounded soldiers in the first convention.

#### **Applicability of the Geneva Conventions**

- The conventions apply to all cases of declared war between signatory nations.
- The conventions apply to all cases of armed conflict between two or more signatory nations, even in the absence of a declaration of war.
- The conventions apply to a signatory nation even if the opposing nation is not a signatory, but only if the opposing nation 'accepts and applies the provisions' of the conventions.

#### **Who monitors whether the Geneva Conventions are being followed?**

- The Geneva Conventions have a system of "Protecting Powers" who ensure that the provisions of the conventions are being followed by the parties in a conflict.
- In theory, each side must designate states that are not party to the conflict as their "Protecting Powers".
- In practice, the International Committee of the Red Cross usually plays this role.

#### **Most Favoured Nation status withdrawn, how Pakistan's economy will be hurt**

- Less than 24 hours after the terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district, India withdrew the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status accorded to Pakistan.
- While the withdrawal of the MFN status by India is negative in sentiment terms for the bilateral relations, the impact on trade is unlikely to be substantial given that volumes of merchandise trade are low.
- In fact, India continues to maintain a substantial trade surplus, despite the fact that Pakistan is yet to transition fully to MFN status for India.
- Pakistan's exports to India have consistently been about a fourth of what it imports from India, the MFN concessions notwithstanding.

#### **What is Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status?**

- Article 1 of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), 1994, requires every WTO member country to accord MFN status (or preferential trade terms with respect to tariffs and trade barriers) to all other member countries.
- Accordingly, India accorded MFN status to all WTO member countries, including Pakistan, from the date of entry into force of the so called Marrakesh Agreement, establishing the WTO.

- The WTO is the only global international organisation dealing with the rules of trade between nations and the 164 member countries of the WTO represent 98 per cent of world trade.
- Only a handful of very small countries are out of the WTO.
- The primary purpose of the WTO is to open trade for the benefit of all. In that sense, "most favored" sounds like a contradiction. But even though it suggests special treatment, in the WTO it actually means non-discrimination — that is treating virtually everyone equally. In effect, then, every WTO member is supposed to be "most favoured" for all other WTO members.
- In accordance with the MFN principle and its obligations under the WTO, India accorded Pakistan MFN status in 1996. However, Pakistan is yet to transition fully to MFN status for India and it maintains a Negative List of 1,209 products that are not allowed to be imported from India.
- In addition, Pakistan permits only 138 products to be imported from India through Wagah/Attari border land route.

Despite these restrictions, India continues to maintain a substantial trade surplus with Pakistan.

#### **Controversy over reciprocal status for India:**

- In 2011, the Pakistani cabinet decided formally to accord India MFN status. But that decision remains unimplemented.
- In 2012, Pakistan substituted a "Positive List" of a more than 1,950 tariff lines permitted for import from India, by a "Negative List" of 1,209 lines that could not be imported.
- This meant that the default setting had moved from 'no import' to 'import', and instead of listing only items that could be bought from India, Pakistan had listed items that could not be bought, with everything else allowed. But this was still not the same as according India MFN status.
- This intransigence has periodically triggered anger in India, and demands have been raised, especially during times of heightened tensions and terrorist attacks sponsored by Pakistan, to withdraw the MFN status that New Delhi has granted to Islamabad. India had not, however, taken that step so far.
- Despite the bilateral ups and downs, the MFN status accorded by India was not touched.
- It is important to note that as late as December 19, 2018, in response to a query in Rajya Sabha on the withdrawal of MFN status to Pakistan, the junior Commerce and Industry Minister had told Rajya Sabha in a written reply: "No decision has been taken to review the MFN status accorded to Pakistan, so far."

**Perspective on India-Pakistan trade:**

- India's trade numbers with Pakistan are minuscule. Trade between the neighbours jumped nearly three-and-a-half times between 2000-01 and 2005-06 (from \$251 million to \$869 million per annum), but progress was slower in the decade that followed, with volumes rising a little over three times.
- India's trade with much smaller Bhutan is over half that with Pakistan (In 2016, total India-Bhutan bilateral trade was Rs 8,723 crore; with Pakistan, it was around Rs 17,200 crore.) Back in 2007, the Indian Council of Research on International Economic Relations (Icrier) had projected a bilateral trade potential of \$11.7 billion (Rs 46,098 crore), if both neighbours took proactive measures to exploit untapped areas of economic cooperation. But in FY17, India-Pakistan trade was a mere \$2.29 billion, or about 0.35% of India's overall trade.
- It is important to note that in the 7th round of Commerce Secretary level talks with Pakistan, held in 2012 in Islamabad, a roadmap was agreed for facilitating trade, identifying several actions to be taken by both the countries in a time-bound manner.
  - \* The agreed roadmap could not be implemented since Pakistan did not notify the removal of trade restrictions through Wagah-Attari land route (which was the first step identified in the roadmap).
- The Commerce Ministers of India and Pakistan met in 2014 on the sidelines of the 5th SAARC Business Leaders Conclave held at New Delhi.
  - \* Then in the meeting between Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan, India stated that the two countries could move immediately towards full trade normalisation on the basis of September 2012 roadmap worked out between the Commerce Secretaries of both countries.
  - \* No bilateral trade meeting between India and Pakistan has taken place since then.
- Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan has repeatedly spoken of improving trade with India, arguing that "the best way to alleviate poverty and uplift the people of the subcontinent is to resolve our differences through dialogue and start trading".

**Possible impact on Pakistan's Economy: Post withdrawal of MFN Status:**

- The decision by India to withdraw MFN status to Pakistan is intended to isolate Pakistan diplomatically and squeeze the country's industry.
- Even though the low volumes of trade limit the impact that such a step can have, the stoppage of input materials such as chemicals and cotton from India will push up costs of production for the relevant Pakistani industries.

- It would also give a push to the illegal trade between the two countries, which takes place through border gaps and via third countries.
- It could also give a handle to extremist elements in Pakistan to scale up the rhetoric against India.

**What else should India do?**

- India should focus on targeting Pakistan's greatest current vulnerability — a troubled financial condition.
- Even as Islamabad desperately seeks international support to shore up its economy, the global Financial Action Task Force is considering the case for putting Pakistan on a black list that will trigger major sanctions.
- In nudging the FATF, Delhi faces two problems — one external and the other internal.
  - \* In the external front, China has emerged not only as Pakistan's most important economic partner but also its international political shield.
  - \* On the internal front, surge of communal violence in India has to be controlled
- To begin with, the government would do better to repackage its idea of "isolating Pakistan" into one of building a more inclusive 'coalition against terrorism emanating from Pakistan'.
  - \* An inclusive coalition is more likely to move nations at the global stage as well. The success of the efforts led by the U.S. and other countries to 'grey list' Pakistan at the Financial Action Task Force or of French efforts for a United Nations Security Council statement on Pulwama points to that.
- India must focus on the case against Masood Azhar, which pre-dates the case against 26/11 mastermind Hafiz Saeed. In a first, the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) claimed responsibility for the Pulwama attack in a suicide bomber video that has not thus far been disputed by its leader Masood Azhar. Azhar has been on the U.S.'s radar since 1992, when he was a leader of the banned terror group Harkat ul-Ansar, and worked with jihadi groups in Sudan and Bangladesh. His release after years in Indian prisons in exchange for hostages on board the IC-814 flight should on its own merit his banning and prosecution — not just in Pakistan, but in all the countries whose nationals were on board that Indian Airlines flight, as well as the stops that flight made: in Nepal, the United Arab Emirates and Afghanistan.

**Examining the terror attack in Iran with that at Pulwama**

- A day before the attack on a CRPF convoy at Awantipora, Pulwama in which at least 40 jawans of the paramilitary force were killed — there was an almost identical attack in Iran's Sistan-Balochistan province, which borders Pakistan.

- While there are no apparent connections between the two, there is no denying that the two groups — Jaish ul Adl and Jaish-e-Mohammed – that have each claimed responsibility for the respective attack are ideologically linked.
- Both have been mentored in Pakistan and both are based in Pakistan.
- In the Iran attack that the Jaish ul Adl claimed responsibility for, a suicide bomber rammed his explosive-laden car into a bus carrying troops of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, killing 27 and injuring several on the bus.
- The Revolutionary Guard Corps is an elite arm of the Iran armed forces.
- The attack took place near a town called Zahedan, close to the Iran-Pakistan border.

#### A Perspective on the Jaish ul Adl:

- The Jaish ul Adl is a successor of the Sunni sectarian organisation Jundullah, which was hitting Iranian targets from bases in Balochistan.
- After its leader Abdul Malik Riggi was captured by Iranian security forces and hanged in 2010, Jundullah remnants came together as JuA under the leadership of Mullah Omar (not the Taliban leader) and Salahuddin Farooqi, both shadowy figures about whom little is known.
- Unlike separatist and nationalist Baloch militant groups in Pakistan, Jundullah, JuA and other extremist Sunni sectarian groups such as Sipah Rasoolallah target Shia Iran on religious grounds.
- Sunni sectarian groups like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which operate in Pakistan's Balochistan target Shia minorities in the province and have also picked on other secular targets, have flourished in the region in the shelter provided by Afghan Taliban strongholds in and around Quetta.
- Much like India has been asking Pakistan to shut down Jaish-e-Mohammed, Iran accuses Pakistan of sheltering the JuA and has repeatedly asked Islamabad to crack down against it.
- In a thinly veiled statement after the attack, the Iranian foreign ministry said the group "receives military, financial and intellectual support from certain regional states", hinting both at Saudi and Pakistan backing for the group.
- On 14th February, 2019, the same day as the attack in Kashmir, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Commander Mohammad Ali Jafari issued a statement vowing revenge for the attack on his troops.
- He asked Pakistan to shut down all such groups targeting Iran, and said their actions were hurting Iran-Pakistan relations.

#### Concluding Remarks:

- There is no overt connection between the Jaish-e-Mohammed and the Jaish-ul-Adl, but both are Sunni extremist groups, seen as closely linked to the Taliban.
- The Indian security establishment believes the JuA is actually a front of the Lashkar-e-Taiba. and that both, LeT and JeM, are working with and learning from the Taliban, and the Haqqani network in Afghanistan.
- That both JeM and JuA should deploy the well-known Taliban method of suicide car bombings points to the complex jihadist networks working to destabilise the region. Iran and India both have reason to be nervous about Pakistan-aided US-Taliban talks.

### **12. Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen of J&K banned by Center**

#### Context

- The Union Home Ministry banned the Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen (TuM) under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for its alleged involvement in a series of terror acts.
- Set up in 1990s, TuM claims that it has been been fighting for "liberation of Kashmir".

#### Details

- TuM is involved in terrorism as it has committed and participated in various acts of terrorism in India and its members are getting financial as well as logistic support from their handlers based abroad.
- TuM has carried out many terrorist attacks and subversive acts such as grenade attacks, weapon snatching and supporting other terrorist outfits like the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen and Lashkar-e-Taiba in terms of financial and logistic support
- The terror group has also been engaged in radicalisation of youth for terrorist activities in India
  - \* The group is running terrorist training centres for Kashmiri youth.

# ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

## 1. Asian Elephant Alliance

- It is an umbrella initiative by five NGOs, has come together to secure 96 out of the 101 existing corridors used by elephants across 12 States in India.
- The joint venture is aiming at raising ₹20 million (₹187.16 crore) to secure the 96 remaining elephant corridors, old and new, in the next ten years.
- The alliance joined hands to raise the mammoth sum as money was the main constraint in securing the land.

### Why 96 out of 101?

- Out of 101 elephant corridors identified by the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) in its 2012-15 study, five of them — two in Meghalaya and one each in Assam, Kerala and Karnataka — have already been secured by the WTI with the help of conservation partners and the support of State governments.
- The new alliance is aiming to secure the 96 remaining elephant corridors in the next ten years by raising the money

## 2. Aspergillus Fumigatus

- The fungus is found as a dark grey, wrinkled cushion on damp walls or in microscopically small spores that blow through the air and cling to wallpaper, mattresses and floors
- It is found virtually everywhere on Earth

### Issues

- Healthy people usually have no problem if spores find their way into their body, as their immune defence system will put the spores out of action.
- However, the fungus can threaten the lives of people with a compromised immune system, such as AIDS patients or people who are immunosuppressed following an organ transplantation.
- Among other factors, it is gliotoxin — a potent mycotoxin — that is responsible for the pathogenicity of Aspergillus fumigatus
  - \* It was known that this substance has an immunosuppressive effect, which means that it weakens the activity of cells of the immune defence system

## 3. Bandipur, Wayanad forests face fire fury

### Context:

- There was a major fire outbreak in the forestlands of Bandipur. According to an alert from NASA's Fire Information for Resource Management System (NASA-FIRMS) 21 fires or hotspots were detected during the satellite overpass.

### About forest fires:

- Forest fire is a common hazard in forests.
- They pose a threat to the forest wealth and also to the flora and fauna, thus disturbing the bio-diversity and the ecology and environment of a region.

### Forest fires are caused by Natural causes as well as anthropogenic causes

- Natural causes- Many forest fires start from natural causes such as lightning which set trees on fire. However, rain extinguishes such fires without causing much damage. High atmospheric temperatures and dryness (low humidity) offer favorable circumstance for a fire to start.
- Anthropogenic causes- Fire is caused when a source of fire like naked flame, cigarette or bidi, electric spark or any source of ignition comes into contact with inflammable material.

### Fires are a major cause of forest degradation and have wide ranging adverse ecological, economic and social impacts, including:

- loss of valuable timber resources
- degradation of catchment areas
- loss of biodiversity and extinction of plants and animals
- loss of wildlife habitat and depletion of wildlife
- loss of natural regeneration and reduction in forest cover
- global warming
- loss of carbon sink resource and increase in percentage of CO<sub>2</sub> in atmosphere
- change in the microclimate of the area with unhealthy living conditions
- soil erosion affecting productivity of soils and production
- ozone layer depletion
- health problems leading to diseases
- Loss of livelihood for tribal people and the rural poor, as approximately 300 million people are directly dependent upon collection of non-timber forest products from forest areas for their livelihood.

Forest fires also benefit plants and trees:

Forest fires can also rejuvenate the soil and eliminate invasive species, which promote healthier and stronger plant species.



#### 4. **Bramble Cay Melomys**

##### Context

- Australia officially declared a Great Barrier Reef rodent extinct, making it the first mammal believed to have been killed off by human-induced climate change.
- The Bramble Cay melomys is also called the mosaic-tailed rat.

##### Details

- IUCN: Extinct
- This small coral cay is just about 340 metre long and 150m wide, off the north coast of Queensland, Australia.
- It's only known habitat was a small sandy island in far northern Australia where it has not been spotted in a decade.
- It was similar to the Cape York melomys except that it had some protein differences and a coarser tail caused by elevated scales

##### Causes

- Available data on sea level rise and weather events in the Torres Strait region "point to human induced climate change being the root cause of the loss of the Bramble Cay Melomys"

#### 5. **Emission levels rising faster in Indian cities than in China**

##### Context

- A study that analyzed the link between population density and emissions from transport, across India's districts said Urbanization is accelerating greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles in India at a faster than in China.

##### Details

- On an average, an Indian emitted about 20 kg per capita while commuting for work, with the highest (140 kg CO<sub>2</sub>) in Gurugram district (Haryana) and the lowest (1.8 kg CO<sub>2</sub>) in Shrawasti district (Uttar Pradesh)
- The experience in most Developed Countries was that urbanisation led to a reduction in emissions — more urbanisation meant shorter distances between the workplace and home and thereby, a preference for public transport.
- However this didn't effectively apply to Developing Countries

##### About Delhi

- Delhi had the highest commuting emissions per capita — a factor that also contributed to its high level of pollution — and the national capital region had 2.5 times higher commuting emissions than Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, and Hyderabad

- Delhi's higher socio-economic status and heavy reliance on private travel modes led to higher commuting emissions than in other megacities

##### Stats

- India's CO<sub>2</sub> emission grew by an estimated 4.6% in 2017 and its per-capita emission was about 1.8 tonnes.
- In spite of being the 4th largest emitter, India's per capita emissions are much lower than the world average of 4.2 tonnes.
- But those emissions have been growing steadily, with an average growth rate over the past decade of 6%, according to data from the Global Carbon Project.

#### 6. **Forest Rights Act 2006**

The Forest Rights Act was passed by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in 2006 and came into force in 2007.

- The FRA was introduced to address the "historic injustice" and decades of rights denied to the tribals and forest dwellers due to the colonial forest laws in the country.
  - \* For British rulers, forest was a source of revenue, which drove their timber trade. So, anyone who inhabited or used forest was termed an encroacher.
- Nodal agency for implementation is Ministry of Tribal affairs.

##### Eligibility criteria

- Eligibility to get rights under the Act is confined to those who "primarily reside in forests" and who depend on forests and forest land for a livelihood. Further, either the claimant must be a member of the Scheduled Tribes scheduled in that area or must have been residing in the forest for 75 years.

##### Rights Guaranteed

- right to live in forest
  - \* right to self-cultivation for livelihood
  - \* rights to waterbodies
- Use Rights: community right to use "minor forest produce" to include all non-timber forest produce of plant origin, including bamboo, brush wood, stumps, cane, tussar, ivory, cocoons, honey, wax, lac, tendu or kendu leaves, medicinal plants and herbs, roots, tubers and the like. (Grazing, fish and other products of water bodies also).
  - \* The Act also provides for diversion of forest land for public utility facilities managed by the Government, such as schools, dispensaries, fair price shops, electricity and telecommunication lines, water tanks, etc. with the recommendation of Gram Sabhas.

- Forest management rights - to protect forests and wildlife
- Relief and development rights - to rehabilitation in case of illegal eviction or forced displacement; and to basic amenities, subject to restrictions for forest protection
- The maximum limit of the recognizing rights on forest land is 4 hectares.

### Important Sections

Fore The forest rights to the ST members and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFD) are recognized and vested by the Central Government.

- Section 1(2) of the FRA, it extends to the whole of India except the State of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Under Section 3(1)(h), the rights of settlement and conversion of all forest villages, old habitations, unsurveyed villages and other villages in forest, whether recorded, notified, or not, into revenue villages have been recognized as one of the forest rights of forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers on all forest lands.
  - \* As per the provisions of the Act and the rules framed thereunder, the forest right related to conversion of forest villages into revenue villages is to be adjudicated by the Gram Sabha, Sub-Divisional Level Committee and the District Level Committee as per the laid down procedure
- Section 4(2) of the Act lays out a procedure by which people can be resettled from areas if it is found to be necessary for wildlife conservation.
  - \* The first step is to show that relocation is scientifically necessary and no other alternative is available; this has to be done through a process of public consultation.
  - \* The second step is that the local community must consent to the resettlement.
  - \* Finally, the resettlement must provide not only compensation but a secure livelihood

### How are rights recognized?

Section 6 of the Act provides a transparent three step procedure for deciding on who gets rights.

- First, the gram sabha (full village assembly, NOT the gram panchayat) makes a recommendation - i.e who has been cultivating land for how long, which minor forest produce is collected, etc.
  - \* The gram sabha plays this role because it is a public body where all people participate, and hence is fully democratic and transparent.
  - \* The gram sabha's recommendation goes through two stages of screening committees at the taluka and district levels.

- The district level committee makes the final decision
  - \* The Committees have six members - three government officers and three elected persons.
  - \* At both the taluka and the district levels, any person who believes a claim is false can appeal to the Committees, and if they prove their case the right is denied finally, land recognised under this Act cannot be sold or transferred.
- The state government finally recognizes and vests the forest rights.

### Concerns/ Non implementation of act

- Many studies reveal that forest land is being acquired by the government for development projects like mining and dams' construction by forging consent of tribes people or by ignoring it
- Public hearings were either not held or were conducted at far-off locations where affected tribespeople could not participate
- There were delays in approving the claims filed by the communities on the land where projects are proposed
- The government authorities have rejected more than 43 percent claims filed by the forest dwellers across India.
  - \* As many as 79 percent claims were rejected in Uttar Pradesh-highest among all states-followed by 67 percent claims in West Bengal, 63 percent in Maharashtra and 59 percent in Madhya Pradesh.
  - \* Most states do not explain why claims are rejected. Those that do, often cite as the most common the lack of documents to prove the claimant has been cultivating the land in question
- The forest bureaucracy fears that it will lose the enormous power over land and people that it currently enjoys, while
  - \* the corporates fear they may lose the cheap access to valuable natural resources that they currently have
- Forest departments have been forcing plantations on the land claimed by the forest dwellers
  - \* The FRA prohibits any activity, even by the government, on the land claimed by the forest dwellers without prior consent from the village council concerned. In most of the cases, no consent was taken before plantation.
- The village survey and interactions with key stakeholders revealed that illiteracy is a major reason for lack of understanding of the provisions of the Act among potential beneficiaries.

- \* The older generation of tribals aged above 40 years is mostly illiterate. Written communication materials or a mere two hours of interaction in a Gram Sabha meeting are inadequate to help them understand the various provisions.
- The Gram Sabha which is the major decision maker lacks infrastructure and other technical details required to maintain records
- Therefore lack of political will and non-responsive attitude of Bureaucracy has resulted in its abysmal implementation

### **Wildlife First & Ors v. Ministry of Forest and Environment & Ors.**

#### **Context:**

- The court has ordered the eviction of lakhs of people whose claims as forest dwellers have been rejected under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, or FRA.

#### **Questions before SC in relevance to this case**

- The constitutional validity of the FRA
  - \* Is this law acting as a land distribution scheme that will lead to the handing over of forests to tribals and forest dwellers
- Preservation of forests
  - \* Wildlife conservationists who fear that the law will make it impossible to create "involute spaces", or areas free of human presence, for the purposes of wildlife conservation

#### **Stats**

- The details regarding claims made under the FRA that were placed before the court by the petitioner in 2016 showed that of the 44 lakh claims filed before appropriate authorities in the different States, 20.5 lakh claims (46.5%) were rejected.

#### **What did the SC say?**

"If the claim is found to be not tenable by the competent authority, the result would be that the claimant is not entitled for the grant of any Patta or any other right under the Act but such a claimant is also either required to be evicted from that parcel of land or some other action is to be taken in accordance with law". The claimant cannot contest the decision of the authority, said the court.

In the present order of February 2019, the Supreme Court specifically directs governments in 21 States by name to carry out evictions of rejected claimants without further delay and report on or before July 12.

#### **Why are their claims being rejected?**

The most obvious one has to do with the meanings attached to the rejection of claims.

- According to the 2014 report of the High-Level Committee on Socio-Economic, Health and Educational Status of Tribal Communities in India, constituted by the Government of India (Xaxa Committee), 60% of the forest area in the country is in tribal areas — protected by Article 19(5) and Schedules V and VI of the Constitution. It says:
  - \* Their claims are being rejected without assigning reasons, or based on wrong interpretation of the 'Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFD)' definition and the 'dependence' clause, or simply for lack of evidence or 'absence of GPS survey'
  - \* The land is wrongly considered as 'not forest land', or because only forest offence receipts are considered as adequate evidence.
  - \* The rejections are not being communicated to the claimants, and their right to appeal is not being explained to them nor its exercise facilitated.
  - \* Lack of land documents and absence of connectivity to land is another reason

#### **Issues with Judgment**

The immediate result will be the forced eviction of over one million people belonging to the Scheduled Tribes and other forest communities.

- That this order denies the claims of citizens under special protection of the Constitution, viz. the Scheduled Tribes and other vulnerable communities
- Several activists have pointed to the inaction from the forest department officials in granting forest rights to these tribal and forest dwellers, issuing land rights documents and other identity cards.
- The question before us today centers on the responsibility of the Supreme Court in upholding constitutional claims and equal citizenship.

#### **Recommendation**

- Information dissemination campaigns should have several dimensions to reach out to the people.
  - \* They should have a mass communication approach i.e. reaching out through radio, television and other media to ensure that people receive the basic messages
- Provide clarity on the time limit for accepting FRA claims
  - \* Very few claims for community rights have been filed because of lack of clarity about the provisions of the Act and the procedure for filing applications.

- \* The Act does not specify a time limit for settling such claims, a fact most people are unaware of, and this message must be clearly conveyed to both the officials and the community.
- The FRA states that the community will have the right to preserve, protect and develop resources for sustainable use. There is a need to strengthen the capacity of Gram Sabhas to manage, protect, preserve and add value to community assets.
- District-level coordination for accessing resources/technical support
  - \* The community has strong local wisdom to manage community assets. However, it lacks scientific knowledge to undertake this function in a more efficient and appropriate manner.
  - \* In case of land reserved for public utilities like schools, anganwadis, playground, etc, it will be necessary to build coordination mechanisms with the concerned departments to allocate resources as well as provide technical guidance for construction and maintenance.

### Conclusion

- The SC as the guardian of Constitution has given few landmark judgments from right to privacy to decriminalization of homosexuality but the apathy right now is people for whom forests was their only home will be evicted and they will be on the streets there by are criminalized for no wrongdoing.

### Alternative mechanism

#### Why resettlement is a must?

- In the ideal scheme, as the Forest Rights Act envisages, forested areas and their biodiversity will be protected by communities, with individuals taking forest produce only for sustenance and livelihood. Such an approach is at odds with the colonial paradigm of forests being treated as a resource run by an opaque bureaucracy that replaced precious old-growth trees with monocultures such as teak.
- Today, forests have shrunk to about 5% of the land in terms of protected areas, while human pressures are growing: landscapes are alienated for resource exploitation, road and dam building, and a lot of wildlife is lost to poaching.
- Man-animal conflict is growing.
- Claims for tenure under the Forest Rights Act must therefore satisfy the primary test of whether they are legally unimpeachable, and even if they are, whether they would impose additional pressures on forests and wildlife. The answer in many areas may lie in resettlement.

### Nagarahole Example

- In some well-documented cases, such as in the Western Ghats, alternative land and cash compensation convinced tribals to move out of core areas.
- One example is that of the Nagarahole National Park, where the outcome has been good for both people and wildlife, as evidenced by the recovery of tiger density over three decades.
- State governments need to pursue such programmes in a humane and vigorous fashion. They must also come forward to declare critical wildlife habitats under the Act.
- This will aid in formulating resettlement schemes for tribal residents.

### SC stays eviction order of over a million forest dwellers across states

- The Supreme Court stayed its previous order to evict forest dwellers in over 16 states, in a major relief for over a million people affected by the order
- The court also sought information on whether the claims were rejected after following due process of law and if state-level committees had actually monitored the processes, as per the mandate of the Act.

## **7. Great Hornbill**

- Its IUCN status is Vulnerable
- It is listed in Appendix I of CITES.
- They are monogamous
- Hornbills are secondary cavity nesters and choose cavities formed in large trees for nesting

### Types of Cavity Nesters

- Primary Cavity-Nesting Birds: These birds excavate their own holes, such as woodpeckers that drill out chambers in suitable trees or ground-nesting species that may dig out burrows in riverbanks.
  - \* The labor to create a new cavity may take several days or weeks, depending on the birds' nesting needs.
- Secondary Cavity-Nesting Birds: These species take advantage of natural or abandoned cavities, or in some cases will usurp them from other birds through aggressive intrusion.
  - \* They may make minor adjustments to the cavity, such as adding or removing nesting material or changing the entrance but do not do substantial modifications.

### Threats

- Hunting, modified land use, ensuing forest fragmentation, felling of large trees with the potential for nesting, the loss of fruit bearing trees could also affect hornbill nesting habits.



**Context**

- Great Indian hornbills can adapt to modified habitat says study published in the journal Ornithological Science.
- Great hornbills may adapt to habitat modification provided that their key requirements for food and nesting are fulfilled in the habitats like coffee and forest fragments

**8. Hydrothermarchaeota**

- They are microbes living in extreme environments
- They thrive in the hot, oxygen-free fluids that flow through Earth's crust.
- These use carbon monoxide and sulfate as sources of energy - chemosynthesis.
- The researchers also found genetic evidence that Hydrothermarchaeota have the ability to move on their own.
  - \* Motility offers a valuable survival strategy for the extreme environment they call home, which has a limited supply of nutrients essential to life.

**Significance**

- These microbes may hold clues to the evolution of early life.
- Provides clues to the evolution of life on Earth, and potentially other planets.

**9. In Maharashtra, protecting a sanctuary****Why in the news?**

- An environment clearance to the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed train corridor has put the spotlight on the Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary (TCFS) in Mumbai.

**What happened?**

- A committee, chaired by Union Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan, has accorded wildlife clearance to the project which will encroach upon the TCFS and the Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Mumbai.
- It is important to note that the Sanjay Gandhi National Park, is home to leopards, in Mumbai.
- The proposal involves diverting 3.2 hectares of forestland from the TCFS and 97.5 hectares of land close to the boundary of the forest's protected area.

**Environmental Concerns Raised around the Project:**

- Ever since the project was conceived, there have been concerns about the impact of the construction, which will create enormous debris, on the sanctuary and the national park.
- The drilling of underground tunnels will lead to sound pollution which will disturb the tranquillity of the sanctuary.

- The project will entail cutting down several mangrove trees, a natural flood barrier. In the aftermath of the 2005 floods, environmentalists spoke out against the declining mangrove cover for land reclamation projects.

**A Closer Look at the Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary (TCFS)**

- The TCFS consists of 896 hectares of mangrove forests and 794 hectares of waterbodies.
- It is on the western bank of the creek, between the Airoli and the Vashi bridges connecting Mumbai and Navi Mumbai.
- It came into being in August 2015 and is Maharashtra's second marine sanctuary, after Malvan.
- The TCFS has been attracting flamingos in large numbers since 1994.
- By November every year, over 30,000 flamingos, along with their chicks, occupy the mudflats and the bordering mangroves.
- They stay till the month of May each year, after which most of them migrate to Bhuj in Gujarat for breeding, leaving a small resident population.
- Besides supporting a large congregation of flamingos, the area is a refuge for many resident and migratory birds.
- In all, 200 species have been reported, even globally threatened species such as the greater spotted eagle and others such as osprey.
- Other birds found here are the Pied avocet, western reef heron, black-headed ibis, common redshank, marsh sandpiper, common greenshank, curlew sandpiper, brown-headed gull, whiskered, gull-billed, Caspian and little terns.
- The white-bellied sea eagle and Eurasian marsh harrier have been spotted too.

**Are there any remedial measures?**

- While according permission, the National Board for Wildlife has laid several conditions.
- The project developers should provide an alternate site and funds for penal plantation of at least five times the number of mangrove plants anticipated to be lost.
- Because the project also encroaches upon the Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Borivili, developers have to construct under-passes to enable smooth movement of wild animals.
- An existing quarry would have to be closed and a natural stormwater drainage stream, passing through the culvert system, would have to be restored and kept free of any obstruction.

**Are these steps adequate?**

- In general, experts point out that any foray into wildlife sanctuaries is pernicious.
- The project plan of the corridor involves drilling a 7-km-long undersea tunnel to avoid damaging the forest and several of the mitigating measures could go a long way to encourage flamingos and other birds to continue visiting the sanctuary.
- However, environmentalists say they aren't confident that mitigation work will be taken seriously.
- In conclusion, the ongoing Mumbai Metro Project has adversely impacted the Aarey Forest and destroyed mangroves and wetlands in Uran and the Sion-Panvel Highway, according to ecologists.

**10. Indian Birding Fair****Context**

- 22nd Indian Birding Fair was organised on the banks of Man Sagar Lake.
- Wading birds such as little stint, green sandpiper, small pratincole, pied avocet, Jerdon's courser, black winged stilt and many more species were spotted on the occasion.

**Details**

- It is dedicated to the conservation of waders, which are tiny birds mostly confined to the edges of water and are observed feeding across moist surfaces.
- The fair was organised by the Tourism & Wildlife Society of India and supported by Jaipur Zoo and some philanthropic bodies and overseas organisations.

**Man Sagar Lake**

- It is an artificial lake, situated in Jaipur
- It is named after Raja Man Singh, the then ruler of Amer and a trusted general of Mughal Emperor Akbar, who had built it in 1610 AD by damming the Dravyavati river.
- A palace, Jal Mahal, is situated in the middle of the lake.

**11. Indus Dolphin****Context**

- Amarinder gives nod to declare endangered Indus River dolphin as state aquatic animal

**Details**

- IUCN: Endangered
- The Indus river dolphin is the national marine mammal of Pakistan
- Punjab has Black Buck as its state animal, and Baaj, also known as northern goshawk (*accipiter gentilis*), as the official state bird.

- They have adapted to life in the muddy river and are functionally blind. So they are also called the Blind River Dolphins because they don't have functional sight, and navigate and hunt prey including prawns, catfish and carp through echolocation using a biological sonar.

**12. International Conference on Energy and Environment****Context**

- The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, inaugurated the International Conference and Exhibition on Energy and Environment: Challenges and Opportunities (ENCO 2019) in New Delhi.

**Objective**

- The conference aims to deliberate and identify the R&D needs to innovate new techniques, technologies and applications for clean, safe, symbiotic sustenance of society, environment, energy and industries in post-2020 era.

**Details**

- This Conference is being organised by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research.
- It will provide a platform to the international community to disseminate and deliberate on various issues related to the subject and discuss several research and development opportunities and pathways that could lead to a prosperous, sustainable and secure energy future for the world.
- This conference will discuss the current trends and developments in topics like sustainable building materials, waste management, hydrogen production and storage, sustainable energy production, materials and manufacturing etc.

**13. International Dam Safety Conference****Context**

- The 5th International Dam Safety Conference-2019 was held in Bhubaneswar as a joint initiative of the Government of India, Government of Odisha and the World Bank under aegis of the on-going World Bank assisted Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP) as a part of institutional strengthening.

**About dam safety conference**

- Dam Safety Conferences are being organized as an annual event in different DRIP States in collaboration with the Implementing Agencies and leading academic institutes to provide a common platform for all stakeholders including non-DRIP States.
- The basic objective of these annual events is to give exposure to non-DRIP States as well as other stakeholders across the Country and World, to the best global practices and technological advancements to address the emerging dam safety challenges. As these events are being organised in various regional centres of the country, they also make aware the overseas delegates with culture and traditions of India.

**Status of dams in India**

- Globally India ranks third after China and the USA in terms of the number of large dams with 5264 large dams in operation and 437 large dams under construction.
- The total storage capacity of the impounded water by these dams is about 283 billion cubic meters (BCM).
- About 80% of our large dams are over twenty-five years old. About 209 dams are over 100 years old and were built in an era when design practices and safety considerations were much below the current design and safety norms.
- Dams play a vital role in water security and foster rapid and sustained growth in agricultural, rural, urban and industrial development, which have been key priorities for the Govt. of India since independence.

**About dam rehabilitation and improvement project (DRIP)**

- In April 2012, project started by Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation through Central Water Commission with World Bank assistance.
- The overall implementation, supervision, and coordination of DRIP have been entrusted to the Central Water Commission.
- The objective of DRIP is not to provide budgetary support for regular Operation and Maintenance (O & M), but to bring new initiatives in the dam safety area through technological advancements, novel rehabilitation construction materials, best global dam safety practices, capacity building of dam owning agencies as well as other selected stakeholders, cross-learning among partners, publication of technical guidelines and manuals, strengthening of the State and the Central Dam Safety Organisations etc.
- The project envisaged the rehabilitation and improvement of the projects located in seven States namely Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand.

**14. Megachile Pluto / Wallace's Giant Bee**

- It is a very large Indonesian Resin Bee
- It is the largest known living bee species
- IUCN: Vulnerable
- The bee (Megachile pluto), which lives in the Indonesian island region of North Moluccas, makes its nest in termite mounds, using its large fanglike mandibles to collect sticky resin to protect its home from the termites.
- Despite its conspicuous size, no one had observed Wallace's giant bee — discovered in the 19th century by British naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace and nicknamed the "flying Bulldog".

**15. Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary**

- It is located in South Eastern Goa
- It constitutes one of the vital corridors of the Western Ghats
- Netravali or Neturli is an important tributary of River Zuari, which originates in the sanctuary.
- Netravali WLS has two all-season waterfalls, namely Savri and Mainapi

**16. 'Status of trace and toxic metals in Indian rivers 2018'****Context**

- 42 rivers in India are polluted with at least two toxic heavy metals reveals this report published by Central Water Commission.
- Ganga, the national river, is polluted with five heavy metals—chromium, copper, nickel, lead and iron

**Details**

- Metal contamination in the environment is one of the persistent global environmental problems.
- This contamination is caused by continuous growth in mining, fertilizer, tannery, paper, batteries and electroplating industries which subsequently has shown noxious effects on human health around the globe. Unlike organic contaminants, heavy metals are nonbiodegradable and also carcinogenic.

**Concerns**

- This is worrying because a majority of Indians still use water directly from rivers for their domestic use.
- Consequently, concentrations of toxic metals in grains and vegetables grown in contaminated soils have increased at alarming rates.
- This poses a serious threat to humans and the environment because of its toxicity, non-biodegradability and bioaccumulation
- Heavy metals such as Zinc, Copper, Nickel, Mercury, Cadmium, Lead, Chromium and Arsenic tend to accumulate in organisms, which may lead to a reduction in species diversity.

**17. Thane Creek**

- It is an inlet along the shoreline of the Arabian Sea that isolates the city of Mumbai from the Indian mainland.
- It is Asia's largest creek with a length of 26 km.
- The creek is lined up with mangroves on both sides and plays host to a lot of species ranging from iconic flamingos
- The creek is divided into two parts.
  - \* The first part lies between Ghodbunder and Thane, a section from where the Ulhas river flows from the north of Mumbai Island to meet the Arabian Sea on the west.

- \* The second part of the waterway lies between the city of Thane and the Arabian Sea at Trombay, before the Gharapuri islands.

## 18. Thwaites Glacier

### Context

- A gigantic cavity about 1,000 feet tall is growing at the bottom of Thwaites Glacier in West Antarctica has been reported in a new NASA-led study of the disintegrating glacier.
- The findings highlight the need for detailed observations of Antarctic glaciers' undersides in calculating how fast global sea levels will rise in response to climate change.

### Details

- The cavity was revealed by ice-penetrating radar in NASA's Operation IceBridge, an airborne campaign beginning in 2010 that studies connections between the Polar Regions and the global climate.
- The researchers also used data from a constellation of Italian and German spaceborne synthetic aperture radars.
- These very high-resolution data can be processed by a technique called radar interferometry to reveal how the ground surface below has moved between images.

### How Scientists Measure Ice Loss?

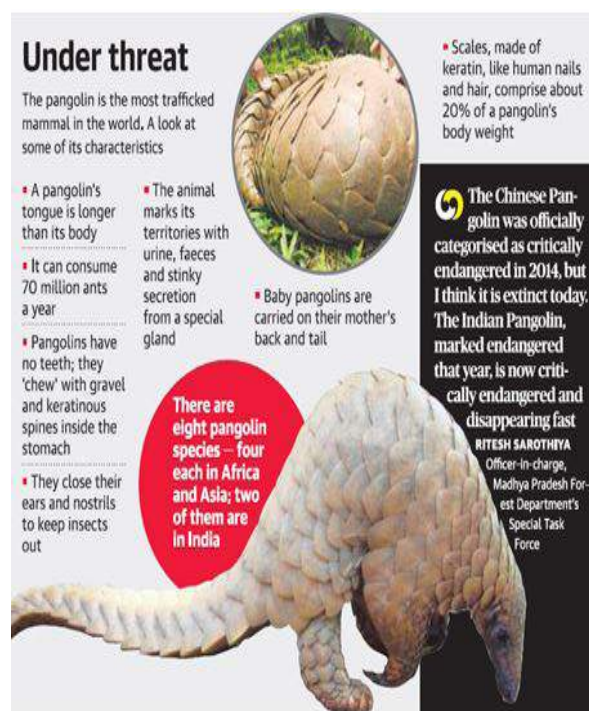
- There's no way to monitor Antarctic glaciers from ground level over the long term.
- Instead, scientists use satellite or airborne instrument data to observe features that change as a glacier melts, such as its flow speed and surface height.
- Another changing feature is a glacier's grounding line - the place near the edge of the continent where it lifts off its bed and starts to float on seawater.
  - \* Many Antarctic glaciers extend for miles beyond their grounding lines, floating out over the open ocean.

## 19. World Pangolin Day

- It is celebrated on the 3rd Saturday in February and in 2019 is on February 16.

### How are they Smuggled?

- Investigations by wildlife crime sleuths have revealed that almost 90% of smuggling of pangolin and pangolin scales is through the northeast.
- From elsewhere in India, the scales are smuggled out to China via Myanmar at Moreh in Manipur and Champhai in Mizoram. But there are numerous gateways along the border with Myanmar.



## 20. World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS)

- It is The Energy and Resources Institute's (TERI) annual flagship event.
- The WSDS brings together Nobel laureates, political leaders, decision-makers from bilateral and multilateral institutions, business leaders, high-level functionaries from the diplomatic corps, scientists and researchers, media personnel, and members of civil society; on a common platform to deliberate on issues related to sustainable development.
- The theme of the 2019 edition of the Summit is 'Attaining the 2030 Agenda: Delivering on Our Promise.'



# HEALTH ISSUES

## 1. Benchmarks for Training in Yoga

### Context

- Ministry of AYUSH and WHO are jointly organizing a Working Group Meeting for reviewing the WHO document "Benchmarks for Training in Yoga".

### Details of the meeting:

- The meeting is coordinated by Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga (MDNIY). WHO is developing Benchmarks Document for Training in Yoga as part of its global strategy to strengthen the quality, safety and effectiveness of Traditional and Complementary Medicine.
- Development of this benchmarks document is included in the Project Collaboration Agreement signed between World Health Organization (WHO) and Ministry of AYUSH on Cooperation in the field of Traditional and Complementary Medicine under WHO strategy covering the period 2014-2023.

### Objectives:

- The specific objectives of the meeting are to discuss the challenges in training of Yoga, to review & discuss the scope and structure of the working draft document, to review and discuss the contents of the working draft document, to identify the type, scope and criteria of information/data that are further required, and to discuss the working procedure and time frame for further development of the document.
- This benchmarks document will be used in evaluating Yoga therapy, identifying trends in utilization, developing payment structures for service models, establishing regulatory framework for Yoga practice.

### Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023:

- World Health Organization (WHO) has been launched Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023 to help health care leaders to develop solution that contribute to a broader vision of improved health and patient autonomy.
- The strategy has two key goals: to support Member States in harnessing the potential contribution of Traditional and Complementary Medicine (T&CM) to health, wellness and people-centered health care and to promote the safe and effective use of T&CM through the regulation of products, practice and practitioners.
- These goals will be reached by implementing three strategic objectives are 1) Building the knowledge base and formulating nation's policies; 2) Strengthening safety, quality and effectiveness through regulation; and 3) Promoting universal health systems.

## 2. Blood Regulation- Every drop matters

### Introduction

- A ready supply of safe blood in sufficient quantities is a vital component of modern health care.
- In 2015-16, India was 1.1 million units short of its blood requirements.
- Yet, in April 2017, it was reported that blood banks in India had in the last five years discarded a total of 2.8 million units of expired, unused blood (more than 6 lakh litres).

### Blood is considered to be a 'drug'

- The regulatory framework which governs the blood transfusion infrastructure in India is scattered across different laws, policies, guidelines and authorities.
- Blood is considered to be a 'drug' under the Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940.
- Therefore, just like any other manufacturer or storer of drugs, blood banks need to be licensed by the Drug Controller-General of India (DCGI).
- For this, they need to meet a series of requirements with respect to the collection, storage, processing and distribution of blood, as specified under the Drugs & Cosmetics Rules, 1945.
- Blood banks are inspected by drug inspectors who are expected to check not only the premises and equipment but also various quality and medical aspects such as processing and testing facilities.
- Their findings lead to the issuance, suspension or cancellation of a licence.

### National Blood Transfusion Council (NBTC)

- In 1996, the Supreme Court directed the government to establish the National Blood Transfusion Council (NBTC) and State Blood Transfusion Councils (SBTCs).
- The NBTC functions as the apex policy-formulating and expert body for blood transfusion services and includes representation from blood banks.
- However, it lacks statutory backing (unlike the DCGI), and as such, the standards and requirements recommended by it are only in the form of guidelines.

### Concerns

- This gives rise to a peculiar situation — the expert blood transfusion body can only issue non-binding guidelines, whereas the general pharmaceutical regulator has the power to license blood banks.
- The DCGI does not include any experts in the field of blood transfusion

- Drug inspectors do not undergo any special training for inspecting blood banks
- This regulatory dissonance exacerbates the serious issues on the ground and results in poor coordination and monitoring.
- It is especially odd given the existence of expert bodies such as the NBTC and National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), which are more naturally suited for this role.

#### Towards a solution

- The present scenario under the DCGI is far from desirable, especially given how regulating blood involves distinct considerations when compared to most commercial drugs.
- In order to ensure the involvement of technical experts who can complement the DCGI, the rules should be amended to involve the NBTC and SBTCs in the licensing process.
- Given the wide range of responsibilities the DCGI has to handle, its licensing role with respect to blood banks can even be delegated to the NBTC under the rules.
- This would go a long way towards ensuring that the regulatory scheme is up to date and accommodates medical and technological advances.

#### Conclusion

- A collaborative regulator can, more effectively, take the lead in facilitating coordination, planning and management.
- This may reduce the regional disparities in blood supply as well as ensure that the quality of blood does not vary between private, corporate, international, hospital-based, non-governmental organisations and government blood banks.

### **3. Celiac Disease (Gluten-Sensitive Enteropathy)**

- It is sometimes called sprue or coeliac
- Gluten is a family of proteins found in grains like wheat, rye, spelt and barley.
- It is an autoimmune disorder, and involves the body treating gluten as a foreign invader.
  - \* The immune system attacks the gluten, as well as the lining of the gut
  - \* This damages the gut wall, and may cause nutrient deficiencies, anemia, severe digestive issues and an increased risk of many diseases
- The most common symptoms of celiac disease are digestive discomfort, tissue damage in the small intestines, bloating, diarrhea, constipation, headache, tiredness, skin rashes, depression, weight loss
- Celiac disease is hereditary, meaning that it runs in families.

- There's no cure for celiac disease — but for most people, following a strict gluten-free diet can help manage symptoms and promote intestinal healing.

### **4. Crohn's disease**

- It is an Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD).
- It causes inflammation of your digestive tract, which can lead to abdominal pain, severe diarrhea, fatigue, weight loss and malnutrition.
- Inflammation caused by Crohn's disease can involve different areas of the digestive tract in different people.

#### Symptoms may include:

- Diarrhea
- Fever
- Fatigue
- Abdominal pain and cramping
- Blood in your stool
- Mouth sores
- Reduced appetite and weight loss
- Pain or drainage near or around the anus due to inflammation from a tunnel into the skin (fistula)

#### Causes

The exact cause of Crohn's disease remains unknown. Scientists believe that Crohn's disease is caused by a combination of these factors:

- Immune system problems
- Genetics
- Environmental factors

### **5. e-AUSHADHI portal**

#### Context:

- Ministry of State (IC) for AYUSH, launched the e-AUSHADHI portal, for online licensing of Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy drugs and related matters at New Delhi.

#### Significance:

- e-AUSHADHI portal is intended for increased transparency, improved information management facility, improved data usability and increased accountability.
- Timelines will be fixed for processing of application through this portal with SMS and e-mail status updates at each step of the process.
- It will provide real-time information of the licensed manufactures and their products, cancelled and spurious drugs, contact details of the concerned authority for specific grievances.

## 6. Global Digital Health Partnership Summit

### Context:

- Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare inaugurated the '4th Global Digital Health Partnership Summit'.

### Details:

- The global intergovernmental meeting on digital health is being hosted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in collaboration with World Health Organization (WHO) and the Global Digital Health Partnership (GDHP).
- The Ministerial Conclave discussed the implication of digital health interventions to health services accessibility, quality and affordability and explores ways of leveraging digital health technologies to strengthen the healthcare delivery systems globally.
- The Global Digital Health Partnership (GDHP) is an international collaboration of governments, government agencies and multinational organisations dedicated to improving the health and well-being of their citizens through the best use of evidence-based digital technologies.

### About health information platform:

- Platform which Health Ministry is in the process of establishing for interoperability amongst various health IT systems and a pan-India exchange of Electronic Health Records of citizens ensuring privacy, security, and confidentiality of data.
- The same is to be supplemented by a pan-Indian network of disease surveillance, tele-medicine and tele-radiology and tele-education.

## 7. India Pharma 2019 & India Medical Device 2019.

### Context:

- 4th edition of India's biggest Global Conference on Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices, inaugurated in Bengaluru.

### Theme:

- The theme of 'India Pharma 2019' is 'Enabling Quality Affordable Healthcare & that of 'India Medical Device 2019' is 'Accelerating Growth to Achieve Universal Healthcare'.

### Details:

- The event is being organized by Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP), Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, along with Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI).
- During the event, thematic sessions are being held on areas of Artificial Intelligence in Pharma, Import Export issues, Biologicals, Biopharmaceuticals and New Chemical Entities (NCEs) for the Pharmaceutical Sector.
- For the Medical Device Sector, thematic sessions are focusing on Diagnostics Ecosystem, Ease of Doing Business and Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Framework.
- Technical workshop by World Health Organization will help in addressing key challenges before the industry and will also provide tremendous business linkages to the participating companies.
- Annual India Pharma & Medical Device awards were conferred during the inaugural session for various categories including India Pharma Leader Award, India Pharma Innovation of Year Award, India Pharma Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Programme of the Year Award, India Medical Devices Company of the Year Award and India Pharma Swachhta Champion Award.

## 8. Kerala takes the lead in tackling trans-fat hazard

### Context:

- The Health Department of Kerala has drawn up an action plan to generate public awareness on the harmful effects of Trans Fatty Acids (TFA) in commercially available food items and to encourage the local food industry to meet the current statutory limits set for TFA.

## Health is wealth

### Action plan against unhealthy foods

#### Creating awareness

- Campaigns will be held on the ill-effects of trans fat and HFSS<sup>1</sup> foods at public places, hospitals & cinemas
- IEC<sup>2</sup> campaigns will rope in celebrities as ambassadors of healthy food

#### Enforcement activities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify manufacturers and suppliers of PHVOs<sup>3</sup> to bakeries and restaurants; collect samples</li> <li>Monitor retail sales of PHVOs and test samples of various brands</li> <li>Scientific sessions on TFA<sup>5</sup> and training on using TFA-free alternatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor oils and fats used for frying and making snacks; test samples</li> <li>Testing of a range of food products to assess trans fat content</li> <li>Meetings with bakers, restaurant owners and unorganised sector FBOs<sup>4</sup></li> <li>Preparing guidelines on action to be taken against violators</li> </ul>
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1. HIGH FAT, SUGAR, SALT  
2. INFORMATION, EDUCATION, COMMUNICATION  
3. PARTIALLY HYDROGENATED VEGETABLE OILS  
4. FOOD BUSINESS OPERATORS | 5. TRANS FATTY ACIDS

## 9. Leprosy

- Leprosy is caused by a bacterium, called *Mycobacterium leprae*
- It was first discovered by Hansen of Norway in 1873. Thus the disease is also called Hansen's disease.
- Leprosy is known to occur at all ages ranging from early infancy to very old age.
- Leprosy is curable and early treatment averts most disabilities. It is curable with Multi-Drug Therapy (MDT).

### How does it spread?

- Close, intimate and prolonged contact may be responsible for transmitting the disease.
- A large number of bacilli are discharged by infectious patient while talking, coughing and sneezing. These bacilli enter healthy person through respiratory tract.

### Leprosy is characterized by one or more of the following signs

- Hypopigmented patches.
- Partial or total loss of cutaneous sensation in the affected area.
- In advanced stages of the disease, there is the presence of nodules or lumps on the skin of the face and ears.
- Also, there is loss of fingers or toes, claw toes and various other deformities.
- Presence of thickened nerves.

### Why it gets tough for elimination?

- The incubation period of the disease, on average, is five years.
- In some cases, symptoms may occur within one year but can also take as long as 20 years to occur.
- This is the trouble with the elimination of leprosy. The long incubation period, and the social stigma attached to it, makes it a tough disease to eliminate.
- High population density, poor sanitation and inadequate access to nutrition are among the reasons for the number remaining high

### Stats

- There is rise in the number of recorded leprosy cases from 86,147 (in 2013-14) to 90,709 (2017-18)
- India was declared leprosy-free in 2005
- Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Maharashtra remain the 'hotspots' from which maximum prevalence is detected

### Initiatives

- Disease management efforts now include going down to the village level in what is called the "Active Seeking Mode" for cases, where health workers go from house to house and physically examine people for a leprosy patch.
- Leprosy Case Detection Campaign –
  - \* The campaign, spearheaded by the National Leprosy Elimination Programme, covered 149 districts across 19 states and mobilized almost 300000 health workers.
  - \* A record 320 million Indians have been screened in a door- to-door leprosy detection campaign, revealing thousands of "hidden" cases.
  - \* It involved volunteers from the Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) project.

### WHO's global strategy to end leprosy –

- The strategy aims to, by 2020,
  - \* reduce to zero the number of children diagnosed with leprosy and related physical deformities;
  - \* reduce the rate of newly-diagnosed leprosy patients with visible deformities to less than one per million; and
  - \* ensure that all legislation that allows for discrimination on the basis of leprosy is overturned.
- The new global strategy is guided by the principles of initiating action, ensuring accountability and promoting inclusivity.

## 10. Leptospirosis/ Weil's disease

- Leptospirosis is an infection caused by corkscrew-shaped bacteria called *Leptospira*
- Leptospirosis, a bacterial infection caused by 'spirochaete', is naturally carried by more than a dozen species of rodents, wildlife and domestic animals.
- Dogs, cattle and rabbits also transmit the infection.

### How does it spread?

- Rodents have an enormous ability to excrete large number of leptospirae in the urine, which is the main source of contamination incriminating human and animal leptospirosis.
- Infection can also occur through aborted fetuses, afterbirth or uterine discharges of cattle or the semen of an infected bull.
- It ends up in soil and water through their urine.
- If you're around soil or water where an infected animal has peed, the germ can invade your body through breaks in your skin, like scratches, open wounds, or dry areas.
  - \* It's hard to get it from another human, though it can be passed through sex or breastfeeding.



**Symptoms**

- Clinically, patients may suffer from non-specific symptoms like fever, body ache, vomiting, redness of eyes, cough and chest pain.
- Without treatment, Leptospirosis can lead to kidney damage, meningitis (inflammation of the membrane around the brain and spinal cord), liver failure, respiratory distress, and even death.
- Leptospirosis during pregnancy has adverse outcomes especially in first trimester and near-term mothers.

**11. National Deworming Programme**

- Soil-transmitted helminth infections are caused by different species of parasitic worms.
- STH is categorised among Neglected Tropical Diseases

**Soil-Transmitted Helminth (STH) Transmission:**

- Adult worms live in human intestines for food and survival and produce thousands of eggs each day.
- Eggs are passed in the faeces of infected person.
- Infected people who defecate outdoors spread worm eggs in the soil.
- Eggs contaminate the soil and spread infection in several ways:
  - \* Ingested through vegetables that are not carefully cooked, washed or peeled;
  - \* ingested from contaminated water sources;
  - \* Ingested by children who play in soil and then put their hands in their mouths without washing them.

**Causes**

- Open defecation, contaminated soil and water, uncooked food, and not following basic hygiene are the main reasons for transmission (worm larvae and eggs).
- If undiagnosed, worms persist in the body and lay thousands of eggs every day.

**STH infections**

- Worms cause a decline in iron, protein and vitamin A levels, leading to anaemia, a lower appetite, malnutrition, and diarrhoea.
- Impaired mental and physical & cognitive development, and reduced school participation.

**Stats**

- 2018 the World Health Organisation said approximately 1.5 billion people globally were at risk of contracting Soil-Transmitted Helminth (STH) infections — or roundworms.
- That is, 270 million pre-school children and 600 million children of school-age live in areas where these parasites are intensively transmitted.

- India accounts for a quarter of the world's STH-infected children; 64% of them are younger than 14 years.

Recognising this challenge, India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, in 2015, launched the National Deworming Programme under the National Health Mission, one of the largest fixed-day, mass drug administration public health programmes in the world, to reach out to over 230 million children by 2020.

**Details of Program**

- It is an initiative of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- The objective of National Deworming Day is to deworm all preschool and school-age children (enrolled and non-enrolled) between the ages of 1-19 years through the platform of schools and Anganwadi Centers in order to improve their overall health, nutritional status, access to education and quality of life.
- Primarily a school and Anganwadi-based initiative, this involves teachers and frontline health workers administering deworming tablets (Albendazole) for free.

**Significance of this initiative:**

- School-based mass deworming program is safe, cost-effective, and can reach millions of children quickly.
- Deworming has also been shown to reduce absenteeism in schools; improve health, nutritional, and learning outcomes; and increase the likelihood of higher-wage jobs later in life.

**Concerns**

- First, teachers and frontline workers are overburdened and under-incentivised to participate in the programme.
  - \* Thus, the engagement of community volunteers, youth and the village health and sanitation committees needs to be planned.

- Second, there needs to be special focus on out-of-school children and adolescents through intensified outreach and also using peer-group and youth-group networks to administer the drug.
- Third, private schools need to raise awareness among parents and increase participation.
- Finally, the State departments (of health, women and child development, and education) must coordinate better and improve drug procurement and the timely delivery of drugs.

#### Way forward

- The reach of mass drug administration is commendable, but what India needs to do on a war footing is to focus on preventive chemotherapy, improved sanitation facilities, enable access to clean/safe drinking water, and enable hygiene awareness.
  - \* The Swachh Bharat Mission has to a large extent addressed the issue of open defecation in many States, but we need to ensure that this rigour is maintained.
- Issues of clean drinking water, safe faecal sludge management, and safe waste disposal and recycling need to be prioritised.
- Alternatively, the problem of STH infections should also be considered as a part of India's urbanisation and city-planning mandates.

### **12. NDM-1 gene found in pristine Arctic**

#### Context

- In a significant find in the global spread of Multi-Drug Resistant (MDR) bacteria, scientists have found a 'superbug' gene - first detected in New Delhi over a decade back - in one of the last 'pristine' places on Earth, the Arctic, which is some 12,870 km away.
- Soil samples taken in Svalbard have now confirmed the spread of blaNDM-1 (New Delhi Metallo-beta-lactamase-1) into the High Arctic.

#### NDM 1

- The enzyme that makes bacteria drug-resistant got 'New Delhi' in its name because it was first detected in a Swedish patient of Indian origin who travelled to India in 2008.
- This Antibiotic-Resistant Gene (ARG), originally found in Indian clinical settings, conditionally provides MDR in microorganisms
- NDM-1 was first identified in New Delhi and coded by the resistant gene blaNDM-1.
- Strains that carry blaNDM-1 were first found in clinical settings in 2008, but by 2010, blaNDM-1 was found on water surfaces in Delhi.
- This gene gave bacteria resistant to a class of antibiotics known as Carbapenems, which doctors generally use as a last resort to treat bacterial infections.

#### Details

- In the study, the researchers analyzed, the DNA extracted from soil cores in Spitsbergen, a Norwegian island in the Arctic Ocean. They found a total of 131 antibiotic resistance genes, many of which did not appear to be of local origin.
- Carried in the gut of animals and people, blaNDM-1 and other medically-important ARGs were found in Arctic soils that were likely to spread in the faecal matter of birds, other wildlife and human visitors to the area.
- Encroachment into areas like the Arctic reinforces how rapid and far-reaching the spread of antibiotic resistance has become, confirming solutions to antibiotic resistance must be viewed in global rather than just local terms
- What humans have done through excess use of antibiotics on global scales is accelerate the rate of evolution, creating a new world of resistant strains that never existed before

#### Superbugs

- Superbugs are strains of bacteria that are resistant to several types of antibiotics.
- Antibiotics are among the most commonly prescribed drugs for people. They're also given to livestock to prevent disease and promote growth.
- Antibiotics are effective against bacterial infections, such as strep throat and some types of pneumonia, diarrheal diseases, and ear infections. But, these drugs don't work at all against viruses, such as those that cause colds or flu.
- Unfortunately, many antibiotics prescribed to people and to animals are unnecessary. And the overuse and misuse of antibiotics helps to create drug-resistant bacteria.

#### Svalbard

- It is a Norwegian archipelago in the Arctic Ocean
- Administratively, the archipelago is not part of any Norwegian county, but forms an unincorporated area administered by a governor appointed by the Norwegian government.
- Kongsfjorden is an inlet on the west coast of Spitsbergen, an island which is part of the Svalbard archipelago in the Arctic Ocean.

### **13. One Health India Conference 2019**

#### Context:

- One Health India Conference, 2019 was inaugurated in New Delhi.

**Objectives of conference:**

- The main objective of the conference is to formulate a roadmap for the response, preparedness, and management of current regional, national and global health challenges using a One Health collaborative approach.
- It is known that 60% of human diseases are of animal origin and many of them have developed resistance to major antibiotics in nature and share the ecosystems they live and infect animal and humans.
- Therefore, the conference deliberations are focused on identifying needs and opportunities and developing a strategy map to addressing major human and animal diseases of concern including Brucellosis, Tuberculosis, Anthrax, Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), together with biosafety, biosecurity, burden of disease and inter-sectoral collaboration considerations.

**Details of the conference:**

- The conference plans to launch India's new One Health Initiative – an inter-sectoral approach to tackling the most urgent health threats in India as well as in low and middle income countries across South and South East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Background:**

- India is among the top geographical hotspots where zoonotic diseases are major public health issue causing high burden of morbidity and mortality.
- High priority zoonotic diseases like Brucellosis have been emerged from Haryana to Goa, incidence and prevalence of occupational zoonotic disease like Anthrax have affected human health throughout.
- Similarly, Bovine tuberculosis (bTB) is a chronic disease of cattle that impacts productivity and represents a major public health threat and is considered endemic in India.
- Further, being among the highest bacterial disease burden in the world, antibiotics, therefore, have a critical role in limiting morbidity and mortality and consequently Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) has huge implications for India.

**14. Price Monitoring and Research Unit (PMRU)****Context:**

- Kerala has become the first State to set up a price monitoring and research unit (PMRU) to track violation of prices of essential drugs and medical devices under the Drugs Price Control Order (DPCO).

**Background**

- Pharma companies have been accused of overcharging prices of drugs in the scheduled category fixed by the DPCO and those outside its ambit too.

- The suggestion to set up PMRUs was made against the backdrop of the lack of a field-level link between the NPPA and the State Drugs Controllers and State Drug Inspectors to monitor drug prices.

**Function**

- The new watchdog will offer technical help to the State Drug Controllers and the NPPA to monitor notified prices of medicines, detect violation of the provisions of the DPCO, look at price compliance, collect test samples of medicines, and collect and compile market-based data of scheduled as well as non-scheduled formulations.

**Structure**

- The State Health Secretary would be the Chairman of the society and the Drugs Controller would be its member secretary.
- Its members include a State government representative, representatives of private pharmaceutical companies, and those from consumer rights protection fora.
- The society would also have an executive committee headed by the Drugs Controller.

**15. Rodenticides**

- Rodenticides also called rat poison, are typically non-specific pest control chemicals made and sold for the purpose of killing rodents.
- Rodents include not only rats and mice, but also squirrels, woodchucks.
- They can damage crops in some cases cause ecological damage.

**Context:**

- The number of children getting admitted to the Kozhikode Medical College Hospital after consuming dangerous rodenticides is increasing allegedly because of the reckless handling of the poisonous material by parents at home.

**Concerns**

- Rodenticides are available in the market without proper labelling
  - \* Product purchased from the market by parents were not properly covered or labelled for safety.
  - \* Some products did not have explanations about usage and the quantity that needs to be used leaving it open to customer whims with lack of knowledge on side effects.
- Some of the children consumed food items which were kept outside for attracting rodents.
- Children have used Rodenticides in paste form with high content of yellow phosphorous for brushing teeth and died.

- Many are taking children to hospital after several days of consumption.

#### **Recommendations**

- Children have the tendency to imitate their parents. Parents should never have medicine in front of children as a basic safety measure
- They should be kept in a place where it is not accessible for the children to use them
- Rodenticides in paste form should be banned or controlled in the market for ensuring better safety of children.

### **16. Regulating drug prices**

#### **Larger Background:**

- NPPA (National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority) is an organization of the Government of India which was established, inter alia, to fix/revise the prices of controlled bulk drugs and formulations and to enforce prices and availability of medicines in the country, under the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 1995.
- The organization is also entrusted with the task of recovering amounts overcharged by manufacturers for the controlled drugs from the consumers.
- It also monitors the prices of decontrolled drugs in order to keep them at reasonable levels.

#### **Functions of National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority:**

- To implement and enforce the provisions of the Drugs (Prices Control) Order in accordance with the powers delegated to it.
- To deal with all legal matters arising out of the decisions of the Authority;
- To monitor the availability of drugs, identify shortages, if any, and to take remedial steps;
- To collect/maintain data on production, exports and imports, market share of individual companies, profitability of companies etc, for bulk drugs and formulations;
- To undertake and/or sponsor relevant studies in respect of pricing of drugs/ pharmaceuticals;
- To recruit/appoint the officers and other staff members of the Authority, as per rules and procedures laid down by the Government;
- To render advice to the Central Government on changes/revisions in the drug policy;
- To render assistance to the Central Government in the parliamentary matters relating to the drug pricing.

#### **What has been the impact of market-based pricing?**

- It is important to note that the largest share of out-of-pocket expenditure on health is due to medicines (approximately 70%, according to the NSSO).
- This is a major access barrier to healthcare, especially for the poor.

- Health experts have criticised the Drug (Prices Control) Order (DPCO), 2013 for doing little to increase the affordability of medicines.
- Data from the Department of Pharmaceuticals show that the majority of medicines have price reductions of 20% or less.

#### **How are prices regulated?**

- The DPCO controls the prices of all essential medicines by fixing ceiling prices, limiting the highest prices companies can charge.
- The National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) is drawn up to include essential medicines that satisfy the priority health needs of the population.
- The list is made with considerations of safety, efficacy, disease prevalence and the comparative cost-effectiveness of medicines, and is updated periodically by an expert panel set up for this purpose under the aegis of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- This list forms the basis of price controls under the DPCO.

#### **What is the mechanism for price capping?**

- The NLEM 2015 contains 376 medicines on the basis of which the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has fixed prices of over 800 formulations using the provisions of the DPCO.
- However, these formulations cover less than 10% of the total pharmaceutical market.
- The DPCO follows a market-based pricing mechanism. The ceiling price is worked out on the basis of the simple average price of all brands having at least 1% market share of the total market turnover of that medicine.

#### **Have any other methods been used?**

- Prior to 2013, the DPCO followed a cost-based pricing mechanism that was based on the costs involved in manufacturing a medicine along with reasonable profit margins.
- Health experts have argued that this policy resulted in comparatively lower prices than the current market-based policy.
- Since the implementation of the DPCO, 2013, the NPPA has made certain departures from the market-based pricing mechanism, which was found to be insufficient for ensuring affordability.
- This has been done through the use of special powers to act in public interest under Paragraph 19 of the DPCO, to regulate the prices of cardiac stents and knee implants.
- These moves have brought about dramatic price reductions: 85% in the case of stents and 65% in the case of knee implants.



**What about cancer drugs?**

- Experts point out that currently, the government is planning to cap the trade margins for highly priced drugs for cancer and rare diseases to bring down their prices.
- As a matter of fact, they further opine that this move is in the wake of recent amendments to the DPCO that exempted patented medicines and rare disease drugs from price controls.
- However, they also claim that the trade margin capping will not sufficiently bring down prices.
- As a matter of fact, some of them urge the government to take serious policy measures to ensure true affordability such as through price controls, implementation of the national rare disease policy and the use of legal flexibilities under patent law.

**17. The correct prescription (The legality of e-pharmacies)****Why in the news?**

- Amid a slew of conflicting judicial decisions from different High Courts, the legality of e-pharmacies continues to be questioned by various trade associations such as the All India Organisation of Chemists and Druggists (AIOCD).
- It represents 8.4 lakh pharmacists who run the brick and mortar pharmacies in neighbourhoods across India.

**Editorial Analysis:**

- It is important to note that E-pharmacies, which operate through websites or smartphone apps on the Internet, offer medicines for sale at a discount of at least 20% when compared to traditional pharmacists, with the added convenience of home delivery of medicines to one's doorstep.
- For scheduled drugs, patients can submit photographs of prescriptions while placing orders.

**What is the legal status of these e-pharmacies?**

- Despite operating in India for at least four years now, the legal status of these e-pharmacies is not clear because the government is yet to notify into law draft rules that it published in 2018.

**Who are opposing e-pharmacies?**

- The fiercest opponents of e-pharmacies are trade associations of existing pharmacists and chemists.
- They argue that their livelihoods are threatened by venture capital backed e-pharmacies and that jobs of thousands are on the line.
- Apart from these obvious arguments, these trade associations also spin imaginary tales of how e-pharmacies will open the door to drug abuse and also the sale of sub-standard or counterfeit drugs, thereby threatening public health.

- Experts point out that there is enough evidence on record to demonstrate how existing pharmacies contribute generously to drug abuse and sale of sub-standard medicine. There is no reason to suspect that e-pharmacies are going to worsen the situation in anyway.

**Cartelisation: A Perspective**

- Experts point out that the more prudent way of looking at the entry of e-pharmacies is competition and the resultant effect it will have on lowering the price of medicine for Indian patients.
- Viewed from this perspective, there is virtually no doubt that e-pharmacies should be allowed to operate because the history of India's trade associations of pharmacists is one of rampant, unabashed cartelisation that has resulted in an artificial inflation of medicine prices.

**How Cartelisation takes place:**

- In a fully functional, competitive market, pharmacists would compete with each other for business. This competition could happen in the form of discounts or improving operational efficiency. For example, if two retailers buy a medicine from a wholesaler at ₹50 and the maximum retail price of the drug is ₹75, they are free to sell it at ₹70 or ₹65 or even ₹51.
- The seller with the lower price gets more customers and can make more profits. However, if both sellers enter into an agreement with each other to sell the drug at ₹75 and they also clearly define the geographical area within which they are operating, they both make higher profits but at the cost of the patient who now has to pay higher prices.
- This practice of two competitors colluding to fix the sale price and area of operation is called cartelisation, and is illegal under India's Competition Act.
- The premise of this law is that a free market is efficient only if all sellers are competing with each other to offer the lowest price to the customer.

**Complaints the Competition Commission of India (CCI) has had to deal with:**

- It is important to note that over the last decade, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) has had to deal with several complaints alleging that trade associations of pharmacists are providing platforms for cartelisation where pharmacists are basically rigging the market.
- In simple terms, this means that pharmacists, who should otherwise be competing with each other to offer lower prices for their customers, prefer to enter into agreements with each other to fix the price at which they will sell medicines to patients.
- Once all parties are on the same page, there is no reason to compete with each other and reduce prices.

- A second, more insidious strategy is the practice of requiring pharmaceutical companies to apply for a no-objection-certificate (NOC) from the regional trade association before they appoint new stockists in a region to sell a particular drug. This has the effect of artificially restricting competition in certain markets because more stockists mean more competition.
- By creating such artificial, extra-legal barriers to the free trade of medicines within India, these trade associations create huge distortions in the Indian market. It is suspected that these practices continue despite multiple restraining orders by the CCI.
- In its recent policy note on "Making markets work for affordable healthcare", published in October 2018, the CCI noted, "One major factor that contributes to high drug prices in India is the unreasonably high trade margins." One of the culprits for this phenomenon identified by the CCI was "self-regulation by trade associations [which] also contributes towards high margins as these trade associations control the entire drug distribution system in a manner that mutes competition".

### **18. Will Ayushman Bharat hurt the spirit of cooperative federalism?**

#### **Introduction**

- The Seventh Schedule of the Constitution makes States responsible for hospital services.
- The States have their own schemes to provide financial risk protection to those seeking medical relief.
- West Bengal, Telangana, Delhi and Odisha not joining Ayushman Bharat, the question arises whether the scheme is hurting the idea of cooperative federalism.
- Based on the ongoing centrally sponsored scheme, the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana, the Central government launched an improved version in 2018 called the National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS) for a sum assured of ₹5 lakh per family per year.

#### **Concerns**

- The insistence to prefix Ayushman Bharat to existing State names and the despatch of a personalised letter to 7.5 crore families with only the Prime Minister's photograph were seen as attempts to attribute the entire credit to the current administration, though State governments are equal partners — funding 40% of the scheme, bearing the responsibility of its implementation and covering double the number of beneficiaries.
- Given that the Central government transfers funds to States through the Finance Commission, Central Sector Schemes and the Centrally Sponsored Schemes, it is expected of the National Health Agency (NHA) to build an institutional architecture, standardise procedures, costs and access all data for effective monitoring.

- \* This is important as it is accountable to Parliament and the Comptroller and Auditor General for the proper utilisation of allocated funds. The NHA has, therefore, come up with comprehensive and detailed guidelines for the contracting and outsourcing of the job to commercial companies that function as Third Party Administrators (TPA).
- \* 1. It has given guidelines to contract companies to detect fraudulent claims are also being put in place.
- \* 2. The architecture includes an intermediary State Health Society to be established by the state governments at the state level
- \* 2.1 The advantage of the above approach is two-fold. One, it enhances the implementation and institutional capacity for monitoring and administering several aspects of the programme at decentralised levels.
- \* 2.2 It also helps the NHA to keep a close watch on the utilisation of the funds released and the performance in terms of depth and quality at the district level in accordance with the guidelines laid down.

- The NHA's approach does not appear to be built on consensus.
  - \* Its model consists of outsourcing the vital functions of pricing services, pre-authorisations, scrutiny of bills, grievance redressal, and fraud detection to private companies and third-party administrators.
  - \* This may increase administrative costs from the current 6% to 30%, as seen in the Medicare scheme of the U.S.
  - \* The TPAs are commercial companies, most probably foreign-owned.
  - \* 1. The relational power between them and the local health administration, their control over data and their deep pockets can give rise to impulses and tendencies that can harm the building of a balanced health system.

#### **Private Sector involvement may increase costs**

- The policy of providing fiscal incentives to the private sector to establish hospitals in deficit areas without insulating government-owned facilities or the small and marginal hospitals that together provide 95% of hospital care will tighten the grip of corporates on secondary and tertiary markets.
- This will result in cost escalations — more so because of the rapid consolidation and aggregation of tertiary hospitals by foreign financial conglomerates and private equity funding agencies, impacting prices, access to tertiary care and the very sustainability of the NHPS.

- Alternative Mechanism
  - \* One move can be such that the central government releases funds to the state governments and allows the latter to design and implement the programme.
  - \* Under such a model of financing, the release of funds would be based on achieving certain milestones and outcomes.
  - \* This is, simply put, the way Canada funds its states. Such an approach would then challenge the state governments to select the best way of implementation – whether through public hospitals or the private sector, community health insurance programmes or commercial or both, outpatients alongside, and hospitalisation, the stepping up of primary and referral pathways to reduce hospitalisation and so on.
  - \* The design would be contextualised for the states' level of development, resource base and epidemiological status and, most importantly, one that is affordable and in keeping with its own level of development and capacity.
  - \* In such a model, the state would be an active player: it would have a higher level of ownership and accountability, a greater scope to innovate and scale up more rapidly with a far greater variety and combination of approaches to achieve the laid down outcomes and targets.
  - \* On the flip side, there is enough evidence to suggest that central grants are not utilised on time, and delays, diversions to other schemes and misuse or inappropriate use are not uncommon and this should be avoided.
- Conclusion
  - \* The issues and questions raised in this article should be ones that ought to be argued, debated and discussed thoroughly by our lawmakers as Ayushman Bharat and its design are going to be fundamentally changing the very nature of the health system

# ART AND CULTURE

## 1. Bharat Rang Mahotsav

- It was established two decade ago by the National School of Drama
- Originally a national festival showcasing the work of the most creative theatre workers in India, it has evolved to international scope, hosting theatre companies from around the world
- It is now the largest theatre festival of Asia.

### National school of drama

- The National School of Drama is one of the foremost theatre training institutions in the world and the only one of its kind in India.
- It was set up by the Sangeet Natak Akademi as one of its constituent units in 1959. In 1975, it became an independent entity and was registered as an autonomous organization under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860, fully financed by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India.
- Training in the School is highly intensive and is based on a thorough, comprehensive, carefully planned syllabus which covers every aspect of theatre and in which theory is related to practice. As a part of their training, students are required to produce plays which are then performed before the public.

## 2. Church of St. Augustine

- It is a church complex located in Old Goa.
- The church was completed in 1602 and is part of the World Heritage Site of UNESCO, Churches and convents of Goa
  - \* Churches and convents of Old Goa is the name given by UNESCO to a set of religious monuments located in Goa Velha (or Old Goa)

## 3. Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha

- It was established in the year 1918 by our beloved Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi with the sole aim of propagating Hindi in southern states.
- The first Pracharak was none other than Devadoss Gandhi son of Mahatma Gandhi.
- "Hindi Prachar" was a movement that emerged as part of Freedom Movement and the leaders who led the nation to "FREE INDIA" felt the necessity of making a single Indian Language the National Language, and through that language unify the people and thereby intensify National Integration.
- The organisation was established by Annie Besant with support from Mahatma Gandhi, who became the founder president of the Sabha, who held the post till his death.

- The headquarters are located at Thanikachalam Road, T. Nagar, Chennai.
- The four regional headquarters are at:
  - \* Andhra Pradesh - Hyderabad
  - \* Karnataka - Dharwad
  - \* Kerala - Ernakulam
  - \* Tamil Nadu - Tiruchirappalli

### Context

- The President of India unveiled a statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha in Chennai.

## 4. Ghumot

- It is an indigenous earthen drum
- It was once banned due to the use of monitor lizard skin in its making, will soon be notified as a "heritage instrument of Goa"
- Monitor lizards are classified as an endangered wildlife species listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 because of which the ghumot was banned by the state forest department.
- It is a percussion instrument played during Ganesh Chaturthi 'aarties' (prayers), is fashioned as a designed clay pot, with the skin of the monitor lizard (locally known as 'gaar') stretched taut across the pot's mouth, forming a drumhead.

## 5. Guru Padmasambhava

- He is widely venerated as a "second Buddha" by adherents of Tibetan Buddhism
- In Tibetan, Guru Padmasambhava is generally referred to as Guru Rinpoche, which means "precious master."

### Context

- Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik unveiled a 19-foot-high statue of Guru Padmasambhava, the founder of Tibetan Buddhism, at Jirang in Gajapati district

### Details

- This 29 tonne stone statue is placed in the middle of 'Padma Sarovar', a large tank near Padmasambhava Mahavihara, the largest Buddhist monastery in eastern India.
- Historians claim that Guru Padmasambhava, also known as second Buddha, was born and brought up in Odisha before he left for Tibet.



**6. International Mother Language Day (IMLD)**

- It is a worldwide annual observance held on 21 February
- It has been observed every year since February 2000 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism.
- The idea to celebrate International Mother Language Day was the initiative of Bangladesh
- In Bangladesh the 21 February is the anniversary of the day when Bangladeshis fought for recognition for the Bangla language

**7. Nilavembu Kudineer**

- It is an archaeological site in Puducherry
- Significant findings at Arikamedu include numerous Indo-Pacific beads, which facilitated fixing the period of its origin.
- it was a French colonial town
- It is located on the bank of the Ariyankuppam River

**8. Vangchhia's ancient art of holding water in rock amid Mizoram's hills**

- Vangchhia is a village in the Champhai district of Mizoram bordering Myanmar
- It is a revered site for the locals who call it the Kawtchhuah Ropuithe or the Great Gateway
- The site, measuring about 45 sq km and located 260 km from Aizawl, has yielded pictographs etched on large stone slabs, menhirs — large standing stones — and a necropolis — a large cemetery — among other artefacts.
- The area is part of the Lower Himalayas, and has rows of steep hills largely made up of various kinds of sandstone shading from light grey to blackish.

**Water pavilion and strategically drilled holes**

- Most of the ethnic groups that inhabited these areas were at war, and the possibility of raiders poisoning water reservoirs or stealing water. This made locals devise a strategy to dissuade those not familiar with the topography
- They came up with a Water harvesting technique which could sustain local populations for at least a year.
- The archaeologists say that locals strategically drilled holes — between one foot and one metre across — spread over several sandstone slopes.
  - \* The grey sandstone is softer and home to the holes while the harder black rock is used for menhirs
- They trapped rainwater flowing down the slopes by making holes to let the water flow in and be stored in the fissures and veins of the rocks.

**9. Victoria Memorial**

- When was it built: Built between 1906 to 1921
- Who built it: Conceptualized by George Curzon, Viceroy of India
- Where is it located: Kolkata, West Bengal, India
- Why was it built: To commemorate Queen Victoria
- Architectural Style: Indo-Saracenic revivalist style

**10. Tagore Award**

- Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony was instituted by the Government of India from 2012 recognizing the contributions made by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore to humanity at large with his works and ideas, as part of the Commemoration of his 150th Birth Anniversary in 2012, for promoting values of Cultural Harmony.
- It is awarded annually
- It carries an amount of Rs. One Crore (convertible to foreign currency), a citation in a Scroll, a Plaque as well as an exquisite traditional handicraft / handloom item.
- This annual award is given to individuals, associations, institutions or organizations for their outstanding contribution towards promoting values of Cultural Harmony.
  - \* The Award is open to all persons regardless of nationality, race, language, caste, creed or gender.
- Normally, contributions made during ten years immediately preceding the nomination are considered.
  - \* Older contributions may also be considered if their significance has become apparent only recently.

**Context**

- President of India will present the Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony to Shri Rajkumar Singhajit Singh; Chhayanaaut (a cultural organization of Bangladesh); and Shri Ram Sutar Vanji for the years 2014, 2015 & 2016 respectively at Pravasi Bhartiya Kendra, New Delhi

# DISASTER MANAGEMENT

## 1. Cyclone Pabuk

- Pabuk originated over the Gulf of Thailand and its neighbourhood
- Pabuk is a name given by Laos and means a 'big fresh water fish'.

## 2. Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar

### Context

- Government has instituted an annual award titled Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar. The award is to be announced every year on 23rd January on the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.

### Details

- In the aftermath of any disaster, many organisations and individuals work silently but effectively to alleviate suffering of the affected population.
- Their immense contribution and selfless service to humanity often goes unacknowledged. Keeping this in view, Prime Minister, has advised to institute a National Award so as to recognise the efforts of such organisations and individuals.
- All Indian Citizens and organizations, who have excelled in areas of Disaster Management; like Prevention, Mitigation, Preparedness, Rescue, Response, Relief, Rehabilitation, Research/Innovations or Early Warning are eligible for the Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar.

# GOVERNANCE

## 1. All India Citizens Survey of Police Services

### Context

- To strengthen good governance practices in the working of police, the Ministry of Home Affairs has commissioned the Bureau of Police Research and Development to conduct "All India Citizens Survey of Police Services".

### Details

- The pan-India survey will be conducted through the National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi.
- The survey is aimed at understanding public perception about the force, level of non-reporting of crime, timeliness and quality of police response and action, and to assess citizens' perception and experience about women and children's safety.
- The outcome of the survey is expected to bring out useful suggestions for stakeholders in formulating and implementing policy responses and changes in the functioning of police.

## 2. Inclusive Internet Index 2019

- The Inclusive Internet Index is commissioned by Facebook and conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit
- The index provides a rigorous benchmark of national-level Internet inclusion across four categories: Availability, Affordability, Relevance and Readiness.
- The aim of the Inclusive Internet Index is to provide researchers and policymakers with the information they need to enable the beneficial use of the Internet, irrespective of age, gender, location or background

### Details

- Men still have more Internet access than women globally but low and lower middle income countries narrowed the gender gap in 2018
- Web accessibility standards also improved globally, led by low and lower middle income countries.
- Concerns about online privacy remain high, and trust in information from governments on the Internet has retreated in the West.

### Ranking

- India has been ranked 47th in the overall "Inclusive Internet Index 2019" score while Sweden topped the chart, followed by Singapore and the US

## 3. National e-Governance Awards, 2019

### Context

- With a view to recognize and promote Excellence in the implementation of e-Governance initiatives, the Government of India presents National Awards on e-Governance.

### Details:

- The Awards will be given in 6 categories to recognize achievements in the area of e-Governance.
- This initiative also seeks to disseminate knowledge on effective methods of designing and implementing sustainable e-Governance initiatives, to encourage innovations in successful e-Governance solutions and to exchange experiences in solving problems, mitigating risks, resolving issues and planning for success.
- The National e-Governance Award recognizes some of the best Government to Government (G to G), Government to Citizen (G to C), Government to Business (G to B) initiatives taken by government departments. It also recognizes initiatives in Start ups, Academic Research Institutions as well as initiatives in adopting emerging technologies.

### The six categories under which Awards will be presented are as follows:-

- Excellence in Government Process Re-engineering for Digital Transformation.
- Excellence in providing Citizen-Centric Delivery.
- Excellence in District level Initiative in e-Governance (i) North-East States + Hilly States (ii) UTs (including Delhi) (iii) Other States.
- Outstanding research on Citizen Centric Services by Academic/Research Institutions.
- Innovative Use of ICT in e-Governance solutions by Start ups [Start up as defined by Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) Government of India]
- Excellence in Adopting Emerging Technologies.

# GEOGRAPHY

## 1. Bagamoyo Port

- The Bagamoyo Port is being constructed in Bagamoyo, Tanzania. Work started in 2018.
- It is planned to be one of the largest government infrastructure projects in the country.
- It will be built in association with the state-owned China Merchants Port, it will include a special economic zone. The US\$ 10bn project is backed by an Omani sovereign wealth fund.

## 2. Bedin 1

- It is a modestly sized, elongated galaxy that measures only around 3,000 lightyears at its greatest extent — a fraction of the size of the Milky Way.
- Not only is it tiny but it is also incredibly faint.
- These properties have led astronomers to classify it as a 'Dwarf Spheroidal Galaxy'.
  - \* Dwarf spheroidal galaxies are defined by their small size, low-luminosity, lack of dust and old stellar populations.
  - \* Dwarf spheroidals are galaxies that are in retirement; the star formation party is over, and the stars that they do have are old and dim.
- Bedin 1 was discovered by the Hubble Space Telescope when it was looking for white dwarf stars.
- Bedin I was named by its discovery team after their leader, Luigi Bedin

## 3. Cooum River

- It is one of the shortest classified rivers draining into the Bay of Bengal
- This river is about 72 km in length, flowing 32 km in the Urban part and the rest in rural part.
- The river is highly polluted in the urban area (Chennai)

### Adyar River

- It originates near the Chembarambakkam Lake in Kanchipuram district
- Most of the waste from the city is drained into this river and the Cooum.

### Context

- The Principal Bench of the National Green Tribunal has come down heavily on the Tamil Nadu government and is even considering imposing a ₹100 crore fine in damages for its repeated failure to prevent pollution of the Adyar and Cooum rivers and the Buckingham Canal

## 4. Chicxulub crater

- It is an impact crater buried underneath the Yucatán Peninsula in Mexico
- It was formed by a large asteroid or comet about 11 to 81 kilometres (6.8 to 50.3 miles) in diameter

### Context

- Two studies published in the journal Science say massive volcanic eruptions over hundreds of thousands of years may have contributed to the dinosaurs' demise at the end of the Cretaceous period.

### Details

- Before the 1980s, the dominant theory had been that huge and prolonged volcanic eruptions caused rapid and deadly shifts in the planet's climate by sending vast clouds of ash, gas and dust into the atmosphere.
- Then scientists discovered the huge Chicxulub crater of an ancient asteroid impact off the Caribbean coast of Mexico, which they posited had sent so much debris into the atmosphere that it hampered photosynthesis in plants and killed off three-quarters of life on Earth.

## 5. Lake Urmia

- It is an endorheic salt lake in Iran
- It is a limited drainage basin that normally retains water and allows no outflow to other external bodies of water, such as rivers or oceans
- Lake Urmia is an internationally registered protected area as both a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and a Ramsar site
- It was once the largest salt-water lake in the Middle East.

### Context

- The Iranian government has pledged to take measures to increase water level at Lake Urmia





## 6. Long Island in A&N- Development Program to be relooked

### Context

- An expert committee of the Union Environment Ministry has “deferred” clearance to a ₹100 crore proposal by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation Limited (ANIIDCL) to develop an island resort, as well as put up “premium tents” and “tree houses”, on the ground that this region is biodiversity rich.

### Background

- The Centre has been working on a long-term plan to make several of the A&N islands more conducive to tourism.
- The Home Ministry revived an Island Development Agency that would coordinate infrastructure projects to aid tourism in the A&N islands as well as Lakshadweep.
- The Environment Ministry has approved a new set of rules for infrastructure development along coasts that, in general, gives greater flexibility to development and infrastructure projects in the form of CRZ.

### Details

- The ANIIDCL presented plans for the development of a premium Island Resort at Lalaji Bay, Long Island
- The committee observed that as the area where the premium resort is proposed seems to be in an ecologically very fragile and biodiversity rich
- A sub-committee shall undertake a site visit to assess the likely impact of tourism activities on the eco-system
- The proposal in its present form seems premature for its consideration for appraisal and therefore deferred



## 7. Earthquake Swarm

### Context

- The Palghar district in Northern Maharashtra was in a state of Panic on February 1, 2019 as it was rocked by a series of minor earthquakes.
- Media reported as many 6 tremors on the day, with magnitudes ranging between 3 and 4.1 on the Richter scale.
- According to a report by the National Centre for Seismology (NCS), many aftershocks of lesser magnitude have also been observed in the area.

### Earthquake Swarm- What is it?

- It is a pattern of several small earthquakes occurring in a brief time-window
  - \* They are series of low magnitude earthquakes that occur in a localised region and over a period of time ranging from days, weeks to even months.
  - \* When seismic energy piles up inside the Earth and is released in small amounts from certain points, such a series of earthquakes can occur.

### Hydro-seismicity

- The Hydroseismicity is a hypothesis that suggests that there are areas in a region that are already under stress.
- So any variations in rainfall, water from heavy rainfall enters small fractures in rocks. This raises the pressure within them and can trigger earthquakes
- A study from the ISR in 2008, published in the Journal of Geological Society of India, estimates that with every 10 metre rise in groundwater, pore pressure increases by 1 bar. This pressure is released in earthquake swarms.
  - \* In 2007, a Current Science study by researchers from IIT-Bombay suggested that swarm activity along the west coast was due to a major fault parallel to it.
- The theory of hydroseismicity, first articulated in 1987, attributes most intraplate and near-intraplate earthquakes, to the dynamics of the hydrological cycle.

### Foreshocks

- They are earthquakes that precede larger earthquakes in the same location.
- An earthquake cannot be identified as a foreshock until after a larger earthquake in the same area occurs.

### Seismic zoning map for Palghar

- Palghar falls in Zone 3 of the seismic zoning map developed by the Bureau of Indian Standards.
- This means that buildings here must be able to withstand earthquakes of intensity 5.5-6.5 on the Medvedev-Sponheuer-Karnik (MSK) scale.

- Intensity is a qualitative measure of how people experience earthquakes, rather than the energy released, which is measured by the magnitude scale
- In earthquakes measuring 5.5-6.5 on the MSK scale, people are frightened and run outdoors, and heavy furniture can move. Buildings that follow the BIS codes are likely to survive swarms and even larger quakes. So, it is crucial for the code to be implemented stringently.

### Seismic Zones

Earthquake - prone areas of the country have been identified on the basis of scientific inputs relating to seismicity, earthquakes occurred in the past and tectonic setup of the region.

- Based on these inputs, Bureau of Indian Standards, has grouped the country into four seismic zones, viz. Zone II, III, IV and V.
  - \* Zone - II: This is said to be the least active seismic zone.
  - \* Zone - III: It is included in the moderate seismic zone.
  - \* Zone - IV: This is considered to be the high seismic zone.
  - \* Zone - V: It is the highest seismic zone
- Zone - V comprises entire northeastern India, parts of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rann of Kutch in Gujarat, part of North Bihar and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
- Zone - IV covers remaining parts of Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, Sikkim, Northern Parts of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal, parts of Gujarat and small portions of Maharashtra near the west coast and Rajasthan.
- Zone - III comprises Kerala, Goa, Lakshadweep islands, remaining parts of Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and West Bengal, Parts of Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu and Karnataka.
- Zone - II covers remaining parts of country.



### 8. Pavoar Uliya Island

- It is an island on the Netravathi River
- Uliya means “leftover or remaining land”

#### Netravathi River

- It has its origins at Bangrabalige valley, Yelaneeru Ghat in Kudremukh in Chikkamagaluru district of Karnataka
- This river flows through the famous pilgrimage place Dharmasthala
- It merges with the Kumaradhara River at Uppinangadi before flowing to the Arabian Sea

### 9. Warming imperils clouds that deter ‘hothouse’ conditions

#### Context

- Marine clouds that protect us from hothouse Earth conditions by reflecting sunlight back into space could break up and vanish if CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere triples – A study by California Institute of Technology
- Computer modeling shows that marine stratus clouds could disappear if atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels climb high enough, raising global temperatures.

#### Details of the Study

- Stratocumulus clouds cover about 20% of subtropical oceans, mostly near western seaboard such as the coasts of California, Mexico and Peru.
- When they disappear, Earth warms dramatically, by about eight degrees Celsius — in addition to the global warming that comes from enhanced greenhouse concentrations alone. A temperature increase of that magnitude would melt polar ice and lift sea levels tens of metres.
- The last time the planet was that hot, some 50 million years ago during the Eocene Epoch, crocodiles roamed the Arctic. Even half that much warming would overwhelm humanity’s capacity to adapt.

- A barely one-degree increase since the mid-19th century — mostly in the last 50 years — has been enough to worsen heatwaves, droughts, and flooding, along with cyclones engorged by rising seas.
- The 2015 Paris climate treaty enjoins nations to cap the rise in temperatures at “well below” 2C.

#### Stratocumulus Clouds

- Cloud is a mass of minuscule water drops or minute crystals of ice formed by the condensation of water vapour in free air at significant altitudes.
- According to their altitude, stretch, density, and transparency or opaqueness clouds are classified under four types – Cirrus, Cumulus, Stratus, Nimbus. A combination of these four types can give rise to many other types of clouds
- A stratocumulus cloud belongs to a genus-type of clouds characterized by large dark, rounded masses, usually in groups, lines, or waves, the individual elements being larger than those in altocumulus, and the whole being at a lower height, usually below 2,000 metres (6,600 ft).
- Weak convective currents create shallow cloud layers because of drier, stable air above preventing continued vertical development

# HISTORY

## 1. Battle of Sinhagad

- The Battle of Sinhagad took place during the night on 4 February, 1670 on the fort of Sinhagad near the city of Pune, Maharashtra
- The battle was fought between Tanaji Malusare, a Koli commander of Maratha ruler Shivaji Maharaj and Udaybhan Rathod, fortkeeper under Jai Singh I who was a Mughal Army Chief.

### Context

- Workers were restoring a more recent memorial for Malusare, erected in 1941, consisting of a bronze statue and a concrete canopy.

## 2. National War Memorial (NWM)

- The National War Memorial (NWM) pays homage to soldiers who laid down their lives for the country post-Independence
- The NWM is being constructed at the 'C' Hexagon near India Gate
- The National War Museum at Princes Park Complex Gate in memory of about 22,500 Indian soldiers who laid down their lives for the country in the post-Independence period.

### Significance

- The NWM will be used for guard of honour for all national events and India Gate which houses the Amar Jawan Jyoti (AJJ) will be used for regimental events and visiting dignitaries.
- The AJJ at India Gate which represents the 'unknown soldier' is currently accorded guard of honour on important occasions to pay homage to the soldiers who sacrificed their life in service of the nation.
- India Gate was built to honour the soldiers who lost their lives during the First World War.

## 3. Pietermaritzburg Incident

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



# MISCELLANEOUS

## 1. Aarohan Social Innovation Awards

- It is an award initiated by Infosys Foundation
- The objective of these awards is to accelerate innovation in the social sector
- The Aarohan Social Innovation Awards seek to recognize and reward individuals, teams or NGOs that are developing unique solutions for the social sector that have the potential to positively impact the underprivileged in India, at scale.
- The awards will accept submissions across six categories: Healthcare, Rural Development, Destitute Care, Women's Safety & Empowerment, Education & Sports Sustainability

## 2. Absher App

- Under Saudi law, it is essential for women to have a legal "guardian" who can restrict their travel.
- This app allows men in Saudi Arabia to track and control women's movements.
  - \* It allows men to give women permission to travel, and also get SMS when a woman uses her passport at the border.
- The apps are available on Google Play and Apple's App Store
- Absher also offers other functions like paying parking fines,

### Concerns

- The U.S.-based tech giants have been accused of facilitating misogyny and helping "enforce gender apartheid."
- Its travel features have been targeted by activists as it makes it difficult for women to leave Saudi Arabia.

Amnesty International called on Apple and Google to demand changes to the app so that it can be stopped for being used to harm women.

## 3. Bir Bikram Kishore Debbarman

- He was a king (or maharaja) of Tripura State.
- Bir Bikram Kishore Debbarman is considered the father of modern architecture in Tripura
- He built the first airport in Tripura
- He is credited with planning of Agartala city.

### Context

- Prime Minister will unveil the statue of Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur at Maharaja Bir Bikram Airport, Agartala.

## 4. Darwaza Band – Part 2' Campaign

### Concerns

- The Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen launched the 'Darwaza Band -Part 2' campaign starring Amitabh Bachchan, which focuses on sustaining the open defecation free status of villages across the country.

### About the campaign:

- The campaign, produced by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, and supported by the World Bank was launched in Mumbai.
- The campaign talks about how a toilet must be used by all, always and under all circumstances (har koi, har roz, hamesha).
- Darwaza Band- Part 2 focuses on ensuring that people's behavior is changed for good and everyone always uses a toilet.
- 50 crore people stopped defecating in the open since the launch of the SBM and with over 5.5 lakh villages having already been declared Open Defecation Free (ODF), the national sanitation coverage is now in excess of 98%.

## 5. DD Arunprabha

### Context:

- Prime Minister launched DD Arunprabha at Arunachal Pradesh. He also laid foundation stone of Film and Television Institute (FTI).

### Details of DD Arunprabha:

- DD Arunprabhais the 24th satellite channel operated by Doordarshan.
- It is equipped with state of the art facilities, including a Digital Satellite News Gathering unit to provide live coverage from remote locations, for 24x7 telecast.
- The playout facility and the earth stations established at DDK Itanagar will ensure seamless transmission of DD Arunprabha.

### Significance of DD Arunprabha:

- The channel will showcase the rich tradition and diversity of local culture.
- it integrates North-East with the country, also bring alive the magnificence of North-East by airing content sensitive to the needs and aspirations of local population including news, travelogues, mythological shows, documentaries, magazines, tele-films, reality shows, daily shows etc.

**Film And Television Institute:**

- The permanent campus of Film and Television Institute will come up at Jollang-Rakap (Jote), Papum Pare, Arunachal Pradesh.
- This is the third Film and Television Institute of Ministry of I&B, the first two being FTII Pune and SRFTI Kolkata. It is the first Film and Television Institute of entire North-East.
- It will provide a boost to the talented youngsters of the North-East in film and television sector

**6. Ethical Intuitionism**

- It is the thesis that our intuitive awareness of value, or intuitive knowledge of evaluative facts, forms the foundation of our ethical knowledge.

**Intuitionism teaches three main things:**

- There are real objective moral truths that are independent of human beings.
- These are fundamental truths that can't be broken down into parts or defined by reference to anything except other moral truths.
- Human beings can discover these truths by using their minds in a particular, intuitive way

**Philosophers object to intuitionism because:**

- they don't think that objective moral truths exist
- they don't think that there is a process of moral intuition
- there's no way for a person to distinguish between something actually being right and it merely seeming right to that person
- if intuitionism worked properly, everyone would come to the same moral conclusions, but they don't

**7. India inks contract for 72,000 assault rifles**

- After several failed attempts to equip the infantry with a basic rifle, the Army had signed a contract with Sig Sauer of the U.S. for 72,400 SIG716 assault rifles for front-line soldiers deployed in operational areas.
- Of the 72,400 rifles, 66,400 are meant for the Army, 2,000 for the Navy and 4,000 for the Air Force. The broad parameters for the weapon are an effective range of 500 m and weight of less than 3 kg. The new rifles will replace the Indian National Small Arms System (INSAS) rifles.
- The Defence Ministry also issued the Expression of Interest (EoI) for a deal to buy 111 naval utility helicopters. This is the first project to be executed through the strategic partnership policy. Under this, the chosen Indian private company will team up with the Original Equipment Manufacturer to build the product in India.

- The EoI follows the Request for Information (RFI). The Navy will likely issue a detailed Request for Proposal (RFP) at the end of the third quarter of this year to short-listed Indian companies.

**8. 7 islands in Andamans, Lakshadweep identified for seaplane operations****Context**

- According to the Home Ministry Four islands in the Andaman's and three in Lakshadweep have been identified for seaplane operations, while private sector participation has been invited for tourism-based projects.

**Details**

- Key infrastructure projects such as operationalization of the Diglipur airport for civilian aircraft and the construction of a new airport on Minicoy Island have been accorded high priority by the government, while Coastal Regulation Zone clearance (CRZ) has been accorded for 'Middle Strait Bridge' on Andaman Trunk Road.
- Bids for private sector participation in three tourism-based projects have already been invited by the Andaman & Nicobar Administration.
- They include eco-tourism projects on Smith Island and Long Island and a tent city project on Aves Island.

**Govt incentives**

- The Ministry of Commerce has issued a notification extending tax incentives for investments made in manufacturing and service sector in islands of Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep.
- The tax incentives are Central Capital Investment Incentive for access to credit (CCIIAC), Central Interest Incentive (CII), Central Comprehensive Insurance Incentive (CCII), Goods and Services Tax (GST) reimbursement, Income Tax (IT) reimbursement, Transport Incentive (TI) and Employment incentive (EI).

**Significance**

- Expeditious implementation of the above-mentioned projects will provide high economic return to the private sector, satisfactory jobs and additional income to the islanders and enhanced revenue to the government
- Above all, stability of the island eco-system will be maintained with effective execution of well-planned environmental safeguards.

**9. Missed target (International Olympic Committee (IOC) to revoke Tokyo 2020 Olympics qualification status)**

- the recent decision of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to revoke Tokyo 2020 Olympics qualification status for the men's 25-metre rapid fire pistol event from the New Delhi shooting World Cup is a controversy Indian sport could have done without.

- This has come after India refused visas to two Pakistani competitors, in the backdrop of heightened bilateral tensions after the terror attack in Pulwama.

#### **Position taken up by the IOC:**

- In view of India's refusal to grant visas to two Pakistani competitors, the IOC has declared that this is against the Olympic Charter's principles, of which non-discrimination, equal treatment of all athletes and sporting delegations and political non-interference are supreme.

#### **India's Decision: What the Critics Say?**

- Critics of India's decision point out that in the clamour to send Pakistan what it perceives to be the right message, India has shot itself in the foot.
- Further, it is important to note that in the short term, the scrapping of two out of 16 quota places will deny three Indian shooters, including 16-year-old Anish Bhanwala who won the gold in the event at the 2018 Commonwealth Games, an opportunity to make the Olympic grade at home.
- While the National Rifle Association of India has thanked the IOC for sparing the 14 other places by restricting the withdrawal of recognition to just one event, three Indian shooters, for no fault of theirs, have ended up as collateral damage.

#### **What the long-term consequences can be?**

The long-term consequences could be more severe.

- The IOC, in a strongly worded statement, said that it has decided to "suspend all discussions with the Indian National Olympic Committees and government regarding the potential applications for hosting future sports and Olympic-related events until clear written guarantees are obtained...to ensure the entry of all participants."
- This means negotiations regarding India's potential bids for the 2026 Youth Olympics, 2030 Asian Games and 2032 Olympics are set to go into cold storage.
- While it is true that the IOC's record in dealing with the overlapping worlds of geopolitics and sports is uneven, there have been precedents of strong action in similar cases.
- Ahead of the 2016 Rio Olympics, the Asian Shooting Championship in Kuwait had its qualification status removed after an Israeli delegate wasn't granted a visa.
- Recently, Malaysia was stripped of the World Para Swimming Championship for turning down visa requests from Israeli participants.

#### **Concluding Remarks:**

- The entire episode has also played out at a time when sections of the BCCI, egged on by a few yesteryear greats, seemingly mulled over the option of calling for a complete ban on Pakistan from the upcoming ICC World Cup in England.

- Going by experience, beyond feeding into a certain kind of atmospherics, such bans on sportspersons and interactions in international sports events will have no meaningful effect.

### **10. MOU for training 1800 Bangladesh civil servants in National Centre For Good Governance**

- India and Bangladesh have signed an MOU for training 1800 Bangladesh Civil Servants at the National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG) an institute under the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DAR&PG), Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions
- The MOU was signed between the NCGG and the Ministry of Public Administration, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
- Bangladesh Civil Servants will be trained in e-Governance and service delivery, public policy and implementation, information technology, decentralization, urban development and planning, Ethics in Administration and challenges in implementation of SDGs.

### **11. Sarojini Mahishi Committee**

#### **Definition of Kannadiga**

- As per the report, local people (Kannadiga) means any person born in the state of Karnataka or who has lived in Karnataka for not less than 15 years and knows to read, write and speak Kannada. Candidate availing the facility is supposed to produce SSLC certificate as proof of having studied Kannada as one of the languages, Ration Card, Birth Certificate and Aadhar card.

#### **Important Recommendations**

- 100% reservation for Kannadigas in blue collar jobs in State government, central government departments and Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs). Non-Kannadigas could be appointed only in case of exigency with the permission of the State government.
- Exams being conducted by Institute of Banking and Personnel Selection for Holding recruitment exams for jobs should be in all languages under Schedule 8 of the Constitution
- Kannada should be included with other languages in the exams being conducted by National Council for Vocational Training and Staff Selection Commission Examination.
- Studying Kannada as one subject should be made mandatory for all students who join ICSE, CBSE, Kendriya Vidyalaya, Navodaya Vidyalaya and other English schools
- Presence of a government representative in the appointment panel of all institutions with employee strength more than 100.

**Context**

- Over three decades after the Sarojini Mahishi report was submitted recommending 100% jobs to Kannadigas in Group 'C' & 'D' jobs in the private sector, the State government decided to ask private companies to "prefer" Kannadigas for such posts, subject to qualification and availability of Jobs.

**12. Social Hostilities Index**

- Pew Research Centre, an independent non-partisan polling and research organisation, has been publishing its annual Global Restrictions on Religion Report since 2009.
- It has used 18 main sources, including US Department of State reports, reports by UN and other multilateral agencies and reports by international non-governmental groups, to compose two indices--the Government Restrictions Index and the Social Hostilities Index.
  - \* former measures government restrictions on the free practice of religion
  - \* latter looks at hostilities between groups around the issue of religion

**Details**

- The Social Hostilities Index looks at 13 indicators including crimes motivated by religious hatred, mob violence related to religion, communal violence, religion-related terrorist groups, using force to prevent religious groups from operating, the harassment of women for 'violating' religious dress codes and violence over conversion or proselytising.

**Ranking**

- India ranked 'very high' on the index with an index value of 8.7 out of 10, 10 being the worst. Syria ranked at 9.2, Nigeria at 9.1 and Iraq at 8.9.

**13. Sulwade Jamphal Kanoli Lift Irrigation Scheme**

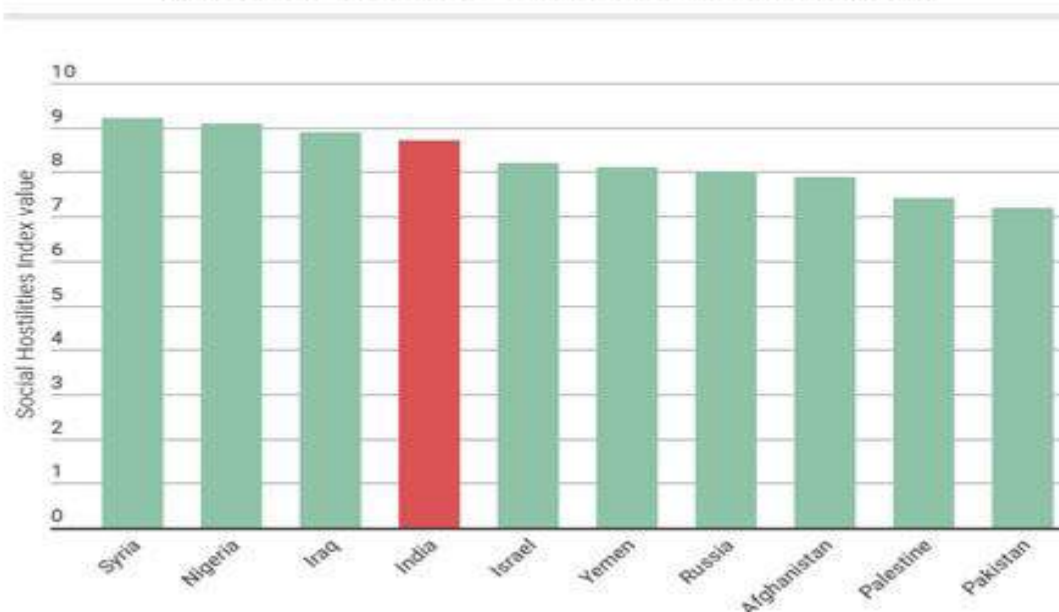
- This scheme envisages lifting 9.24 TMC of flood water from river Tapi in 124 days of monsoon season.
- It is proposed to irrigate 33367 hectares area of about 100 villages of Dhule district.

**14. Vat Cau Festival**

- It is a Vietnamese festival
- It is a centuries-old sport which began as a training exercise for soldiers and contains elements of wrestling and rugby.
- Dating back to the 11th century, the game was invented by a revered general to teach his recruits about the importance of teamwork, intelligence and strength when fighting against foreign invaders

**15. VIVID 2019****Context:**

- VIVID-Vision Insight and Voices as India goes Digital"-the District Informatics Officer (DIO) meet, is being organised by National Informatics Centre (NIC) on 21st and 22nd February, 2019.
- VIVID started in 2017, as an annual event, with the objective to empower NIC officials in the field of technology.
- The National meet will cover a wide range of relevant topics in various technical sessions including Emerging Technologies (Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning & Big Data Analytics), Cyber Threats & Counter Measures (Changing Digitisation Paradigm & its impact on Security), Enterprise Level Applications, and many other relevant topics.

**10 Countries with the highest Social Hostilities**



**NIC TechGov Awards:**

- NIC TechGov is a competitive platform that presents a unique opportunity to the NIC officers posted in states and districts offices across the nation to accelerate their knowledge and learn emerging technologies.

**Digital India Compendium:**

- 'Digital Bharat, Saksham Bharat – A Compendium on Digital India' covers the entire gamut of the Digital India programme from policy to implementation perspective, highlighting the transformation led by Digital India, a story of Digital Empowerment and Digital Inclusion. The compendium is brought out with an objective to disseminate and propagate the success of Digital India among masses.

**Digidhan Mitra Chatbot**

- Designed and developed by NIC, the AI based Digidhan Mitra enables a text & voice based conversation with the user, mining the Digidhan Portal, to give customized information in graphical, tabular and textual format. It provides bank wise transactions details as well as growth pattern of various modes of transactions like BHIM, IMPS, Cards etc. in tabular as well as graphical form.

**Technology Incubation and Development of Entrepreneurs (TIDE 2.0) Scheme:**

- The Scheme has been devised to promote the momentum into the tech entrepreneurship landscape. The Scheme provides financial and technical support to incubators engaged in supporting ICT startups using emerging technologies such as IoT, AI, Block-chain, Robotics etc. in seven pre-identified areas of societal relevance.

**16. Voters want more women in LS: survey**

- More than 82% voters want more women in the next Lok Sabha, according to a survey by a citizen's collective called Shakti.
- The survey was conducted among 10 lakh voters across 24 States on a mobile application called Neta app. The application has more than two crore verified users and covers all 543 parliamentary constituencies.
- The users were posed one simple question — Do you want more women in Lok Sabha 2019? And, in response as many as 82.2% of participants voted 'yes.'
- "Only 1.4% of independent candidates get elected. Therefore, it is important to focus on political parties and put pressure on them so that more women leaders stand for elections. We have seen from data from the Election Commission of India that more women get voted than men, but we needed to know whether voters were willing to elect women leaders and that's the question we asked in our survey," said Tara Krishnaswamy, co-convener, of Shakti. The collective was set up in December last year to promote participation of women in politics.

## PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. The Kibble balance was recently in the news, is associated with the accurate measurement of which one of the following International System of Units?

- A. Kilogram
- B. Kilometre
- C. Kelvin
- D. Ampere

2. What is Oumuamua?

- A. The Hawaiian name given to folds on land surface created due to lava flowing underneath the surface.
- B. Name of the birth place of former US President Barack Obama.
- C. A geographical phenomenon encompassing nitrogen cycle, water cycle and phosphorus cycle in one go.
- D. Name of the first interstellar object discovered in our solar system

3. Consider the following statements regarding Svalbard Global Seed Vault:

- i. Svalbard Global Seed Vault houses the world's largest collection of seeds.
- ii. The facility is located in Finland and the permafrost surrounding the facility helps maintain the low temperature of the seeds when the electricity supply fails.
- iii. A temperature of -18 degree Celsius is required for optimal storage of the seeds in customised three-ply foil packages.

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

- A. Only i and ii
- B. Only ii and iii
- C. Only i and iii
- D. All of the above

4. With reference to Money Bill, which of the following statements is incorrect?

- i. This programme will provide the vulnerable landholding farmer families, having cultivable land upto 2 hectares a direct income support at the rate of Rs 6,000 per year.
- ii. The programme will be funded 100 per cent by the Central government
- iii. This programme would not only provide assured supplemental income to the most vulnerable farmer families, but would also meet their emergent needs especially before the harvest season.

Which of the following statements is/are correct?

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii
- C. Only ii and iii
- D. All of the above

5. Consider the following statements about millets:

- i. Millets are naturally rich in nutrients such as iron, zinc and calcium
- ii. Kodo and Kutki are a variety of small millets.
- iii. They can withstand higher temperatures, making them the perfect choice as 'climate-smart' cereals.
- iv. Millets can grow in poor soil conditions with less water, fertiliser and pesticides.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii
- C. Only i and iii
- D. All of the above

6. Consider the following statements:

- i. The surfaces of tiny fragments of plastic may carry disease-causing organisms and act as a vector for diseases in the environment.
- ii. Within the cell, they can trigger changes in gene expression and biochemical reactions.
- iii. Additives such as phthalates and Bisphenol A (widely known as BPA) known for their harmful hormonal effects leach out of plastic particles.

Which of the following statements is/are correct?

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii
- C. Only i and iii
- D. All of the above

**7. Consider the following statements about Perovskite solar cells:**

- i. These are solar panels coated with the mineral and are light, flexible, efficient and inexpensive and come in varying hues and degrees of transparency.
- ii. These solar panels can easily be fixed to almost any surface be it laptop, car, drone, spacecraft or building to produce electricity, including in the shade or indoors.
- iii. Perovskite solar cells have the potential to address the world energy poverty.

Which of the following statements is/are correct?

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii
- C. Only ii and iii
- D. All of the above

**8. Consider the following statements:**

- i. Judicial review is the power of courts to decide the validity of acts of the legislative and executive branches of government.
- ii. The decisions of the executive and administrative agencies can also be overruled by the courts as not conforming to the law or the Constitution.
- iii. The Indian Constitution does not explicitly mention judicial review.

Which of the following statements is/are incorrect?

- A. Only i
- B. Only iii
- C. Only ii and iii
- D. None of the above

**9. Consider the following statements about Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG):**

- i. They are centrally recognized special category from among the Scheduled Tribes

Forest Rights Act, 2006 provided scope for the recognition of the PVTGs' forest and habitat rights for the first time.

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

- A. only i
- B. only ii
- C. Both i and ii
- D. None of the above

**10. With reference to 'Origins Spectral Interpretation Resource Identification Security - Regolith Explorer (OSIRIS-REX)' which of the following statements is/are correct?**

- i. It was developed by European space agency.
- ii. It is a spacecraft to study on comet.
- iii. It will help scientists investigate how planets formed and how life began.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

- A. Only i and ii
- B. Only ii and iii
- C. Only iii
- D. All of the above

**11. The 'Inclusive India Initiative' of National Trust is specifically catering to:**

- A. Persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- B. Women from underprivileged backgrounds
- C. Children living in tribal areas who have poor access to health and education
- D. None of the above

**12. Google TEZ is associated with:**

- A. Digital Payments
- B. Rural internet connectivity
- C. 3D Mapping
- D. Self-driving car project

**13. India Wage Report is published by:**

- A. International labour Organisation
- B. Reserve Bank of India
- C. Finance Ministry
- D. Prime Minister's Office

**14. Consider the following statements about International Nitrogen Initiative:**

- i. It is an intergovernmental body under the aegis of the UN.
- ii. The initiative aims to optimise nitrogen's beneficial role in sustainable food production.

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

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii
- C. Both i and ii
- D. None of the above

**15. Consider the following about the Senior Citizens Welfare Fund (SCWF).**

i. It was established along with the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB).

It will be administered by an Inter-Ministerial Committee.

The fund shall not be audited by the CAG due to its fundamental character as a welfare fund.

Select the correct answer using the codes below.

- A. Only ii
- B. Only i and iii
- C. Only i and ii
- D. Only ii and iii

**16. Consider the following statements about 'Graded Surveillance Measure':**

i. It is developed by Reserve Bank of India

ii. It is launched in order to enhance market integrity and safeguard interest of investors

iii. It is aimed at advising market participants to carry out necessary due diligence while dealing in identified securities.

Select the correct statements:

- A. Only i and ii
- B. Only ii
- C. Only ii and iii
- D. All of the above

**17. Which of the following areas are identified for the intensive conservation and management of coral reefs in India?**

i. Gulf of Mannar

ii. Sundarbans

iii. Lakshadweep

iv. Gulf of Kutch

v. Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- A. Only i and ii
- B. Only i, iii and iv
- C. Only i, iii, iv and v
- D. All of the above

**18. Match following the Indian 'Rivers' and corresponding 'National Parks'**

**No Rivers      National Parks**

i. Brahmaputra      Orang National Park

ii. Chambal      Rajaji National Park

iii. Narmada      Kanha National Park

Select the correct match:

- A. Only ii
- B. Only i and iii
- C. Only iii
- D. All of the above

**19. 'Technology and Innovation Support Centres' is often seen in news. It is associated with which of the following?**

- A. World Intellectual Property Organization
- B. World Trade Organization
- C. World Economic Forum
- D. World Bank

**20. Sadarmatt anicut, recently got heritage tag by the International Executive Council, the highest decision making body of International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID). This anicut is situation in which river**

- A. River Godavari
- B. River Krishna
- C. River Sabarmati
- D. River Siang

**21. Consider the following statements about Anticipatory Bail**

i. It is valid only in case of non-bailable offence.

ii. It is meant to protect a person from false accusation against him/her.

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

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii
- C. Both i and ii
- D. None of the above



**22. Consider the following statements about GST Council**

- i. This is a constitutional Body under article 279A of the constitution of India.
- ii. GST Council is chaired by the Union Finance Minister.
- iii. Union Minister of State in charge of Revenue or Finance is the Member of council.
- iv. It is an Extra constitutional body

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

- A. Only ii, iii and iv
- B. Only ii and iii
- C. Only i, ii and iii
- D. Only i and ii

**23. Consider the following statements about WTO Appellate Body**

- i. It is located in Geneva, Switzerland.
- ii. It hears appeals related to disputes brought by WTO Members.
- iii. The Appellate Body Reports, once adopted by the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB), is mandatory for the parties to the dispute.

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

- A. Only i and ii
- B. Only ii and iii
- C. Only i and iii
- D. All of the above

**24. The conservation status of snow leopard has been changed from "endangered" to "vulnerable" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Which of the following criterion constitutes the Endangered Status?**

- i. Reduction in population size of  $\leq 50\%$  over the last 10 years or three generations.
- ii. Area of occupancy estimated to be less than 500 km<sup>2</sup>.
- iii. Population size estimated to number fewer than 250 mature individuals.
- iv. Probability of extinction in the wild is at least 20% within 20 years or five generations

Correct answer code is:

- A. Only i, ii and iii
- B. Only i, iii and iv
- C. Only i, ii and iv
- D. All of the above

**25. Consider the following statements about Payments Bank**

- i. It can advance loans but can't issue credit cards.
- ii. It can accept demand deposits.
- iii. Payment bank was established in India on the recommendation of Nachiket Mor Committee.

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

- A. Only i and ii
- B. Only ii and iii
- C. Only i and iii
- D. All of the above

**26. Consider the following statements about the Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (ECHO)**

- i. It is a concept of weekly or fortnightly virtual clinics that use teleconferencing to bridge the gap in healthcare resources by using the best specialists to reach out to underserved areas.
- ii. Unlike telemedicine, ECHO clinics do not provide care directly to patients.

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

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii
- C. Both i and ii
- D. None of the above

**27. Transformative Carbon Asset Facility (TCAF) was launched by?**

- A. World Bank
- B. UN-Environment
- C. Green Climate Fund (GCF)
- D. Vulnerable Twenty (V20)

**28. Consider the following statements about UDAN:**

- i. The UDAN scheme envisages providing connectivity to un-served and under-served airports of the country through revival of existing air-strips and airports.
- ii. The scheme would be in operation for a period of 10 years.
- iii. A Regional Connectivity Fund would be created to meet the viability gap funding requirements under the scheme.

Which of the following is/are correct?

- A. Only i
- B. Only iii
- C. Only ii and iii
- D. All of the above

**29. Consider the following statements about Forest Rights Act, 2006:**

- i. It recognises Right to intellectual property and traditional knowledge related to biodiversity and cultural diversity.
- ii. This Act can act as a potential tool to address the issues of Conservation and management of the Natural Resources and conservation governance of India.
- iii. For the first time Forest Rights Act recognises and secures Community Rights or rights over common property resources of the communities in addition to their individual rights.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. Only i
- B. Only iii
- C. Only ii and iii
- D. All of the above

**30. Which of the city/cities recently added Hindi as a third language in their courts?**

- A. Dubai
- B. Doha
- C. Abu Dhabi
- D. Riyadh

**31. Consider the following about an Escrow account:**

- i. Escrow is a legal concept in which a financial instrument or an asset is held by a third party on behalf of two other parties that are in the process of completing a transaction.
- ii. The funds or assets are held by the escrow agent until it receives the appropriate instructions or until predetermined contractual obligations have been fulfilled.
- iii. Money, securities, funds and other assets can all be held in escrow.

Which of the following is/are correct?

- A. Only ii
- B. Only iii
- C. Only i and iii
- D. All of the above

**32. Arrange the following cities from east to west:**

- i. Ghazni
- ii. Kandahar
- iii. Herat
- iv. Kabul

Which of the following codes is correct?

- A. i-ii-iii-iv
- B. ii-i-iv-iii
- C. iv-i-ii-iii
- D. iv-iii-ii-i

**33. Consider the following statements with reference to the Ayushman Bharat-National Health Protection Scheme (AB-NHPS)**

- i. The scheme will provide a cover of Rs.5 lakh per family per year.
- ii. Only hospitalization expenses will be a part of the cover.
- iii. It will subsume Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) and the Senior Citizen Health Insurance Scheme (SCHIS).

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

- A. Only i and ii
- B. Only i and iii
- C. Only ii and iii
- D. All of the above

**34. Consider the following statements about Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (AASA) Scheme:**

- i. The major aim of the scheme is food security at low cost to the vulnerable groups as identified by Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC) data
- ii. The scheme also includes Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS) for crops excluding oilseeds
- iii. In Price Support Scheme (PSS), physical procurement of pulses will be done by Central Nodal Agencies

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

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii and iii
- C. Only iii
- D. None of the above

**35. Which of the following statements about Law Commission given below is/ are correct?**

- i. It is a statutory body.
- ii. The 21st law commission has recommended simultaneous election for Union and State.
- iii. Each Commission appointed till date has a three-year term

Select the correct answer using the codes below:

- A. Only i and ii
- B. Only iii
- C. Only ii
- D. Only ii and iii

**36. Consider the following statements about Banks Board Bureau**

- i. It has its genesis in the recommendations of The Committee to Review Governance of Boards of Banks in India.
- ii. It is a statutory body.

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

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii
- C. Both i and ii
- D. None of the above

**37. As per the constitutional scheme, which of the following are state subjects?**

- i. Public health
- ii. Public order
- iii. Adoption and succession
- iv. Land

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- A. Only i, ii, iv
- B. Only i, and ii
- C. Only iii and iv
- D. All of the above

**38. Justice K N Saikia committee is related to-**

- A. Extra-judicial killings in Assam during 1998-2001
- B. De-criminalisation of Sec 377
- C. Merging of PSBs
- D. Crop- Insurance

**39. Consider the following statements about United Nations Human Rights Council:**

- i. It is a non-governmental body within the United Nations system
- ii. The Human Rights Council replaced the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights
- iii. The Council was created by the United Nations General Assembly in March 2000

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

- A. Only i and ii
- B. Only ii
- C. Only iii
- D. Only i and iii

**40. Which of the following statements given below is/ are correct about Common Risk Mitigation Mechanism?**

- i. It is under the International Solar Alliance.
- ii. It will act as a pooled insurance with limited liability
- iii. Banks and multi-lateral institutions can contribute to the fund for a marginal premium

Select the correct answer using the codes below:

- A. Only i and ii
- B. Only ii and iii
- C. Only i and iii
- D. All of the above

**41. Which nations from the following list – comprising of members of SAARC – are also members of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)?**

- i. Bangladesh
- ii. Bhutan
- iii. Nepal
- iv. Sri Lanka
- v. Maldives
- vi. Afghanistan
- vii. Pakistan

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- A. Only iv and v
- B. Only i, ii, v, vi and vii
- C. Only i, iv and v
- D. Only i, ii, iii and iv

**42. Supreme Court has recently set up a panel headed by retired SC Judge Amitava Roy Panel to look in to which one of the following matters?**

- A. Prison reforms and decongest crowded jails
- B. Disqualification of MPs
- C. Digital Payments
- D. None of the above

**43. Consider the following statements about WAYU:**

- i. It is a device developed by ISRO
- ii. It is to address air pollution at high traffic zones, which have lot of buildings in the neighbourhood leading to restricted flow of air called "Street Canyon" effect.

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

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii
- C. Both i and ii
- D. None of the above

**44. The gates of Idukki dam in Kerala were recently opened after 26 years. This dam is on the river:**

- A. Kabini
- B. Valapattanam
- C. Bharatapuzha
- D. Periyar

**45. With reference to adultery, consider the following statements**

- i. Adultery can be a civil wrong and a ground for divorce.
- ii. Section 497 of IPC is violative of right to equality and right to equal opportunity to women.

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

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii
- C. Both i and ii
- D. None of the above

**46. Consider the following statements about Blackbucks:**

- i. The blackbuck is an antelope indigenous to the India plains.
- ii. It is considered to be the fastest animal next to Cheetah.
- iii. It is of Least Concern according to the IUCN red list.
- iv. Blackbucks are primarily grazers.

Which of the following is/are correct?

- A. Only i
- B. Only iii
- C. Only ii and iv
- D. All of the above

**47. Consider the following statements for ICJ:**

- i. It was established in 1945 by the UN Charter.
- ii. The ICJ is vested with the power to make its own rules.
- iii. The ICJ is composed of fifteen judges elected to nine-year terms by the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council from a list of people nominated by the national groups in the Permanent Court of Arbitration=

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- A. Only ii
- B. Only iii
- C. Only i and iii
- D. None of the above

**48. Consider the following statements about the Finance Commission:**

- i. The Finance Commission is a constitutional body.
- ii. It is an autonomous body.
- iii. The commission is constituted to make recommendations to the president about the distribution of the net proceeds of taxes between the Union and States and also the allocation of the same among the States themselves.

Which of the following statements is/are correct?

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii
- C. Only iii
- D. All of the above

**49. Which of the following passes is not in the state of Jammu and Kashmir?**

- A. Zoji La
- B. Khardung La
- C. Fotu La
- D. Shipki La

**50. Consider the following statements for CBI:**

- i. CBI is a statutory body.
- ii. It derives its powers from the Delhi Special Establishment Act, 1946.
- iii. The committee appointing the director of CBI has Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition and Chief Justice of India as its member.

Which of the following is/are correct?

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii
- C. Only ii and iii
- D. All of the above



**51. Consider the following statements about 'Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006'**

- i. It grants legal recognition to the rights of traditional forest dwelling communities, partially correcting the injustice caused by the forest laws
- ii. It gives the community the right to protect and manage the forest
- iii. It provides for rights to use and/or collect the 'Minor forest produce'

Select the correct statements:

- A. Only i
- B. Only i and iii
- C. All of the above
- D. Only ii and iii

**52. Which of the following statements about CORDEX is correct?**

- A. It is a regional climate change modelling programme.
- B. It is Food standardization programme
- C. It is a vaccination programme run by UNICEF
- D. It is internet sea cable laying programme of the WTU

**53. Who administers the oath of the President of India?**

- A. Vice-President
- B. Prime Minister of India
- C. Speaker, Lok Sabha
- D. Chief Justice of India

**54. Consider the following statements with respect to Private Members Bill:**

- i. A private member bill can be introduced by ruling party MPs and non-ministers in either house of Parliament.
- ii. One month prior notice is required to be given before introducing such bill.
- iii. President can easily exercise his absolute veto power against such bills.

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

- A. All of the above
- B. Only i and ii
- C. Only ii and iii
- D. Only iii

**55. Supreme Court has recently set up a panel headed by retired SC Judge Amitava Roy Panel to look in to which one of the following matters?**

- A. Prison reforms and decongest crowded jails
- B. Disqualification of MPs
- C. Digital Payments
- D. None of the above

**56. Consider the following statements about WAYU**

- i. It is a device developed by ISRO
- ii. It is to address air pollution at high traffic zones, which have lot of buildings in the neighbourhood leading to restricted flow of air called "Street Canyon" effect.

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

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii
- C. Both i and ii
- D. None of the above

**57. The gates of Idukki dam in Kerala were recently opened after 26 years. This dam is on the river**

- A. Kabini
- B. Valapattanam
- C. Bharatapuzha
- D. Periyar

**58. With reference to adultery, consider the following statements.**

- i. Adultery can be a civil wrong and a ground for divorce.
- ii. Section 497 of IPC is violative of right to equality and right to equal opportunity to women.

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

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

**59. Consider the following statement regarding Financial Action Task Force (FATF).**

- i. It was established in 1989 during the G-20 Summit in Paris (France) to combat the growing problem of money laundering.
- ii. FATF does not deal with terrorism financing.

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

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2 only
- D. Neither 1 and 2

**60. SATAT initiative was recently in news. It is related to which ministry?**

- A. Petroleum and Natural Gas
- B. Home Affairs
- C. Defence
- D. None of the above

61. JIMEX – 18 is a maritime exercise between India and:

- i. Japan
- ii. Indonesia
- iii. Maldives

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii and iii
- C. Only i and iii
- D. All of the above

62. Consider the following statements about Banks Board Bureau

- i. It has its genesis in the recommendations of The Committee to Review Governance of Boards of Banks in India.
- ii. It is a statutory body.

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

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii
- C. Both i and ii
- D. None of the above

63. Consider the following statements:

- i. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations..
- ii. The Organization was established in 1969.
- iii. It has 57 members.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- A. Only i
- B. Only iii
- C. Only ii and iii
- D. All of the above

64. Consider the following statements about the Dongria Kondh tribe.

- i. The Dongria Kondh people are a tribe residing in the Niyamgiri Hills of Odisha.
- ii. They derive their name from dongar, meaning 'hill' and the name for themselves is Jharnia: protector of streams.
- iii. They belong to the particularly vulnerable tribal

Which of the above is/are correct?

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii
- C. Only i and iii
- D. All of the above

65. Which of the States is not covered by the Ganga Basin?

- A. Madhya Pradesh
- B. Haryana
- C. Punjab
- D. Rajasthan

66. Consider the following for Olive Ridley turtles

- i. The Olive Ridley turtles are the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles found in the world.
- ii. The IUCN status of Olive Ridley turtle is Vulnerable.
- iii. The coast of Orissa in India is the largest mass nesting site for the Olive-Ridley.

Which of the following is/are Incorrect?

- A. Only i
- B. Only iii
- C. Both ii and iii
- D. None of the above.

67. Consider the following about forest fires:

- i. They pose a threat to the forest wealth and also to the flora and fauna, thus disturbing the bio-diversity and the ecology and environment of a region.
- ii. Forest fires can also rejuvenate the soil and eliminate invasive species, which promote healthier and stronger plant species.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii
- C. Both i and ii
- D. None of the above

68. Which of the following is not an objective of the AMRUT Mission?

- A. To ensure that every household has access to a sewerage connection.
- B. To increase the amenity value of cities by developing greenery.
- C. To reduce pollution by switching to public transport.
- D. To provide internet access to all gram Panchayats

69. DIKSHA, an initiative by the government, aims to

- A. Assist below poverty line (BPL) kids to avail free education till class 12th
- B. Assist teachers by equipping them with advanced digital infrastructure.
- C. Assist exporters by providing a single window clearance facility for product certification.
- D. Assist Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises by allowing them access to government infrastructure.

**70. Consider the following statements about Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme:**

- i. It aims at providing adequate and timely credit support from the banking system under a single window to the farmers.
- ii. It is to be implemented by RRBs only
- iii. Tenant farmers are not eligible under the scheme.

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

- A. Only i and iii
- B. Only i
- C. Only ii and iii
- D. All of the above
- E.

**71. Consider the following about OPEC**

- i. OPEC is an intergovernmental organisation aimed towards stabilisation of global oil prices.
- ii. Qatar is a member of OPEC

Select the correct option from below

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii
- C. Both i and ii
- D. Neither i nor ii

**72. Consider the following statement regarding Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016**

- i. The number of recognized disability conditions has been increased from 7 to 21
- ii. Acid attack survivors are not included in the list.
- iii. It has provided for reservation in vacancies in government establishment for disabled person.

Choose the correct statement

- A. i and ii only
- B. i and iii only
- C. ii and iii only
- D. i, ii and iii

**73. With reference to a National Park, consider the following statements:**

- i. It is located at the junction of the Aravalis and the Vindhyas.
- ii. It is bounded in north by Banas river and in south by Chambal river.
- iii. It is under Project Tiger.

Which of following National Park has all of the above characteristics?

- A. Bandhavagarh National Park
- B. Ranthambore National Park
- C. Kanha National Park
- D. Gaurumara National Park

**74. Consider the following statements regarding Article 13**

- i. A constitutional amendment is not a law and hence cannot be challenged
- ii. The term "law" as mentioned in Article 13 includes permanent laws enacted by the Parliament only

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

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii
- C. Both i and ii
- D. All of the above

**75. With reference to the Fundamental Duties which of the following statements is incorrect?**

- i. Anti-Defection Law was introduced by 52nd Constitution Amendment Act, 1985, by adding 10th Schedule in the Constitution of India.
- ii. Anti-Defection Law was never amended again.

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

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii
- C. Both i and ii
- D. None of the above

**76. The above statements represent which of the following committee?**

- A. Ethics Committee
- B. Committee of Privileges
- C. Committee on Petition
- D. Rules Committee

**77. The project "Development of Tribal Circuit" is sanctioned under which Ministry**

- A. Ministry of Human resources and Development
- B. Ministry of tribal Affairs
- C. Ministry of Tourism
- D. Ministry of Culture

**78. Consider the following statements regarding Geographical Indication (GI)**

- i. GIs are typically used for agricultural products, foodstuffs, wine and spirit drinks, handicrafts, but not industrial products.
- ii. GI tags last up to a term of 10 years, and cannot be renewed

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

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii
- C. Both i and ii only
- D. Neither i and ii

79. Net population size in an area will increase if

- A. If both birth rate and death rate is high
- B. If birth rate is high, but death rate is low
- C. If birth rate is low, but death rate is high
- D. If immigration rate is lower than emigration rate

80. Consider the following codes:

Mountain Ranges	Continent
i. Andes	South America
ii. Alps	Europe
iii. Atlas	Africa
iv. Appalachian	North America

Which of the above codes is/are correctly matched?

- A. Only i
- B. Only ii and iv
- C. i, ii and iii
- D. All of the above
- E. Only i and ii
- F. Only ii and iii
- G. Only i, ii and iv
- H. Only iii and iv

Select the correct code:



# ANSWER KEYS

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

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

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

Question No	Answer Keys
76.	D
77.	A
78.	B
79.	D
80.	C

## MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Recently researchers from the University of Exeter and Plymouth Marine Laboratory in the U.K. examined 50 animals from 10 species of dolphins, seals and whales — and found micro plastics in all of them. In this context write a note on micro plastics with special emphasis on its possible impact on the human health and environment
2. What do you understand by Money Laundering? Discuss the need to revisit the prevention of money laundering act.
3. Analyse the importance of Judicial Review in India citing examples.
4. The year 2018 was declared as the year of Millets, discuss the importance of this “super food” in the context of India.
5. The INF Treaty – Signed in 1987 by Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, it barred both countries from deploying land-launched cruise missiles in the 500- to 5,500-km range. In pulling out of the INF, Washington is effectively throwing away leverage it may have had with Russia on an issue of global concern. Critically examine the statement
6. Terrorist organizations have invaded cyberspace and made it a battleground. They no longer rely on military force such as weapons, armor and bombs only. Instead, they become more and more savvy, and their strategies and tactics have technological orientation. Discuss the statement in the present context with special emphasis on India
7. Without a sound and robust institutional framework and a co-operative approach, India’s water dispute resolution is unlikely to have much improvement. Discuss
8. Many attempts including the US war on Afghanistan has failed to bring any fruit. Discuss the reasons for the failure of several world powers in exerting their control over Afghanistan.
9. India shares a long border with several countries and the difficult nature of the terrain and open border poses special challenges for India. In this context analyse the need and scope of the Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS).
10. While terrorism results in large scale violence, conducted to exploit political objectives and religious or nationalist sentiments, organized crime is largely nonviolent and is carried out for economic objectives. Discuss
11. The setting up of Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog will result in increased growth of livestock sector which is more inclusive, benefitting women, and small and marginal farmers. Discuss
12. The European Space Agency’s (ESA’s) HERA mission is set for a new record by becoming the first spacecraft to explore a binary asteroid — the Didymos pair. Write a note on the HERA mission
13. The climate change crisis is not a distant nightmare anymore. It is very real and already unfolding. Examine the statement in the context of the recent Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment Report
14. Recently Macedonia has signed accession papers with NATO. The signing of accession papers allows Macedonia take part in NATO ministerial meetings as an invitee. In this context write a note on the NATO by highlighting its objectives and significance.
15. Air pollution is a serious issue in India and many of the world’s most polluted cities are from India. Air pollution is not only a problem in Metropolitan or big cities but also in small cities, towns and even villages. In this context examination the reasons for the air pollution India and suggest some innovative measure to face the challenges of air pollution
16. The government has introduced Constitution (125th Amendment) Bill in Rajya Sabha to increase the financial and executive powers of the 10 Autonomous Councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of the northeastern region. The amendment will impact one crore tribal people in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. In this context write a note on Autonomous Councils by highlighting their significance
17. The Forest Rights Act, 2006 has been partly successful in improving the situation of forest dwellers and tribals of India. Critically Analyse.
18. Loan waivers are a temporary solution, structural changes are the need of the hour to sustainably develop incomes in the country. Discuss

19. Recently the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to launch the 'India-Norway Marine Pollution Initiative'. In this context write a note on the Marine Pollution
20. A committee constituted for making a report for the Promotion and Protection of Maithili Language and its scripts, has submitted its report to MHRD. In this context, examine the need for promotion and protection of languages and scripts which are in the verge of decline.
21. February 2019 marks the 40th anniversary of the Iranian Revolution, one of the major events of the 20th century and a momentous development in the modern history of Islam. In this context, discuss the impact of the Iranian revolution with special emphasis on the dissatisfaction of the current demography of Iran.
22. Despite some solid legislative accomplishments—from the goods and services tax (GST), which is slowly improving tax compliance, to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, which is bringing crony capital to heel—there is not much progress in one critical area of corruption: corporate funding of political parties. Examine the statement.
23. Dolphins have been included in Schedule I of the Indian Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972, in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), in Appendix II of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and categorised as 'Endangered' on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List. Explain the statement
24. An analysis by the Centre for Science and Environment has revealed that nearly half of India's waste-to-energy (WTE) plants, meant to convert non-biodegradable waste, are defunct. In this context, write a note on the solid waste management with special emphasis on the feasible and innovative strategies in the Indian context.
25. Discuss the impact of monsoon in the Indian Economy.
26. Disruptions in the Parliament is a loss for the country. Critically analyse.
27. According to the recently released Parliamentary standing committee report, the Centre has failed to not just reign in escalating drug prices but has also not been able to curb the business of substandard drugs,. Examine the statement
28. Constructed as a marketplace of views, social media tends to favour privilege, and the privileged. Discuss
29. In a first for India, Rajasthan government has prepared the draft of Rajasthan Social Accountability Bill. The citizen centric law will enable citizens to initiate enquiries rather than relying on the departmental enquires in the existing system. Discuss the relevance of Social Accountability in the bringing probity in governance
30. Argentina has recently signed the Framework Agreement of the International Solar Alliance (ISA). In this context, write a note on the importance of ISA
31. Recently the Shisht Bharat Campaign was launched by a NGO which aims to strengthen the moral character of Indian citizens by sensitizing them about values of morality, civic sense, politeness, decorum and dignity. Discuss the need for such an initiative.
32. In the run-up to centenary year of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, the Punjab assembly has sought a formal apology from the British government for the bloodbath in Amritsar on April 13, 1919. In this context, discuss how Jallianwala Bagh massacre was one of the turning points in India's freedom struggle.
33. Forest fires are considered to be deadly and catastrophic to the flora and fauna but at the same time it can be beneficial too. Analyze.
34. Representation of India in various multilateral forums signifies her rising power in the international community. Discuss
35. PM-KISAN is an ambitious scheme that has the potential to deliver significant welfare outcomes. However, the current top-down, rushed approach of the government ignores governance constraints and is therefore likely to result in failure. Critically evaluate the statement
36. Recently the state government of Himachal Pradesh had urged the centre to declare Monkeys as vermin because the animals have been adversely affecting crops and causing harm to humans. In this context discuss whether is it right to kill wildlife that damage crops? Suggest some feasible strategies to protect the crops from wildlife

37. As countries around the world face the challenges of designing systems and delivering services that result in good health and well-being for their citizens, digital technologies can provide potential solutions. Explain the statement with relevant examples
38. Electronic trading of medicines via online platforms, with appropriate regulatory safeguards, can bring in transparency and spur price competition among platforms and among retailers, as has been witnessed in other product segments. Examine the statement
39. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has recently conducted a national workshop on heat wave risk reduction. What are the Heat Waves? Discuss India's vulnerability to heat waves and feasible strategies to deal with the heat waves.
40. Good jobs, not Universal Basic Income, are needed for a good society. Examine the statement
41. In a first for India, Rajasthan government has prepared the draft of Rajasthan Social Accountability Bill. The citizen centric law will enable citizens to initiate enquiries rather than relying on the departmental enquires in the existing system. Discuss the relevance of Social Accountability in the bringing probity in governance
42. Argentina has recently signed the Framework Agreement of the International Solar Alliance (ISA). In this context, write a note on the importance of ISA
43. Recently the Union Cabinet has approved promulgating an ordinance with regard to the Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, to protect gullible investors from Ponzi schemes. What do you understand by Ponzi scheme? What are the issues associated with these kind of schemes?
44. 2Recently the Union Cabinet has given its approval to the National Policy on Electronics 2019 (NPE 2019), proposed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). In this context write a note on the factors contributing towards the growth of the Electronics Sector in India and also examine the efforts of the government to make India a global hub for electronics manufacturing.



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