



# CURRENT CONNECT DECEMBER - 17

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| S.N.   | 1  | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5  | 6                                     | 7   | 8  | 9  | 10  | 11   |
|--------|--|---|---|---|--|---------------------------------------|---|--|--|---|--|
| GS-I   | Culture-Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times. | Indian history significant events, personalities, issues and the Freedom Struggle | Post independence issues, National boundary and disputes  | Indian society features, issues, globalization and diversity  | Women - issues and developments  | Urbanization - problems and remedies  | Distribution of industries and resources - India and world        | Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc | Culture-Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.   |   |  |
| GS-II  | Indian constitution- Amendments, acts and bills.                             | Legislative, executive and judicial processes.                                    | Constitutional, non-constitutional, judicial, quasi judicial, administrative and other types of bodies. | Federal structure and local bodies. Their powers and functions.   | Government policies and various governance issues like transparency, accountability and - governance | Committees and schemes.               | Non-government issues, self-help groups and role of civil society | Vulnerable sections of our society and social sector issues and initiatives.       | International Relation-India and other countries, various Indian and international agreements, effects of other countries on India and international institutions. |   |  |
| GS-III | Various measures to boost Indian economy- planning, policies, management.    | Government budgeting and issues related to budget.                                | Agriculture, animal husbandry and transport   | Food security- measures to boost food security and food processing issues related to land- land reforms | Industries and infrastructure and their growth and investment model                                  | Space and technology, IT and computer | Disease, biotechnology and human welfare                          | Innovations, intellectual property, Awards, POI and other important aspects of S&T | Environment and disaster: government initiatives, various judgment, pollution, degradation and conservation efforts  | International agreements and works of various international bodies, effort by individuals and misc. | Challenges to internal security, Various Security forces and their mandate. Cyber security, money laundering and its prevention. |
| GS-IV  | Ethical issues related to family society, education, Corruption etc.         | Ethics in public and private administration                                       | Issues  | Related laws and rules  | Governance/e- Governance   | Ethics in international issues        | Personalities and their teachings                                 | Other important topics   |  |   |  |
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| <u>INDEX</u> |  |          |
|--------------|--|----------|
| S.NO.        | PARTICULAR   | PAGE NO. |
| 1.           | Election Commission of India   | 5        |
| 2.           | National Nutrition Mission   | 6        |
| 3.           | Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS)   | 7        |
| 4.           | Supreme Court judgment on child repatriation                                 | 7        |
| 5.           | Soil Health Card (SHC) Scheme  | 9        |
| 6.           | Border Protection Grid (BPG)   | 10       |
| 7.           | The Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Bill, 2017                    | 10       |
| 8.           | Adultery Law   | 12       |
| 9.           | eCourts Mission Mode Project   | 13       |
| 10.          | NIC CERT   | 14       |
| 11.          | Laqshya-Labour Room Quality Improvement Initiative                           | 15       |
| 12.          | Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL)   | 16       |
| 13.          | E-Waste in India   | 17       |
| 14.          | National Ayush Mission   | 18       |
| 15.          | National Medical Commission Bill, 2017                                       | 19       |
| 16.          | North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS)                | 21       |
| 17.          | India's first social audit law - Meghalaya                                   | 22       |
| 18.          | IMA regulations on antibiotic prescriptions                                  | 23       |
| 19.          | E-Cigarette- Danger without warning  | 24       |
| 20.          | VAHAN - The Integrated Solution for Vehicle Registration                     | 25       |
| 21.          | eHRMS - Manav Sampada  | 26       |
| 22.          | PRASAD Scheme  | 27       |
| 23.          | Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill 2017 | 28       |
| 24.          | Urja Ganga Gas Pipeline Project  | 30       |
| 25.          | The Indian Institute of Petroleum and Energy Bill, 2017                      | 31       |
| 26.          | Good Governance Day  | 31       |
| 27.          | Myanmar Signs Pact with Bangladesh over Rohingya Repatriation                | 33       |
| 28.          | India re-elected as Member of International Maritime Council                 | 34       |
| 29.          | US out of UN Global Compact on Migration                                     | 35       |
| 30.          | BIMSTEC Coastal Shipping Agreement   | 35       |
| 31.          | Asian Harmonisation Working Party  | 36       |
| 32.          | US Recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's Capital                                  | 36       |
| 33.          | SAICON 2017  | 38       |
| 34.          | ASEAN-India Connectivity Summit  | 39       |
| 35.          | India, Australia Call for 'Open' Asia-Pacific Zone                           | 40       |
| 36.          | Hambantota Port  | 40       |
| 37.          | World Migration Report, 2018   | 41       |
| 38.          | Loan Agreement Signed for Pare Hydroelectric Plant                           | 42       |
| 39.          | State of the World's Children Report   | 42       |
| 40.          | Cyclone Ockhi  | 43       |
| 41.          | One-member Benches of NGT  | 44       |
| 42.          | Certificate of Commendation for Combating Illegal Wildlife Trade             | 45       |
| 43.          | Sentinel-5P satellite  | 46       |
| 44.          | International Solar Alliance   | 47       |
| 45.          | Danger in the Air  | 48       |
| 46.          | Amarnath Cave Declared Silent Zone   | 49       |
| 47.          | National Energy Conservation Day   | 49       |
| 48.          | NDMA Conducts Training of Trainers for Sendai Framework                      | 49       |
| 49.          | Zoological Survey of India Compiles a list of 157 Alien Invasive Species     | 50       |
| 50.          | Protection of Majuli Island - Endeavour of Brahmaputra Board                 | 50       |
| 51.          | Regional Project to Tackle Stubble Burning                                   | 51       |
| 52.          | Centre Releases Draft Action Plan to Tackle Air Pollution in Capital         | 52       |

|      |   |    |
|------|---|----|
| 53.  | Environment Ministry Launches Pilot Project for Beach Clean-up            | 53 |
| 54.  | China's Dark Matter Probe   | 53 |
| 55.  | India free of Infective Trachoma  | 54 |
| 56.  | Solar Winds   | 54 |
| 57.  | New form of matter 'Excitonium' Discovered                                | 54 |
| 58.  | VoLTE Services  | 55 |
| 59.  | Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant   | 56 |
| 60.  | Clean Sea 2017  | 56 |
| 61.  | UN Environment's Patron for Clean Air                                     | 56 |
| 62.  | Kiwi Birds  | 56 |
| 63.  | Indian Forest (Amendment) Bill, 2017                                      | 56 |
| 64.  | Google's Artificial Intelligence Finds Two New Exoplanets                 | 57 |
| 65.  | Methanol Economy Fund   | 57 |
| 66.  | Telangana Varsity Hosts Global Conference on Functional Materials         | 57 |
| 67.  | Google India Signs Pact with And Pradesh Govt to Enable Digital AP vision | 58 |
| 68.  | Anti-Smog Cannon in Fight Against Delhi Pollution                         | 58 |
| 69.  | New frog species  | 58 |
| 70.  | Merchant Discount Rate  | 58 |
| 71.  | Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)                        | 59 |
| 72.  | Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference                                       | 60 |
| 73.  | DARPAN  | 61 |
| 74.  | Financial Sector Assessment Programme                                     | 62 |
| 75.  | Arogya 2017   | 63 |
| 76.  | Scheme for Capacity Building in Textiles Sector (SCBTS)                   | 64 |
| 77.  | Project Mousam  | 65 |
| 78.  | SAMEEP  | 66 |
| 79.  | SFIO  | 66 |
| 80.  | IMT Highways  | 67 |
| 81.  | Public Procurement Portal   | 67 |
| 82.  | Mission Antyodaya: Ranking of 5000 Gram Panchayats                        | 68 |
| 83.  | 3rd Annual Meeting of Board of Governors of AIIB                          | 69 |
| 84.  | Kimberly Process (KP)   | 69 |
| 85.  | India-Swiss Deal Inked on Data Sharing                                    | 69 |
| 86.  | NITI Aayog and EU Delegation to India Release the Strategy on RE          | 70 |
| 87.  | International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography                | 71 |
| 88.  | Rashtriya Vayoshree Yojna   | 71 |
| 89.  | Ajeya Warrior   | 72 |
| 90.  | Wassenaar Arrangement Admits India as Its 42nd Member                     | 72 |
| 91.  | Akash Missile   | 73 |
| 92.  | INS Kalvari   | 74 |
| 93.  | Naseem Al-Bahr  | 74 |
| 94.  | Mission Seven Summit  | 74 |
| 95.  | Kumbh Mela As Intangible Cultural Heritage                                | 75 |
| 96.  | State Related News  | 75 |
| 97.  | International Day of Persons with Disabilities                            | 77 |
| 98.  | World AIDS Day and National Strategic Plan for AIDS                       | 77 |
| 99.  | Ujh multi-purpose project   | 78 |
| 100. | WHO to recognise 'gaming disorder' as mental health condition             | 78 |
| 101. | Ganga Gram Project  | 79 |
| 102. | Bodhi Parva   | 79 |
| 103. | Concept Clearing Assignment   | 80 |
| 104. | PT Oriented Question  | 81 |

## Election Commission of India

### In News

The Supreme Court recently sought the Attorney-General’s assistance on a PIL petition pointing out the vagueness in the procedure for removal of Election Commissioners, **saying it affects the Election Commission’s autonomy.**

| GS CONNECT |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| GS         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| I          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| II         |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| III        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| IV         |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| V          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |

### Issue

- ✓ The petition filed by Supreme Court advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay argued that though the provision to Article 324 (5) of the Constitution safeguards the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) from arbitrary removal, the same provision is silent about the procedure for removal of the two Election Commissioners.
- ✓ Art 324 provides that EC cannot be removed from office except on the recommendation of the CEC. The petition said the ambiguity about the removal procedure of the Election Commissioners may affect the functional independence of the Election Commission.

### Article 324(5)

Subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament, the conditions of service and tenure of office of the Election Commissioners and the Regional Commissioners shall be such as the President may by rule determine; Provided that the Chief Election Commissioner shall not be removed from his office except in like manner and on the like grounds as a Judge of the Supreme Court and the conditions of service of the Chief Election Commissioner shall not be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment: Provided further that any other Election Commissioner or a Regional Commissioner shall not be removed from office except on the recommendation of the Chief Election Commissioner.

### Constitutional Provision

1. They hold the office for a term of 6 years or until they attain the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.
2. The CEC can be removed from office for misconduct through a process applicable to removal of Supreme Court judges that is by passing a removal motion by two-third majority- present and voting- in both Houses of Parliament.
3. EC or RC cannot be removed from office except on the recommendation of the CEC.
4. The CEC and the Election Commissioners enjoy the same decision-making powers, which is suggestive of the fact that their powers are at par with each other. They receive equal salary, allowances and other perquisites.

### About ECI

Under art 324 of Constitution of India, ECI is vested with the power of superintendence, direction and control of conducting the elections to Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. The ECI is 3 member body (initially a 1 member body), with one CEC and 2 EC. The President of India appoints CEC and ECs

PEPPER IT WITH  
Anti-Defection Law,  
Goswami committee on  
Electoral reform, T N  
Seshan case

### Way Forward

The petition, in short, has asked the Supreme Court to provide Election Commissioners with the same protection against arbitrary removal as the Chief Election Commissioner. It contended that **the “rationale behind not affording similar protection to Election Commissioners is not explicable.”** The element of independence sought to be achieved under the Constitution is not exclusively for an individual alone but for the institution.

## National Nutrition Mission

### In News

The Union Cabinet has approved setting up of National Nutrition Mission (NNM) with a three year budget of Rs.9046.17 crore commencing from 2017-18.

| GS CONNECT |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| GS         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| I          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| II         |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| III        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| IV         |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| M          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |

### Features

The NNM, as an apex body, will monitor, supervise, fix targets and guide the nutrition related interventions across the Ministries. Under NNM, the ministries of women and child development, health and family welfare, and water and sanitation will work together.

The proposal consists of:

1. mapping of various Schemes contributing towards addressing malnutrition
2. introducing a very robust convergence mechanism
3. ICT based Real Time Monitoring system
4. incentivizing States/UTs for meeting the targets
5. incentivizing Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) for using IT based tools
6. eliminating registers used by AWWs
7. introducing measurement of height of children at the Anganwadi Centres (AWCs)
8. Social Audits
9. Setting-up Nutrition Resource Centres, involving masses through *Jan Andolan* for their participation on nutrition through various activities, among others.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Kuposhan Mukh Bharat,  
Kayakalp, National  
Nutrition Strategy

### Objective

The program through the targets will strive to reduce the level of stunting, under-nutrition, anemia and low birth weight babies. It will create synergy, ensure better monitoring, issue alerts for timely action, and encourage States/UTs to perform, guide and supervise the line Ministries and States/UTs to achieve the targeted goals.

It will strive to achieve reduction in stunting from 38.4 per cent as per the National Family Health Survey-4 to 25 per cent by 2022.

Aadhaar card is a mandatory requirement to avail the benefits of the mission.

### Implementation strategy and targets

1. Implementation strategy would be based on intense monitoring and Convergence Action Plan right upto the grass root level.
2. NNM will be rolled out in three phases from 2017-18 to 2019-20. NNM targets to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anemia (*among young children, women and adolescent girls*) and reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively.
3. The mission would include several components like an ICT (information and communications technology)-based real-time monitoring system, incentivizing of states and Union territories to meet their targets, social audits, and setting up of nutrition resource centres.

### Way Forward

There are a number of schemes directly/indirectly affecting the nutritional status of children (0-6 years age) and pregnant women and lactating mothers. In spite of these, level of malnutrition and related problems in the country is high. There is no dearth of schemes but lack of creating synergy and linking the schemes with each other to achieve common goal. NNM through robust convergence mechanism and other components would strive to create the synergy. It is very important to invest in nutrition in India because balanced diet and healthy nutrition plays a pivotal role in overall development of women and children. Healthy women deliver healthy **children and nurture a good society, and healthy and nourished children are the country's future.** We have a long way to go in terms of nutrition of women and children.

## Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS)

### In News

An Indo-Spanish technical cooperation (government to government) agreement was signed for implementation of RRTS to design speed of 180 kmph using state of the art technologies for Track Structure, Rolling Stock & Signaling System.

| GS CONNECT |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| GS         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| I          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| II         |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| III        |   |   |   | ■ |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| IV         |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| M          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |

### RRTS

The National Capital Region Planning Board (NCRPB), in order to enhance the connectivity within the NCR, has proposed to connect urban, industrial (SEZs/industrial parks), regional and sub-regional centers through a fast rail based Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS). The objective of this system is to reduce dependence of commuters on road based transportation.

The eight identified RRTS corridors are:

1. Delhi – Gurgaon – Rewari – Alwar [DGRA - Project Corridor]
2. Delhi – Ghaziabad – Meerut
3. Delhi – Sonipat – Panipat
4. Delhi – Faridabad – Ballabhgarh – Palwal
5. Delhi – Bahadurgarh – Rohtak
6. Delhi – Shahadra – Baraut
7. Ghaziabad – Khurja
8. Ghaziabad – Hapur

PEPPER IT WITH  
NCRTC, Pod Taxis,  
Hyperloop, NRTU

RRTS, first of its kind project in India, with design speed of 180 kmph will use state of the art technologies for track structure, rolling stock and signalling system. Expertise and experience in India on these technologies for higher speeds being limited, international expertise will be tapped for efficient implementation of project, operation of system and developing capacity in the country.

The NCRPB has decided to implement RRTS in the following three corridors on priority.

1. Delhi – Gurgaon – Rewari – Alwar;
2. Delhi – Sonipat – Panipat; and
3. Delhi – Ghaziabad – Meerut.

### International support for RRTS

Administrador de Infraestructuras Ferroviarias (ADIF), Spain, State-Owned Railway infrastructure company has experience of planning, developing, constructing, operating and maintaining high-speed railway and regional rail systems like ‘Cercanias’ in Madrid. SNCF, the State-owned Railway Company of France, has also expressed willingness to support RRTS projects.

## Supreme Court judgment on child repatriation

### Background

The judgment came in a case where the father took the younger of the two sons from his wife’s custody in the United States and came to India. The mother’s version was that he had taken the boy on the pretext of visiting the neighbourhood mall. A U.S. Court upheld her lawful custody and ordered the man to return his son to his wife.

| GS CONNECT |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| GS         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| I          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| II         |   |   |   | ■ |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| III        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| IV         |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| M          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |

The Supreme Court concluded that the boy, who is five-and-a-half years old, has settled in India, studying in a reputed school here and enjoys his extended family. The apex court allowed the father to retain his son in India. Uprooting the boy from his present situation may be counter-productive, the apex court held.

SC verdict and implications

- ❖ A Supreme Court judgment delivered recently accords courts in India unlimited discretion to determine which parent should have the custody of minor children involved in international parental child abduction.
- ❖ The verdict holds that Indian courts can decline the relief of repatriation of a child to the parent living abroad even if a foreign court, located in the country from where the child was removed, has already passed orders for the child's repatriation.
- ❖ As India is not a signatory to **The Hague Convention of "The Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction"** its verdict is not binding and the welfare of child was of paramount and predominant consideration when such case happens.
- ❖ The judgment, authored by Justice Roy, observed that welfare of the child came first over the repatriation order of the foreign court.

PEPPER IT WITH  
CARA, Adoption Regulations,  
2017, CARINGS

About Hague Convention on Child Abduction

The *Hague Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction* is a multilateral treaty, which seeks to protect children from the harmful effects of abduction and retention across international boundaries by providing a procedure to bring about their prompt return. The "Child Abduction Section" provides information about the operation of the Convention and the work of the Hague Conference in monitoring its implementation and promoting international co-operation in the area of child abduction.

Difference between the "Hague Conference" and the "Hague Conventions"  
The term "Hague Conference on Private International Law" refers to the name of the intergovernmental organisation, whose purpose is "to work for the progressive unification of the rules of private international law" (Article 1 of the Statute of the Hague Conference). The principal method used to achieve this goal consists in the negotiation and drafting of multilateral treaties, which are called "Hague Conventions".

Objectives:

1. to secure the prompt return of children wrongfully removed to or retained in any Contracting State; and
2. to ensure that rights of custody and of access under the law of one Contracting State are effectively respected in the other Contracting States.

International child abduction occurs when one parent unlawfully takes (or retains) a minor child in a country other than the one the child has his/her habitual residence.

Applicable to:

The Convention shall apply to any child who was habitually resident in a Contracting State immediately before any breach of custody or access rights. The Convention shall cease to apply when the child attains the age of 16 years.

Indian Scenario

THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN (INTER-COUNTRY REMOVAL AND RETENTION) BILL, 2016 as recommended by the Law Commission of India is being endorsed by the Ministry Of Women And Child Development which is in line with international conventions to safeguard the interests of parents and children is drafted.



## Soil Health Card (SHC) Scheme

### In News

On the occasion of World Soil Day, Soil Health Card mobile App has been launched by the government to help the farmers. The aim of the Ministry is to provide SHC to all 120 million farm holdings by December, 2017. The second phase began on May 1, 2017, and will continue for the year 2017 to 2019.

| GS CONNECT |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| GS         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| I          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| II         |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| III        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| IV         |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| M          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |

### What is Soil Health Card (SHC) scheme?

Soil Health Card (SHC) is a **Government of India's scheme** promoted by the Department of Agriculture & Co-operation under the Ministry of Agriculture and

PEPPER IT WITH  
iFMS, Krishi Vigyan  
Kendras, MSME Sambandh

#### World Soil Day 2017

- **Theme:** "Caring for the Planet starts from the Ground"
- UN General Assembly designated 5 December 2014 as the first official World Soil Day.
- The date of 5 December for WSD was chosen because it corresponds with the official birthday of H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the King of Thailand, who officially sanctioned the event.

and Farmers' Welfare. It is being implemented through the Department of Agriculture of all the State and Union Territory Governments. A SHC is meant to give each farmer soil nutrient status of his/her holding and advice him/her on the dosage of fertilizers and also the needed soil amendments, that s/he should apply to maintain soil health in the long run. The state governments will prepare yearly action plan on the issue and the cost will be shared in the ratio of 75:25 between the Centre and states.

### What is a Soil Health Card?

SHC is a printed report that a farmer will be handed over for each of his holdings. It will contain the status of his

soil with respect to 12 parameters, namely N,P,K (Macro-nutrients) ; S (Secondary- nutrient) ; Zn, Fe, Cu, Mn, Bo (Micro - nutrients) ; and pH, EC, OC (Physical parameters). Based on this, the SHC will also indicate fertilizer recommendations and soil amendment required for the farm.

SHC informs farmers about nutrients status of the soils along with the recommendation on appropriate dosage of nutrients to improve soil health and fertility. A farm will get the soil card once in every 2 years so that nutrients deficiency can be regularly detected and improved.

The Agriculture Minister informed that the SHC portal has been linked to the Integrated Fertilizer Management System (iFMS) and distribution of fertilizers has started in 16 districts on the basis Soil Health Card recommendation as a pilot scheme

### Features of App

- The app will benefit field-level workers as it will automatically capture GIS coordinates while registering sample details at the time of sample collection in the field and indicate the location from where the sample has been collected.
- This app works like other Geo-tagging apps developed for the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana.
- **The app contains farmers' details including name, Aadhaar card number, mobile number, gender, address, crop details, etc.**



### Border Protection Grid (BPG)

The Union Home Minister chaired a meeting with the Chief Ministers of the Indo-Bangladesh Border (IBB) States, in Kolkata recently. The Home Minister, giving highest priority to making borders secure, had earlier conducted border specific review meetings for Indo-China, Indo-Myanmar, Indo-Pakistan borders.

| GS CONNECT |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| GS         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| I          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| II         |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| III        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| IV         |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| M          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |

#### BPG

It is a multi-pronged and foolproof mechanism to secure Indian border. The grid will comprise of various elements namely physical barriers, non-physical barriers, surveillance system, Intelligence agencies, State Police, BSF and other State and Central agencies. BPG will be supervised by a State level Standing Committee under the Chairmanship of respective Chief Secretaries.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Injupani Bridge,  
BRO, Deopani/Eze  
Bridge

#### Progress Statistics

The Indo-Bangladesh Border covering 5 states of India including Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura and West Bengal is 4096 km long. So far in 3006 km border security infrastructure of fence, roads, floodlights and border out posts (BOPs) are in place and works in the remaining 1090 km are yet to be started. Out of this, 684 km will be secured with fence and the related infrastructure, and the balance 406 km with the non-physical barriers. Although bulk of the infrastructure is in place or under construction, construction in some parts is yet to commence mainly due to land acquisition issues.

#### Significance

1. It will facilitate a systems of legitimate trade and commerce between countries.
2. To facilitate legitimate cross-border movement of people while curbing radicalization, illegal migration, and smuggling of cattle, fake Indian currency notes and drugs etc.
3. **To increase “vigilance” in border areas to control Rohingya influx, armed infiltration, human trafficking, supply of fake Indian currency notes, cross-border terrorism and extremist groups for furthering anti-national activities with ulterior motives and posing threat to internal security.**
4. In the comprehensive review meeting of border management, it emphasized the need to fast track border infrastructure development and to strengthen border security.

### The Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Bill, 2017

#### In News

The Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Bill, 2017 (FRDI Bill), introduced in the Lok Sabha on August 11, 2017, is under consideration of the Joint Committee of the Parliament. The Joint Committee is consulting all the stakeholders on the provisions of the FRDI Bill. Certain misgivings have been expressed in the media regarding **“bail-in”** provisions of the FRDI Bill.

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#### Key Highlights

1. The Bill establishes a Resolution Corporation to monitor financial firms, anticipate risk of failure, take corrective action, and resolve them in case of such failure. The Corporation will also provide deposit insurance up to a certain limit, in case of bank failure.
2. The Resolution Corporation or the appropriate financial sector regulator may classify financial firms under five categories, based on their risk of failure. These categories in the order of increasing risk are: (i) low, (ii) moderate, (iii) material, (iv) imminent, and (v) critical.

PEPPER IT WITH  
DICGC Act, Crony  
capitalism, GNPA's

3. The Resolution Corporation will take over the management of a financial firm once it **is classified as 'critical'**. It will resolve the firm within one year (may be extended by another year).
4. Resolution may be undertaken using methods including: (i) merger or acquisition, (ii) transferring the assets, liabilities and management to a temporary firm, or (iii) liquidation. If resolution is not completed within a maximum period of two years, the firm will be liquidated. The Bill also specifies the order of distributing liquidation proceeds.

#### Key Issues

1. The Resolution Corporation will exercise certain powers including: (i) classification of firms based on risk, and (ii) directing the management of a firm to return their performance based incentive. However, the Bill does not specify a review or appeal mechanism for aggrieved persons to challenge the decision of the Resolution Corporation.
2. A financial firm will have to be **resolved within two years of being classified as 'critical'**. However, the point at which the resolution process ends is not specified in the Bill.
3. Until now it was mandatory for banks to pay a sum to the DICGC as insurance premium. Though the Bill proposes the banks to pay a sum to the Resolution Corporation, it neither specifies the insured amount nor would the amount a depositor be paid. It is thus unclear how much a depositor would be paid in case of liquidation.
4. The Resolution Corporation will be under Finance Ministry with representatives from SEBI, RBI, IRDAI, and PFRDA. The Chairperson, two independent members and other members of the Board would effectively be appointed by the Union Government.

#### The bail-in clause

A “**bail-in**” involves rescuing a financial institution on the brink of failure by making its creditors and depositors take a loss on their holdings. It is the opposite of a “**bail-out**”, which involves the rescue of a financial institution by external agencies, typically governments, using taxpayers’ money.

In other words, instead of the government rescuing a failing bank or any other financial intermediary by **infusing capital, depositors’ funds are being proposed to be used for this purpose**. So, the depositors run the risk of losing their money or facing inordinate delays in realizing the money—and that too may not be the full amount as deposits may get converted into other financial instruments such as equity or a quasi-equity.

#### Way Forward

The bill seeks to deal with insolvency of financial service providers. It provides for establishment of a resolution corporation with powers relating to transfer of assets to a healthy financial firm, merger or amalgamation, liquidation to be initiated by an order of the National Company Law Tribunal.

The Bill says that in case of a bank failure, the proposed corporation will provide deposit insurance up to a certain limit, which has not been specified. Currently, bank deposits of up to Rs 1 lakh are insured. So far the RBI, being the banking regulator, has managed to ensure that depositors remain protected even when bank goes in stress.

Under the new regime, the Resolution Corporation, which becomes the overseeing authority in the case of stressed financial **institutions may not have that kind of ‘moral suasion’ powers and may resort to liquidation**. This, in turn, would test the deposit insurance framework which has remained largely untested in India so far.

#### Viewpoint

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code deals with the corporations that have taken money from the banks but are unable to pay back, the FRDI Bill outlines how the insolvency of a financial intermediary—banks, non-banks and even insurance firms—can be tackled. The need for such a regulation stemmed from the 2008 global financial crisis which killed iconic US investment bank Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. and brought many large financial intermediaries to their knees, forcing large-scale bailouts by governments.

Adultery Law

Background

The legal definition of adultery varies from country to country. Laws related to adultery vary from statute to statute and at some places adultery is considered a crime and the adulterer may even have to face death penalty, while at some places it is not punishable. In few statutes, if either individual is married to someone else, both parties to an adulterous liaison are culpable to the crime. According to Indian jurisdiction, the adultery law comes under Section 497 of the Indian penal code. The laws pertaining to adultery as follows:-

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Section-497- Adultery **“Whoever has sexual intercourse with a person who is and whom he knows or has reason to believe to be the wife of another man, without the consent or connivance of that man, such sexual intercourse not amounting to the offence of rape, is guilty of the offence of adultery, and shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years, or with fine, or with both. In such case, the wife shall not be punishable as an abettor.”**

Section 198(2) in The Code Of Criminal Procedure, 1973  
 For the purposes of sub- section (1), no person other than the husband of the woman shall be deemed to be aggrieved by any offence punishable under section 497 or section 498 of the said Code: Provided that in the absence of the husband, some person who had care of the woman on his behalf at the time when such offence was committed may, with the leave of the Court, make a complaint on his behalf.

Section-498- Enticing or taking away or detaining with criminal intent a married woman **“Whoever takes or entices any woman who is and whom he knows or has reasons to believe to be the wife of any other man, from that man, or from any person having the care of her on behalf of that man, with intent that she may have illicit intercourse with any person or conceals or detains with that intent any such woman, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both”**

PEPPER IT WITH Adultery Divorce, Section 198(1),

Issue

SC has issued notice to the government challenging the constitutionality of of IPC section 497 dealing with Adultery, the Bench has observed that the provision is archaic. It has further noted that in a case of adultery, one person is liable for the offence but the other is absolved, and that the concept of gender neutrality, on which criminal law normally proceeds, is absent.

- I. why does Section 497 treat the man as the adulterer and the married woman as a victim.
- II. the offence of adultery ceases the moment it is established that the husband connived or consented to the adulterous act. So, is a married woman the "property" of her husband or a passive object without a mind of her own?

Analysis

- 1. The provision (Section 497) really creates a dent in the individual independent identity of a woman when the emphasis is laid on the connivance or consent of the husband. This tantamount to subordination of a woman where the Constitution confers (women) equal status.
- 2. It amounts to a violation of a women's fundamental right against discrimination under Article 15 **when law "assumes a patronizing attitude to women."** **“By presuming the woman to be a victim, has the law made a patronizing assumption?**
- 3. The debate in the court centered on the question whether Section 497 demeans a woman to the extent of her being considered the husband's "commodity".
- 4. The petition says, Section 497 IPC is unconstitutional as it discriminates against men and violates Article 14, 15 and 21 as it always hold men as **“the author of the crime”**.

Way Ahead

**Adultery isn't such a grave crime for which one gets a sentence of 5 years (maximum).** Adultery is at best a violation of the terms of agreement between a married couple. As long as it serves as a basis of getting a divorce, makes a man feel morally guilty, hurts his conscience, the punishment has been given, divorce will serve as the punishment. Imprisonment may further destroy his social and family life and may bring defamation along. It also scars the minds of the children as they may not even understand why the father has been imprisoned.

**Is the law not encouraging adultery in the minds of women by this defect in the section? It's not necessary that the woman is always a victim of such crime and not the author of it.** A female too may have an urge to step outside her holy matrimony; otherwise an act of non-consensual sex shall amount to rape. The time has now come when all these questions must be answered. **Vague and illogical laws shouldn't find a place in society. It will make the subjects distant from the rulers and create instability in the legal system.**

**eCourts Mission Mode Project**

In News

The eCommittee, of the Supreme Court of India in association with the Department of Justice (DoJ) of the Government of India held a two day National Conference in which all the Central Project Coordinators of various High Courts connected with the ongoing National eCourts Project along with eCommittee Members, senior officers from DoJ, NIC and many other senior Judicial officers participated.

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eCourts Mission Mode Project

It is one of the National e-Governance projects being implemented in District and Subordinate Courts of the Country. The objectives of the project is to provide designated services to litigants, lawyers and Judiciary through universal computerisation of district and subordinate courts, as well as the upgradation of ICT infrastructure of the Supreme Court and the High Courts.

PEPPER IT WITH  
DoJ, eTaal, eCommittee,  
Nyaya Gram project

Implementation

The eCourts Mission Mode Project (Phase I 2010-15; Phase II 2015-19) is a national eGovernance project for ICT enablement of district and subordinate courts of the country. It is being implemented by the Government of India with a total outlay of 1670 crores (Phase II).

E-Filing facility launched  
e-Filing software has the facility to e-sign uploaded documents. Through e-Filing software, registered advocates and registered parties or persons will be able to file their cases in the district courts.

Target

The major target of the Project are to make whole judicial system ICT enabled by putting in place adequate and modern hardware and connectivity; automation of workflow management in all courts; electronic movement of records from taluka/trial to appeal courts; connecting all courts in the country to the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) through WAN and additional redundant connectivity; computerization of all the courts (around 20400), full Installation and use of Video Conferencing facility

Objective

1. To help judicial administrations of the courts in streamlining their day-to-day activities
2. To assist judicial administration in reducing the pendency of cases
3. To provide transparency of information to the litigants
4. To provide access to legal and judicial databases to the judges.

Benefits of eCourts Project

1. Allows electronic monitoring of court-wise case pendency and other key monitoring parameters with reference to courts.
2. Greater control over management of cases leads to faster disposal of cases and reduction in pendency.
3. Decrease in the time and effort on daily operational activities and a reduction in the movement of stakeholders to courts.
4. Efficient and effective service delivery in consonance with access to justice for all, ensuring fast and fair trials.
5. Citizen can avail of services at the Judicial Service Centre or access the information through the Web at anytime and from anywhere.

Way Forward

The eCourts project has created awareness about computerisation among courts and about the application software, namely, Case Information System, among the important stakeholders including judicial officers and court officials. The project has achieved more than 90% in ICT deployment in terms of asset creation. However, the degree of usage of the eCourts national portal and the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) among users varies across different court complexes. It depends on connectivity, availability of skilled manpower in the court complexes and computer knowledge and training among the users.

**NIC CERT**

In News

Ministry of Law & Justice and Electronics & Information Technology **inaugurated the “NIC-CERT”, a setup** of National Informatics Centre (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology) recently.

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NIC-CERT

NIC-CERT has been set up with the objective of creating a comprehensive framework that integrates world-class security components and inbuilt threat intelligence for detection, prevention and incident response.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 NIC, Eternal Blue,  
 Petya, GoldenEye, Safe  
 City Surveillance

NIC-CERT will operate in close co-ordination and collaboration with other sectoral CERTs and more so with CERT-In.

Setting up **NIC-CERT is MeitY’s initiative** under Digital India aimed at enhancing the security posture of NIC and the Government which will in turn lead to enhanced trust of the citizens as the services offered to them would be configured in a framework that is secure by design.

CERT-In

It is a functional organization of MeitY with the objective of securing Indian cyber space. It provides Incident Prevention and Response services as well as Security quality Management Services. CERT-In is acronym for Indian Computer Emergency Response Team. CERT-In has been designated under Section 70B of Information Technology (Amendment) Act 2008.

Vision & Mission

**Proactive contribution in securing India’s cyber space.**

**To enhance the security of India’s communications and information infrastructure.**

Objectives

1. Preventing cyber-attacks against country
2. Responding to cyber-attacks and minimizing damage and recovery time reduction national vulnerability to cyber-attacks.
3. Enhancing security awareness among citizens.

KSG – (DELHI VN) 9717380832, (DELHI RN) 9811293743, (JAIPUR) 8290800441, (BHOPAL) 7509975361, (PATNA) 7463950774, (INDORE) 7314977441, www.ksgindia.com

## Laqshya-Labour Room Quality Improvement Initiative

### In News

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched LaQshya - Labour Room Quality Improvement Initiative, a Safe Delivery Mobile Application for health workers who manage normal and complicated deliveries in the peripheral areas.

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### Laqshya

It is an initiative to improve the Quality of Core (QoC) in the Labour Room (LR), Operation Theatres (OT) and other mother and child services areas in public health facilities across the country. The program aims to reduce complications and deaths of mothers and babies around the period of child birth which contributes to highest proportion of maternal and newborn deaths.

PEPPER IT WITH  
RMNCH+A, JSY,  
JSSK, RBSK

### Key Components

1. Organisation and standardization of LRs, OTs and Obstetric High Dependency Units/ICUs as per guidelines and standards.
2. Structured QI efforts/process to improve adherence to critical practices around childbirth
3. Environment and process for ensuring improved client satisfaction like “Respectful Maternity Care.”

### Objective

The goal of this initiative is to reduce preventable maternal and new-born mortality, morbidity and stillbirths associated with the care around delivery in Labour room and Maternity OT and ensure respectful maternity care. The initiative plans to conduct quality certification of labour rooms and also incentivize facilities achieving the targets outlined.

### Implementation

This initiative will be implemented in Government Medical Colleges (MCs) besides District Hospitals (DHs), and high delivery load Sub- District Hospitals (SDHs) and Community Health Centres (CHCs).

## Bar candidates from contesting from two seats

### In News

The Supreme Court agreed recently to adjudicate on whether politicians could be barred from contesting from more than one seat in an election and sought assistance from the Attorney General (AG) to decide the issue.

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### Background

In its 2004 proposal, the EC had said that if the law cannot be changed to bar people from contesting on more than one seat, then the winning candidate should bear the cost of the by-election to the seat he or she vacates. The amount then proposed was Rs 5 lakh for state assembly and state legislative council elections and Rs 10 lakh for Lok Sabha polls.

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A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court challenging Section 33(7) of the RPA 1951 that allows a person to contest elections of Parliament and state assemblies from two constituencies.

PEPPER IT WITH Proposed Electoral Reforms (2004), Law Commission Report on Reform of the Electoral Laws

Section 33(6) of RPA

Nothing in this section shall prevent any candidate from being nominated by more than one nomination paper: Provided that not more than four nomination papers shall be presented by or on behalf of any candidate or accepted by the returning officer for election in the same constituency.

Section 33(7) RPA

It permits a candidate to contest any election (Parliamentary, State Assembly, Biennial Council, or bye-elections) from up to two constituencies. The provision was introduced in 1996 prior to which there was no bar on the number of constituencies from which a candidate could contest.

Reason to bar the practice of contesting from more than one seat

- ✓ When a candidate contests from two seats, it is imperative that he has to vacate one of the two seats should he win both. This, apart from the consequent unavoidable financial burden on the public exchequer and the manpower and other resources for holding by-election against the resultant vacancy, would be an injustice to the voters of the constituency which the candidate is quitting from.
- ✓ **The only way out is to make a leader’s candidature void if he or she files a nomination from more than one constituency. Like “one person, one vote”, the principle of “one leader, one constituency” should also be followed. Indeed, Section 70 of the RP Act prevents a leader from holding on to more than one seat.**

**Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL)**

In News

NITI Aayog’s Atal Innovation Mission recently launched the Atal Tinkering Lab’s Community Day. The day marked the Community Drive Initiative in which 25 young Mentors will engage with more than 200 students who are not enrolled in the formal education system.

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Purpose of Community Drive

The Atal Tinkering Lab Community Drive Initiative is aimed at maximizing the impact of Atal Tinkering Labs by extending innovation to children in the community who do not have access to formal educational institutions. The purpose of this initiative is to provide these children with the same educational tools as the students in Atal Tinkering Labs to enable them to become problem solvers.

PEPPER IT WITH STEM, Atal Incubation Centres, SETU

About ATL

ATL is an approach of Central government of India to create an environment of scientific temperament, innovation, creativity amongst Indian Students. It is a step towards a new India. The vision is to cultivate 1 Million children in India as Neoteric Innovators.

Background

The Government of India has setup the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) at NITI Aayog. Realizing the need to create scientific temper and cultivate the spirit of curiosity and innovation among young minds, AIM proposes to support the establishment of a network of Atal Tinkering Laboratories (ATL). ATL is a workspace where young minds can give shape to their ideas through hands-on do-it-yourself mode and learn innovation skills.



### Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)

AIM is Government of India's flagship initiative to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in the country. AIM's objective is to develop new programs and policies for fostering innovation in different sectors of the economy, provide platform and collaboration opportunities for different stakeholders, create awareness and create an umbrella structure to oversee innovation ecosystem of the country.

The Atal Innovation Mission shall have two core functions:

1. Entrepreneurship promotion through Self-Employment and Talent Utilization, wherein innovators would be supported and mentored to become successful entrepreneurs
2. Innovation promotion: to provide a platform where innovative ideas are generated
  - ❖ Atal Tinkering Labs
  - ❖ Atal Incubation Centers
  - ❖ Scale-up support to Established Incubators

## E-Waste in India

### In News

Severe health impacts and environmental damage are widespread in India, due to the final step of the e-waste processing by the informal sector which was highlighted by the report- Global E-waste Monitor 2017 published by the International Telecommunications Union and the UN University.

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E-Parisaraa Pvt. Ltd, **India's first** Government authorized electronic waste recycler started operations from September 2005, is engaged in handling, recycling and reusing of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) in eco-friendly way.

### What is E- waste?

Electronic waste, or e-waste, refers to all items of electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) and its parts that have been discarded by its owner as waste without the intent of re-use. E-waste is also referred to as WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment), electronic waste or e-scrap in different regions and under different

PEPPER IT WITH  
E-Waste (Management)  
Rules, 2016,

circumstances in the world.

### Remarks observed in Global E-waste Monitor 2017 report

1. Over 1 million poor people in India are involved in manual recycling operations, but "most of these people have very low literacy levels with little awareness of the dangers of the operations.
2. Domestically India produced 1.95 million tonnes of e-waste last year -- or about 1.5 kg per person -- and it also imports it from developed countries.
3. Last year, the world produced 44.7 million tonnes of e-waste or 6.1 kg per person, which is four times more than the e-waste produced by each Indian. Only 8.9 million tonnes or 20 per cent--per cent of total global e-waste was recycled.
4. Severe health impacts and environmental damage are widespread in India, due to the final step of the e-waste processing by the informal sector. The dangers **come from "improper and unsafe treatment and disposal through open burning or in dumpsites.**
5. The report estimated that the value of recoverable precious materials like gold, silver, copper, platinum and palladium contained in last year's e-waste was \$55 billion and much of it was going to waste.

In India, among top ten cities, Mumbai ranks first in generating e-waste followed by Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai, Kolkata, Ahmadabad, Hyderabad, Pune, Surat and Nagpur

### Enforcement Agencies in India

Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), Government of India is the nodal agency for policy, planning, promoting and coordinating the environmental programme including electronics waste. Other enforcement bodies namely:

- ❖ Central Pollution Control Board
- ❖ State Pollution Control Boards
- ❖ Directorate General of Foreign Trade

Ninety-five percentage of the e-waste in India is being recycled in non-formal sector and five percentage of the e-waste volume are handled in formal unit.

### E-waste Recycling Practices in India

E-Waste Management Rules, 2016 includes restrictions on usage of hazardous substances as per global best-practices and to prevent e-waste dumping in the country is a subject which is being dealt by Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF). The main features of the regulations are a refundable deposit scheme that incentivizes recycling and parallel to that is the creation of Producer Responsibility Organisations to handle the waste.

The Indonesian island of Bali recently declared a “garbage emergency” in response to the overwhelming amount of plastic waste that has floated ashore and spoiled pristine beaches

### Non-Formal Sector

Non-formal units generally follow the steps such as collection of the e-waste from the rag pickers, disassembly of the products for their useable parts, components, modules, which are having resell value. The rest of the material is chemically treated to recover precious metals. Due to inadequate means, it may cause leaching of hazardous substances to the air, soil, and water. This recycling method has low efficiency and recovery is carried out only for valuable metals like gold, silver, aluminum, copper, etc.

### Formal Sector

Few formal recyclers are operating in India. The processes followed in formal sector are mainly limited to the segregation, dismantling of e-waste till the size reduction stage of printed circuit boards (PCBs) and also treating the slag byproduct in an eco-friendly manner in accordance with these Rules.

### Way Ahead

Most of the e-waste is recycled in India in unorganized units, which engage significant number of manpower. Recovery of metals from PCBs by primitive means is a most hazardous act. Proper education, awareness and most importantly alternative cost effective technology need to be provided so that better means can be provided to those who earn the livelihood from this. A holistic approach is needed to address the challenges faced by India in e-waste management. The problem could become more acute with cheaper cell phones and other equipment becoming available. This means that more people will be able to afford purchasing new equipment, and that more equipment will eventually be discarded. Therefore, there is need for developing systems to safely handle the e-waste and recycle it.

## National Ayush Mission

### In News

The Union Cabinet has approved the continuation of Centrally Sponsored Scheme of National Ayush Mission (NAM) from 01.04.2017 to 31.03.2020 with an outlay of Rs. 2400 crore over the 3 year period.

Department of AYUSH, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India has launched National AYUSH Mission (NAM) during 12th Plan.

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Vision:

1. To provide cost effective and equitable AYUSH health care throughout the country by improving access to the services.
2. To revitalize and strengthen the AYUSH systems making them as prominent medical streams in addressing the health care of the society.
3. To improve educational institutions capable of imparting quality AYUSH education
4. To promote the adoption of Quality standards of AYUSH drugs and making available the sustained supply of AYUSH raw-materials.

The Ministry of AYUSH was formed on 9th November 2014 to ensure the optimal development and propagation of AYUSH systems of health care. Earlier it was known as the Department of Indian System of Medicine and Homeopathy (ISM&H) which was created in March 1995 and renamed as Department of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) in November 2003, with focused attention for development of Education and Research in Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy.

Objectives:

1. To provide cost effective AYUSH Services, with a universal access through upgrading AYUSH Hospitals and Dispensaries, co-location of AYUSH facilities at Primary Health Centres (PHCs), Community Health Centres (CHCs) and District Hospitals (DHs).
2. To strengthen institutional capacity at the state level through upgrading AYUSH educational institutions, State Govt. ASU&H Pharmacies, Drug Testing Laboratories and ASU & H enforcement mechanism.
3. Support cultivation of medicinal plants by adopting Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) so as to provide sustained supply of quality raw materials and support certification mechanism for quality standards, Good Agricultural/Collection/Storage Practices.
4. Support setting up of clusters through convergence of cultivation, warehousing, value addition and marketing and development of infrastructure for entrepreneurs.

PEPPER IT WITH National Tobacco Control Programme, LDF-Mobile App

Way Ahead

The NAM is addressing the gaps in health services through supporting the efforts of State/UT Governments for providing AYUSH health services/education in the country, particularly in vulnerable and far-flung areas. Under NAM special focus is given for specific needs of such areas and for allocation of higher resources in their Annual Plans. The basic objective of NAM is to promote AYUSH medical systems through cost effective AYUSH services, strengthening of educational systems, facilitate the enforcement of quality control of Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani & Homoeopathy (ASU &H) drugs. It envisages flexibility of implementation of the programs which will lead to substantial participation of the State Governments/UT. The positive features of the Indian systems of medicine namely their diversity and flexibility; accessibility; affordability, a broad acceptance by a large section of the general public; comparatively lesser cost and growing economic value, have great potential to make them providers of healthcare that the large sections of our people need.

**National Medical Commission Bill, 2017**

In News

More than 2.9 lakh doctors had gone on a 12-hour nationwide strike in protest against the Bill, which seeks to allow those practicing alternative and traditional medicine to practice allopathy after completing a "bridge course".

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## Background

The National Medical Commission Bill, 2017 was introduced by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, in Lok Sabha on December 29, 2017. The Bill seeks to repeal the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956 and provide for a medical education system which ensures: (i) availability of adequate and high quality medical professionals, (ii) adoption of the latest medical research by medical professionals, (iii) periodic assessment of medical institutions, and (iv) an effective grievance redressal mechanism.

## Key features of the Bill

### Constitution of the National Medical Commission:

The Bill sets up the National Medical Commission (NMC). Within three years of the passage of the Bill, state governments will establish State Medical Councils at the state level. The NMC will consist of 25 members, appointed by the central government. A Search Committee will recommend names to the central government for the post of Chairperson, and the part time members. These posts will have a maximum term of four years. The Search Committee will consist of seven members including the Cabinet Secretary and three experts nominated by the central government (of which two will have experience in the medical field).

### Members of the NMC:

(i) the Chairperson, (ii) the President of the Under-Graduate Medical Education Board, (iii) the President of the Post-Graduate Medical Education Board, (iv) the Director General of Health Services, Directorate General of Health Services, (v) the Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research, and (vi) five members (part-time) to be elected by the registered medical practitioners from amongst themselves from the prescribed regional constituencies under the Bill.

### Medical Advisory Council:

Under the Bill, the central government will constitute a Medical Advisory Council. The Council will be the primary platform through which the states/union territories can put forth their views and concerns before the NMC. Further, the Council will advise the NMC on measures to enable equitable access to medical education.

### Entrance examinations:

There will be a uniform National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test for admission to under-graduate medical education in all medical institutions regulated by the Bill. The NMC will specify the manner of conducting common counselling for admission in all such medical institutions.

### Functions of the National Medical Commission:

Functions of the NMC include: (i) framing policies for regulating medical institutions and medical professionals, (ii) assessing the requirements of healthcare related human resources and infrastructure, (iii) ensuring compliance by the State Medical Councils of the regulations made under the Bill, (iv) framing guidelines for determination of fees for up to 40% of the seats in the private medical institutions and deemed universities which are regulated as per the Bill.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Indian Medical Council Act,  
Indian Medical Association

The Medical Council of India was established in 1934 under the Indian Medical Council Act, 1933, now repealed, with the main function of establishing uniform standards of higher qualifications in medicine and recognition of medical qualifications in India and abroad.

According to bill, the Ethics and Medical Registration (EMR) Board shall maintain a separate National Register including the names of licensed AYUSH practitioners. The names of BAMS (Bachelor of Ayurveda Medicine and Surgery) and BHMS (Bachelor of Homeopathic Medicine and Surgery) graduates are already registered with their respective councils.

The Bill allows practitioners of Ayurveda and other traditional Indian systems of medicine the licence to prescribe allopathic drugs after they have passed a **'bridge course'**.

Way Ahead

A recent paper by Brookings India, a policy research institution titled—Restructuring the Medical Council of India— stated that the National Medical Commission Bill introduces much needed reform to the Indian accreditation system, however, it lacks in structural integrity, structural vision, and institutional vision. “it recommend tackling structural integrity by removing/limiting the members of the National Medical Commission in the Medical Advisory Council. To improve structural vision, it recommend the creation of Regional Medical Councils as the compliance wing of the Medical Assessment and Rating Board, and creating a fifth sub-board to set standards for both individual medical professionals and professional medical affiliations.

**North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS)**

In News

The cabinet approved the introduction of new central sector scheme of NESIDS from 2017-18 with 100 per cent funding from the central government to fill the gaps in creation of infrastructure in specified sectors till March, 2020.

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Features of NESIDS:

The new scheme will broadly cover creation of infrastructure under following sectors:-

1. Physical infrastructure development
2. Water supply
3. Power sector and Connectivity
4. Infrastructure of social sectors of education and health.
5. Encourage tourism, thereby providing employment opportunities to the local youth.
6. To promote industrialization in the northeastern states.

|   |
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| PEPPER IT WITH<br>North East Development<br>Summit, CCISS, NEIIPP,<br>NLCPR<br>Universal Service Obligation<br>Fund, vanbandhu kalyan yojna |
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Benefits of NESIDS:

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

The CCEA has revised financial powers for approval of capital investment subsidy claims up to Rs 500 crore which will be now approved by the Minister of Commerce and Industry. This will facilitate expeditious settlement of claims.

The Union Cabinet has approved the continuation of the existing Non Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR) scheme with funding pattern of 90:10 till March, 2020 with an outlay of Rs.5300.00 crore. It would enable completion of projects under NESIDS.

Way Ahead

The scheme will act as a catalyst in overall development of the region in the years to come. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, also approved the capital investment subsidy amounting to Rs 264.67 crore to four industrial units in the North-Eastern Region, including Sikkim, under the Central Capital Investment Subsidy Scheme (CCISS), 2007 of North East Industrial Investment and Promotion Policy (NEIIPP), 2007.

The grant of subsidy to the industrial units will not only provide incentives to the operational units but also boost confidence of existing investors as well as potential investors in the states of NER.

## India's first social audit law - Meghalaya

### In News

Meghalaya on recently became the first state in India to operationalise a law that makes social audit of government programs and schemes a part of government practice.

### Background

THE MEGHALAYA COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC SERVICES SOCIAL AUDIT ACT, 2017 is enacted to review delivery of public services and implementation of government schemes and programs through a participatory social audit by government and the stakeholders; by ensuring timely review and concurrent course-correction in the delivery of schemes and programs, to achieve realization of desired development outcomes.

### Key Facts of Social Audit Law

1. The legislation provides a legal framework for **allowing citizens' participation in the planning of** development, selection of beneficiaries, concurrent monitoring of programs, redress of grievances, and audit of works, services, and programs on an annual basis. The legislation is applicable to 11 departments and 21 schemes.
2. A social audit facilitator will be appointed to conduct the audit directly with the people. He will present findings to the Gram Sabha, who will add inputs and the result will finally go to the auditors.
3. To monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of the development programs and public services in a time-bound manner and to initiate course-correction measures wherever necessary
4. To monitor and encourage transparency in the delivery mechanisms and institutions engaged in the implementation of the developmental programs and public services.

PEPPER IT WITH  
NREGA, CAG, Hamara Paisa,  
Hamara Hisab

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### What are social audits?

- ✓ Social audits refer to a legally mandated process where potential and existing beneficiaries evaluate the implementation of a program by comparing official records with ground realities.
- ✓ The public hearings that social audits conclude with remain its soul.
- ✓ The proceedings cannot be scripted, and the entire social audit is often a dramatic process of redistribution of power based on evidence and fact.
- ✓ These audits were first made statutory in a 2005 Rural Employment Act.

### Objectives of Social Audit

- ✓ Accurate identification of requirements.
- ✓ Prioritization of developmental activities as per requirements.
- ✓ Proper utilization of funds.
- ✓ Conformity of the developmental activity with the stated goals.
- ✓ Quality of service.

### Social Audit vs. Financial Audit

- Social Audit is often misinterpreted as another form of audit to determine the accuracy of financial or statistical statement or reports and the fairness of the facts they present.
- A conventional financial audit focuses on financial records and their scrutiny by an external auditor following accounting principles whereas the Social Audit is much more holistic having a greater scope for measuring, understanding and improving the social performance of an activity of an organisation.

Benefits of Social Audit

- ✓ Involvement of people in developmental activities ensures that money is spent where it is actually needed.
- ✓ Reduction of wastages.
- ✓ Reduction in corruption.
- ✓ Awareness among people.
- ✓ Promotes integrity and a sense of community among people.
- ✓ Improves the standard of governance.

Why Social Audit is required in India?

1. Former Prime Minister late Shri Rajiv Gandhi had once famously said that only 16 Paise out of one Rupee sanctioned by government reach poor.
2. **Aiyar Swaminathan had commented that “Likelihood of money reaching the poor would be higher if we simply drop the money by helicopter or gas balloon into rural areas than route it through employment programs”.**
3. The situation with respect to our government/public schemes has not changed much since then. Even today a crisis of credibility, confidence and trust persists with respect to government projects, programs and schemes.
4. High economic growth is threatened by corruption at all levels. Leakage of funds in public programs and misuse of shareholders and stakeholders resources is a common scenario.
5. There has been a growing tendency of depriving the marginalised in the name of **“Development”**. **Of late, it is being noticed that ‘Social Conscience’ is fast eroding and the Means don’t matter—** the End justifies any means.
6. Inequitable resource allocation is a common concern in the country. This background calls for the culture of social audits to take roots in the country, in both private and public sector.

**IMA regulations on antibiotic prescriptions**

In News

Alarmed over the growing antibiotic resistance that has made it difficult to treat many bacterial infections, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) has advised doctors to follow strictly guidelines while prescribing antibiotics.

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Issue

Despite the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) setting up the National Anti-Microbial Resistance Research and Surveillance Network (AMRRSN) to enable compilation of data of such resistance at different levels of healthcare and publishing of treatment guidelines for anti-microbial use in common syndromes, the problem of multi-drug resistance due to widespread and indiscriminate use of antimicrobial and antibiotic drugs continues unabated in the country.

PEPPER IT WITH  
MDR TB, Moscow  
Declaration (on HIV& TB)

Initiative to put check on it

1. To address this issue, the IMA, at the Antimicrobial Resistance Conference held recently, advised its members to mandatorily restrict the usage of antibiotics for treatment of proven bacterial infections. It also came out with a policy on anti-microbial resistance.

Antibiotic Resistance refers to resistance developed by bacteria against antibiotics or the ability of bacteria to mutate or change so as to resist the effects of antibiotics. The more we use them, and the more we abuse them, the less effective they become.

2. When prescribing antibiotics, clear instructions should be given to the patient about no refill of antibiotic prescription without the signature of the doctor. The role of antibiotics should be discussed in an informed consent.
3. No antibiotics should be prescribed for small bowel diarrhoea, fever with cough and cold, dengue, chikungunya, malaria and fever with rashes. However, early initiation of antibiotics is the rule in suspected sepsis bacterial pneumonia meningitis and confirmed tuberculosis cases.
4. **The government should conduct random “prescription audits” in both private and public sectors to improve medication safety.**
5. IMA has advised doctors to strictly follow the guidelines while prescribing antibiotics. ICMR had set up National Anti-Microbial Resistance Research and Surveillance Network to assist in checking indiscriminate use of antimicrobial and antibiotic drugs through verifiable data.

Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organisation of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well-being of the community at large.

Some WHO initiatives

1. World Antibiotic Awareness Week
2. The Global Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance System (GLASS)
3. Global Antibiotic Research and Development Partnership (GARDP)
4. Interagency Coordination Group on Antimicrobial Resistance (IACG)

Way Ahead

The world urgently needs to change the way it prescribes and uses antibiotics. Even if new medicines are developed, without behaviour change, antibiotic resistance will remain a major threat. Behaviour changes must also include actions to reduce the spread of infections through vaccination, hand washing, practising safer sex, and good food hygiene.

Antibiotic resistance is rising to dangerously high levels in all parts of the world. New resistance mechanisms are emerging and spreading globally, threatening our ability to treat common infectious diseases. A growing list of infections – such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, blood poisoning, gonorrhoea, and foodborne diseases – are becoming harder, and sometimes impossible, to treat as antibiotics become less effective.

**E-Cigarette- Danger without warning**

In News

The government is examining the legal implications and health effects of e-cigarettes and has constituted three groups to study the various aspects of e-cigarettes under the Ministry of Health.

E-cigarettes or electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS)

ENDS, of which electronic cigarettes are the most common prototype, are devices that do not burn or use tobacco leaves but instead vaporise a solution called ‘juice/ e-juice /Nicotine juice’ the user then inhales. The main constituents of the solution, in addition to nicotine when nicotine is present, are propylene glycol, with or without glycerol and flavouring agents. ENDS solutions and emissions contain other chemicals, some of them considered to be toxicants.

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The compound annual growth rate of the Indian e-cigarette industry was 63.38 per cent in the period 2013-2018.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has red flagged the growing market for e-cigarettes in India.



The WHO submitted a report on ENDS at 6<sup>th</sup> session Conference of Parties (COP) on Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (COP-6) held at Moscow.

PEPPER IT WITH WHO Tobacco Free Initiative's, COTPA Act

Observations by Expert Study Group

The Health Ministry has created 3 study group to study the effect of the e-cigarette. One was to study the legal implications of this e-nicotine drug induce system, another was to go into the health effects and the other was to study advocacy. "All three sub-groups have submitted their reports.

1. As recommended by an expert group, the import, manufacture, distribution, sale, including online promotion, advertising etc. in any manner of nontherapeutic nicotine as an extract or in chemical form and e-cigarettes, remains illegal and a violation of existing laws.
2. The advisory is likely to mention that products such as e-cigarettes, electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), nicotine and flavoured hookah are extremely harmful to health and that they have not been approved in any form by the ministry of health and family welfare as these products contain carcinogens and other hazardous products.
3. Nicotine has recently been declared as a lethal and hazardous substance under the Environment (Protection) Act and Insecticide Act.
4. There is a growing market in India as well, with companies like ITC announcing a foray into the e-cigarette manufacture. Along with the traditional cigarette manufacturing, there is a parallel industry of e-cigarette like devices growing in India, which needs to be regulated.
5. According to the senior health ministry official, the health ministry is in quandary over whether to ban e- cigarettes under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, or the Poisons Act 1919.
6. Some states, including Punjab, Chandigarh, Haryana, Kerala, Mizoram, Karnataka, and Jammu and Kashmir have already banned e-cigarettes as an unapproved drug.

Way Ahead

In this light, it is recommended that first, the Indian government impose appropriate restrictions on the sale and advertisement, online and otherwise, of e-cigarettes, including proper health warnings, in order to plug the existing regulatory vacuum. This should be done with immediate effect, and simultaneously the government should also commission independent scientific research on the benefits and risks posed by these products in the Indian context. On the basis of this research, it may then make an informed decision regarding their regulation as tobacco imitation products or as therapeutic products.

**VAHAN - The Integrated Solution for Vehicle Registration**

About

- 'Vahan' is the name of the national vehicle registry, which intends to collate all the information available with road transport authorities for easy access by both citizens and regulators.
- VAHAN is a highly flexible and comprehensive system that takes care of all the burdensome activities of Vehicle Registration, leaving the Transport Department to deal with more important business issues. The software enables the processes at RTO/DTO/MLO/SDM involving Vehicle Registration, Fitness, Taxes, Permits & Enforcement to get computerized.
- The State Transport Department is governed by both Central Motor Vehicle Regulation (CMVR) and state specific Motor Vehicle Regulation (State MVR). Consequently, Vahan was conceptualized as a product that would capture the functionalities as mandated by CMVR as well as state MVRs.

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- Vahan now contains about 21.68 crore vehicle records in its repository. Vahan allows access to all details related to vehicles such as registration number, chassis/engine number, body/fuel type, colour, manufacturer and model and provides various online services to citizens. Driving Licence and related data are **automated through a separate application called ‘Sarathi’**.

PEPPER IT WITH  
e-Vahan, Sarathi,

Objective

The objective behind taking this step is to bring more transparency to the entire process of tax collection and, secondly, to create a smart system so that people can pay taxes online without having to visiting the motor vehicles office – where they often face inconvenience.

VAHAN Services

- Vehicle Registration
  1. New Vehicle Registration
  2. Renewal of Registration
  3. Transfer of Ownership
  4. Change of Address etc.
- Permit
  1. Issue of National & Interstate Permit
  2. Renewal of Permit
- Taxes
  1. State-wise tax calculation & Payment
- Fitness
  1. Issue of Fitness Certificate
  2. Renewal of Fitness Certificate
- Enforcement
  1. Issue of Challan
  2. Settlement of Penalty Amount

Why it is important?

- Vahan has been designed to capture all the information mandated by the Central Motor Vehicle Act 1988 as well as State Motor Vehicle Rules. Besides, centralisation of data through the creation of the State and National Registries, Vahan also helps address the needs of RTOs, police and motor insurers.
- The Police Department will also have access to the registry. The information available online can help in resolving crimes such as theft of vehicles and usage of fake registration numbers.
- Enforcement activities such as issue of challan and settlement of penalty amount can also be carried out through Vahan. Banks, which may have given out loans for vehicle purchases, will also have access to the National/State Registry to track the status of vehicles under lien.
- Motor insurance companies have also been encouraged to upload data of insured vehicles on Vahan. When the process is completed, it will help in tracking vehicles that have not obtained an insurance cover or vehicles that have not renewed their covers.

eHRMS - Manav Sampada

About

The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS, PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, launched the electronic-Human Resource Management System (e-HRMS) recently during the observance of Good Governance Day.

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The eHRMS an online application helps to facilitate the proper monitoring, manpower planning, recruitments, Postings,

PEPPER IT WITH  
PRAGATI, Good Governance

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Promotion, Transfer based on employee skill set, service history. National Informatics Centre (Himachal Pradesh) developed “eHRMS”, which brought a breakthrough in managing Human resource in Government efficiently and effectively. “Manav Sampada” was not only the solution to manpower planning but its integration with other e-Governance applications extended its ambit to various other Government G2G, G2E and G2C services.

Features of eHRMS

1. Personnel Information System- which has functionalities of self-updating by employees.
2. Leave- Leave of all kind may be claimed and sanctioned through website that will become part of service book.
3. LTC- All function related to LTC application, Eligibility Check, Sanction, Advance claim, Final reimbursements, Leave encashment.
4. Loan/Advances- All kind of loan and advances can be claimed, sanctioned and paid through it.
5. Tour: - All tour applications to be submitted through system and TA advance may also be claimed.

The e-service book for DOPT employees launched on March 30, 2017 was also an initiative taken to fully automate it with live updating of all records. It was envisaged to go on a bigger and single platform for all central government employees and all transactions from Hiring to Retiring of a government servant should be fully automated.

Significance

This will reduce employee’s grievances to a certain extent. Even availability of online data of employees will help organisation to take many administrative decisions easily like planning of recruitments, posting of official to a task as per their experience and qualification. It will also help employees to concentrate more on public service once free from personal anxiety of getting their due work done. That will enhance public delivery more satisfactory and more employees will be available for core work of the Government than maintaining of Service Book.

Availability of centralized data will enable Government for policy research and planning as such educational qualifications and other competencies and deficiencies may be easily obtained. It will enable Government to take transfer and posting decisions more pragmatically based on reliable first hand data.

**PRASAD Scheme**

In News

The parliamentary standing committee on transport, tourism and culture has referred to the tourism ministry's flagship Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (Prasad) scheme as one whose conceptualisation is "radically wrong" and which needs a "complete relook".

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Issue

The 31-member committee, chaired by Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien and with 15 BJP MPs as members, presented its report in Parliament recently and punched holes in implementation of the scheme,

PEPPER IT WITH Swadesh Darshan, HRIDAY, Rural Tourism

1. The standing committee noted that the scheme was not running properly even three years after its launch. It said, "States are not actually buying the idea of tourism department and their plan.
2. Pulling up the tourism ministry for overlaps between 'Prasad' and other schemes run by the ministry, and for slow implementation of the scheme since its inception in 2014, the standing committee appeared to be dissatisfied with the government's response blaming state government agencies for the delay.

3. There is no coordination with the central government.
4. Lapses in managing its overseas offices

About PRASAD

PRASAD scheme aims to drive national mission for rejuvenation and spiritual augmentation of important religious destinations and to position religious tourism as a major economic growth and job creation.

**Under the 'PRASAD' scheme the focus is on development and beautification of the identified pilgrimage destinations. Whereas, in the 'Spiritual Circuit' identified under the Swadesh Darshan scheme, the thrust is on development of particular thematic circuit consisting of various religious/spiritual destination in a State and Union Territory.**

Cities

There are 25 sites in 16 states which are under PRASAD scheme namely Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttarakhand, AP, UP, Jharkhand, WB, Gujarat, Bihar, Kerala, Assam, TN, J&K, Odisha, MP and Maharashtra.

**4. Mission Objectives:**

- Integrated development of pilgrimage destinations in a planned, prioritized and sustainable manner to provide complete religious tourism experience.
- Harness pilgrimage tourism for its direct and multiplier effects on employment generation and economic development.
- Follow community-based development and pro-poor tourism concept in development of the pilgrimage destinations.
- Leveraging public capital and expertise.
- Enhancing the tourist attractiveness in a sustainable manner by developing world-class infrastructure in the religious destination.
- Creating awareness among the local communities about the importance of tourism for them in terms of increase in sources of income, improved living standards and overall development of the area.
- Promote local arts, culture, handicrafts, cuisine, etc., to generate livelihood in the identified places.

**Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill 2017**

In News

Anti-trafficking bill is facing stiff opposition from sex workers, who claim it has failed to consider a top court panel's recommendation that they be included in the fight against the menace. One major area of concern in the draft bill is that it has no provision for sex work done with consent or voluntary sex work.

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Objective

The Bill aims to prevent trafficking of persons and to provide protection and rehabilitation to the victims of trafficking and to create a legal, economic, and social environment against trafficking of persons and for matters connected therewith or incidental. It is initiated by the women & child development ministry.

Key Highlights

List of form of trafficking

Listing out the 'aggravated forms of trafficking', the bill speaks about offences such as forced labour, or bonded labour, by using violence, intimidation, inducement, promise of payment of money, deception or coercion. Also, it mentions trafficking after administering any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance or alcohol, or for the purpose of marriage or under the pretext of marriage.

MINIMUM 7 YEARS IN JAIL

➤ Bill proposes rigorous imprisonment of at least 7 years, extendable to 10 years, for those engaging in 'buying or selling' a person. They will also be fined over ₹1 lakh

➤ Anybody who distributes or sells or stores, in any electronic or printed form, incidents of sexual assault



for extortion or coercion of victim or his/her family, or for unlawful gain, can be jailed for 3-7 years

➤ Apart from national anti-trafficking bureau, bill also proposes state-level anti-trafficking officers

➤ Bill spells out measures for relief & rehabilitation of victims of trafficking, and seeks formation of a committee

### Central Anti-Trafficking Advisory Board

The Central Government shall constitute a Central Anti-Trafficking Advisory Board headed by the Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development and representatives from the concerned Ministries, State/UTs and members from civil society organisations as may be prescribed.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Global Slavery  
Index, JJ Act, NCRB

### Anti-Trafficking Bureau

The bill proposes the establishment of a national anti-trafficking bureau, which shall be entrusted with the gamut of issues aimed at controlling and tackling the menace under various forms. These include coordination, monitoring and surveillance of illegal movement of persons and their prevention.

The bureau will also be entrusted with increasing cooperation and coordination with authorities concerned and organisations in foreign countries for strengthening operational and long-term intelligence for investigation of trafficking cases, and driving in mutual legal assistance.

### State Anti-Trafficking Committee

The appropriate Government shall establish State Anti-Trafficking Committee to oversee the implementation of this Act and advise the State/UT Government and District Anti-Trafficking Committee on matters relating to prevention of trafficking, protection and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking in persons.

### Punishment

Whoever commits the offence of aggravated form of trafficking of a person shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than 10 years, but which may extend to life imprisonment and shall be liable to fine that shall not be less than Rs 1 lakh, the bill proposes.

For repeat offenders, it suggests imprisonment for life which shall mean imprisonment for the remainder of that person natural life, apart from a fine that will not be less than Rs 2 lakh.

### Rehabilitation and Social Integration Initiative

#### Special Homes

The appropriate Government shall maintain either directly or through voluntary organisations or use the existing shelter homes, as the case may be, one or more Special Homes in each district for the purpose of providing long- term institutional support for the rehabilitation of victims, in the manner as may be prescribed.

#### Protection Homes

(1) The appropriate Government shall maintain either directly or through voluntary organisations, protection homes selected and managed in the manner, as may be prescribed for the immediate care and protection of the victims. (2) Protection Homes shall provide for shelter, food, clothing, counselling and medical care that is necessary for the rescued victims and such other services in the manner, as may be prescribed.

### Statistic

As per data released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), human trafficking numbers rose by almost 20% in 2016 against the previous year. NCRB said there were 8,132 human trafficking cases last year against 6,877 in 2015, with the highest number of cases reported in West Bengal (44% of cases), and followed by Rajasthan (17%). Of the 15,379 victims who were caught in trafficking, 10,150 were female and 5,229 males.

### Way Forward

NCRB said the purpose of trafficking included forced labour; sexual exploitation for prostitution; other forms of sexual exploitation; domestic servitude; forced marriage; child pornography; begging; drug peddling; and removal of organs. It is believed that the numbers recorded by NCRB are a far cry to actual incidences of trafficking as many cases went unreported with many people still unaware of the crime or lacking confidence to seek police help. The recognition of human trafficking as a massive problem is long overdue. According to the UN

office for Drugs and Crime, South Asia, with India at its centre, is the fastest growing region for human trafficking in the world. The Global Slavery Index of 2016, published by the Australia-based rights group Walk Free Foundation, says that Indian is home to the largest number of enslaved people in the world, with about 18 million children and adults victim to modern slavery.

## Urja Ganga Gas Pipeline Project

### In News

Urja Ganga gas pipeline will now be extended by 750 km to connect the seven North-Eastern states of the country announced by Petroleum ministry. Project aim is to bring the north-east under the natural gas grid. Work has already started on Jagdishpur-Haldia and Bokaro-Dhamra region of the pipeline extending it to Guwahati.

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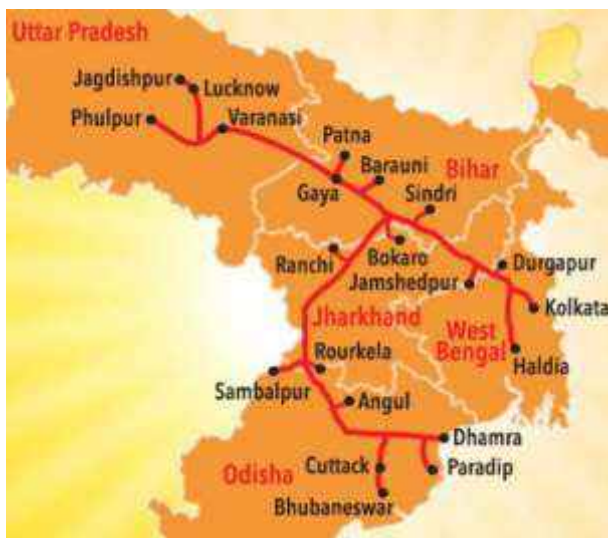
### Objective

The main objective of Urja Ganga project is to provide piped cooking gas to the residents of Varanasi within next two years. However, in the later one year the project will be expanded to cater to millions of people in states including Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha and North eastern region.

PEPPER IT WITH  
PMUY, PAHAL,  
ISPRL, PETROTECH

### Key Highlights

1. In Varanasi alone, about 800 kilometers of pipeline would be laid under the scheme to benefit about 50,000 households and 20,000 vehicles for PNG and CNG respectively.
2. The project would also enable the availability of about 5 Lakh LPG gas cylinders to the rural population in next 5 years. Construction of 20 CNG stations is also the part of project.
3. It will cater to energy needs of five states, covering 40 districts and 2,600 villages. It will pave way for revival of three large fertilizer plants, enable industrialisation of over 20 cities and development of city gas network in 7 cities, generating a large number of jobs.
4. The original Rs 12,940-crore, 2,655-km Urja Ganga project plans to fulfill the energy requirements of 40 districts and 2,600 villages across Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal by 2020
5. In addition, the pipeline will now be extended with an aim to help in better utilisation of gas deposits in Manipur, Silchar Valley and Arunachal Pradesh, and in turn create more jobs in the region.



### Other Facts

The Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL) has constructed Strategic Crude Oil Reserves with storage capacity of 5.33 Million Metric Tonnes (MMT) at three locations Visakhapatnam, Mangalore and Padur.

It has been decided that the country will leapfrog directly from BS-IV to BS-VI fuel standards and BS-VI standards will be implemented from April 1, 2020.

## The Indian Institute of Petroleum and Energy Bill, 2017

The Indian Institute of Petroleum and Energy Bill, 2017 was introduced by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas in Lok Sabha. The bill seeks to promote education and research in the area of petroleum, hydrocarbons and energy. Promotion of research and development for the benefit of oil, gas, petrochemical industry and the energy sector has also been identified as a focus area for the institution.

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1. Institution of national importance: The Bill establishes the Indian Institute of Petroleum and Energy, Vishakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. It declares the Institute as an institution of national importance. The Institute aims to provide high quality education and research focussing on the themes of petroleum, hydrocarbons and energy.
2. Authorities of the Institute: The key authorities of the Institute are as follows: (i) the General Council; (ii) the Board of Governors; (iii) the Senate; and (iv) any other authorities declared by the statutes.
3. Composition and powers of the Board of Governors: The Board of Governors will comprise 13 members including: (i) the President (to be appointed by the central government); (ii) the Director of the Institute; (iii) two persons from the Board of Directors of companies that **contribute to the Institute's endowment fund (to be nominated by the central government)**; (iv) five eminent experts in the field of petroleum technology and energy; and (v) two professors of the Institute.
4. Powers of the Board of Governors include: (i) instituting courses of study and laying down standards of proficiency and other academic distinctions; (ii) considering proposals for taking loans for the Institute; (iii) creating academic, administrative, technical and other posts; and (iv) fixing fees and other charges.
5. Composition and powers of the General Council: The Council will comprise up to 20 members including the: (i) Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (Chairman); (ii) Chairman, Indian Oil Corporation Limited; (iii) Secretary, Oil Industry Development Board; and (iv) Principal Advisor (Energy), NITI Aayog.
6. The Senate: The Senate is the principal academic body responsible for the maintenance of standards of instruction, education and examination in the Institute.
7. Settlement of disputes: Any dispute arising out of a contract between the Institute and any of its employees will be referred to an internally constituted Tribunal of Arbitration. The Tribunal will consist of: (i) one member appointed by the Institute; (ii) one member nominated by the employee; and (iii) an umpire appointed by the Visitor (President of India). The decision of the Tribunal of Arbitration will be considered final.

## Good Governance Day

### In News

The government has decided to celebrate former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birthday as "good governance day" from this year onwards and has asked party Members of Parliament to spend an hour on December 25 in their constituency to work for cleanliness as part of the Swachh Bharat programme.

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### Good Governance

Good governance has 8 major characteristics. It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society.

### Objectives of Good Governance Day:

1. To make people aware about the government commitment for providing a transparent and accountable administration in the country.
2. To enhance the welfare and betterment of the people.
3. To standardise the government functioning and to make it a highly effective and accountable governance for the citizens of the country.
4. To implement the good and effective policies to complete a mission of good governance in India.
5. To enhance the growth and development in the country through good governance.
6. To bring citizens closer to the government to make them active participants in the good governance process

### Characteristics of Good Governance

#### 1. Participation:

Participation by both men and women is a key cornerstone of good governance. Participation could be either direct or through legitimate intermediate institutions or representatives. It is important to point out that representative democracy does not necessarily mean that the concerns of the most vulnerable in society would be taken into consideration in decision making. Participation needs to be informed and organized. This means freedom of association and expression on the one hand and an organized civil society on the other hand.

#### 2. Rule of law

Good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced impartially. It also requires full protection of human rights, particularly those of minorities. Impartial enforcement of laws requires an independent judiciary and an impartial and incorruptible police force.

#### 3. Transparency

Transparency means that decisions taken and their enforcement are done in a manner that follows rules and regulations. It also means that information is freely available and directly accessible to those who will be affected by such decisions and their enforcement. It also means that enough information is provided and that it is provided in easily understandable forms and media.

#### 4. Responsiveness

Good governance requires that institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe.

#### 5. Consensus oriented

There are several actors and as many viewpoints in a given society. Good governance requires mediation of the different interests in society to reach a broad consensus in society on what is in the best interest of the whole community and how this can be achieved. It also requires a broad and long-term perspective on what is needed for sustainable human development and how to achieve the goals of such development. This can only result from an understanding of the historical, cultural and social contexts of a given society or community.

#### 6. Equity and inclusiveness

**A society's wellbeing depends on ensuring that all its members feel that they have a stake in it** and do not feel excluded from the mainstream of society. This requires all groups, but particularly the most vulnerable, have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being.

#### 7. Effectiveness and efficiency

Good governance means that processes and institutions produce results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal. The concept of efficiency in the context of good governance also covers the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the environment.



### 8. Accountability

Accountability is a key requirement of good governance. Not only governmental institutions but also the private sector and civil society organizations must be accountable to the public and to their institutional stakeholders. Who is accountable to whom varies depending on whether decisions or actions taken are internal or external to an organization or institution. In general an organization or an institution is accountable to those who will be affected by its decisions or actions. Accountability cannot be enforced without transparency and the rule of law.

## Myanmar Signs Pact with Bangladesh over Rohingya Repatriation

Myanmar and Bangladesh have signed an initial deal for the possible repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims who fled violence in Rakhine state.

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India, Myanmar ink pact for socio-economic development of Rakhine State

India and Myanmar inked an agreement on restoration of normalcy and development of the Rakhine State, from where thousands of Rohingya Muslims recently fled following incidents of violence against the community.

This is the first government to government pact inked by Myanmar with a cooperation partner focused on socio-economic development and livelihood initiatives in the Rakhine State.

Under this MoU, India proposes to take up, among others, a project to build prefabricated housing in Rakhine State so as to meet the immediate needs of the returning people.

The signing took place after a **meeting between Myanmar's de facto leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, and the Bangladeshi foreign minister, Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali in Myanmar's capital, Naypyidaw.**

A joint working group including officials from Bangladesh, Myanmar and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) will be set up in three weeks, and Myanmar would begin to repatriate the refugees within two months.

Myanmar said that it would accept people with identity documents issued by governments in the past. Refugees would have to fill in forms with names of family members, previous addresses in Myanmar, birth dates and a statement of voluntary return.

### What had led to the exodus?

The agreement was welcomed by many countries. Since August, when the Myanmar military began a crackdown on Rohingya villages in Rakhine after a series of terror strikes on army camps, the numbers that have

escaped burning homes and alleged atrocities by the authorities, have risen rapidly, with most seeking shelter across the border in Kutupalong camp of Bangladesh's Cox's Bazaar. The UN has condemned the **violence as a case of "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide", putting pressure on Myanmar's leadership to end it.**

|  |
|--|
| PEPPER IT WITH<br>Cox Bazaar,<br>Thenger Char<br>Island, UNHCR |
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### How did China help?

- What sets this agreement apart is that talks between Bangladesh and Myanmar appear to have been guided not by international agencies, but by China.
- Beijing announced that it favoured a **"three-step" solution, comprising a ceasefire in Rakhine, a bilateral repatriation deal for the Rohingya to Myanmar and long-term solutions including the economic development of the Rohingya areas.**
- Beijing has deep interests in Rakhine, especially in the Kyaukpyu Port, with oil and energy pipelines to Yunnan province forming part of a \$10 billion economic zone in its Belt and Road Initiative.



- While on the one hand, China has protected the Myanmar regime from international sanctions at the UN thus far, it has tied itself to the success or failure of the repatriation agreement, on which the fate of the Rohingya now rest.

What lies ahead?

According to the deal, Myanmar has committed not to delay sending those repatriated back to their original homes, but this task will be made more difficult by the fact that that many of the Rohingya villages have been burnt down. Also of concern is the stipulation that those who will be accepted by Myanmar must show their Myanmar-issued identity cards, not just their Bangladesh-issued refugee cards.

Finally, international human rights agencies have warned that refugees cannot be forced to return while threat of violence against them persists, even as they process the trauma borne of the atrocities they fled from. The requirements for identification documents has been a contentious issue for the stateless Rohingya.

Amnesty International released a report this week accusing Myanmar of effectively denying **citizenship to Rohingya on the basis of their ethnicity, including engaging “in an active policy of depriving Rohingya of vital identity and residency documentation”.** This includes blocking newborn babies from household lists. The London-based rights group said this week that Rohingya lived under state-sponsored, institutionalised discrimination that amounted to apartheid.

**India re-elected as Member of International Maritime Council**

India has been re-elected to the Council of the International Maritime Organization [IMO] under Category “B” at the 30th session of the Assembly of the IMO held in London.

The IMO Council consists of 40 member countries. In Categories “A” and “B” there are 10 members each and in Category “C” 20 members, who are elected by the IMO Assembly. IMO Council plays a crucial role to play in deciding various important matters within the mandate of the IMO, in relation to the global shipping industry, including its work programme strategy and budget.

India has been one of the earliest members of the IMO, having ratified its Convention and joined it as a member-state in the year 1959. India has had the privilege of being elected to and serving the Council of the IMO, ever since it started functioning, and till date, except for two years for the period 1983-1984.

Significance

- India has a large merchant marine fleet of 1359 vessels, both on foreign going and coastal operations, with a combined Gross Tonnage of 12.2 million.
- Nearly 90% of India’s overseas trade by volume is carried through maritime transport. Nearly 92% of these goods are carried through foreign flag vessels.
- With the Indian economy poised to grow at a faster pace, there exist more opportunities for both the Indian and foreign flag vessels, to carry large volumes of goods, to and from the Indian coasts.
- India has a strong contingent of more than 145,000 active seafarers who continue to be the preferred choice for specialized vessels.
- With re-election in IMO, India will continue to engage with the international maritime community to further her maritime interests and promote the welfare of her citizens.

India is a party to 34 IMO Conventions and protocols and is currently in the advanced stage of ratifying Ballast Water Convention and Bunker Convention. India has already deposited with the ILO, instrument of ratification of the Seafarers’ Identity Documents Convention (revised), 2003 and Maritime Labour Convention, 2006.

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About IMO

- As a specialized agency of the United Nations, IMO is the global standard-setting authority for the safety, security and environmental performance of international shipping.
- Its main role is to create a regulatory framework for the shipping industry that is fair and effective, universally adopted and universally implemented.
- IMO measures cover all aspects of international shipping including ship design, construction, equipment, manning, operation and disposal to ensure that this vital sector for remains safe, environmentally sound, energy efficient and secure.

PEPPER IT WITH  
International Seabed Authority  
Exclusive economic zone

**US out of UN Global Compact on Migration**

The Trump administration has pulled out of the **United Nations’ ambitious** plans to create a more humane global strategy on migration, saying involvement in the process interferes with American sovereignty, and runs counter to US immigration policies.

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The announcement of the US withdrawal from the pact came hours before the opening of a UN global conference on migration which was scheduled to begin in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.

In 2016, 193 members of the UN general assembly unanimously adopted a non-binding political declaration, the New York declaration for refugees and migrants, pledging to uphold the rights of refugees, help them resettle and ensure they had access to education and jobs. The initiative had the enthusiastic backing of Barack Obama, and was embraced by UN as one of his major challenges for 2018.

The US **decision to withdraw will delight Trump’s** “America first” political base, but will do little to improve his standing in developing countries.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Israel Palestine conflict  
New York declaration,  
World Migration Report

Background

- The UN had always insisted that the compact was never intended to be legally binding on any country, but instead was an attempt to create a shared understanding that migration flows are likely to increase, and need to be regularised by recognising the reality of state interdependence, as much as national sovereignty.
- The move is likely to put US-UN relations back in the deep freeze. The US has already pulled out of the UN climate change treaty and UNESCO, the cultural heritage body, accusing the **latter’s leadership of an anti-Israeli bias**.
- The impact of the migration pullout is more symbolic than practical, since the UN never had **any illusion that it could control a member state’s policies**.

**BIMSTEC Coastal Shipping Agreement**

Member States of BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) met in New Delhi to discuss modalities for promoting coastal shipping in the region. In this first meeting of the Working Group, member countries discussed the draft text of BIMSTEC Coastal Shipping Agreement drafted by the Ministry of Shipping, Government of India.

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Significance

- The objective of the above agreement is to facilitate coastal shipping in the region, thereby giving a boost to trade between the member countries.



- The agreement would apply to coastal shipping, that is shipping within 20 nautical miles of the coastline. The requirements for movement of vessels in this part of the sea are different from standard requirements of deep sea shipping.
- Coastal ship movements require smaller vessels and lesser draft, and therefore, involve lower costs.
- Once the agreement is ratified by the member countries and becomes operational, a lot of cargo movement between the member countries can be done through the cost effective, environment friendly and faster coastal shipping route.
- The meeting of the Working Group is a follow up of the **BIMSTEC leaders' call at the Retreat** hosted by India in October 2016, to enhance connectivity in the region.
- India is the lead country in BIMSTEC for cooperation in transport and communication. Other BIMSTEC member countries include Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Nepal.

PEPPER IT WITH  
BBIN, SCO, East  
Asia Summit

**Asian Harmonisation Working Party**

The 22nd conference of Asian Harmonisation Working Party (AHWP) was inaugurated in India. The conference aims to develop and recommend approaches for the convergence and harmonisation of medical devices regulation in Asia.

The five-day conference is being conducted by Central Drugs Standard Control Organization and National Drug Regulatory Authority of India in collaboration with Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

The government intends that with such efforts, affordable medical devices to the best of the quality standards, is made available to the citizens across the vast and diverse geographical locations.

About AHWP

- AHWP was established in 1999 as a voluntary non-profit organisation of the 30 national regulators of member countries and industry members to promote regulatory harmonisation on medical device regulations in Asia and other regions.
- It was set up in accordance with the guidance issued by International Medical Device Regulators Forums. The AHWP works in collaboration with related international organisations such as International Medical Device Regulators Forum (IMDRF), WHO, International Organization for Standardization.
- The government intends that with such efforts, affordable medical devices to the best of the quality standards, is made available to the citizens across the vast and diverse geographical locations.

PEPPER IT WITH  
National List of Essential  
Medicines  
National, Pharmaceutical  
Pricing Authority

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**US Recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's Capital**

U.S. President reversed decades of policy and recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, despite warnings from around the world that the gesture will further drive a wedge between Israel and the Palestinians.

Mr. Trump said his administration would also begin a process of moving the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, which is expected to take years. The move reflects the reality of Jerusalem as the centre of Jewish faith and the fact that the city is the seat of the Israeli government.

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**Mr. Trump called his decision “a long overdue” step to advance the peace process. He said his decision marked the start of a “new approach” to solving the thorny conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.**

PEPPER IT WITH  
Al-Aqsa Mosque, West  
Bank, 6 day war

#### UN stand

- ✓ **The U.N. General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to denounce President Donald Trump’s recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital**, largely ignoring his threats to cut off aid to any country that went against him.
- ✓ **The nonbinding resolution declaring U.S. action on Jerusalem “null and void”** was approved 128-9 a victory for the Palestinians. 35 of the 193 U.N. member nations abstained and 21 were absent.
- ✓ **The resolution reaffirmed what has been the United Nations’ stand on the divided holy city since 1967- that Jerusalem’s final status must be decided in direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.**

#### Significance

- President Trump’s **decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, despite warnings** at home and abroad, will worsen the Israel-Palestine conflict.
- Jerusalem, which houses holy places of all three Abrahamic religions and is claimed by both Israelis and Palestinians, is at the very heart of the dispute.
- Israel built its seat of power in West Jerusalem decades ago and occupied the East during the 1967 war, and later annexed it. Palestinians insist that East Jerusalem should be the capital of their future state.
- Even though there is a Congressional resolution in the U.S. urging Washington to relocate its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, previous American Presidents avoided doing so given the legal, ethical and political implications of the issue, besides their commitment to a negotiated two-state settlement.
- By breaking with this consensus, Mr. Trump has in effect endorsed the Israeli claims to East Jerusalem. The decision will likely help him bolster his image among the Jewish lobby in Washington as well as American evangelical groups, his social base.
- Israel is obviously happy. Though Arab countries have voiced protest, they are unlikely to challenge an American decision.
- The Jerusalem gambit risks triggering another cycle of protests and repression in the Occupied Territories. In the longer term, Mr. Trump has just made the two-state solution more complicated.
- The Israeli-Palestine conflict can be settled only after an agreement is reached on the status of Jerusalem.
- With this latest announcement, Mr. Trump **has undermined the U.S.’s position as a neutral broker** in Israeli-Palestinian talks. In short, he has dealt a blow to the peace process.

#### History of Jerusalem

- Conflicts over Jerusalem go back thousands of years — including biblical times, the Roman Empire and the Crusades — but the current one is a distinctly 20th-century story, with roots in colonialism, nationalism and anti-Semitism.
- In December 1917 — 100 years ago — the British general Edmund Allenby seized control of Jerusalem from its Ottoman Turkish defenders.
- **The three decades of British rule that followed Allenby’s march on Jerusalem saw an influx** of Jewish settlers drawn by the Zionist vision of a Jewish homeland, while the local Arab population adjusted to the reality of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which had ruled the city since 1517.



- After the war, in 1947, the United Nations approved a partition plan that provided for two states — one Jewish, one Arab — **with Jerusalem governed by a “special international regime”** owing to its unique status.
- The Arabs rejected the partition plan, and a day after Israel proclaimed its independence in 1948, the Arab countries attacked the new state. They were defeated. Amid violence by militias and mobs on both sides, huge numbers of Jews and Arabs were displaced.
- Jerusalem was divided: The western half became part of the new state of Israel (and its capital, under an Israeli law passed in 1950), while the eastern half, including the Old City, was occupied by Jordan.
- While Israel moved many government functions **to Jerusalem during the country’s first two** decades, foreign governments largely avoided Jerusalem and opened embassies in Tel Aviv, in recognition of the United Nations resolution.
- No event has shaped the modern contest over Jerusalem as much as the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, in which Israel not only defeated invading Arab armies but also seized control of the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt; the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan; and the Golan Heights from Syria.
- 1980, Israeli lawmakers passed a bill declaring that Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel.
- The 1993 Oslo accords provided for the creation of a Palestinian Authority to govern the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, while deferring a resolution on core issues: borders, refugees **and Jerusalem’s status.**
- Palestinians say that Jewish settlers have encroached on East Jerusalem, and that Israel has compounded the problem by revoking residency permits. Even so, the ethnic composition **of Jerusalem’s population has remained** about 30 percent to 40 percent Arab.

### SAICON 2017

The First International Conference on Sports Medicine and Sports Sciences SAICON 2017 was held in India with the theme "Scoring goals in sports with science and technology."

Organized by Sports Authority of India, the 3-day conference is being attended by about 1000 national and international delegates.

#### Significance

India has made significant progress in Sports by winning medals in many international events and standing behind each athlete is an expert team of coaches, physiologists, doctors, scientists and technical staff who aided in journey of this success of Indian players. Sports Science and Sports medicine is increasingly becoming important as it plays an integral role in improving the performance of the sportspersons and also in facilitating rehabilitation and recovery. Contribution of Sports Science will become important under the Khelo India Programme which has been chalked out to tap talent at the school and college level.

SAICON 2017 will promote scientific temperament in the country and inspire students, researchers and educationists alike to take up sports science and research to the next level.

#### Sports Authority of India

The Sports Authority of India (SAI), a successor organization of the IXth Asian Games held in New Delhi in 1982, was set up as a Society registered of Societies Act, with the objective of promotion of Sports and Games. It is also entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining and utilizing, on the behalf of Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, the following Stadia in Delhi which were constructed/renovated for the IX Asian Games held in New Delhi:-

PEPPER IT WITH  
Rajiv Gandhi Khel  
Abhyan, Mission XI  
million

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- o Jawaharlal Nehru Sports Complex
- o Indira Gandhi Sports Complex
- o Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium
- o Dr. Shyam Prasad Mookherjee Swimming Pool Complex
- o Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Ranges

## ASEAN-India Connectivity Summit

The ASEAN India Connectivity Summit (AICS) on the theme: Powering Digital and Physical Linkages for Asia in the 21st Century was held at New Delhi.

### Significance

- The AICS would be bringing together, policymakers, senior officials from the Government, investors, industry leaders, representatives of trade associations and entrepreneurs on the same platform.
- The AICS aims to accelerate existing connectivity prospects; identify issues of concern, evolve suitable policy recommendations and develop strategies to enhance economic, industrial and trade relations between ASEAN and India.
- Its focus areas are Infrastructure, Roadways, Shipping, Digital, Finance, Energy and Aviation.
- The AICS was organized by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in collaboration with AIC and CII.

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### About ASEAN

- ✓ The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established in 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the Founding Fathers of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.
- ✓ Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Cambodia joined later and made ASEAN a ten Member States.

### AIMS AND PURPOSES

- To accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavours in the spirit of equality and partnership in order to strengthen the foundation for a prosperous and peaceful community of Southeast Asian Nations.
- To promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries of the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter.
- To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interest in the economic, social, cultural, technical, scientific and administrative fields.
- To provide assistance to each other in the form of training and research facilities in the educational, professional, technical and administrative spheres.
- To collaborate more effectively for the greater utilisation of their agriculture and industries, the expansion of their trade, including the study of the problems of international commodity trade, the improvement of their transportation and communications facilities and the raising of the living standards of their peoples.
- To maintain close and beneficial cooperation with existing international and regional organisations with similar aims and purposes, and explore all avenues for even closer cooperation among themselves and
- To promote Southeast Asian studies.

### India, Australia Call for ‘Open’ Asia-Pacific Zone

Continuing with the strategic bilateral discussion, Australia and India discussed the need to maintain the Asia-Pacific region as a **“free” and “open” zone under the “2+2” dialogue model which includes the foreign and defence secretaries of both sides.**

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Both sides agreed that a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region serves the long-term interests of all countries in the region and of the world at large.

#### Significance

The “2+2” dialogue indicated that the focus remains on freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, where China has been reclaiming land for infrastructure, boosting its maritime influence. All aspects of bilateral relations with a focus on strategic and defence relations between the two countries were also reviewed.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Quadilateral group, South China sea dispute, TPP

### Hambantota Port

Sri Lankan government completed the formal handover of the strategic port of Hambantota to China, which will take control of the facility on a 99-year lease.

Hambantota International Port Group (HIPG) and Hambantota International Port Services (HIPS), two new companies set up by the China Merchants Port Holdings Company and the Sri Lanka Ports Authority, will own the port.

#### About Hambantota

Hambantota sits on Sri Lanka’s southern coast which provides access to critical Indian Ocean sea lanes. Hambantota is the main town in Hambantota District, Southern Province, Sri Lanka. This underdeveloped area was hit hard by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and is undergoing a number of major development projects including the construction of a new sea port and international airport finished in 2013. These projects and others such as Hambantota Cricket Stadium are said to form part of the government’s plan to transform Hambantota into the second major urban hub of Sri Lanka, away from Colombo.

#### India’s concern

- The acquisition of the port by China has spurred particular **alarm in India, which is concerned about Beijing’s** growing strategic and economic footprint in the Indian Ocean region.
- China, as part of its Belt and Road Initiative, is interested in expanding its footprint in the Indian Ocean.
- In addition to Sri Lanka, Beijing has made important inroads in the Maldives, which concluded a free trade agreement with Beijing at the end of November.
- **China’s acquisition** of Hambantota port, according to assurances given by the Sri Lankan government, is purely intended for civilian purposes.
- Beijing has just one overseas military base for the **People’s Liberation Army-Navy**, in Djibouti near the port of Doraleh. The base opened formally in August 2017.
- Despite Sri Lankan assurances, Indian observers express concerns that Beijing could **operationalize Hambantota as a resupply node for the People’s Liberation Army-Navy** in the future.

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PEPPER IT WITH  
Gwadar port, North-South transport corridor



## World Migration Report, 2018

IOM (International Organization for Migration), the UN Migration Agency, launched its flagship publication, the World Migration Report 2018, during the 108th IOM Council, in Geneva.

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The report, **the ninth in IOM’s World Migration Report (WMR) series** and the first since IOM became the UN Migration Agency, presents current migration issues in a two-part structure. It combines an overarching presentation of current migration dynamics with in-depth analyses of complex and emerging issues that have been shaping, and posing challenges to, human mobility. The report includes chapters that delve into themes such as transnational connectivity, media reporting on migrants and migration, and violent extremism and social exclusion.

PEPPER IT WITH  
IOM, New York  
declaration, Rohingya  
Crisis, Yemen Crisis

### Takeaways From Report

- Chief takeaways from the report include the need to understand better and take more into consideration the geographic, demographic and geo-political variations that shape migration realities across the world.
- The largest chapter delves into regional dimensions and developments and explores key features, such as intra-regional migration, internal and international displacement, labour migration and remittances, migrant smuggling and human trafficking, integration and irregular migration.
- The report calls for greater recognition of the many interconnections in the analysis and **policymaking on migration**. **“While the complex dynamics of migration can never be fully measured, understood and regulated, there is a continuously growing and improving body of data and evidence that can help make better sense of the basic features of migration in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world.**
- There are now an estimated 258 million people living in a country other than their country of birth—an increase of 49 per cent since 2000. The report shows that international migration makes an important contribution to population growth in many parts of the world and even reverses population decline in some countries or areas.
- International migration is a critical concern for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Between 2000 and 2015, migration contributed 42 per cent of the population growth in Northern America and 31 per cent in Oceania. In Europe, the size of the total population would have declined during the period 2000-2015 in the absence of migration.

### India

In 2017, India was the largest country of origin of international migrants at 17 million, followed by Mexico at 13 million. Other countries of origin with large migrant populations include the Russia at 11 million, China at 10 million, Bangladesh at 7 million, Syria at 7 million and Pakistan and Ukraine at 6 million each. The number of migrants from India now reside in multiple destination countries, including the UAE at 3 million, the US and Saudi Arabia at 2 million each.

### Significance

These new estimates of numbers of international migrants around the world will provide an important baseline for Member States as they begin their negotiations on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

### Loan Agreement Signed for Pare Hydroelectric Plant

A Loan agreement and a Guarantee agreement for providing additional **funding of Euro 20 million was signed for the project 'Pare Hydroelectric Plant'** under Indo-German Bilateral Development Cooperation.

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It may be recalled that in 2008, Germany had signed a loan agreement with North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Limited (NEEPCO) for providing **Euro 80 million with Government of India's Guarantee for the project 'Pare Hydroelectric Plant'** under Indo-German Bilateral Development Cooperation. The broad objective of the project is generation of hydroelectric power for socio-economic development of the North Eastern Region. The purpose of the project is efficient and ecological friendly generation of electric power. This will contribute to the economic efficient generation of power, growth in the North East region and protection of global climate.

|                               |
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| PEPPER IT WITH                |
| Sardar sarovar dam,           |
| Bhakhra nangal dam,           |
| Tuirial Hydroelectric Project |

#### About Pare Hydroelectric Plant

- The Pare Hydro Electric Project (2 x 55 MW) is planned as a run-of-the-river scheme on the Dikrong River in the Papumpare District of Arunachal Pradesh.
- HCC has been awarded Rs 276.44 crore contract for construction of the Pare Hydel Power Project by the North Eastern Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO).
- The power from the project would be utilized within the North Eastern Region itself, using the existing 132 KV transmission system of Ranganadi Hydro Electric Project to meet the needs of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and other North Eastern Region States.

### State of the World's Children Report

The 2017 edition of **Unicef's annual flagship publication "The State of the World's Children Report"** was launched in Kolkata. **Themed "Children in a digital world"**, the latest report provides country-level examples to give a sense of the kinds of barriers girls and women confront.

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#### Highlights of report

- With less than one-third of **India's internet users being females, the country's girls and women risk becoming further marginalised in society and at home if they remain digitally illiterate in the backdrop of the country making a public push towards a more digital economy.**
- There is a digital gender gap as well. Globally, 12% more men than women used the internet in 2017. In India, less than one third of internet users are female.
- In India, where only 29% of all internet users are female, girls in rural areas often face restrictions on their use of ICTs solely because of their gender.
- Digital gender divide is caused by a number of factors — social norms, education levels, lack of technical literacy and lack of confidence among them — but is often rooted in **parents' concern for the safety of their daughters.**
- Digital connection and literacy offer advantages in a knowledge-based society, improving **children's lives and their future earning potential. At the same time, connectivity doesn't always equalise opportunity.**
- In a society that is still largely patriarchal, for girls, traits like deference and obedience are often valued over intelligence and curiosity. In some households, technology is not seen as necessary or beneficial for girls and women.

|                         |
|-------------------------|
| PEPPER IT WITH          |
| Beti Bachao Beti Padhao |
| Digital india program   |

### Significance

Digital divides can mirror broader societal divides — between rich and poor, cities and rural areas, between those with or without an education — and between women and men. India is one **place in which the digital divide highlights society’s deep chasms**, the report calls for addressing the disparity at the highest levels for universal, safe access to be realised.

## Cyclone Ockhi

Cyclone Ockhi was named by Bangladesh after the Bengali word for "eye" and is considered to be the most intense cyclone to transverse the Arabian Sea since 2015's Cyclone Megh that affected Oman, Somalia and Yemen. Originating near Sri Lanka over the Bay of Bengal, Cyclone Ockhi moved over the Arabian Sea via Kanyakumari, triggering heavy rains and high speed wind.

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A deep depression in the Bay of Bengal near Tamil Nadu intensified into Cyclone Ockhi. This resulted in strong winds and heavy showers that uprooted trees, snapped power lines, damaged settlements. In Kanyakumari, the situation was particularly worrisome and over 1,000 people were evacuated from the low-lying areas. It also affected Lakshdweep, Kerala, Maharastra, Goa and Gujrat.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Ocean Current, El Nino, OP Sahayam, INS Sujata

### Govt Response

There are **three basic failings in the government’s response**: the cyclone warning was delayed; the warning, when it came, was ineffective because it could not be conveyed to thousands of fisherfolk who were already out at sea; and once the cyclone struck, there was no war-like mobilisation and action, which are the hallmarks of good disaster management.

### Way Forward

The fury of Cyclone Ockhi is now spent, leaving behind an alarming trail of death by the score and massive destruction in its wake. Hundreds of fishermen are still reported missing at sea. The damage to livelihoods of millions of farmers and fishers in coastal Tamil Nadu and Kerala is yet to be calculated, but will surely run into millions.

Scientists are chary of connecting a specific extreme weather event to climate change but trends clearly show that they are interrelated. They recognise that not everything is known about how global warming affects cyclones such as Ockhi or hurricanes such as Harvey, Irma, and Maria earlier this year in the Atlantic Ocean that ravaged coastal America and the Caribbean islands. Since the turn of the century, there have been at least eight intense cyclones when wind speeds have exceeded 200 km per hour.

There is sufficient scientific evidence that ocean temperatures will continue to increase in the coming decades due to climate change, which will give birth to increasingly violent cyclones. In the face of such a reality, the only path left for us is to build resilience, particularly among vulnerable populations. The economic losses will also be greater because more assets are being **created in India’s coastal cities**.

We need to urgently sort out systems that provide early warnings of violent storms. There are already murmurs that the Met Department was slow in issuing cyclone warnings, thus jeopardising the lives of hundreds of fishermen at sea and those living in low-lying coastal areas. If this is indeed true, we need to take action to rectify this shortcoming by updating our weather forecasting systems.

Disaster preparedness in India is also known to be notoriously shabby. Cyclone Ockhi has once again exposed the tardy response by authorities in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. For instance, **civil society organisations have alleged that Kerala’s State Disaster Management Authority could have taken more prompt action that would have saved more lives, which the agency has refuted**. Be

that as it may, it's time we recognise that extreme weather events have to be countered with mitigation strategies if we are to soften the suffering of people impacted by climate change.

This calls for the combined efforts of the Central and State government (departments of agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry and fisheries) and various departments (rubber board, coconut board, spices board, etc.) To get things moving, the Central Relief Commissioner should immediately visit the district, make realistic assessments, and award reasonable compensation immediately.

About Cyclones

A tropical cyclone is an intense low pressure area or a whirl in the atmosphere over tropical or sub-tropical waters, with organised convection (i.e. thunderstorm activity) and winds at low levels, circulating either anti-clockwise (in the northern hemisphere) or clockwise (in the southern hemisphere). From the centre of a cyclonic storm, pressure increases outwards. The amount of the pressure drop in the centre and the rate at which it increases outwards gives the intensity of the cyclones and the strength of winds.

Once the winds around the low pressure area reach at least 62 km.p.h, it is called a tropical cyclone and is assigned a name. When wind speed is between 89 & 118 km.p.h (48 & 63 kt) it will be a Severe Cyclonic Storm (SCS), between 119 & 221 km.p.h (64 & 119 kt) it is Very SCS and when exceeds 221 km.p.h (119 knots), the cyclone is called a Super Cyclonic Storm. Kerala coast have been affected by low pressure systems upto the category of severe cyclonic storm (max. wind speed 118 km.p.h)

How do cyclones form?

Tropical cyclones require certain conditions for their formation. These are

- A source of warm, moist air derived from tropical oceans with sea surface temperature normally near to or in excess of 27 °C
- Winds near the ocean surface blowing from different directions converging and causing air to rise and storm clouds to form
- Winds which do not vary greatly with height - known as low wind shear. This allows the storm clouds to rise vertically to high levels;
- Coriolis force / spin induced by the rotation of the Earth. The formation mechanisms vary across the world, but once a cluster of storm clouds starts to rotate, it becomes a tropical depression. If it continues to develop it becomes a tropical storm, and later a cyclone/ super cyclone.

Naming of Cyclones

Tropical cyclones are named to provide ease of communication between forecasters and the general public regarding forecasts and warnings. Since the storms can often last a week or even longer and more than one cyclone can be occurring in the same region at the same time, names can reduce the confusion about what storm is being described. Various meteorological organisations have responsibility of naming them. The names of cyclones in Indian Seas are not allocated in alphabetical order, but are arranged by the name of the country which contributed the name. It is usual practice for a storm to be named when it reaches tropical storm strength (winds of 34 knots).

**One-member Benches of NGT**

Centre has passed a notification allowing the NGT chairperson to “constitute a single-member bench” in “exceptional circumstances.”

The Ministry of Environment and Forests on December 1 amended the National Green Tribunal (Practices and Procedure) Rules, 2011. According to **the earlier rules, the bench consisted of “two or more members” with at least one judicial member and another expert.** However, the amended rule has included an

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additional clause which said: “Provided that in exceptional circumstances the chairperson may constitute a single-member bench.” **The notification does not define the “exceptional circumstances”.**

Recently Centre tweaked the norms for appointment and selection of chairpersons of various tribunals including the NGT. Though the NGT Act, 2010, made it mandatory for the NGT chairperson to be a sitting judge of the Supreme Court or Chief Justice of High Court, the rules instead, said that even a judicial member or expert member for three years is qualified to be a chairperson of the NGT.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Green climate fund  
REDD, REDD+

About the move

Experts have termed this move as “very lazy governance”. Instead of the government taking the time to fill up vacancies, it is attempting to reduce the bench to a single-member. **The essence of the NGT was to have a bench comprising both “technical and judicial” members. Often environment issues have a very strong scientific component, for which the expert members are important. Otherwise, the tribunal will function no differently from a high court.**

About NGT

The National Green Tribunal has been established in 2010 under the National Green Tribunal Act 2010 for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources including enforcement of any legal right relating to environment and giving relief and compensation for damages to persons and property and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. It is a specialized body equipped with the necessary expertise to handle environmental disputes involving multi-disciplinary issues. The Tribunal shall not be bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, but shall be guided by principles of natural justice.

The Tribunal is mandated to make and endeavour for disposal of applications or appeals finally within 6 months of filing of the same. Initially, the NGT is proposed to be set up at five places of sittings and will follow circuit procedure for making itself more accessible. New Delhi is the Principal Place of Sitting of the Tribunal and Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai shall be the other four place of sitting of the Tribunal.

The Chairperson of the NGT is a retired Judge of the Supreme Court, Head Quartered in Delhi. Other Judicial members are retired Judges of High Courts. Each bench of the NGT will comprise of at least one Judicial Member and one Expert Member. Expert members should have a professional qualification and a minimum of 15 years experience in the field of environment/forest conservation and related subjects.

Certificate of Commendation for Combating Illegal Wildlife Trade

India has been awarded with the Certificate of Commendation for its exemplary enforcement action in its regional and global effort to combat illegal wildlife trade. **“The award was given to Wildlife Crime Control Bureau by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) at Geneva, Switzerland.**

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The award has been presented to WCCB for its efforts in conducting and coordinating a species specific wildlife enforcement Operation, codenamed “Operation Save Kurma”.

Operation Save Kurma

- “Operation Save Kurma” was conducted in the country by the WCCB to combat the proliferating illegal trade in live turtles and its parts from the country to destinations abroad.
- The Minister pointed out that the operation was also aimed to invite attention of the enforcement agencies towards such illegal trade.

- ‘Operation Save Kurma’ was conducted from December 15, 2016 to January 30, 2017, approximately 16, 000 live turtles/tortoises were seized and released back into the wild with various suspects involved in the illegal trade arrested.
- WCCB worked in close collaboration with regional law enforcement agencies, including West Bengal Criminal Investigation Department, State Police and Forest Department, the Special Task Force of Uttar Pradesh Police, Karnataka Forest and Police departments and Maharashtra and Rajasthan Forest Departments.

About CITES

- ✓ CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) is an international agreement between governments.
- ✓ Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.
- ✓ Because the trade in wild animals and plants crosses borders between countries, the effort to regulate it requires international cooperation to safeguard certain species from over-exploitation. CITES was conceived in the spirit of such cooperation.
- ✓ Today, it accords varying degrees of protection to more than 35,000 species of animals and plants, whether they are traded as live specimens, fur coats or dried herbs.

The species covered by CITES are listed in three Appendices, according to the degree of protection they need. Appendix I includes species threatened with extinction. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances. Appendix II includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival. Appendix III contains species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling the trade.

CITES was drafted as a result of a resolution adopted in 1963 at a meeting of members of IUCN (The World Conservation Union). The text of the Convention was finally agreed at a meeting of representatives of 80 countries in Washington, D.C., the United States of America, on 3 March 1973, and on 1 July 1975 CITES entered in force.

PEPPER IT WITH  
National Tiger Conservation Authority, National Mission on Clean Ganga

CITES is an international agreement to which States and regional economic integration organizations adhere voluntarily. States that have agreed to be bound by the Convention ('joined' CITES) are known as Parties. Although CITES is legally binding on the Parties – in other words they have to implement the Convention – it does not take the place of national laws. Rather it provides a framework to be respected by each Party, which has to adopt its own domestic legislation to ensure that CITES is implemented at the national level. For many years CITES has been among the conservation agreements with the largest membership, with now 183 Parties.

**Sentinel-5P satellite**

Sentinel-5P satellite a European satellite tracking the levels of air pollutants around the world has beamed back new views of the Earth's atmosphere, including images of pollution drifting away from power plants in India. The worst of this pollution runs from north of Patna in Bihar to south of Raipur in Chhattisgarh.

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The first sample images released by mission scientists show plumes of nitrogen dioxide flowing away from power plants and traffic-choked cities. It has even captured the ash and sulphur emissions from Agung volcano on the Indonesian island of Bali, which is in the midst of a big eruption.

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### About Sentinel-5P

- The Sentinel-5P satellite is designed to make daily global maps of the gases and particles that pollute the air.
- When fully operational, the new Sentinel will be an extremely powerful tool to monitor air quality.
- The satellite was launched into an 824 kilometre high orbit by a Russian rocket in October this year.
- It carries an instrument called Tropomi-a spectrometer that observes the reflected sunlight coming up off the Earth, analysing its many different colours. This helps detect the presence of gases such as nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, methane, and carbon monoxide in the atmosphere.

PEPPER IT WITH SCATSAT, INSAT 3D, IRNSS

### International Solar Alliance

With 19 countries ratifying its framework agreement, the International Solar Alliance (ISA) became the first treaty-based international government organisation to be based in India.

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#### Significance

**This marks the culmination of India’s efforts, which had taken a lead role in setting up the ISA—** an alliance of 121 sunshine countries situated between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. ISA also signals that India would employ it as a foreign policy tool to cement its leadership among developing countries.

One of the ways that the ISA is exploring to reduce costs is to aggregate the demand from member nations and then call for tenders. To start with, this approach is being explored for bringing down the cost of solar powered agricultural pumps.

PEPPER IT WITH OPEC, International Energy Association

The World Bank last year signed an agreement with the ISA to mobilize \$1 trillion in investments by 2030. In addition, the ISA is also working on a plan to create a \$300 billion risk mitigation fund as part of the strategy to create a sustainable financing architecture for solar projects globally. The fund will be used to insure solar power projects against risks such as default in payment from electricity procurers, foreign exchange fluctuation and regime change. This, in turn, will help attract investors to the space.

#### About ISA

- The ISA is an Indian initiative, jointly launched by the Prime Minister of India and the President of France in November 2015 in Paris, on the sidelines of COP-21, the UN Climate Conference.
- It aims at addressing obstacles to deployment at scale of solar energy through better harmonization and aggregation of demand from solar rich countries lying fully or partially between the Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn.
- The ISA, headquartered in India, has its secretariat located in the campus of the National Institute of Solar Energy, Gurgaon, Haryana.

Vision and mission of the International Solar Alliance is to provide a dedicated platform for cooperation among solar resource rich countries where the global community, including bilateral and multilateral organizations, corporates, industry, and other stakeholders, can make a positive contribution to assist and help achieve the common goals of increasing the use of solar energy in meeting energy needs of prospective ISA member countries in a safe, convenient, affordable, equitable and sustainable manner.

## Danger in the Air: How air pollution can Affect Brain Development in Young Children

"Danger in the Air: How air pollution can affect brain development in young children" is a paper released by UNICEF.

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According to it almost 17 million babies under the age of one live in areas where air pollution is at least six times higher than international limits, causing them to breathe toxic air and potentially putting their brain development at risk. More than three-quarters of these young children – 12 million – live in South Asia. It notes that breathing in particulate air pollution can damage brain tissue and undermine cognitive development with lifelong implications and setbacks.

Satellite imagery reveals that South Asia has the largest proportion of babies living in the worst-affected areas, with 12.2 million babies residing where outdoor air pollution exceeds six times international limits set by the World Health Organization. The East Asia and Pacific region is home to some 4.3 million babies living in areas that exceed six times the limit.

### Highlights of the report

- The paper shows that air pollution, like inadequate nutrition and stimulation, and exposure to violence during the critical first 1,000 **days of life, can impact children’s early childhood development by** affecting their growing brains.
- Ultrafine pollution particles are so small that they can enter the blood stream, travel to the brain, and damage the blood-brain barrier, which can cause neuro-inflammation.
- Some pollution particles, such as ultrafine magnetite, can enter the body through the olfactory nerve and the gut, and, due to their magnetic charge, create oxidative stress – which is known to cause neurodegenerative diseases. Other types of pollution particles, such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, can damage areas in the brain that are critical in helping neurons **communicate, the foundation for children’s learning and development.**
- **A young child’s brain is especially vulnerable because it can be damaged by a smaller dosage of toxic chemicals, compared to an adult’s brain. Children are also highly vulnerable to air pollution because they breathe more rapidly and also because their physical defences and immunities are not fully developed.**

PEPPER IT WITH Smog, Paris Climate Deal

### Solution

The paper outlines urgent steps to reduce the impact of air pollution on babies’ growing brains, including immediate steps parents can take to reduce children’s exposure in the home to harmful fumes produced by tobacco products, cook stoves and heating fires:

- o Reduce air pollution by investing in cleaner, renewable sources of energy to replace fossil fuel combustion; provide affordable access to public transport; increase green spaces in urban areas; and provide better waste management options to prevent open burning of harmful chemicals.
- o **Reduce children’s exposure to pollutants by making it feasible for children to travel during** times of the day when air pollution is lower; provide appropriately fitting air filtration masks in extreme cases; and create smart urban planning so that major sources of pollution are not located near schools, clinics or hospitals.
- o **Improve children’s overall health to improve their resilience.** This includes the prevention and treatment of pneumonia, as well as the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding and good nutrition.
- o **Improve knowledge and monitoring of air pollution.** Reducing children’s exposure to pollutants and the sources of air pollution begins with understanding the quality of air they are breathing in the first place.



### Amarnath Cave Declared Silent Zone

National Green Tribunal (NGT) has put restriction on devotee or individual to maintain silence while standing in front of the "Amarnath Ji Maha Shivling", a natural formation in the cave.

The restriction is not applicable to any other part including the main stairs leading to the holy cave. The tribunal also clarified that on the last stairs approximately 30 steps leading to the holy cave, it should be ensured that no pilgrim carries any material as it is already the practice of the Board. There is no restriction of any kind below the stairs.

The decision came following the Tribunal's earlier hearing when it suggested that the shrine be declared a silent zone to prevent avalanches and noise pollution.

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PEPPER IT WITH  
NGT, Clean Ganga  
Mission

### National Energy Conservation Day

Hon'ble President of India presided as the Chief Guest over the National Energy Conservation Day celebrations, held in New Delhi, on 14th December, 2017.

On the occasion, President also unveiled the interactive online portal, ECO-NIWAS (Energy CONservation - New Indian Way for Affordable & Sustainable homes) for increasing awareness to build sustainable and energy efficient homes in the country.

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#### About National Energy Conservation Day

To drive mass awareness about the importance of energy efficiency and conservation, Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), under Ministry of Power, celebrates the National Energy Conservation Day, on 14th December, every year. As part of its awareness outreach, BEE recognizes and encourages endeavours of industries in reducing energy consumption by felicitating them with National Energy Conservation Awards. BEE also awards prizes to the national winners of the annual National Painting Competition on Energy Conservation.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Bureau of Energy  
Efficiency

This year, over 1.22 crore children participated in the National Painting Competition and 322 industrial units and establishments from key sectors participated in the National Energy Conservation Awards 2017.

### NDMA Conducts Training of Trainers for Sendai Framework

The first national-level Training of Trainers programme to sensitise various Central Ministries and Departments on utilisation of Sendai Monitor for developing action plans for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) was held recently.

The three-day programme was organised by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction-Global Education and Training Institute (UNISDR-GETI).

#### About Sendai Framework

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR), 2015-2030, is the first major agreement of the post-2015 development agenda and identifies targets and priority actions towards reducing disaster risks and implementing development that is both resilient and sustainable. India, being a signatory to the SFDRR, is committed to work towards achieving the targets enshrined in the Framework.

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PEPPER IT WITH  
National Disaster  
Management  
Authority, Mangroves

In June 2016, India became one of the first countries to align its National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP) with the SFDRR, which clearly identifies regional, national and local targets along with short, medium and long-term timelines. Various activities are being undertaken across the country to achieve the targets identified in the SFDRR. It is important to monitor and assess the progress towards implementation of these activities.

Significance

This training programme will build the capacity of the participants to utilise defined indicators to monitor the progress of the Sendai targets. Training modules at the programme will also enable them to lead consultations and train others on the monitoring of the Sendai Framework Targets. During the programme, various case studies on the implementation of Sendai priorities were discussed which will lead to a practical understanding of the issues to the trainees.

**Zoological Survey of India Compiles a list of 157 Alien Invasive Species**

The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) has for the first time compiled a list of 157 alien invasive animal species. This list excludes the invasive microbe species.

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- Out of the 157 species listed by the ZSI, 58 are found on land and in freshwater habitat, while 99 are found in the marine ecosystem
- Among alien invasive marine species, genus Ascidia accounts for maximum number of species, followed by Arthropods, Annelids etc

Alien Invasive species

- Alien species become "invasive" when they are introduced deliberately or accidentally outside their natural areas where they displace the native species and upset the ecological balance.
- These invasive animal species pose a threat to the biodiversity of the area and human welfare and safety, also harming the agriculture and biodiversity.
- The most common characteristics of invasive species are rapid reproduction and growth, high dispersal ability, ability to survive on various food types and in a wide range of environmental conditions and the ability to adapt physiologically to new conditions, called phenotypic plasticity.

PEPPER IT WITH  
African apple snail  
Amazon sailfin catfish  
Olive ridley turtles

**Protection of Majuli Island – Endeavour of Brahmaputra Board**

The Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation started a new scheme for protection of Majuli Island in Assam from flood and erosion of river Brahmaputra, at an estimated cost of Rs. 233.57 crore. The scheme has been framed by Brahmaputra Board based on the recommendations of the high level Expert Committee of the Government of India that visits the island at least twice a year to monitor and recommend anti-erosion measures. The funding for the project would be from Ministry of DoNER.

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Need for protection

Majuli District with an area of 1245 sq km, includes mainly the Majuli Island with an area of 522 sq km, a large number of smaller islands some of which are inhabited and the Brahmaputra River upto its south bank touching Jorhat and Sibsagar Districts. The area of the island was 734 sq km in 1914 whereas, the minimum area was recorded to be 502 sq km in 2004. Geomorphologically, the entire Majuli island is a part of the alluvial flood plains of the

PEPPER IT WITH  
Sagar island, Cox  
Bazaar, Mising and  
Deori tribes



Brahmaputra river. The Island is formed of soil consisting mainly of silt deposits. The soil is without cohesion and thus, susceptible to erosion. Although some measures were taken in the form of embankment and anti-erosion work by Government of Assam, the problem of erosion and flood remained mostly uncontained. The embankments built during the 60s were in poor condition.

About majuli island

The Guinness World Records has declared Majuli in Assam as the largest river island in the world. It has toppled Marajo in Brazil to clinch the record. The beautiful river island is situated on the Brahmaputra river.

Some facts about Majuli island:

- It is formed by Brahmaputra river in the south and Kherkutia Xuti, an anabranch of the Brahmaputra, joined by the Subansiri river in the north.
- The island is inhabited by Mising tribes, Deori and Sonowal Kachri tribes.
- The people of the island speak Mising, Assamese and Deori language.
- It is the hub of Assamese neo-Vaishnavite culture.
- It was recently declared a district and was earlier a subdivision under Jorhat district.
- It has been included in the tentative list of World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

**Regional Project to Tackle Stubble Burning**

In a significant step to combat climate change, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has approved a regional project on 'Climate Resilience Building among Farmers through **Crop Residue Management**' under the National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC). The first phase of the project has been approved at a cost of approximately Rs. 100 Crore for the States of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. The project will leverage approximately three times the approved amount with contribution from the States as well as farmers.

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PEPPER IT WITH  
Smog, Basel convention

- The problem of crop residue burning has been intensifying over the years, with Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh being the major burning hotspots.
- Increased mechanization, declining number of livestock, long period required for composting and no economically viable alternate use of residues are some of the reasons for residues being burnt in field.
- This not only has implications for global warming, but also has an adverse impact on air quality, soil health and human health.
- The project not only aims to mitigate climate change impacts and enhance adaptive capacity, but will also counter the adverse environmental impacts that arise from burning.
- The project will be implemented following a phased approach. Initially, awareness generation and capacity building activities will be undertaken to encourage farmers to adopt alternate practices which would also help diversify livelihood options and **enhance farmer's income**.
- A slew of technological interventions will be undertaken for timely management of crop residue in addition to effective utilisation of existing machineries.
- Implementable and sustainable entrepreneurship models will be created in rural areas through upscaling successful initiatives and innovative ideas.

About National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC)

National Adaptation Fund on Climate Change (NAFCC) was established with a budget provision of Rs.350 crores for the year 2015-16 and 2016-17, with an estimated requirement of Rs.181.5 crores for financial year 2017-18.

The objective of the fund is to assist State and Union Territories that are particularly vulnerable

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to the adverse effects of climate change in meeting the cost of adaptation. The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has been appointed as National Implementing Entity (NIE) responsible for implementation of adaptation projects under the (NAFCC). The focus of the fund is to assist adaptation projects and programmes to support concrete adaptation activities that reduce the effects of climate change facing communities and sectors.

### Centre Releases Draft Action Plan to Tackle Air Pollution in Capital

A high-level task force, headed by principal secretary to Prime Minister, N Misra, has finalised "Air Action Plan - Abatement of Air Pollution in Delhi National Capital Region". It has underlined the need for "sustained and coordinated action" by state governments and central government ministries.

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#### Highlights of the plan

- The plan has 12 major actionable points. It has underlined the need for "sustained and coordinated action" by state governments and central government ministries.
- A pollution app to register violations, action against brick kilns operating without environment clearance, prevention of landfill fires, identification of traffic congestion points, watering of roads to curb dust pollution and real-time stubble burning data - these are the cornerstones of Air Action Plan to improve air quality in Delhi and NCR.
- Department of science and technology would provide real-time data on stubble burning which would be used to punish errant farmers. Absence of a plan had led to rampant burning of kharif crop residue in neighbouring states which had choked Delhi in November and December.
- The action plan envisages setting up of an anti-pollution helpline where citizens can report violations and development of a pollution app where people can take photographs and post them for remedial action. State governments would also crackdown on brick kilns operating without environmental clearances, especially in Baghpat and Jhajjar areas.
- Traffic congestion points in Gurugram, Meerut and Rohtak divisions would be identified and traffic police would be asked to develop a decongestion plan, especially during peak traffic hours. A special emphasis would be laid on improving public transport including last mile connectivity, increasing number of Metro coaches, integrating ticketing systems of Metro and DTC buses within six months.
- All divisional commissioners of Delhi and NCR have been asked to develop a solid waste management plan for 100% collection and processing of garbage. A special emphasis would be laid on collection from slum and jhuggi clusters.

**Prime Focus**  
A high-level task force, headed by principal secretary to Prime Minister Nripendra Misra, has finalised "Air Action Plan" to improve air quality of Delhi and NCR. The main action points of the plan:

- Crop stubble burning:** Chief secretaries of Punjab, Haryana and UP to frame a plan to curb stubble burning and monitor it to reduce stubble burning. Department of science and technology to provide real-time data on stubble burning.
- Pollution monitoring:** A pollution app to be developed and an anti-pollution helpline to be set up to register complaints of specific violations.
- Pollution from power plants and other industries:** Environment ministry to develop a dashboard of all red category polluting units and ensure all these units install a certified pollution meter on their premises. Enforce all brick kilns to switch to zig-zag technology.
- Solid waste management:** Special focus on 100% solid waste collection in slums and jhuggi clusters. Management of landfills: Municipal bodies to ensure there are no fires at landfill sites. Municipal bodies to get special expertise to close landfill fires.
- Mechanical sweeping of roads:** Delhi to increase mechanised road sweeping from 15% to 40%.
- Improvement of public transport:** Procurement of additional buses to improve last mile connectivity. Journey planner app to be developed to integrate Metro and bus services. Integrated ticketing system of DTC, private buses and Metro within six months. Non-destined trucks should not enter Delhi.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Odd-even scheme  
BS VI norms

#### Background

Indian Medical Association (IMA) declared a "public health emergency" in Delhi due to hazardous pollution levels, experts warned people to avoid outdoor physical activities like cycling and jogging. Delhi woke up to a blanket of smog with air quality touching hazardous levels. The

air quality index was very severe with high particulate matter at a 2.5 level at many places recently.

Air pollution poses a major health risk and can cause stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, and chronic and acute respiratory diseases. **According to the WHO, 92% of the world's population** lives in areas where the air quality is below the WHO standards. About 88% of premature deaths occur in the low- and middle-income countries, where air pollution is escalating at an alarming rate. Having all these a policy for air pollution was much needed.

### Environment Ministry Launches Pilot Project for Beach Clean-up

To enhance standards of cleanliness on beaches, the environment ministry has launched a pilot project for its clean-up and development. Under the project, each state or union territory has been asked to nominate a beach which will be funded through the ongoing Integrated Coastal Management Programme. All the coastal states have nominated the pilot beaches in their receptive territories including Goa.

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#### Objective

With the prime objective of enhancing standards of cleanliness, upkeep and basic amenities at beaches, the project also strives for the 'Blue Flag' certification for such identified beaches.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Exclusive economic zone  
Polymettalic nodules

#### Blue Flag certification

A world-renowned eco-label trusted by millions around the globe, the Blue Flag programme is operated under the auspices of the Foundation for Environmental Education and is headquartered in Copenhagen, Denmark. In order to qualify for this prestigious award, a series of stringent environmental, educational, safety-related and access-related criteria must be met and maintained. Through close collaboration on any and all issues one may have, the Foundation for Environmental Education works tirelessly to ensure the programme's expansion, and that the unrivalled standards of the Blue Flag are maintained internationally.

### China's Dark Matter Probe

Chinese satellite which was sent to the skies to look for evidence of the annihilation or decay of dark matter particles in space has detected unexpected and mysterious signals in its measurement of high-energy cosmic rays, bringing scientists closer to proving the existence of the invisible matter. The mysterious dark matter is believed to comprise a quarter of universe.

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The satellite, Dark Matter Particle Explorer (DAMPE), also called Wukong or "Monkey King", has measured more than 3.5 billion cosmic ray particles with the highest energy up to 100 tera-electron-volts (TeV), including 20 million electrons and positrons, with unprecedented high energy resolution.

#### Significance

Precise measurement of cosmic rays, especially at the very high energy range, are important for scientists to look for traces of dark matter annihilation or decay, as well as to understand the universe's most energetic astrophysical phenomena, such as pulsars, active galaxy nuclei and supernova explosions.

DAMPE has opened a new window for observing the high-energy universe, unveiling new physical phenomena beyond our current understanding.

#### About Dark Matter

Unlike normal matter, dark matter does not interact with the electromagnetic force. This means it does not absorb, reflect or emit light, making it extremely hard to spot. In fact, researchers have been able to infer the existence of dark matter only from the gravitational effect

it seems to have on visible matter. Dark matter seems to outweigh visible matter roughly six to one, making up about 27% of the universe.

Here's a sobering fact: The matter we know and that makes up all stars and galaxies only accounts for 5% of the content of the universe. One idea of dark matter is that it could contain "supersymmetric particles" – hypothesized particles that are partners to those already known in the Standard Model. Experiments at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) may provide more direct clues about dark matter.

PEPPER IT WITH  
NASA's Fermi Space Telescope and the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer (AMS-02), Large hadron collider, Dark energy

### India free of Infective Trachoma

Calling it a momentous achievement, Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry declared India free of Infective Trachoma, which has been a leading cause of infectious blindness among children.

The survey findings indicate that the active trachoma infection has been eliminated among children in all the survey districts with overall prevalence of only 0.7 per cent. This is much below the elimination criteria of infective trachoma as defined by the WHO. The survey findings indicate that the active trachoma infection has been eliminated among children in all the survey districts with overall prevalence of only 0.7 per cent.

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PEPPER IT WITH  
Bird Flu,MDR-TB

#### About Trachoma

- According to medical sciences, trachoma is a chronic infective disease of the eye and is the leading cause of infective blindness globally.
- Caused by poor environmental and personal hygiene and inadequate access to water and sanitation, it affects the conjunctiva under the eyelids and repeated infections cause scarring leading to in-turning of the eyelashes and eyelids.
- This further causes damage to the cornea and subsequently blindness. It is found affecting the population in certain pockets of the states like Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh as well as the Nicobar Islands.

### Solar Winds

A group of researchers from Physical Research Laboratory (PRL), Ahmedabad, have, for the first time, figured out the conditions under which certain types of solar storms can flow towards the earth and affect its atmosphere. This is important because such storms contain charged particles travelling at very high speeds and these can affect the electronics present on satellites in orbit around the earth.

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#### Solar Storms

Solar storms are violent events on the sun which can temporarily **distort the earth's magnetosphere** – the region around the earth which is influenced by its magnetic field. These temporary disturbances, called geomagnetic storms, can generate shock waves in the interplanetary medium that can accelerate charged particles to very high energies and which, in turn, can harm the satellites placed by humans in space.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Solar aurora, Gravitational waves

### New form of matter 'Excitonium' Discovered

Scientists have proven the existence of new form of matter called excitonium which was first theorised almost 50 years ago.

#### About Excitonium

Excitonium is a condensate – it exhibits macroscopic quantum phenomena, like a superconductor. It is made up of excitons, particles that

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are formed in a very strange quantum mechanical pairing, namely that of an escaped electron and the hole it left behind.

It defies reason, but it turns out that when an electron, seated at the edge of a crowded-with-electrons valence band in a semiconductor, gets excited and jumps over the energy gap to the otherwise empty conduction band, it leaves **behind a “hole” in the valence band. That hole behaves as though** it were a particle with positive charge, and it attracts the escaped electron.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Boson particles  
Dark matter

When the escaped electron with its negative charge, pairs up with the hole, the two remarkably form a composite particle, a boson – an exciton. **In point of fact, the hole’s** particle-like attributes are due to the collective behaviour of the surrounding crowd of electrons.

Way Forward

The findings holds great promise for unlocking further quantum mechanical mysteries. It could also shed light on the metal-insulator transition in band solids, in which exciton condensation is believed to play a part. Beyond that, possible technological applications of excitonium are purely speculative.

VoLTE Services

Why in News?

**India’s largest telecom operator Bharti Airtel has launched VoLTE** (Voice over LTE) services in Karnataka, offering users the flexibility of high-quality voice calls and fast data sessions in parallel.

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Customers can call any mobile, landline network using Airtel VoLTE. There will be no additional data charges for VoLTE and calls will be billed in accordance with the existing plan or pack benefits.

Airtel VoLTE works over 4G but even in the case of unavailability of 4G network, these calls automatically switch to a 3G/2G network to ensure that the subscriber is connected at all times. Airtel VoLTE will also enable customers to enjoy HD (High Definition) quality voice calls and high speed data sessions in parallel.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Free Basics, Net  
Neutrality

What is it?

VoLTE is a technology update to the LTE protocol used by mobile phone networks. Under LTE, the infrastructure of telecom players only allows transmission of data while voice calls are routed to their older 2G or 3G networks. This is why, under LTE, you cannot access your 4G data services while on a call. This leads to problems such as slow internet speeds and poor voice clarity.

**VoLTE allows voice calls to be ‘packaged’ and carried through LTE networks. This would mean** 4G data accessibility even during calls. VoLTE is an Internet Protocol Multimedia Subsystem (IMS) specification which enables a variety of services to operate seamlessly on the network rather than having to switch to different applications for voice or video. In India, mobile phones and telecom operators have adapted to LTE networks, faster than to 3G and are preparing to launch VoLTE services.

Why is it important?

If VoLTE becomes a reality, it could enable call quality that is much superior to the previous networks. Apart from high definition voice quality, it can also provide improved coverage. Your network would pick up 2G or 3G signals when VoLTE is unavailable, ensuring you are always connected with both voice and data. You may also be able to place video calls directly from your number which may render applications such as Skype or Viber redundant.

VoLTE can also extend or save your battery life. In the present scenario, your network has to switch from 4G to 3G every time you place a call. This constant switching and searching for a network takes a toll on your mobile battery.

On the downside, this service might be limited to mobile phones that are equipped with software to allow VoLTE function. There might be call drops in the initial stages of implementation.

In India, Jio was the first player to offer VoLTE services, followed by Airtel, which has recently launched its VoLTE services.

VoLTE may be superfast, but whether it allows you to make a voice call in a fast moving train or in the subway still remains to be seen.

### Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant

The Rooppur nuclear power plant, which is being built by the Russians near **Dhaka, will be Bangladesh's first atomic energy project.**

After commissioning of two units, each with a capacity of 1200 MWs, Bangladesh will be the third South Asian country after India and Pakistan to harness energy from atomic fission.

India is collaborating with Russia to build the Rooppur nuclear power plant in Bangladesh, the first initiative under an Indo-Russia deal to undertake atomic energy projects in third countries.

**This will also be India's first atomic energy venture abroad.**

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### Clean Sea 2017

**Regional Level Marine Oil Pollution Response Exercise** titled 'Clean Sea - 2017', was conducted at sea off Port Blair by Indian Coast Guard.

The objective of the exercise was to ascertain preparedness of the Indian Coast Guard, resource agencies and other stakeholders in responding to a major oil spill in line with the provisions of NOS-DCP (National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan). The highlight of the exercise was participation of one ICG Pollution Control Vessel (PCV) and integration of Indian Coast Guard Dornier/Chetak aircraft into the Oil Spill Disaster Management System for aerial assessment/ delivery of Oil Spill Dispersant (OSD) for mitigation of the spilled oil. Representatives from various stake holders also participated in the exercise as observers.

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### UN Environment's Patron for Clean Air

Paytm founder and CEO Vijay Shekhar Sharma has been named the UN Environment's 'Patron for Clean Air'.

He will help drive greater environmental action and awareness, and advocate for the goals of UN Environment's global BreatheLife campaign.

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### Kiwi Birds

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature upgraded the Okarito kiwi and the Northern Brown kiwi from endangered to vulnerable due to **New Zealand's progress in controlling** predators like stoats and cats.

Two types of New Zealand kiwi birds are rare bright spots in a mostly grim assessment of global species at risk of extinction.

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### Indian Forest (Amendment) Bill, 2017

The Indian Forest (Amendment) Bill, 2017 was introduced in Lok Sabha. The Bill replaces the Indian Forest (Amendment) Ordinance, 2017 and amends the Indian Forest Act, 1927. The Act consolidates laws relating to forests, transit of forest-produce and the duty to be levied on them.

Under the Act, the definition of tree includes palms, bamboos, stumps, brush-wood, and canes. The Bill amends this definition of tree to remove the word bamboos. Since bamboo is defined as a tree under the Act, its inter-state movement requires permit when in transit in other states. Consequent to the amendment, felling or transportation of bamboos growing in non-forest areas will not require any permits.

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### Google’s Artificial Intelligence Finds Two New Exoplanets

NASA announced that it has discovered two new exoplanets with a little help from Google. The researchers used the artificial intelligence from Google to analyse the data from Kepler- a telescope placed in space.

Kepler-80g was found in the planetary system around Kepler 80. Kepler 80 is a star about 1364 light years away which already has five exoplanets around it. The other exoplanet Kepler-90i was found orbiting Kepler 90. Kepler 90 star is 2722 light years away and was previously known to have seven planets around it.

With the discovery of the eight planet Kepler-90i, the planetary system Kepler 90 has matched our solar system. It has become the first star system to have as many planets as our solar system. According to NASA website, Kepler-90 planets have a similar configuration to our solar system with small planets found orbiting close to their star, and the larger planets found farther away. In our solar system, this pattern is often seen as evidence that the outer planets formed in a cooler part of the solar system, where water ice can stay solid and clump together to make bigger and bigger planets. The pattern we see around Kepler-90 could be evidence of that same process happening in this system.

#### How did Artificial Intelligence aid the discovery?

From the millions of data recieved from Kepler, the programmers trained the computer to pick up specific clues regarding orbit calculation, sense change in brightness when a planet passes across etc., and apply certain algorithms for detection of exoplanets. When all the clues matched the machine was able to interpret and give a positive result. Using machine learning techniques, we can detect even weaker signals that can be missed when done manually.

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### Methanol Economy Fund

The think-tank Niti Aayog is considering a proposal for suggesting the creation of a Methanol Economy Fund with a corpus of ₹4000-₹5000 crore. The fund will be for developing Methanol as a fuel in India. It will be used to set up 3 to 4 methanol processing plants, out of which at least one plant will start running in the next 3 years.

The Niti Aayog is going to propose a road map to achieve its target of increasing the penetration of Methanol as an alternative fuel to petrol and diesel by December end. Under the roadmap, the Aayog proposes ramping up facilities to convert Coal, Stranded Gas and Biomass to Methanol. The current installed capacity of Methanol production of the country is 0.47 million tonne and the total production of the Methanol in the country is 0.2 million tonne. But the total Methanol consumption of the country in 2016 is 1.8 million tonne.”

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### Telangana Varsity Hosts Global Conference on Functional Materials

Over 200 delegates from 10 countries attended an international conference on advanced functional materials at Rajiv Gandhi University of Knowledge Technologies (RGUKT) at Basar in Telangana.

Internationally acclaimed scientists came together to discuss and showcase their research findings to researchers from India and abroad at the three-day conference. The conference aims to address the application aspect of the functional materials in areas of societal relevance, to discuss current scientific issues and to ignite scientific temper in young researchers.

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### Google India Signs Pact with And Pradesh Govt to Enable Digital AP vision

Google India and the Andhra Pradesh government will launch a number of initiatives aimed at **bridging the state’s digital divide and enabling skill development**, according to a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between the two. The **measures are part of chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu’s Digital AP vision**. Google India will work with the state government to get women and small and medium businesses online and help them benefit from the Internet economy; help the state government make its websites mobile-ready and accessible in the local language; promote Internet safety among children and government officials; and improve and get more local language content online.

#### Significance

Creating awareness about the benefits of Internet and promoting its adoption amongst women, small medium businesses and children can deliver a huge economic impact for the state. Improving accessibility to government websites and scaling the local language web can open up a whole new opportunity for local entrepreneurs and make the Internet more meaningful to non-English speaking users.

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### Anti-Smog Cannon in Fight Against Delhi Pollution

India has unveiled a new weapon against air pollution – **an “anti-smog gun”** which authorities hope will clear the skies above New Delhi but which environmentalists say amounts to a band-aid solution.

The cannon ejects fine droplets of water at very high speed which can flush out deadly airborne pollutants. The device – shaped like a hair dryer and **mounted on a flatbed truck was tested in Anand Vihar, an area of Delhi’s east** bordering an industrial zone that often boasts the dirtiest air. It can blast up to 100 litres of water per minute into the skies and clear 95% of airborne pollutants.

#### Way Forward

**Cannon may prove as a distraction from the root causes of Delhi’s winter pollution**, a phenomenon so bad **the city’s own chief minister described it as a “gas chamber”**.

This might not be the solution. It can be used occasionally at sensitive locations but the solution to pollution lies in controlling it at the source rather than spraying water on it.

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### New frog species

Scientists have discovered a new frog species in the fast flowing streams of **Arunachal Pradesh’s Lower Subansiri district**. The new species found in Talle Valley Wildlife Sanctuary has been named *Odorrana arunachalensis*.

They are expected to be found in similar habitats in other parts of the State. *Odorrana* (commonly known as the odorous frog) is a genus of true frogs (family Ranidae) from East Asia and surrounding regions. The frog inhabits fern-covered rocky areas along hill streams in mixed wet tropical forests.

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## Merchant Discount Rate

### Why in News?

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its fifth bi-monthly monetary policy statement, 2017-18 has decided to rationalise Merchant Discount Rate (MDR). The move is aimed to encourage merchants to accept online mode of payments.

For merchants with turnover of up to Rs 20 lakh, Rs 200 has been set as the absolute cap. While for larger merchants, the absolute cap is Rs 1000.

Moreover, the cap as percentage is different for physical card and Quick Response (QR) code transactions with upper limit being the same as mentioned above.

At present, MDR for debit card transactions were capped at 0.75% of the transaction amount for value upto Rs 2000 and 1% of transaction amount for value above Rs 2000.

### QR code

- QR code is a two-dimensional figure of black squares arranged in a square grid on a white background, which is a machine-readable optical label that carries with it details of the item to which it is attached.
- The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has developed this payments system for India in collaboration with RuPay, MasterCard and Visa, **India's three mobile payments providers.**
- It eliminates the need for the merchant to produce ID or phone numbers for making payments.
- It simplifies digital transactions as customers can make payments by scanning the QR code on the product and entering the transaction amount.
- It allows transactions to be performed across all payment gateways.

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MDR is the fee that a merchant have to pay to a bank for every transaction which is split between the bank which has issued the card, the lender whose point-of-sale terminal is being used and payment gateways like MasterCard or Visa.

MDR charges are not borne by the customers.

The new caps will come into effect from January 1, 2018.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Merchant Account,  
E-Purse, Bharat QR  
code, Digital  
economy

## Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)

### Why in News?

The 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of FSDC was held recently under the Chairmanship of Union Finance Minister, as pre-Budget 2018-19 consultations with the financial sector regulators. Various sector regulators presented their proposal for the upcoming budget.

### About FSDC

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There are different regulators for various segments of financial sectors, like the RBI for commercial banks and NBFCs, SEBI for capital market etc. So, there should be coordination among these financial sector regulators to ensure better efficiency as well as for avoiding overlapping of functions. For this, the Government formed the Financial Stability and Development Council in 2010. The immediate impulse for the establishment of the FSDC was the tussle between SEBI and IRDA on the regulation of Unit Linked Insurance Plans (ULIP).

Composition of FSDC

- Finance minister as the chairman
- Heads of financial sector Regulators (RBI, SEBI, PFRDA, IRDA, IBBI)
- Chief Economic Adviser
- Finance Secretary and/or Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs; Secretary, Department of Financial Services
- The Council can also invite experts to its meeting.
- The FSDC Secretariat is in the Department of Economic Affairs.

Functions

- To perform as an apex level forum to strengthen and institutionalize the mechanism for maintaining financial stability.
- Enhancing inter-regulatory coordination and promoting financial sector development in the country.
- It will focus on financial literacy and financial inclusion.
- It aims strengthening and institutionalizing the mechanism of financial stability and development.
- It will monitor macro-prudential supervision of the economy. It will assess the functioning of the large financial conglomerates.

PEPPER IT WITH  
ULIP, European systemic Risk Board, Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

It will assess the functioning of the large financial conglomerates.

- It will address intra regulatory coordination issues.

An important wing of the FSDC, in terms of functional responsibility is the Sub committee chaired by the Governor of the RBI. It meets more often than the full Council. In addition to the members of the FSDC, all four Deputy Governors of the RBI and Additional Secretary, DEA, in charge of FSDC, are also members of the Sub Committee.

There are few other regulatory wings within the FSDC created for specific purposes.

FSDC replaced the High Level Coordination Committee on Financial Markets (HLCCFM), which was facilitating regulatory coordination, though informally, prior to the setting up of FSDC.

The Raghuram Rajan report (Committee on Financial Sector Reforms, 2008) suggested the creation of a statutory body called Financial Sector Oversight Agency (FSOA).

India is a member of the international agency looking into the issue, namely, financial stability board, a recast of the erstwhile Financial Stability Forum.

Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference

The 11<sup>th</sup> ministerial conference (MC11) of World Trade Organisation (WTO) was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina and was chaired by Minister Susana Malcorra of Argentina. It ended in a stalemate with countries divided along industrial and developing lines. The 23-year-old trade body requires unanimity among all 164 WTO member countries to reach any agreement.

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The Ministerial Conference, which is attended by trade ministers and other senior officials is the highest decision-making body of the WTO. Under the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the WTO, the Ministerial Conference is to meet at least once every two years.

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What Happened in MC11

- India is seeing the outcome as a partial success as none of its offensive interests were achieved and its defensive interests remain protected.
- **India’s push to ensure a consensus around a ‘permanent solution’ to the public stockpiling of food for food security purposes was thwarted by the U.S., but the “peace clause”, under which countries would not lodge complaints against developing country subsidies to meet their food security needs, remained in place.**
- The failure of industrial countries to fast-track e-commerce talks, and commitments that reductions in fishing subsidies would not be discussed at least until the next ministerial in 2019, are being seen by India as points in its favour.
- Industrial countries have been keen on moving the agenda forward from development, which was the stated focus of the Doha Round that began in 2001. The rift between advanced economies and the rest was apparent.
- Developing countries want Doha Round commitments to be fulfilled before topics of interest to the West — such as e-commerce and market access for small enterprises — are discussed.
- The U.S. has said it wants to clarify **its understanding of “development”**, and contended that members were using it to gain exemptions from rules, and that some of the richest countries (presumably in absolute and not per capita GDP terms) were claiming this status.
- US issued a joint statement with the European Union and Japan, aimed primarily at China, on trade-distorting practices such as over-capacity and mandatory technology transfer policies, while India and China submitted a proposal to end the trade-distorting farm subsidies of Western nations.

Buenos Aires Declaration on Women and Trade  
 For the first time at a WTO MC, a declaration calling for greater inclusion of women in trade was issued.  
 The Declaration serves to reaffirm the link between gender and trade, and is crucial in emphasizing the role that women can play in the global economy.  
 Through the Buenos Aires Declaration on Women and Trade, WTO members voluntarily undertake, over the next two years, to cooperate with each other and to share best practices in five key areas

**PEPPER IT WITH**  
 TRIPS, ecommerce, fishing subsidies

**DARPAN**

Why in News?

The Ministry of Communications recently launched DARPAN - **“Digital Advancement of Rural Post Office for A New India” Project to improve the quality of service, add value to services and achieve “financial inclusion” of un-banked rural population.**

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The IT modernisation project, having an outlay of Rs 1400 crore, intends to provide a low power technology solution to each branch postmaster (BPM) which will enable each of approximately 1.29 lakhs branch post offices (BOs) to improve service delivery.

- Trends such as urbanization, increased demand for financial services, increased funding by the government for the weaker sections and the rural sector, have opened up new opportunities for the Department of Posts (DoP), which in turn has necessitated development of new processes and supporting technology.
- DoP is also faced with twin challenges of increasing competition and continuing advances in communication technology, especially in mobile telephony and the Internet.

- In order to provide the best-in-class customer service, deliver new services and improve operational efficiencies, DoP has undertaken an end to end IT modernization project to equip itself with requisite modern tools and technologies.
- DARPAN offers core banking services. The core banking application covers following services:
  - ✓ Cash deposit in savings bank (SB) and recurring deposit (RD)
  - ✓ Withdrawal from savings bank, new account opening for SB and RD
  - ✓ Higher value withdrawal
  - ✓ Mini statement
  - ✓ Aadhaar seeding and
  - ✓ Daily transaction report.

Post offices in India were established between 1764 and 1766 in Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai by East India Company. Warren Hastings (Governor General of British India from 1773-1784) opened the posts to the public in March 1774. Post Office Act (1837) reserved the government the exclusive right to convey letters in the territories of the East India Company. The first postal stamp in India was introduced on 1 July 1852 in the Scinde district. The first pictorial stamps were issued in 1931.

PEPPER IT WITH  
India Post Office Act 1898, Payment Bank, ePost Office

The project shall increase the rural reach of the department of posts and enable BOs to increase traffic of all financial remittances, savings accounts, rural postal life insurance, and cash certificates; improve mail operations processes by allowing for automated booking and delivery of accountable article; increase revenue using retail post business; provide third party applications; and make disbursements for social security schemes such as MGNREGS and DBT. The project is to be completed by March 2018.

## Financial Sector Assessment Programme

### Why in News?

IMF and WB released the Financial System Stability Assessment (FSSA) and Financial Sector Assessment (FSA) respectively. The Second comprehensive FSAP has now been successfully conducted for India (last FSAP for India was conducted in 2011-12).

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The FSAP report acknowledges many efforts by Indian authorities like tackling Non-Performing Assets (NPAs), recent recapitalization measures for banks and introduction of special resolution regime, formalization of National Pension System (NPS) and making the pension sector regulator statutory, passing of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code and setting up of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), to name a few.

As a member of the FSB, BCBS, IOSCO, IAIS and IMF, India actively participates in post-crisis reforms of the international regulatory and supervisory framework under the aegis of the G20. India remains committed to adoption of international standards and best practices, in a phased manner, calibrated to domestic needs and economic conditions, wherever necessary.

- The FSAP assessment acknowledges that India has recorded strong growth in recent years in both economic activity and financial assets with size of the financial system remaining broadly stable in terms of GDP.
- Increased diversification, commercial orientation, and technology-driven inclusion have supported growth in the financial industry, backed up with improved legal, regulatory, and supervisory frameworks.



- It appreciates initiatives such as ‘no frills’ account (under Jan DhanYojana), promoting digitization, introduction of unique biometric identification number (AADHAR), currency exchange initiative etc.
- It also recognizes the improved inter-agency co-operation since the establishment of Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC).
- FSAP assessment acknowledges that RBI has made substantial progress in strengthening banking supervision by introduction of risk-based supervision in 2013 through
  - A comprehensive and forward-looking Supervisory Program for Assessment of Risk and Capital (SPARC).
  - Domestic and cross-border cooperation arrangements.
  - Asset Quality Review (AQR) and
  - The strengthening of regulations in 2015 leading to improved distressed asset recognition etc.
- In relation to securities market, the report acknowledges that SEBI has made significant changes to its regulatory programs that directly address many findings and recommendations contained in the detailed IOSCO (International Organization of Securities Commissions) assessment published in 2013.
- The reports note that India is moving towards a new state-of-the-art bankruptcy regime and the newly created regime on insolvency and bankruptcy is comprehensive and aims at restructuring companies within ambitious timelines.
- The recommendations in case of India FSAP are mainly to bring about further improvements in the structure and functioning of the financial system and many of the detailed **recommendations are in sync with the authorities’ own developmental plans.**

FSAP was launched in 1999 after the Asian crisis and since then more than 100 countries have participated in the programme.

FSAPs analyze the resilience of the financial sector, the quality of the regulatory and supervisory framework, and the capacity to manage and resolve financial crises. Based on its findings, FSAPs produce recommendations of a micro- and macro-prudential nature, tailored to country-specific circumstances.

The Financial Sector Assessment Program (FSAP) is a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of a **country’s financial sector**. FSAP assessments are the joint responsibility of the IMF and World Bank in developing economies and emerging markets and of the IMF alone in advanced economies. The FSAP includes two major components: a financial stability assessment, which is the responsibility of the IMF, and a financial development assessment, the responsibility of the World Bank.

PEPPER IT WITH  
IOSCO, AQR, Basel  
norms, IBBI

The goal of FSAP assessments is twofold: to gauge the stability and soundness of the financial sector and to assess its potential contribution to growth and development.

In 2010 the IMF decided that 25 jurisdictions (In 2013 it was expanded to 29) with financial **sectors that have the greatest impact on global financial stability or “systemically important”** financial sectors should undergo in-depth reviews of their financial health by the Fund every five years.

**Arogya 2017**

The First Ever International Conference on AYUSH and Wellness ‘Arogya 2017’ was inaugurated in New Delhi. The three day ‘**Arogya 2017**’ has been jointly organized by Ministry of AYUSH and Ministry of Commerce and Industry of Government of India including Pharmexcil in partnership

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with FICCI to showcase the strength and scientific valuation of traditional system of medicine.

- Arogya 2017 is the first of its kind International Conference which has been organized in India. It will result in sharing the traditional medicine knowledge of India with humanity across the world.
- A White Paper "AYUSH for the World" by Frost & Sullivan was launched at the event to offer a roadmap for AYUSH regulations and registration in ASEAN and BIMSTEC countries.
- AYUSH is the acronym of the medical systems that are being practiced in India such as Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy.
- India has long history and culture running over 5000 years of using traditional medicines for health care and **developing them with modern scientific outlook.**
- The Wellness industry in India has evolved rapidly from its nascent unstructured beginning in the early 1990s to a comprehensive ecosystem today. India is the second largest exporter of Ayurvedic and alternate medicine to the world.
- The Ministry of AYUSH was formed in 2014 to ensure the optimal development and propagation of AYUSH systems of health care.

The Union Cabinet has approved the continuation of Centrally Sponsored Scheme of National Ayush Mission (NAM) from 2017 to 2020. The Mission was launched in September, 2014.

### Scheme for Capacity Building in Textiles Sector (SCBTS)

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved a new skill development scheme covering the entire value chain of the textile sector excluding Spinning & Weaving in organized Sector, titled "Scheme for Capacity Building in Textile Sector (SCBTS)" from 2017-18 to 2019-20 with an outlay of Rs. 1300 crore.

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The scheme will have National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) compliant training courses with funding norms as per the Common Norms notified by Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).

NSQF is a competency-based framework that organizes all qualifications according to a series of levels of knowledge, skills and aptitude. These levels, graded from one to ten, are defined in terms of learning outcomes which the learner must possess regardless of whether they are obtained through formal, non-formal or informal learning. NSQF in India was notified in 2013 and all other frameworks were superseded by it.

The objectives of the scheme are:

- To provide demand driven, placement oriented skilling programme to incentivize the efforts of the industry in creating jobs in the organized textile and related sectors.
- To promote skilling and skill up-gradation in the traditional sectors through respective Sectoral Divisions/organizations of Ministry of Textiles; and to provide livelihood to all sections of the society across the country.

The Integrated Skill Development Scheme (ISDS) was introduced by Ministry of Textiles as a pilot scheme in the last two years of XI Five Year Plan. ISDS addresses the critical gap of skilled manpower in textile industry through industry-oriented training programmes.

The skilling programmes would be implemented through:

1. Textile Industry /Units in order to meet the in-house requirement of manpower;



2. Reputed training institutions relevant to textile sector having placement tie-ups with textile industry/ units; and
3. Institutions of Ministry of Textiles /State Governments having placement tie-ups with textile industry/units.

The scheme will be implemented for the benefit of all sections of the society across the country including rural, remote, LWE affected, North East, J&K by imparting skills in the identified job roles.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Cottage industry, New  
Textile Policy, NVEQF

The new scheme would enable the industry to adopt scientific principles for upgrading the skills of the employees and achieve higher productivity as Indian textile industry has been lagging in productivity and countries like China, Bangladesh, Vietnam were much ahead in productivity.

#### About Textile Industry

- Textile plays a major role in the Indian economy
  - ✓ It contributes 14 per cent to industrial production and 2 per cent to GDP
  - ✓ With over 45 million people, the industry is one of the largest source of employment generation in the country
- The industry accounts for nearly 15 per cent of total exports.
- Government has allowed 100 per cent FDI in the Indian textiles sector under the automatic route.
- **The size of India's textile market in 2016 was around US\$ 137 billion, which is expected to touch US\$ 226 billion market by 2023, growing at a CAGR of 8.7 per cent between 2009-23.**

### Project Mousam

#### Why in News?

The list of 39 countries identified under project mousam was given by **minister of state for culture**. Project 'Mausam' is a Ministry of Culture project with Archaeological Society of India (ASI), as the nodal agency and Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) as its Research Unit.

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The main objective of the project is to inscribe places and sites identified under Project Mausam as trans-national nomination for inscription on **UNESCO's World Heritage List**. The project, launched by India in partnership with member states, will enable a significant step in recording and celebrating this important phase of world history from the African, Arab and Asian-world perspectives.

#### Main Goals of the Project

- Reviving lost linkage with nation
- Creating links to existing world heritage sites
- Redefining cultural landscapes
- Achieving transnational nomination under World Heritage

'Mausam' or Arabic 'Mawsim' refers to the season when ships could sail safely. This distinctive wind-system of the Indian Ocean region follows a regular pattern: southwest from May to September; and northeast from November to March.

**The endeavour of Project 'Mausam'** is to position itself at two levels: at the macro level it aims to re-connect and re-establish communications between countries of the Indian Ocean world, which would lead to an enhanced understanding of cultural values and concerns; while at the micro level the focus is on understanding national cultures in their regional maritime milieu.

- The English term ‘Monsoon’ came from Portuguese ‘Monção’, ostensibly from Arabic ‘Mawsim’. The etymology of this word signifies the importance of this season to a variety of seafarers.
- The central themes that hold Project ‘Mausam’ together are those of cultural routes and maritime landscapes that not only linked different parts of the Indian Ocean littoral, but also connected the coastal centres to their hinterlands.
- Project ‘Mausam’ is an exciting, multi-disciplinary project that rekindles long-lost ties across nations of the Indian Ocean ‘world’ and forges new avenues of cooperation and exchange.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Archaeological Society of  
India, Maritime Silk  
Route, OBOR, Sagarmala

**SAMEEP**

Why in News?

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has launched a new programme, ‘Students and MEA Engagement Programme’ (SAMEEP).

- The main objective of SAMEEP is to take Indian foreign policy and its global engagements to students across the country.
- Under this programme, all the ministry officers - under-secretary and above - will be asked to go to their hometowns, particularly their alma maters.
- They will be expected to interact with the students about the way the MEA works, basic elements of its policies, how diplomacy is conducted, and generally give students an idea of what a career in the MEA would look like.
- The officials will be provided a basic standardised presentation by the ministry, but will be free to add their own improvisations and experiences.
- **The agenda of the programme is not only to make students interested and aware of India’s place in the world and its global ambitions, but also to drive interest in diplomacy as a career option.**

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The External Affairs Ministry has been quite active on social media and their team has been answering questions asked by anyone under the ‘Ask the Spokesperson’ program.

**SFIO**

Why in News?

The Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) has taken up probes into various companies for allegedly indulging in illegal money-pooling activities. The count of such firms being referred for investigation is the highest in the last three financial years.

SFIO is a multi-disciplinary organization under Ministry of Corporate Affairs, consisting of experts in the field of accountancy, forensic auditing, law, information technology, investigation, company law, capital market and taxation for detecting and prosecuting or recommending for prosecution white-collar crimes/frauds.

In exercise of the powers conferred Companies Act 2013, the Central Government established the SFIO in 2015. **Earlier this office was established vide Government of India’s Resolution No. 45011/16/2003-Admn.-1 in 2003.**

Investigation into the affairs of a company is assigned to SFIO, where Government is of the opinion that it is necessary to investigate into the affairs of a company –

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1. On receipt of a report of the Registrar or inspector under section 208 of the Companies Act, 2013:
2. On intimation of a special resolution passed by a company that its affairs are required to be investigated:
3. In the public interest: or
4. On request from any department of the Central Government or a State Government:

PEPPER IT WITH  
 Naresh Chandra  
 Committee, Central  
 Economic Intelligence  
 Bureau Shri Vepa  
 Kamesam committee

SFIO is headed by a Director as Head of Department in the rank of Joint Secretary to the Government of India. The Headquarter of SFIO is at New Delhi, with five Regional Offices at Mumbai, New Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad & Kolkata.

## IMT Highways

### Why in News?

India and Asean countries are holding consultations on the extension of the 1,360 km IMT highway from Moreh in India to Mae-Sot in Thailand to Laos, Cambodia and to Vietnam.

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The 1,360 km IMT Highway starts from Moreh in Manipur and reaches Mae Sot in Thailand via Myanmar. Originally supposed to be finished by 2014, the project deadline is now extended to 2020. The India-Myanmar Friendship Road — connecting Moreh in Manipur with Tamu, Kalemmyo and Kalewa in Myanmar, constructed by the Border Roads Organisation in 2001 forms the first segment of the IMT Highway.

- Connecting India with the south eastern countries through a network of road will create jobs, market for crops grown in hilly regions of the Northeast which will also help growers in getting better price for their produce.
- Connectivity can generate annually, an estimated USD 70 billion in incremental GDP and 20 million in incremental aggregate employment by 2025.
- **With over 50% of India's trade flowing through the South China Sea and Beijing's growing influence in the region** with its Belt and Road initiative, the completion of this trilateral highway project assumes serious strategic significance.
- The IMT Highway will provide the much needed impetus **to India's border trade and its relations** with the near-east countries. A success of the IMT Highway will only **accentuate India's positioning in the neighbourhood**, and that would undoubtedly proof India as a paragon example of a responsible actor in the region.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 BBIN, India-Myanmar-  
 Thailand Friendship  
 Motor Rally,

Another area on which the government is working to connect India with South East Asia is the IMT Motor Vehicle Agreement (IMT MVA). India, Myanmar and Thailand in 2014 commenced negotiations for finalising and implementing the IMT Motor Vehicle Agreement (IMT MVA)

## Public Procurement Portal

### Why in News?

**Public Procurement Portal 'MSME Sambandh'** was launched recently. The objective of the portal is to monitor the implementation of the Public Procurement from MSEs by Central Public Sector Enterprises. The Procurement Policy launched in 2012 mandates every Central Ministry/Department/PSU to set an annual goal for procurement from the MSE sector at the beginning of the year, with the objective of achieving an overall procurement goal of minimum of 20 per cent of the total annual purchases of the products or services produced

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or rendered by MSEs. By creating an online portal, the Ministries and the CPSEs can assess their performance.

- Micro and Small Enterprises would be able to access the information about the products being procured by CPSEs. Thus, it would help the MSEs in participating in the procurement process.
- MSME is not given its due importance which generates more employment next only to Agriculture sector.
- 80% of jobs in industry is given by MSME with just 20% of investment.
- Such portal would gel with the ease of doing business and **'Make in India' initiatives of the Government of India.**

India is not a signatory to the Government Procurement Agreement within the WTO framework because it wants to retain its policy space to meet its development needs through public procurement process.

Indian recently brought a policy providing preference in government procurement to local goods and services suppliers. This was to push the 'Make In India' initiative, ensure greater flow of capital and technology into domestic services and manufacturing, and in turn, boost job creation locally as well as promote small enterprises. It also came up with an order restricting or excluding from public procurement tenders in India, the firms from those nations where Indian suppliers are not allowed to participate and/or compete in government procurement process.

PEPPER IT WITH  
RCEP, GeM, FTA,  
UNICITRAL Model Law

### Mission Antyodaya: Ranking of 5000 Gram Panchayats

#### Why in News?

As part of the Centre's ambitious plan to make 50,000 villages poverty free by 2019, an exercise to rank as many gram panchayats on the parameters of physical infrastructure, human development and economic activities have been completed by ministry of rural development with the help of state governments.

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- The ranking will help in identification of gaps in the quest for making these gram panchayats poverty free.
- Under the Mission Antyodaya, the Centre has set a target of bringing one crore households out of poverty and making 50,000 gram panchayats poverty free by 2019.
- The 50,000 gram panchayats have been selected in about 5,000 clusters to drive economic activities along with development of physical infrastructure and human development on priority.
- Besides involving public institutions such as Krishi Vigyan Kendras, MSME clusters, skill development institutions, the ministry has also invited private sector, especially start-ups and corporate social responsibility initiatives to be part of this mission.
- These gram panchayats were selected by the state governments on the basis of social capital.
- Through convergence of all government programmes across ministries and departments, an effort is being made to diversify livelihood and to eradicate poverty of households.

Mission Antyodaya is a convergence framework for measurable effective outcomes on parameters that transform lives and livelihoods.

It aims to make India poverty free by 2022



- Gram Panchayat Tellapur, block Ramchandrapuram, district Sangareddy (Telangana) topped the ranking.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Self Help Group, Gram Mitra Fellowship

**3rd Annual Meeting of Board of Governors of AIIB**

India will host the 3rd Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of AIIB at Mumbai in June 2018. The Theme of the Annual Meeting, 2018 will be **“Mobilizing Finance for Infrastructure: Innovation and Collaboration”**. The Government of India and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) Secretariat signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to delineate the duties and responsibilities of major stakeholders who would be involved in organizing the aforesaid Annual Meeting.

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PEPPER IT WITH  
ADB, IMF, UNSC reforms

Significance

- ✓ It is a significant development that India is to host the 3rd Annual Meeting of AIIB at Mumbai. India is not only one of the founding members of AIIB but is also the 2nd largest shareholder in AIIB.
- ✓ This international event will provide an excellent opportunity to showcase the strengths of the Indian economy and introduce AIIB members to potential infrastructure investment opportunities in India and Asia.

About AIIB

- AIIB is a multilateral development bank with a mission to improve social and economic outcomes in Asia and beyond.
- Headquartered in Beijing, China, AIIB commenced operations in January 2016.
- The AIIB recently also approved a US\$335 million loan to finance a 100-percent electric Bangalore Metro Rail—R 6 project.

**Kimberly Process (KP)**

- India attended the KP Plenary Session held at Brisbane, Australia in December, 2017. In one of the landmark decisions favoring India’s leading position in Diamonds globally, India was appointed as the KP Vice Chair for 2018 & Chair for 2019 in the last plenary held in Dubai in November, 2016. The EU will be KP Chair for 2018.

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About KP

- The Kimberley Process is a joint Government, International Diamond Industry and Civil Society initiative to stem the flow of Conflict Diamonds.
- “Conflict Diamonds” means rough diamonds used by rebel movements or their allies to finance conflict aimed at undermining legitimate governments.
- It is also described in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions. The KPCS came into effect from 2003 and evolved into an effective mechanism for stopping the trade in conflict diamonds. India is the founding member of KPCS. At present, KPCS has 54 members representing 81 countries including the EU with 28 members. India was Chair of the KPCS for the year 2008.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Minamata convention  
Vienna convention

**India-Swiss Deal Inked on Data Sharing**

In a move aimed at combating black money stashed abroad, India signed an agreement with Switzerland that would allow automatic sharing of tax-related information from January 1 next year. The agreement was signed by CBDT chairman.

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A joint declaration for the implementation of Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI) was signed last month between the two sides and it provided that both countries would start collecting data in accordance with the global standards in 2018 and exchange it from 2019 onwards.

PEPPER IT WITH Round tripping, FATF DTAA

While Switzerland has conformed to the global standards on automatic exchange of information with the signing of the declaration, India, on its part, has promised to safeguard the confidentiality of the data.

Significance

- ✓ It will now be possible for India to receive from September, 2019 onwards, the financial information of accounts held by Indian residents in Switzerland for 2018 and subsequent years, on an automatic basis.
- ✓ Switzerland, which has always been at the centre of the debate on black money allegedly stashed by Indians abroad, used to be known for very strong secrecy walls till a few years ago around its banking practices. A huge global pressure has resulted in Switzerland relenting on the tough secrecy clauses its local laws gave to the banks.

AEOI

The AEOI conforms to a norm set by global economic body the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for tax transparency.

**NITI Aayog and EU Delegation to India Release the Strategy on RE**

NITI Aayog in collaboration with the European Union delegation to India have released the Strategy on Resource Efficiency (RE). The report included in action plan for promoting resource efficiency in India.

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Resource efficiency very simply put is making more with fewer materials. In practice, through a life-cycle approach, it leads to minimizing impact on environment & the associated societal burdens, **transforming ‘waste’ into ‘resources’** fostering circular economy, and strengthening resource security.

PEPPER IT WITH Planning Commission, National Development Council Niti Aayog ease of doing business

This strategy is the first policy document to emphasize resource productivity in the country. RE Strategy emphasizes on Sustainable Public Procurement (SSP) as an action agenda which will be the market transformation tool to transform to a resource efficient economy.

The document is developed with the recommendations from the Indian Resource Efficiency Programme (IREP), launched by the Indian Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and Indian Resource Panel (InRP) in April 2017. The work on Resource Efficiency Strategy and proposed plan of action (core and medium term) will be supported for its implementation by the European Union (EU) funded Resource Efficiency Initiative (EU-REI) led by GIZ in the consortium with TERI, CII and Adelphi. NITI Aayog has provided key support in positioning this document for public consultation, and charting the way forward.

Significance

- Sustainability is a global priority and SDGs commitment and 11th Five year plan clearly enunciate importance of Resource efficiency (RE).
- Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy are important goals and central principles for achieving sustainable development.
- **India’s large population, rapid urbanization** and expanding industrial production have led to exploitation of available limited natural resources with concerns regarding resource depletion and future availability becoming more pronounced.

- Ensuring resource security requires an integrated, concerted and collaborative approach in order to fulfill the needs of a vast and growing population.
- Also, the environmental burdens emanating due to resource extraction, utilization and disposal, including land degradation, biodiversity loss, as well as air and water pollution remain of great concern, Enhancing resource efficiency (RE) and promoting the use of secondary raw materials (SRM) is a pertinent strategy to address these challenges and reduce dependence on primary resource.

### International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography

The Union Cabinet has approved the establishment of International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography, as a Category-2 Centre (C2C) of UNESCO, in Hyderabad.

The purpose of this Agreement is to establish a training centre towards development of capacity for the countries on the Indian Ocean Rim (IOR), African countries bordering the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, small island countries under the framework of UNESCO.

#### Operational Oceanography

The operational oceanography is an activity of conducting systematic oceanographic studies towards providing information services to various sectors viz. fisherman, disaster management, shipping, ports, coastal states, navy, coast guard, environment, offshore industries for conducting their day-to- day operations.

#### Significance

- The Centre will provide assistance in areas of capacity building and training, knowledge sharing and exchange of information, and hence could represent a valuable resource for UNESCO and its Intergovernmental Oceanography Commission (IOC) by enhancing the impact and visibility of UNESCO's action.
- The establishment of UNESCO Category-2 Centre will provide an opportunity for India to emerge as a leading country in the Indian Ocean.
- This will also help India to forge cooperation and improve engagement among the countries of the Indian Ocean, including South Asian and African states bordering the Indian Ocean.
- The establishment of the centre would respond to the worldwide increasing need to build technical and management capacity to address marine and coastal sustainability issues and prepare the region for and react efficiently to marine natural hazards.
- The Centre could contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goal-14 (SDG 14) related to building marine scientific research capacity in geographical area of the Centre responsibility which will also fulfill the commitments to support Small Island Developing States, Least Developed Countries.
- This C2C is intended to improve skill of students and other participants which will increase the employment opportunities within and outside India.

The establishment of C2C is also expected to increase ancillary development leading to employment generation in India. The centre is currently operational with the state-of-the-art facilities available at Indian Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Hyderabad.

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PEPPER IT WITH  
 Indian-Ocean Rim  
 Association, Asia-  
 Pacific Economic  
 Cooperation

### Rashtriya Vayoshree Yojna

- It is a welfare scheme for providing Physical Aids and Assisted-living Devices for Senior citizens belonging to BPL category.
- This is a Central Sector Scheme (fully funded by central government) and the expenditure for implementation of the scheme is met from the "Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund".

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- The sole implementing agency for the scheme is Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation (ALIMCO), a PSU under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment which is also the nodal ministry to oversee the implementation of the scheme.
- The Scheme is for a period of the 3 years ie. upto 2019-20.
- A sizeable percentage (5.2%) of the senior citizens suffers from some sort of disabilities related to old age.
- The Government has hence devised this Scheme to provide Walking sticks, Elbow crutches, Walkers / Crutches, Tripods / Quadpods, Hearing Aids, Wheelchair, Artificial Dentures, Spectacles to such senior citizens suffering from age related disabilities/ infirmities, who belong to BPL category.
- As per 2011, the population of senior citizens in India is 10.38 crore. More than 70% of the population of senior citizens live in rural areas of the country. Projections indicate that the number of elderly population will increase to around 173 million by 2026.

PEPPER IT WITH  
IPOP, Senior Citizens Welfare Fund, Atal Pension Yojna

**Ajeya Warrior**

- The third India -UK joint army training exercise '**Ajeya Warrior**' concluded recently in Rajasthan.
- The fortnight-long exercise was aimed at sharing best practices and experiences of the two armies.
- Set in the backdrop of growing terrorist activities worldwide, the first and second editions of the exercise were held in Karnataka and Westdown Camp in the UK, in 2013 and 2015 respectively.
- The exercise is aimed to build and promote bilateral relations between the Indian Army and the Royal British Army and to enhance inter-operability while sharing skills and experiences.

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**Wassenaar Arrangement Admits India as Its 42nd Member**

India has been admitted as the 42nd member of the Wassenaar Arrangement, a global export control regime. This development will **burnish India's nonproliferation credentials and broaden its access to sensitive technologies.**

The members of the Wassenaar Arrangement, during their two-day plenary meeting in Vienna, decided to admit India.

Admission to the arrangement

- ✓ To be admitted to the Arrangement, states must meet certain criteria, including acquiescence to a range of global nonproliferation treaties, including the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT).
- ✓ **India's admission to the Arrangement is not predicated on this requirement.** New Delhi has never signed the NPT and has sought to burnish its nonproliferation credentials through its behavior and policies **since its nuclear breakout in late 90's.**
- ✓ **Though admission requires consensus, the United States' backing for Indian admission into the Arrangement — reaffirmed prominently by the Obama administration — helped New Delhi's case.**
- ✓ **Moreover, the U.S. backing for India in the aftermath of the two countries' bilateral agreement on civil nuclear cooperation in 2005 helped New Delhi acquire a waiver from the Nuclear Suppliers Group in 2008 and accede to the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in 2016.**

PEPPER IT WITH  
Australian group  
NPT, MTCR

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✓ **India’s admission to the Wassenaar Arrangement was in part facilitated by China’s nonparticipation in the Arrangement.**

✓ Earlier this year, India had updated its export control lists to bring them in line with international standards, including those required by the Wassenaar Arrangement.

About Wassenaar Arrangement

It was established in 1996 to contribute to regional and international security. It is headquartered in Vienna, Austria and has 42 participating states including India.

The Wassenaar Arrangement has been established in order to contribute to regional and international security and stability, by promoting transparency and greater responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies, thus preventing destabilising accumulations. Participating States seek, through their national policies, to ensure that transfers of these items do not contribute to the development or enhancement of military capabilities which undermine these goals, and are not diverted to support such capabilities. The aim is also to prevent the acquisition of these items by terrorists.

India’s entry into the export control regime would enhance its credentials in the field of non-proliferation despite not being a signatory to the NPT.

The WA membership is also expected to build up a strong case **for India’s entry into the 48-member Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).**

China, which has been **stonewalling India’s entry into the 48-nation NSG** is not a member of the Wassenaar Arrangement. It is also not a member of MTCR.

**Akash Missile**

Why in News?

India successfully test fired its indigenously-developed surface-to-air Akash missile. Akash is a medium range surface-to-air anti-aircraft defence system developed by the DRDO as part of the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme.

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- The supersonic missile is the first surface-to-air missile with indigenous seeker to be test fired and is being inducted into the Army as short range surface to air missile (SRSAM).
- With the successful test firing, India has achieved the capability of making any type of surface to air missile.
- Akash has a strike range of about 25 km and carries a 55- kg fragmentation warhead that is triggered by proximity fuse.
- It is an all-weather area air defence weapon system for defending vulnerable areas against medium range air targets penetrating from low, medium and high altitudes.
- Akash missile system has the capability to neutralise aerial targets like fighter jets, cruise missiles and air-to-surface missiles as well as ballistic missiles.
- The system is designed to neutralise multiple aerial targets attacking from several directions simultaneously. The system is autonomous and its operation is fully automated.
- It uses state-of-the-art integral ram jet rocket propulsion system and the onboard digital autopilot ensures stability and control.

PEPPER IT WITH IGDP, Ram Jet, ITR

### INS Kalvari

#### Why in News?

The first of six scorpene submarine, Kalvari, was recently handed over to navy for commissioning. It is named after the dreaded Tiger Shark, a deadly deep sea predator of the Indian Ocean.

Kalvari can carry 18 torpedoes and travel 1,020km underwater. The 66-metre submarine can dive up to a depth of 300 metres to elude enemy detection.

- INS Kalvari is a diesel-electric attack submarine built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited. The project has been undertaken with French collaboration. It represents a significant success for the "Make in India" initiative.
- It is capable of handling various missions such as anti-surface warfare (attacking surface ships), anti-submarine warfare (destroying submarines), intelligence gathering, mine-laying and area surveillance.
- Kalvari is designed to operate in all theatres of war, including the tropics.
- It is also built with a special kind of high-tensile steel that is capable of withstanding high yield stress. This feature allows it to withstand pressure exerted by water, hydrostatic force, while diving deeper to enhance stealth.
- **Kalvari is a 'reincarnation' of the first Indian submarine to be commissioned into the Indian Navy on December 8, 1967.** The previous Kalvari served for nearly three decades, before being decommissioned in 1996.
- The second of the Scorpene's under construction, Khanderi, was launched in January 2017 and it is currently undergoing sea trials. The third Scorpene, Karanj, is being readied for launch in 2019. The remaining submarines are likely to be delivered to the navy by 2020.

Under Project 75I India will acquire 6 next generation diesel submarines with Air Independent Propulsion System (AIP) technology for the Indian Navy by 2022. Conventional diesel-electric submarines have to surface every few days to get oxygen to recharge their batteries. With AIP systems, they can stay submerged for much longer periods.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Sea Tiger, Defence Acquisition Council

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### Naseem Al-Bahr

- Naseem Al-Bahr or sea breeze is a bilateral exercise between India and Oman.
- The 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the biennial exercise was conducted in December 2017. It was first held in 1993.
- India has an ancient maritime tradition and maritime interaction with Oman dates back to over 4000 years B.C.
- Bilateral relation between Indian and Oman were formally established with signing of a 1953 Indo-Oman Treaty of friendship, Navigation and Commerce, a first between India and an Arab country.

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### Mission Seven Summit

After scaling of Mt Everest in 2005, Indian Air Force launched a unique and unprecedented series of mountaineering expedition 'Mission Seven Summits' with an aim to fly the tricolour and the IAF flag on the highest peaks in every continent.

A team comprising five IAF mountaineers, led by Gp Capt RC Tripathi, on 26 December 2017, has successfully scaled Mt Vinson in Antarctica, thus completing the assigned Mission.

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The highest peaks of every continent are as under:

- Aconkagua- South America
- Denali- North America
- MT Everest- Asia
- Mt Kilimanjaro- Africa
- Mt Elbrus- Europe
- Vinson Massif- Antarctica
- Carstensz Pyramid- Oceania

### Kumbh Mela As Intangible Cultural Heritage

The Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage under the UN body **'UNESCO' inscribed Kumbh Mela on the "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity"** at its 12th session in Jeju, South Korea.

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- The Kumbh Mela, held in Allahabad, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nashik, represents a syncretic set of rituals related to worship and cleansing in holy rivers. At any given place kumbh mela is held once in 12 years. It is **considered as the world's largest congregation of religious pilgrims.**
- The inscription of elements on the list helps countries which are a part of UNESCO's convention for safeguarding cultural heritage to mobilise international cooperation and assistance for ensuring that communities continue to practise and transmit such aspects of their heritage.
- In 2003, the UNESCO General Conference adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage as an international treaty acknowledging that cultural heritage is more than tangible places, monuments and objects; it also encompasses traditions and living expressions.
- Intangible cultural heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated with them that communities, groups and in some cases, individuals recognize as a part of their cultural heritage.  
For more on UNESCO please visit CC September 2017.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Vikram Samvat calendar,  
Festival of the sacred  
pitcher, Shital Pati weaving

Nowrouz; Yoga; Traditional brass and copper craft of utensil making among the Thateras of Jandiala Guru (Punjab); Sankirtana, ritual singing, drumming and dancing of Manipur; Chhau dance; Kalbelia folk songs and dances of rajasthan; Mudi yettu, ritual theatre and dance drama of Kerala; Ramman, religious festival and ritual theatre of the Garhwal Himalayas-India; Kutiyattam, Sanskrit theatre; tradition of vedic chanting; Ramlila, the traditional performance of the Ramayana; These are in the list of Intangible cultural heritage of Humanity.

### Rajasthan offers e-mail IDs in Hindi

- Rajasthan has become the first state in the country to offer its residents email ids in Hindi.
- The move will help encourage the population who is not comfortable reading or writing in English to go digital.
- The initiative is part of the 'Rajasthan DigiKit' which has an enrollment of more than 1 crore people.

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### Odisha Recognised as Champion State for Export

The Centre has recognised Odisha as a 'Champion State' for recording the highest growth in exports during 2016-17. Between 2012-13 and 2016-17, in terms of USD, shipments from the state witnessed a positive growth of 17.60 per cent against the negative growth of 2.07 per cent in overall exports of India.

As per the Revealed Competitive Advantage (RCA) done by the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO), four categories of export items have emerged as 'items of prime importance' for the state having a competitive advantage vis-à-vis the other Indian states and world exports. The items are iron, mineral metals, chemicals and marine products.

### Andhra Pradesh Fiber Grid Project

- Andhra Pradesh Fiber grid is a prestigious project which aims to expand high speed internet facility in the state. It was recently inaugurated by President of India.
- The government of Andhra Pradesh entered into an agreement with Alphabet to bring the breakthrough Free Space Optical Communication (FSOC) technology in order to provide internet through the government Fibergrid project.
- The technology was originally used by the Project Loon team to beam data between balloons, but it can also be used closer to earth.
- FSOC links deliver high-speed, high-capacity connectivity over long distances using beams of light which is similar to how data is transmitted through fiber optic cables using light, but unlike traditional fiber, one doesn't need to dig trenches or string cable along the poles.

### Safe City Surveillance

- The Bihar government has launched Safe City Surveillance Scheme for keeping the crimes against women in check.
- The scheme aims to bring all major public places under a strict watch of close-circuit television (CCTV) cameras and improve the overall crime control in the state.
- The scheme has specially been launched for checking crimes against women such as harassment, eve-teasing and molestation, snatching incidents and roadside scuffles etc.

### U.P. Pro-Poor Tourism Development Project

- An agreement for IBRD credit of USD 40 million (about 260 crore) from the World Bank for the UP Pro-Poor Tourism Development Project was signed recently.
- The five-year programme is worth approximately USD 57.14 million, of which USD 40 million will be financed by the bank, and the remaining amount will be funded out of state Budget.
- The programme is aimed at increase tourism-related benefits for local communities in targeted destinations.
- It is expected to have far-reaching social, economic and environmental benefits by targeting local communities and entrepreneurs near some of the main tourist and pilgrimage attractions in Uttar Pradesh.

### Tamil Nadu Irrigated Agriculture Modernisation Project

- The Government of India, the Government of Tamil Nadu and the World Bank signed a \$318 million loan agreement for the Tamil Nadu Irrigated Agriculture Modernisation Project to promote climate resilient agriculture technologies, improve water management practices, and increase market opportunities for small and marginal farmers.
- Tamil Nadu, being a water-stressed state, continues to experience water shortages which are expected to further exacerbate in the future.
- Rehabilitating and modernizing irrigation tanks will improve the reliability and availability of irrigation water for farming communities, making them less prone to climatic hazards. More than 160,000 ha of currently partially irrigated lands will come into full irrigation under this project.

- This project will help Tamil Nadu scale up its efforts to unlock the full potential of its agriculture sector.
- It will support farmers improve the efficiency of water used in farming, diversify into high value crops, and produce crops that are resilient to the increasing threats of climate change.
- **By helping farmers’ access modern technologies, linking** them to markets, and providing postharvest management support, the project will enable farmers to shift from a mono crop paddy system to mixed cropping including high-value crops (fruits, vegetables, and spices), pulses, oilseeds, and millets.

### International Day of Persons with Disabilities

International Day of Persons with Disabilities was celebrated on 3rd december.

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The annual observance of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly resolution 47/3 in 1992. It aims to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and development, and to increase awareness of on the situation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

**The theme for this year’s IDPD is** “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient society for all”.

### World AIDS Day and National Strategic Plan for AIDS

Founded in 1988, World AIDS Day was the first ever global health day. **World AIDS Day takes place on December 1 each year. It’s an opportunity** for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, to show support for people living with HIV, and to commemorate those who have died from an AIDS-related illness. The theme for this year **was** “25 Years of National AIDS Control Programme”.

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The National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI), 2017-24 was released recently on the occasion of World AIDS day. India is committed to 'Ending the AIDS' epidemic as a public health threat by 2030 in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Since the first HIV/AIDS case reported in 1986 in India, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, has made significant progress in containing the spread of the disease with evidence based policy, strategic directions, funding to establish services for HIV prevention, treatment and care continuum for people living with and affected by AIDS including key affected groups such as Sex Workers, Injection Drug Users, Men who have Sex with Men, Transgender and bridge populations who are at risk of acquiring HIV infection.

**Vision**

Paving the way for an AIDS Free India

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**Mission**

Attain universal coverage of HIV prevention, treatment to care continuum of services that are effective, inclusive, equitable and adapted to needs

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**Goal**

Achieving zero new infections, zero AIDS related deaths and zero discrimination

- The National Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS and STIs 2017-2024 has been designed keeping global and national commitments made by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare at various platforms in the past.
- The National Strategic Plan (NSP) has taken into account the gains made by India through evidence based programming over the last two decades, the

- Priority 1** Accelerating HIV prevention in 'at risk group' and key population
- Priority 2** Expanding quality assured HIV testing with universal access to comprehensive HIV care
- Priority 3** Elimination of mother to child transmission of HIV and syphilis
- Priority 4** Addressing the critical enablers in HIV programming
- Priority 5** Restructuring the strategic information system to be efficient and patient-centric

new HIV and other inclusive laws and policies that have come into effect.

- The NSP recognises the need for diversified approach, stepping up prevention, reaching the unreached and emerging at-risk populations including workplaces and prisons.
- The new policies of community based testing (CBT) and 'Test and Treat' have been interwoven to give impetus for achieving prevention and treatment targets.

Objectives:

- Reduce new infections by 80% by 2024 (Baseline 2010)
- Link 95% of estimated PLHIV to services by 2024
- Ensure ART initiation and retention of 90% of PLHIV for sustained viral suppression by 2024
- Eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV & syphilis by 2020
- Eliminate HIV related Stigma & discrimination by 2020
- Facilitate sustainable NACP service delivery by 2024

- India successfully achieved the targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 (over 50% reduction in annual new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths),
- With an HIV prevalence of 0.26% in the adult population, India has an estimated 2.1 million People living with HIV (2015).
- Over the past fifteen years, India has experienced a gradual decline in estimated new HIV infections, prevalence and mortality due to AIDS-related causes.
- Free Anti-Retroviral Therapy was launched in 2004

In addition to HIV, there are various co-infections and co-morbidities, including other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), Reproductive Tract Infections (RTIs), Tuberculosis (TB), Hepatitis B and C, and cervical cancer, that will be addressed in the implementation of the NSP.

PEPPER IT WITH NACO, VCTC, Anti-Retroviral Therapy, HIV/AIDS prevention and control Act, 2017

**Ujh multi-purpose project**

Why in News?

The Central Water Commission has submitted a detailed project report (DPR) of the Ujh multi-purpose project to the Jammu and Kashmir government for evaluation.

About Ujh project

The project will store around 0.65 million acre-feet (MAF) of water of the river Ujh (a tributary of river Ravi) to irrigate nearly 30,000 hectares of land and produce more than 200 MW of hydro-power.

Significance

It is a step towards fast track utilisation of India's rights under the Indus Waters Treaty. Under the Indus Waters Treaty, water of river Ravi is allocated to India. This will help India utilise a part of the flow that presently goes across the border unutilised.

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**WHO to recognise 'gaming disorder' as mental health condition**

The WHO is set to include "gaming disorder" for the first time in its International Classification of Diseases (ICD), which is used by more than 100 countries. The latest version of the manual, last updated in 1990, will be published shortly.

By adding "gaming disorder" to the ICD, WHO will make the health condition an official diagnosis that can be used by health care workers, including doctors. It also lists conditions medical personnel can use to decide if a gamer's behaviour can be described as a mental health disorder.

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Significance

PEPPER IT WITH  
Blue Whale game

- Health professionals need to recognise that gaming disorder may have “serious health consequences”.
- Inclusion of a disorder in ICD is a consideration which countries take into account when making decisions on provision of health care and allocation of resources for prevention, treatment and rehabilitation.
- The list is also intended to facilitate the sharing and comparing of health information between hospitals, regions and countries. Public health experts also use the ICD to track the number of deaths and diseases.

Ganga Gram Project

- The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MDWS) launched ‘Ganga Gram’ – a project for sanitation based integrated development of all 4470 villages along the River Ganga.
- The Ganga Gram Swachhta Sammelan was attended by more than 1400 delegates including 500 village sarpanches from all five Ganga States (Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal), State and District government officials, NMCG Members and Ganga Swachhta Manch volunteers.
- Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation is the nodal agency for implementation of the Ganga Gram Project. For the Ganga Gram Project the Ministry works in close coordination with NMCG, various Ministries, State Government and Districts.

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Significance

- Ganga Gram vision is an integrated approach for holistic development of villages situated on the banks of River Ganga with active participation of the villagers. After achieving ODF target in Ganga Villages, implementation of solid and liquid waste management and other integrated activities are remaining tasks.

Bodhi Parva

- **Bodhi Parva: BIMSTEC Festival of Buddhist Heritage’ was celebrated** between December 8-10, 2018 in New Delhi (Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts). It was as celebrated as part of celebrations of 20th anniversary of BIMSTEC.
- BIMSTEC has a deep connect with Buddhism, which originated in South Asia and then travelled and rooted itself in South East Asia. Buddhism constitutes a bridge between South and South-East Asia.
- BIMSTEC is an international organisation comprising of India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan. The geographical contiguity of BIMSTEC implies common social, cultural and religious linkages.
- BIMSTEC is a conscious effort to revitalise relations among these countries.
- The universal message of peace and tolerance practiced by Buddhism can address the growing sense of inadequacy in the face of changes and conflicts that people and the world face.

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## CONCEPT CLEARING ASSIGNMENT

1. Bring out the importance of ECI in the conducting the fair election in India. Critically analyse the vagueness of removal of ECI highlighted by recent PIL questioning the proviso of Art 324 that ECI can be removed only on the recommendation of CEC and how it can affect the autonomy and fairness of election machinery.
2. Ninety-five percentage of the e-waste in India is being recycled in non-formal sector and five percentage of the e-waste volume are handled in formal unit which is health hazardous and alarm raising on the negligence of government authorities. Elucidate on the harmful effect of non-formal scavenging of e- Waste and recommend step to curb health hazard in light of Global E-waste Monitor 2017 report.
3. What is Good Governance and how it is different from Administration? Critically analyze vital role of Good Governance in strengthening Indian democracy.
4. Meghalaya on recently became the first state in India to operationalise a law that makes social audit of government programmes and schemes a part of government practice. Briefly define is social audit. Why it should be used in India and how it can help in building policies and help in better governance?
5. How does Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017 protect Muslim women's rights? Also bring out the key features of this Bill.
6. Briefly discuss the reasons for the exodus of Rohingya. How the pact signed between India-Myanmar for socio-economic development of Rakhine state will affect the deteriorating condition of Rohingya. Bring out the salient features of this pact.
7. U.S. President recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, despite warnings from around the world that the gesture will further drive a wedge between Israel and the Palestinians. What effect **will Trump's** declaration have and how will the peace process proceed?
8. Due to Ockhi in Kanyakumari, the situation was particularly worrisome and over 1,000 people were evacuated from the low-lying areas. The cyclone warning was delayed and the warning, when it came, was ineffective because it could not be conveyed to thousands of fisher folk who were already out at sea; these were the dereliction observed during Ockhi. Critically analyse the issue and suggest action for preparedness for the disaster like Ockhi.
9. Briefly discuss about Indian Solar Alliance. Discuss the significance of ISA at international platform and how it will help Indian economy in far run?
10. The problem of crop residue burning has been intensifying over the years, with Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh being the major burning hotspots. Bring out the salient features of Central Action Plan to tackle the air pollution by stubble burning. Also discuss the harmful effect of crop residue burning. What changes would you recommend in the Central Action Plan to tackle air pollution.
11. The failure to reach at any outcome in the recent Ministerial Conference of World Trade Organisation has again started the debate of bilateral negotiations. Do you think this amounts to an end to or downfall of Globalisation. Does America First call of US president in this globalized world have any impact on international organisations.
12. Financial inclusion has always been an issue for India. Earlier planning Commission and now the Niti Ayog has given a lot of emphasis on this issue but India still lags behind as compared to developed nations. What steps according to you is required to make financial inclusion a reality. What other than launching schemes can be done in this regard.
13. India recorded strong growth in recent years in both economic activity and financial assets. Increased diversification, commercial orientation, and technology-driven inclusion have supported growth in the financial industry. Yet, the financial sector is grappling with significant challenges, and growth has recently slowed. Suggest measures for improvement in financial sector in India. Also discuss the structural reforms required in the banking sector in India.
14. The Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) has taken up probes into various companies for allegedly indulging in illegal money pooling activities. In the last three financial years the count of such firms has been highest. discuss the functioning of SFIO. Also suggest some measures to tackle the issue of illegal money.



## P. T ORIENTED QUESTIONS

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| <p>1. Consider the following statements about SIMBEX</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is a military bilateral exercise.</li> <li>2. The participants are India and Singapore.</li> </ol> <p>Choose the correct answer:</p> <p>(a) 1 only                      (b) 2 only<br/>(c) 1 and 2                      (d) None</p> <p>2. Consider the following about Wasenaar agreement and choose the correct one/s</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is an arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies.</li> <li>2. India is one of founding member of this arrangement.</li> </ol> <p>Code:</p> <p>(a) 1 only                      (b) 2 only<br/>(c) 1 and 2                      (d) None</p> <p>3. Ethereum is</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) radioactive element</li> <li>(b) probe for dark matter</li> <li>(c) crypto currency</li> <li>(d) newly found element</li> </ol> <p>4. Which of the following Indian states neighbour Bangladesh</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mizoram                      2. Meghalaya</li> <li>3. Tripura                      4. Assam</li> </ol> <p>Code:</p> <p>(a) 1, 2 and 3                      (b) 1,3 and 4<br/>(c) 1, 2 and 4                      (d) All the above</p> <p>5. Which of the following is not member/s of OPEC</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Oman                      2. Gabon</li> <li>3. Egypt                      4. Saudi Arabia</li> </ol> <p>Code</p> <p>(a) 1 and 2                      (b) 1 and 3<br/>(c) 1, 2 and 3                      (d) 1,3 and 4</p> <p>6. Consider the following about Clean Sea-2017</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It was conducted by Indian Navy.</li> <li>2. It was held at A&amp;N islands</li> </ol> <p>Code:</p> <p>(a) 1 only                      (b) 2 only<br/>(c) 1 and 2                      (d) None</p> <p>7. Consider the following about THAAD missiles and choose the correct one/s</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It has been developed by DRDO.</li> <li>2. It is a missile defence system that is designed to intercept and destroy short and medium-range ballistic missiles in their final flight phase.</li> </ol> <p>(a) 1 only                      (b) 2 only<br/>(c) 1 and 2                      (d) None</p> <p>8. Consider the following about Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana - Saubhagya scheme and choose the correct one/s</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is for electrical connection to rural households</li> </ol> | <p>2. The beneficiaries will be identified by SECC.</p> <p>(a) 1 only                      (b) 2 only<br/>(c) 1 and 2                      (d) None</p> <p>9. Consider the following statements and choose the correct one/s</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Asian development bank is headquarters at Beijing.</li> <li>2. US is the largest shareholder of ADB.</li> </ol> <p>(a) 1 only                      (b) 2 only<br/>(c) 1 and 2                      (d) None</p> <p>10. In India the steel production industry requires the import of</p> <p>(a) saltpeter                      (b) rock phosphate<br/>(c) coking coal                      (d) All of the above</p> <p>11. With Reference to the Fourteenth Finance Commission, which of the following statements is/are correct?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It has increased the share of States in the central divisible pool from 32 percent to 42 percent</li> <li>2. It has made recommendations concerning sector-specific grants</li> </ol> <p>Select the correct answer using the code given below.</p> <p>(a) 1 only                      (b) 2 only<br/>(c) Both 1 and 2                      (d) Neither 1 nor 2</p> <p>12. Consider the following about FSSAI and choose the correct one/s</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is a statutory body.</li> <li>2. It is under ministry of agriculture.</li> </ol> <p>(a) 1 only                      (b) 2 only<br/>(c) 1 and 2                      (d) None</p> <p>13. <b>Who is known as 'the father of local self government' in India</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Lord Morley</li> <li>(b) Lord Canning</li> <li>(c) Lord Ripon</li> <li>(d) Lord Wellesley</li> </ol> <p>14. Consider the following statements and choose the correct one/s</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. August offer provided for dominion status</li> <li>2. It was rejected by Indian National Congress</li> </ol> <p>(a) 1 only                      (b) 2 only<br/>(c) 1 and 2                      (d) None</p> <p>15. Which of the following are critically endangered</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pygmy hog</li> <li>2. Kondana rat</li> <li>3. Malabar civet</li> </ol> <p>(a) 1 and 2                      (b) 1 and 3<br/>(c) 2 and 3                      (d) All the above</p> <p>16. Consider the following about Namdapha flying squirrel and choose the correct one/s</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is endemic to south India</li> </ol> |
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2. It is endangered according to IUCN  
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 1 and 3  
(c) 2 and 3 (d) All the above
17. Which of the above are correctly matched  
1. Anamudi Shola National Park - Tamil Nadu  
2. Balphakram National Park - Meghalaya  
3. Bandipur National Park - Karnataka  
Code:  
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 1 and 3  
(c) 2 and 3 (d) All the above
18. Which of the following has caused food inflation in India  
1. Due to a gradual switchover to the cultivation of commercial crops, the area under the cultivation of food grains has steadily decreased in the last five years by about 30%.  
2. As a consequence of increasing incomes, the consumption patterns of the people have undergone a significant change.  
3. The food supply chain has structural constraints.  
Code:  
(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only  
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3
19. Consider the following about gravitational waves and choose the correct one/s  
1. It was predicted by Einstein special theory of relativity  
2. The only laboratory which can detect gravitational wave is LIGO.  
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 1 and 3  
(c) 2 and 3 (d) None
20. The seasonal reversal of winds is the typical characteristic of  
(a) Equatorial climate  
(b) Mediterranean climate  
(c) Monsoon climate  
(d) All of the above climates
21. If the interest rate is decreased in an economy, it will  
(a) decrease the consumption expenditure in the economy  
(b) increase the tax collection of the Government  
(c) increase the investment expenditure in the economy  
(d) increase the total savings in the economy
22. Consider the following statements and choose the correct one/s  
1. Partition of the Bengal province came into effect during the viceroyalty of lord Curzon  
2. It was divided on the basis of language.  
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) 1 and 2 (d) None
23. Which act/charter act created the post "Governor general of India"  
(a) GOI act 1858 (b) Charter act 1833  
(c) Charter act 1853 (d) GOI act 1909
24. Consider the following statements about Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) and choose the correct one/s  
1. It insures the income of farmer and not that of crop  
2. It also covers post harvest losses  
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) 1 and 2 (d) None
25. The terms 'Marginal Standing Facility Rate' and 'Net Demand and Time Liabilities', are used in relation to  
(a) banking operations  
(b) communication networking  
(c) military strategies  
(d) supply and demand of agricultural products
26. Consider the following statements and choose the correct one/s  
1. Nano tech has great use in targeted drug delivery  
2. Nano tech is future for cancer treatment  
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) 1 and 2 (d) None
27. Losar is traditional festival of  
(a) Meghalaya (b) Assam  
(c) Ladakh (d) Rajasthan
28. Consider the following statements given below and choose the INCORRECT one/ones.  
1. Merchant discount rate charges are borne by the customers  
2. Quick Response code is a three-dimensional figure  
Code:  
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
29. Consider the following statements given below.  
1. Financial Stability and Development council is headed by the Ministry of Finance  
2. India is a member of Financial Stability Board (FSB)  
3. FSB is a specialised wing of International Monetary Fund  
Which among the following is/are correct?  
(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 only  
(c) 2 and 3 only (d) None of the above
30. Buines Aires Declaration is related to which among the following  
(a) A declaration to decrease the fishing subsidy with a special focus on developing nations  
(b) A declaration to have ethical business environment  
(c) A declaration to reaffirm the issues of gender and trade  
(d) None of the above