



CURRENT CONNECT APRIL - 2018

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Central Vigilance Commission

In News

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) recently said since Aadhaar was being made mandatory for numerous financial transactions and property deals, it could be used effectively in tracking the ill-gotten wealth of corrupt bureaucrats.

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Significance of this proposed move

1. The anti-corruption watchdog was optimistic that information made available through a person's Permanent Account Number (PAN) and Aadhaar cards could help the CVC check if financial deals carried out by the card holder were within his or her means.
2. With Aadhaar being made mandatory for some financial transactions, institution like CVC, CBI etc would be in a position to get data from a few centralised agencies and use the information for the purpose of determining a transaction made by an individual and to probe disproportionate assets (DA).
3. The financial transactions including those related to immovable properties and shares were available in various domain areas of Income Tax authorities, registration departments or Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) and other government agencies.

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has urged the Prime Minister's Office to bring private sector banks under its watch, citing the fact that they have been involved in many recent instances of malfeasance.

Few CVC initiatives

1. National Anticorruption Strategy Leveraging Technology to Prevent Corruption
2. Integrity in Public procurement
3. Awareness Campaign
4. Provision for Whistle Blowers
5. Modern Preventive Vigilance Framework

CVC

- The Central Vigilance Commission was set up by the Government in February, 1964 on the recommendations of the Committee on Prevention of Corruption, headed by Shri K. Santhanam, to advise and guide Central Government agencies in the field of vigilance.
- It was conferred with statutory status in 2003. It submits its report to the President of India.
- The term of service is 4 years or 65 years, whichever is earlier.

PEPPER IT WITH
Integrity Index Development,
Financial Intelligence Unit.,
Vigeye Vani

Composition

1. A Central Vigilance Commissioner - Chairperson
2. Not more than two Vigilance Commissioners – Members Appointment
The Central Vigilance Commissioner and the Vigilance Commissioners shall be appointed by the President on recommendation of a Committee consisting of the Prime Minister (Chairperson), the Minister of Home Affairs (Member) and the Leader of the Opposition in the House of the People (Member)

Removal

The Central Vigilance Commissioner or any Vigilance Commissioner can be removed from his office only by order of the President on the ground of proved misbehavior or incapacity after the Supreme Court, on a reference made to it by the President, has, on inquiry, reported that the Central Vigilance Commissioner or any Vigilance Commissioner, as the case may be, ought to be removed.

Guidelines for Accreditation of Journalists

In News

Noticing the increasing instances of fake news in various mediums including print and electronic media, the Government has amended the Guidelines for Accreditation of Journalists.

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What is fake news?

- Completely false information, photos or videos purposefully created and spread to confuse or misinform
- Information, photos or videos manipulated to deceive - or old photographs shared as new
- Satire or parody which means no harm but can fool people

Malaysia has approved a law banning fake news. The law makes “fake news” punishable with a maximum six-year jail term. The law covers all media and extends even to foreigners outside Malaysia.

Key Highlights

1. Accreditation of a journalist (both television and print) can be cancelled/annulled if the news reported by them is found to be “fake.”
2. **On receiving complaints of “fake news”, it will be** referred to the Press Council of India (PCI) if it pertains to print media and to the News Broadcasters Association (NBA) if it relates to electronic media. Both the agencies will have to dispose of each complaint within 15 days.
3. In case of any confirmation of publication or telecast of fake news, the accreditation of the journalist shall be suspended for a period of six months in the first violation and for one year in the case of second violation. In the event of a third violation, it would be cancelled permanently.
4. The Accreditation Committee of the PIB (Press Information Bureau) which consists of representative of both PCI and NBA shall be invariably be reached out to for validating any accreditation request of any news media agency.
5. While examining the requests seeking accreditation, the regulatory agencies will examine whether the **‘Norms of Journalistic Conduct’ and ‘Code of Ethics and Broadcasting Standards’** prescribed by the PCI and NBA respectively are adhered to by the journalists as part of their functioning. It would be obligatory for journalists to abide by these guidelines.

PEPPER IT WITH
World Press Freedom Index,
Reporters Without Borders

Concern

In recent times it has been observed how fake news can sway an election, manipulate public thinking, and is often used as a tool by crooked publishers who’re looking to cash in on a fast buck. But fake news is also becoming a tool of trade for conspiracy theorists to preach manipulating lies with the intent of spreading hatred against humanity, and worst of all, inciting inexcusable violence to boot. In general “fake news” is journalism that consists of deliberate misinformation, news whose main purpose is to distort “the truth for emotional persuasion, seeking to drive action.”

One seat-one candidate

In News

The Supreme Court recently asked the Centre to respond to an affidavit filed by the Election Commission (EC) of India to amend the law to prevent candidates contesting from multiple constituencies.

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Background

- ✓ Under the Section 33(7) of Representation of People’s Act, a candidate is allowed to contest from two constituencies simultaneously during a Lok Sabha or assembly election.

- ✓ A three-judge bench comprising Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and D.Y. Chandrachud heard the matter under petition filed demanding striking down of this provision as invalid and unconstitutional.

Issue

- In 255th report, the Law Commission of India recommends an amendment of section 33(7) of the RPA, which permits a candidate to contest any election (parliamentary, assembly, biennial council, or bye-elections) from up to two constituencies. In view of the expenditure of time and effort; election fatigue; and the harassment caused to the voters, section 33(7) should be amended to permit candidates to stand from only one constituency.
- The EC had cited expenditure, time, election fatigue and harassment caused to voters as reasons behind the recommendation.
- EC had pointed out that there had been cases of a person contesting from two constituencies and winning from both. The consequence is one seat is vacated and a by-election would be required from one constituency, involving avoidable labour and expenditure putting burden on exchequer.

Section 33(7) of RPA:
 Section 33(7) of the Representation of **People’s Act** 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.

EC Suggestions

1. The ECI had back then proposed that the amount could be Rs 5 lakh for state Assembly and Council election and Rs 10 lakh for election to the House of the People in order to discourage the habit of contesting from two constitutioncies.
2. It had once again proposed that the law be amended to provide that a person cannot contest from more than one constituency at a time for better management of elections or to bring in law for candidates winning from two seats to deposit money in government.
3. The EC told the court that it had proposed an **amendment to Section 33(7) of the Representation of People’s Act in July 2004, as one of the 22 “urgent electoral reforms”** suggested to a Rajya Sabha parliamentary standing committee.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Prohibition of Simultaneous
 Membership Rules, RPA,
 Open Prison

SC/ST Act

In News

The Supreme Court order banning automatic arrest and registration of cases for alleged harassment of SCs and STs will dilute the law which aims to protect the marginalized.

Verdict

- The Supreme Court banned automatic arrests and registration of criminal cases under the SC/ST Act, triggering widespread criticism and outcry from the dalit community.
- The bench had directed arrests only after preliminary enquiries by assessing authorities in case of bureaucrats and by senior police officials in case of general public. This had prompted Dalit agitations, forcing the Centre to seek a review.
- The bench ruled that preliminary inquiry in a case under the Act would be conducted by the Deputy Superintendent of Police to ensure the allegations are not frivolous.

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- The amendment in the SC/ST Act was made to protect honest public servants discharging bona fide duties from being blackmailed with false cases under the Act.

PEPPER IT WITH
Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, Thank
You India Campaign

Issue on horizon

1. The dilution of the provisions of the Act might lead to increase in violence against Dalits.
2. There were concerns that the order would make the law "ineffective" and adversely impact dispensation of justice to Dalits and tribal.
3. Taken together, the three changes neatly reverse the original mandate of the SC/ST Act: instead of immediately registering an FIR and investigating the accused, the police would now immediately doubt the Dalit and investigate her complaint for veracity

Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act, 2015

- ✓ The Act prohibits the commission of offences against members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SCs and STs) and establishes special courts for the trial of such offences and the rehabilitation of victims.
- ✓ New offences added under the Act include: (a) garlanding with footwear, (b) compelling to dispose or carry human or animal carcasses, or do manual scavenging, (c) abusing SCs or STs by caste name in public, (d) attempting to promote feelings of ill-will against SCs or STs or disrespecting any deceased person held in high esteem, and (e) imposing or threatening a social or economic boycott.
- ✓ Preventing SCs or STs from undertaking the following activities will be considered an offence: (a) using common property resources, (c) entering any place of worship that is open to the public, and (d) entering an education or health institution.
- ✓ Role of courts: Under the Act, a Court of Session at the district level is deemed a Special Court to provide speedy trials for offences. A Special Public Prosecutor is appointed to conduct cases in this court.
- ✓ Rights of victims and witnesses: The Act adds a chapter on the rights of victims and witness. It shall be the duty of the state to make arrangements for the protection of victims, their dependents and witnesses. The state government shall specify a scheme to ensure the implementation of rights of victims and witnesses.
- ✓ Power of Special Courts and Exclusive Special Courts, to take direct cognizance of offence and as far as possible, completion of trial of the case within two months, from the date of filing of the charge sheet.

Significance

The SC/ST Act and the SC/ST Amendment Act hold enormous significance for Dalits not because they have been effective in protecting them from caste injustice; not at all. If they are cherished despite their poor conviction rates and shoddy implementation, it is because their very existence is a testament to Dalit agency in a heavily casteist society, and a powerful affirmation of the **community's faith in the Indian Constitution.**

The problem with this law is not its **supposed misuse but the inability of India's criminal justice system** to recognise its own casteist biases. It is, after all, a matter of common sense that in a society seeped in caste, no institution can claim immunity from casteist prejudices or mindset. Sadly, the judiciary has been reluctant to acknowledge the social matrix of jurisprudence in India, which is caste.

Competition Commission of India (CCI)

In News

The Union Cabinet chaired has given its approval for rightsizing the Competition Commission of India (CCI).

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Competition Act 2002

The Act prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and M&A), which causes or likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.

In line with the international trend and to cope up with the changing realities India, consequently, enacted the Competition Act, 2002 to supersede and replace the MRTP Act.

PEPPER IT WITH
NCLT, NCLAT

Objectives

1. To check anti-competitive practices
2. To prohibit abuse of dominance
3. Regulation of combinations.
4. To provide for the establishment of CCI, a quasi-judicial body to perform below mentioned duties

Competition Commission of India

CCI is a statutory body of India entrusted with enforcing Competition Act 2002 and regulating anti-competitive practices in the country to prevent activities that have an adverse effect on competition in India.

Composition

From One Chairperson and Six Members (totaling seven) to One Chairperson and Three Members (totaling four) by not filling the existing vacancies of two Members and one more additional vacancy, which is expected in September, 2018 when one of the present incumbents will complete his term.

Benefits of rightsizing

1. The proposal is expected to result in reduction of three Posts of Members of the Commission in pursuance of the Governments objective of "Minimum Government - Maximum Governance".
2. The faster turnaround in hearings is expected to result in speedier approvals, thereby stimulating the business processes of corporates and resulting in greater employment opportunities in the country.

Protection of Human Rights (Amendments) Bill, 2018

In News

The Union Cabinet has given its approval to the Protection of Human Rights (Amendments) Bill, 2018 for better protection and promotion of human rights in the country.

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Salient Features of Bill

1. It proposes to include "National Commission for **Protection of Child Rights**" as deemed Member of the Commission;
2. It proposes to add a woman Member in the composition of the Commission;
3. It proposes to enlarge the scope of eligibility and scope of selection of Chairperson, National Human Rights Commission as well as the State Human Rights Commission; and
4. It proposes to incorporate a mechanism to look after the cases of human rights violation in the Union Territories.
5. It proposes to amend the term of office of Chairperson and Members of National Human Rights Commission and State Human Rights Commission to make it in consonance with the terms of Chairperson and Members of other Commissions.

PEPPER IT WITH
UDHR, Paris Principles,
NHRC, Protection of
Human Rights Act,

Significance

1. The Amendment will strengthen the Human Rights Institutions of India further for effective discharge of their mandates, roles and responsibilities. Moreover, the amended Act will be in perfect sync with the agreed global standards and benchmarks towards ensuring the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual in the country.
2. The amendment to the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 will make National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) more compliant with the Paris Principle concerning its autonomy, independence, pluralism and wide-ranging functions in order to effectively protect and promote human rights.
3. It would also bring India's human rights law "in perfect sync with the agreed global standards and benchmarks towards ensuring the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual in the country".

The NHRC shall consist of:

1. a Chairperson who has been a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court;
2. one Member who is or has been, a Judge of the Supreme Court;
3. one Member who is, or has been, the Chief Justice of a High Court;
4. two Members to be appointed from amongst persons having knowledge of, or practical

BIS Act 2016

In News

Consumer Affairs Ministry stressed on the effective implementation of the new Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) law, which will bring more services and products like jewellery under the mandatory standards regime.

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Issue highlighted by ministry

1. The members of the committee discussed issues related to improvement in core activities of the BIS, such as Standards formulation, Certification, Hallmarking, Laboratory Testing, Consumer Affairs and International Cooperation
2. Drawn emphasis on easy redressal mechanism of complaints, mandatory certification and enhancing consumer confidence through publicity.
3. Addressed issues of technology changes and advancements, climate change, environment and energy conservation, conditions of health and safety and facilitation of trade.

India Mobile Congress 2018

Theme: **“NEW DIGITAL HORIZONS: Connect. Create. Innovate.”**

About IMC: The India Mobile Congress 2018, hosted by the Department of telecommunications and the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI)

BIS ACT 2016

An Act to provide for the establishment of a national standards body for the harmonious development of the activities of standardisation, conformity assessment and quality assurance of goods, articles, processes, systems and services.

About BIS

- BIS is the National Standard Body of India established under the BIS Act 1986 for the harmonious development of the activities of standardization, marking and quality certification of goods.
- It works under the aegis of Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution.
- The Minister in charge of the Ministry or Department having administrative control of the BIS is the ex-officio President of the BIS.
- The Government of India, Ministry of Commerce has designated BIS as the WTO-TBT Enquiry Point under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade of the World Trade

Organization (WTO) to answer all reasonable inquiries from other members and interested parties concerning standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures. Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) granted First Licence to M/s Gujarat Alkalies and Chemicals Ltd for Liquid Chlorine on All India basis.

Right To Change Of Faith Is Part Of Fundamental Right Of Choice

In News

The Supreme Court recently held that a person's right to choose a religion and marry is an intrinsic part of her/his meaningful existence. Neither the State **nor “patriarchal supremacy” can interfere in her/his decision.**

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Background

The observations are part of the 61-page reasoned judgment published by the Supreme Court in the case of Hadiya, a 26-year-old Homeopathy student who converted to Islam and married a Muslim man.

PEPPER IT WITH
Art 25-28, Art 19

A Bench of Chief Justice Dipak Misra, Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and D.Y. Chandrachud set aside a Kerala High Court order annulling Ms. Hadiya's marriage to Shafin Jahan. The High Court had called the marriage a “sham” and referred to it as “love jihad”. **That day, the Supreme Court Bench, in a short order, allowed Ms. Hadiya to re-join Mr. Jahan.** Chief Justice Misra said a detailed judgment would follow later in the case which the top judge termed “unique”.

Key takes from verdict

- Freedom of faith is essential to his/her autonomy; choosing a faith is the substratum of individuality and sans it, the right of choice becomes a shadow.
- Matters of belief and faith, including whether to believe, are at the core of constitutional liberty. The Constitution exists for believers as well as for agnostics.
- Matters of dress and of food, of ideas and ideologies, of love and partnership are within the central aspects of identity. Society has no role to play in determining our choice of partners.
- The court held that the Constitution protects the ability of each individual to pursue a way of life or faith to which she or he seeks to adhere.
- The Constitution guarantees to each individual the right freely to practise, profess and propagate religion. Choices of faith and belief as indeed choices in matters of marriage lie within an area where individual autonomy is supreme.
- In deciding whether Shafin Jahan is a fit person for Hadiya to marry, the High Court has entered into prohibited terrain. Our choices are respected because they are ours. Social approval for intimate personal decisions is not the basis for recognizing.
- The society should have no role to play in determining our choice of partners and opined that **the right to marry a person of one's own choice is integral to Article 21 of the Constitution of India.**
- The strength of our Constitution lies in its acceptance of the plurality and diversity of our culture.

Article 25

Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion

Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion.

Significance of Article 25

The Article 25 is one of the pillars of fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution. It states that every individual is “equally entitled to freedom of conscience” and has the right “to profess, practice and propagate religion” of one's choice. Practicing religion or the act of propagating it should not, however, affect the “public order, morality and health.” The Article doesn't put any restriction on the government when it comes to making any law to regulate “economic, financial, political or other secular” activities, which may be associated with religious practice. The

relevance of this legislation can be gauged only when one understands the importance of preserving the pluralistic ethos of the country and the idea of harmonious coexistence of different religions.

Drugs Technical Advisory Board

In News

The Union Health Ministry has banned over-the-counter sale of around 14 creams containing steroids and antibiotics without prescription.

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Issue

- To prevent indiscriminate sale of topical preparations containing steroids and antibiotics without prescription, the Health Ministry has banned over-the-counter sale of around 14 such creams under the Schedule H category by making amendments to certain Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945.
- The decision was taken following consultation with the Drugs Technical Advisory Board which had recommended a ban on the sale of such creams without prescription and had also submitted their recommendations to the Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation.
- The creams which have been banned are alclometasone, beclomethasone, desonide, desoximetasone and flucinonide among others.
- The revised rules will apply to skin creams that contain steroids or other prescription drugs and not for ordinary face-cleansing and moisturisers.

PEPPER IT WITH
AYUSH, AMRIT

Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB)

It is a statutory body to advise the Central Government and the State Governments on technical matters of drugs in country arising out the administration of Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and to carry out the other functions assigned to it by this Act.

Director General of Health Services, ex officio, who shall be Chairman of DTAB.

Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation(CDSCO)

- CDSCO under Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) of India for discharging functions assigned the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.
- Under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, CDSCO is responsible for approval of New Drugs, Conduct of Clinical Trials, laying down the standards for Drugs, control over the quality of imported Drugs in the country and coordination of the activities of State Drug Control Organizations by providing expert advice with a view of bring about the uniformity in the enforcement of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.
- CDSCO along with state regulators, is jointly responsible for grant of licenses of certain specialized categories of critical Drugs such as blood and blood products, I. V. Fluids, Vaccine and Sera.

Schedule H is a class of prescription drugs listed under Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 which governs manufacture and sale of all drugs in India. These **can't be purchased without** prescription from doctors.

National Commission For Safai Karamcharis

In News

The new Website and Mobile App of the 'National Commission for Safai Karamcharis' was launched by Ministry for Social Justice and Empowerment. Mobile App will help the Commission in addressing the grievances/complaints of petitioners in an efficient manner.

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The new website is very user-friendly and as per Government of India Guidelines for official websites. It is a comprehensive website giving complete details about the Commission viz. its composition, mandate, manner of filing complaints, details of visits undertaken by its Chairman and Members, etc. The petitioners can file their grievances/complaints, etc. on-line on the website and thereafter track their grievances/complaints.

PEPPER IT WITH
Mahila Samridhi Yojna,
Green Business Scheme,
Swachhta Udyami Yojana,
Sanitary Marts Scheme

About NCSK

The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) was constituted on 12th August, 1994 as a statutory body by an Act of Parliament viz. **‘National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993.**

With the lapsing of the “The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993” w.e.f. 29.2.2004, the Commission is acting as a Non-Statutory body of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment whose tenure is extended from time to time through Government Resolutions.

Composition

It consist of a Chairperson and 4 members.

The mandate of the NCSK:

1. Recommend to the Central Government specific programmes of action towards elimination of inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities for Safai Karamcharis.
2. Study and evaluate the implementation of the programmes and schemes relating to the social and economic rehabilitation of Safai Karamcharis; and scavengers, in particular.
3. Investigate specific grievances and take suo-motu notice of matters relating to non-implementation of above two point mentioned.

Impeachment of CJI

In News

Recently, Opposition leaders met Chairman of the Rajya Sabha M. Venkaiah Naidu to hand over a motion to impeach Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra. Chief Justice Misra is the 45th Chief Justice of India (CJI).

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Steps of impeachment

1. A removal motion signed by 100 members of Lok Sabha or 50 members of Rajya Sabha has to be submitted to the Speaker of the Lower House or Chairperson (ie Vice President) of the Upper House. This can be in either of the Houses of Parliament.
2. The Speaker/Chairperson can either accept or reject the motion.
3. If the motion is admitted, then the Speaker/ Chairperson forms a three-member committee comprising a senior judge of the Supreme Court, a judge of a high court and a distinguished jurist to investigate the charges leveled against the CJI.
4. If the committee supports the motion, it can be taken up for discussion in the House where it was introduced. It must be passed by a special two-third majority of MPs in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. This means, in case of a full House seated, at least 364 Members should

Article 124(4) of the Constitution lays down the procedure for removal of a judge of the Supreme Court, including the CJI, who can be impeached on grounds of "misbehaviour or incapacity".

Madras High Court became the first court in south and eighth in the country to introduce e-court fee payment facility.
Delhi, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, UP and HP had introduced the e-court fee payment facility

PEPPER IT WITH
Article 126, Article 127,
Article 128, e-Vidhan
project

- be have voted for the motion in the Lok Sabha, and 164 Members in the Rajya Sabha.
- After it is passed in both Houses, it is presented to the President, who can pass a Presidential Order for removal of the CJI.

Appointment of CJI

The Chief Justice of India and the Judges of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President under clause (2) of Article 124 of the Constitution.

- Appointment to the office of the Chief Justice of India should be of the senior most Judge of the Supreme Court considered fit to hold the office. The Union Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs would, at the appropriate time, seek the recommendation of the outgoing Chief Justice of India for the appointment of the next Chief Justice of India.
- After receipt of the recommendation of the Chief Justice of India, the Union Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs will put up the recommendation to the Prime Minister who will advise the President in the matter of appointment.

The Supreme Court collegium has recommended the name of senior advocate Indu Malhotra as the first woman lawyer to be directly appointed as a judge of the apex court

Ordinance for rape minor

In News

President recently approved the ordinance to strengthen the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

Background

In the wake of an increase in incidents of rape of minors, the cabinet had on Saturday approved a number of measures to amend the POCSO Act. The ordinance seeks death penalty for rapists of girls below 12 years of age and stringent punishment for perpetrators of rape particularly of girls below 16 years.

The Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018 was promulgated on April 21, 2018. It amends certain laws related to rape of minors. The amendments are as follows:

- Amendments to Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860
- Amendments to Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012:
- Amendments to Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973
- Amendments to Indian Evidence Act, 1872

Amendments to Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860:

- ❖ Enhanced punishment for rape: Under IPC, 1860, the offence of rape is punishable with a rigorous imprisonment of at least seven years up to life imprisonment, along with fine. The minimum imprisonment has been increased from seven years to ten years.
- ❖ New offences: The Ordinance introduces three new offences relate to rape of minors, and increases the penalty for one:

PEPPER IT WITH
Section 376-AA, Section
376-DD,

| Age Group | Offence | Punishment |
|----------------|-----------|---|
| Below 12 years | Rape | Rigorous imprisonment of at least 20 years extendable to life imprisonment, along with fine to meet medical expenses and rehabilitation cost of the victim, or, death. |
| | Gang Rape | Life imprisonment, along with fine, to meet medical expenses and rehabilitation cost of the victim, or, death. |
| Below 16 years | Rape | This has been enhanced to a minimum rigorous imprisonment of at least 20 years, extendable to life imprisonment, along with fine, to meet medical expenses and rehabilitation cost of victim. |
| | Gang Rape | Life imprisonment, along with fine, to meet medical expenses and rehabilitation cost of victim. |

Amendments to Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012:
Under the POCSO, 2012, for rape of minors (below 18 years), the punishment is at least seven years or life imprisonment, along with a fine. For rape of minors below the age of 12 years or for gang rape of minors, the punishment is rigorous imprisonment of at least ten years or life imprisonment, along with fine. The Ordinance amends the POCSO, 2012 to state that for all such offences, the punishment which is higher between the POCSO, 2012 and IPC, 1860, will apply.

Amendments to Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973:

- ❖ Time-bound investigation: The Ordinance reduces the time for completion of investigation from three months to two months.
- ❖ Appeal: The Ordinance states that any appeal against a sentence related to rape cases must be disposed of within six months.
- ❖ Anticipatory Bail: The Ordinance makes the provision of anticipatory bail not applicable to rape and gang rape of minor girls below 12 years of age and below 16 years of age.

Amendments to Indian Evidence Act, 1872:

Under the Evidence Act, in determining whether the act was consensual or not, the past sexual experience or character of the victim is disregarded. This provision has been extended to the rape and gang rape of minor girls below 12 years of age and below 16 years of age.

National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI)

In News

The Supreme Court recently held that the NCMEI has original jurisdiction to determine which institution should be granted minority status.

Background

In writ petitions challenging NCMEI's jurisdiction to decide minority status of educational institutions, the Calcutta High Court had held that the NCMEI had no original jurisdiction to declare the minority status of educational institution.

Verdict of SC

1. NCMEI has the power to decide minority status of an already existing educational institution and all applications for the establishment of a minority educational institution after the Amendment Act of 2006 must go only to the competent authority set up under the statute.
2. Referring to various provisions of the NCMEI 2004 Act, the bench observed that Section 11(f) is a very wide provision which empowers the NCMEI to decide all questions relating to the status/establishment of an institution as a minority educational institution and to declare its status at all stage.
3. Article 30 of the Constitution of India grants a fundamental right to all minorities, whether based on religion or language, to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
4. **Only the Commission has the power to decide on granting a 'no objection' certificate to an institution that wanted to convert into a minority institution.**

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PEPPER IT WITH
Article 30, NCMEI 2004 Act

NCMEI

1. This Commission is a quasi-judicial body and has been endowed with the powers of a Civil Court.
2. It is to be headed by a Chairman who has been a Judge of the High Court and three members are to be nominated by Central Government. The Commission has 3 roles namely adjudicatory function, advisory function and recommendatory powers.
3. The Commission is mandated to look into specific complaints regarding deprivation or violation of rights of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. Protection of rights of minorities are enshrined in Article 30 of the Constitution **which states that "all minorities, whether based on religion or language shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice"**

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- 4. The Commission can make recommendations to the Central Government and the State Governments regarding any matter which directly or indirectly deprives the minority community of their educational rights enshrined in Article 30.

NCM

- The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) recently approached the government for Constitutional status to protect the rights of minority communities.
- Presently, NCM has powers to summon officials, including chief secretaries and director generals of police, but has to rely on departments concerned to take action against them. If granted constitutional status, the NCM will be able to act against errant officials.
- Composition: Chairperson, a Vice Chairperson and five Members to be nominated by the Central Government from amongst persons of eminence, ability and integrity.(five Members including the Chairperson shall be from amongst the minority communities.)

Zonal Council

In News

The 23rd meeting of the Western Zonal Council was held at Gandhinagar.

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Zonal Councils

Zonal Councils are statutory bodies set up under the States Re-organization Act, 1956 to provide a common meeting ground to the States and UTs in each zone for resolution of inter-State and regional issues, fostering balanced socio-economic regional development and building harmonious Centre-State relations. The Zonal Council meetings are chaired by the Union Home Minister. In case of UTs, there are two members from each UT.

PEPPER IT WITH
PAP, RAP,

There are 5 five Zonal councils namely:

1. Central Zonal Council - Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.
2. Eastern Zonal Council - Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, and West Bengal.
3. Northern Zonal Council - Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, National Capital Territory of Delhi and Union Territory of Chandigarh.
4. Southern Zonal Council - Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry.
5. Western Zonal Council - Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and the Union Territories of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli.

Composition

- Chairman- Union Home Minister nominated by President
- Vice Chairman – Chief Ministers of the States of each zone by rotation, each holding office for a period of one year at a time.
- Members- Chief Minister and two other Ministers as nominated by the Governor from each of the States and two members from Union Territories included in the zone.

The main objectives of setting up of Zonal Councils are as under:

1. Bringing out national integration;
2. Arresting the growth of acute State consciousness, regionalism, linguism and particularistic tendencies;
3. Enabling the Centre and the States to co-operate and exchange ideas and experiences;
4. Establishing a climate of co-operation amongst the States for successful and speedy execution of development projects.

Scheduled Area

In News

The Union Cabinet has given approval to the declaration of Scheduled Areas in respect of Rajasthan under Fifth Schedule to the Constitution of India.

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What are scheduled areas?

As per the Fifth Schedule {Article 244(1)} to the Constitution of India, the expression ‘Scheduled Areas’ means ‘such areas as the President may by order declare to be

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Scheduled Areas'. Under Fifth Schedule, the most important institution is the Tribes Advisory Council.

The Fifth Schedule (Article 244(1))

The Fifth Schedule being a very important provision of the constitution deals with the control and administration of the Schedule Areas. Some of the important features of the Schedule are:

1. It deals with provision for the constitution of a Tribes Advisory Council
2. The Governor has the power to adapt laws passed by Parliament and State legislature in such a way that it suits these areas.
3. It provides Governor with the power to make regulation for good governance and peace for the area.
4. The Fifth Schedule also deals with the extension of direction by the Union to a State for the administration of the Schedule Areas.

PEPPER IT WITH
Disturbed Area, AFSPA,
Article 275(1), Tribes Advisory
Council, District Council

President and the Schedule Areas

Schedule Areas are those areas which the President may direct to be Scheduled Areas with respect to the Fifth Schedule of our Constitution. The President has the power to direct that the whole or any part of a Scheduled area has ceased to be a Scheduled area. He can after consultation with the governor of that state increase the area of any Scheduled Area. In this way he possesses the power to alter the boundaries of any Schedule area. The regulations made by the Governor come into effect only when they are accepted by the President. Governor is required to submit annually the reports regarding administration of the Scheduled areas to the President.

Sixth Schedule Of The Constitution (Article 244(2) and 275(1))

The Sixth Schedule is different from the Fifth Schedule as it deals with the details of the mechanism and institutions essential for governance of the autonomous districts in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. These autonomous districts are directly administered by the Governor. The Sixth Schedule deals with the constitution, powers and functions of District Councils and Regional Councils in these autonomous districts.

Sixth Schedule envisages the powers of the Autonomous District Councils within the autonomous areas, to make laws of the land, management of forests (except reserved forests), regulation on trade by persons not being local schedule tribes, appointment of traditional chiefs and headmen, inheritance of property, marriage, divorce, social customs, establishment and maintenance of primary schools, markets, taxation, issue of lease for extraction of minerals etc.

Role Of Governor

The Governor under the provision of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution is empowered to determine areas under the administration of the council. He has the authority to form new autonomous districts. He can increase or reduce the area of any autonomous districts or Districts Councils. He is also empowered to unite two or more districts or its parts to carve out one autonomous district from it. The Governor can also define the boundaries or alter the name of any autonomous district. But it should be noted that such changes can only be brought in the composition of the territory of Autonomous District Councils by the Governor after the submission of report of the appointed commission for that purpose.

Law Commission on BCCI

In News

The Law Commission of India recently recommended bringing the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) under the purview of the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

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Recommendations by Law Commission

1. Turn the BCCI into a government-controlled body. The Commission has asked the government to classify BCCI as a national sports federation and bring it under the ambit of the Right to Information Act (RTI).
2. BCCI should **be classified as “state” under Article 12** of the Constitution so that it is answerable to authorities like the Supreme Court.

PEPPER IT WITH
Lodha Committee, Public
Authority, Article 12, RTI Act

Why BCCI should be declared as a public body?

1. By virtue of being the organisers of competitive cricket, BCCI is de facto legislating on sport-related activities which is a trait of “state function”. **When the body acts as a public authority and has a public duty to perform, so it should be tagged as public body.**
2. BCCI, though not a NSF, nominates cricketers for the Arjuna Awards etc which is a function of National Sport Federation.
3. BCCI virtually acts as a National Sports Federation (NSF). Its own Memorandum of **Association states that the Board’s objects and purposes are to control, improve quality,** lay down policies pertaining to the game of cricket in India as well as select teams to represent India at international level.
4. Tax exemptions and land grants **qualify as indirect “substantial funding” by the Government which is ‘public money’ and it would follow that the body/entity receiving such benefits would be a ‘public authority’, even though it may be a private, non-statutory or non-Government body,** thereby putting such a body squarely within the purview of the RTI Act.

Way Forward

1. **The board’s monopolistic activities, directly and indirectly,** affect the fundamental rights of citizens, players, and other functionaries.
2. Non-consideration of the role played by the BCCI as monopolistic in the regulation of the **game of cricket has resulted in the board “flying under the radar of public scrutiny,** encouraged an environment of opacity and non-accountability”.
3. Corruption concerns
4. The BCCI should be held accountable, under all circumstances, for any violations of basic human rights of the stakeholders and a private citizen should be able to move the highest court against the BCCI for any violation of his fundamental rights.

Misuse of PIL

In News

The Supreme Court derided the Loya PIL petitions as a case in point of how **Public Interest Litigation has become an “industry of vested interests”** rather than a powerful tool to espouse the cause of the marginalised and oppressed.

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Apprehensions

1. It is a travesty of justice for the resources of the legal system to be consumed by an avalanche of misdirected public interest petitions which become an industry of vested interests personal, business or political agenda.
2. A vexatious and Frivolous PIL makes court misspend the worthy time that court must spend on genuine cases. This would cost the judiciary and other democratic institutions dearly and seriously denuding the efficacy of the judicial system.
3. PIL is being misused by people agitating for private grievances in the grab of public interest and seeking publicity rather than espousing public causes.
4. The overuse of PIL for every conceivable public interest might dilute the original commitment to use this remedy only for enforcing human rights of the victimised and the disadvantaged groups. It can cause overuse-induced non-seriousness.

5. The credibility of PIL process is adversely affected by the criticism that the judiciary is overstepping the boundaries of its jurisdiction and that it is unable to supervise the effective implementation of its orders.
6. Judicial populism: Judges are human beings, but it would be unfortunate if they admit PIL cases on account of raising an issue that is (or might become) popular in the society. Conversely, the desire to become **people’s** judges in a democracy should not hinder admitting PIL cases which involve an important public interest but are potentially unpopular.
7. PIL is a weapon which must be used with great care and circumspection; the courts need to keep in view that under the guise of redressing a public grievance PIL does not encroach **upon the sphere reserved by the Constitution to the executive and the legislature.”**

Why PIL is needed?

- The most important contribution of PIL, in my view, has been to bring courts closer to the disadvantaged sections of society such as prisoners, destitute, child or bonded labourers, women, and scheduled castes/tribes. By taking up the issues affecting these people, PIL truly became a vehicle to bring social revolution through constitutional means, something that the founding fathers had hoped.
- PIL became an instrument to promote rule of law, demand fairness and transparency, fight corruption in administration, and enhance the overall accountability of the government agencies. The underlying justification for these public demands and the judicial intervention was to strengthen constitutionalism—a constant desire of the civil society to keep government powers under check.
- PIL has helped the Indian judiciary to gain public confidence and establish legitimacy in the society.

Significance

PIL has an important role to play in the civil justice system in that it affords a ladder to justice to disadvantaged sections of society, some of which might not even be well-informed about their rights. Furthermore, it provides an avenue to enforce diffused rights for which either it is difficult to identify an aggrieved person or where aggrieved persons have no incentives to knock at the doors of the courts. PIL could also contribute to good governance by keeping the government accountable. Last but not least, PIL enables civil society to play an active role in spreading social awareness about human rights, in providing voice to the marginalised sections of society, and in allowing their participation in government decision making.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana

In News

The Centre has allowed states to set up their own insurance companies for implementing the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY).

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Background

- The move comes after several requests from states as well as observations made by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) in its 2017 report that old crop insurances schemes which have now been merged with PMFBY, were poorly implemented during 2011-2016.
- Presently, five public sector insurers and 13 private insurance companies are empaneled for implementation of the scheme.
- The public insurers include Agriculture Insurance Company of India (AIC), United India Insurance Company (UICC), National Insurance Company (NIC), Oriental Insurance Company (OIC) and New India Assurance Company (NIAC).

Risks covered

1. Yield losses
2. Prevented sowing (on notified area basis)
3. Post-harvest losses
4. Localized calamities

PMFBY

PMFBY is in line with One Nation – One Scheme theme. It incorporates the best features of all previous schemes and at the same time, all previous shortcomings / weaknesses have been removed. The PMFBY will replace the existing two schemes National Agricultural Insurance Scheme as well as the Modified NAIS.

PMFBY provides comprehensive crop insurance from pre-sowing to post harvest against non-preventable natural risks at extremely low premium rate of 2% for kharif crops, 1.5% for rabi crops and 5% for horticulture and commercial crops.

Objectives

PMFBY aims at supporting sustainable production in agriculture sector by way of –

1. providing financial support to farmers suffering crop loss/damage arising out of unforeseen events
2. stabilizing the income of farmers to ensure their continuance in farming
3. encouraging farmers to adopt innovative and modern agricultural practices

4. Ensuring flow of credit to the agriculture sector; which will contribute to food security, crop diversification and enhancing growth and competitiveness of agriculture sector besides protecting farmers from production risks.

PEPPER IT WITH
PMUY, Blue Revolution,
GeM 2.0, e-NAM



Eligible farmers

- ❖ All farmers growing notified crops in a notified area during the season who have insurable interest in the crop are eligible.
- ❖ The scheme is compulsory for loanee farmer obtaining Crop Loan /KCC account for notified crops. However, voluntary for Other/non loanee farmers who have insurable interest in the insured crop(s).

Crops Covered

1. Food crops (Cereals, Millets and Pulses),
2. Oilseeds,
3. Annual Commercial / Annual Horticultural crops

IMPLEMENTING AGENCY (IA)

The Scheme shall be implemented through a multi-agency framework by selected insurance companies under the overall guidance & control of the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare (DAC&FW), Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW), Government of India (GOI) and the concerned State in co-ordination with various other agencies.

POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission) Phase II

In News

The first meeting of National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges under POSHAN Abhiyaan was held recently.

Background

The Council which has been set up under POSHAN Abhiyaan is the apex body to formulate overall policies, guide and monitor all nutrition based schemes.

The Council will submit its report to the Prime Minister every six months.

The mandate of the Council is:

1. To provide policy directions to address India's Nutrition Challenges through coordinated inter-sectoral action
2. To coordinate and review convergence among ministries
3. To review programmes for nutrition on a quarterly basis

About POSHAN

- POSHAN *Abhiyaan* under Innovation component, envisages undertaking activities to be implemented intended to improve the service delivery system, capacity building of front line functionaries and community engagement for better nutritional outcomes.
- POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission) is a flagship programme of the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD)
- It was launched on 8th March 2018 by the Prime Minister in Jhunjhunu.

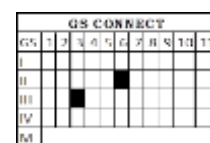
PEPPER IT WITH
Swasth Bharat Preraks,
ORS-Zinc, IYCF,
PMMVY, JSY, SAG

| S.No | Objective | Target |
|------|---|-----------------|
| 1. | Prevent and reduce stunting in children (0-6years) | By 6% @ 2% p.a. |
| 2 | Prevent and reduce under-nutrition (underweight prevalence) in children (0-6 years) | By 6% @ 2% p.a. |
| 3 | Reduce the prevalence of anemia among young Children(6-59 months) | By 9% @ 3% p.a. |
| 4 | Reduce the prevalence of anemia among Women and Adolescent Girls in the age group of 15-49 years. | By 9% @ 3% p.a. |
| 5 | Reduce Low Birth Weight (LBW). | By 6% @ 2% p.a. |

Van Dhan Vikas Kendra

In News

Ministry of Tribal Affairs to launch first ever "Van Dhan Vikas Kendra" at Bijapur, Chhattisgarh for value addition of Forest Produce.



About

- The Van Dhan Scheme is an initiative of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and TRIFED. It was launched on 14th April, 2018 and seeks to improve tribal incomes through value addition of tribal products.
- Under Van Dhan, 10 Self Help Groups of 30 Tribal gatherers is constituted. They are then trained and provided with working capital to add value to the products, which they collect from the jungle.
- The selection of the tribal beneficiaries and formation of the SHGs has been undertaken by TRIFED.
- The establishment of "Van Dhan Vikas Kendra" is for providing skill upgradation and capacity building training and setting up of primary processing and value addition facility.
- This first model Van DhanVikas Kendra in Bijapuris being implemented for training of 300 training beneficiaries with a total outlay of Rs.43.38 lakhs for training, providing equipments & tools for primary level processing and infrastructure & building for housing the Kendra.
- This Kendra to start with will have processing facility for Tamarind brick making, Mahua flower storage facility and chironjee cleaning and packaging.

PEPPER IT WITH
PESA Act, TRIFED,
Forest rights Act, Jan
Dhan, Gobar-Dhan

Significance

The Van Dhan Vikas Kendras will be an important milestone in economic development of tribals involved in collection of MFPs (Minor Forest Produce) by helping them in optimum utilization of natural resources and provide sustainable MFP-based livelihood in MFP-rich districts.

Satyagraha se Swachhagraha campaign

In News

To commemorate this landmark, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, in coordination with the Government of Bihar, is working to spread the message of Swachhata across the country by initiating the "Satyagraha se Swachhagraha" campaign.

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Significance of campaign

Mahatma Gandhi launched the Champaran Satyagraha over a century ago, on 10th April, 1917, to give the country freedom from foreign rule. April 10th, 2018 marks the end of the centenary year celebrations of the Champaran Satyagraha, and is going to be celebrated through the "Satyagraha se Swachhagraha" campaign, which is aimed at achieving freedom from filth.

PEPPER IT WITH
Champaran Satyagraha,
SBMU, Swachh Swasth
Sarvatra, RSK

Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin (SBMG)

SBMG, launched on October 2, 2014 by the Prime Minister of India, is the largest behaviour change campaign ever attempted in the field of sanitation in the world. It aims to build an ODF (Open Defecation Free) and Swachh Bharat by October 2, 2019 as a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th birth anniversary.

Under the mission, One lakh thirty four thousand crore rupees will be spent for construction of about 11 crore 11 lakh toilets in the country. SBM-Gramin mainly focuses on ensuring the use of toilets, besides their construction.

Under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin), 6.7 crore toilets have been built, 3.5 lakhs villages and over 360 districts, and 14 States and UTs have already been declared ODF.

Project Dhoop

In News

FSSAI Launches Project Dhoop to Combat Vitamin D Deficiencies in Children in order to address the rising incidences of **Vitamin 'D' deficiencies (VDD)** in young people FSSAI has launched a unique initiative, 'Project Dhoop' in association with NCERT, NDMC and North MCD Schools.

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About

- Project Dhooop is a unique initiative that urges schools to shift their morning assembly to noon time mainly between 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. to ensure maximum absorption of Vitamin D in students through natural sunlight.’
- It was launched on the occasion of World Health Day and was organized at National Bal Bhavan. The initiative has been conceptualized by McCann Health and is supported by Kwality.

Significance of Micronutrients

Micronutrients including vitamins are needed by people in only very small amounts, but these are the “magic wands” that enable the body to produce enzymes, hormones and other substances essential for proper growth and development. As tiny as the amounts are, the consequences of their absence are very severe. Vitamin A, D, B12, Iron, Folic Acid and Iodine, are the most important; their lack represents a major threat to the health and development of populations the world over, particularly children and pregnant women in countries like India.

PEPPER IT WITH
FSSAI, +F symbol,
FoSCoRIS, MAA

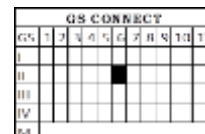
FSSAI

- The FSSAI has been established under Food Safety and Standards, 2006 laying down science based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption.
- Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the Administrative Ministry for the implementation of FSSAI.
- The Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is appointed by Central Government. The Chairperson is in the rank of Secretary to Government of India.
- The Chairperson and the Members other than ex officio Members of the Food Authority shall be appointed by the Central Government on the recommendations of the Selection Committee.
- Apart from Chairman and Chief Executive Officer there are 24 member out of which one-third shall be women.
- The Chairperson and the members other than ex officio Members shall hold office for a term of three years, and shall be eligible for re-appointment for a further period of three years: Provided that the Chairperson shall not hold office as such after he has attained the age of sixty-five years.

Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana

In News

The agriculture ministry plans to offer cash incentives to farmers who take up ‘yogik’ farming, ‘gou mata kheti’ and ‘rishi krishi’—obscure methods of cultivation that have little scientific evidence to prove they are beneficial.



1. *Yogik farming* refers to a system where it is believed that farmers can channelize cosmic energy to their fields by performing yoga.
2. *Rishi krishi* is based on pre-Vedic, Vedic and medieval texts like Vishvavallava, Kashyapiyakrishisukti, and Surapala’s Vrikshayurveda.
3. *Gou mata kheti* is a system of farming which uses cow dung and urine from indigenous breeds of lactating cows.
4. *Other types:* Vedic farming, Vaishnav kheti, Ahinsa farming, Adhvoot Shivanand farming

PKVY

- The Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY), launched in 2015, is an extended component of Soil Health Management (SHM) under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS), National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA). PKVY aims at supporting and promoting organic farming, in turn resulting in improvement of soil health.
- Funding pattern under the scheme is in the ratio of 60:40 by the Central and State Governments respectively. In case of North Eastern and Himalayan States, Central Assistance is provided in the ratio of 90:10 (Centre: State) and for Union Territories, the assistance is 100%.
- The objective is to produce agricultural products free from chemicals and pesticides residues by adopting eco- friendly, low- cost technologies.
- The Scheme targets to form 10,000 clusters of 20 ha each and bring nearly two lakh hectares of agricultural area under organic farming by 2017-18.
- PKVY is being implemented by the Organic Farming cell of the Integrated Nutrient Management (Division) of Department of Agriculture; Cooperation and Farmers Welfare (DAC&FW).



Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH)

In News

PMNCH Delegation calls on the Prime Minister and present the logo for the 2018 Partners' Forum.

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About

1. The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health (PMNCH) is an alliance of more than 700 organizations in 77 countries from the sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health communities, as well as health influencing sectors.
2. PMNCH with the mandate to strengthen alignment and consensus building to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially MDGs 4 and 5, calling for the reduction of under-five child mortality and maternal mortality.
3. PMNCH provides a platform for organizations to align objectives, strategies and resources, and agree on interventions to improve maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health.
4. To increase the engagement, alignment and accountability of partners, by creating a multi-stakeholder platform that will support the successful implementation of the **Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health**, enabling partners to achieve more together than any individual Partner could do alone.

About POCSO e-Box:
 Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO), e-Box, is an online complaint management system for easy and direct reporting of sexual offences against children and timely action against the offenders under the POCSO Act. 2012.

PEPPER IT WITH
 PMMVY, RMNCH+A,
 PMSMA, JSY

5. The Partnership is governed by a Board, and administered by a Secretariat hosted at the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland.
6. PMNCH introduced the 12 Success Factors case studies of best practice RMNCH+A programmes and initiatives which will be launched at the **2018 Partners' Forum**, including Intensified Mission Indradhanush.
7. **India's commitment to RMNCH+A** through policy and programmes, including the new school health programme and implementation of UHC that drives progress within this strategic framework.

Inter-country removal & retention of children

- A Committee headed by Justice Rajesh Bindal related to Inter-country removal & retention of children was established has submitted its report on legal issues to the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- **It recommended to establish an 'Inter Country Parental Child Removal Disputes Resolution Authority'.**
- The Authority may be chaired by a retired High Court Judge, with Members from Legal and Social sector background along with representatives from key Ministries.

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY)

In News

PMGSY well on its way to achieve March 2019 target. But the panel also found that some states had deviated from the prescribed procedures.

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About PMGSY

- Objective: The primary objective of the PMGSY is to provide Connectivity, by way of an all-weather Road (with necessary culverts and cross-drainage structures, which is operable throughout the year).
- The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) is a 100% Centrally Sponsored Scheme. 50% of the Cess on High Speed Diesel (HSD) is earmarked for this Programme.
- For most intensive Integrated Action Plan (IAP) blocks as identified by Ministry of Home Affairs, the unconnected habitations with population of 100 and above (as per 2001 Census) are eligible to be covered under PMGSY.
- Eligibility: All habitation with Population of 500+ in normal areas, 250+ in special areas and 100+ in 267 identified LWE affected Blocks.
- Budget Outlay: 2015-16- Rs. 18,289.86 Cr. & 2016-17-Rs. 19,000 Cr.

An Unconnected Habitation is one with a population of designated size located at a distance of at least 500 metres or more (1.5 km of path distance in case of Hills) from an All-weather road or a connected Habitation.

Saksham Bharat - Samartha Bharat

Banta Bharat - Aage Badhta Bharat

New Initiatives

Passenger bus service between India and Bangladesh

Bus services on Guwahati-Shillong-Dhaka route and Kolkata- Agartala via Dhaka route flagged off by Prime Ministers of both countries at Dhaka on 6th June, 2015

208 Railway Over bridges/ Under Bridges to be constructed with an outlay of Rs 20,800 crore

1000 kms of Expressways along High Density Corridors



- Benefits to citizens: Access to socio- economic centers (schools, Hospitals, Markets, and administration Centers). & Sustainable rural poverty reduction

Unique Features

- ✓ Maintenance of roads assets created under PMGSY is a big focus for the Ministry and through various advocacy workshops etc Rural Road Maintenance policies have been framed for 23 States. Maintenance software eMarg used in MP will be replicated in all states to streamline maintenance systems of rural roads.
- ✓ Satellite imagery is being used to verify the completion of road length being reported by States on the programme software i.e. OMMAS as well as to verify habitation connectivity. Further use of geo spatial technology for mapping rural roads built under PMGSY are being geo mapped using remote sensing technology, through NRSC and CGARD –NIRD.
- ✓ During the financial year 2017-18, a record length of 6,313 kms has been constructed using green technologies. Rajasthan, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Jharkhand are using this in building green PMGSY roads.

PEPPER IT WITH
Meri Sadak App, Setu
Bharatam, Char Dham
Mahamarg Vikas Pariyojna

Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0

In News

Human Resource Development Ministry Launch ed Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0.

UBA

- Unnat Bharat Abhiyan(UBA) is a flagship programme of the Ministry of Human Resources Development, with the intention to enrich Rural India.
- UBA is inspired by the vision of transformational change in rural development processes by leveraging knowledge institutions to help build the architecture of an Inclusive India.
- The Mission of UBA is to enable higher educational institutions to work with the people of rural India in identifying development challenges and evolving appropriate solutions for accelerating sustainable growth.
- To identify & select existing innovative technologies, enable customisation of technologies, or devise implementation method for innovative solutions, as per the local needs.

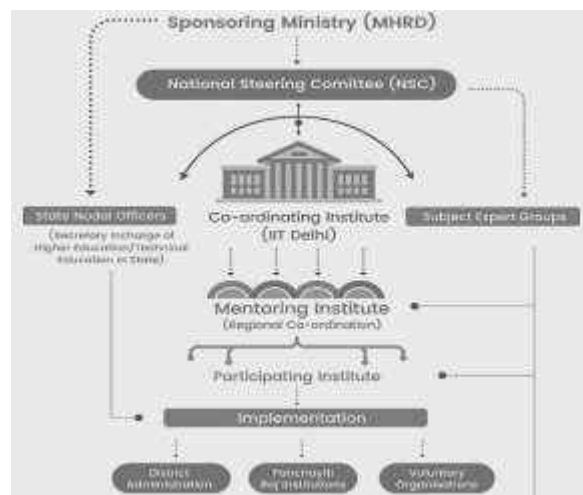
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Atal New India Challenge:
Under the Atal New India Challenge, AIM will invite prospective innovators/MSMEs/start-ups to design market-ready products such as Climate Smart Agriculture, Smart Mobility etc.

It shall be running in collaboration Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation and Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation.

It has 6 themes namely;

1. Organic Farming
2. Water Management
3. Renewable Energy
4. Artisans, Industries and Livelihood
5. Basic Amenities
6. Convergence



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

Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0.

- Under it, the institutions have been selected on a Challenge Mode and the scheme has been extended to 750 reputed Higher Educational Institutes (both public and private) of the country.
- IIT Delhi has been designated to function as the National Coordinating Institute for this programme and the Ministry intends to extend the coverage to all the reputed Higher Educational Institutes, in a phased manner.
- Each selected institute would adopt a cluster of villages / panchayats and gradually expand the outreach over a period of time.

PEPPER IT WITH
NSC, Unnat Chulha
Abhiyan, DISHA Scheme, e-
SANAD

Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project

In News

Central Water Commission (CWC) recently appreciated the Telangana government for the ambitious Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP) which aimed to provide Godavari waters to the upland regions of Telangana state.

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Kaleshwaram Project

- The Kaleshwaram project is an off-shoot of the original Pranahitha-Chevella Lift Irrigation Scheme taken up by the Congress government in 2007 when Andhra Pradesh was not divided. After the formation of Telangana in 2014, the TRS government redesigned the project on the ground which had very low water storage provision — only about 16.5 tmc ft.
- After conducting a highly advanced Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) survey, the government separated the original component serving the Adilabad area as the Pranahitha project and renamed the rest as Kaleshwaram by redesigning the head works, storage capacity and the canal system based on the data of availability of water along the course of the Godavari and its tributaries.
- The Kaleshwaram project has provision for the storage of about 148 tmc ft with plans of utilising 180 tmc ft by lifting at least 2 tmc ft water every day for 90 flood days.
- The project is designed to irrigate 7,38,851 hectares (over 18.47 lakh acres) uplands in the erstwhile districts of Karimnagar, Nizamabad, Warangal, Medak, Nalgonda and Ranga Reddy.
- Unique Features:
 - ❖ According to engineers, KLIP has many unique features, including the longest tunnel to carry water in Asia, running up to 81 km, between the Yellampally barrage and the Mallannasagar reservoir.
 - ❖ The project would also utilise the highest capacity pumps, up to 139 MW, in the country to lift water.
 - ❖ The surge-pool (92 m height and 56 m of diameter) constructed at Tippapur village was stated to be biggest open to sky surge-pool in Asia. **“The surge-pool is part of the lift irrigation system.**

PEPPER IT WITH
Mid Manair Dam, Pranahitha-
Chevella Lift Irrigation Scheme,
Kaleshwara Mukteswara Swamy
Temple, CWC

Lift irrigation is a method of irrigation in which water instead of being transported by natural flow (as in gravity-fed canal systems) requires external energy through animal, fuel based or electric power using pumps or other mechanical means. Treadle pumps, although an ancient method of lifting water for small heads have recently been modernized and used in a big way

Godavari Facts

1. The Godavari is the largest river system of the Peninsular India and is also called as Dakshina Ganga.

2. The Godavari River rises from Trimbakeshwar in the Nashik district of Maharashtra.
3. The basin is bounded by Satmala hills, the Ajanta range and the Mahadeo hills on the north, by the Eastern Ghats on the south and the east and by the Western Ghats on the west.
4. Left Bank Tributaries: Dharna, Penganga, Wainganga, Wardha, Pranahita, Pench, Kanhan, Sabari, Indravati etc.
5. Right Bank Tributaries: Pravara, Mula, Manjra, Peddavagu, Maner etc.
6. Prominent Project: Prnahita-Chevala, Polavaram, Srirama Sagar, Godavari barrage, Jaikwadi etc.

India steps up vigil at Walong tri-junction

Indian troops deployed along the disputed Sino-India border in the Himalayan range of the Arunachal sector have increased their patrolling at a tri-junction of India, China and Myanmar to prevent a repeat of a Doklam-like standoff.

The tri-junction is located around 50 km from Walong, India's easternmost town in Arunachal Pradesh, near the Tibet region. This is the most important tri-junction along the Sino-India border.

Walong, situated on the bank of Lohit river, had witnessed the bravery of Indian troops against Chinese aggression during the 1962 war between the two countries.

Concerns

- The Chinese troops did not enter the tri-junction too frequently, but had developed road infrastructure near the area, which could be advantageous for the mobilisation of troops.
- The tri-junction, located in the easternmost town of India near the Tibet region, is extremely important for India to help it maintain its dominance in the nearby mountain passes and other areas.
- The deepening of military engagement between China and Myanmar was another reason for India ramping up its presence at the tri-junction with thick rainforests on the Himalayan ranges.

Significance

- China has been laying new roads and improving its overall infrastructure along the nearly 4,000km-long border with India.
- Defence minister of India said last month that China had undertaken the construction of helipads, sentry posts and trenches for its army personnel near Doklam. Sources said China has been keeping its troops in north Doklam and significantly ramping up its infrastructure in the disputed area.
- Army chief Gen. Bipin Rawat had said recently that the time had come for India to shift its focus from its borders with Pakistan to the frontier with China, indicating the seriousness of the situation.

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Troops of India and China were locked in a 73-day-long standoff in Doklam from 16 June last year after the Indian side stopped the building of a road in the disputed area by the Chinese Army. The face-off ended on 28 August.

The area in Doklam where China tried to construct a road is a disputed territory claimed by both China and Bhutan. India sent its troops to stop the Chinese construction activity, saying it could be a threat to its strategic interests in the region.

PEPPER IT WITH
Thank You India Event,
Doklam Stand-off, CPEC,
B&R Initiative

Pak approaches World Bank over Kishanganga project

Why in News?

Pakistan has informed the World Bank about India’s completing of the Kishanganga hydropower project during the bank’s “pause” period and has urged it to “recognise its responsibility” under the Indus Waters Treaty.

Pakistan has approached the World Bank, the mediator between the two countries of the water distribution treaty, in the past and raised issues over Kishanganga and Ratle projects in Jammu and Kashmir.

It has been flagging concern over designs of India’s five hydroelectricity projects—Pakal Dul (1000 MW), Ratle (850 MW), Kishanganga (330 MW), Miyar (120 MW) and Lower Kalnai (48 MW)—being built/planned in the Indus river basin, contending these violate the treaty.

Pakistan had called for resolution of disputes over Kishanganga project on the Neelum river and Ratle hydropower project on the Chenab.

Pakistan has raised objections over the design of the hydel project in Jammu and Kashmir, saying it is not in line with the criteria laid down under the Indus Water Treaty between the two countries. India has, however, asserted the project design is “well within parameters” of the treaty and urged the bank to appoint a neutral expert.

Background

- In December 2016, the World Bank had announced that **it had “paused” the process for either appointing a COA or a neutral expert** and started mediation between the two countries on how to advance and develop consensus in the light of the treaty on the mechanism for resolution of faulty designs of the two projects.
- In view of the inability of the parties to agree on whether a COA or a neutral expert is the way forward, the World Bank is reported to have called another round of discussions to minimise the differences but failed to bring New Delhi to the negotiating table.
- Under the provisions of the Indus Waters Treaty, the waters of the eastern rivers—the Sutlej, Beas and Ravi—had been allocated to India and that of the western rivers —the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab—to Pakistan except for certain non-consumptive uses.

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India signed an MoU with the Republic of Korea on Mutual Recognition of Certificates of Competency of Seafarers. This paves the way for the two governments to mutually recognize the certificates of maritime education and training, competency, endorsements and medical fitness of seafarers issued by each other.

PEPPER IT WITH

Indus Water Treaty, Cauvery river dispute, Mahanadi Dispute, Teesta river, Sir Creek

IEF16 MINISTERIAL

Why in News?

The Government of India hosted 90+ delegations including 50 energy ministers, 30 CEOs, 12 heads of international organisations and 500+ guests at the 16th biennial International Energy Forum Ministerial Meeting **(IEF16) in New Delhi with the support of the People’s Republic of China** and the Republic of Korea as co-hosts.

The meeting was held under the theme: "The Future of Global Energy Security - Transition, Technology, Trade and Investment". Providing the opportunity for attendees to discuss relevant issues that currently affect global energy markets, the IEF Ministerial is the largest gathering of energy ministers in the world.

Significance

Meeting on the neutral global platform that the IEF provides to strengthen international cooperation on energy through dialogue, the IEF16 focused on how global shifts, transition policies and new technologies influence market stability and future investment and trade patterns in the energy sector. Dialogue among Ministers and industry leaders on how global

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shifts, new policies and technologies change investment and trade patterns and influence energy market security, facilitate orderly transitions, and accelerate the achievement of shared goals.

IEF

- The International Energy Forum (IEF), a 72 Member Countries of the Forum aims to foster greater mutual understanding and awareness of common energy interests among its members.
- Covering all six continents and accounting for around 90% of global supply and demand for oil and gas, the IEF is unique in that it comprises not only consuming and producing countries of the IEA and OPEC, but also Transit States and major players outside of their memberships, including Argentina, China, India, Mexico, Russia and South Africa.
- The Forum's biennial Ministerial Meetings are the world's largest gathering of Energy Ministers. The IEF and the global energy dialogue are promoted by a permanent Secretariat of international staff based in the Diplomatic Quarter of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

India has emerged as the biggest beneficiary of the Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, soaking up a quarter of all its investment commitments to date, despite continuing diplomatic tension between New Delhi and Beijing. In the first two years of its existence, the AIIB — conceived by China as an alternative to the World Bank — approved \$4.3bn worth of funding for infrastructure projects around Asia, over \$1bn worth of which is due to go to schemes in India.

PEPPER IT WITH
IEA, OPEC, OPEC Fund for, International Development (OFID), Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF)

Eighth Regional 3R Forum

Why in News?

The eighth 3R regional forum in Asia and Pacific was held in Indore with the adoption of chair summary by the participating nations reaffirming their commitment to promoting the principles of 3R - Reduce, Reuse & Recycle.

The 3R forum legacy was handed over to the delegation of the Govt. of Thailand - the host of the next 3R forum to be held in Bangkok, which extended invitation to all the participant nations. Various Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and NGOs along with industry players were presented the 3R awards for their exemplary work in the areas of solid waste management, promotion of 3R principles and efforts for the mission of zero waste society.

The Eighth Regional 3R Forum in Asia and the Pacific is hosted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India, and co-organized by the Ministry of the Environment, Government of Japan, and the United Nations Centre for Regional Development of the Division for Sustainable Development /United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Highlights

The highlight of the conference was the adoption and signing of the INDORE 3R DECLARATION by the mayors and city authorities of the participating nations which relevant to vision of sustainable development and achieving SDG goals. The commitments expressed in the declaration are

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Indian Prime Minister gave the principle of 6R i.e Reduce , Reuse, Recycle, Recover , Redesign and Remanufacture which ultimately leads to the 7th R i.e Rejoice (Complete blissfulness).

PEPPER IT WITH
Counsellor (Disarmament) in the Permanent Mission of India, Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC), OPCW



crucial to promote the principles of 3R . i.e Reduce , Reuse, Recycle and achieving resource efficiency.

Regional 3R Forum

- The Regional 3R Forum in Asia and the Pacific was launched in 2009 in Tokyo, Japan with the objective of integrating the 3Rs in policy, planning and development.
- The forum provides a strategic platform for sharing best practices in 3R areas, including new and emerging issues of concern in waste management.
- Established in 1971 the UNCRD is based on an agreement between the Government of Japan and the United Nations.
- The Forum seeks to address policies, programs, measures, tools and technologies in the context of achieving resource efficiency, sustainable production and consumption, integrated solid waste management, sound material-cycle, low-carbon and zero waste society.
- The Forum also provides a knowledge sharing platform for disseminating and sharing best practices in 3R areas, including new and emerging issues of concern in waste management.

UN launches road safety trust

- Citing tragic road accidents in India and Canada, UN termed traffic deaths an urgent global concern as the world body launched a trust fund aimed at spurring action to help save lives in road accidents.
- The trust fund will support efforts along the five pillars of the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety, which include strengthened road safety management capacities; improved safety of road infrastructure and broader transport networks; enhanced safety of vehicles; improved behaviour of road users; and improved post-crash care.
- The UN General Assembly also adopted a resolution on road safety, sponsored by Russia, in which it called for a host of measures to prevent road accidents and to minimising the resulting damage.
- One of the measures, it urged, the adoption policies and measures to implement vehicle safety regulations to ensure that all new motor vehicles meet applicable minimum regulations for the protection of occupants and other road users, with seat belts, airbags and active safety systems fitted as standard equipment.

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Sustainable Development Goal 3
“Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”.
 Target 3.6: By 2020, halve the number of global deaths from road traffic accidents.

Sustainable Development Goal 11
“Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”.
 Target 11.2: By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.

Significance

- The United Nations took a major step to address the tragedy of road accidents by launching the UN Road Safety Trust Fund to spur action that could save lives and prevent the loss of opportunity associated with road accidents.
- Road traffic deaths and injuries have become a serious and urgent global concern. Traffic accidents are the number one cause of death of young people and are responsible for keeping millions of people in poverty each year. Around

PEPPER IT WITH
 FIA High Level Panel for Road Safety, UNECE, India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Trilateral Highway, India mobile Congress, Uniform Road Tax, Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board in India



1.3 million drivers, passengers and pedestrians die each year, and up to 50 million are injured on the world's roads.

- According to the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), which is also the secretariat for the trust fund, every USD 1,500 contributed to the fund could save one life; prevent 10 serious injuries; and leverage USD 51,000 towards investments in road safety.
- The Road Safety Trust Fund will serve as a catalyst for much-needed progress towards the road safety targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. Dealing specifically with road safety, two Sustainable Development Goals targets aim to halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents and to provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems as well as improve road safety for all, respectively.

US places India again on priority watch list on IP protection

- India would continue to remain on the US' Priority Watch List for longstanding challenges in its IP framework and lack of sufficient measurable progress, according to USTR, alleging that the country remains one of the world's most challenging major economies in the area.
- In its latest 2018 Special 301 Report, the US Trade Representative has placed 12 countries on its Priority Watch List. In addition to India, other countries on the list are Algeria, Argentina, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Indonesia, Kuwait, Russia, Ukraine, and Venezuela. The Intellectual Property (IP) issues in these countries will be the subject of intense bilateral engagement during the coming year.
- India remains on the Priority Watch List this year for longstanding challenges in its IP framework and lack of sufficient measurable improvements, particularly with respect to patents, copyrights, trade secrets, and enforcement, as well as for new issues that have negatively affected US right holders over the past year.
- India remains one of the world's most challenging major economies with respect to protection and enforcement of intellectual property. Longstanding IP challenges facing US businesses in India include those which make it difficult for innovators to receive and maintain patents in India, particularly for pharmaceuticals.
- Among other issues include India's enforcement action and policies that are insufficient to curb the problem, copyright policies that do not properly incentivise the creation and commercialisation of content, and an outdated and insufficient trade secrets legal framework.
- China remains on the Priority Watch List for the 14th consecutive year. Longstanding and new IP concerns merit increased attention, including China's coercive technology transfer practices, range of impediments to effective IP enforcement, and widespread infringing activity including trade secret theft, rampant online piracy, and counterfeit manufacturing.

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Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data Act (CLOUD Act), enable the U.S. government to enter into agreements with like-minded states for cross-border data sharing. This will allow law enforcement agencies from these states to directly obtain electronic data, held by communication service providers headquartered in the U.S., to combat crime. New Delhi, on the back of this development, will soon push for an India-U.S. data sharing agreement to serve the interests of its law enforcement and, more importantly, to make headway in the global cyber norms conversation.

Highlights of report

At the same time, the report takes note of the several steps being taken by the Indian Government to improve its IP environment. In 2017, India continued to carry out high-level initiatives involving IP, including the 2016 National IP Policy and Startup India. While these and other administration initiatives have acknowledged the important role innovation and creativity play

in India's development, they have failed to draw a direct link to specific IP reforms that would best help achieve these goals.

In particular, India has yet to take steps to address longstanding patent issues that affect innovative industries. Companies across different sectors remain concerned about narrow patentability standards, the potential threat of compulsory licensing and patent revocations, as well as overly broad criteria for issuing such licenses and revocations under the India Patents Act.

Concerns

➤ The report comes at a time when the United States

Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) has demanded the elimination of 'Form 27' — a statutory requirement unique to India's patent law that mandates patent

holders to declare how a monopoly is being exercised in the country.

➤ The report unfairly targets India at the urging of pharmaceutical corporations as **the country is the "pharmacy of the developing world" and supplies affordable quality generic medicines globally.**

➤ At a time when people all over the world are struggling to afford their medicines, **it's outrageous that the U.S. government is doing pharma's bidding and bullying other countries into taking actions that would restrict generic competition and limit access to affordable, lifesaving drugs.**

➤ India, which has been on this watch list for years, accounts for one fourth of the global burden of multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB). While patient groups have repeatedly urged the Indian government to fight to increase access to newer, safer, and more tolerable medicines for MDR-TB programs across the world — as India has done for HIV and older TB drugs — the U.S. government and the companies that make the drugs **are pushing India to do what's best for them rather than the people desperately in need of treatment.**

Special 301 Report identifies US trading partners that do not adequately or effectively protect and enforce IP rights or otherwise deny market access to its innovators and creators that rely on protection of their IP rights.

The annual report calls on US trading partners to address IP-related challenges with a special focus on the countries identified on the Watch List and Priority Watch List.

PEPPER IT WITH

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Cell for IPR Promotion and Management, Creative India; Innovative India, National Biopharma Mission

India-Wiesbaden Conference

Why in News?

The Ministry of External Affairs, in cooperation with the Government of Germany and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) hosted the India-Wiesbaden Conference 2018. Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) was the industry partner for the event.

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• **The conference was titled 'Securing Global Supply Chains through Government-Industry Partnerships towards Effective Implementation of UNSC Resolution 1540'.**

• The Conference provided an opportunity to participants to share experiences on their export control systems and to identify legal & technical assistance, action plans & challenges in national implementation of UNSC 1540.

• The conference is being held amid reports of an alleged chemical attack in Douma, Syria.

PEPPER IT WITH

UN nuke disarmament efforts, Australia Groups, N. Korea Sanctions

- The Wiesbaden Process was initiated by the Government of Germany in 2012 to strengthen the implementation of UNSC 1540 through Government-Industry partnerships.
- India, with its long standing commitment to international non-proliferation has established a legally backed robust export control system to implement UNSC 1540.

UNSC Resolution 1540

The UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) establishes legally binding obligations on all States to adopt and enforce appropriate and effective measures to prevent the proliferation to non-State actors of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and their delivery systems. It requires, therefore that States implement appropriate and effective measures to prevent non-state actors such as terrorists, from obtaining access to weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

Study In India Program

- The government launched its flagship Study in India programme aimed at attracting foreign students in 160 public and private universities which will offer 15,000 seats to them in the academic year 2018-19. About 55 per cent of these seats will offer fee waivers to students from abroad.
- As per 2016-17 figures, there are a little over 47,000 students of foreign nationalities studies in India but the government has set an ambitious target to take this number to 2 lakhs by 2023.
- The program would be introduced in 30 countries and 160 institutes in the first phase. Under this scheme, the government has decided to launch mega publicity blitzkrieg in 30 focus countries-mainly in Africa, South East Asia, SAARC and West Asian countries for which Rs 150 crore will be spent in next two years.
- Ministry of External Affairs through the Indian Council for Cultural Relations has been offering scholarships to 6,000 students mainly from south and east Asian countries but it had limitations. Now the programme by the Union Human Resources Development Ministry has no such limits. It's an open invitation to students all over to come and study in our institutions of higher education.

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A recent World Bank report said that "Indians learn relatively faster than foreign students."

Objectives

- ✓ To improve the soft power of India with focus on the neighbouring countries and use it as a tool in diplomacy.
- ✓ To boost the number of inbound International students in India.
- ✓ **To double India's market share of global education** exports from less than 1 percent to 2 percent.
- ✓ Increase in contribution of international student in the form of direct spends, indirect spends, spillover effects.
- ✓ Improvement in overall quality of higher education.
- ✓ Increase in global ranking of India as educational destination.
- ✓ To reduce the export – Import imbalance in the number of International students.
- ✓ **Growth of India's global market share of International students**

PEPPER IT WITH
Know India Program,
Kaleshwaram irrigation
project, MAA program

G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting

In News

The Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the High Representative of the European Union met in Lucca, Italy on 10 –11 April to address a number of major international issues that impact global peace and security. The Ministers adopted the G7 Joint Communiqué and the G7 Declaration on Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace and endorsed the G7 Statement on Non-proliferation and Disarmament.

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The Joint Communiqué covers a number of international issues such as countering terrorism and violent extremism, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Africa, Yemen, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Ukraine, Iran, Afghanistan, North Korea, non-proliferation and disarmament, outer space, maritime security, cyberspace security, peace and security in the framework of the UN, human rights and others.

The International Buddhist Conference-2018 was held in Lumbini, the birthplace of Gautam Buddha.

G7 on Russia

G7 Joint Communiqué also touches on the relations with Russia. There was G7 unity on **opposing Russia’s malign behavior**. German Foreign Minister called on Moscow to help resolve the crisis in Syria, where Russia and Iran are backing Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The G7 condemned what it said was a Russian nerve agent attack in Britain. G7 nation were deeply worried about what the group saw as a pattern of Russia misbehavior going back years.

PEPPER IT WITH
Russian Nerve agent attack, Syrian crisis, Yemen Crisis, G8, G20, G15, SCO

Polar Silk route

China outlined its ambitions to extend **President Xi Jinping’s signature Belt and Road Initiative** to the Arctic by developing shipping lanes opened up by global warming. Releasing its first official Arctic policy white paper, China said it would encourage enterprises to build infrastructure and conduct commercial trial voyages, paving the way for Arctic shipping routes **that would form a “Polar Silk Road”**.

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The white paper said China also eyes development of oil, gas, mineral resources and other non-fossil energies, fishing and tourism in the region. It said it would do so **“jointly with Arctic States, while respecting traditions and cultures of the Arctic residents including the indigenous peoples and conserving natural environment”**.

China’s Belt and Road initiative aims to connect China to Europe, the Middle East and beyond via massive infrastructure projects across dozens of countries, reflecting Xi’s desire for China to take on a more prominent global leadership role.

Significance

- China, despite being a non-Arctic state, is increasingly active in the polar region and became an observer member of the Arctic Council in 2013.
- **Among its increasing interests in the region is its major stake in Russia’s Yamal liquefied natural gas project** which is expected to supply China with four million tonnes of LNG a year.
- Shipping through the Northern Sea Route would shave almost 20 days off the regular time using the traditional route through the Suez Canal
- **China’s increasing prominence in the region has prompted concerns from Arctic states over its long-term strategic objectives, including possible military deployment.**

PEPPER IT WITH
B&R initiative, CPEC, India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway

Press Freedom Index

Why in News?

India’s ranking in the Press Freedom Index has fallen two places to 138, blaming **“physical violence” against journalists like Gauri Lankesh** as the key reason behind the country’s low ranking.

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Norway topped the list of having the world's freest press for the second year in a row, while North Korea remained the most repressive country followed by Eritrea, Turkmenistan, Syria and then China.

Highlights

- It is published annually by Reporters Without Borders (RWB) and measures the level of media freedom in 180 countries.
- The parameters that are evaluated include the level of pluralism, media independence, environment and self-censorship, legal framework, transparency, and the quality of the infrastructure that supports the production of news and information.
- The physical violence against journalists is largely responsible for India's **low ranking**. At least three journalists were murdered in connection with their work. More were killed in circumstances that were unclear, as is often the case in rural areas, where reporters are poorly paid.
- **China's ranking remained unchanged at 175th** position for the second year. Underlining that **China's censorship and surveillance has reached unprecedented levels due to the massive use of new technology**. Foreign reporters are finding it harder to work and ordinary citizens can now be jailed just for sharing content on a social network or during a private chat on a messaging service.
- The report also highlighted a "slow erosion" of press freedom in Europe and an increasing amount of unprecedented attacks on journalists in democratically-elected governments.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Weaponization of outer space,
 1961 Vienna Convention

Happy Cities Summit

Why in News?

The first **Happy Cities Summit: Amaravati 2018**, a global summit, was held at CK Convention Centre near Mangalagiri on the National Highway, and was a unique event bringing the best of minds in urban innovation across the world. While the Government of Andhra Pradesh is hosting it, the event partners are Dalberg, Confederation of Indian Industries, and Centre for Liveable Cities (Singapore).

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- A delegation from Finland, the highest rated country in Happiness Index, also arrived to participate.
- Thinkers, designers, architects, planners, city leaders, and entrepreneurs discussed and shared best practices, innovations and ideas for enhancing societal happiness in the cities of the 21st century.
- 'Happy city hackathon' **was also conducted in the run-up** to the summit, a unique initiative where students got the opportunity to envision and bring to life a public space in their capital city. In addition, there was an exhibition that run through all the days of the summit, where leading industry players and start-ups showcased products and services across various facets of urban life, including mobility, governance, housing, waste management, clean energy, etc.
- The summit had four central themes - citizen-centric governance; liveable communities; clean and healthy environment; and vibrant economies.
- The summit is also expected to create a Happy Cities Innovation Lab that will be the institutional anchor to take this work forward, in collaboration with the partner countries and institutions from around the world.

PEPPER IT WITH
 UNISDR, Yokohama Strategy,
 Smart City, Hyogo Framework

Key objective

Happy Cities has been a global event in the calendar of the developed countries, but probably **this is the first time the event is happening in Andhra Pradesh in tune with the government's thrust on raising the Happiness Index in the State.**

A key objective of the summit is to evolve a framework for thinking about and measuring **'city happiness'** as well as a declaration and set of principles for guiding policy and action in the development of **'happy cities'**, especially relevant for cities in the developing world.

Draft rules to utilise afforestation fund

Why in News?

The Central government came out with draft rules to utilise around Rs 50,000 crore compensatory afforestation fund for increasing green cover and strengthening conservation measures in the country.

The fund is the accumulated amount of money which user agencies had deposited as compensation for diverting forest land for non-forest purposes, including industries and infrastructure, over the years.

The draft rules, notified by the environment ministry, specify that 80% of compensatory afforestation (CA) amount will be utilised by states for plantations, assisted natural regeneration of forests, forest fire prevention and improvement of wildlife habitat among others in the list of 12 permissible activities while the remaining 20% will be used for 10 listed works to strengthen forest and wildlife related infrastructure.

Though the law—Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF) Act—to utilise the money was passed by the Parliament in July 2016, it could not be implemented in absence of enabling rules within the Act. It had led to adhocism in disbursal of funds to states, resulting in transfer of only a small amount (up to 10%) to the states for afforestation and conservation works.

Currently, most of the compensatory funds, amounting to around Rs 50,000 crore, are with the ad hoc Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA).

The ad hoc authority was created by an order of the Supreme Court in 2009. Once the rules come into force, the amount will be transferred to the National Compensatory Afforestation Fund at Centre and the respective State Compensatory Afforestation Funds in a phased manner, depending on its utilisation. The national and state funds - both non-lapsable - will be governed under the respective general financial rules and utilised for only the activities listed under the CAF Act.

Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF) Act

- The act establishes the National Compensatory Afforestation Fund under the Public Account of India, and a State Compensatory Afforestation Fund under the Public Account of each state.
- These Funds will receive payments for: (i) compensatory afforestation, (ii) net present value of forest (NPV), and (iii) other project specific payments. The National Fund will receive 10% of these funds, and the State Funds will receive the remaining 90%.
- These Funds will be primarily spent on afforestation to compensate for loss of forest cover, regeneration of forest ecosystem, wildlife protection and infrastructure development.
- It also establishes the National and State Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authorities to manage the National and State Funds.

Key Issues and Analysis

It establishes the Funds for compensatory afforestation and forest conservation. However, there are several factors (other than administration of funds) which affect compensatory afforestation and forest conservation. These factors are mentioned below.

- A 2013 CAG report noted that state forest departments lack the planning and implementation capacity to carry out compensatory afforestation and forest

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A new plant species was discovered from the Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot. Classified as a sedge, the grass-like plant has been named *Fimbristylis agasthyamalaensis*, after the locality from which it was found. The new species belongs to the Cyperaceae family. In India, the genus is represented by 122 species, of which 87 are reported from the Western Ghats. Many of the known Cyperaceae species are medicinal plants or used as fodder.

conservation. With the share of funds transferred to states increasing from 10% to 90%, effective utilisation of these funds will depend on the capacity of state forest departments.

- Procuring land for compensatory afforestation is difficult as land is a limited resource, and is required for multiple purposes, such as agriculture, industry, etc. This is compounded by unclear land titles, and difficulties in complying with procedures for land use.
- A High Level Committee on Environment Laws observed that quality of forest cover has declined between 1951 and 2014, with poor quality of compensatory afforestation plantations being one of the reasons behind the decline.
- The act delegates the determination of NPV (value of loss of forest ecosystem) to an expert committee constituted by the central government. As NPV constitutes about half of the total funds collected, its computation methodology would be important.
- Environmentalists and forest rights activists criticized the draft rules stating they violate the Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006. The FRA provides for individual and community rights over forests and provides a framework for communities to govern them.

PEPPER IT WITH

Chipko Movement, Drip and Sprinkle irrigation, DBT on fertilizers, National Afforestation Programme (NAP) scheme, National Mission for a Green India (GIM), HELP

Delhi becomes first city to roll-out Euro VI fuel

Why in News?

With an aim to combat the rising levels of air pollution in Delhi-NCR region, petrol pumps in the capital started supplying ultra-clean Bharat Stage VI grade fuel (both petrol and diesel). This move makes New Delhi the first city in the country to switch from BS-IV grade fuels to BS-VI (equivalent to fuel meeting Euro-VI emission norms).

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Other cities like Noida, Ghaziabad, Gurugram and Faridabad along with 13 major cities, including Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Pune, will also switch over to cleaner BS-VI grade fuel from January 1 next year. However, BS-VI fuel will be rolled out in rest of the country by April 2020.

Mathura refinery in Uttar Pradesh, Panipat refinery in Haryana, Bina in Madhya Pradesh and Bhatinda in Punjab have started producing Euro-VI grade fuel. Around Rs 183 crore has already been spent on Panipat refinery alone for producing cleaner fuel.

Difference between BS-IV and the new BS-VI

The major difference in standards between the existing BS-IV and the new BS-VI auto fuel norms is the presence of sulphur. The newly introduced fuel is estimated to reduce the amount of sulphur released by 80 per cent, from 50 parts per million to 10 ppm. As per the analysts, the emission of NOx (nitrogen oxides) from diesel cars is also expected to reduce by nearly 70 per cent and 25 per cent from cars with petrol engines.

Deadline for rest of the country

It was decided in 2015 that the country will switch from BS-IV grade fuel to BS-VI grade fuel by April 2020. While the deadline stands for the rest of the country, in Delhi the authorities were compelled to advance the introduction of a cleaner fuel looking at the deteriorating conditions of the air quality. The decision was taken by the Petroleum Ministry on November last year, where it stated that BS-VI grade auto fuels would be dispensed with effect from April 1, 2018 instead of the scheduled April 1, 2020.

Concerns

- The introduction of higher grade fuel will be beneficial only if it is done in tandem with the roll-out of BS-VI compliant vehicles. Using BS-VI fuel in the current BS-IV engines or, conversely, running BS-IV engines on the current-grade fuel, may be ineffective in curbing vehicular pollution, and may damage the engine in the long run.
- According to IOC, for petrol engines, one of the most critical specifications is Research Octane No. (RON), which has improved from 88 in BS-II to 91. It is at par with regular 91 octane gasoline (petrol) required for Euro VI emission norms.
- A regional approach is also needed to tackle the issue of stubble burning in neighbouring states, as well as enforcing tougher rules on construction and waste management.



Significance

The revised standards will improve the environment and reduce respiratory problems due to reduction in permissible Sulphur content which will also reduce emission of nitrogen oxides (NOX). Also, these standards permit increased blending of Ethanol in petrol and bio-diesel in diesel which will help in conservation of natural resources and reduction in import of Crude.

BS-IV grade fuel was first introduced in the country in April last year, but India subsequently decided to jump to BS-VI grade by April 2020 to meet international best practices. The petroleum ministry, justifying the move, had said, **“This measure is expected to help mitigate the problem of air pollution in National Capital Territory of Delhi and surrounding areas.”**

BS Norms

BS norms introduced in 2000 are emission control standards introduced by the government, based on European emission standards, to keep a check and control over release of air pollutants from equipment using internal combustion engines including vehicles.

The amount of Sulphur in both petrol and diesel in BS-VI fuel is limited to a maximum of 10 parts per million (PPM), similar to that of its Euro counterpart. They set limits for release of air pollutants from equipment using internal combustion engines, including vehicles. Typically, the higher the stage, the more stringent the norms.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Odd-Even Scheme, Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution, REDD, REDD+, GEF, Green Climate Fund

National Clean Air Programme

Why in News?

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) released a concept note on the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

Objective of NCAP

- The NCAP aspires to overcome the deficits of the ongoing government initiatives targeted towards air pollution control. It lays down a comprehensive strategy framework for enhanced management of air quality.
- Augmentation of existing air quality monitoring network by increasing number of existing manual and continuous monitoring stations, introducing rural monitoring stations, identifying alternative technology for real-time monitoring network and augmenting capabilities of existing monitoring stations to measure PM2.5 concentration, are integral components of the strategy framework.
- Devising air quality management plans for 100 non-attainment cities calls for detailed source apportionment (identification of pollution sources) studies for each city. The document stresses the need for taking up these studies in a phased manner.
- In addition to setting up of an Air Information Centre that would analyse and disseminate monitored data, an Air Quality Forecasting system is also being envisioned. The NCAP lays down the need for a national-level emission inventory. A technology assessment cell for evaluation of new pollution prevention and control technologies has also been proposed.
- The document highlights lack of indigenous studies establishing the correlation between exposure to air pollution and human health. A high-level apex committee and working group has, therefore, been constituted under the Indian Council of Medical Research and the MoEF&CC to overcome this deficit.
- A budget amounting to Rs 637 crore has been set aside for aiding implementation of the programme. The document lays down specific targets and timelines for each initiative listed under the programme.

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Asian Premium is the extra charge being collected by OPEC countries from Asian countries when selling oil, and India has been voicing its dissent against this practice.

India sources about 86 per cent of crude oil, 75 per cent of natural gas and 95 per cent of LPG from OPEC member nations.

Concerns

While the document mentions emission reduction targets, nowhere does it actually quantify these targets. However, the draft concept note for NCAP released earlier in March, clearly listed specific targets to reduce 35 per cent pollution levels in the next three years and 50 per cent **pollution levels in the next five years. These targets don't find a mention in the concept note. It will be interesting to observe whether NCAP's well-intended and ambitious initiatives without quantified targets would result in significant impact or not.**

Way Forward

The concept note acknowledges that while recent policy interventions like notification of sector-specific emission standards, augmentation of air quality monitoring network, banning the burning of biomass and leapfrogging from BSIV to BSVI for vehicles by April 1, 2020 have resulted in marginal improvements in air quality levels, the need for time-bound initiatives at both city and rural level are absolutely essential to combat the problem of air pollution in our country holistically, thus substantiating the need for the NCAP.

The intended goal of the programme is to meet the “annual average air quality standards at all locations in the country in a stipulated timeframe”. In order to achieve this, all the 100 non-attainment cities would have to design city-specific action plans with specific timelines for implementation of listed initiatives.

PEPPER IT WITH
Stable Burning, BSIV and BSVI, Air Quality Monitoring Network

New system to measure air quality

Why in News?

India is tying up with the United States and Finland to develop a pollution-forecast system that will help anticipate particulate matter (PM) levels at least two days in advance and at a greater resolution than what is possible now. The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) will be coordinating this exercise and the plan is to have a system in place by winter.

Currently, the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR), run out of the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, serves as the apex forecaster of pollution trends in Delhi, Mumbai, Pune and Ahmedabad. It generates a likely air quality profile, a day in advance, for these cities.

The new system, to be jointly developed with expertise from the Finnish Meteorological Institute and the U.S.' **National Oceanic and**

Atmospheric Administration, will use a different modelling approach as well as computational techniques from that employed in the SAFAR model.

SAFAR

- The application, developed by scientists at IITM, enables **citizens to check their city's air quality** in real time. The forecasting system is jointly run by the IITM and the India Meteorology Department.
- The app provide current data and a forecast **for air quality in the user's current location** through a colour-coded system- green is good, yellow is moderately polluted, orange is poor, red is very poor and maroon is critical.
- It aids in enhancing the awareness of the hazards of air pollution and will also aid the policy makers to adopt practical city-level measures to address air pollution.

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Diu Smart City has become the first city in India, that runs on 100% renewable energy during daytime setting a new benchmark for other cities to become clean and green.

It has now adopted a two-pronged approach whereby a 9 MW solar park spread over 50 hectares rocky barren land has been developed besides installing solar panels on the roof tops on 79 government buildings thereby generating 1.3 MW annually.

PEPPER IT WITH

IITM, National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), Air Quality Index, Photochemical Smog, Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants

World's first microfactory to help tackle e-waste hazard

An Indian-**origin scientist in Australia has launched the world's first** microfactory that can transform the components from electronic waste items such as smartphones and laptops into valuable materials for re-use. The modular microfactories can operate on a site as small as 50 square metres and can be located wherever waste may be stockpiled.

A microfactory is one or a series of small machines and devices that uses patented technology to perform one or more functions in the reforming of waste products into new and usable resources.

Significance

- The e-waste microfactory has the potential to reduce the rapidly growing problem of vast amounts of electronic waste causing environmental harm and going into landfill.
- It can also turn many types of consumer waste such as glass, plastic and timber into commercial materials and products.

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PEPPER IT WITH

e-Waste management rules, 2016, Microbeads, Basel Convention on the Control of, Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes, The Waigani convention

- Using our green manufacturing technologies, these microfactories can transform waste where it is stockpiled and created, enabling local businesses and communities to not only tackle local waste problems but to develop a commercial opportunity from the valuable materials that are created.

South Asian Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF)

In News

India Meteorological Department (IMD) has taken responsibility for the preparation of annual regional forecast outlook for the SW Monsoon Season rainfall under the regional forum known as the SASCOF.

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Background

12th edition of SASCOF, a two-day annual international meet at Pune. The Forum was attended by meteorologists from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. This was the sixth SASCOF meeting hosted by India.

PEPPER IT WITH
WMO, APEC Climate
Centre, Global Framework
for Climate Services

Prediction by SASCOF

1. The monsoon will be normal over most regions of South Asia this year. All weather parameters, including winter and spring Northern Hemisphere snow cover, Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) conditions, among others, are in favour of a good monsoon.
2. **The forecast is helpful for India's neighbouring nations, which don't have advanced facilities to issue forecasts and make predictions.**

About SASCOF

- The idea of establishing SASCOF was originated in a meeting convened by WMO, the Directors General of the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) in South Asia and Permanent Representatives (PRs) of the respective countries with WMO, at the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP), Trieste, Italy. The PRs of south Asian nations with the WMO had unanimously agreed to implement SASCOF for southwest monsoon season from 2010 onwards.
- The main activity during all the SASCOFs was the preparation and issuing of a consensus outlook for the southwest monsoon rainfall over South Asia.
- Countries under SASCOF — Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and Maldives — share weather services with each other.

Fast Track task force (mobile production)
The government has established a Fast Track Task Force (FTTF) under Ministry of Electronics and IT, which has set target to achieve around 500 million by 2019

Ramsar tag likely for Sunderbans

The Sunderban Reserve Forest, spread of 4,260 sq. km. with over 2,000 sq. km. of mangrove forests and creeks, is likely to be declared a Ramsar Site soon.

Being conferred the status of a wetland of international importance will not only be a matter of pride for the Sunderbans but also bring a lot of international scientific attention and intervention to the area.

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Concerns

- Spread over 125-square-km (12,500 hectare) the wetland area of the water bodies have been decreasing over the past three decades. In 1986, the percentage of water bodies was 30.6% which dropped to 26.3% and in 2011 further dropped to 24.7.
- According to experts, Sunderbans is already a World Heritage Site, and another feather in its cap as a Ramsar site will not help in its conservation, even as the recognition has not

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helped the East Kolkata Wetlands. What is required is the implementation of existing laws and regulations by the tribunals.

- Other than threats such as climate change, sea level rise, widespread construction and clearing of mangrove forests for fisheries is posing a danger to the Sunderbans. Another threat is the 1,320-megawatt coal-based thermal power plant at Rampal, just a few kilometres north of the reserve forest in Bangladesh.

Indian Sunderbans

The Indian Sunderbans, with 2,114 sq. km. of mangrove forests, comprise almost 43% of the mangrove cover in the country according to a 2017 Forest Survey of India report. Other than the forests, home to about 100 Royal Bengal tigers, the creeks and river systems of the Sunderbans are also part of the reserve forest and once conferred a Ramsar site status, it will be the largest protected wetland in the country.

The Sundarbans are a part of the world's largest delta formed by the rivers Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna. Sundarban is a vast area covering 4262 square kms in India alone, with a larger portion in Bangladesh. 2585 sq. kms of the Indian Sundarban forms the largest Tiger Reserve and National Park in India.

Ramsar Wetland Sites

The Convention on Wetlands, called the Ramsar Convention, is the intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. The Convention was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and came into force in 1975.

There are currently 26 sites in India recognised as Ramsar wetland sites of international importance, including the East Kolkata Wetlands also in West Bengal. Vembanad Kol Wetland of Kerala is the largest Ramsar Wetland site in India.

World Earth Day 2018

- ❖ World Earth Day is celebrated every year as an annual event by the people all across the world on 22nd of April in order to increase the awareness among people about the environment safety as well as to demonstrate the environmental protection measures.
- ❖ First time, the world earth day was celebrated in the year 1970 and then started celebrating annually on global basis by almost 192 countries.
- ❖ This years theme was "End Plastic Pollution."

In the highland plateaus of the Western Ghats parts of Goa, scientists have identified a new species of frog called Fejervarya Goemchi. The new species is named after the historical name of the state of Goa where the species is discovered.

PEPPER IT WITH

Montreux Record, National Wetland Conservation Programme, World Wetland Day

National Bamboo Mission

Why in News?

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved Centrally Sponsored Scheme of National Bamboo Mission (NBM) under National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) during remaining period of Fourteenth Finance Commission (2018-19 & 2019-20).

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The Mission would ensure holistic development of the bamboo sector by addressing complete value chain and establishing effective linkage of producers (farmers) with industry.

- The scheme will benefit directly and indirectly the farmers as well as local artisans and associated personnel engaged in bamboo sector including associated industries. Since it is

proposed to bring about one lakh ha area under plantation, it is expected that about one lakh farmers would be directly benefitted in terms of plantation.

- The Mission will focus on development of bamboo in limited States where it has social, commercial and economical advantage, particularly in the North Eastern region and States including Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
- Focus will be given on Research & Development (R&D) to increase the production and productivity of bamboo.

CCEA has also approved Empowerment of Executive Committee for formulation of guidelines of the NBM and to make the changes therein, including cost norms for various interventions from time-to-time as per the felt needs and specific recommendations of States, with the approval of Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare.

The restructured NBM strives to -

- To increase the area under bamboo plantation in non forest Government and private lands to supplement farm income and contribute towards resilience to climate change.
- To improve post-harvest management through establishment of innovative primary processing units, treatment and seasoning plants, primary treatment and seasoning plants, preservation technologies and market infrastructure.
- To promote product development at micro, small and medium levels and feed bigger industry.
- To promote skill development, capacity building, awareness generation for development of bamboo sector.

Significance

Bamboo plantation will contribute to optimizing farm productivity and income thereby enhancing livelihood opportunities of small & marginal farmers including landless and women as well as provide quality material to industry. Thus, the Mission will not only serve as a potential instrument for enhancing income of farmers but also contributing towards climate resilience and environmental benefits. The Mission will also help in creating employment generation directly or indirectly in both skilled and unskilled segments.

PEPPER IT WITH
National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture, Coir Board, Coconut palm state tree of goa

National Bamboo Mission

National Bamboo Mission (NBM) was initially started as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme in 2006-07 and was subsumed under Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) during 2014-15 and continued till 2015-16.

NBM was mainly emphasizing on propagation and cultivation of bamboo, with limited efforts on processing, product development and value addition. There, was weak linkage between the producers (farmers) and the industry. The restructured proposal gives simultaneous emphasis to propagation of quality plantations of bamboo, product development and value addition including primary processing and treatment; micro, small & medium enterprises as well as high value products; markets and skill development, thus addressing the complete value chain for growth of the bamboo sector.

Great Barrier Reef

Why in News?

Australia has pledged \$379 million in an effort to rescue the ailing Great Barrier Reef in the country's largest-ever investment in coral reef conservation.

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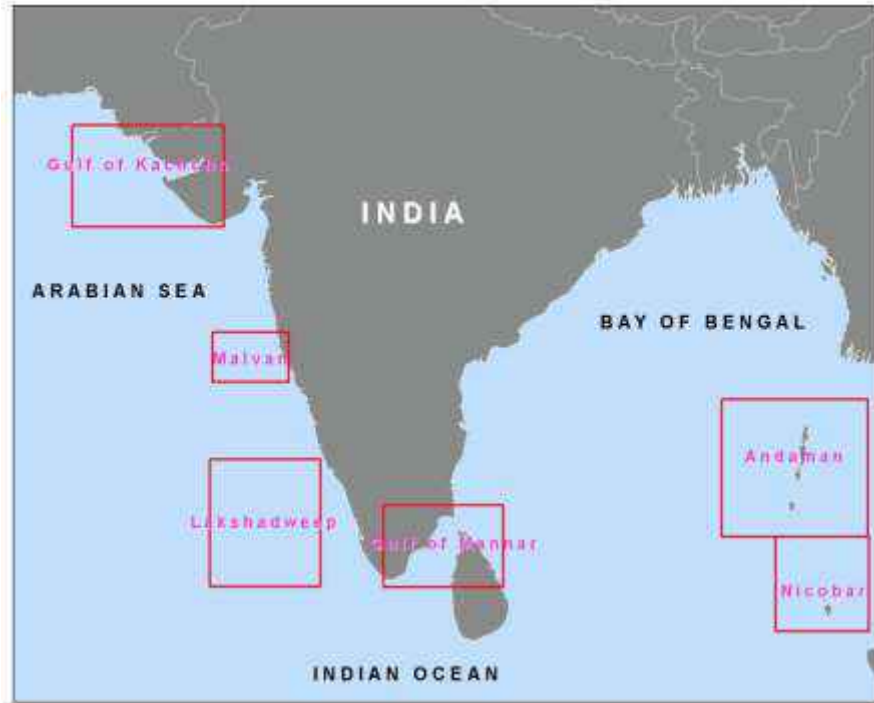
The landmark plan includes funds for improving water quality by reducing pollution from farm fertilizer runoff and encourage reef restoration by experimenting with laboratory-grown coral that is more durable at higher temperatures. The proposal also includes \$43.8 million to stem the spread of crown-of-thorn starfish, a poisonous coral-eating predator.

The 1,400-mile-long Great Barrier Reef is already facing a full ecosystem collapse with global warming increasing water temperatures and acidity, leading to extensive coral bleaching. Two successive heat waves in 2016 and 2017 killed off nearly half of the northern reef's coral.

PEPPER IT WITH
Coral Bleaching, Eutrophication, Mangrove, Phundi

Coral Reef

- Coral reefs are large underwater structures composed of the skeletons of coral, which are marine invertebrate animals. The coral species that build coral reefs are known as hermatypic or "hard" corals because they extract calcium carbonate from seawater to create a hard, durable exoskeleton that protects their soft, sac-like bodies.
- Each individual coral is referred to as a polyp. New coral polyps live on the calcium carbonate exoskeletons of their ancestors, adding their own exoskeleton to the existing coral structure.
- Corals are found all over the world's oceans, from the Aleutian Islands off the coast of Alaska to warm tropical waters of the Caribbean Sea. The biggest coral reefs are found in the clear, shallow ocean waters of the tropics and subtropics where they grow quickly. The largest of these coral reef systems — the Great Barrier Reef of Australia — is more than 1,500 miles (2,400 km) in length.
- Most corals have a symbiotic (mutually rewarding) relationship with algae called zooxanthellae according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). These algae live inside the coral polyp's body and produce food for themselves and the polyp through photosynthesis. The polyps, in turn, provide a home and carbon dioxide for the algae. Additionally, the zooxanthellae provide the coral with their lively colors — most coral polyp bodies are clear and colorless.



United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

Why in News?

Asia Pacific Regional Workshop of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), jointly hosted by Environment ministry and UNCCD Secretariat, to build the capacity of the Asia-Pacific Region to monitor and report on land degradation was held recently in India.

The participants in the workshop were trained in the use of the state-of-the-art tool called "Trends Earth" developed by Conservation International, an NGO.

About UNCCD

- Established in 1994, the UNCCD is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management. The Convention addresses specifically the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, known as the drylands, where some of the most vulnerable ecosystems and peoples can be found.
- The new UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework is the most comprehensive global commitment to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) in order to restore the productivity of vast expanses of degraded land, improve the livelihoods of more than 1.3 billion people, and reduce the impacts of drought on vulnerable populations.
- The convention works together to improve the living conditions for people in drylands, to maintain and restore land and soil productivity, and to mitigate the effects of drought.
- The UNCCD is particularly committed to a bottom-up approach, encouraging the participation of local people in combating desertification and land degradation.
- As the dynamics of land, climate and biodiversity are intimately connected, the UNCCD collaborates closely with the other two Rio Conventions; the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to meet these complex challenges with an integrated approach and the best possible use of natural resources.

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Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought (DLDD) cost India about 2.54 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2014-15.

Desertification is the process of fertile land becoming desert, typically as a result of drought, deforestation, or inappropriate agriculture.

PEPPER IT WITH

Land Degradation Neutrality, United Nations Framework Convention to Combat Climate Change, Convention on Biological Diversity, Global Environment Facility, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Point Nemo - spacecraft cemetery

Chinese space station Tiangong-1 recently plunged into the Pacific Ocean. It crashed very close to the only place on Earth where old satellites can go to die – the spacecraft cemetery.

About Point Nemo

- The spacecraft cemetery is marked by the oceanic point of **inaccessibility or Point Nemo (Latin for 'nobody') in the South Pacific Ocean**. The remotest place on Earth, it lies nearly 1,400 nautical miles from the nearest land mass.
- Point Nemo was named after the deep-sea diving captain in **Jules Verne's classic sci-fi novel '20,000 Leagues Under The Sea'**.
- According to NASA, the likelihood of spacecraft debris hitting someone in this part of the ocean is around 1 in 10,000.

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PEPPER IT WITH

Space X, Falcon 9, Tiangong, PSLV and GSLV

- The actual spacecraft cemetery lies four kilometres below the ocean’s surface and is home to defunct and old satellites, spent fuel tanks and waste freighters. At that level, no sunlight penetrates and the only living inhabitants are sponges, viperfish, squid, octopi and whales.
- Space agencies from across the world have been dumping their old or decommissioned satellites around Point Nemo since 1971. In the last four-and-a-half decades, around 260 to 300 satellites have been dumped, with Russia being the largest contributor.
- This will also be the final resting place for the International Space Station when it will finally be decommissioned in 2024.

Space Junk

Why in News?

China’s first space station, Tiangong-1 making a fiery re-entry into Earth, caused a bit of concern among the public about debris raining from the sky.

Humanity’s journey into space began in 1957, when the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the first ever artificial satellite. Since then, more than 5,250 rockets have been launched, which have put into space numerous

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satellites, spacecraft and space stations. Not all of them are functional today, nor everything has come back to Earth. Many of them, their parts and random objects like an astronaut’s gloves are still up there as space junk. Thousands of non-functional ones end up in the orbit of the Earth contributing to what is called – space debris or space junk. This shows that we are not just polluting the Earth but also the space! And they come with potential risk.

Space debris refers to all the human-made objects such as whole, abandoned satellites, pieces of broken satellites, deployed rocket bodies, and other random objects such as tiny flecks of paint from spacecraft and even tools left behind by astronauts during space walks. Most of them orbit Earth and some even beyond it. Some of them have made it to Venus and Mars. Twenty tonnes of them have been found on the Moon, says NASA. Space debris also includes natural particles such as the meteoroid.

Magnitude

According to the European Space Agency, as of January 2017, there are about 29,000 objects of size less than 10 cm in Earth’s orbit, 7,50,000 objects from 1 cm to 10 cm and 166 million objects from 1 mm to 1cm. These numbers do not include the millions of tiny pieces of debris that cannot be tracked.

Monitoring

Scientists use radar to keep track of space debris. The U.S. Space Surveillance Network keeps track of known orbital objects, using ground-based radar systems such as the TIRA, Haystack and EISCAT radars and the Cobra Dane. Telescopes and observatories such as the ESA Space Debris Telescope and the Goldstone provide additional data.

Risks

In-orbit risks: The damages can be as small as a dent on a shuttle window to a destruction of an entire satellite. Objects in Low Earth Orbit travel at speeds up to 28,000 km/hour, fast enough to cause significant damage to satellite, spacecraft or spacewalking astronauts. A number of space shuttle windows have been replaced because of damage caused by paint flecks.

What is Kessler Syndrome?

The Kessler Syndrome is a theory proposed by scientist Donald J. Kessler in 1978. It is a scenario where two colliding objects in space generate more debris which then cause a chain reaction of collisions in low Earth orbit to an extent that it could render space activities such as a satellite launch unfeasible for many generations.

PEPPER IT WITH

RemoveDebris Mission, Kounotori 6 spacecraft, Cryogenic Engine

Debris that re-enters Earth: **Space trash is often attracted by Earth's gravitational pull. It is pulled lower and lower until it finally reaches Earth's atmosphere. Most objects burn up when they enter Earth's atmosphere due to the compression of atmospheric gases**, but larger objects can reach the ground intact. According to NASA website, an average of one catalogued piece of debris has fallen back to Earth each day for the past 50 years. But there have not been significant damages.

Solutions

- The solution involves steps to clean up the mess, mitigate damage and avoid future debris. There are systems in place to track the debris and avert disasters.
- Various space organisations have been working on reducing the amount of trash by adopting better designs of rockets and other objects. For example, making rockets reusable could vastly cut down waste.
- Technologies to remove space junk are also being developed. The European Space Agency has designed a mission to remove large space debris from orbit. Called e.Deorbit, it can remove debris as big as 4,000 kg from low Earth orbit.

Advanced Supersonic Parachute Inflation Research Experiment (ASPIRE)

A supersonic parachute designed to land future NASA spacecraft on Mars underwent a key test high up in Earth's skies. The test was meant to mimic the conditions that a spacecraft would experience during a Red Planet entry, descent and landing (EDL).

Shortly after liftoff, ASPIRE splashed down in the Atlantic Ocean off Virginia, where it was to be retrieved by boat. Analysis of the recovered chute and its rigging, as well as data gathered during the flight by cameras and other instruments, will help researchers complete the design of the chute for NASA's 2020 Mars rover.

Mars Rover 2020

- As its name suggests, that rover is scheduled to be launched in 2020, on a mission to hunt for signs of ancient life on the Red Planet. The six-wheeled vehicle, whose body is based heavily on NASA's Curiosity Mars rover, will study rocks on site and cache samples for eventual return to Earth.
- The 2020 rover will employ the same broad EDL strategy employed by Curiosity, which slowed its descent through the Martian air using a supersonic chute and was lowered to the red dirt on cables by a rocket-powered "sky crane."

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PEPPER IT WITH

Shukrayaan, Mars Orbiter Mission 2, Cartosat, Astrosat, SCATSAT

Govt. bans imports of hormone oxytocin

Why in News?

The Union government banned imports of the hormone oxytocin to stop its misuse in the livestock industry, as it causes hormonal imbalances and shortens the lives of milch animals. India halted retail sales of the prescription-only drug in 2014, but regulators have struggled to curb illegal sales, and the volume of imports is unclear.

The government has decided to rely on domestic production to satisfy requirements of the hormone.

Oxytocin

- Oxytocin is a hormone and a neurotransmitter that is involved in childbirth and breast-feeding. It is also associated with empathy, trust, sexual activity, and relationship-building.

Odilorhabdins

It is a new class of antibiotics, which has a distinct way of killing bacteria. The antibiotic is produced by symbiotic bacteria found in soil-dwelling nematode worms that colonise insects for food. The bacteria helps in killing the insect and, importantly, secretes the antibiotic to keep competing bacteria away. ODLs act on the ribosome of bacterial cells.

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- It is sometimes referred to as the "love hormone," because levels of oxytocin increase during hugging and orgasm. It may also have benefits as a treatment for a number of conditions, including depression, anxiety, and intestinal problems. Research shows that it may benefit people with an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), anxiety, and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).
- Oxytocin is produced in the hypothalamus, a part of the brain. Females usually have higher levels than males.

PEPPER IT WITH
World Immunization Week,
Global Vaccine Action Plan
(GVAP)

North Atlantic Aerosols and Marine Ecosystems Study (NAAMES) mission

Why in News?

About half the carbon dioxide emitted into Earth's atmosphere each year ends up in the ocean, and plankton absorb a lot of it. The North Atlantic Aerosols and **Marine Ecosystems Study (NAAMES) studies the world's largest** plankton bloom in the North Atlantic and how it gives rise to small organic particles that leave the ocean and end up in the atmosphere, ultimately influencing clouds and climate.

It is the first research mission to conduct an integrated study of all four distinct phases of the world's largest phytoplankton bloom.

Significance

- NAAMES research challenges conventional ideas about the dynamics of bloom and species succession.
- Phytoplankton are the autotrophic components of the plankton community. They are a key part of oceans, seas and freshwater basin ecosystems.
- This final NAAMES campaign provides a unique opportunity for researchers aboard Atlantis to do experiments that study the growth and decay of the phytoplankton population.
- Rates of phytoplankton accumulation are critical for understanding the ocean conditions that lead to phytoplankton growth and its timing, a key to unlocking the environmental drivers and controls of biological dynamics.

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Phosphorus pentoxide

The revenue department has imposed an anti-dumping duty on the import on Phosphorus pentoxide from China to protect the domestic manufacturers from cheap shipments. The duty has been imposed for five years.

Phosphorus Pentoxide is used as a powerful desiccant and dehydrating agent, and is a useful building block and reagent in the chemical industry.

PEPPER IT WITH
Carbon sequestration, Storing
Carbon Dioxide under the
Ocean, CoP 23 Bonn

IRNSS-1I

Why in News?

Navigation satellite IRNSS-1I was put in orbit by the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) PSLV-C41 rocket recently.

Eighth in the series, the 1425- kg satellite completed the first phase of the Indian regional navigation constellation.

The navigation satellites, dubbed India's own GPS (Global Positioning System), are meant for giving precise information of position, navigation and time of objects or people. They were built by a consortium of six Indian companies led by Alpha Design Technologies Ltd., Bengaluru. They have a civilian and a restricted military/security application.

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Although 1I is the ninth to be launched in the NavIC navigation fleet, it counts as the eighth, as the previous one, 1H, was lost in a faulty launch last August. They were planned as backups but became necessary after the three imported rubidium atomic clocks on 1A failed while in orbit.

Nasa lunar ‘Gateway’ space station

NASA is planning to build the Lunar Orbital Platform-Gateway in the 2020s. The platform will consist of at least a power and propulsion element and habitation, logistics and airlock capabilities. While specific technical and mission capabilities as well as partnership opportunities are under consideration, NASA plans to launch elements of the gateway on the agency’s Space Launch System or commercial rockets for assembly in space.

IRNSS

- IRNSS is an independent regional navigation satellite system being developed by India.
- It is designed to provide accurate position information service to users in India as well as the region extending up to 1500 km from its boundary, which is its primary service area.
- An Extended Service Area lies between primary service area and area enclosed by the rectangle from Latitude 30 deg south to 50 deg north, Longitude 30 deg east to 130 deg east.
- IRNSS will provide two types of services, namely, Standard Positioning Service (SPS) which is provided to all the users and Restricted Service (RS), which is an encrypted service provided only to the authorised users.
- The IRNSS System is expected to provide a position accuracy of better than 20 m in the primary service area.

PEPPER IT WITH
GSAT 6A, PSLV, GSLV,
MoM 2

Some applications of IRNSS are:

- ✓ Terrestrial, Aerial and Marine Navigation
- ✓ Disaster Management
- ✓ Vehicle tracking and fleet management
- ✓ Integration with mobile phones
- ✓ Precise Timing
- ✓ Mapping and Geodetic data capture
- ✓ Terrestrial navigation aid for hikers and travellers
- ✓ Visual and voice navigation for drivers

The space segment consists of the IRNSS constellation of eight satellites, NavIC. Three satellites are located in suitable orbital slots in the geostationary orbit and the remaining four are located in geosynchronous orbits with the required inclination and equatorial crossings in two different planes. All the satellites of the constellation are configured identically. The satellites are configured with I-1K Bus to be compatible for launch on-board PSLV.

Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS)

Why in News?

NASA has a new planet hunter in the heavens. The agency's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) was launched from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida, rising off the pad atop a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.

- The Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) will discover thousands of exoplanets in orbit around the brightest stars in the sky.
- In a two-year survey of the solar neighborhood, TESS will monitor more than 200,000 stars for temporary drops in brightness caused by planetary transits.
- This first-ever spaceborne all-sky transit survey will identify planets ranging from Earth-sized to gas giants, around a wide range of stellar types and orbital distances. No ground-based survey can achieve this feat.

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- As of now, the number of known exoplanets stands at over 3,700. Another 4,500 objects are strong contenders to become exoplanets. About 50 are believed to potentially habitable. They have the right size and the right orbit to support surface water and, at least theoretically, to support life.
- TESS will find the most promising exoplanets orbiting our nearest and brightest stars, giving future researchers a rich set of new targets for more comprehensive follow-up studies.



Significance

TESS is the first step toward finding habitable planets. The mission will be a big step toward exploring such worlds up-close as well. In 50 to 100 years, humanity will probably be capable of launching tiny robotic spacecraft to explore a number of nearby exoplanets, perhaps using technology like that being developed by the Breakthrough Starshot project.

PEPPER IT WITH
Starshot project,
Exoplanet, Falcon9

RS 500-CR ACTION PLAN FOR VIRAL HEPATITIS

The Union Health Ministry is ready to roll out a Rs 500 crore-three-year comprehensive integrated national action plan to check morbidity and mortality due to the disease that inflicts the liver.

About Viral Hepatitis

Inflammation of liver is usually referred as hepatitis. Viral hepatitis is a widespread infectious disease normally caused by the hepatitis viruses A, B, C, D and E. The condition can progress to liver fibrosis (scarring), cirrhosis or liver cancer. It can be caused by any of the known five hepatotropic viruses, namely — hepatitis A, B, C, D and E which are highly divergent in their structure, epidemiology, mode of transmission, incubation period, signs/symptoms, diagnosis, prevention and treatment options.

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PEPPER IT WITH
MDR TB, Human papillomavirus (HPV),
International Conference on Military
Medicine, World Homoeopathy Day

While 40 million people are chronically infected with Hepatitis B, 6 to 12 million people are chronically infected with Hepatitis C. Besides, Hepatitis E virus (HEV) is the most important cause of epidemic Hepatitis, whereas Hepatitis A virus (HAV) is more common among children. Most acute liver failures diagnosed are attributable to HEV.

Background

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has already recognised viral hepatitis as a serious public health problem in India which is home to over 52 million people infected with chronic hepatitis. This is placing a huge disease, social and economic burden on the affected families as well as the health system, as per the UN agency. Latest assessment by WHO shows that in 2016, of the 400 million people infected by viral hepatitis globally, about 13 per cent were Indians

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A bigger concern is that most people infected with the virus are unaware and experts points out that with challenges such as awareness, accessibility, compliance and affordability, India can only eradicate hepatitis by 2080 (as against global goal of 2030) if they start acting now.

Innovate in India for Inclusiveness Project

Why in News?

The World Bank announced signing of a loan agreement with India for IBRD credit for US \$ 125 million for the "Innovate in India for Inclusiveness Project".

Significance

- The objective of the project is to nurture indigenous innovation, foster local product development and accelerate commercialisation process.
- It will involve bridging critical skill and infrastructure gaps to promote affordable and innovative healthcare product generation for inclusive development and increasing competitiveness in India.
- The project would support consortia of public, private, and academic institutions to overcome key market failures that are holding back development of an innovative biopharmaceutical and medical devices industry in the country.
- The project consists of three parts -- strengthening of pilot-to-market innovation ecosystem, acceleration of the pilot-to-market process for specific products, and project management, monitoring and evaluation.

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Innovate in India (i3) programme

With an aim of creating a globally competitive biopharmaceutical industry that can addresses **the country's major concerns around barriers to affordable healthcare; innovate in India (i3) programme** was launched.

The \$250 million programme of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science & Technology, is a first- of-its-kind mission that brings together industry and academia to promote entrepreneurship and indigenous manufacturing in the biopharmaceutical sector. This flagship programme of the GOI in collaboration with World Bank, will be implemented by Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), a Public Sector Enterprise, set up by DBT.

Earth BioGenome Project

- An international consortium of scientists is proposing a massive project to sequence, catalog and analyze the genomes of all known eukaryotic species on the planet. Eukaryotes include all organisms except bacteria and archaea. There are an estimated 10-15 million eukaryotic species on Earth.
- The EBP project will support and promote international protocols for data storage and sharing. A coordinating council with members from Africa, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, the European Union and the United States will head a global network of collaborators.
- The council also will include representatives of several current large-scale genomics projects including the Global Genome Biodiversity Network, the Global Invertebrate Genomics Alliance, the i5K Initiative to Sequence 5,000 Arthropod Genomes and the Genome 10K Project.

Significance

- The Earth BioGenome Project will create a new foundation for biology, informing a broad range of major issues facing humanity, such as the impact of climate change on biodiversity, the conservation of endangered species and ecosystems, and the preservation and enhancement of ecosystem services.

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- Genomics has helped scientists develop new medicines and new sources of renewable energy, feed a growing population, protect the environment and support human survival and well-being. The Earth BioGenome Project will give us insight into the history and diversity of life and help us better understand how to conserve it.
- Powerful advances in genome sequencing technology, informatics, automation, and artificial intelligence, have propelled humankind to the threshold of a new beginning in understanding, utilizing, and conserving biodiversity. For the first time in history, it is possible to efficiently sequence the genomes of all known species, and to use genomics to help discover the remaining 80 to 90 percent of species that are currently hidden from science.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Human Genome Project, Earth Microbiome Project, Three Parent Baby, BT Citton

Atal New India Challenges

Why in News?

The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) of the NITI Aayog announced to launch the Atal New India Challenges, which came into being following Prime Minister’s clarion call to bring innovations and technologies relevant to the people.

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Partnering with the Ministries of Road Transport and Highways, Housing and Urban Affairs, Agriculture and Family Welfare, Drinking Water & Sanitation and the Railway Board, AIM will attempt to harness the potential of India’s innovators.

Under this applicants showing capability, intent, and potential to productize technologies will be awarded grants up to Rs 1 crore. This grant support will be supplemented by mentoring, handholding, incubating and other support as needed at various stages of commercialisation. Furthermore, the winning grantees will be supported with mentoring, go-to-market strategies by leading incubators, accelerators and experts, technical support, and other means. The programme is open to Indian companies registered under the Companies Act 1956/2013, primarily a Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) as defined in the MSMED Act, 2006. It is also open to Start-Ups, as defined by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Government or private R&D organizations (other than a Railway R&D organization), academic institutions, academicians, or even individual innovators are encouraged to apply, provided they partner with entities with appropriate manufacturing capabilities.

Significance

There is need to ensure inclusive and innovative solutions. India has accelerated its growth potential by leveraging technology in various spheres. **This initiative will focus India’s efforts** towards solving problems in core areas, which would have a direct impact on improving lives of our citizens and will also generate employment. The topics placed in different phases are aligned with India’s needs and through the support of innovation, we are ready to make a giant leap towards a New India.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Atal Tinkering Lab, Janani Suraksha Yojana, INSPIRE Programme, Adolescence Education Programme

There is need to identify unique technological solutions to problems unique to India. Bringing more innovations to the service of Indian citizens will require more individuals and entities to innovate for Indian needs, and take innovative products to market through several mechanisms, such as startups, government schemes, or other deployment mechanisms. These innovations will be deployed to make lives of all Indian citizens better. This programme will bring a technological revolution in the lives of the common man, solving India’s technological challenges locally.

Atal Innovation Mission

- The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) is a flagship initiative set up by the NITI Aayog to promote innovation and entrepreneurship across the length and breadth of the

country, based on a detailed study and deliberations on innovation and entrepreneurial needs of India in the years ahead.

- AIM is also envisaged as an umbrella innovation organization that would play an instrumental role in alignment of innovation policies between central, state and sectoral innovation schemes incentivizing the establishment and promotion of an ecosystem of innovation and entrepreneurship at various levels - higher secondary schools, science, engineering and higher academic institutions, and SME/MSME industry, corporate and NGO levels.
- Long term goals of AIM include establishment and promotion of Small Business Innovation Research and Development at a national scale (AIM SBIR) for the SME/MSME/startups, and in rejuvenating Science and Technology innovations in major research institutions of the country like CSIR (Council of Scientific Industrial Research), Agri Research (ICAR) and Medical Research (ICMR) aligned to national socio-economic needs.

GAIA CREATES RICHEST STAR MAP OF OUR GALAXY – AND BEYOND

Why in News?

ESA's Gaia mission has produced the richest star catalogue to date, including high-precision measurements of nearly 1.7 billion stars and revealing previously unseen details of our home Galaxy.

The new data includes positions, distance indicators and motions of more than one billion stars, along with high-precision measurements of asteroids within our Solar System and stars beyond our own Milky Way Galaxy.

Significance

- Preliminary analysis of this phenomenal data reveals fine details about the make-up of the Milky Way's stellar population and about how stars move, essential information for investigating the formation and evolution of our home Galaxy.
- With these accurate measurements it is possible to separate the parallax of stars – an apparent shift on the sky caused by Earth's yearly orbit around the Sun – from their true movements through the Galaxy.
- The new catalogue lists the parallax and velocity across the sky, or proper motion, for more than 1.3 billion stars. From the most accurate parallax measurements, about ten per cent of the total, astronomers can directly estimate distances to individual stars.

Scientists have detected the most distant star ever viewed, located more than halfway across the universe and named it after the ancient Greek mythological figure Icarus. Researchers said they used NASA's Hubble Space Telescope to spot the star, which is up to a million times more luminous and about twice as hot as our sun, residing 9.3 billion lights years away from Earth. It is a type of star called a blue supergiant.

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GAIA

Gaia is an ambitious mission of ESA to chart a three-dimensional map of our Galaxy, the Milky Way, in the process revealing the composition, formation and evolution of the Galaxy. Gaia will provide unprecedented positional and radial velocity measurements with the accuracies needed to produce a stereoscopic and kinematic census of about one billion stars in our Galaxy and throughout the Local Group. This amounts to about 1 per cent of the Galactic stellar population.

Sentinel-3B

The second Sentinel-3 satellite, Copernicus Sentinel-3B, was launched, joining its identical twin Sentinel-3A in orbit. This pairing of satellites increases coverage and data delivery for the European Union's Copernicus environment programme.

Like Sentinel-3A, the newly lofted satellite will use a suite of instruments to keep tabs on Earth's seas, land and air, shedding light on how our planet

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ticks, and how it's changing. Both Sentinel-3s are designed to operate for at least seven years, and they carry enough fuel to last a dozen years. With the launch of Sentinel-3B, the first set of Sentinels for Copernicus is now in orbit delivering an almost mind-boggling amount of data. While this wealth of information advances environmental monitoring, it also opens up huge business opportunities. To help bring these data to market, ESA and SAP have joined forces to create the World Space Alliance.

Sentinel-3

Sentinel-3 is primarily an ocean mission, however, the mission is also able to provide atmospheric and land applications. The mission provides data continuity for the ERS, Envisat and SPOT satellites. Sentinel-3 makes use of multiple sensing instruments to accomplish its objectives; SLSTR (Sea and Land Surface Temperature Radiometer), OLCI (Ocean and Land Colour Instrument), SRAL (SAR Altimeter), DORIS, and MWR (Microwave Radiometer).

NASA canceled Resource Prospector, a rover that would have mined water ice in permanently shadowed regions on the Moon.

NASA defends the cancellation by saying Resource Prospector was a "one-time effort to explore a specific location on the Moon, and as designed, now is too limited in scope for the agency's expanded lunar exploration focus."

Copernicus Earth-observation program

- Copernicus is the most ambitious Earth observation programme to date. It will provide accurate, timely and easily accessible information to improve the management of the environment, understand and mitigate the effects of climate change and ensure civil security.
- Copernicus is the new name for the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security programme, previously known as GMES. This initiative is headed by the European Commission (EC) in partnership with the European Space Agency (ESA).
- ESA is developing a new family of satellites, called Sentinels, specifically for the operational needs of the Copernicus programme. At present, three complete two-satellite constellations are in orbit plus an additional single satellite, Sentinel-5P.
- The Sentinels will provide a unique set of observations, starting with the all-weather, day and night radar images from Sentinel-1A and -1B, launched respectively in 2014 and 2016.
- Sentinel-2A, launched in 2015, is designed to deliver high-resolution optical images for land services. The second satellite, Sentinel-2B, joined its twin in orbit in 2017.
- The two Sentinel-3 satellites, launched in 2016 and in 2018, will provide data for services relevant to the ocean and land.
- Sentinel-4 and -5 will provide data for atmospheric composition monitoring from geostationary and polar orbits, respectively. Sentinel-6 will carry a radar altimeter to measure global sea-surface height, primarily for operational oceanography and for climate studies.
- In addition, a Sentinel-5 Precursor mission has been developed to reduce data gaps between Envisat, in particular the Sciamachy instrument, and the launch of Sentinel-5. Sentinel-5P, the first Copernicus mission in orbit dedicated to monitoring our atmosphere, was launched on in 2017.

e-FRRO Scheme

- The Union Home Minister recently launched the web-based application 'e-FRRO' (e-Foreigners Regional Registration Office). The e-FRRO scheme is aimed at building a centralized, transparent online platform for the foreigners to avail visa related services and to provide Faceless, Cashless and Paperless services to the foreigners with user friendly experience.
- Advantages of e-FRRO include facilitation of legitimate foreigners through "Digital India" vision of the Government, foreigners need not visit FRRO/FRO office – "Services from the

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comfort of home”, convenient and Time saving, exclusive dashboard for User friendly experience and Uniform & Standardized Services across the Country.

- The e-FRRO scheme would be a quantum jump in improving the ease of service delivery with respect to foreigners visiting and staying in India. Using the e-FRRO application, foreigners can apply online on the portal and obtain the service(s) through email/post without appearing in person at the FRO/FRRO office.

Benefits of e-FRRO

1. No Mandatory visit to the physical offices
2. Documents can be submitted online
3. E-mail/SMS alerts about approval/rejection
4. Certification can be downloaded from the portal and a physical copy and email of the same will be sent to the applicant.

- It may be noted that the online services offered by E-FRRO scheme are not available even in some of the most advanced countries in North America and Europe.

- e-FRRO has already been implemented and is running successfully as a pilot project in four FRROs (Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi and Mumbai) since February 12, 2018. Now it has been rolled out in the remaining eight FRROs.

PEPPER IT WITH

e-Visa, IVFRT Platform, H1B Visa, L1 Visa, NRI, PIO

- In the present system, foreigners staying in India on Visa duration of more than 180 days have to get themselves registered with their respective FROs/FRROs. In 2017, over 3.6 lakh people had to visit an FRRO office for visa related services.

- In the new system, foreigners will be able to get as many as 27 visa and immigration-related services in India from the comfort of their place of stay.

Liberalised Remittance Scheme

Why in News?

In order to improve monitoring and also to ensure compliance with the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) limits, it has been decided to put in place a daily reporting system by Authorised Dealer (AD) banks of transactions undertaken by individuals under LRS, which will be accessible to all the other ADs.

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The LRS transactions are currently permitted by banks based on the declaration made by the remitter. The monitoring of adherence to the limit is confined to obtaining such a declaration without independent verification, in the absence of a reliable source of information. Now banks will be required to upload daily transaction-wise information undertaken by them under LRS.

PEPPER IT WITH

Hindu Growth Rate, Hindu Undivided Family (HUF),

About LRS

- The scheme was introduced in 2004 to facilitate resident individuals to remit funds abroad for permitted current or capital account transactions or combination of both.
- Under the scheme, AD may freely allow remittances by resident individuals up to USD 2,50,000 per Financial Year (In 2004 it was USD 25000). The Scheme is not available to corporates, partnership firms, HUF, Trusts, etc.
- The Scheme is available to all resident individuals including minors.
- The permissible capital account transactions by an individual under LRS are:

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- (i) Opening of foreign currency account abroad with a bank;
- (ii) Purchase of property abroad;
- (iii) Making investments abroad- acquisition and holding shares of both listed and unlisted overseas company or debt instruments.
- (iv) Setting up Wholly Owned Subsidiaries and Joint Ventures outside India for bonafide business subject to certain terms and conditions.
- (v) Extending loans including loans in Indian Rupees to Non-resident Indians (NRIs) who are relatives as defined in Companies Act, 1956.

NRE and NRO account are both rupee denominated accounts which can be a savings account, current account, or fixed/term deposit account and are meant specifically for NRIs. Nomination is allowed for both the accounts.

Non-Resident External (NRE) & Non-Resident Ordinary (NRO) Account

- ❖ The interest earned from an NRE account is fully exempt from income tax while that of NRO account is taxable.
- ❖ The main difference between an NRE and NRO account is that the money cannot be repatriated from an NRO account. Thus, the money held in an NRO account has to be used only for local payments in Indian Rupees while in NRE it can freely be sent to another country. Also, funds cannot be transferred from an NRO account to an NRE account.
- ❖ If the non-resident Indian who holds the NRE/NRO account comes back to India and becomes a resident of India, the NRE/NRO account is converted into a regular resident account
- ❖ The biggest advantage of an NRO account is that it can be held jointly with another NRI or even with a resident Indian.

Commonwealth Innovation Index

- India was ranked 10th on a new Commonwealth Innovation Index which was topped by the UK, Singapore and Canada. The index was launched as part of a new Commonwealth Innovation Hub on the sidelines of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).
- It has been created in partnership with the United Nations World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and its annual Global Innovation Index (GII).
- It is aimed at providing a tool that allows member states, organisations and citizens to benchmark themselves with the new innovation hub offering a dedicated online space for Commonwealth countries to showcase what they have to offer and share with other members.
- This is part of the reform and renewal process of the organisation, which will take it into a higher energy orbit and into the information age. It makes the Commonwealth even more relevant and fit for its sharing and caring purpose.

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- The Global Innovation Fund (GIF) will work as the delivery partner to host a new Commonwealth Innovation Fund (CIF)
- CIF will use GIFs existing due diligence processes for sourcing, evaluating and investing to generate a high-quality portfolio of enterprises that are aligned with the Commonwealth Secretariats priorities.
- The GIF will manage the fund and its investments, which will be targeted at innovative projects across Commonwealth countries that "save and improve lives".
- The target size of the new fund, with financial commitments from member-countries, is expected to be 25 million pounds of initial funds to prove the new model.

About Commonwealth Nations

- ❖ The Commonwealth is home to 2.4 billion people and includes both advanced economies and developing countries.

- ❖ Member countries are supported by a network of more than 80 intergovernmental, civil society, cultural and professional organisations.
- ❖ **The Commonwealth is one of the world's oldest political association of states. Its roots go back to the British Empire when some countries were ruled directly or indirectly by Britain. Some of these countries became self-governing while retaining Britain's monarch as Head of State. They formed the British Commonwealth of Nations.**
- ❖ In 1949 the association we know today, the Commonwealth came into being.
- ❖ The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 53 independent and equal sovereign states. Membership today is based on free and equal voluntary co-operation.
- ❖ The last two countries to join the Commonwealth - Rwanda and Mozambique - have no historical ties to the British Empire.
- ❖ Maldives is the last country to leave the commonwealth nations.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Gambia, Commonwealth Charter, Non-Aligned Movement, Balfour Declaration, London Declaration

India second largest manufacturer of crude steel

In a major achievement, **India has overtaken Japan to become the world's second largest producer of crude steel in February**, according to the Steel Users Federation of India (SUFIL). At present, China is the largest producer of crude steel in the world, accounting for more than 50% of the production.

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India's crude steel production was up 4.4% and stood at 93.11 million tonnes (MT) for the period April 2017 to February 2018, compared with April 2016 to February 2017. This had helped India to overtake Japan and become the second largest producer of crude steel in the world. India overtook the U.S. in 2015 to become the third largest producer of crude steel.

UTTAM App for Coal Quality Monitoring

UTTAM stands for – Unlocking Transparency by Third Party Assessment of Mined Coal. The Ministry of Coal and Coal India Limited (CIL) developed UTTAM, which aims to provide an App for all citizens and coal consumers to monitor the process of Third Party Sampling of coal across CIL subsidiaries.

UTTAM App ensures accountability, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency in coal ecosystem. It provides a platform for monitoring of sampling and coal dispatches.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Core Industries, US tariff on steel and Aluminium, Stainless steel

According to the World Steel Association, India produced 8.4 MT of crude steel in February 2018, up 3.4% over February 2017.

Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts

The seventh edition of Home Expo India 2018, organised by Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH) was held recently in Noida. The emphasis laid by the Council is on making this show a wholesome show with a Home Total tag attached to it with the intention of making it a benchmark event for premium merchandise for a target market/buyers segment.

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About EPCH

- Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH) was established under Companies Act in the year 1986-87 and is a non-profit organisation, with an object to promote, support, protect, maintain and increase the export of handicrafts.
- It is an apex body of handicrafts exporters for promotion of exports of Handicrafts from country and projected India's image abroad as a reliable supplier of high quality of handicrafts goods & services and ensured various measures keeping in view of observance of international standards and specification.
- The Council is engaged in promotion of handicrafts from India and project India's image abroad as a reliable supplier of high quality handicrafts. The council is an ISO 9001:2015 certified organisation.
- The Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts has a rare distinction of being considered as model council that is self-sustaining and where all the promotional activities are self-financed.

The EPCH " VRIKSH " timber legality assessment and verification standard for verification of legality and legal origin of wood and wooden products is intended for entities who want to accurately track and make claims about the legal origin and transport of their products .

PEPPER IT WITH
Global Indian Festival, Giftex World, Comprehensive Handicrafts Cluster Development

Indian Accounting Standard

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently decided to defer implementation of Indian Accounting Standards, popularly known as Ind AS, by one year, in respect of scheduled commercial banks.
- **As per the Centre's roadmap for adoption of Ind AS in the financial sector**, all scheduled commercial banks (excluding regional rural banks) were required to prepare Ind AS-based financial statements for accounting periods beginning April 1, 2018. This was to be done with comparatives ending March 31, 2018, or thereafter.
- Ind AS is a set of accounting norms developed by Indian authorities, which converge with the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). The implementation of IndAS for public sector banks requires an amendment to the Banking Regulation Act.
- The extension of one year would help banks set up their IT infrastructure to meet the requirements of Ind AS, particularly for the computation of the expected credit loss. Banks should use this period to build robust processes for Ind AS adjustments.
- Ind AS or Indian Accounting Standards govern the accounting and recording of financial transactions as well as the presentation of statements such as profit and loss account and balance sheet of a company.

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PEPPER IT WITH
Twin Balance sheet Syndrome, NPA's, Mutual Funds, Factor cost, market Price, International Financial Reporting Standards

Impacts of Ind AS

Ind AS will not just change the way companies present their numbers, but may also bump up or knock down the profits/losses of firms. Here are a few instances.

- ❖ Under the existing rules, incentives, discounts or rebates given to customers by a firm can be shown as part of advertising, sales promotion or marketing expenses, which figure in the costs. But under Ind AS, these will have to be deducted from sales (revenues).
- ❖ **Excise duties which are currently netted off from revenues to show 'net sales', will have to be shunted under 'expenses' under Ind AS.**
- ❖ Intangible assets such as goodwill had to be amortised, or written off as expenses over a period of time until now. Ind AS treats such items as having an indefinite life and

hence they need not be amortised. This can lift the profits of firms which carry sizeable goodwill on their books.

- ❖ **Ind AS advocates the ‘fair value’ method of accounting.** For example, currently, investments by a company in government securities or mutual funds is shown at the lower of cost and fair value (market value). Under Ind AS, these will have to necessarily be captured at fair value. For firms which have legacy or under valued investments, this revaluation can expand the balance sheet size.
- ❖ The new Ind AS also promises clearer disclosures to investors in certain cases.

Mutual Agreement Procedure

Why in News?

The Income Tax Department has confirmed that India and Finland have reached an agreement under the Mutual Agreement Procedure (MAP) system and that the issue surrounding the alleged tax payable by Nokia has been resolved, paving the way for the company to sell its plant shuttered for long in Chennai.

Nokia India was issued a demand notice for Rs 2,500 crore in 2013, which was thereafter reduced to Rs 1,600 crore. The Income Tax Department also raised a tax demand of Rs 10,000 crore tax on Nokia Corporation for the same transaction, which has now been dropped under the MAP agreement.

Nokia India had agreed to pay the Rs 1,600 crore tax demand made by the Income Tax Department. Under the MAP system, settling an issue between two countries means closing all pending tax proceedings as well.

What is MAP

The MAP article within the tax treaty allows the competent authority (CA) in governments of the contracting states to interact with the intent to resolve tax disputes between the government of one country and the government of the other country. This happens most commonly when one government imposes tax on additional profits in its country, but those profits have already been subjected to tax in the other country. Under this scheme, the taxpayer is entitled to approach the CA of their country of residence to invoke a MAP. Thereafter, CAs of both the jurisdictions convene a meeting (without the taxpayer's presence) and try to resolve the dispute through mutual agreement. Based on the MAP resolution, the taxpayer has an option to accept the agreement reached by the CAs, or decline it, and continue litigating as per the remedies available under the domestic law. The details of resolutions reached are not available within the public domain and cannot be used as a precedent by other taxpayers.

Some of the areas where government can consider making changes to the MAP to make it more effective could include the following:

- ✓ India should provide access to MAP for all transfer pricing disputes and ensure economic double taxation is relieved in all cases involving tax treaty countries.
- ✓ Flexibility should be allowed for invoking MAP where the taxpayer is subject to double taxation as a result of applying safe harbour rules.
- ✓ Roll back provisions should be introduced for MAP settlements to resolve tax treaty disputes more effectively and save time and resources both for taxpayer and tax authorities.

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What is Competent Authority?

DTAs are usually concluded between the governments of two countries. These countries are then referred to as the Contracting States or Contracting Parties to such an agreement. "Competent Authority" is a term used in tax conventions or agreements to identify a position, a person or a body to whom issues can be addressed within a Contracting State.

PEPPER IT WITH

Transfer Pricing, OECD, BEPS, DTAA, CBDT

- ✓ Benefit of suspension of taxes provided in case of MAP with US, UK, etc. should be extended to MAP with other countries, till settlement is reached in MAP.
- ✓ Outcome of MAP process should be binding on taxpayer upon acceptance and the time limits or the procedures laid down under the domestic tax laws of India should not restrict the application of tax treaty provisions or the implementation of the MAP agreement arrived at by the CAs.

Price Deficiency Payment System

Why in News?

The government has decided to follow the Madhya Pradesh’s model of the deficit price payment scheme, an ambitious project under which farmers are proposed to be compensated for the difference between the government-announced MSPs for select crops and their actual market prices.

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- For crops such as rice and wheat where it is effective now, MSP announcements will continue. For other targeted crops, price deficiency payments will be made. However, it has to be noted that there may be a cap on the extent to which the Centre will bridge the gap between MSP and market price.
- To avail this benefit, each farmer would have to register with the nearest Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) mandi and report the total area sown.
- The key benefit from the price deficiency payment is that it will reduce the need for the government to actually procure food crops, transport and store them and then dispose of them under Public Distribution System (PDS). The difference between the support and market prices can instead simply be paid in cash to the farmer.
- **Price deficiency payment can also keep India’s bill on food subsidies under check. India’s food subsidy schemes** have frequently come under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) scanner.
- In recent years, the government has been seeing the accumulation of large food grain stocks in its godowns over and above the buffer requirement. This entails storage and wastage costs that add on to the subsidy bill. This scheme may lead the government to overcome this problem.
- **MSP’s reach is limited**, in terms of both the crops and the geographical area it covers. Though every year MSPs are announced for 20-plus crops before the sowing season begins, actual procurement at MSP is restricted to a few crops such as paddy and wheat. This has led farmers to excessively focus on the crops with assured procurement which has skewed the cropping pattern.
- Monoculture also results in soil degradation and makes crops susceptible to pest and weed, leading to higher usage of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. The price deficiency system may incentivise farmers to diversify beyond the conventional cereals. The crops with effective MSPs such as rice, wheat and sugarcane, where support prices are effective now, are also water-intensive.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Mukhya Mantri Bhavantar
 Bhugtan Yojana, APMC, PDS,
 SFAC, NAFED, CACP

Legalisation of Gambling in India

‘Gambling’ as per most Gambling Legislations is understood to mean “the **act of wagering or betting” for money or money’s worth**. Gambling under the Gambling Legislations however does typically not include (i) wagering or betting upon a horse-race/dog-race, when such wagering or **betting takes place in certain circumstances**, (ii) games of “mere skill” and (iii) lotteries (which is covered under Lottery Laws).

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Gambling and betting is a State subject but the primary law on which States have framed their gambling legislation is a British-era law called the Public Gambling Act, 1867. Ironically, while India follows a British-era prohibitionist statute, the U.K. legalised and regulated

various forms of gambling and betting many decades ago. The Law Commission of India's endeavour to study the issue of whether or not gambling and betting should be legalised in the country is therefore a timely initiative to consider the issue of legalisation of gambling in India.

Why to legalise gambling

- Gambling is already happening in a massive way. Law enforcement authorities are not able to stop it. Legalising the activity will not only help curtail an important source of black money that is used by criminal syndicates, but also bring massive revenue to the state exchequer, which can be used for various constructive social schemes.
- In addition to revenue generation, a legal and regulated gambling sector will also help in creating large-scale employment opportunities. Globally, wherever gambling is regulated, it has created a massive avenue for employment generation.
- Naysayers say that gambling is not morally correct in the Indian context. They suggest that it is responsible for addiction, loss of livelihoods and bankruptcy. These concerns are unfounded. Gambling has been prevalent in society since ancient times and has been accepted as a form of recreation on various social occasions.
- A robust regulatory framework governing the gaming sector will ensure that people do not fall prey to the excesses of gambling. Awareness campaigns should educate people about the perils of excessive gambling; minors, habitual gamblers and vulnerable sections should be excluded from having access to gaming facilities; and limits must be imposed on the **amounts that can be wagered, based on a person's financial capabilities.**

- ❖ The Supreme Court, in *Board of Control for Cricket v. Cricket Association of Bihar & Ors (2016)*, mandated the Law Commission to study the possibility of legalising betting in India.
- ❖ According to the FICCI-KPMG Indian Media and Entertainment Industry Report 2014, the Indian gaming industry showed growth of 25.5 per cent in 2013, is expected to grow at a CAGR of 16.2 per cent between 2013 and 2018.
- ❖ The State of Sikkim is the first state in India which has enacted a law for online gambling and sports betting in 2008.
- ❖ Under the Constitution of India, the central legislature has the power to enact laws with respect to lotteries. Lottery is banned in certain states in India, for example Madhya Pradesh.
- ❖ In Lakshmanan case, the SC held that betting on horse racing was a game of skill since factors like fitness, and skill of the horse and jockey could be objectively assessed by a person placing a bet.
- ❖ Prize scheme means any scheme by whatever name called whereby any prize or gift is offered, or is proposed to be given to one or more persons to be determined by lot, draw or in any other manner from among persons who purchase or have purchased goods or other articles.

PEPPER IT WITH

2010 KPMG report, Bibhitaki tree, Satyanarayana Judgment, Common Gaming Houses, Pornographic and Obscenity Laws, Information Technology Act, 2008

Arguments against legalising gambling

- Having failed to control illegal betting, which happens on a large scale and also deprives the state of a huge revenue-earning opportunity, legalising it is like arguing that we are not able to control road accidents due to drunken driving, so govt should come up with robust policies and regulations that impose large fines to generate revenue which will ultimately curb illegal betting.
- A majority of people still live on a meagre meal or two after toiling hard. They cannot afford to send their children to school or take care of their basic health needs. However, their aspirations have changed in the last decade. If betting were to be legalised, this segment

would become ready fodder. Companies will host betting apps, tempting poor people to try their luck. Imagine the consequences of a poor person losing his hard-earned money on betting?

- It is well known that as of now, most betting is restricted to individuals who sit on piles of black money and want to make a quick buck. The percentage of individuals who bet with hard-earned money is minuscule. Our abject failure in bringing people who have amassed huge illegal wealth by dubious means in the tax net should not be reason enough to legalise betting.
- Moreover, what is the guarantee that legalising betting will generate revenue as projected, when radical steps like demonetisation and giving more power to tax authorities have not been able to make any significant change in revenue inflows or in curbing black money?

Conclusion

In India, since the Mahabharata, the practice of gambling has been criticised. There are a number of hurdles in legalising gambling. The Supreme Court has mandated the Law Commission to look into the matter. The existing law was passed before the Constitution came into existence and it was a Central legislation. If Parliament wishes to legislate on the subject, it will be difficult to do so, as the subject of gambling figures in the State List.

The problem of online gaming cannot be curbed by merely amending the Information Technology Act where it finds a mention. There has been a steep rise in online gambling of late and governments are trying to find ways of curbing the menace. Relevant provisos will have to be made in the new Act if gambling is to be regulated. There will still be the issue of jurisdiction **as online gambling goes way beyond India's borders. How will you ensure that online gambling is safe and protects the interests and rights of players? It is easier said than done.**

First International SME Convention-2018

- First ever international SME convention was held in New Delhi recently. The convention has specific focus on inclusion of MSMEs in the Make in India program & empowering women entrepreneurs.
- **With the theme as “Business Beyond Borders”,** the convention will allow entrepreneur-to-entrepreneur exchange of ideas, free and fair business discussions, mutual sizing of opportunities and ways to address them.
- The focus sectors include agriculture, food processing, alcoholic beverages, fruit beverages, jewellery, healthcare IT, ammunition, strategic defence training, coal, education, logistics, Bitcoin technology, digital entertainment, waste management, energy, dairy products and seeds & fertilisers.
- The International SME Convention 2018 is a platform for intensive business discussion, progressive interaction and trade association between progressive entrepreneurs from all over the world and offers a special focus on business and trade opportunities in India for International Entrepreneurs.

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World Union of Small and Medium Enterprises (WUSME) is an international non profit organization with the mission to protect, support and represent small and medium-sized enterprises and crafts worldwide.

WUSME aims to contribute to a new paradigm of growth based on SMEs as driving force for each country and society to reach a substantial, inclusive and sustainable social progress.

- India is home to more than 60 million MSMEs, majority of who are in low-tech areas and serve the local domestic markets. Of these, a small percentage, have the ability and capability to derive access to International Markets, with the vast majority of enterprises working as ancillaries.
- Together the MSMEs constitute a single largest employer after the Agriculture sector in India. Highly developed economies have banked on their small and medium enterprises for both GDP Growth as well as higher employment resulting in higher per capita incomes.

What is underwriting rule?

The Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) has asked the SEBI to review the regulations for underwriting of a public issue, the model agreement for which was framed back in 1993 and has since been in operation.

What is underwriting? Underwriting is the mechanism by which a merchant banker gives an undertaking that in the event of an initial public offer (IPO) remaining undersubscribed, the banker would subscribe to unsold shares. The underwriting clause, mandatory in all SME IPOs, ensures the issue does not fail due to low demand from investors.

Inflation Targeting

Why in News?

Surjit Bhalla, a member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) recently said Inflation Targeting has made zero impact on prices in India i.e Inflation targeting in India has zero impact on inflation.

Inflation, a rise in the overall level of prices erodes savings, discourages investment, stimulates capital flight (as domestic investors put their funds into foreign assets, precious metals, or unproductive real estate), inhibits growth, makes economic planning a nightmare, and, in its extreme form, provokes social and political unrest. Governments consequently have tried to squelch inflation by adopting conservative and sustainable fiscal and monetary policies.

- Inflation targeting is a monetary policy strategy used by Central Banks for maintaining price level at a certain level or within a range. It indicates the primacy of price stability as the key objective of monetary policy.
- Inflation targeting brings in more predictability and transparency in deciding monetary policy. If the central banks could ensure price stability, households and companies can plan ahead, negotiating wages on the basis of expecting low and stable inflation.
- Various advanced economies including United States, Canada and Australia have been using inflation targeting (New Zealand was the first country to implement it in 1990) as a strategy in their monetary policy framework.

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- ✓ Under Section 45ZA(1) of the RBI Act, 1934, the Central Government determines the inflation target in terms of the CPI, once in every five years in consultation with the RBI.
- ✓ The Monetary Policy Committee is entrusted with the task of fixing the benchmark policy rate (repo rate) required to contain inflation within the specified target level.
- ✓ Amongst other measures, RBI targets inflation primarily by changing the Policy Rate.
- ✓ Average inflation in India in 2017-18 was 3.5 per cent.
- ✓ Real interest rate, which is the difference between the nominal interest rate and inflation, is very high in India and not justified for an emerging economy.

- The RBI and Government of India signed a Monetary Policy Framework Agreement in 2015 with the objective to maintain price stability, while keeping in mind the objective of growth.
- The monetary policy framework is operated by the RBI which aims to contain consumer price inflation within 4 percent with a band of (+/-) 2 percent.
- An inflation target of zero is not recommended because it would not allow real interest rates to fall sufficiently to stimulate overall demand when a central bank is trying to boost the economy.
- The case for inflation targeting in India was made because the country has been experiencing a high level of inflation till recently. The inflation target notified to RBI by finance ministry is for 5 years, i.e till 31st march 2021.
- If the target is not achieved for 3 consecutive quarters then RBI will have to explain the reason for its failure to meet as well as give a timeframe within which it will achieve it. RBI will send a report to the central government stating reasons and remedial actions that will be taken.
- RBI has been using headline CPI (Combined) inflation as the nominal anchor for monetary policy stance from April 2014 onwards.
- This flexible inflation targeting (FIT) framework greatly enhances the credibility and effectiveness of monetary policy, and particularly, the pursuit of the inflation targets that have been set.
- A major advantage of inflation targeting is that **it combines elements of both “rules” and “discretion” in monetary policy.** This “constrained discretion” framework combines two distinct elements: a precise numerical target for inflation in the medium term and a response to economic shocks in the short term.
- Management of monetary policy and the express objective of inflation targeting has been enshrined as the responsibility of RBI by amending the preamble of the RBI Act, 1934 through the Finance Act 2016. Thus, ensuring price stability through inflation targeting is a legal responsibility of RBI since 2016.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Monetary Policy Committee (MPC),
 EAC-PM, Base year, Fiscal Deficit,
 Procurement Prices

REITs and InvITs

Why in News?

In order to make real estate investment trusts (REITs) and infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs) more attractive, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) recently said they will have to provide a mechanism for resolution of disputes with their shareholders and partners in the holding firm.

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SEBI has also amended REITs and InvITs regulations to facilitate the growth of such trusts.

- **Shareholders’ agreement or partnership agreement shall provide for an appropriate mechanism for resolution of disputes between the InvIT and the other shareholders or partners in the holding company and/or the SPV (special purpose vehicle).**
- The provisions of these regulations will prevail in case of inconsistencies between such agreement and the obligations cast upon an InvIT and REIT. InvIT will have to file the final placement memorandum with SEBI within 10 working days from date of listing of the units issued therein.
- Market regulator also released guidelines for issuance of debt securities by REITs and InvITs, wherein they need a registered debenture trustee, along with financial disclosure to the stock exchanges. Last year, SEBI had allowed these trusts to raise funds by issuing debt securities in order to make them attractive to investors.

- For issuance of debt securities, the REIT or InvITs shall appoint one or more debenture trustee registered with SEBI. This will be applicable provided a trustee of the REIT or InvIT is not eligible to be appointed as debenture trustee to such issuance of debt securities.
- SEBI had notified REIT and InvIT regulations in 2014. However, only 2 InvITs- IRB InvIT fund and Indiagrid Trust have got listed on the stock exchanges of India. Not a single REIT has been listed in the country so far.
- SEBI's board is expected to consider an easier set of norms on REITs and InvITs. It may allow the REITs and InvITs to have up to five sponsors, as against the current norm for maximum three.
- Under the proposal for REITs, Sebi would allow up to 20 per cent investment by such trusts in under-construction projects, up from a maximum of 10 per cent allowed currently. Besides, relaxations would be made to provisions relating to compliance of minimum public holding norms, as also for investments by the associate entities of the trustees.

PEPPER IT WITH
Institutional Training Platform for start-ups, Related Party Transactions, FEMA

Issue of Virtual Currency (VC) Regulation in India

Why in News?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently directed all regulated entities including banks, not to provide services to businesses dealing in virtual currencies like bitcoin, so as to protect consumer interest and check money laundering.

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Entities regulated by RBI shall not deal with or provide services to any individual or business entities dealing with or settling VCs with immediate effect. Virtual currencies, also variously referred to as cryptocurrencies and crypto assets, raise concerns of consumer protection, market integrity and money laundering, among others.

- Internationally, cryptocurrencies are regulated as commodities by several central banks. They are not treated as currencies as the name suggests. Only few credible cryptos have got the status of currencies. VC trading in India is carried by unregulated digital exchanges.
- The government of India had appointed an Inter-Disciplinary Committee on cryptocurrencies comprising nine members including representatives of RBI, SBI, NITI Aayog and Department of Financial Services in April 2017.
- Though, the Committee which was chaired by Dinesh Sharma submitted its recommendations in August 2017, details of the report are yet to be published.
- This panel was asked to examine the existing framework on digital/crypto currencies both in India and globally and come out with measures for dealing with such virtual currencies on issues relating to consumer protection, money laundering etc.

- ✓ RBI has constituted an inter-departmental group to study and provide guidance on the feasibility to introduce a central bank digital currency.
- ✓ Cryptocurrency, or virtual currency like Bitcoin, is not legal tender and not backed by government of India.
- ✓ Fiat digital currency is issued by a central bank and they constitute liability of a central bank.
- ✓ Fiat currency reduces the cost of printing and circulating paper currency.
- ✓ Venezuela recently became the first country to launch its own cryptocurrency named Petro.
- ✓ Tron, Ethereum, Ripple, Litecoin, Monero, Zcash, Dash are some other cryptocurrencies.

- Countries like China, Morocco, Ecuador, Bolivia, Bangladesh and Nepal have already banned cryptocurrency exchanges and ICOs.
- Japan, South Korea and Vietnam together accounted for 80 percent of bitcoin trading activity at the end of November 2017, according to World Street Journal. Japan also allowed the use of bitcoin and several other cryptocurrencies for payments.

VCs may pose several risks to their users, including the following:

- ❖ Virtual currencies are stored in digital form and hence are prone to losses due to hacking, loss of password, compromise of access credentials, malware attack etc. Since they are not supported by an authorised central registry or agency, the loss of the e-wallet could result in the permanent loss of the VCs held in them.
- ❖ Payments by VCs, such as Bitcoins, take place on a peer-to-peer basis as there is no authorised central agency to regulate such payments. Hence, there is no way to settle customer problems / disputes / charge backs etc.
- ❖ The VCs get their value from speculation without any backing. Hence, money may be lost from extreme volatility.
- ❖ VCs are traded on exchange platforms that have low legal status. Hence, the traders of VCs on such platforms are exposed to legal as well as financial risks.
- ❖ VCs can easily be used for illicit and illegal activities in several jurisdictions. This may force investors into anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) laws.

PEPPER IT WITH
Solaris effect, Zebpay, Satoshi Nakamoto, Peer to Peer Lending, Crypto-Demonetisation, Wall Street Journal (WSJ)

Economic Freedom Index

Why in News?

India has jumped 13 places in the last one year to be at 130th spot (out of 186 countries) in the latest annual Index of Economic Freedom of The Heritage Foundation, an American conservative public policy think-tank based in Washington.

In 2017, India with a score of 52.6 points was ranked at 143 among 180 countries, two spots below neighbour Pakistan.

- The Index of Economic Freedom measures the degree of economic freedom in a country on a scale from 0 to 100, based on four complex sets of indicators:
 - Rule of Law (property rights, freedom from corruption)
 - Limited Government (fiscal freedom, government spending)
 - Regulatory Efficiency (business freedom, labor freedom, monetary freedom)
 - Open Markets (trade freedom, investment freedom, financial freedom)

- ✓ Economic freedom is defined by the Heritage Foundation as the fundamental right of every human to control his or her own labour and property.
- ✓ In an economically free society, individuals are free to work, produce, consume, and invest in any way they please, with that freedom both protected by the state and unconstrained by the state.
- ✓ In economically free societies, governments allow labour, capital and goods to move freely, and refrain from coercion or constraint of liberty beyond the extent necessary to protect and maintain liberty itself.

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- India's economic freedom score is 54.5, an overall increase of 1.9 points, which is led by improvements in judicial effectiveness, business freedom, government integrity, and fiscal health.
- India is ranked 30th among 43 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, and its overall score is below the regional and world averages. Hong Kong is the leading country with an index score of 90.2.
- Observing that non-tariff barriers significantly impede trade, the Heritage Foundation said the **government's openness to foreign investment is below average. "State-owned institutions dominate the financial sector, and foreign participation is limited" it said.**
- According to the report, Corruption, underdeveloped infrastructure, a restrictive and burdensome regulatory environment, and poor financial and budget management continue to undermine overall development.

PEPPER IT WITH
Fraser Institute, Laissez-faire, Socialist economy, World Press Freedom Index, Inclusive Development Index

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

Why in News?

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) was recently in news due to Skripal episode.

Sergei Skripal, a retired Russian military intelligence colonel along with his daughter Yulia Skripal are fighting for their lives after a suspected poisoning.

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About OPCW

- Established in 1997, it is headquartered in The Hague, Netherlands.
- Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are the official languages of OPCW.
- The OPCW is an independent, autonomous international organisation with a working relationship with the United Nations.
- It has more than 190 Member States, who are working together to achieve a world free of chemical weapons.
- As the implementing body for the Chemical Weapons Convention (it entered into force in 1997), the OPCW oversees the global endeavour to permanently and verifiably eliminate chemical weapons.
- Over 96% of all chemical weapon stockpiles declared by possessor States have been destroyed under OPCW verification.
- For its extensive efforts in eliminating chemical weapons, the OPCW received the 2013 Nobel Prize for Peace.
- The OPCW Member States share the collective goal of preventing chemistry from ever again being used for warfare, thereby strengthening international security.

- The Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) team of OPCW is deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic to establish facts around the allegations of chemical weapons use in Douma.
- Set up in 2014, the on-going mandate of the OPCW Fact Finding **Mission (FFM) is "to establish facts surrounding allegations of the use of toxic chemicals, reportedly chlorine, for hostile purposes in the Syrian Arab Republic".**

PEPPER IT WITH
Spy swapping, MI6, Federal Security Service, The Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation (SVR RF), Novichok, Nerve agent, UN Disarmament commission

To this end, the Convention contains four key provisions:

- ✓ Destroying all existing chemical weapons under international verification by the OPCW;
- ✓ Monitoring chemical industry to prevent new weapons from re-emerging;
- ✓ Providing assistance and protection to States Parties against chemical threats; and
- ✓ Fostering international cooperation to strengthen implementation of the Convention and promote the peaceful use of chemistry.

About Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)

The Convention aims to eliminate an entire category of weapons of mass destruction by prohibiting the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention, transfer or use of chemical weapons by States Parties. States Parties, in turn, must take the steps necessary to enforce that prohibition in respect of persons (natural or legal) within their jurisdiction.

A unique feature of the CWC is its incorporation of the 'challenge inspection', whereby any State Party in doubt about another State Party's compliance can request the Director-General to send an inspection team. Under the CWC's 'challenge inspection' procedure, States Parties have committed themselves to the principle of 'anytime, anywhere' inspections with no right of refusal.

Harimau Shakti

- Harimau Shakti-2018 is a joint training exercise between Indian and Malaysian armies being conducted in Sengai Perdik, Hulu Langat, Malaysia from April 30, 2018 to May 13, 2018.
- The exercise is aimed at bolstering cooperation and coordination between the armed forces of both the nations and to share the expertise of both the contingents in conduct of counter-insurgency operations in jungle terrain.
- The focus will remain on tactical operations in jungle warfare. Overall, the exercise will not only provide an excellent opportunity to both the armies to hone their operational skills but will also contribute to enhance the strategic partnership between India and Malaysia.
- The two sides have had a history of military cooperation, and became strategic partners in 2010. In the defence arena, the two sides have engaged in exchange of information on training, maintenance and technical support for Su-30 fighter aircraft, in addition to the **establishment of a "Systems School" for the fighters at the Gong Kedak airbase.**
- Bilateral naval cooperation has also remained strong, and the Indian Navy regularly participates along with other external partners in the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition in Malaysia. India and Malaysia have also established a mechanism for information sharing information for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) and white shipping.

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- ❖ The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Malaysia concluded "Desert Tiger 5" joint military exercise aimed at sharing expertise and enhancing joint military actions.
- ❖ The military exercise was implemented within the framework of the UAE leadership's continued desire "to support and create unique partnerships between both countries in all areas".
- ❖ The drill was also aimed at raising the level of performance and combat efficiency and working together based on a strategy to improve the overall ability and combat readiness of the ground forces.

PEPPER IT WITH

Indo-Malaysian defence cooperation, ASEAN, UNCLOS, Mig 29 fulcrums, White Shipping, HADR

Bhabha Kavach

- The Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) has developed a new bulletproof jacket for which is not only cheaper but also much lighter. Lighter bulletproof vest means that the troops would be able to move faster even on difficult terrains.

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- The jacket, christened Bhabha Kavach, will reduce the weight by nearly 50%. At present, CAPF use heavy steel-armoured jackets that weigh between 10kg to 17kg. Using technology developed at BARC, scientists have brought the weight down to anywhere between 3.1kg and 6.6kg.
- Bhabha Kavach is made of boron carbide and carbon nanotube polymer composite. The materials used have been indigenously developed at BARC and is a spin-off from nuclear technology. The bullet proof jacket can also be customised to various requirements.
- Apart from being lighter, sturdier and more reliable, Bhabha Kavach will also be cost effective. It is estimated that CAPF and Indian army require about 1 lakh bullet-proof jackets every year over the next ten years.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Indian Small Arms System, self-loading rifle, National Security Guard, Special Protection group, APSARA, ZERLINA, DHRUVA, Sagar Kavach

About BARC

Dr. Homi Jehangir Bhabha conceived the Nuclear Program in India. Dr Bhabha established the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) for carrying out nuclear science research in 1945. To intensify the effort to exploit nuclear energy for the benefit of the nation, Dr Bhabha established the Atomic Energy Establishment, Trombay (AEET) in 1954 for multidisciplinary research program essential for the ambitious nuclear program of India. After the sad demise of Bhabha in 1966, AEET was renamed Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC).

Based in Mumbai, Maharashtra BARC is the mother of the R&D institutions such as IGCAR, RRCAT, VECC, etc., which carry out pioneering research on nuclear and accelerator technologies and industrial establishments such as NPCIL, NFC, ECIL, etc., spearheading nuclear power production, materials technology, electronics & instrumentation.

Defence Planning Committee

Why in News?

Government has revamped the existing defence planning system by establishing a Defence Planning Committee (DPC) under the chairmanship of the National Security Adviser (NSA). DPC, a permanent body, is intended to facilitate a comprehensive and integrated planning for defence matters.

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It is a vital ingredient in defence preparedness, which was conspicuously missing in the mechanism set up in the early 2000s in the wake of the Kargil conflict. The new measure is likely to have a far reaching consequence on the way defence planning is undertaken and on defence preparedness.

Salient Features of the New Mechanism

- The DPC will have the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, three service chiefs, secretaries of the ministries of defence, expenditure and foreign affairs as its members. The Chief of Integrated Staff in the MoD will be the member secretary of DPC, and his headquarters will be the secretariat for the committee. Besides, the NSA is empowered to co-opt other members as and when required.
- It is tasked to analyse and evaluate all relevant inputs relating to defence planning, which includes, among others, the national defence and security priorities, foreign policy imperatives, operational directives and associated requirements, relevant strategic and security-related doctrines, defence acquisition and infrastructure development plans, including the 15-year Long-Term Integrated Perspective Plan (LTIPP), defence technology and development of the Indian defence industry and global technological advancement.

PEPPER IT WITH
 National Security Advisor, Defence Production Policy, DefExpo 2018, Chief of Defence Staff, Tejas, Defence Acquisition Council



- DPC is tasked to prepare at least five different sets of drafts over different time-frames in consonance with the overall priorities, strategies and likely resource flows. These are:
 - National security strategy, strategic defence review and doctrines
 - International defence engagement strategy
 - Roadmap to build defence manufacturing eco-system
 - Strategy to boost defence exports
 - Prioritised capability development plans for the armed forces
- HQ IDS, which was established in October 2001 consequent to the decision of the Group of Ministers (GoM) based on the Kargil Review Committee (KRC) Report is to function as the Secretariat for the DPC, in addition to performing its usual secretariat function for the Chief of Staff Committee.
- In order to assist the functioning of the DPC, the new mechanism provides for four sub-committees, one each on Policy and Strategy, Plans and Capability Development, Defence Diplomacy, and Defence Manufacturing Eco-System. The reports of the DPC are to be submitted to the Defence Minister.
- The existing system of HQ IDS-led planning is perceived to have given way to the parochial interests of various stakeholders. This has had an adverse impact not only on how security threats were perceived by various security organs, but also on how scarce resources are distributed among the services and within the various branches of each service.
- DPC will prepare a draft national security strategy, develop a capability development plan, and work on defence diplomacy issues and improving defence manufacturing in India. The defence planning process is expected to become more rational as well as provide a much needed boost to defence preparedness.

Gaganshakti-2018

- Gaganshakti 2018 is an Indian Air Force (IAF) a country-wide war training exercise to be conducted in April 2018. **This will be India's biggest** combat exercise along the borders of Pakistan and China ever.
- The combat exercise will be conducted in both the western and the northern borders. The IAF will conduct the exercise with real-time deployment and employment of air power assets in a simulated, short and intense battle scenario.
- Gaganshakti is a biennial exercise to assess war waging capabilities of IAF. During this exercise, the entire machinery of the IAF will be activated. This is the first time that IAF will be indulging in surge operations.
- This synergised combat exercise will showcase accelerated 24x7 operations, network-centric operations, multi-spectrum capabilities, offensive manoeuvring tactics, joint operations with the Indian Army and the Indian Navy. Exercises of combat search and rescue and mass casualty evacuation will also be conducted.
- The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and Bharat Electronics Limited will be assisting the IAF in carrying out this massive exercise. Both the aerospace companies will be shifting the base of their technicians for the purposes of maintenance.
- The all-encompassing Gaganshakti 2018 will be conducted in two phases, the first being at the western border and second phase will be along the northern borders with Pakistan.

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Chakravat is a multi-agency humanitarian assistance and disaster relief exercise which is aimed to review the response mechanism in the event of a cyclonic storm.

It is for the first time that the yearly exercise is being conducted in Kochi and is being led by Southern Naval Command.

PEPPER IT WITH
HADR, Joint Operational
Doctrine, Su-30, MKI Fighters

Sahyog - Hyeoblyeog 2018

- Sahyog - Hyeoblyeog 2018 a bilateral exercise between the Indian Coast Guard and the Korea Coast Guard which will be held in Chennai in April-2018.
- The joint exercise is part of a proposed establishment of a MoU between the two Coast Guards to improve maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region.
- The joint exercise is one in a series of exercises being undertaken by the Indian Coast Guard with a number of countries. In 2016, a Korean ship came to India while in 2017, an Indian Coast Guard ship visited South Korea, to take part in joint exercises.
- The exercise will see Indian Coast Guard ship Shaurya, and a few interceptor boats taking part.
- The two sides will also try to have cross landing operations on board the ships mid-sea. The joint exercise will focus on jointly planning, training, and executing a series of well-developed anti-piracy scenarios and rescue operations.

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PEPPER IT WITH
Sahyog Kaijin, Northern Limit Line, Yellow Sea

Cybersecurity Tech Accord

- Top 34 global technology and securities firms, led by Microsoft and Facebook, have signed a **“Cybersecurity Tech Accord” to defend people** from malicious attacks by cybercriminals and nation-states.
- The watershed agreement will prevent them help governments launch cyber attacks against innocent citizens and enterprises. It will also protect against tampering or exploitation of their products and services through every stage of technology development, design and distribution.
- **The “Cybersecurity Tech Accord” is a public commitment among 34 global companies to protect and empower civilians online and to improve the security, stability and resilience of cyberspace.**
- The Tech Accord remains open to consideration of new private sector signatories, large or small and regardless of sector, who are trusted, have high cybersecurity standards and will adhere **unreservedly to the Accord’s principles.**
- The victims of cyberattacks are businesses and organisations of all sizes, with economic losses expected to reach \$8 trillion by 2022.
- The companies made commitments in four areas:
 - (i) Stronger defense
The companies will mount a stronger defense against cyberattacks. As part of this, recognizing that everyone deserves protection, the companies pledged to protect all customers globally regardless of the motivation for attacks online.
 - (ii) No offense
The companies will not help governments launch cyberattacks against innocent citizens and enterprises, and will protect against tampering or exploitation of their products and services through every stage of technology development, design and distribution.

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- ✓ Security service provider Symantec publishes Internet Security Threat Report.
- ✓ Cryptojacking is the use of a computer system to mine cryptocurrency without the owner of the machine knowing.
- ✓ According to the report, India is ranked third among list of countries globally where most of the threats were detected and it is second in terms of targeted attacks.

PEPPER IT WITH
Internet of Things (IOT), US-CERT, Ransomware, WannaCry, Spam, Phishing

- (iii) Capacity building
The companies will do more to empower developers and the people and businesses that use their technology, helping them improve their capacity for protecting themselves.
- (iv) Collective action
The companies will build on existing relationships and together establish new formal and informal partnerships with industry, civil society and security researchers to improve technical collaboration, coordinate vulnerability disclosures, share threats and minimize the potential for malicious code to be introduced into cyberspace.

Road map for UAV

In News

With an aim to prepare a road map and fast-track the implementation of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technology, or drones, in the country, the Centre announced setting up of a 13-member task force headed by Minister of State for Civil Aviation Jayant Sinha.

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Key Highlights of Draft Regulation on Civil use of UAV

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation, in 2017, announced draft regulations on civil use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems, commonly known as Drones.

- As per the draft regulation all drones are proposed to be operated in visual line of sight, during day time only and below 200 feet. Dropping of any substance, carriage of hazardous material or animal or human payload is not permitted.
- All commercial categories of drones except those in the Nano category and those operated by government security agencies, will have to be registered by DGCA as per ICAO proposed policy, in the form of Unique Identification Number (UIN).
- The draft regulation also mandates remote pilots to undergo requisite training, except for Nano and micro categories.
- As per the draft regulation, the Micro and above category drones will have to be equipped with RFID/SIM, return to home option and anti-collision lights.
- The draft regulation also specifies certain restricted areas for operations of drones. Drones cannot be operated within an area of 5km from airport, within permanent or temporary Prohibited, Restricted and Danger Areas as notified by AAI in AIP.

Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) classification as per their maximum take-off weight:

- Nano ≤ 250 gm
- Micro ≥ 250 gm and ≤ 2 kg.
- Mini ≥ 2 kg and ≤ 25 kg.
- Small ≥ 25 kg and ≤ 150 kg.
- Large ≥ 150 kg

Issues not tackled by Draft Regulations

- When it comes to UAVs, the question of privacy becomes an intricate problem, bringing with it the controversial debate of security versus privacy. Drones operated by non-governmental agencies pose a major threat to existing privacy laws.
- There have been several instances of known terrorist organisations using UAV to carry out their activities. Policymaking needs to be robust in this sphere as well, to ensure that security agencies are prepared to deal with threats of this nature.
- Drones present a new dimension in the management of air traffic as they are neither as easy to track as conventional aircraft nor as easy to communicate with. Can existing air traffic management infrastructure be used to manage the traffic of drones as well?
- Another aspect of legal liability is the rules governing trespass of private property by drones. Important questions arise relating to factors that will determine whether the operation of a drone over private property constitutes a case of trespassing.

PEPPER IT WITH
DGCA, UDAN-RCS, Drone
Federation of India, DIPP

Way Forward

Technology affects us in positive ways yet can also be disruptive; such is the case with Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA or more commonly known as drones). While drones are proving to be useful for military, commercial, civilian, and even humanitarian activities, their unregulated use carries serious consequences that need to be addressed. The issues of quality control, or response mechanisms in the event of an incident, questions of privacy and trespass, air traffic, terrorist threat management, and legal liability need to be tackled by the govt with robust policies and strict regulations.

Peace Mission 2018

It is a multi-nation counter-terror exercise in Russia. The military exercise will take place under the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, a China-dominated security grouping which is increasingly seen as a counterweight to NATO.

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Military drill would be held in the Ural mountains of Russia, and almost all SCO member countries will be part of it. The main aim of the exercise will be to enhance counter-terror cooperation among the eight member countries. In a first, arch rivals India and Pakistan will be part of this exercise, which will also be joined by China and several other countries. It will be for the first time since Independence that India and Pakistan will be part of a military exercise, though the armies of the two nations have worked together in U.N. peacekeeping missions.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

- The SCO was founded at a summit in Shanghai in 2001 by the Presidents of Russia, China, Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
- India and Pakistan were admitted as observers of the grouping in 2005. Both the countries were admitted as full members of the bloc last year.
- **India's membership was strongly pushed by Russia, while Pakistan's entry into the grouping was backed by China.** With expansion of the grouping, SCO now represents over 40% of humanity and nearly 20% of the global GDP.
- India feels that as an SCO member, it will be able to play a major role in addressing the threat of terrorism in the region. It is also keen on deepening its security-related cooperation with the SCO and its Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS), which specifically deals with issues relating to security and defence.

PEPPER IT WITH
 BIMSTEC, ASEAN, SAARC,
 Trans-Pacific Partnership, Act
 East Policy

Konark Sun Temple

Why in News?

A world-class tourist facilitation centre and an interpretation centre at Konark Sun Temple in Odisha were inaugurated recently on Utkal Divas.

The interpretation centre and the tourist facilitation centre at the Unesco World Heritage Site have been developed by Indian Oil Foundation.

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About Konark Temple

- It was built by King Narsimha Deva I of Ganga dynasty (1238-64 AD) and is dedicated to lord Surya/Sun god.
- It is directly and materially linked to Brahmanism and tantric belief systems.
- The Sun Temple is the culmination of Kalingan temple architecture, with all its defining elements in complete and perfect form.

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- The temple was conceived as a gigantic chariot of the Sun God, with 12 pairs of exquisitely ornamented wheels pulled by seven horses.
- Each wheel has a set of eight spokes and these spokes serve as sundials. The shadows made by these sundials give exact time of the day.
- The temple was also referred as black pagoda.
- The temple is protected under the National Framework of India by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act (1958) and its Rules (1959).
- Under the AMASR Act, a zone 100 metres outside the property and a further zone 200 metres outside the property constitute, respectively, prohibited and regulated zones for development or other similar activity that may have adverse effects on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

The Melakkadambur Shiva temple, built in the form of a chariot during the age of Kulottunga Chola I (1075-1120), is the earliest of this kind, and is still in a well preserved state. It is believed that this temple set the pace for the ratha (chariot) vimana temples in India.

Utkal Divas or Odisha Day is celebrated on 1 April every year in all over Odisha to commemorate the formation of the state as a separate unit on 1 April 1936.

Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act (1958) and its

PEPPER IT WITH

Chandrabhaga Mela, Odisha's golden triangle, Old Delhi beatification project, Elephanta cave temple, Ellora cave temple

Kalamkari Art

Why in News?

A kalamkari art museum has been inaugurated at Pedana, Krishna district (Andhra Pradesh). The museum has three galleries — wooden blocks, natural colours and history — which establish the connection with the Dutch and the British.

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About Kalamkari/Qalamkari Art

- Kalamkari means 'pen work'. It is nearly 3000 years old.
- Kalamkari is synonymous with two ancient Indian places i.e. Masulipatnam and Srikalahasti.
- The Masulipatnam style of Kalamkari has Persian influence and is intricate. Some common motifs used are trees, creepers, flowers and leaf designs.
- The Srikalahasti style of Kalamkari is influenced by Indian temples with paintings of epics and deities as the main subjects.
- The art includes both, printing and painting. The colors used in making these paintings are organic.

PEPPER IT WITH

Jadupatuas/Duaripatuas, Chintz, Sitz, Pintado, Karuppur style, Madhubani paintings, Patachitra, Warli paintings, Kalighat paintings, Cheriya scroll painting

Assam's Spring Festival

The two-day Assam Spring Festival was held recently at the Manas National Park. The aim of the event is to promote the local food and culture of the fringe villagers. It is an attempt to create a model of alternative livelihood through food, handloom and culture.

The festival has been organised, among others, by Indian Weavers' Association and the Swankar Mithinga Onsai Afat, an association of reformed poachers in Manas who are now engaged in wildlife conservation and preservation. The

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itinerary of the festival include village tours, exposition of local handicraft and handloom, cultural shows, local folk music and tasting of local cuisines and delicacies.

About Manas National Park

- The name 'Manas' is derived from the Hindu deity, **the snake goddess 'Manasa' and is also** shared with the Manas river that flows thorough the west of the park and is the main river within it. The Manas River also serves as an international border dividing India and Bhutan.
- Manas National park covers five districts of Assam and is a UNESCO Natural World Heritage site (1985), a Project Tiger Reserve (1973), an Elephant Reserve, rhino reserve and a Biosphere Reserve. It is also famous for the rare golden langur, the red panda and the wild Buffalo.
- The Manas-Beki system is the major river system flowing through the property and joining the Brahmaputra river further downstream. The area contained by the Manas-Beki system gets inundated during the monsoons but flooding does not last long due to the sloping relief.
- Two major biomes are represented in Manas - the grassland biome and the forest biome.
- Manas is the only landscape in the world where pristine Terai Grasslands are seen merging with the Bhabar grasslands interspersed with diverse habitats ascending to Semi-Evergreen forests and then to Bhutan Himalayas. The Biodiversity is very rich here. The last population of the Pygmy Hog survive in the wilds of Manas and nowhere else in the world.

PEPPER IT WITH

Bhogali festival, Tea Festival, Bohag Bihu, Kati Bihu, Magh Bihu, Kaziranga National Park, Nameri National Park, Bodoland Territorial Council, Game Sanctuary

11th World Hindi Conference

- The 11th World Hindi Conference or Vishwa Hindi Sammellan will be held in Mauritius on 18-20 August at Swami Vivekananda International Conference Center.
- It sees participation from Hindi scholars, writers and laureates from different parts of the world who contribute to the language. The previous conference was held in Bhopal in 2015.
- The logo of the conference is as the image of a ship struggling to keep sailing in the water and is similar to what the difficulties Hindi is facing today.
- Language and culture go hand in hand. If language is lost, culture is lost. The conference is thus being organised to ensure that the Indian staying abroad do not forget it.
- The first World Hindi Conference was held on 10-12 January, 1975 in Nagpur, India. Since then, 10 January is celebrated as world hindi day.

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National Culture Fund

In News

Cultural Ministry released data stating 34 projects successfully implemented under National Culture Fund Scheme.

National Culture Fund (NCF)

- The NCF was established as a funding mechanism distinct from the existing sources and patterns of funding for the arts and culture in India. It will enable institutions and individuals to support arts and culture directly as partners with its government.
- The NCF is managed and administered by a council to decide the policies and an Executive Committee – to actualize those policies.

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PEPPER IT WITH

Adopt a Heritage Project, Monument Mitras, Tangible & Intangible Heritage

- The Council is chaired by the Union Minister of Tourism & Culture and has a maximum strength of 24 including both the Chairman and Member Secretary.
- The Fund aims at inviting the participation of the corporate sector, non-government organizations, private/public sector as well as individuals in the task of promoting, protecting and preserving India's cultural heritage.
- NCF could accept projects relating to preparatory assistance, technical cooperation including studies of problems on heritage protection, provision of experts, supply of equipment, emergency assistance, training and support for promotional activities.

Tibet has launched a year-long **“Thank you India”** campaign to mark the 60th year of the arrival of the spiritual leader Dalai Lama to India.

WHY AN NCF?

- ✓ The heritage of a community is essentially its resource for growth - a threshold for a forward movement even if that is rather evolutionary in character. It not only constitutes the spiritual resource of the community as also of individuals it is an essential source of an identity deeply rooted in the past.
- ✓ But in India today, as indeed throughout the world, the pace of change poses unprecedented threats to the continuity of that cultural heritage. Aware of these threats, societies everywhere are expressing a growing demand for cultural preservation and renewal.
- ✓ The NCF as constituted is expected to remedy this situation and to innovate effectively on the Indian culture scene. The importance of this effort is not only in what it brings in materially but in the vision, that it carries, that it will be the society that will, to a large extent, provide for, financially, for its cultural aspirations.

Krishna Circuit

In News

The PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) and the Indian Yoga Association (IYA) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) recently to facilitate interaction and cooperation between the two organisations to promote wellness, spiritual and cultural tourism in the Krishna Circuit.

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Facts

- Ramayana Circuit and Krishna Circuit are among the thirteen thematic circuits identified for development under Swadesh Darshan Scheme.
- Ministry has initially identified fifteen destinations for development under the Ramayana Circuit theme namely Ayodhya, Nandigram, Shringverpur & Chitrakoot (Uttar Pradesh), Sitamarhi, Buxar & Darbhanga (Bihar), Chitrakoot (Madhya Pradesh), Mahendragiri (Odisha), Jagdalpur (Chattisgarh), Nashik & Nagpur (Maharashtra), Bhadrachalam (Telangana), Hampi (Karnataka) and Rameshwaram (Tamil Nadu).
- Similarly, twelve destinations have been identified for development under Krishna circuit namely Dwarka (Gujarat), Nathdwara, Jaipur & Sikar (Rajasthan), Kurukshetra (Haryana), Mathura, Vrindavan, Gokul, Barsana, Nandgaon & Govardhan (Uttar Pradesh) and Puri (Odisha).

PEPPER IT WITH PRASAD Scheme, Chardham Project

Swadesh Darshan Scheme

- Ministry of Tourism (MoT) launched the Swadesh Darshan Scheme (Central Sector Scheme)- for integrated development of theme based tourist circuits in the country
- A National Steering Committee (NSC) will be constituted with Minister in charge of Ministry Of Tourism as Chairman, to steer the mission objectives and vision of the scheme.
- The scheme is 100% centrally funded for the project components undertaken for public funding.

Bagh-E-Naya Quila

In News

In another instance of modern technology coming to the aid of medieval heritage, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) will be using Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) to map the contours of the area around the Bagh-e-Naya Qila excavated garden inside the Golconda Fort.

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About Bagh-e-Naya Qila

- This medieval garden of Outb Shahi rule (1518-1687) in Hyderabad is the only one of its kind still intact.
- The Naya Qila garden inside Golconda Fort was built by successive rulers of the Deccan and is one of the few symmetrical gardens extant.
- ASI excavated the area after diverting the water flow, it discovered water channels, settlement tanks, walkways, fountains, gravity pumps, and a host of other garden relics.

Ground penetrating radar (GPR) technology

Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) technology uses a high frequency radio signal that is transmitted into the ground and reflected signals are returned to the receiver and stored on digital media. The computer measures the time taken for a pulse to travel to and from the target which indicates its depth and location. The reflected signals are interpreted by the system and displayed on the unit's LCD panel.

GPR uses electromagnetic radiation in the microwave frequency for imaging sub-surface area.

Silappathikaram

In News

A rare panel with ritualistic dancers of Nayak period and an inscribed Chola pillar were found by local residents, near Pattalappettai, a tiny hamlet near Kiliyur in Trichy district.

The ancient Tamil literature Silappathikaram has rich references to such ritualistic performances among rural folks. This type of embracing pairs dramatizing a ritualistic cultural performance is a rare occurrence and in that this particular panel gains much importance and is a significant find.

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Dance Panel Details

1. The dance panel is depicted on a stone slab that measures 1.21 meters in length and 33 centimetre in height.
2. Four pairs of well-dressed male and female dancers where the women are clad in silk dress holding some object in one of their hands are visibly engaged in a ritualistic dance.
3. The female deity with a flower in the right hand side seen between the first two pairs and the pot depicted between the last two pairs denote the ritualistic nature of the dance
4. Three pairs are shown hugging each other while the last pair is dancing keeping a distance between. All of them are decked with ornaments and different head gears. M Rajamanikkar Centre for Historical Research, Trichy, said the study at the site has yielded a rare dance panel of Nayak period and an inscribed pillar of Chola period.

Pillars Details

The round pillar that has an inscribed base measures 1.44 m. in length and its circumference is 66 cm. It is shaped into a tall Linga at a later period. The base is almost a square and has a Tamil inscription of Chola paleography with a few grantha letters used in between. Though seven lines are visible, the last two are not readable.

The inscription records that a certain Rejaladeviyar Sativinjei queen of Iladevayan had gifted that pillar. A sketchy figure of a Mugalinga is seen sculpted on the first half of the pillar, suggesting its conversion into a Linga.

World Heritage Site

In news

As many as 6 monuments/historical sites in the North Eastern states have been identified tentatively for listing under World Heritage Site.

Details of monuments/sites identified/placed under tentative list for listing under world heritage in the north eastern states are given below:

1. Apatani Cultural Landscape, Arunachal Pradesh
2. Iconic Saree Weaving Clusters of India
3. Moidams – the Mound – Burial System of the Ahom Dynasty, Assam
4. Namdapha National Park, Arunachal Pradesh
5. River Island of Majuli in midstream of Brahmaputra River in Assam
6. Thembang Fortified Village, Arunachal Pradesh

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18th April is celebrated Worldwide as World Heritage Day to create awareness about Heritage among communities.

Theme(2018): Heritage for Generations.

World Heritage List

Under the title of "World Heritage List," a list of properties forming part of the cultural heritage and natural heritage, as defined in Article of this Convention, which it considers as having outstanding universal value in terms of such criteria as it shall have established. An updated list shall be distributed at least every two years.

To be included on the World Heritage List, sites must be of outstanding universal value and meet at least one out of ten selection criteria. World Heritage sites were selected on the basis of six cultural and four natural criteria. With the adoption of the revised Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, only one set of ten criteria exists.

Infrastructure conglomerate GMR and tobacco company ITC Ltd are currently bidding to adopt the Taj Mahal under the 'Adopt a Heritage' project.

List of World Heritage in Danger

It is a list of the property appearing in the World Heritage List for the conservation of which major operations are necessary and for which assistance has been requested under this Convention.

The list may include only such property forming part of the cultural and natural heritage as is threatened by serious and specific dangers, such as the threat of disappearance caused by accelerated deterioration, large-scale public or private projects or rapid urban or tourist development projects; the outbreak or the threat of an armed conflict; calamities and cataclysms; serious fires, earthquakes, landslides; volcanic eruptions; changes in water level, floods and tidal waves.

PEPPER IT WITH Oversight and Vision Committee, Monument Mitras, Naldurg fort

Walmiki and Malhar

In News

Hyderabad University linguist discovers Walmiki and Malhar two new language spoken by small communities in Odisha.

Facts

- Malhar, is spoken in a remote and isolated hamlet which is almost 165 km from Bhubaneswar. The community consists of about 75 speakers including children. It falls in the North Dravidian subgroup of the Dravidian family of languages and has close affinities with the other North Dravidian languages.
- Walmiki is spoken in district Koraput of Odisha and on the bordering districts of Andhra Pradesh. Walmiki is an isolate language i.e. it does not belong to a family of languages like Nihali spoken in MP and Maharashtra border and Burushaski

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PEPPER IT WITH SPPEL, CIIL

spoken in Kashmir. The name of the language is also interesting and indicative because the speech community claims descent from the great Indian saint-poet Valmiki.

- **UNESCO's *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*** is intended to raise awareness about language endangerment and the need to safeguard the world's linguistic diversity among policy-makers, speaker communities and the general public, and to be a tool to monitor the status of endangered languages and the trends in linguistic diversity at the global level.
- According to UNESCO, any language spoken by less than 10,000 persons is considered "**potentially endangered**". Not every potentially endangered language necessarily faces the threat of immediate extinction.
- The Census of India has classified languages in the categories of Scheduled and Non-Scheduled languages. There are 22 Scheduled and 100 Non-Scheduled languages.

Concept Clearing Assignment

1. Critically analyze the importance of PIL in Indian Judiciary. Highlight the demerits of PIL in the present scenario of country.
2. **Elucidate the impact of “fake news” in the socio-political** aspect of India in the light of Guidelines for Accreditation of Journalists. Suggest administrative steps to check the misinformation spread by fake news.
3. Bring out the salient features of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna. Present a detailed analysis with review on the completion of 17 years of PMGSY.
4. Briefly define the office of CJI. Write down the process of appointment and impeachment of a CJI.
5. Supreme Court recently asked a commission to study the possibility of betting on cricket. Cricket in India has been blighted by spot fixing scandals involving promises of huge sums of money by cartels involved in illegal betting. Do you think there is any possibility of legalising betting in India?
6. Reserve Bank of India has repeatedly cautioned users, holders and traders of virtual currencies, regarding various risks associated in dealing with these types of currencies. Is there any possibility of introducing a central bank digital currency in India?
7. Government of India constituted National Culture Fund under the ministry of culture. What are the guiding principles of NCF? Also discuss why these type of initiatives are necessary in India?
8. Kalamkari is an ancient style of painting which was very popular in India. What were the effects of Muslim rule on India art? Do you think Indian art became more splendid due to the advent of Muslims in India?
9. Government recently constituted a committee to look into the matter of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs). What steps would you suggest for the promotion of UAVs in India? Does India really need to invest in R&D?
10. Election Commission (EC) of India affidavit to amend the law to prevent candidates contesting from multiple constituencies embraces idea of one seat-one candidate. Comment on this suggested provision in light of ECI & Law commission recommendations.
11. In Indian recent years we have seen cyberattacks in various ways. The whole world is becoming digital and so cyberattacks are also becoming common. What protections can a developing country get from these attacks? What steps can government take in this regard?
12. Unlawful use of force by a state against any state sounds perilously close to an act of war. Do you agree?
13. Inflation targeting has become widely adopted by developed economies. Inflation targets were introduced to help reduce inflation expectations and help avoid the periods of high inflation which destabilised economies in the past. What are the pros and cons of Inflation Targeting in a country like India?
14. In a country where there are more than 100 crops, Minimum Support Price is given only to a quarter of crops. Poor farmers are systematically abused by the system. Suggest some administrative measures with regard to the problems of MSP?
15. There is an unprecedented increase in tax litigations in India. Tax disputes calls for an immediate amendment to the dispute resolution mechanism. Do you think the current law mechanism is not effective in expediting resolution of tax litigation?

P.T Oriented Questions

1. Consider the following statements about No-Confidence motion and choose the correct one/s
 1. It is a constitutional right of a member of the House
 2. Speaker has the power to disallow this motion to be tabledCode:
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
2. Consider the following statements and choose the correct one/s
 1. The concept of a special category state was introduced by the 5th Finance Commission
 2. Currently 11 states have got special category statusCode:
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. Consider the following statements about IMPRINT (Impacting Research Innovation and Technology) and choose the correct one/s
 1. It is a MHRD supported Pan-IIT + IISc joint initiative.
 2. Under this grants upto One crore will be provided to innovative ideas.Code:
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
4. Consider the following about Mahanadi river and choose the correct one/s
 1. It rises in the hills of southeastern Madhya Pradesh.
 2. Hirakund Dam is built on this river.Code:
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
5. Consider the following statements on silk cultivation and choose the incorrect one/s
 1. Central Silk Board is apex body for silk industry development under Ministry of Agriculture **and Farmer's Welfare**
 2. Tasar is a unique variety of Silk due to its Golden SheenCode:
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
6. Consider the following about Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana and choose the correct one/s
 1. It is a scheme to incentivise employers for employment generation
 2. All establishments registered with Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) can avail benefits under this scheme.Code:
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
7. Consider the following about Know India Program and choose the correct one/s
 1. It is a program to develop inter-state relations
 2. Under this program states will pair up and do activities to know each other wellCode:
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
8. LaQshya Programme is for which among the following
 - (a) Students
 - (b) Government Servants
 - (c) Judiciary
 - (d) Pregnant Women
9. Consider the following about ICC (International Criminal Court) and choose the correct one/s
 1. It is a body attached to United Nation.
 2. It has the power to prosecute individuals for war crimes, genocide and crime against humanity.
 3. Philippines has recently withdrawn from ICC.Code:
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 1 and 3
(c) 2 and 3 (d) Only 2
10. Namaste Shalom, is a regular monthly magazine on bilateral relations between
 - (a) India and Myanmar
 - (b) India and Israel
 - (c) India and Bhutan
 - (d) China and Nepal
11. Consider the following about International Competition network and choose the correct one/s

1. It is the only international body devoted exclusively to competition law enforcement
2. It helps to build consensus and convergence towards sound competition policy principles across the global antitrust community
- Code:
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2 (d) None
12. World Happiness Report is published by
(a) UN Sustainable Development Solution Network
(b) WHO
(c) OECD
(d) IMF
13. Brazzaville Declaration is related to
(a) Wetlands
(b) Peatlands
(c) Ozone layer
(d) Afforestation
14. Consider the following about India based Neutrino Observatory and choose the correct one/s
1. It will be build in Hingoli (Maharashtra)
2. It is a joint project of Department of Atomic Agency and ISRO
- Code:
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2 (d) None
15. Consider the following statements about ISA (International Solar Alliance) and choose the correct one/s
1. It was launched on the sideline of COP21.
2. Its membership is open to countries between tropic of cancer and tropic of Capricorn.
- Code:
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2 (d) None
16. Consider the following about Newton Bhabha Fund and choose the correct one/s.
1. It is provided by the British council
2. Commonwealth nation members are eligible to get assistance by this fund
- Code:
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2 (d) None
17. Naitwar Mori Hydro Electric Project is to be built on which river
(a) Yamuna
(b) Tons
(c) Lohit
(d) Subansiri
18. Lamitye is military exercise between
(a) India and Thailand
(b) India and Singapore
(c) India and Nepal
(d) India and Seychelles
19. Consider the following statements about Mutual Agreement procedure (MAP)
1. Settling an issue under MAP requires closing all tax proceedings
2. MAP is provided for all transfer pricing disputes
3. Outcome of MAP is not binding on taxpayers
- Which of the statements given above are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above
20. Consider the following statements about Loktak Lake and choose the correct one/s
1. It is the largest freshwater lake of India
2. It is famous for Phumdis
3. It is listed under Montreux record
- Code:
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 1 and 3
(c) 2 and 3 (d) All the above
21. Consider the following about Majuli Islands and choose the correct one/s
1. It is the largest river island of the world
2. It is surrounded by Brahmaputra river on north and west.
- Code:
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2
(d) None of the above
22. Cartosat satellites provides which among the following function
(a) Weather Forecasting
(b) Remote Sensing
(c) Space Exploration
(d) Seismic Activity

23. Consider the following about ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relation) and choose the correct one/s
1. It is an autonomous organisation under MEA
 2. It was founded by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad
- Code:
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2 (d) None
24. Consider the following about SFIO (Serious Fraud Investigation Office) and choose the correct one/s
1. It is under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Finance
 2. It acts as a coordinating agency to CBI and Income Tax Department
- Code:
- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2
(d) None
25. Consider the following about Prithvi missiles and choose the correct one/s
1. They are surface to surface long range missiles
 2. They are capable of carrying nuclear warhead
- Code:
- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2
(d) None
26. Consider the following statements about Price Deficiency Payment (PDP) scheme and choose the correct ones
1. It was suggested by Niti Ayog
 2. Under the PDP scheme farmers are compensated for all types of crops
 3. To avail the benefits of PDP scheme farmers need to register with the Agriculture produce market committee
- Code:
- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) All of the above
27. Which among the following is/are correct?
1. The income tax earned on Non-Resident Ordinary (NRO) account is exempted from income tax
 2. NRO account can be a joint account
 3. The income tax earned on Non-Resident External (NRO) account is not exempted from income tax
- Code:
- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) Only 2
(c) Only 3
(d) Only 1
28. Consider the following statements and choose the correct ones
1. India imposed anti-dumping duty on phosphorous pentoxide
 2. It is used as a powerful dehydrating agent
 3. It is also used in chemical industry
- Code:
- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above
29. Consider the following statements and choose the correct ones
1. Oxytocin is a hormone and neurotransmitter
 2. It is produced in the brain
 3. Oxytocin is very useful in livestock industry
- Code:
- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above
30. Consider the following statements and choose the correct one/ones
1. Sun temple-Konark was built by the Cholas
 2. The sun temple is the culmination of the Kalingan temple architecture
 3. Sun temple is linked to tantric belief system
- Code:
- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) Only 3
(d) All of the above