



# CURRENT CONNECT AUGUST - 18

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GS-I	Culture-Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.	Indian history, significant events, personalities, issues and the Freedom Struggle	Post independence issues, National boundary and disputes	Indian society features, issues, globalization and diversity	Women - issues and developments	Urbanization - problems and remedies	Distribution of industries and resources - India and world	Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc	Culture-Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.		
GS-II	Indian constitution- Amendments, acts and bills.	Legislative, executive and judicial processes.	Constitutional, non-constitutional, judicial, quasi judicial, administrative and other types of bodies.	Federal structure and local bodies, Their powers and functions.	Government policies and various governance issues like transparency, accountability and - governance	Committees and schemes.	Non-government issues, self help groups and role of civil society	Vulnerable sections of our society and social sector issues and initiatives.	International Relation-India and other countries, various Indian and international agreements, effects of other countries on India and International Institutions.	International agreements and works of various international bodies, awards, effort by individuals and misc.	Challenges to Internal security, Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate, Cyber security, money laundering and its prevention.
GS-III	Various measures to boost Indian economy- planning, policies, management.	Government budgeting and issues related to budget.	Agriculture, animal husbandry and transport	Food security- measures to boost food security and food processing issues related to land- land reforms	Industries and infrastructure their growth and investment model	Space and technology, IT space, robotics and computer.	Disease, biotechnology and human welfare	Innovations, intellectual property, Awards, POI and other import art aspects of S&T	Environment and disaster: government initiatives, various judgment, pollution, degradation and conservation efforts		
GS-IV	Ethical issues related to family, society, education, Corruption etc.	Ethics in public and private administration	Issues	Related laws and rules	Governance/- Governance	Ethics in international issues	Personalities and their teachings	Other import art topics			
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## CSC and Ayushman Bharat

### In News

**MeitY's** Common Service Center (CSC) and National Health Accounts (NHA) have signed a MoU to implement the Ayushman Bharat scheme through three-lakh CSCs across the country.

Ayushman Bharat is National Health Protection Scheme which will cover over 10 crore poor vulnerable families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) providing coverage of up to 5 lakh rupees (per family per year) for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.

### Benefits to Citizens through CSC Centres under MoU

- MoH&FW and CSC SPV came forward to implement the scheme through CSC centres.
- Beneficiary can visit the nearby CSCs across India to get the benefit of this scheme. CSCs will help a beneficiary to identify his name in the MoH&FW database and his entitlement for the scheme.
- CSCs will help beneficiary to scan/upload his KYC documents for verification of his/her identity and claim his/her entitlement.
- Beneficiary will have facility to print his/her Ayushman Scheme card through CSC which will be his base source claim.
- The 3 lakh CSCs in 2.5 lakh Panchayat would be a great help in the implementation of the scheme.

### What are CSCs?

CSCs are the access points for delivery of essential public utility services, social welfare schemes, healthcare, financial, education and agriculture services, apart from host of B2C services to citizens in rural and remote areas of the country. It is a pan-India network catering to regional, geographic, linguistic and cultural diversity of the country, thus **enabling the Government's mandate of a socially, financially and digitally inclusive society.**

CSC scheme is also one of the approved projects under the Integrated Mission Mode Projects of the National eGovernance Plan, FASTag, Bharat BillPay, SHC, PMAY etc.

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**Ayushman Bharat Targets**  
 The target beneficiaries of the proposed scheme will be more than 10 crore families belonging to poor and vulnerable population based on SECC database.

Under Ayushman Bharat, it is proposed to set up Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission Council (AB-NHPMC) at apex level Chaired by Union Health and Family Welfare Minister

Lok Sabha recently passed the Homoeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Bill 2018. It seeks to replace the Central Council of Homoeopathy (CCH) with a board of governors and is aimed at bringing accountability and quality in homeopathy education system.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 VLE, Stree Swabhimani, National Common Minimum Programme, AB-NHPM

## 123rd Constitutional Amendment Bill

### In News

In the monsoon session of the Parliament, both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha passed the 123rd Constitutional Amendment Bill regarding reservations for OBCs (Other Backward Communities).

### Background

The Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill, 2017 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in 2017. It seeks to grant the National Commission on Backward Classes (NCBC) constitutional status, at par with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.

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### Key Highlights

- Constitutional status to NCBC:** The NCBC is a body set up under the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993. It has the power to examine complaints regarding inclusion or exclusion of groups within the list of backward classes, and advise the central government in this regard. The Bill seeks to establish the NCBC under the Constitution, and provide it the authority to examine complaints and welfare measures regarding socially and educationally backward classes.

- NCBC can advise the Central government on which castes to include or exclude from the OBC category.
    - It can also monitor the provisions of the reservation system like the number of seats in PSU jobs given to OBCs or admission cut-offs in colleges.
    - With this Bill, the NCBC that looks into complaints and distress of backward classes has now been added to the Constitution under Article 338B.
  - Note that this Bill was introduced alongside the National Commission for Backward Classes (Repeal) Bill, 2017 that seeks to repeal the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993.
  - Backward classes:** The Constitution Amendment Bill states that the President may specify the socially and educationally backward classes in the various states and union territories. He may do this in consultation with the Governor of the concerned state. However, a law of Parliament will be required if the list of backward classes is to be amended.
  - Composition and service conditions:** Under the Constitution Amendment Bill, the NCBC will comprise of five members appointed by the President. Their tenure and conditions of service will also be decided by the President through rules.
  - Functions:** Under the Constitution Amendment Bill, the duties of the NCBC will include:

    1. Investigating and monitoring how safeguards provided to the backward classes under the Constitution and other laws are being implemented,
    2. Inquiring into specific complaints regarding violation of rights,
    3. Advising and making recommendations on socio-economic development of such classes. The central and state governments will be required to consult with the NCBC on all major policy matters affecting the socially and educationally backward classes.
- PEPPER IT WITH  
Art 338B, NCSC, NCST,  
Mandal Commission, Art  
14-18, Socially and  
Educationally Backward  
Classes
- Reports:** The NCBC will be required to present annual reports to the President on working of the safeguards for backward classes. These reports will be tabled in Parliament and in the state legislative assemblies of the concerned states.
  - Powers of a civil court:** Under the Constitution Amendment Bill, the NCBC will have the powers of a civil court while investigating or inquiring into any complaints. These powers include: (i) summoning people and examining them on oath, (ii) requiring production of any document or public record, and (iii) receiving evidence.

### Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha

#### About

The Deputy Chairman is a constitutional position created under *Article 89 of the Constitution*. The office becomes vacant either by resignation or removal from office or when **the Rajya Sabha member's term gets over**.

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#### Election of Deputy Chairman

1. The election of a Deputy Chairman shall be held on such date as the Chairman may fix and the Secretary-General shall send to every member notice of this date.

2. At any time before noon on the day- preceding the date so fixed, any member may give notice in writing addressed to the Secretary-General of a motion that another member be chosen as the Deputy Chairman of the Council, and the notice shall be seconded by a third member and shall be accompanied by a statement by the member whose name is proposed in the notice that he is willing to serve as Deputy Chairman if elected: *Provided that a member shall not propose or second more than one motion.*
3. A member in whose name a motion stands in the list of business may, when called, move the motion or not move the motion, in which case he shall confine himself to a mere statement to that effect.
4. The motions which have been moved and duly seconded shall be put one by one in the order in which they have been moved and decided if necessary by division. If any motion is carried, the person presiding shall, without putting later motions, declare that the member proposed in the motion which has been carried, has been chosen as the Deputy Chairman of the Council.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Removal of CJI, Money Bill, Joint sitting, No-Confidence Motion, Leader of Opposition

According to the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of Rajya Sabha, in the absence of a deputy chairman, the vice-president may nominate from among the members of the council a panel of not more than six vice-chairperson to preside over the council.

Article 89: The Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the council of States  
1. The Vice President of India shall be ex officio Chairman of the Council of States  
2. The council of States shall, as soon as may be, choose a member of the council to be Deputy an thereof and, as often as the office of Deputy Chairman becomes vacant, the council shall choose another member to be Deputy Chairman.

Powers of Deputy Chairman

The Deputy Chairman or other member competent to preside over a sitting of the Council under the Constitution or these rules shall, when so presiding, have the same power as the Chairman when presiding over the Council and all references to the Chairman in these rules shall in these circumstances be deemed to be, references to any such person so presiding.

Panel to look into issues in jails

In News

The SC commented to constitute a committee under the chairmanship of its retired judge to look into problems in jails, including overcrowding, and suggest measures to deal with it.

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About Committee

- The committee for prison reforms would also have two or three officials from the government of India to look into the issues, including that of women prisoners languishing in jails across the country.
- The Committee will look into Indian prisons facing three long-standing structural constraints: overcrowding due to a high percentage of *undertrials* in the prison population, understaffing and underfunding.
- The Committee will delve into the sub-human living conditions, poor hygiene, violent clashes between the inmates and jail authorities and violation of human rights to prisoners.
- Besides, while 33% of the total requirement of prison officials still lies vacant, almost 36% of vacancy for supervising officers is still unfulfilled. In the absence of adequate prison staff, overcrowding of prisons leads to rampant violence and other criminal activities inside the jails.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Vidyadanam Scheme, Bangkok Rules, AN Mulla Committee, Modernization of Prisons

### NCRB-Prison Statistics India 2015

1. The occupancy rate at the all India level at the end of 2015 was 114.4 per cent.
2. At 276.7 per cent, Dadra & Nagar Haveli is reported to have most overcrowded prisons, followed by Chhattisgarh (233.9 per cent), Delhi (226.9 per cent), Meghalaya (177.9 per cent) and Uttar Pradesh (168.8 per cent).
3. Three States from the Northeast also had a high proportion of undertrials: Meghalaya (91.4 per cent), Manipur (81.9 per cent) and Nagaland (79.6 per cent).
4. On an average, four died every day in 2015. In 2015, a total of 1,584 prisoners died in jails. 1,469 of these were natural deaths and the remaining 115 were attributed to unnatural causes.
5. As per NCRB 2015 data there are 4,19,623 persons in jail in India, of which 17,834 (about 4.3%) are women.
6. Over hundred people were awarded death penalty (101) in 2015. Forty-nine were commuted to life sentence.

### Suggestions in past

1. Lord Macaulay, while presenting a note to the Legislative Council in India on December 21, 1835, for the first time, pointed out the terrible inhumane conditions **prevalent in Indian prisons and he termed it as a “shocking to humanity”**.
2. On 2nd January, 1836, a Prison Discipline Committee was constituted by Lord William Bentinck to improve discipline in prisons.
3. The Law Commission in its 239th Report has suggested further more steps such as that there should be standardized design of the Criminal Court complex as prescribed which shall inter-alia have separate rooms for witnesses, under trial prisoners, police personnel, advocates and prosecutors. Further, all communication of bail orders should be sent to the Jail through e-mail and sufficient number of washrooms and filtered drinking water facilities should be constructed in these complexes.
4. The Human Rights Law Network has suggested several prisons reforms viz., providing educational facilities to prisoners, introduction of Non-discriminatory provisions for minority groups in jail, computerization of prisons, social audit etc.
5. The All India Committee Jail Reforms also known as AN Mulla Committee suggested that better transport arrangement should be made for taking undertrial to courts, proper record of release of prisoners on leave and special leave should be properly maintained, district level review committee to appraise under trial cases and recommend their release on bail, facilities of food, clothing, medicare, etc. to undertrials at par with convicts.
6. The Ministry of Women and Child Development has come up with its report titled **‘Women in Prisons’** which aims to build an understanding of the various entitlements of women in prisons, the various issues faced by them and possible methods for resolution of the same. The report contains a comprehensive list of 134 recommendations for improving the lives of women under incarceration, addressing a wide range of issues pertaining to pregnancy and childbirth in prison, mental health, legal aid, reintegration in society and their caregiving responsibilities among others. Various changes in the National Model Prison Manual 2016 have also been suggested to bring it in line with international standards and norms.

### Other Recommendations

- ✓ Construction of additional prisons to reduce overcrowding;
- ✓ Repair and renovation of existing prisons and construction of additional barracks;
- ✓ Improvement in sanitation and water supply;
- ✓ Living accommodation for prison personnel.
- ✓ Prisons (Entry 4, State List II) are a state subject under the Constitution which is one of the reasons why it is neglected by the States and are starved of funds. Thus, Prisons and allied institutions should be deleted from state list and inserted in the Concurrent List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.
- ✓ Women jails must be set up in every state. Further, the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders



(Bangkok Rules) should be implemented.

- ✓ The number of open prisons should be increased, presently there are 63 open prisons in India, these prisons unlike all other prisons allows a prisoner more freedom and dignity by allowing them to roam in and around the jail vicinity, taking up employment outside jail and also have less security personnel.

## Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill

### In News

The Lok Sabha recently passed Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill, 2017 to **extend the facility of 'proxy voting'** to overseas Indians.

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### Issue faced by Overseas Elector

The said rules (Registration of Electors Rules, 1960) stipulate the physical presence of the overseas electors in the respective polling station in India on the day of polling. This causes hardship to the overseas electors in exercising their franchise by being present in India on the day of polling.

### Background

The Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill, 2017 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Ministry of Law and Justice. The Bill seeks to amend the Representation of People Act, 1950 and the Representation of People Act, 1951 to allow for proxy voting and to make certain provisions of the Acts gender- neutral.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Registration of Electors  
Rules, 1960, Section 126  
(election silence), Electoral  
Reforms by ECI

### Key Highlights

1. The Amendment Bill seeks to enable Non-Resident Indians to cast votes through their proxies in the constituency.
2. The 1950 Act deals with allocation of seats and delimitation of constituencies for elections, qualifications of voters, and preparation of electoral rolls. The 1951 Act provides for the conduct of elections and offences and disputes related to elections. Section 20A of the 1950 Act recognized the right of an NRI to have her name entered in the electoral roll. However, the right to vote was exercisable only in person.
3. In order to allow proxy voting by NRIs, Section 60 of the 1951 Act is proposed to be amended by the Bill, by adding sub-section (ba) in Section 60. Section 60 enables the Election Commission to frame rules to allow special procedure for voting by special class of persons.
4. The new sub-section seeks to enable the EC to frame rules to make special procedure for any of the persons as is referred to in section 20A of the 1950-Act to give his vote either in person or by proxy and not in any other manner at any election in a constituency where poll is taken.
5. The Bill also seeks to include gender-neutral references by substituting word **“wife”** with **“spouse”**.

### What is proxy voting?

Voting in an Indian election can be done in three ways — in person, by post and through a proxy. Under proxy voting, a registered elector can delegate his voting power to a representative. This was introduced in 2003 for elections to the Lok Sabha and Assemblies, but on a limited scale. Only a **“classified service voter”** — a definition that includes members of the armed forces, BSF, CRPF, CISF, General Engineering Reserve Force and Border Road Organisation — is allowed to nominate a proxy to cast vote on his behalf in his absence. A classified service voter can also vote by postal ballot.

### Nomination of proxies

It is not clear yet how NRIs will nominate their proxies. The Election Commission will lay down the procedure by amending the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, after the Bill is

passed by both Houses of Parliament.

Committee Recommendations

A 12-member committee was set up in 2014 to study mainly three options — voting by post, voting at an Indian mission abroad and online voting.

The committee ruled out online polling as this could compromise **“secrecy of voting”**. It also ruled out the proposal to vote at Indian missions abroad as they do not have the resources to organise polling. In 2015, the panel finally recommended that NRIs be given **the “additional alternative options of e-postal ballot and proxy voting”, apart from casting their vote in person**. E-postal ballot is a ballot paper that is sent to the voter electronically and returned to the returning officer by post. The Law Ministry accepted the recommendation on proxy voting and the Cabinet passed the proposal to amend the law recently.

**Triple talaq bill**

In News

The govt recently added safeguards in the form of three amendments to The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017 in order to impose checks on misuse of 3 year jail term to husband.

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The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017	Official Amendments to the 2017 Bill
Effect of Declaration	
The Bill states that Triple Talaq (including talaq-e-biddat or any other similar form of talaq pronounced by a Muslim man resulting in instant and irrevocable divorce), including in spoken, written or electronic form, is void (i.e. not enforceable in law) and illegal.	No change
Offence	
The Bill makes declaration of Triple Talaq a cognizable and non-bailable offence. (A cognizable offence is one where a police officer may arrest a person without a warrant.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The offence will be cognizable only if information relating to the offence is given by: (i) the married woman (against whom Triple Talaq has been declared), or (ii) any person related to her by blood or marriage.</li> <li>The Magistrate may grant bail to the accused after hearing the woman (against whom Triple Talaq has been pronounced), and if he is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for granting bail.</li> <li>The offence may be compounded by the Magistrate upon the request of the woman (against whom Triple Talaq has been declared). Compounding refers to the procedure where the two sides agree to stop legal proceedings, and settle the dispute. The terms and conditions of the compounding will be as determined by the Magistrate</li> </ul>
Punishment	

A husband declaring Triple Talaq can be imprisoned for up to three years along with a fine.	No change
<b>Maintenance and Custody</b>	
A Muslim woman, against whom Triple Talaq has been declared, can seek: (i) subsistence allowance for herself and her dependent children; and (ii) custody of her minor children, from her husband. The amount of allowance and terms of custody will be decided by a Magistrate	No change

### Significance

1. The proposed law would only be applicable on instant triple talaq or 'talaq-e-biddat' and it would give power to victim to approach a magistrate seeking "subsistence allowance" for her and minor children.
2. A woman can also seek the custody of her minor children from the magistrate who will take a final call on the issue.
3. Under a compoundable offence, both parties have the liberty of withdrawing the case.

Delhi will be the first police force in the country to have an *all-women SWAT team*. 36 women constables from north-eastern states have been inducted into the squad.

## The Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2018

### In News

The Lok Sabha has recently passed the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2018.

### Background

The Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2018 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Ministry for Law and Justice. It seeks to amend the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996. The Act contains provisions to deal with domestic and international arbitration, and defines the law for conducting conciliation proceedings.

### Key Highlights

1. Arbitration Council of India: The Bill seeks to establish an independent body called the Arbitration Council of India (ACI) for the promotion of arbitration, mediation, conciliation and other alternative dispute redressal mechanisms. Its functions include: (i) framing policies for grading arbitral institutions and accrediting arbitrators, (ii) making policies for the establishment, operation and maintenance of uniform professional standards for all alternate dispute redressal matters, and (iii) maintaining a depository of arbitral awards (judgments) made in India and abroad.
2. Composition of the ACI: The ACI will consist of a Chairperson who is either: (i) a Judge of the Supreme Court; or (ii) a Judge of a High Court; or (iii) Chief Justice of a High Court; or (iv) an eminent person with expert knowledge in conduct of arbitration. Other members will include an eminent arbitration practitioner, an academician with experience in arbitration, and government appointees.
3. Appointment of arbitrators: Under the 1996 Act, parties were free to appoint arbitrators. In case of disagreement on an appointment, the parties could request the Supreme Court, or the concerned High Court, or any person or institution designated by such Court, to appoint an arbitrator.
4. Relaxation of time limits: Under the 1996 Act, arbitral tribunals are required to make their award within a period of 12 months for all arbitration proceedings. The Bill proposed to remove this time restriction for international commercial arbitrations.

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PEPPER IT WITH  
ADR, UNCITRAL,  
Litigation, PIL,

5. Completion of written submissions: Currently, there is no time limit to file written submissions before an arbitral tribunal. The Bill requires that the written claim and the defence to the claim in an arbitration proceeding, should be completed within six months of the appointment of the arbitrators.
6. Confidentiality of proceedings: The Bill provides that all details of arbitration proceedings will be kept confidential except for the details of the arbitral award in certain circumstances. Disclosure of the arbitral award will only be made where it is necessary for implementing or enforcing the award.
7. Applicability of Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 2015: The Bill clarifies that the 2015 Act shall only apply to arbitral proceedings which started on or after October 23, 2015.

### Arbitration

Arbitration is an ADR (alternative dispute resolution) method where the disputing parties involved presents their disagreement to one arbitrator or a panel of private, independent and qualified third party “arbitrators.” **The arbitrator(s) determine the outcome of the case.**

### Mediation

Mediation is an ADR method where a neutral and impartial third party, the mediator, facilitates dialogue in a structured multi-stage process to help parties reach a conclusive and mutually satisfactory agreement.

### Conciliation

Conciliation is a type of ADR where the settlement is made out of court. There is no involvement of the court in the whole arbitral proceedings. The dispute is settled by a neutral third party, who is the conciliator. The conciliation process is voluntary as it is on the mutual discretion of the parties to choose conciliation as a method of resolving their dispute with the assistance of the conciliator, also the proposal is not binding upon the parties.

Mediation and conciliation both are an informal process. Whereas, arbitration is more formal as compared to them.

### Why is ADR preferred more than litigation?

ADR has gained a rapid popularity over the years. The business disputes are resolved more by the arbitration process than the litigation. The reason for acceptance of arbitration over litigation is due to many reasons.

1. Arbitration is more cost-effective. The cost of the process involved in the dispute is much less than the cost involved in the litigation.
2. The process is more informal as compared to the litigation process. There are no lengthy procedures as that is present in the court.
3. ADR process is flexible. The parties can withdraw their case anytime they want which, is not possible in the court process.

## Appellate Tribunal for Electricity

- Appellate Tribunal for Electricity (APTEL) is a statutory body constituted for the purpose of hearing cases against the orders of the Regulatory Commissions and the Adjudicating officer. This Tribunal has been established by the Ministry of Power.
- By virtue of Section 110 of The Electricity Act, 2003, an APTEL having jurisdiction throughout India has been set up to hear appeals or original petitions against the orders of the Adjudicating officer or The Central Regulatory Commission or State Regulatory Commission or Joint Commission constituted.
- The Tribunal is conferred with original jurisdiction to hear petitions under Section 121 of the Act and issue directions

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Third Party Survey Report on Station Cleanliness has been released.

Top A1 category Stations: Jodhpur, Jaipur, Tirupati.

Top A category stations: Marwar, Phulera, Warangal.

Top Zonal Railways Rankings: North Western Railway, South Central Railway, East Coast Railway, South East Central Railway.

to any Appropriate Commission for the performance of its statutory functions.

- The Tribunal shall consist of a Chairperson and three other Members. Every Bench constituted by the Chairperson shall consist of at least one Judicial Member and one Technical Member.

## Mahadayi verdict

### In News

The tribunal recently decided that Goa will allot 13.42 TMC of water from the **Mahadayi river basin to Karnataka, as against the latter's demand for 36.55 TMC.**

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### Issue Background

Karnataka seeks to divert water from tributaries of the river through the Kalasa-Bhanduri Nala project towards the parched Malaprabha river basin (a tributary of River Krishna), which is being strongly opposed by Goa. This has led to a long-drawn **farmers' agitation in Karnataka.**

### Bone of contentions

- ❖ **Goa's main contention is that Karnataka cannot divert water from an already-deficit Mahadayi basin to the Malaprabha river basin: 115 tmcft was available in the basin, while the requirement for the three States is 145 tmcft.** It has said that any attempt to divert water from one river basin to the other will cause irreparable environmental damage. Karnataka claims 199.6 tmcft is available and the river is water-surplus. Of this, Karnataka wants 36 tmcft.
- ❖ Since the Mahadayi River is largely rain-fed between months of June through October, any diversion of waters by Karnataka would adversely affect the water needs of people of Goa. Given erratic monsoon patterns over the years, people of the region have been demanding drinking water and water to meet irrigation needs for agriculture.

### Mahadayi River Fact

- The Mahadayi River also known as Mandovi River, is described as the lifeline of the Indian state of Goa.
- The 80-km-long river rises from the forests of the Western Ghats at Khanapur taluka, Belagavi district in northern Karnataka.
- Malaprabha and the Mahadayi run parallel to each other for some distance but flow in the opposite directions.
- Madei and Valpoi are major streams that feed the Mahadayi River.

### Final Verdict

1. Ending a 50-year-old dispute, the tribunal allowed Karnataka access to 13.4 tmcft of water for its consumptive use (5.4 tmcft) and power generation (8.02 tmcft). Also, while the state sought 7.5tmcft of water for drinking, it was allotted 3.9tmcft.
2. The share of Goa was determined at 24 tmcft with the Tribunal allowing it for the **state's municipal water needs, irrigation water requirements** and industrial water demands.
3. Maharashtra got the lowest share of 1.33 tmcft for meeting its in-basin needs with respect to five projects.
4. **The verdict also directs the central government to constitute a body called 'Mahadayi Water Management Authority' to implement the report and final decision.**

PEPPER IT WITH  
Cauvery verdict, Indus Water Treaty, India-Bangladesh Treaty, Pancheshwar Multi-Purpose Project

## Uttarakhand HC on cows

### In News

The Uttarakhand high court recently said it would act as the legal guardian of cows in the state, and issued 31 directions to the state government.

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### Parens patriae

It is stated that *parens patriae* is the inherent power and authority of a State to provide protection to the person and property of persons *non Sui juris*, such as minor, insane, and incompetent persons. Today, this term is used to designate the State referring to its sovereign power of guardianship over persons under disability. It is a Latin term meaning **'parent of his or her country'**.

PEPPER IT WITH  
non Sui juris, Powers of  
HC, Removal &  
Appointment of HC Judge,  
Writ Jurisdiction

### Cases highlighting use of Parens Patriae

- In the case of *State of Kerala v. N.M. Thomas*, it has been categorically held that the **Court is also 'State' within the meaning of Article 12** of the Constitution of India. Thus, Court can also act as *Parens Patriae* so as to meet the ends of justice.
- **The Supreme Court has stated that "in the case of an incompetent person who is unable to take a decision whether to withdraw life support or not, it is the Court alone, as *parens patriae*, which ultimately must take this decision, though, no doubt, the views of the near relatives, next friend and doctors must be given due weight"**.

There are two tests in relation to this doctrine.

- 'Best Interests' Test**
- 'Substituted Judgment' Test**

### Doctrine of Parens Patriae and the Constitution of India

1. The Directive Principles as well as the Fundamental Rights enshrined in our Constitution make it imperative for the State to secure to all its citizens the rights guaranteed by the Constitution and where the citizens are not in a position to assert these rights, the State comes into picture and protects the rights of such Citizens.
2. The Preamble to our Constitution read with Article 38, Article 39 and Article 39A makes it amply clear that the State must take up these responsibilities. The State must strive to promote social, economic and political welfare of the people.

### Verdict Highlights

- ✓ **Remarking that "it is the responsibility of the state under Article 48A to protect and improve the environment and safeguarding of forests and wildlife of the country", the court directed all civic bodies in the state to construct "gaushalas/gausadans" or shelters/homes for housing cows and other stray cattle within one year.**
- ✓ The court asked the state government to register cases against people who abandon cows and owners of cattle found on the streets, roads and public places under the Indian Penal Code, Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 and Uttarakhand Protection of Cow Progeny Act, 2007.
- ✓ It directed the state government to set up a special squad to be headed by an officer not below the rank of deputy superintendent of police in both the Kumaon and Garhwal regions with one veterinary doctor to protect cows.
- ✓ The court banned slaughter of cows, bulls, bullocks, heifers or calves in the state and ruled that no person shall sell beef or beef products in any form in Uttarakhand.

### Significance

This doctrine makes sure that the voiceless, abandoned and disabled people and living entities are ultimately the responsibility of the State and the State must take all the steps to ensure their well-being when they are not in a position to do so. The values enshrined in our Constitution are a testimony of the standard of governance and welfare that the people and living entities expect from their representatives to maintain and carry out respectively.

## CJI Launches Applications to Facilitate Litigants and Lawyers

### In News

The Supreme Court recently took a giant step towards digitisation of courts across the country by launching three applications to facilitate e-filing of cases, making digital payments and service of judicial notices through smartphones to the litigants.

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Applications launched: e-Filing, e-Pay, and National Service and Tracking of Electronic Processes (NSTEP).

- The eFiling application is online portal for registration of lawyers and litigants. Through the application, one can file cases from any part of India to any court on registration. Portfolio management of cases of litigants and lawyers is provided on the portal and one can get updates from time to time about filed cases
- NSTEP is another innovative application launched as part of the eCourts Project, which is a collaboration between Case Information Software (CIS), Web portal and Mobile Application. It is a transparent and secure system for transmission of process from one location to another, and shall address delays in process serving particularly for processes beyond jurisdiction.
- The ePay application is a unified portal wherein facility to pay online court fees is provided. The platform is user friendly which can be used with very little self-help. ePayment is a safe and secure, quick and easy way to pay court fees.

PEPPER IT WITH  
PIL, RTI, Judicial Review,  
Delegated Legislation,  
ROFR, Federalism

### Significance

The eFiling application will facilitate efficient administration of Judicial System, as it will ease pressure on filing counters and will speed up work flow processing. Data entry will be more accurate which will help to take data driven decisions in court administration. It will start building digital repositories which will auto generate paper books and can be quickly transmitted to Higher Courts which will reduce delays. The application will help reduce touch point of litigants, will result in more productivity of staff members and can send documents for service to other locations or mail addresses which will be relatively easy and the requirement of scanning the record can be done away with.

### eCourts Mission Mode Project

1. The eCourts Mission Mode Project (Phase I 2010-15; Phase II 2015-19) is a national eGovernance project for ICT enablement of district and subordinate courts of the country.
2. It is being implemented by the Government of India with a total outlay of 1670 crores (Phase II).
3. The major objectives of the Project are to make whole judicial system ICT enabled by putting in place adequate and modern hardware and connectivity; automation of workflow management in all courts; electronic movement of records from taluka/trial to appeal courts; installation of video conferencing (VC) facility and recording of witness through Video Conferencing; connecting all courts in the country to the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) through WAN.

## Odisha approves proposal for legislative council

### In News

The Odisha government has approved a proposal for setting up a legislative council in the state. A resolution will be brought in the monsoon session of the Odisha legislative Assembly.

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### Proposal

- The proposed Vidhan Parishad will have 49 members (one-third size of the assembly); while it will have an additional financial burden of Rs 35 crore every year towards salary and establishment expenses of members.

- It was also suggested that having a second chamber would allow for more debate and sharing of work between the Houses.

Opposition to proposal

Opposition to the idea of Legislative Councils is centred on three broad arguments. One, they can be used to park leaders who have not been able to win an election. Two, they can be used to delay progressive legislation. Three, they would strain state finances.

PEPPER IT WITH  
PMMMMNMTT, Permanent  
Residency Status scheme,  
GSPD, ToneTag

Legislative Councils and its importance

- ❖ India has a bicameral system i.e., two Houses of Parliament. At the state level, the equivalent of the Lok Sabha is the Vidhan Sabha or Legislative Assembly; that of the Rajya Sabha is the Vidhan Parishad or Legislative Council.
- ❖ Like Rajya Sabha the LC is a continuing chamber; it is a permanent body and is not subjected to dissolution.
- ❖ 1/3 of its member retires on expiration of every second year.
- ❖ A second House of legislature is considered important for two reasons: one, to act as a check on hasty actions by the popularly elected House and, two, to ensure that individuals who might not be cut out for the rough-and-tumble of direct elections too are able to contribute to the legislative process.

Constitution on Legislative Councils

- Under Article 169 of the constitution, Parliament may by law create or abolish the second chamber in a state if the Legislative Assembly of that state passes a resolution to that effect by a special majority.
- As per Article 171 clause (1) of the Indian Constitution, the total number of members in the Legislative Council of a state shall not exceed one third of the total number of the members in the Legislative Assembly of that state.

Composition of LC:

- 1/3 are elected by members of local bodies in state like municipalities, district boards, etc.
- 1/12 are elected by graduates of 3 years standing and residing within state
- 1/12 are elected by teachers of three years standing in the state not lower in standards than secondary school
- 1/3 are elected by members of legislative assembly of the state from among persons who are not the member of assembly
- The remainder are nominated by the governor from among person of special knowledge

The Odisha government has proposed to come up with a single revenue act by merging various revenue laws enacted at different point in times. In this regard, the state government has prepared the draft '**Odisha Land and Revenue Code**'.

Report on Wrongful Prosecution

In News

The Law Commission of India submitted its Report No. 277 titled '**Wrongful Prosecution (Miscarriage of Justice): Legal Remedies**' to the Government of India recently.

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Issue

The High Court of Delhi in the case of *Babloo Chauhan vs. State Govt. of NCT of Delhi* expressed grave concern about the state of innocent persons being wrongfully prosecuted, incarcerated for crimes that they did not commit. The Court highlighted the urgent need for a legislative framework for provided relief and rehabilitation to victims of wrongful prosecution, incarceration and asked the Law Commission to undertake a comprehensive examination of the aforesaid issued and make a recommendation thereon to the Government of India.

What are Wrongful Prosecutions?

Law Commission defines Wrongful Prosecutions as the cases of miscarriage of justice

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where procedural misconducts- police or prosecutorial, malicious or negligent – resulted in wrongful prosecution of an innocent person, who was ultimately acquitted, with a court making an observation or recording a finding to that effect. The underlying sentiment being that such person should not have been subjected to these proceedings in first place

Internationally, the issue of wrongful prosecution, incarceration, and conviction of innocent persons is identified as ‘miscarriage of justice’ that takes place after a person has been wrongfully convicted but is later found to be factually innocent basis a new fact / proof coming to light.

International Scenario

The Article 14 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (‘ICCPR’, ratified by India) also creates an obligation on the State parties to enact a law to compensate the victims of such miscarriage of justice.

Highlights of report

1. The Report enumerates the core principles of the recommended framework- defining ‘wrongful prosecution’.
2. The Commission has recommended enactment of a specific legal provision for redressal of cases of wrongful prosecution – to provide relief to the victims of wrongful prosecution in terms of monetary and non-monetary compensation (such as counselling, mental health services, vocational / employment skills development etc.) within a statutory framework.
3. This report looks at the issue from the context of Indian Criminal Justice system and recommends ‘wrongful prosecution’ to be the standards of miscarriage of justice, as against ‘wrongful conviction’ and ‘wrongful incarceration’.
4. A draft Bill is also annexed with the Report as the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill, 2018.

Remedies suggested by Law Commission

- ✓ Special Court: Emphasising on the need for speedy adjudication of claims brought by those wrongfully prosecuted, the Commission recommends designation of special courts in each district for adjudicating upon the claims of compensation for wrongful prosecution.
- ✓ Cause of action: The report advocates for the ambit of wrongful prosecution to include malicious prosecution and prosecution instituted without good faith. It explains that malicious prosecution would mean the malicious institution of unsuccessful proceedings against the applicant, without reasonable or probable cause.
- ✓ Compensation: The report vouches for pecuniary as well as non-pecuniary assistance, in order to effectively effectuate the rehabilitation of victims of wrongful prosecution into the society.
- ✓ Who can apply: A claim for compensation can be brought by any person who was wrongfully prosecuted and suffered damage to body, mind, reputation or property. Further, it can be brought by the person, his agent, or by his heirs or legal representative.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Call for Code initiative,  
UAPA, Criminal Law  
Amendment Bill 2018

Way Forward

The criminal justice system, as it stands, does not provide for an effective response from the state to the victims of miscarriage of justice resulting in the wrongful prosecutions. There is no statutory or legal scheme articulating the State response to this issue. There is a pressing need for an explicit law for compensating the victims who have suffered miscarriage of justice at the hands of the State machinery.

Cabinet clears Bill to restore the provisions of SC/ST Act

In News

The amendment passed by both Houses of Parliament in the just-concluded monsoon session, reinstating a controversial clause allowing immediate arrests in complaints filed under the SC/ST Act, has been

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challenged in the Supreme Court.

Issues

- The two judges had held that public servants accused under the Atrocities Act should not be arrested without written permission of the appointing authority. In the case of other accused of committing atrocities on Dalits and tribal, both the justices held that arrests should be subject to the written permission of the senior superintendent of police.
- A preliminary inquiry should be conducted before the FIR was registered to check if the case fell within the ambit of the Act, and whether it was frivolous or motivated.
- The court order triggered fiery protests from Dalits who saw it as a dilution of the anti-atrocity law. Their statements were followed by a countrywide bandh.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Pradhan Mantri Mudra  
Yojana, Pradhan Mantri  
Rojgar Srijan Yojana, QCI

Proposed Amendments after Section 18 which were withdrawn

1. It stipulates that for the purposes of the Act, **“preliminary enquiry shall not** be required for registration of a First Information Report against any person.
2. It stipulates that the arrest of a person accused of having committed an offence under the Act would not require any approval.
3. It says that the provisions of Section 438 of the Code of Criminal Procedure — which deals with anticipatory bail — shall not apply to a case under this Act, **“notwithstanding any judgment or order of any Court.**

According to Census 2011, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes form 25.2 per cent of India's population. SCs comprise 16.6 per cent of population while STs make 8.6 per cent of nearly 1.3 billion people of the country. Himachal Pradesh saw the highest crimes against SC women as a share of total crimes against SCs

The scope of Section 18 of the SC/ST Act read with Section 438 of the Code is such that it creates a specific bar in the grant of anticipatory bail. When an offence is registered against a person under the provisions of the SC/ST Act, no Court shall entertain application for anticipatory bail, unless it prima facie finds that such an offence is not made out.

Way Forward

This would adversely affect the very objective of the Act to prevent commission of atrocities against members of SC and ST and be severely detrimental especially in heinous offences like sexual exploitation of SC/ST women including rape, gangrape, acid attacks and murder etc.

The dilution of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act can erode the faith of the historically marginalised communities in the criminal justice system in the country.

**NOTA in Rajya Sabha**

In News

The Supreme Court struck down the four-year-old none of the above' option in Rajya Sabha polls, saying Nota defeated the fairness in indirect elections, destroyed democratic values and served "the Satan of defection and corruption".

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What is NOTA?

"NOTA" or "none of the above" is a ballot option provided in the elections to Indian voters. Through NOTA, a citizen has the right to not vote for any candidate contesting the elections. NOTA is viewed as a right to register a negative opinion.

The NOTA option was first used in the 2013 assembly elections held in four states -- Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh and the Union Territory, Delhi. More than 15 lakh people exercised the option in the state polls.

### Why SC discarded NOTA?

- NOTA in indirect elections, such as in the Rajya Sabha, would lead to horse-trading, corruption and use of extra constitutional methods to defeat a party candidate.
- The NOTA option is meant only for universal adult suffrage and direct elections and not polls held by the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote as done in the Rajya Sabha.
- The system of NOTA makes the system of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote nugatory and otiose.
- The ECI cannot sanction the use of NOTA by way of mere circulars, which have the effect of overriding the provisions of Article 80(4) — proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote, the provisions of Representation of People Act, 1951 and the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961.

Before NOTA came into existence, there was Section 49 (O) of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, under which a voter could enter his electoral serial number in Form 17A and cast a negative vote. The presiding officer would then put a remark in the form and get it signed by the voter. This was done to prevent fraud or misuse of votes.

## Data localization

### In News

U.S. technology giants plan to intensify lobbying efforts against stringent Indian data localisation requirements, which they say will undermine their growth ambitions in India.

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### Issue

U.S trade groups, representing companies such as Amazon, American Express and **Microsoft, have opposed India’s push to store data locally.** That push comes amid rising global efforts to protect user data but is one that could hit planned investments by the firms in the Indian market, where the companies currently have limited data storage.

### What is Data localization?

Data localization is the act of storing data on any device that is physically present within the borders of a specific country where the data was generated. Free flow of digital data, especially data which could impact government operations or operations in a region, is restricted by some governments. Many attempt to protect and promote security across borders, and therefore encourage data localization.

PEPPER IT WITH  
US-India Strategic Partnership  
Forum, Puttaswamy ruling,  
Protectionism

While some arguments support data localization, some feel that misguided policies on data localization could cause serious harmful consequences to citizens and economies alike.

### Why Indian Government is in favour of Data Localisation?

- Greater use of digital platforms in India for shopping or social networking have made it a lucrative market for technology companies, but a rising number of data breaches have pushed Indian government to develop strong data protection rules.
- In fact, post the recent Cambridge Analytica and Facebook data breach controversy, the Indian government is considering asking all global firms to ensure that data of Indians are stored locally.

The Google has agreed to abide by the data localisation mandate of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to all payment service providers. Google has however sought an extension of a couple of months to meet with the mandate that comes into force from October 2018. RBI mandated that all payment data of Indians have to be stored in servers located only in India **in order to provide “unfettered access” to regulators.**

- Stricter localisation norms would help India get easier access to data when conducting investigations, but critics say it could lead to increased government demands for data access.
- Minimal or deregulated governance on critical data, due to absence of localisation requirements, **could be detrimental to India's national security** as data would be outside the purview of existing data protection legislation. The ineffectiveness of Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs) in this realm aggravates such government fears.
- The Srikrishna Committee on data privacy proposed a draft law, recommending **restrictions on data flows and proposing that all "critical personal data" should be processed only within the country.**

**"Splinternet"**, or the idea that the internet, long imagined as a global online commons, is becoming a maze of national or regional and often conflicting rules. The internet is at risk of breaking up into national and regional networks.

Adverse impact

1. **Restricting data flowing across borders would risk a country's global competitiveness** and economic growth. Such a move would also not necessarily ensure data protection.
2. As per US-India Business Council **"There is also the risk of a backlash from its (India's) IT export markets**, which could result in reciprocal changes that could undermine India as the preferred outsourcing destination.
3. Free flow of data across borders —with a focus on user privacy and security —will encourage start-ups to innovate and expand globally and encourage global companies to contribute to India's digital economy which will be adversely affected after this move.
4. Opening gateway to cyber-balkanisation and splinternet.

What is cyber-balkanisation? At a very high level it can be characterised as an end to the idea of a globally united internet promoting collaboration, innovation and information sharing. Whether the fault lines come via competing technologies, commerce, politics, nationalism, religion, or other interests, the result is the same: a divided, distrustful and destabilised world.

Way Ahead

Data localisation mandates raise at least two constitutional questions. First, does data localisation restrict the fundamental right of all **Indian citizens to "practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business"**? This freedom is not absolute, and the state may restrict it in the interests of the general public. Second, **the fundamental right to privacy includes an individual's right to make her own decisions** about what happens with her data. This right, like other fundamental rights, is not absolute, and the state is allowed to frame restrictions subject to certain conditions. The guarantee of the Puttaswamy ruling, however, is that any restriction by the state on the fundamental right to privacy must fulfill a three-part test – it must be in furtherance of a legitimate state aim, backed by law, and be necessary and proportionate. Whether data localisation mandates fulfill this three-part test may also well be a question that courts are asked to decide.

**Feminist Foreign Policy-Sweden**

In News

Sweden released a handbook of its "feminist foreign policy" recently for rights groups and foreign governments, showcasing lessons from the Scandinavian nation's flagship approach to promoting women's rights globally.

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Feminist Foreign Policy

- **Sweden's feminist foreign policy is a working method** and a perspective that takes three Rs as its starting point and is based on a fourth R.
- The implication is that the Swedish Foreign Service, in all its parts, shall strive to

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**strengthen all women’s and girls’ Rights, Representation and Resources, based on the Reality in which they live.**

- **Sweden’s feminist foreign policy is** a transformative agenda that aims to change structures and enhance the visibility of women and girls as actors.
- The manual published is derived from four years of work to place gender equality at the heart of the country's international agenda.
- As per policy discrimination and **gender inequality in all life’s stages** and contexts shall be counteracted.

- The State government in matrilineal Meghalaya has made it mandatory for married people to produce marriage certificates for all official purposes.
- The government has also decided to deny government jobs and benefits to men who have abandoned their families and are not providing for maintenance of their children.
- The step has been taken in view of increasing cases of broken marriages and women being forced to fend for themselves and their children. The abandonment of families by men leads to a spike in school dropouts and juvenile crimes.

Important Issues highlighted

1. Do they have the same rights – to education, work, marriage, divorce and inheritance?
2. Are women represented where decisions that affect them are made – in parliaments, on boards and in legal systems?
3. Is gender equality taken into consideration when resources are allocated – in central government budgets or development projects?
4. The most controversial issue is also the most basic: the right to decide over your own body, sexuality and reproduction. There are still many women who are unable to decide whom to marry, whom to have sex with or when to have children. This is absurd, and should be relegated to the annals of history.

- Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.
- FGM is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. It reflects deep-rooted inequality between the sexes, and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women. It is nearly always carried out on minors and is a violation of the rights of children. The practice also violates a person's rights to health, security and physical integrity, the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and the right to life when the procedure results in death.
- More than 200 million girls and women alive today have been cut in 30 countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Policy objectives

1. Full enjoyment of human rights
2. Freedom from physical, psychological and sexual violence
3. Participation in preventing and resolving conflicts, and post-conflict peace building
4. Political participation and influence in all areas of society
5. Economic rights and empowerment
6. Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)

The Supreme Court recently questioned the practice of female genital mutilation of minor girls in the Dawoodi Bohra Muslim community, saying it violates the bodily "integrity" of a girl child.

International frameworks that form the basis for

**Sweden’s Feminist Foreign Policy**

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women).
- The declarations and actions plans from the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the agreements from the conferences on financing for development.

- The EU action plan for gender equality and women’s empowerment in EU’s external relations (2016–2020).

PEPPER IT WITH  
CEDAW, CARA, Kudumbashree

Way Forward

**Gender equality is not a separate women’s issue** – it benefits everyone. Research shows that gender equal societies enjoy better health, stronger economic growth and higher security. It also shows that gender equality contributes to peace and that peace negotiations in which women have taken part have a better chance of being sustainable.

With its **feminist foreign policy, Sweden’s feminist government has taken another step** towards realising its vision of a gender equal world.

Slave Trade and its Abolition

In News

The United Nations’ International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition is observed every year on August 23 to remind people of the tragedy of the transatlantic slave trade, the largest deportation in history.

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The day is commemorated to pay tribute to all those who fought for freedom and worked hard to abolish the slave trade and slavery throughout the world.

BACKGROUND OF THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION

- The night of August 22-23, 1791, in Saint-Domingue, in what is Haiti and the Dominican Republic today, saw the beginning of the uprising that would play a crucial role in the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade
- Men and women sold into slavery, revolted against the slave system to obtain freedom and independence for Haiti
- The rebellion weakened the Caribbean colonial system, sparking an uprising that led to abolishing slavery and giving the island its independence.
- It marked the beginning of the destruction of the slavery system, the slave trade, and colonialism.
- The large and well-organized uprising, better known as the Haitian Revolution, lasted 13 years and ended with the independent nation of Haiti.

PEPPER IT WITH  
The Slave Route Project,  
International Decade for  
People of African Descent  
(2015-2024)

Initiative by UNESCO

- ❖ To honour the history of the slave trade and its abolition, UNESCO in 2017, added to its World Heritage List the Mbanza Kongo, Vestiges of the Capital of the former Kingdom of Kongo (Angola) and the Valongo Wharf Archaeological Site (Brazil), as an acknowledgement of their "outstanding universal value."
- ❖ UNESCO also started an initiative in 1994 known as the 'Slave Route' project to contribute to a better understanding of the causes, forms of operation, issues and consequences of slavery in the world.

Gandhi in South Africa

1. Gandhi formed the Natal Indian Congress in 1894. This organisation led non-violent protests against the oppressive treatment of the white people towards the native Africans and Indians.
2. Phoenix Farm is considered as the birthplace of Satyagraha. However, it was at the Tolstoy Farm, Gandhi’s second camp in South Africa, where Satyagraha was moulded into a weapon of protest.
3. In September 1906, Gandhi organised the first Satyagraha campaign to protest against the Transvaal Asiatic ordinance that was constituted against the local Indians. Again in June 1907, he held Satyagraha against the Black Act.
4. He also fought against the nullification of non-Christian marriages in 1913.

In 1888, nearly 85 years later, Brazil became the last nation in America to abolish slavery.

## Iris Authentication and Aadhaar-based transactions

### In News

Axis Bank is the first bank in India to introduce iris biometric authentication feature on micro ATMs for Aadhaar-based transactions.

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### Key Facts

- Micro ATMs completely eliminate the requirement of debit cards, passwords, PINs, user IDs, etc. and empower consumers to avail banking services using only their Aadhaar numbers and biometrics (iris scan/fingerprint scan).
- The Bank has deployed highly secure iris powered micro ATM tablets which are STQC certified & UIDAI compliant registered devices with completely integrated iris sensors.
- Iris scan technology is completely contactless and provides up to 98.2% authentication success rate and offers an edge over other prevalent biometric modes.
- This service, which requires a customer to scan their iris on a tablet, will boost the **Bank's Financial Inclusion efforts by making Aadhaar authentication process hassle-free** and offering easier access to digital banking for consumers especially in the rural parts of the country.

## O-SMART

### In News

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for the **umbrella scheme "Ocean Services, Technology, Observations, Resources Modelling and Science (O-SMART)"**, for implementation during the period from 2017-18 to 2019-20 at an overall cost of Rs.1623 crore.

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### About Scheme

- The scheme encompasses a total of 16 sub-projects addressing ocean development activities such as Services, Technology, Resources, Observations and Science.
- The technologies being developed under this Scheme will help in harnessing the vast ocean resources of both living and non-living resources from the seas around India.
- This scheme will also facilitate installation of Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion Plant (OTEC) in Kavaratti and six Desalination Plants in Lakshadweep.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Poly-Metallic Nodule,  
ISBA, Antarctic Treaty  
System, CCAMLR

### Benefits

1. The services under this O-SMART will provide economic benefits to a number of user communities in the coastal areas, namely fisheries as this will help in reducing the search time for fishermen resulting savings in the fuel cost.
2. Currently, five lakhs fishermen community are receiving this information daily through mobile which includes allocation of fish potential and local weather conditions in the coastal waters. This will help in reducing the search time for fishermen resulting savings in the fuel cost.
3. Implementation of O-SMART will help in addressing issues relating to Sustainable Development Goal-14, which aims to conserve use of oceans, marine resources for sustainable development. This scheme (O-SMART) also provide necessary scientific and technological background required for implementation of various aspects of Blue Economy.
4. The State of Art Early Warning Systems established under the O-SMART Scheme will help in effectively dealing with ocean disasters like Tsunami, storm surges.
5. The scheme play a pivotal role in the development activities over dozen sectors, working in the marine environment including the coastal states of India, contributing significantly to the GDP.

## Project Navlekha

### Background

Google announced during the fourth edition of 'Google for India' event, the Project Navlekha claims to bring offline content online in just a few clicks.

### About Project

- Navlekhā, a Google initiative, helps you easily make offline content fully editable and publish online without expert digital knowledge. Available soon starting with Hindi publications, express your interest for your free publication website to grow your online presence.
- Navlekha in Sanskrit means **“a new way to write.”**
- The project aims to bring 135,000 local language publishers online by making web hosting smooth and simple.

## Lakhwar Multipurpose Project

### In News

The Centre has signed MOU with Uttarakhand, UP, HP, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi for Construction of Lakhwar Multipurpose Project on Yamuna near Dehradun.

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### Key Highlights of Project

- The scheme envisages construction of 204 m high concrete dam on river Yamuna near Lohari village. The Multipurpose scheme also envisages construction of Vyasi HEP (2x60 MW) (Hathiari power station) downstream of Lakhwar HEP.
- This storage will provide irrigation for 33,780 hectares land and availability of 78.83 MCM water for domestic, drinking and industrial use in the six basin states.
- The project will also generate 300 MW of power. The project is to be executed by M/s Uttarakhand Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited (UJVNL).
- Centre will Fund 90% of Irrigation Component, the Six States to the Fund Remaining 10% and Share Water Proportionately.
- The project which will benefit all six states in terms of river flow, drinking water, irrigation and electricity Says, 34 projects under Clean Ganga Mission being taken up on river Yamuna to also ensure pollution free Yamuna

PEPPER IT WITH  
Renukaji Multi-Purpose  
project, Polavaram Project,  
Jal Marg Vikas Project

## Pitch to MOVE

### In News

NITI Aayog launched **“Pitch to MOVE”** recently.

### About Pitch to MOVE

- It is a mobility pitch competition that aims to provide budding entrepreneurs of India a unique opportunity to pitch their business ideas to a distinguished jury. Start-ups working in the various fields of mobility can pitch their ideas to industry leaders and Venture Capitalists for raising investments.
- **“Pitch to MOVE” is organised by NITI Aayog in collaboration with Invest India and Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM).**
- Pitch to MOVE aims to identify and incentivise the start-ups, which will help the Government realize its vision of Shared, Connected, Intermodal and Environment Friendly Mobility for India. The objective is to harness the latest disruption for generating employment and growth in our country.
- The Start-ups can be from the domain of Public Mobility, Electric Vehicles, Shared Transport, Last Mile Connectivity, Passenger Transportation, Battery Technology, Automotive IoT, Freight & Logistics, Powertrain/Drivetrain, Experiential, Travel, Mobility Infrastructure and Automotive Electronics etc.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Great Firewall, internet  
sovereignty, IMPRINT 2



## Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana

### In News

Odisha government has launched Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana, a health for all scheme, on the occasion of the 72nd Independence Day.

### Key Highlights

- BSKY promises insurance of up to Rs 5 lakh per eligible family and Rs 7 lakh for treatment of female members.
- The scheme claims to cover 70 lakh families, reportedly nine lakh more than what would be covered by the Centre's National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS)
- All beneficiaries currently enrolled under the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY), as well as other low-income families, are covered under the BSKY.
- Under this scheme, state health department will offer candidates with Health Smart Cards.

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PEPPER IT WITH  
PMKSY, Ayushman  
Bharat, Janani Suraksha  
Yojana, NPHCE

### Challenges

1. Odisha proposes to form a Trust to implement the scheme, which will reimburse the hospitalisation cost and will not pay premiums to insurance companies. The other advantage is that the Trust will incur less administrative expenditure.
2. Another uphill task for the Trust is to improve the governance structure. Riddled with weak IT system and poor administration, the uptake of the ongoing health insurance programmes is far from satisfactory.
3. The financial implication of such a humongous scheme needs deliberation. The current resource absorption for RSBY, BKKY and OSTF is not hefty. The claims ratio for RSBY is 65-68 per cent. This is unlikely to rise significantly, unless architectural correction is made.
4. There are large inter-district variations in the RSBY utilisation and the uptake is low for BKKY. Moreover, the Odisha State Treatment Fund has several procedural challenges, which, increases the predicament of patients.

## Kanyashree scheme

### In News

On the fifth Kanyashree Day, West Bengal Chief Minister decided to do away with any ceiling on the family income as a condition for getting the Kanyashree grant.

### About Scheme

1. Kanyashree Prakalpa seeks to improve the status and wellbeing of girls, specifically those from socio-economically disadvantaged families through Conditional Cash Transfers by:
2. Incentivizing them to continue in education for a longer period of time, and complete secondary or higher secondary education, or equivalent in technical or vocational streams.
3. Disincentivising marriage till at least the age of 18, the legal age of marriage.
4. The schemes benefits are therefore paid directly to bank accounts in the **girls'** names, leaving the decision of utilization of the money in their hands.
5. The scheme also works to enhance the social power and self-esteem of girls through a targeted behaviour change communication strategy.
6. It received the United Nations Public Service Award in 2017.
7. **This initiative led to a "drastic reduction in child marriage, increase in female education**

Maharshi Badrayan Vyas Samman is conferred once a year on the Independence Day in recognition of substantial contribution in the field of Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Pali, Prakrit, Classical Oriya, Classical Kannada, Classical Telugu and Classical Malayalam.

**and female empowerment.”**

- 8. While Kanyashrees Annual Scholarship of Rs. 750/- is for girls who are between the ages of 13 and 18 years, the one-time grant of Rs. 25,000/- is for girls who are between the ages of 18 and 19. This is for unmarried girls only.
- 9. Previously girls who belong to families with annual family income not more than Rs 1.20 lakh is entitled to get the benefits. Now this is scrapped and all girls are eligible.

- ✓ The Life Insurance Corporation has settled three claims of Rythu Bima, the group life insurance scheme introduced by the Telangana government for pattadar farmers in the age group of 18-59 years, on the first day of its implementation.
- ✓ It was initiated with an objective to provide financial relief and security to the family members/dependants of deceased farmers (pattadars) in case of insured farmers' death.
- ✓ The scheme covers about 28 lakh farmers in the age group of 18-59 years. The State Government gave the premium amount of ₹636 crore to the LIC.

**Mukhya Mantri-Yuva Nestham**

- Andhra Pradesh government has launched ‘Mukhya Mantri-Yuva Nestham’- Unemployment Pension Scheme.
- A scheme through which an allowance of Rs 1000 per month will be provided to unemployed youth in the state.
- About 12 lakh youths in the age group of 22-35 years will get the benefit of the scheme. The registration for the scheme will start mid-August.
- All such candidates who are currently paying Provident Fund will not be eligible for this scheme.
- The government will not only provide financial help to the unemployed youth but also provide training and help them develop their skills.
- The scheme will be extended to all those eligible even if there are more than one beneficiary in a family.
- The data of unemployed youth in the state will be made available for industries and companies searching for young talent.
- The money will be credited directly into the bank accounts through biometric authentication.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Sukanya Samridhi  
Account, SABLA, Ladli  
Laxmi Yojana

**Startup India’s Academia Alliance Programme**

In News

Startup India launched the Startup Academia Alliance programme to fulfill the Government of India’s mission to promote the spirit of entrepreneurship in the country.

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About

- The Startup Academia Alliance aims to reduce the gap between scientific research and its industrial applications in order to increase the efficacy of these technologies and to widen their impact.
- The Alliance strives to create lasting connections between the stakeholders of the startup ecosystem and implement the third pillar on which the Startup India Action Plan is based - Industry Academia Partnerships and Incubation.
- The first phase of Startup Academia

FIEO

It is apex and largest trade promotion organisation in India. It was jointly established in 1965 by Ministry of Commerce and private trade and industry. It Provides the crucial interface between international trading community of India & the Central and State gov, financial institutions, ports, railways, surface transport and all engaged in export trade facilitation.

Alliance was kickstarted through partnering with Regional Centre for Biotechnology, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), Council on Energy, Environment and Water, and TERI School of Advanced Studies.

- The applications for Startup Academia Alliance were hosted on the Startup India Hub, a one-stop destination for startups to apply for opportunities such as incubator and accelerator programmes.
- Renowned scholars from fields including renewable energy, biotechnology, healthcare and life sciences were taken on board to provide mentorship and guidance to the startups working in relevant areas.

- ITC-HS Codes or better known as Indian Trade Clarification based on Harmonized System of Coding was adopted in India for import-export operations. Indian custom uses an eight digit ITC-HS Codes to suit the national trade requirements.
- Any changes or formulation or addition of new codes in ITC-HS Codes are carried out by DGFT (Directorate General of Foreign Trade).

### Mobile App Niryat Mitra

- ❖ Commerce & Industry Ministry launched Mobile App Niryat Mitra.
- ❖ The app developed by the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO).
- ❖ It provides wide range of information required to undertake international trade right from the policy provisions for export and import, applicable GST rate, available export incentives, tariff, preferential tariff, market access requirements – SPS and TBT measures.
- ❖ The app works internally to map the ITC HS code of other countries with that of India and provides all the required data without the users bothering about the HS code of any country. Presently the app comes with the data of 87 countries.
- ❖ This is a step towards Digital India and it has great promises of further increase the ease of doing business.

## One District One Product (Ek Zila – Ek Ut padan) Scheme

### In News

President in UP had recently launched One District One Product (ODOP) Summit to promote traditional industries in every district of the state.

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### About ODOP Scheme

- The summit had a tagline of 'Nayi Udaan, Nayi Pehchan.
- The ODOP scheme seeks to promote traditional industries synonymous with their respective districts to spur local economy and create jobs.
- Loan amounting to Rs 1,006.94 crore are to be distributed to 4,085 artisans from 75 districts in the summit.
- The objective of the ODOP is to optimise production, productivity and income, preservation and development of local crafts, promotion of art, improvement in product quality and skill development.
- ODOP is a market place which connects buyers and sellers. Buyers get a convenience of connecting with sellers anytime, anywhere and get access to wider marketplace with a range of products and suppliers.
- Uttar Pradesh contributes around 44 per cent in the total handicraft exports of the country.
- The UP government has set a goal of providing employment to 25 lakh people in five years through the financial assistance of Rs 25,000 crores.
- UP will sign memorandum of understandings

PEPPER IT WITH Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Srijan Yojana, QCI

ODOP is basically a Japanese business development concept, which gained prominence in 1979. It is aimed at promoting a competitive and staple product from a specific area to push sales and improve the standard of living of the local population. Over time, it has been replicated in other Asian countries as well.

(MoUs) with e-retailor giant Amazon for marketing of products of artesian and Quality Control of India (QCI) that will ensure quality of products.

- Uttar Pradesh is uniquely famous for product-specific traditional industrial hubs across 75 districts, including Varanasi (Banarasi silk saris), Bhadohi (carpets), Lucknow (chikan), Kanpur (leather goods), Agra (leather footwear), Aligarh (locks), Moradabad (brassware), Meerut (sports goods) and Saharanpur (wooden products).

## Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)

### In News

The 21st All India Review Meeting on MPLADS was held under the Chairmanship of Union Minister of Statistics & Program Implementation recently.

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### Major Issues:

- Major Agenda Items, discussed during the meeting, include - Status of pending instalments, progress on utilization of MPLADS Fund, Status of works recommended and progress of sanctioned works in Natural Calamities area, VIP reference/Grievances, Review Meetings of MPLADS at State level, Closure of accounts, Recent modification in guidelines etc.
- It was pointed out that the major problems being faced in the implementation of the Scheme at the District level include non-submission of requisite documents in time to the Ministry such as Audit Certificate, Utilization Certificate, Provisional Utilization Certificate, Monthly Progress Report, Bank Statement and Online Monthly Progress Report.

### Performance:

Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, Punjab, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, West Bengal, Gujarat, Odisha are best performing States/UTs in terms of uploading the information (Monthly Progress Report and Work-wise details) on the MPLADS web Portal.

Of the total release since inception, Rs 45604.94 Crore have been utilized. This is more than ninety-five percent of the release.

### About MPLADS

- The MPLAD scheme was introduced in 1993.
- It is implemented by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
- It is a centrally sponsored scheme in which each MP has the choice to suggest to the District administration (DA) for works to the tune of Rs.5 Crores per annum, non-lapsable in nature, to be taken up in the constituency.
- Out of the total amount, 15% and 7.5% funds must be entitled to areas with SC and ST population respectively.. In other words, out of an amount of Rs.5 crores, a M.P. shall recommend for areas inhabited by S.C. population, Rs.75 lacs and Rs.37.5 lacs for areas inhabited by S.T. population.
- A Member of Parliament shall give his/ her choice of Nodal District in to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- Lok Sabha Members can recommend works within their Constituencies and Elected Members of Rajya Sabha can recommend works within the State of Election (with select exceptions). Nominated Members of both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha can recommend works anywhere in the country.
- Funds are released in the form of grants in-aid directly to the district authorities. The funds released under the scheme are non-lapsable.
- One MP - One Idea: In order to foster a grass-root bottoms-up approach to innovation and development and to arrive at solutions for local problems, which are sustainable and scalable, there is a need for seeking out and campaigning for ideas that have the potential to solve challenges.

PEPPER IT WITH  
RUSA, PMVVY, SWAYAM,  
Samagra **Shiksha'** scheme

## Innovation Cell and ARIIA

### In News

Ministry of HRD launched the Innovation Cell (IC) and Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA) at AICTE recently.

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### About IC

- Ministry of HRD has established **Innovation Cell'** with the mandate to work closely with our Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to encourage the creative energy of our student population to work on new ideas and innovation and promote them to create start-ups and entrepreneurial ventures.
- IC will focus on creating complete ecosystem which will foster the culture of Innovation across all educational institutions from ideas generation to pre-incubation, incubation and graduating from the incubator as successful start-ups.
- IC will also work on designing ranking system to identify institutions in the forefront of innovation.
- The move comes after India's ranking in the Global Innovation index Ranking moved slightly up to 60 in 2017 from 66 in 2016, out of 127 countries. The setting up of IC in the ministry will to more focused attention on innovation and research efforts.**

PEPPER IT WITH  
UMANG, PENCIL, Madad  
App, PMGSY, Central Silk  
Board, AIM, ATL, STEM

### Major Programs under IC

- Network of Innovation Clubs (NIC)
- Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA)
- Smart India Hackathon (SIH) 2019
- National Student Startup Policy (NSSP)

### ARIIA

ARIIA introduced to systematically rank education institutions and universities primarily on innovation related indicators. ARIIA considers all major indicators which are commonly used globally to rank most innovative education institutions/ universities in the world.

### ARIIA will primarily focus on 5 main parameters

- Budget Expenses and Revenue generated through Innovation and entrepreneurship development
- Facilitating access to advance centres / facilities and entrepreneurial support system
- Idea to Entrepreneurship
- Development of Innovation Ecosystems Supported through Teaching & Learning
- Best innovative solutions Developed In-house for Improving Governance of Your Institution

### Significance

ARIIA ranking will certainly inspire Indian institutions to reorient their mind-set and build ecosystems to encourage high quality research, innovation and entrepreneurship. More than quantity, ARIIA will focus on quality of innovations and will try to measure the real impact created by these innovations nationally and internationally. Moreover, ARIIA will set tone and direction for institutions for future development for making them globally competitive and in forefront of innovation.

## NCRB to track complaints on sexual violence

### In News

A high-level meeting was convened to discuss recommendations on ways to curb **“sexual violence” videos involving women and children.**

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### Result of meeting

- It was decided in the meeting that the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) would be the designated nodal agency for monitoring the complaints received on a government portal that records child pornography and sexual violence videos.

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

- 2. The NCRB would coordinate with service providers such as Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp and ask them to block malicious videos and contents.

PEPPER IT WITH  
POCSO, Indecent  
Representation of the  
Women (Prohibition) Act,  
Women In Prison Report

Key Highlights

- The move comes against the backdrop of a nearly three-percent increase in crimes against women and a 12-percent rise in rapes in 2016 as compared to 2015.
- The National Crime Records Bureau will be the nodal agency to maintain the sex-offenders' registry. It will help the law-enforcement agencies in identifying the repeat offenders, while people, too, would be aware of those involved in sexual crimes.
- NCRB publishes 4 annual publications on Crime, Accidental Deaths & Suicides, Prison Statistics and Finger Prints.
- The national registry of crimes against women will be launched in near future. The records are being sourced from the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS)
- According to NCRB data, as many as 38,947 rape cases were registered in 2016, against 34,651 in 2015. Overall crimes against women rose from 3,29,243 in 2015 to 3,38,954 in 2016.
- A majority of cases categorised as crimes against women were reported under cruelty by husband or his relatives (32.6 per cent), followed by assault on woman with intent to outrage her modesty (25 per cent), kidnapping and abduction of women (19 per cent), and rape (11.5 per cent).
- Madhya Pradesh reported the highest number of rape cases in 2016, followed by Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra.

CERT-In report on cyber attacks

In News

The report, prepared by the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), which comes under the MeitY, analysed cyber-attacks from April-June 2018.

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Highlights

- The cyber-attacks from China made up 35% of the total number of cyber-attacks on official Indian websites, followed by US (17%), Russia (15%), Pakistan (9%), Canada (7%) and Germany (5%).
- According to the report, it has been observed that China **continues to “intrude” Indian cyberspace in a “significant” way.**
- It has also flagged the possibility of “malicious actors from Pakistan using German and Canadian cyberspace for intruding into Indian cyberspace and carrying out malicious activities”.
- They are targeting by sending spear phishing emails with malware attachments. Phishing attacks are usually in the form of an email from a trusted source where they ask for personal details such as bank details personal details, passwords.
- Many of the institutions impacted by the malicious activities have been identified, include Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, National Informatics Centre, Indian Railway Catering and

PEPPER IT WITH  
**MyDoom’ virus, Magniber**  
ransomware, Emotet  
Trojan, Kuik Adware

NITI Aayog has launched Move Hack, a global mobility hackathon to crowdsource solutions aimed at the future of mobility in India.

The hackathon is a two-mode campaign approach:

- Just Code It: aimed at solutions through innovations in technology/product/software and data analysis.
- Just Solve It: innovative business ideas or sustainable solutions to transform mobility infrastructure through technology.

Tourism Corporation, Railways, Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS) and some banks like Punjab National Bank, Oriental Bank of Commerce, State Bank of India and state data centres, particularly in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka.

## State Energy Efficiency Preparedness Index

### In News

To create awareness about energy efficiency as a resource and also to develop an action plan for energy conservation initiatives, Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) and Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy (AEEE) released the 'State Energy Efficiency Preparedness Index.

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### Key Highlights of Index

### Objectives

- The State Energy Efficiency Preparedness Index has 63 indicators across Building, Industry, Municipality, Transport, Agriculture and DISCOM with 4 cross-cutting indicators.
- AEEE has published the index under the guidance and leadership of BEE and NITI Aayog for 29 states and National Capital Territory of Delhi.
- It examines **states' policies and regulations**, financing mechanisms, institutional capacity, adoption of energy efficiency and energy savings.



- The composition of the Index has been developed considering energy consumption, **energy saving potential and states' influence in implementing energy efficiency** in buildings, industry, municipalities, transport, agriculture and DISCOMs.
- In each sector, energy efficiency indicators have been developed to measure the impact of state initiatives in driving energy efficiency in states. The indicators are both qualitative and quantitative, which include outcome-based indicators as well to signify realisation of the intended performance outcomes.
- The states are indexed into four categories based upon their efforts and achievements towards energy efficiency – **'Front runner', 'Achiever', 'Contender' and 'Aspirant'**.
- The **'Front runner' states** are Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab and Rajasthan.
- Haryana, Gujrat, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are in **'Achiever' Category**.

Perform Achieve and Trade (PAT) scheme is a flagship scheme of Government of India to improve energy efficiency of large energy consuming industries. As a part of Indo-Japan Energy Dialogue, Energy Conservation Centre of Japan (ECCJ) and Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) have developed Energy Conservation Guidelines for energy intensive industries covering both large as well as MSMEs.

### Way Forward

- ✓ Streamline data collection from states towards national energy data management.
- ✓ Review and revise EE indicators to reflect the evolving landscape of EE in the country.
- ✓ Strengthen SDAs with independent charges of energy efficiency.
- ✓ Accelerate coordination among key stakeholders in states and the centre.

PEPPER IT WITH  
ESSL, UJALA, FAME,  
MEEP, BEE, AEEE, Energy  
Conservation Act 2001

### About IESS 2.0

- NITI Aayog had launched the second version of the India Energy Security Scenarios

2047 calculator (IESS 2047) in 2015, an open source web based tool. The tool aims to explore a range of potential future energy scenarios for India, for diverse energy demand and supply sectors leading up to 2047.

India committed to reduce its carbon footprint by 33-35% from its 2005 levels by 2030, as part of its commitments to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted by 195 countries in Paris in 2015.

- 2. It explores India's possible energy scenarios across energy supply sectors such as solar, wind, bio fuels, oil, gas, coal and nuclear and energy demand sectors such as transport, industry, agriculture, cooking and lighting appliances. The model allows users to interactively make energy choices, and explore a range of outcomes for the country-from carbon dioxide emissions and import dependence to land use.
- 3. The UK Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) is the initiative partner with NITI Aayog in this project.

### Ease of Living Index

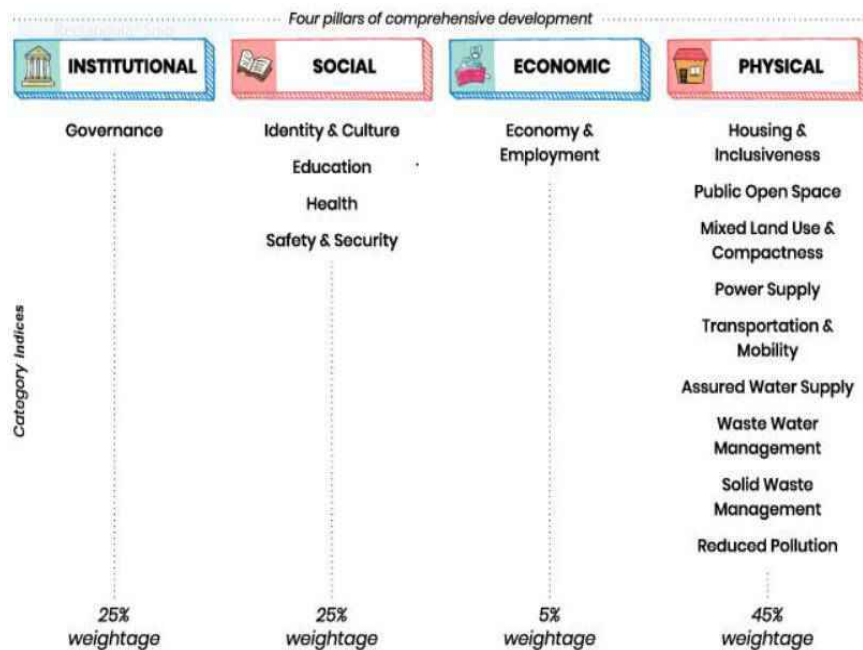
#### In News

The Ease of Living Index released recently by the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry is based on a comprehensive report which assesses the quality of life in cities on the four broad parameters of governance, social, economic and infrastructure.

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#### About Index

- 'Ease of Living' as a term though widely used in urban policy and programming, has no standard definition. For some, it is fundamentally tied to physical amenities such as water supply, solid waste management, parks and green space, cultural offerings, career opportunities, economic dynamism or safety.



- The index has been developed to allow city to get a grip on the city's baseline and compare its performance across key indicators.
- The study took into consideration 78 indicators in 15 categories. But the four pillars are depicted in diagram.
- Through an international bidding process, IPSOS Research Private Limited in consortium with Athena Infonomics India Private Limited and Economist Intelligence Unit were selected for assessment of liveability indices.
- Index Based on an Open and Participatory Assessment of Cities Along with Physical



Audit of Urban Metrics in a Transparent Manner

Highlights from the data analysis:

- Among the 111 cities considered, Navi Mumbai, Tirupati and Karim Nagar had the best institutional sub-index.
- In terms of social indicators, Tirupati and Tiruchirapalli scored the highest.
- Chandigarh, Ajmer and Kota did best on the economic sub-index.
- Greater Mumbai, Pune and Thane topped in terms of infrastructure and other physical parameters.
- In mega-cities (Population over 4 million) Chennai came second after Mumbai, while New Delhi was the worst mega-city.
- Andhra Pradesh had 75% (three out of four cities considered for the survey) of its cities among the top 25 ranks. Maharashtra had 66% of its cities in the top 25 (eight out of 12) while four out of seven (57%) cities in Madhya Pradesh were among the top crop.

Global Liveability Index

- ✓ Both political and financial capitals of India have fared poorly on the Global Liveability Index, 2018, with Delhi ranking 112 and Mumbai five places behind at 117.
- ✓ Delhi and Mumbai are only two Indian cities that are **included in the EIU’s annual index**.
- ✓ The index assigns cities scores on five broad parameters — stability, healthcare, culture/environment, education, and infrastructure using 30 indicators.
- ✓ **Austria’s capital Vienna** has been ranked as the best city to live in, displacing Australian city of Melbourne, which had held the record for seven consecutive years.
- ✓ Syrian capital of Damascus continues to be ranked at the bottom of 140 cities despite the **report noting that it has witnessed “a stabilisation in its dramatic decline in liveability”**.
- ✓ The rankings of 140 global cities based on their living conditions are released by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).
- ✓ The EIU is part of UK magazine The Economist and provides forecasting and advisory services through research and analysis.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Living Planet Index, Human  
Development Index, Global  
Innovation Index

Significance

1. Drive an evidence-based approach for future interventions and investments to deliver Ease of Living outcomes
2. Catalyse actions to improve the quality of life in Indian cities
3. Track broader development outcomes including the Sustainable Development Goals
4. Serve as a basis for dialogue with citizens and urban decision-makers on key strengths and areas demanding improvement

Ranks in the Ease of Living Index  
Top cities: Pune, Navi Mumbai, Greater Mumbai  
Worst Cities: Rampur, Kohima, Patna

## UDAN Scheme for international routes

### Why in News?

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has prepared a draft scheme document for “UDAN International”.

As per the draft, a State will identify international routes for which the Airports Authority of India (AAI) will determine a subsidy amount per seat and invite bids from domestic carriers. This will be followed by airlines submitting their proposals, which will include the routes they wish to connect as well as the subsidy needed by them.

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### Highlights

- The scheme is designed for State governments that are keen to promote air connectivity on international routes identified by them and for which they are willing to provide subsidy to airlines. They will be able to encourage tourism on preferred international air routes by offering subsidy to domestic airlines for a period of three years.
- Only fixed wing aircraft with more than 70 seats can be operated under the scheme and airlines will have to conduct a minimum of three and a maximum of seven departures on a given route on three days in a week.
- The financial assistance to an airline will be offered from the International Air Connectivity Fund (IACF), which will be created through the contributions made by the State government.
- The airlines will bid on the percentage of flight capacity for which they require **financial assistance, provided that the figure doesn't exceed 60% of the flight capacity.** However, the government will grant financial aid only for the actual number of passenger seats that are unsold, even if the airline had sought subsidy for a higher percentage of seating capacity at the time of bidding.
- An airline that is awarded a particular route will have exclusive rights to a subsidy on that route for a period of three years. The key difference between this scheme and the regional connectivity scheme (RCS) for domestic routes is that there is no capping of fares. Under RCS, fares are capped at ₹2,500 for one hour of flight on a fixed wing aircraft in order to make air travel affordable, which was why the scheme was called Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN).
- The Centre has allowed airlines to enter into a code-sharing arrangement with international and domestic airlines for UDAN international.

- ✓ Hindustan Aeronautics has become the first public sector enterprise to make a transaction on the "TReDS platform".
- ✓ TReDS is an online electronic institutional mechanism for facilitating the financing of trade receivables of micro small and medium enterprises through multiple financiers.
- ✓ In 2017, central government mandated all major PSUs to join TReDS platform to facilitate payments to MSME vendors.
- ✓ Receivables Exchange of India Ltd (RXIL) was set in 2016 as a joint venture of Small Industries Development Bank of India and National Stock Exchange of India Limited with **an objective to operate India's First Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS).**

## Delhi leads the NCAER-State Investment Potential Index 2018

### Why in News?

The National Council of Applied Economic Research, NCAER, released its 2018 N-SIPI, the NCAER State Investment Potential Index recently.

Covering 20 States and Delhi, this is the third edition of the annual N-SIPI that ranks India's States' on their competitiveness in business and their investment climate. Since its launch (in 2016), the annual N-SIPI has become a credible yardstick of how the investment climate of India's States is changing.

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### About N-SIPI

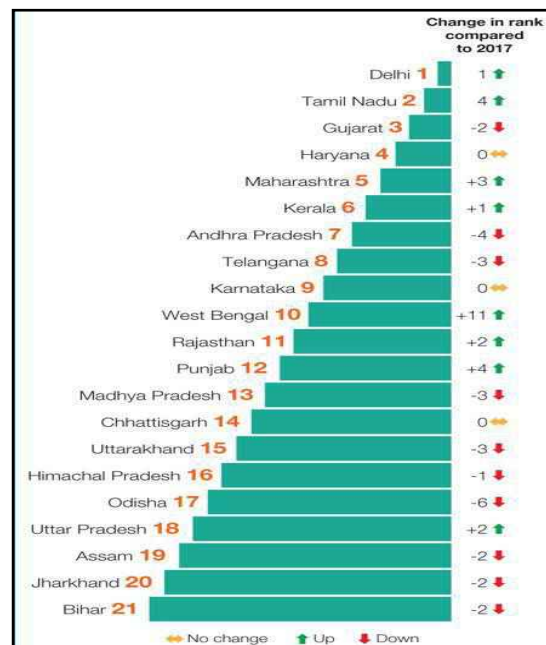
- It is a pioneering effort to provide metrics of economic governance, competitiveness and growth opportunities at the state and regional levels.
- It ranks the competitiveness of Indian States on six pillars: land, labour, infrastructure, economic climate, political stability and governance, and business perceptions.
- These six pillars are classified under four broad categories: factor driven (land and labour), efficiency driven (infrastructure), growth driven (economic climate and political stability and governance), and perceptions driven (ranking of business climate built on firm surveys).
- A unique feature of the N-SIPI index is the integration of industry perceptions of the investment potential and business climate of a state along with the fundamentals likely to drive investment decisions in that state. Another unique feature of the 2018 N-SIPI is the inclusion of GST specific questions in the survey questionnaire for the perception pillar of the index.

PEPPER IT WITH

DIPP's assessment of business reforms, **World Bank's index** on the Ease Of Doing business, A. T. Kearney Foreign Direct Investment Confidence

### Key Findings

- Although Assam, Jharkhand and Bihar are ranked among the least favourable States for investment, they are ranked higher under individual pillars, with Bihar doing better in the labour pillar, Assam in the land pillar, and Jharkhand in the economy pillar.
- Corruption continues to be the number one constraint faced by businesses, as found in the N-SIPI 2017 survey. But perceptions of corruption may be changing: the 2017 N-SIPI reports a decline in the percentage of respondents citing corruption as a constraint to conducting business from 57 percent in 2017 to 46 percent in 2018.
- Getting approvals for starting a business was the second most pressing constraint faced by businesses both in 2016 and 2017, though this figure has declined from 72.1 per cent to 43.6 per cent over the years.
- N-SIPI perception survey also shows the difficulty in obtaining approvals for land, the quality of skilled labour, and access to finance.



### Global Innovation Index-2018 Launched in India

#### Why in News?

Global Innovation Index, GII- 2018 has been launched in India and NITI Aayog is to join hands with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) to develop a Roadmap for Top 10 Rank in GII. India ranked number one on ICT service exports.

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The event was organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) – one of the founding partners of GII along with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), in collaboration with the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP).

#### About GII

- **India's rank on the Global Innovation Index (GII) has** improved from 60 in 2017 to 57 in 2018. India has been consistently climbing the GII ranking for the past two years (it was ranked 81 in 2015).

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

- It is developed jointly by Cornell University, the Paris-based business school Insead and the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in Geneva. GII ranks 126 economies based on 80 indicators. It is now in its 11th edition and has become a major input for policymakers on innovation around the world.
- Although ranked at 57, India is a top performer in the lower middle income group, where it is ranked at fifth position. It is the most innovative country in its region of central and southern Asia. In the indicators that capture the quality of innovation inputs and outputs, India is ranked second after China in the lower and upper middle income group combined.
- GII 2018 report provided an opportunity to look at examples from similar economies from across the world and understand how they effected change in their countries. GII enabled countries to compare their innovation performances and benchmark with others.

India should emphasize the role of pure science in building scientific temper in the country. India need to

- **Transform India’s Innovation Ecosystem by formulating a New Innovation Policy** to attract R&D investment into cutting edge technologies and build appropriate infrastructure and institutions
- Tap Global hotspots of Innovation in latest technologies like AI, Blockchain and Robotics etc.
- Connect Tinkering labs in schools with start-ups, business and high end educational institutions
- Target efficient, productive and outcome driven R&D in the Government Sector

PEPPER IT WITH  
Human Development Index, Gender Development Index, MSCI world Index, Where to be born index

Way Forward

We must devise strategies to address our energy deficit, to ensure sustainable domestic energy supply. There is a need to look for innovative ways to tackle the country's energy problems.

Government and industry must synergise their efforts to promote R&D and innovation in the country. The culture of spending on research and development is growing in India and we are seeing the results in the form of improvements in rankings such as the GII.

US gives STA-1 status to India

Why in News?

India has become the third Asian country after Japan and South Korea to get the Strategic Trade Authorization-1 (STA-1) status, paving the way for high-technology product sales, particularly in civil space and defense sectors.

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About STA-1 status

- India is the 37th country to be designated the STA-1 status by the U S. The move gains significance as the US Administration made an exception for India, which is yet to become a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).
- Traditionally, the US has placed only those countries in the STA-1 list who are members of the four export control regimes: Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), Wassenaar Arrangement (WA), Australia Group (AG) and the NSG.
- India so far was listed in STA-2 category along with Albania, Hong Kong, Israel, Malta, Singapore, South Africa and Taiwan.

Significance

- o By placing India in the STA-1 list, the United States has acknowledged that for all practical purposes India adheres to the export control regimes of the NSG.

- o This exception for New Delhi is intended to send a strong political message to China and the world, taking into account that **America's closest ally Israel is yet to be** given this status, primarily because it is not a member of these multilateral export control regimes.
- o This recognition facilitates and supports **India's military modernisation efforts with** the US as a reliable provider of advanced defense articles. As a result, the Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS), formally recognises under the Export Administration Regulations (EAR) **India's membership in** the WA multilateral export control regimes and revises the EAR accordingly.
- o In addition, to export control-related benefits for India as a result of prior amendments to the EAR in furtherance of the US-India global strategic partnership, BIS places India in Country Group A:5, which provides the benefit of greater availability of License Exception STA for exports and re-exports to, and transfers within India under the EAR.

**International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples 2018**

August 9 is commemorated as the **International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples** in recognition of the first meeting of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations in Geneva in 1982.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Jaitapur Nuclear Power Plant, 2+2 dialogue, COMCASA, LEMOA, US trade wars

**Asia-Pacific Institute of Broadcasting Development**

Why in News?

The Asia-Pacific Institute of Broadcasting Development (AIBD) elected Fayyaz Sheheryar, Director-General of All India Radio, as its new President. This is the first time India has been elected for the position of president of AIBD.

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India's presidency is for two years and will help it in leveraging itself as the broadcasting and media hub in Asia Pacific region. The elections were held at the 44th annual meeting of AIBD in Colombo.

Sangam Radio

Sangam radio was established in 2008 and is run by Deccan Development Society. The radio station is run by women. It gives two hour broadcast in Telugu and is the first community radio which is run by women.

AIBD

- Established in 1977 under the auspices of UNESCO, AIBD is a unique regional inter-governmental organisation servicing countries of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) in the field of electronic media development.
- It is hosted by Malaysia and its secretariat is located in Kuala Lumpur.
- The AIBD is mandated to achieve a vibrant and cohesive electronic media environment in the Asia-Pacific region through policy and resource development.
- The Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) is a founding organisation of the institute and is a non-voting member of the general conference.
- AIBD currently has 26 member countries, represented by 34 organisations, and 67 affiliate member organisations with a total membership of 101 representing 48 countries and regions and over 50 partners.

PEPPER IT WITH  
UN-ESCAP, UNESCO, Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union, APCERT, HABITAT III conference

## Country Code Names Supporting Organisation (ccNSO)

### Why in News?

Ajay Data, Founder and CEO of Data XGen Plus, has become the first Indian to be appointed a member of the Country Code Names Supporting Organisation (ccNSO).

He is the first Indian to have been selected as a member of ccNSO and will be representing India at a global level. He will be the custodian of Asia, Australia and Pacific Islands as a member of ccNSO.

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### About ccNSO

- The ccNSO of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) is a policy-development body for global issues regarding country code top-level domains (ccTLD) within the ICANN structure.
- ccNSO is a body within the ICANN structure created in 2003 for and by ccTLD managers.
- The ccNSO provides a platform to nurture consensus, technical cooperation and skill building among ccTLDs and facilitates the development of voluntary best practices for ccTLD managers.
- It is also responsible for developing and recommending global policies to the ICANN Board for a limited set of issues relating to ccTLDs, such as the introduction of Internationalised Domain Name ccTLDs (IDN ccTLDs).

PEPPER IT WITH  
ISPAI, The Internet Society, Inclusive internet index, TRAI, FSOC technology, Nepal internet connection from China

### ICANN

Internet Corporation For Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) is non-profit corporation that is responsible for allocating IP addresses and managing the domain name system. While the ICANN is a US-based organization, it is also a global Internet community. The organization is dedicated to preserving the operational stability of the Internet; to promoting competition; to achieving broad representation of global Internet communities; and to developing policy appropriate to its mission through bottom-up, consensus-based processes.

## China detains 1 mn ethnic Uighurs

### In News

A UN human rights committee has mentioned about China holding a million ethnic Uighurs in "counter-extremism centres". UN was concerned by a report that Beijing had "turned the Uighur autonomous region into something that resembles a massive internment camp".

China has not responded to the reports. Beijing has previously denied the existence of such camps.

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### Issues

- Human rights groups including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have submitted reports to the UN committee documenting claims of mass imprisonment, in camps where inmates are forced to swear loyalty to Chinese President Xi Jinping.
- The World Uyghur Congress said in a report that detainees are held indefinitely without charge and forced to shout Communist Party slogans. It said they are poorly fed, and reports of torture are widespread.
- It is claimed that most inmates have never been charged with a crime and do not receive legal representation.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Friendship medal, Nuclear Supplier Group, Tiananmen Massacre, Queqiao satellite, Chang'e program

### Uighurs

The Uighurs are a Muslim ethnic minority mostly based in China's Xinjiang province. They make up around 45 per cent of the population there.

## Australia recommences its adoption programme with India

### Why in News?

The Government of Australia has decided to recommence the Adoption Programme with India, as per Hague Convention on Inter-Country Adoption.

The adoptions from India had earlier been put on hold by the Government of Australia eight years ago, on the reported charges of trafficking of children for Inter-country adoption by some of the recognized Indian placement agencies (the Adoption agencies mandated to place children in Inter-country adoption at that point of time).

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### Reasons for recommencement

- The regulation of Inter-country adoptions has been made strict by the Government of India with the enactment of Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 and notification of Adoption Regulations, 2017.
- The Ministry of Women & Child Development along with Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) have been constantly engaging with Australian Government for recommencement of the Adoption Programme.
- The recommencement of the adoption programmes will now enable large number of prospective adoptive parents including those of Indian origin settled in Australia in fulfilling their desire of adopting a child from India.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 CARA, Operation Blackboard,  
 Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, ICDS, 100  
 million for 100 million campaign,  
 Juvenile Justice Act, 2015

### The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption

The Hague Convention of 29 1993 on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention) protects children and their families against the risks of illegal, irregular, premature or ill-prepared adoptions abroad. This Convention, which operates through a system of national Central Authorities, reinforces the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Art. 21) and seeks to ensure that intercountry adoptions are made in the best interests of the child and with respect for his or her fundamental rights. It also seeks to prevent the abduction, the sale of, or traffic in children.

## Postal Highway

### Why in News?

The Indian government handed over a cheque amounting Rs 33 crore to the Nepal Government for construction of a Postal Highway.

The amount has been released towards 25% of the tendered cost (including 10% mobilization advance) of the two road packages of Birgunj-Thori Road being implemented under Postal Highway Project in Nepal with Government of India's grant assistance.

With this payment, the Government of India has released a total of Rs 117.63 Crores to the Government of Nepal for implementing 14 packages of the Postal Highway Projects.

### Postal Highway

Postal Highway also called Hulaki Rajmarg runs across the Terai region of Nepal, from Bhadrapur in the east to Dodhara in the west, cutting across the entire width of the country. It is the Oldest highway in Nepal constructed by Juddha Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana & Padma Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana to aid transportation and facilitate postal services throughout the nation.

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PEPPER IT WITH  
 Nepal-Bharat Maitri  
 Pashupati Dharamshala,  
 BIMSTEC, Surya Kiran,  
 Arun-3 hydropower project,  
 Ramayana circuit

## World Congress of Philosophy 2018

### In News

The XXIV World Congress will be held in Beijing, China, under the auspices of the Chinese Organizing Committee. The complementary aims of the 2018 Congress include an emphasis on exploring dimensions of the human and inquiring into the challenges facing humanity. The World Congress of Philosophy is organized every five years by the International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP) in collaboration with one of its member societies.

The 2018 Congress invited discussions on the nature, roles, and responsibilities of **philosophy and philosophers to enhance a common awareness of “learning to be human.”** It is committed to attending to problems, conflicts, inequalities, and injustices connected with the development of a planetary civilization that is simultaneously techno-scientific and multicultural.

### International Federation of Philosophical Societies

FISP is the highest non-governmental world organization for philosophy. It is a member of the International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences, the non-governmental organization that constitutes the link between international humanities federations and UNESCO. Established in 1948, the Federation is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year.

Its main objectives are:

- to contribute to the development of professional relations between philosophers of all countries, freely and with mutual respect; to foster contacts between institutions, societies and periodical publications dedicated to philosophy
- to collect documentation useful for the development of philosophical studies
- to sponsor every five years a World Congress of Philosophy
- to promote philosophical education, to prepare publications of global interest and to contribute to the impact of philosophical knowledge on global problems

PEPPER IT WITH  
National Conference on Down Syndrome,  
International Conference on Sustainable  
Biofuels 2018, World Sustainable  
Development Summit 2018

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## International Nitrogen Initiative

### Why in News?

Indian scientist-academician, N Raghuram, has been elected Chair of the International Nitrogen Initiative (INI), a global policy making initiative.

He is the first Indian and Asian to be elected to the Chair. The new chairs will formally take up their roles in January, 2019.

### The International Nitrogen Initiative

- The International Nitrogen Initiative (INI) is an international program, set up in 2003 under sponsorship of the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE) and from the International Geosphere-Biosphere Program (IGBP). The program is currently a sustained partner of Future Earth.
- The key aims of the INI are to:
  - **Optimize nitrogen’s beneficial role in sustainable food production, and**
  - **Minimize nitrogen’s negative effects on human health and the environment resulting from food and energy production.**
- INI is coordinated by a Steering Committee, led by a chairperson and six regional centre directors representing, Africa, Europe, Latin America, North America, South Asia and East Asia. The Steering Committee is supported by a Director of Operations, who has a key role to facilitate communications and meetings.
- INI holds a conference every three years, inviting members of the international

PEPPER IT WITH  
World Coustoms Organisation,  
UNMOGIP, RCEP, APTA, RIMES

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nitrogen community to meet up and discuss ideas and exchange knowledge on nitrogen issues. The last INI conference was held in Melbourne, in December 2016 (Melbourne Declaration). The next INI conference will be held in Berlin, Germany, in 2020.

### 11th World Hindi Conference

#### Why in News?

The 11th World Hindi Conference, an event aimed at expanding the reach of the Hindi language at a global level, was held in Mauritius. It was inaugurated by Mauritius Prime Minister. This year the theme of the conference is “Hindi World and Indian Culture”.

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The delegates from India and various countries of the world deliberated on eight subtopics on Hindi World and Indian Culture during the three-day conference. The first World Hindi Conference was held in 1975 in Nagpur, India. Since then, ten such conferences have been held in different parts of the world.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Hindi as official language at UN,  
UN official languages, Eighth  
schedule of Constitution,  
Classical Languages of India

#### Panini Language lab in Mauritius

External Affairs Minister of India inaugurated 'Panini Language Laboratory' at Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI) in Mauritius. The lab, gifted by the Indian government, will help MGI in teaching Indian languages in Mauritius.

### Caspian Sea deal

#### Why in News

Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan - all bordering the Caspian Sea - have agreed in principle on how to divide it up. Their leaders signed the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea in the Kazakh city of Aktau.

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It establishes a formula for dividing up its resources and prevents other powers from setting up a military presence there. It is an important step in the easing of regional tensions, but the deal over the world's largest inland body of water matters for several reasons.

#### Caspian Sea dispute

It would be reasonable to assume that the Caspian Sea is, well, a sea. But at the heart of this long-running dispute is whether or not the 370,000 sq km (143,000 sq mile) body of landlocked water should be considered a lake. Until the dissolution of the Soviet Union (USSR) in 1991, that's what it was known as and shared between the USSR and Iran. But the arrival on the scene of new countries complicated this issue, with ensuing claim and counterclaim. Iran had argued it was a lake and not a sea, but none of the four other countries agreed.



If it was treated as a sea, then it would be covered by international maritime law, namely the United Nations Law of the Sea. This binding document sets rules on how countries can use the world's oceans. It covers areas such as the management of natural resources, territorial rights, and the environment and is not limited to littoral states, meaning others can seek access to its resources. But if it is defined as a lake, then it would have to be divided equally between all five countries. The agreement goes some way to settling this dispute.

#### Convention signed

- The signed convention gives the body of water a "special legal status" which means it is not defined as a sea or a lake. The surface water will be in common usage, meaning freedom of access for all littoral states beyond territorial waters. But the seabed (which

is rich in natural resources) will be divided up.

- Another key factor is that seabed boundaries are yet to be negotiated. But because the deal does not define the Caspian as a lake, Iran - which has the smallest coastline - is viewed as a potential loser.
- The summit also produced security decisions, including an agreement that military vessels from non-Caspian states would not be allowed to enter the sea.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 Black Sea, Meditarranean Sea, Suez Canal, Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal, Panama Canal, Welland Canal, Indira Gandhi Canal, The Corinth Canal

Resources of Caspian Sea

- The Caspian Sea is highly-prized for its vast oil and gas reserves. It's estimated there are 50 billion barrels of oil and nearly 300 trillion cubic feet of natural gas beneath its seabed. That is why disagreements over how to divide some of its huge oil and gas fields have been numerous and acrimonious.
- The Caspian Sea has a number of different species of sturgeon, the fish that yields the highly prized delicacy caviar. Between 80-90% of the world's caviar is sourced from the Caspian, but the numbers have been falling over the past few decades.
- The Caspian Sea is well-known for its population of sturgeon. In 2002, a survey found that the fish was rapidly disappearing and could soon become extinct.

NAFTA deal

In News

The United States and Mexico agreed to overhaul the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), putting pressure on Canada to agree to new terms on auto trade and dispute settlement rules to remain part of the three-nation pact.

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Auto stocks soared and the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq rallied to record highs on the expectation that Canada would sign onto the deal and ease the economic uncertainty caused by **United State's repeated threats to ditch accord**. U.S threatened that it could still put tariffs on Canadian-made cars if Canada did not join its neighbors and warned that it expected concessions on **Canada's dairy protections**.

Postage stamp between India and South Africa  
 The Union Cabinet was apprised of joint issue of Postage Stamps on India-South Africa on the theme "20 Years of Strategic Partnership between India and South Africa". The joint stamps were released in June 2018.  
 The Commemorative Postage Stamps on India-South Africa: Joint Issue depicts image of Deendayal Upadhyaya and Oliver Reginald Tambo of South Africa.

NAFTA

- In 1994, NAFTA came into effect, **creating one of the world's largest free trade zones** and laying the foundations for strong economic growth and rising prosperity for Canada, the United States, and Mexico.
- NAFTA has demonstrated how free trade increases wealth and competitiveness, delivering real benefits to families, farmers, workers, manufacturers, and consumers.
- NAFTA was supplemented by two other regulations: the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC) and the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation (NAALC). These side agreements were intended to prevent businesses from relocating to other countries to exploit lower wages, lenient worker health and safety regulations, and looser environmental regulations.
- NAFTA did not eliminate regulatory requirements on companies wishing to trade internationally, such as rule of origin regulations and documentation requirements that determine whether

PEPPER IT WITH  
 Director general of foreign trade, European free trade association, TPP 11, APTA

certain goods can be traded under NAFTA.

- The free-trade agreement also contains administrative, civil and criminal penalties for businesses that violate **any of the three countries' laws or customs** procedures.

### EU-India launches EUR 30 million Joint Call on Research and Innovation to develop Next Generation Influenza Vaccine

#### Why in News?

The European Union (EU) and India announced that they will engage together on research and innovation to develop a Next Generation Influenza Vaccine to protect citizens worldwide.

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#### About EUR 30 million

In total, EUR 30 million (or approximately INR 240 crs.) has been earmarked for research and innovation actions which aim at advancing the efficacy, safety, duration of immunity, and reactivity against an increased breadth of influenza strains. Both the EU and the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India, have committed EUR 15 million each to fund this joint call. The EU is funding this call under its programme for research and innovation 'Horizon 2020'.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 EU Film Festival, Financial Action Task Force, Bangalore Metro Phase II, Economic partnership Agreement

#### Significance

1. It is expected that the outcome of the projects will also contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 3 to ensure health and well-being for all and boost the Indian National Health Mission.
2. This cooperation is another demonstration of the already robust cooperation between the EU and India based on the EU-India Science & Technology Cooperation Agreement concluded in 2001 and renewed in 2015 until 2020. On the mobility grants known as **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCAs)**, which are part of Horizon 2020, India ranks first in terms of number of beneficiaries from third countries followed by China and the USA.
3. 100 years after the massive outbreak of the Spanish flu, the question was triggered if we are ready to face such a large-scale pandemic. Amongst others, we do not have an effective vaccine against such pandemic virus. In engaging together on a next generation vaccine against influenza both India and the Europe are thus contributing to a major global public health tread.
4. These joint efforts also aim to develop cost-effective and affordable influenza vaccine rapidly without compromising quality.

#### Horizon 2020

Horizon 2020 is the EU's funding programme for research and innovation for the period 2014-**2020 with a budget of almost €80 billion for the entire period**. Horizon 2020 has been designed to deliver results that make a difference to **people's** lives. It will fund many type of activities, from frontier science to close-to-market innovations. It is implemented through multi-annual work programmes.

### Quad countries discuss ocean security

#### Why in News?

A report on the policy recommendations on Indian Ocean security was launched by four think tanks from the Quad countries (India, Australia, U.S, Japan) at the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF).

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#### Highlights

- The reports calls for maintaining the momentum of high-level consultations among the Quad countries **with the aim of “free and open Indo-Pacific region” and progressively** move it to a political level.

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- Australia, Japan, India and the US should work with countries in the IOR to help maintain independent security and economic policies by supporting high-quality alternatives to unilateral Chinese investments and political alignment with Chinese regional objectives.
- Another recommendation is that the four countries **should work to oppose “the establishment of permanent Chinese military bases” in the IOR.** This should include demonstrating to China that its security needs can be met “through cooperation and consultation with other nations” and without the recourse to a “disruptive unilateral military presence.
- Calling the four countries to enhance sea land defence capabilities, the report stresses that naval fleets should evolve increasingly long range operations. This may require consideration in Japan of new options such as nuclear propulsion for its submarines.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 Quadilateral Security  
 Dialogue, Assumption Island,  
 MILES 18, Goa Maritime  
 Conclave, Deep Ocean Mission

**SCO Peace Mission Exercise**

In News

As part of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) initiatives, SCO Peace Mission Exercise is conducted biennially for SCO member states. The joint exercise for the year 2018 will be conducted by Central Military Commission of Russia at Chebarkul, Chelyabinsk, Russia.

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Significance

This will be a historic occasion due to the maiden participation of India post becoming a full member of the SCO in June 2017. This exercise marks a major milestone in the multilateral relations of SCO member nations. The exercise will involve tactical level operations in an international counter insurgency or counter terrorism environment under SCO Charter.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 SCO, AIIB, Qingdao  
 Declaration, International  
 Energy Forum, International  
 Maritime Organisation

The joint exercise will strengthen mutual confidence, interoperability and enable sharing of best practices among armed forces of SCO Nations. It will be a landmark event in the history of SCO defence cooperation.

**Indian Ocean conference**

Why in News?

The third edition of Indian Ocean Conference was held at Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam. The theme of the two- day conference was ‘Building Regional Architectures’, particularly with regards to trade and commerce, security and governance. This year’s conference saw 43 countries as participants.

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This year, the Indian Ocean Conference emphasised on better cooperation, strategic collaboration and governance architectures. This conference served as a platform to the countries to come closer and exchange better views on the economic and strategic importance of the region and neighbourhood.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 India Tourism Mart, IORA,  
 Colombo declaration, String of  
 pearls, Milan Exercise

Indian Ocean Conference

Organised by Indian Foundation along with the partners from Singapore, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka this is an initiative to bring the state leaders, diplomats and bureaucrats from across the region under one roof to strengthen the understanding among each other. Earlier, the conference was held in Singapore and Sri Lanka in 2016 and 2017 respectively.

## International Energy Agency

### In News

The Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology, and the International Energy Agency signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Enhancing Innovation for Clean Energy Transition. This MoU also has a provision for activities such as training and capacity building and accelerating energy innovation by identifying sources of finance. This agreement will be coordinated for the Ministry of Science & Technology by the Mission Innovation India Unit set up by DBT and for IEA by its International Partnership and Initiatives Unit (IPI) and is initially valid for three years.

### Significance

The MoU seeks to deepen co-operation in support of clean energy innovations to accelerate the research, development, and demonstration (RD&D) of clean energy technologies in India and will help support the generation of data for policymaking and improve knowledge of good policy practices for innovation in India and around the world.

It will ensure cooperation on sharing of data regarding energy and its analysis. The MoU will ensure cooperation for sharing of energy policies on RD&D and sharing of best practices on data collection and analysis.

### IEA

- The IEA works to ensure reliable, affordable and clean energy for its member countries and beyond. Its main areas of focus are energy security, economic development, environmental awareness and engagement worldwide.
- The IEA is an autonomous body within the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) framework. The governing board is the main decision-making body of the IEA, composed of energy ministers or their senior representatives from each member country.
- The IEA is made up of 30 member countries. Before becoming a member country of the IEA, a candidate country must meet several criteria.
  - It must have crude oil or product reserves equivalent to **90 days of the previous year's net imports**, to which the government has immediate access even if it does not own them directly, and could be used to address disruptions to global oil supply.
  - It must have in place a demand restraint program to reduce national oil consumption by up to 10 per cent.

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### First SAARC Agri Cooperative Business Forum begins in Kathmandu

- ✓ The first South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Agri Cooperative Business Forum was held in Kathmandu. The theme of three-day Forum was the 'Organizing and Strengthening Family Farmers' **Cooperatives to attain the Sustainable Development Goals-1 and 2** in South Asia.
- ✓ It was co-organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and Asian Farmers' Association with the support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development.
- ✓ The Forum brings together representatives both from the government and non-governmental entities from the Member States of SAARC as well as from regional and international organizations.

### 6TH RCEP Ministerial Meeting

Union Minister of Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation lead the Indian delegation **for the 6th RCEP Trade Ministers' Meeting** in Singapore.

India has been constructively engaged in the RCEP negotiations with an aim to work towards a high quality, balanced and inclusive outcomes that take into consideration sensitivities and interests of member countries.

- It must have a national plan in place for Coordinated Emergency Response Measures, or CERM.
- All oil companies under its jurisdiction report information upon request and
- It must be able to participate in any IEA collective actions.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Coordinated Emergency Response Measures, OECD, GCC, OPEC, Strategic petroleum reserve, Draft Energy Storage Mission, RCEP

## Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve

### Why in News?

The Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve has become the 11th Biosphere Reserve from India that has been included in the UNESCO designated World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR). India has 18 Biosphere Reserves.

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The decision to include Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve in WNBR was taken at the 30th Session of International Coordinating Council (ICC) of Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme of UNESCO held at Palembang, Indonesia.

### Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve

Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve in Sikkim is one of the highest ecosystems in the world, reaching elevations of 1, 220 metres above sea-level. It includes a range of ecolines, varying from sub-tropic to Arctic, as well as natural forests in different biomes that support an immensely rich diversity of forest types and habitats.

The core zone – Khangchendzonga National Park was designated a World Heritage Site in 2016 under the **‘mixed’ category**. Many of the mountains, peaks, lakes, caves, rocks, Stupas (shrines) and hot springs function as pilgrimage sites. Over 118 species of the large number of medicinal plants found in Dzongu Valley in north Sikkim are of ethno-medical utility. The transition zone is targeted for eco-development activities, afforestation, plantation of medicinal herbs and soil conservation measures.

### Recently Developed Races of Silk Worm Seed

- ✓ Central Silk Board (CSB) has notified recently developed races of silkworm seed of mulberry and Vanya silk for increasing the productivity of cocoons and to increase the income of the farmers engaged in sericulture.
- ✓ The recently notified silkworm races will improve the income of the farmers by its enhanced productivity and quality.
- ✓ CSB under the Ministry of Textiles is engaged in applied research developing new breeds of races of silkworm seed and conducts extensive field trial before commercial use in the field.

### World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR)

Composed of 686 biosphere reserves in 122 countries, including 20 transboundary sites, the WNBR of the MAB Programme promotes North-South and South-South collaboration and represents a unique tool for international co-operation through sharing knowledge, exchanging experiences, building capacity and promoting best practices.

### Biosphere Reserves

Biosphere Reserves (BRs) are representative parts of natural and cultural landscapes extending over large area of terrestrial or coastal/marine ecosystems or a combination thereof and representative examples of bio-

### World’s largest 3D printed coral reef installed at Maldives

- ✓ The world’s largest 3D printed coral reef has been submerged at Summer Island Maldives.
- ✓ It is the experimental project which aims to help coral reefs survive the ravages of climate change.
- ✓ The ceramic structures built closely resemble the original structures found in the Maldives. Ceramic is made of calcium carbonate.

geographic zones/provinces.

Criteria for designation of BR

- A site that must contain an effectively protected and minimally disturbed core area of value of nature conservation.
- The core area should be typical of a bio-geographical unit and large enough to sustain viable populations representing all trophic levels in the ecosystem.
- The management authority to ensure the involvement/cooperation of local communities to bring variety of knowledge and experiences to link biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development while managing and containing the conflicts.
- Areas potential for preservation of traditional tribal or rural modes of living for harmonious use of environment.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 MAB program, Ramsar Sites, UNESCO  
 WHS, Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, Zones  
 of biosphere reserve, importance of  
 biosphere reserve

International Status of Biosphere Reserves (BR)

The UNESCO has introduced the designation 'Biosphere Reserve' for natural areas to minimize conflict between development and conservation. BRs are nominated by national government which meet a minimal set of criteria and adhere to minimal set of conditions for inclusion in the world network of Biosphere reserves under the Man and Biosphere Reserve Programme of UNESCO. Globally 621 BRs representing from 117 countries included in the network so far.

National Disaster Response Force

Why in News?

The Union Cabinet gave the nod to raising of four new battalions of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) which will be based in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and the national capital region, to strengthen India's disaster response set up at an estimated cost of Rs 637 crore.

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These four battalions will initially be raised in the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (2 battalions) and one each in Border Security Force (BSF) and Assam Rifles. Later, these battalions will be converted into NDRF battalions. The aim is to reduce the response time, keeping in view the vast geographical area of the country. An NDRF battalion comprises a little over 1,000 personnel.

Disaster Response Force vehicles  
 The Telangana Government has launched Disaster Response Force (DRF) vehicles in Hyderabad to combat situations like flash floods, heavy rains, building collapse and fire mishaps.  
  
 The force has been trained in tackling urban flooding, tree falls, structural collapses and any other site of emergencies.

NDRF

- The NDRF has 12 operational battalions at present.
- It is a specialised force that was raised in 2006 for specific tasks of relief and rescue during natural and man-made disasters or threatening situations.
- The operational battalions are located in Assam, West Bengal, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, NCR (Ghaziabad), Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 coalition on disaster resilient  
 infrastructure, NDMS, RIMES,  
 Sendai framework, Tsunami exercise

### India's first genetic bank for wildlife conservation in Hyderabad

#### Why in News?

The National Wildlife Genetic Resources Bank was inaugurated at the Center of Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) Laboratory of Conservation of Endangered Species (Lacons) facility in Hyderabad.

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#### Benefits

1. This is India's first genetic resource bank where genetic material will be stored for birth, which will be the cause of the protection of endangered and protected animals.
2. This facility would increase the collection of genetic resources from wildlife through collaboration with zoos in India.
3. This facility would also facilitate exchange of genetic material between Indian zoos for maintaining genetic diversity and conservation management made accessible to scientists and wildlife managers for implementing conservation programmes.
4. It is one of the promising options for future species management of threatened populations that also extends the reproductive life span of individuals beyond their life and prevents the loss of valuable individuals to the gene pool.

A vehicles carrying a batch of mouse deer was flagged off from the Nehru Zoological Park, to be reintroduced in the Farahabad Range of Amrabad Tiger Reserve.

The Telangana Forest Department, Central Zoo Authority, Nehru Zoological Park and CCMB have joined hands to conduct the first ever planned reintroduction of the Indian spotted chevrotain (*Moschiola indica*),also known as Indian mouse deer.

#### LaCONES

- LaCONES is a dedicated laboratory of the CSIR-Centre for CCMB and is the only institute in the country working towards conservation of endangered wildlife using modern biotechnologies to save endangered wildlife species of India.
- "CCMB-LaCONES is the only laboratory in India that has developed methods for collection and cryopreservation of semen and oocytes from wildlife and successfully reproducing endangered blackbuck, spotted deer and Nicobar pigeons.
- Through this work, it has established Genetic Resource Bank for Indian wildlife. GRB is the systematic collection and preservation of tissues, sperm, eggs and embryos, genetic material (DNA/RNA).

PEPPER IT WITH  
Central Zoo Authority, Mouse deer, Flemingo festival, Blackbuck, 3rd National Wildlife Action Plan

### Compensatory Afforestation Fund

#### Why in News?

After accumulating approximately Rs 66,000 crore from user agencies/subcontractors for diverting forest land for non-forest purposes in the last 10 years, the government has finally notified the rules to use the money for expanding forest cover and also for setting up authorities to monitor its proper use for afforestation and conservation.

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#### Rules

1. About 80% of the total money will be used by the states for plantation and other green projects, including assisted natural regeneration, artificial regeneration, forest fire prevention and control operations, soil and moisture conservation works in the forest, silvicultural operations in forests, voluntary relocation of villages from protected areas and improvement of wildlife habitat.
2. Besides, the states will utilise the remaining 20% of the afforestation amount for 11 listed works for strengthening of the forest and wildlife related infrastructure. The list includes survey and mapping of forest areas for forest fire control, compensatory



afforestation works, soil and moisture conservation; casual engagement of local people to assist regular staff of state forest department; construction, upgradation and maintenance of inspection paths, forest roads in forest area and independent concurrent monitoring and evaluation and third party monitoring of various works, among others.

- 3. However, the money cannot be utilised for activities such as medical expenses to regular staff of state forest department, payment of salary, payment of legal services, travelling allowances, going on foreign visits, expansion and upgradation of zoo and wildlife safari, among other things.
- 4. The rules also state that all these activities should be taken up in consultation with the Gram Sabha or Village Forest Management Committee.

Mosquito Terminator

- ✓ A special train which will help in preventing mosquito breeding along the railway tracks in Delhi was jointly flagged off by the Delhi Division of Northern Railway and South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC).
- ✓ **The 'Mosquito Terminator on Wheels'** will cover a distance of 150 km in each cycle over a period of two days.
- ✓ The train has been envisaged to control and mitigate the menace of mosquito breeding in the burrow pits alongside railway tracks, as a measure to contribute towards public health and, more importantly, for the health safety of people residing at places

Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF) Act 2016

- The Act was passed to restore forest cover in the country, which was lost due to diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes like mining and industrial use.
- The CAF Act, 2016 has the provision for creating a national fund with contributions from user agencies—any person, organisation, company or department of the Central Government or state government making a request for diversion or de-notification of forest land for non-forest purpose.
- According to the Act, the fund will be used for “compensatory afforestation, additional compensatory afforestation, penal compensatory afforestation, net present value, catchment area treatment plan or any money for compliance of conditions stipulated by the Central Government while **according approval under the provisions of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.**”

PEPPER IT WITH CAMPA, ICFRE, National afforestation programme, UNCCD

RUCO (Repurpose Used Cooking Oil)

In News

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) launched RUCO (Repurpose Used Cooking Oil), an initiative that will enable collection and conversion of used cooking oil to bio-diesel.

Details

- Under this initiative, 64 companies at 101 locations have been identified to enable collection of used cooking oil. For instance: **McDonald’s has already started converting used cooking oil to biodiesel from 100 outlets in Mumbai and Pune.**
- The regulator believes India has the potential to recover 220 crore litres of used cooking oil for the production of biodiesel by 2022 through a co-ordinated action. While biodiesel produced from used cooking oil is currently very small, but a robust ecosystem for conversion and collection is rapidly growing in India and will soon reach a sizable scale.
- FSSAI wants businesses using more than 100 litres of oil for frying, to maintain a stock register and ensure that UCO is handed over to only registered collecting agencies.

PEPPER IT WITH Standards for used cooking oil, Total Polar Compounds in cooking oil, Biodiesel Association of India

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- According to FSSAI regulations, the maximum permissible limits for Total Polar Compounds (TPC) have been set at 25 per cent, beyond which the cooking oil is unsafe for consumption.
- FSSAI has additionally launched a micro-site to monitor the progress of the collection and conversion of used cooking oil into biodiesel.

### Biodiesel

Biodiesel is an alternative fuel similar **to conventional or 'fossil' diesel**. Biodiesel can be produced from straight vegetable oil, animal oil/fats, tallow and waste cooking oil. The process used to convert these oils to Biodiesel is called transesterification.

Biodiesel has many environmentally beneficial properties. The main benefit of biodiesel is **that it can be described as 'carbon neutral'**. This means that the fuel produces no net output of carbon in the form of carbon dioxide (CO2). This effect occurs because when the oil crop grows it absorbs the same amount of CO2 as is released when the fuel is combusted.

## World-class interpretation centre to come up in Bhitarkanika

### In News

The Odisha government has decided to set up a state-of-the-art interpretation centre at Bhitarkanika National Park to showcase its flora, fauna and rich biodiversity.

At present, the national park has an interpretation centre at Dangmal but it has proved to be inadequate in preserving the vast reserve of the finest biodiversity hotspots of the state.

- ❖ The project, which has been approved under the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Programme (ICZMP), will be taken up at an estimated cost of Rs 3 crore.
- ❖ The conservation measures for protecting crocodiles in their natural habitat and preserving the rich mangrove diversity in Bhitarkanika wetland sites will be exhibited at the proposed centre.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Integrated Coastal Zone Management Programme, Society of Integrated Coastal Management, Ramsar Sites, Crocodile, Mangroves

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### Significance

The ICZMP-funded centre that is coming up will cater to the needs of the researchers for an in-depth study of Bhitarkanika's rich reserve of flora and fauna. It will also be of interest to visitors who throng the internationally-acclaimed Ramsar wetland site.

It could be a major attraction for both domestic and international tourists. The national **park is said to house 70 per cent of the country's estuarine crocodile** or saltwater crocodiles, conservation of which was started way back in 1975. The crocodile population at Bhitarkanika is estimated to be 1698 as per the latest census. The park is also famous for its mangroves, turtles and migratory birds.

## India bans pet coke import for use as fuel

### Why in News?

India banned the import of pet coke for use as fuel, but shipments for use as feedstock in some industries was allowed. Usage of pet coke, a dirtier alternative to coal, in the energy-hungry country has come under scrutiny due to rising pollution levels in major cities.

Import of pet coke is allowed for only cement, lime kiln, calcium carbide and gasification industries, when used as the feedstock or in the manufacturing process on actual user condition.

### Petcoke

- It is a dark solid carbon material that emits 11 per cent more greenhouse gases than coal.

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- Petcoke is a byproduct created when bitumen found in tar sands, like those in Alberta, Canada, is refined into crude oil. Bitumen contains a higher number of **carbon atoms than regular oil and it's these atoms**, extracted from large hydrocarbon molecules using heat, that go on to form petcoke.
- Petcoke is an extremely stable fuel which means there is little risk of combustion during transportation, but due to its high carbon content when it does combust it releases up to 10% more CO2 per unit of energy than normal coal.
- Increased pollution controls are required during petcoke combustion to capture the excess sulphur found in low grade petcoke. The heavy metal content of petcoke has also left many worried, both at the effects of releasing it into the air when petcoke is burned, and the implications it has for the local environment during storage.
- Despite the environmental concerns connected to the manufacture and use of petcoke, it remains popular due its cost effectiveness. **It's inexpensive to manufacture yet easily exported**, and provides an attractive source of cheap fuel for developing nations.
- As the world's largest consumer of pet coke, India imports over half its annual pet coke consumption of about 27 million tonnes, mainly from the United States.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 bio-ethanol, BS norms, Hydrogen fuel, World biofuel day, ethanol blending

**Colour for Registration Mark of Battery Operated Vehicles**

Why in News?

All Battery Operated Vehicles will now exhibit their registration mark in Yellow colour on Green background for transport vehicles and for all other cases, in White colour on Green background.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has notified amendments to Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989 to this effect.

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SC approves coloured stickers on vehicles to indicate nature of fuel

The Supreme Court recently accepted the suggestions of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) to have hologram-based coloured stickers on vehicles which would indicate the nature of fuel being used in NCR region.

The MoRTH said that hologram-based sticker of light-blue colour will be used for petrol and CNG run vehicles while similar sticker of orange colour would be placed on diesel vehicles.

**Rajasthan first State to implement biofuel policy**

Rajasthan has become the first State in the country to implement the national policy on biofuels. The desert State will lay emphasis on increasing production of oilseeds and establish a Centre for Excellence in Udaipur to promote research in the fields of alternative fuels and energy resources.

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The policy on biofuels seeks to help farmers dispose of their surplus stock in an economic **manner and reduce the country's oil import dependence**. It has expanded the scope of raw material for ethanol production by allowing use of sugarcane juice, sugar containing materials, starch containing materials and damaged foodgrains like wheat, broken rice and rotten potatoes for ethanol production.

World Biofuel Day

It is observed every year on August 10 to create awareness about the importance of non-fossil fuels as an alternative to conventional fossil fuels. The World Biofuel Day is being observed by **the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas for the last three years**. "World Biofuel Day 2018" event was organized in New Delhi.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 Bioethanol, Ethanol plant Haryana, National Policy on biofuels, Bio-CNG plant, Generations of biofuel

**Kerala floods declared calamity of 'severe nature'**

The massive flood in Kerala has been declared a calamity of a “severe nature” . When a calamity is declared to be of 'rare severity'/'severe nature' support to the state government is provided at the national level. The Centre also considers additional assistance from the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF).

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A Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) is set up, with the corpus shared 3:1 between Centre and state. When resources in the CRF are inadequate, additional assistance is considered from the National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF), funded 100 per cent by the Centre. Relief in repayment of loans or for grant of fresh loans to the persons affected on concessional terms, too, is considered once a calamity is declared "severe".

Kerala Heritage Rescue Initiative

- The ICOMOS, a global monument conservation body, has launched an initiative to assess the damage to the rich cultural and built heritage in flood-devastated Kerala and set up an emergency response platform.
- The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is a prestigious non-government organisation dedicated to promoting the application of theory, methodology and scientific techniques for conservation of architectural and archaeological heritage across the world.
- ICOMOS is also an advisory body to the UNESCO for cultural heritage, in particular for implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

- ✓ As per the Disaster Management Act, 2005, **“disaster”** means a catastrophe, mishap, calamity or grave occurrence in any area, arising from natural or man-made causes, or by accident or negligence which results in substantial loss of life or human suffering or damage to, and destruction of, property, or damage to, or degradation of, environment, and is of such a nature or magnitude as to be beyond the coping capacity of the community of the affected area.
- ✓ A natural disaster includes earthquake, flood, landslide, cyclone, tsunami, urban flood, heatwave; a man-made disaster can be nuclear, biological and chemical. There is no provision, executive or legal, to declare a natural calamity as a national calamity.
- ✓ The 10th Finance Commission (1995-2000) examined a proposal that a disaster be termed “a national calamity of rarest severity” if it affects one-third of the population of a state.
- ✓ **The panel did not define a “calamity of rare severity” but stated that a calamity of rare severity would necessarily have to be adjudged on a case-to-case basis taking into account, inter-alia, the intensity and magnitude of the calamity, level of assistance needed, the capacity of the state to tackle the problem, the alternatives and flexibility available within the plans to provide succour and relief, etc.**

Operation Madad

- o The Southern Naval command called off its 14-day long rescue operations in the flood-hit Kerala, saying there were no more requests for evacuation as water is receding in affected areas.
- o Naval personnel rescued a total of 16,005 people during 'Operation Madad', launched on 9 August for assisting the state administration and undertaking disaster relief operations.
- o According to the Disaster Management State Control room, 231 people have lost their lives and 32 are missing in flood-related incidents since 8 August. Nearly 14.50 lakh people belonging to 3.91 lakh families are still lodged in 3,879 relief camps across the state.

PEPPER IT WITH Typhoon, Hurricane, Cyclone, WMO, SFDRR, Senadai Framework, Stafford Act of USA

## Thematic Reports on Sustainable Development in Indian Himalayan Region

### Why in News?

Recognizing the uniqueness of the Himalayas and the challenges for sustainable development, NITI Aayog had set up 5 Working Groups (WGs) to prepare a roadmap for actions in 5 thematic areas.

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The themes include: Inventory and Revival of Springs in Himalayas for Water Security, Sustainable Tourism in Indian Himalayan Region, Transformative Approach to Shifting Cultivation, Strengthening Skill & Entrepreneurship Landscape in Himalayas and Data/Information for Informed Decision Making. The reports from the five working groups discuss the significance, the challenges, the ongoing actions and a future roadmap.

The reports lists challenges in all 5 thematic areas

- Nearly 30% of springs crucial to water security of people are drying and 50% have reported reduced discharge.
- Himalayan Tourism growing annually at 6.8% has created huge challenge related to solid waste, water, traffic, loss of bio-cultural diversity etc. With the projected arrival of tourists in IHR States to more than double by 2025, urgent actions will be needed to address these issues in addition to other environmental and social issues.
- In the north eastern States, thousands of the households continue to practice slash and burn (shifting cultivation) that need to be addressed in view of ecological, food and nutritional security.
- Predominantly unskilled workforce remains a challenge for the mountains as well that need high priority to address migration of youths. Also challenges related to data availability, data authenticity, compatibility, data quality, validation, user charges for Himalayan States need addressal for informed decision making at different levels of governance.

### **India's first biofuel flight**

India's first ever biojet fuel-powered flight was successfully tested between Dehradun and Delhi.

The 45-minute flight of the 75-seater SpiceJet Bombardier Q400 aircraft took off from Dehradun's Jolly Grant airport and successfully landed in Delhi.

The key messages from reports include

- ❖ Spring Mapping and Revival, using 8 steps protocol be taken up across Himalayan States in phased manner.
- ❖ Apply carrying capacity concept to all major tourist destinations.
- ❖ Implement and monitor tourism sector Standards and apply performance based incentives for States faring well on the standards.
- ❖ Assessment of nature & extent of Shifting Cultivation area, improved policy coherence, strengthened tenurial security & improved access to related programs/schemes are key recommendations to transform shifting cultivation.
- ❖ Strengthening of skill & entrepreneurship will require focus on identified priority sectors where mountains have advantage, investment in trainers, assessors and training centers in industry partnership.
- ❖ Having a Central Data Management Agency for Himalayas to provide data with high fidelity scenario while addressing data sharing, access, authenticity and comparability

### United Nations Environment Programme

UN Secretary General Guterres has appointed veteran Indian development economist and UN official Satya S Tripathi as Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the New York Office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

UN Environment is the leading agency at the world body focussed on environment. It works with governments, the private sector, the civil society and with other UN entities and international organisations across the world.

issues will go a long way in addressing data related issues.

Suggestions

The call for actions includes setting up of a Himalayan Authority for coordinated and holistic development of entire Himalayan region and launching of **“Himalaya Calling”: An Awareness to Action Campaign as people’s** movement.

PEPPER IT WITH Himalayan Arc, Fold Mountain, Joji-La, Bara-Lacha, Chang-la, Dihang-Debang

The call for actions also includes suggestions for setting up of Mission on Spring Water Management in Himalayas, National Mission/Program on Transforming Shifting Cultivation in North Eastern States, demand driven network of skill and entrepreneurship development Centers in Himalayan States, consortium of institutions of high learning for mountain specific research and technology, link with Hindukush Himalaya Monitoring and Assessment program (HIMAP) and Setting up Central Data Management Agency for Himalayan Database at GB Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development.

BNHS to open its regional centre

Why in News?

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), one of India’s premier avian research institutes, will start operating its regional centre on the campus of Wetland Research and Training Centre near Chilika Lake.

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The BNHS has been active in avian research in the Chilika Lake, which hosts nearly one million birds with 97 species being intercontinental migratory in nature during the winter season. The centre will carry out research on avian disease by collecting samples and monitor the Nalabana Bird Sanctuary.

BNHS

- The Bombay Natural History Society, founded in 1883, is one of the largest non-governmental organisations in India engaged in conservation and biodiversity research. It supports many research efforts through grants and publishes the Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society.
- BNHS is the partner of BirdLife International in India. It has been designated as a 'Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation' by the Department of Science and Technology.
- IT consultancy firm Accenture and the Bombay Natural History Society have developed Internet of Birds platform that identifies bird species found in India using Artificial Intelligence technology, including machine learning and computer vision, from digital photos that are uploaded by the public.

Kalijai Temple  
Located on an island in the Chilika Lake, Kalijai Temple is one of the famous attractions. The temple worships Goddess Kalijai. The deity is highly revered among the locals as well as in their folklores and fables. Makar Sankranti is celebrated with great pomp and cheer at the temple that attracts numerous travelers & devotees.

Chilika Lake

- Asia's largest brackish water lagoon is nestled in the heart of the coastal Odisha. It extends from Bhusandpur in Puri district in the North to Rambha-Malud in Ganjan district in the South, separated from the Bay of Bengal by a 60 km long narrow strip of marshy islands and sand-flats.
- Because of its rich bio-diversity and socio-economic importance, Chilika was designated as a Ramsar site in 1981 to afford better protection.
- Chilika is recognized as one of the most important wetlands in the world because it is home to a phenomenal variety of birds.

PEPPER IT WITH AICHI Targets of Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Neknampur lake, Lakes of Ounianga, Ameenpur lake

- The large Nalabana Island (Forest of Reeds) in the lagoon area was declared a bird sanctuary in 1987. The core area of about 9 sq km attracts around 400,000 waterfowls of different species. Often underwater, the island gradually emerges with the outset of summer.
- Another major attraction at Chilika is Irrawady dolphins which are often spotted off Satpada Island. Satpada, bounded by the lagoon on three sides, offers an excellent view.

### Cheetah reintroduction project

#### Why in News?

The Madhya Pradesh forest department wrote to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) to revive the plan to reintroduce cheetahs in the **State's** Nauradehi sanctuary (Sagar district). The ambitious project, conceived in 2009, had hit a roadblock for want of funds.

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- The Wildlife Institute of India at Dehradun had prepared a ₹260-crore cheetah re-introduction project earlier. The proposal was to put the felines in the enclosure with huge boundary walls before being released in the wild.
- According to the earlier action plan, around 20 cheetahs were to be translocated to Nauradehi from Namibia in Africa.
- Nauradehi was found to be the most suitable area for the cheetahs as its forests are not very dense to restrict the fast movement of the spotted cat. Besides, the prey base for cheetahs is also in abundance at the sanctuary.

**The country's last** spotted feline died in Chhattisgarh in 1947. Later, the cheetah — which is the fastest land animal — was declared extinct in India in 1952.

#### NTCA

The National Tiger Conservation Authority is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change constituted under enabling provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2006, for strengthening tiger conservation, as per powers and functions assigned to it under the said Act.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Project Tiger, Orange National Park, Sangai Deer, Flamingo Sanctuary, Keibul Lamjao National park

### Corbett Tiger Reserve

#### In News

**Pointing to an “alarming trend” of tiger deaths**, the Uttarakhand High Court asked if the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) could take over the **management of the Corbett Tiger Reserve “as an interim measure”**. The court also asked the NTCA if the tigers could be relocated **“to save them from poaching”**.

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- The division bench expressed dissatisfaction **with the state government's inaction in dealing with tiger poaching incidents**. It said the state government had failed to constitute a Special Tiger Protection Force despite **the court's order**.
- **Making a note of the “dwindling” tiger population in Corbett and Rajaji tiger reserves**, and pointing out the alleged involvement of senior forest department **officials in a tiger poaching incident in 2016**, it asked the NTCA to suggest **“whether few tigers can be relocated/ shifted to save them from poaching/ killing to other well-managed national parks/sanctuaries**.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Birdlife International, Mangroves, Royal Bengal Tigers, Kanha Tiger Reserve, Orange National Park, Nagarhole National Park, Ranthambhore National Park, Periyar National Park

### Corbett Tiger Reserve

- o In 1936 Corbett attained the distinction of becoming the first National Park to be established in mainland Asia. The park was then named as the 'Hailey National Park' and was later renamed as 'Corbett National Park' after James Edward Corbett the noted hunter turned conservationist of the area. The area came under 'Project Tiger' in 1971 when Gov. of India launched this ambitious conservation project.
- o Corbett National Park covers an area of 521 sq. km and together with the neighboring Sonanadi Wildlife Sanctuary and Reserve Forest areas, forms the Corbett Tiger Reserve. Geographically it is located between the Shiwalik Himalayas and the terai.
- o The most famous of Corbett's wild residents are the Royal Bengal Tiger and the Asiatic Elephant. In addition to that with over 550 species of avifauna Corbett is one of the richest bird regions of the Country and has been declared as an 'Important Bird Area' (IBA) by Birdlife International.

## India's National Redd+ Strategy

### About

Complying with the UNFCCC decisions on REDD+, India has prepared its National REDD+ Strategy. The Strategy builds upon existing national circumstances which have been updated in line with **India's National Action Plan on Climate Change, Green India Mission and India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)** to UNFCCC. The National REDD+ Strategy will soon be communicated to the UNFCCC.

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REDD+ strategy will help the country to fulfill its NDC commitments and will also contribute to the livelihood of the forest dependent population. National Governing Council of REDD+ chaired by the Union Environment Minister at the national level and two technical committees, headed by DG, Forest Survey of India and DG, ICFRE are being established for supporting the REDD+ implementation in the country.

### Significance

- The cooperation and involvement of the tribes, other forest dwelling people and the society as a whole is crucial for the implementation of the REDD+ strategy.
- The well-being of our forests is essential for a healthy living environment in the country. REDD+ activities will help in sustainable livelihood of local communities and also in conservation of biodiversity.
- Paris agreement on climate change also recognizes role of forests in climate change mitigation and calls upon country Parties to take action to implement and support REDD+.
- India has communicated in its Nationally Determined Contribution under Paris Agreement, that it will capture 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of Carbon dioxide through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.
- **India's** first biennial update report to UNFCCC has revealed that forests in India capture about 12% of India's total GHG emissions. Thus, forestry sector in India is making a positive cost effective contribution for climate change mitigation.

### All-women expedition to Mt. Manirang

- ✓ The expedition commemorates the silver jubilee of 1993 Women Everest expedition.
- ✓ Manirang is one of the highest mountains in Himachal Pradesh. It lies on the border between Kinnour and Lahaul and Spiti district.
- ✓ Among the High altitude passes in the Himalayan region of Spiti valley, Manirang Pass is regarded as the most remote and hard even today.
- ✓ This pass is reckoned to be one of the least explored mountain passes in the Indian Himalaya.
- ✓ Mount Manirang (Altitude: 6593 mtr. / 21625.04 ft) is known as the crown of the Spiti valley, is an ultimate challenge for the mountaineers.

### REDD+

- o In simple terms, REDD+ means "Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and



forest Degradation”, **conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management** of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries.

- o REDD+ aims to achieve climate change mitigation by incentivizing forest conservation.
- o The strategy seeks to address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and also developing a roadmap for enhancement of forest carbon stocks and achieving sustainable management of forests.

PEPPER IT WITH

UNDP, UNEP, ICFRE, UNFCCC, Nationally Determined Contribution, Paris Agreement, COP

REDD

- ❖ The United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries was launched in 2008 and builds on the convening role and technical expertise of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the UNDP and the UNEP.
- ❖ The UN-REDD Programme supports nationally led REDD+ processes and promotes the informed and meaningful involvement of all stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent communities, in national and international REDD+ implementation.

Nilgiri tahr

Why in News?

A recent census has revealed that the population of the Nilgiri tahr (an endangered mountain goat) at the Mukurthi National Park (Tamil Nadu) has grown by an impressive 18% in the last two years, from 480 to 568.

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Apart from the increase in numbers, the sex ratio, too, was encouraging. There are two adult females for every male. This indicates a viable breeding population, and hints at further population growth.

Threats to Nilgiri Tahr

Researchers point to the continuing spread of invasive species of flora, such as wattle and pine, and exotic weeds like scotch broom (*Cystisus scoparius*) and gorse, which end up diminishing **grazing land. The rise in the animals’ population** has led to a few herds migrating out of the national park, into the erstwhile Nilgiris South Forest Division.

PEPPER IT WITH

Shola Grassland, Mukurthi National Park, Bandipur national park, Periyar national park, Gaur, Lion-tailed macaque

Nilgiri Tahr

The Nilgiri tahr inhabits the open montane grassland habitats at elevations from 1200 to 2600 m (generally above 2000 m) of the South Western Ghats. Their range extends over 400 km from north to south, and Eravikulam National Park is home to the largest population. The other significant concentration is in the Nilgiri Hills, with smaller populations in the Anamalai Hills, Periyar National Park, Palni Hills and other pockets in **the Western Ghats south of Eravikulam, almost to India’s southern tip.** It is listed in Schedule I of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and as Endangered on IUCN Red List.

GI logo, tagline launched

In News

Commerce and Industry Ministry launched a logo and tagline for Geographical Indications (GI) to increase awareness about intellectual property rights (IPRs) in the country.

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- A GI product is primarily an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicraft and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory.
- “Invaluable Treasures of Incredible India” is the tagline, and a tricolour logo for geographical indication (GI) certified products.
- A total of 320 products have been conferred the GI status in India so far. Karnataka comes first with 38 GI products, followed by Maharashtra which has 32 products. Tamil Nadu comes third with 25 GI products.



Kadaknath chicken meat from Jhabua gets GI tag

Six years after it applied for the Geographical Indications (GI) tag for Kadaknath, a chicken breed whose black meat is in demand in some quarters, Madhya Pradesh has got the coveted label. The protein-rich meat of Kadaknath, chicks and eggs are sold at a much higher rate than other varieties of chicken. The breed is native to Jhabua, Alirajpur and parts of Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Adilabad dikra, Warangal dhurries, Banglar rosogolla, Gobindobhog rice, Nilambur teak, Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property

**Fields Medal**

Why in News?

Akshay Venkatesh, a renowned Indian-Australian mathematician, is one of four winners of mathematics’ prestigious Fields medal, known as the Nobel Prize for math.

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The other three winners are: Caucher Birkar, a Cambridge University professor of Iranian Kurdish origin; Germany’s Peter Scholze, who teaches at the University of Bonn and Alessio Figalli, an Italian mathematician at ETH Zurich.

About Fields Medal

- The Fields medals are awarded every four years to the most promising mathematicians under the age of 40.
- The prize was inaugurated in 1932 at the request of Canadian mathematician John Charles Fields, who ran the 1924 Mathematics Congress in Toronto.
- Each winner receives a 15,000 Canadian-dollar cash prize. At least two, and preferably four people, are always honoured in the award ceremony.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Kalidas samman, Home Ministers Special Operation Medal, World Food Prize, Nikkei Asia Prize, Legion d'honneur

**IMPRINT-2**

In News

For advancing research in the high education institutions, the government has approved 122 new research projects at a cost of Rs 112 crore under IMPRINT-2 covering Energy, Security, Healthcare, Advanced

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Materials, ICT and Security/Defence domains.

IMPRINT

- IMPRINT is the first of its kind MHRD supported Pan-IIT + IISc joint initiative, now open for private institutions too, to address the major science and engineering challenges that India must address and

PEPPER IT WITH  
Innovate India Platform, AIM, Atal New India Challenge, iCREATE facility, Mentor India Campaign

champion to enable, empower and embolden the nation for inclusive growth and self-reliance.

- IMPRINT provides the overarching vision that guides research into areas that are predominantly socially relevant.
- This initiative with twofold mandate is aimed at:
  - a) Developing new engineering education policy
  - b) Creating a road map to pursue engineering challenges

### Scrub typhus is key encephalitis cause in eastern U.P.

#### Why in News?

Three years of data from Gorakhpur's Baba Raghav Das (BRD) Medical College has confirmed that the majority of Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) patients admitted to the hospital each year have scrub typhus. This finding is important, given that scrub typhus can be treated easily if detected early.

Further evidence for the role of scrub typhus comes from a study of trombiculid mites in eastern Uttar Pradesh by Chennai's Vector Control Research Centre (VCRC). They found that the mites carried *Orientia tsutsugumashi*, the bacterium which causes scrub typhus.

#### Scrub typhus

Also known as bush typhus, is a disease caused by a bacteria called *Orientia tsutsugumashi*. Scrub typhus is spread to people through bites of infected chiggers (larval mites). The most common symptoms of scrub typhus include fever, headache, body aches, and sometimes rash. Most cases of scrub typhus occur in rural areas of Southeast Asia, Indonesia, China, Japan, India, and northern Australia. Anyone living in or traveling to areas where scrub typhus is found could get infected.

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PEPPER IT WITH  
Lymphatic Filariasis, Nipah virus, Replace campaign (WHO), Zika virus

### World's first thermal battery plant

#### Why in News?

The world's first-ever facility to create thermal batteries was inaugurated in Andhra Pradesh. The plant will see thermal batteries being manufactured by Bharat Energy Storage Technology Private Limited (BEST).

These batteries are based on alternative sources of energy production, and their presence is expected to reduce the dependence on fossil fuels.

#### Significance

- Through thermal batteries, BEST will look to store energy that can power telecommunications, commercial enterprises, electric vehicles as well as charging systems. Not only will it help create renewable energy, but these batteries are also expected to help provide energy to remote areas.
- By 2025, BEST aims to expand the capacity of its thermal battery plant to 10GW. This technology, patented in India by Dr Patrick Glynn in 2016, scores over Li-ion batteries due to lesser heat sensitivity, as well as a smaller carbon footprint.
- In addition, these also outperform solar panels, which are expensive to maintain, and highly weather-dependent during operation.
- While conforming to the Indian government's 2030 e-vehicles goal, BEST also plans to make batteries that are completely free of hard metal or inflammable substances, so that re-usable materials could make up 95 per cent of all thermal batteries.

#### Thermal battery technology: How it works

Conventional battery technology is based on the system of charging/discharging cycles that are driven by electricity. Thermal batteries use thermal energy to operate, i.e., the energy created by temperature differences. Therefore, the energy transfer in thermal

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batteries helps store heat when heat travels from one part of the battery setup to the other. For that to happen, a thermal battery consists of two parts: a cool zone known as sink, and a hot source called source. Both these sides consist of compounds known as phase-changing materials (PCMs), which can change their state of matter on the basis of a physical/chemical reaction.

When the sink of a thermal battery receives heat, it transforms physically or chemically, thereby storing energy, while the source cools down. During operation, the sink is cooled down, so it releases the stored energy, while the source heats up. Depending on the nature of the battery, the system can derive heat from any source, which makes a thermal battery very versatile.

Applications

- o Given the positives from thermal battery technology, its main application lies in the possible integration with power grids that can help industrial demand, while also supporting public transport systems and telecom grids.
- o In the field of power transmission thermal batteries will be able to function as long as there is a heat source to drive their operation. This could help solve power issues in remote areas, and also address rising energy requirements from regional or national grids.
- o Power-intensive industries will also be major beneficiaries, and the transformation will mean reduced dependence on fossil fuels for energy. Telecom infrastructure is also a target area, as thermal batteries will help maintain signal strength and network connectivity. This, in turn, could also improve internet penetration and ultra-fast mobile services.
- o Another area that could receive impetus from thermal batteries is that of electric vehicles. Government had stated that by 2030, **India's automobile industry will** completely rely on manufacturing of e-vehicles. Currently, Tata and Mahindra are the only domestic firms working on such transport systems. With thermal battery technology, car makers could consider going green, and deploy clean energy at minimal maintenance costs. At the same time, e-vehicles could also derive charging power from stations that run on thermal batteries.
- o In AP plant, BEST aims to setup an electric truck that can run up to 800kms on a single charge.

Microcrystallites

- ✓ Researchers from Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR), Bengaluru, have developed a new type of gold in the form of very small crystals — microcrystallites.
- ✓ The microcrystal gold has been found to be nobler than gold as it do not dissolve in mercury and Aqua regia (a mixture of nitric acid and hydrochloric acid), and showed the least interaction with copper.
- ✓ The microcrystallites were synthesised by decomposing an organic complex containing gold and other ions under controlled conditions.
- ✓ The newly formed microcrystallites, about 3 micrometre in length were found to be of a different crystal structure. Normal gold has a (face-centered) cubic structure, while the new ones exhibit deformed cubic structure — tetragonal and orthorhombic cells.

PEPPER IT WITH BEST, National Wind-Solar Hybrid Policy, Offshore wind energy project of India, International Solar Alliance, Shakti Sthala

Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT)

Why in News?

Astronomers have used an Indian telescope to discover the most distant radio galaxy ever known, located at a distance of 12 billion light-years. The galaxy, from a time when the universe was only 7% of its current age was found using the Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT) in Pune.

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GMRT is an array of thirty fully steerable parabolic radio telescopes of 45-metre diameter. It is operated by the National Centre for Radio Astrophysics. The distance to this galaxy was determined using the Gemini North telescope in Hawaii and the Large Binocular Telescope in Arizona.

### Radio Galaxies

- Bright radio galaxies harbour supermassive black holes. Radio galaxies are very rare objects in the universe.
- They are colossal galaxies with a supermassive black hole in their centre that actively accretes gas and dust from its surroundings.
- This activity initiates the launch of high-energy jet streams, which are capable of accelerating charged particles around the supermassive black hole to almost the speed of light.
- The discovery of such galaxies at extremely large distances is important for our understanding of the formation and evolution of galaxies.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Tiangong satellite,  
Beidou, IRNSS, Galileo,  
Chandrayaan

### New Horizons Mission

#### In News

The New Horizons spacecraft has spotted an ultraviolet glow that seems to emanate from near the edge of the solar system. That glow may come from a long-sought wall of hydrogen that represents where the **sun's influence wanes**.

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- According to the latest findings, the barrier is actually a vast amount of trapped hydrogen atoms caught up in the solar wind of our star. These produce waves of ultraviolet light in a very distinctive way, which have been detected by the sensors aboard the New Horizons interplanetary space probe.
- Astronomers first glimpsed the phenomenon around 30 years ago, when faint signs were detected by both Voyager probes.
- Nasa's New Horizons spacecraft, which passed Pluto in 2015, has been using its on-board detector, known as 'Alice', to look for traces of the celestial interaction.
- New Horizons is the first spacecraft with the capability to verify Voyager's observations. It has scanned the ultraviolet sky seven times between 2007- 2017.

Gaofen-11

China launched Gaofen-11, an optical remote sensing satellite, as part of its high-resolution Earth observation project. It will aid in the Belt and Road Initiative.

It was the 282nd flight mission by a Long March carrier rocket. The satellite can be used for land survey, urban planning, road network design, agriculture, and disaster relief.

#### New Horizon Mission Overview

Launched: Jan. 19, 2006

Pluto Flyby: July 14, 2015

Goal: Answer questions about Pluto, its moons, and Kuiper Belt objects.

Key Findings:

- ❖ Mountains to Moons: Multiple Discoveries
- ❖ Flowing Ices on Pluto

PEPPER IT WITH  
Voyager probes, PARKER  
solar probe, TESS  
satellite

## Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory (LIGO)

### Why in News?

The Environment Ministry has allowed scientists to test the suitability of **land in Maharashtra's Hingoli district** to host the India wing of the ambitious Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory (LIGO) project. This is a key step to establishing the one-of-its-kind astronomical observatory.

The project involves constructing a network of L-shaped arms, each four kilometres long, which can detect even the faintest ripples from cosmic explosions millions of light years away. However the construction of such a large, sensitive device (there are only three of its kind in the world) requires an extremely flat surface.

### Network of detectors

- The LIGO project operates three gravitational-wave (GW) detectors. Two are at Hanford in the State of Washington, north-western USA, and one is at Livingston in Louisiana, south-eastern USA. Currently these observatories are being upgraded to their advanced configurations.
- The proposed LIGO-India project aims to move one Advanced LIGO detector from Hanford to India. The LIGO-India project is an international collaboration between the LIGO Laboratory and three lead institutions in the LIGO-India consortium: Institute of Plasma Research, Gandhinagar; IUCAA, Pune; and Raja Ramanna Centre for Advanced Technology, Indore.
- The LIGO lab would provide the complete design and all the key detector components. Indian scientists would provide the infrastructure to install the detector and it would be operated jointly by LIGO-India and the LIGO-Lab.
- The project, piloted by the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Department of Science and Technology (DST), reportedly costs ₹1,200 crore and is expected to be ready by 2025.

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PEPPER IT WITH  
Gravitational Waves, CERN,  
Black Hole, Einstein theory of  
relativity, Antrix

## Scientists find ice in the darkest and coldest parts of the Moon

### In News

Scientists have found frozen water deposits in the darkest and coldest parts of the Moon's polar regions using data from the Chandrayaan-I spacecraft, that was launched by India 10 years ago.

The ice deposits are patchily distributed and could possibly be ancient.

At the southern pole, most of the ice is concentrated at lunar craters, while the northern pole's ice is more widely, but sparsely spread. Scientists used data from NASA's Moon Mineralogy Mapper (M3) instrument to identify three specific signatures that definitively prove there is water ice at the surface of the Moon.

- M3, aboard the Chandrayaan-1 spacecraft, launched in 2008 by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), was uniquely equipped to confirm the presence of solid ice on the Moon.
- It collected data that not only picked up the reflective properties we would expect from ice, but was able to directly measure the distinctive way its molecules absorb infrared light, so it can differentiate between liquid water or vapor and solid ice.

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### Gaganyaan

An Indian astronaut, be it a man or a woman, will go on a space odyssey by **2022 on board 'Gaganyaan'**, Indian Prime Minister said in his Independence Day address.

When India will celebrate its 75<sup>th</sup> year of **Independence in 2022**, "and if possible even before, an Indian will undertake a manned space mission on board **'Gaganyaan' "carrying the national flag"**.

### Significance

With enough ice sitting at the surface within the top few millimeters, water would possibly be accessible as a resource for future expeditions to explore and even stay on the Moon, and potentially easier to access than the water detected beneath the Moon's surface.

### Chandrayaan-1

- ❖ Government of India approved ISRO's proposal for the first Indian Moon Mission, called Chandrayaan-1 in November 2003.
- ❖ The Chandrayaan-1 mission performed high-resolution remote sensing of the moon in visible, near infrared (NIR), low energy X-rays and high-energy X-ray regions.
- ❖ One of the objectives was to prepare a three-dimensional atlas (with high spatial and altitude resolution) of both near and far side of the moon.
- ❖ It aimed at conducting chemical and mineralogical mapping of the entire lunar surface for distribution of mineral and chemical elements such as Magnesium, Aluminium, Silicon, Calcium, Iron and Titanium as well as high atomic number elements such as Radon, Uranium & Thorium with high spatial resolution.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Relay Satellites,  
Moganite, EPIC Planet,  
Kepler 1649

### OSIRIS-REx spacecraft

#### Why in News?

The OSIRIS-REx spacecraft has begun its final approach toward the big near-Earth asteroid Bennu. The milestone also marks the official start of OSIRIS-REx's "asteroid operations" mission phase.

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#### OSIRIS-REx

- The \$800 million OSIRIS-REx mission (Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, Security, Regolith Explorer) was launched in 2016, from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida.
- The probe will study Bennu (Near Earth Asteroid) from orbit for more than two years, gathering a variety of data. OSIRIS-REx will also spiral down to snag a sizable sample of asteroid material before leaving Bennu in March 2021.
- This cosmic dirt and gravel will come down to Earth in a special return capsule in September 2023.
- Scientists around the world will then study the sample, looking for clues about the solar system's early history and evolution.
- Carbon-rich asteroids such as Bennu are thought to have delivered huge quantities of life's building blocks — complex organic compounds like amino acids — to Earth long ago, along with lots and lots of water. So the Bennu sample could also shed light on the early history of life on our planet.
- In addition, Bennu is a potentially dangerous asteroid that might line up Earth in its crosshairs one day. The data OSIRIS-REx gathers from orbit, as well as details of the space rock's composition and structure gleaned from analysis of the returned sample, could therefore help humanity better defend itself against asteroid threats.

In June, Japan's Hayabusa2 spacecraft arrived in orbit around the near-Earth asteroid Ryugu. Hayabusa2 will also grab samples, which are scheduled to come down to Earth in late 2020.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Trojan Asteroid, 2010 TK7,  
2006 VW139/288P, Bennu  
Asteroid, Psyche Asteroid

### Aeolus Satellite

#### IN News

The European Space Agency (ESA) has successfully launched a satellite that will measure winds around the globe and help improve weather forecasting.

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The Earth Explorer Aeolus satellite was launched into polar orbit on a Vega rocket from Europe's Spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana.

- Named after Aeolus, who in Greek mythology was appointed 'keeper of the winds', the mission is the fifth in the family of ESA's Earth Explorers, which address the most urgent Earth-science questions of our time.
- Aeolus carries one of the most sophisticated instruments ever to be put into orbit. The first of its kind, the Aladin instrument includes revolutionary laser technology to generate pulses of ultraviolet light that are beamed down into the atmosphere to profile the world's winds — a completely new approach to measuring the wind from space.

ICESat-2

NASA is launching a laser-armed satellite next month that will measure (in unprecedented detail) changes in the heights of Earth's polar ice to understand what is causing ice sheets to melt fast.

ICESat-2 will measure the average annual elevation change of land ice covering Greenland and Antarctica to within the width of a pencil, capturing 60,000 measurements every second.

Significance

- o Using revolutionary laser technology, Aeolus will play a key role in our quest to better understand the workings of our atmosphere.
- o It will fill a gap in our knowledge of how the planet functions and demonstrate how cutting-edge technology can be used in space.
- o Highlighted by the World Meteorological Organisation, the lack of direct global wind measurements is one of the major deficits in the Global Observing System. By filling this gap, Aeolus will give scientists the information they need to understand how wind, pressure, temperature and humidity are interlinked.
- o This new mission will provide insight into how the wind influences the exchange of heat and moisture between Earth's surface and the atmosphere — important aspects for understanding climate change.
- o In addition, its data will be used in air-quality models to improve forecasts of dust and other airborne particles that affect public health.

PEPPER IT WITH

Interior Exploration using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy and Heat Transport (InSight), Spitzer telescope, ResourceSat-2A, SpaceX, Super Earth

**BIS to set standards for the service sector**

Why in News?

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has initiated a process to set new standards to measure quality of services offered to consumers across different sectors.

The process was initiated after concerns over lack of standardisation, particularly with regards to after-sales service.

Highlights

- The initial focus will be the 12 champion services sectors identified by the government which include IT, tourism and hospitality, transport and logistics, accounting and finance services, legal services, communication services and construction.
- It has been decided that the BIS will set up a separate 'divisional council' for services in a month's time. Under this, different technical committees will be set up, one for each service. The committees will have various stakeholders such as government officials, experts and industry representatives.
- BIS standards are set to formulate a framework for quality services that should be provided to consumers and also talk about the benchmarks to deal with consumer complaints or after sales service in an effort to ensure quality in the services sector.

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About BIS

- o It came into existence through an Act of Parliament in 1987, with a broadened scope and more powers and functions of erstwhile Indian Standards Institution (ISI).
- o BIS is a national standards body which works under Ministry of Consumer Affairs and is involved in multifarious activities like Standards Formulation, Certification, Product/Schemes, Laboratory Services, International Activities, Consumer - related Activities, Promotional Activities, Training Services, Information services, Sale of Standards & Publications.
- o It works as the WTO-TBT enquiry point for all enquiries except the telecom sector under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) of the World Trade Organization.

Indian economy is classified in three sectors;

(i) Agriculture and allied: It includes Agriculture & Livestock, Forestry & Logging, Fishing and related activities.

(ii) Industry: It includes 'Mining & quarrying', Manufacturing (Registered & Unregistered), Electricity, Gas, Water supply, and Construction.

(iii) Services: It includes 'Trade, hotels, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting', 'Financial, real estate & prof servs', 'Public Administration, defence and other services'.

Way Forward

Service sector is the largest and one of the key sectors of the Indian economy with a huge potential to grow into one of the largest markets of the world. Standards can play a major facilitative role in this regard. It is important that the standardisation needs and priorities of the sector are determined.

PEPPER IT WITH

Trade Facilitation Agreement for Services, Classification of services, National Institute of Training for Standardization

Impact of the Falling rupee on Indian Economy

Why in News?

There is a continuous depreciation of Indian rupee since the past few months. The Indian rupee has been one of the worst performing major emerging market (EM) currencies in 2018, and the worst in Asia-Pacific.

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Reasons behind the depreciation of the Indian rupee against dollar

There are three major reasons. The rise in crude prices, portfolio outflows from India due to the selling of stocks, especially by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), and a growing anticipation of interest rates rising in the US.

Rise in Crude Prices: Brent crude prices have increased from \$70.30 to over \$80 per barrel since the beginning of the new financial year in April. This is mainly due to concerns over supply disruptions after the rise in US tensions with Iran, which contributes 11-12% of OPEC production. As oil prices rise, India's trade deficit will worsen, which can in turn impact the current account deficit.

Foreign Portfolio Investors: Expecting US interest rates to go up, FPIs have taken out Rs 27,000 crore from India in April and May so far, which is over \$4 billion in less than two months. As the US Federal Reserve raises rates further — which is bound to happen — FPIs will prefer to invest in their home country as the arbitrage gain while investing in India and emerging markets will decline. A weakening rupee will also lower returns, which will in turn impact future inflows.

Background?

Rupee's troubles can be traced back to concerns about India's rising current account deficit (CAD). Given that the CAD is likely to remain under pressure, the rupee is likely to remain weak for some time, raising external funding costs for Indian firms even as it feeds into domestic inflation. While almost all emerging markets have witnessed capital

outflows amid interest rate hikes in the US, one pattern stands out. Countries with higher current account deficit appear to have been penalized more.

**India's external vulnerability metrics look far more stable when compared with the taper tantrum of mid-2013, when India was among the worst-hit emerging markets. India's** foreign exchange reserves now provide around 10 months of import cover compared with six months in mid-2013. Besides, India has one of the lowest external debt ratios, when compared with the GDP size, among major emerging market economies.

Impacts

The depreciation of the rupee has the potential to increase domestic inflation through the import route. An already rising crude oil prices will escalate even more once the exchange rate is considered. Oil marketing companies will most likely pass the cost to consumers through fuel price hikes. As fuel permeates almost all sectors of the economy, retail inflation is likely to rise on a broad basis. A sharp rise in inflation will be detrimental to growth, especially when investment is just reviving. The Reserve Bank of India estimated in its monetary policy report in recently that for every 5% fall in rupee, retail inflation will increase by 20 basis points.

- ✓ Under a fixed exchange rate system, devaluation (decrease) and revaluation (increase) are official changes in the value of a country's currency relative to other currencies.
- ✓ Under a floating exchange rate system, market forces generate changes in the value of the currency, known as currency depreciation or appreciation.
- ✓ The conversion rate is the ratio between two currencies which shows how much of one money exchanges for another. A conversion rate is also known as foreign exchange rates. It reflects the supply and demand for each currency.
- ✓ Because most currencies trade widely on global financial markets, conversion rates fluctuate regularly. This constant change can impact stock markets, interest rates, and economic activity worldwide.

What is the solution for a weak rupee?

The premise that a weakening rupee is needs to increase the competitiveness of domestic industry is valid since exports tend to benefit from a falling exchange rate. However, a sudden fall in the currency may shake faith in the economy and therefore the RBI is known to intervene in the forex market to slow the fall. The short-term solution is this intervention by the central bank. Over a longer period, reducing dependence on imports and attracting consistent foreign direct investment through friendly policies may make the currency less vulnerable to external shocks.

Conclusion

Though we cannot control some factors like increasing crude oil prices, trade wars etc., we can take some steps to strengthen rupee or at least to prevent further fall of the value of our currency. Steps to retain trust of investors, to attract more FDI, to reduce the dependence on imports by encouraging domestic manufacturing industry, investing more on the development of renewable energy resources to reduce crude oil imports will help in strengthening rupee.

PEPPER IT WITH

Current Account Deficit,  
Article IV of IMF charter,  
Types of exchange rate system

**ILO: India Wage Report**

Why in News?

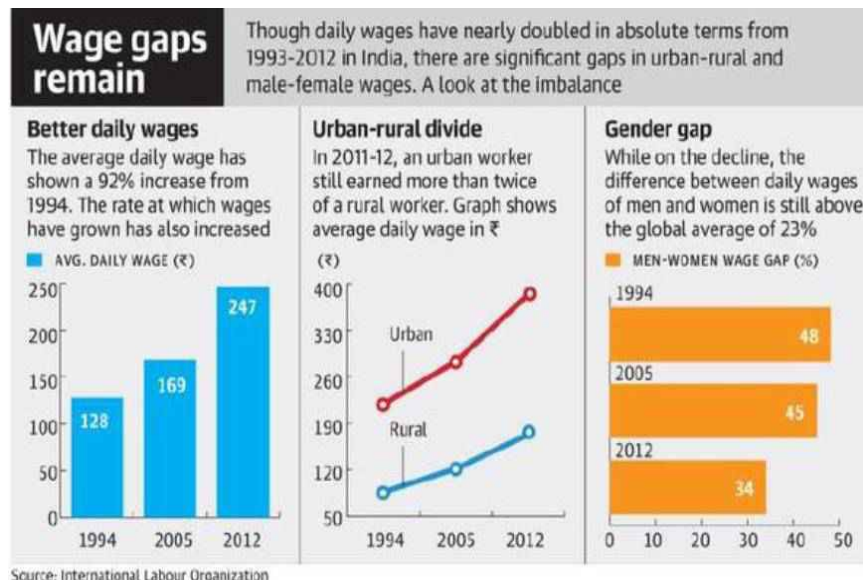
According to India Wage Report: Wage policies for decent work and inclusive growth, published by the *International Labour Organization* **India's economy in the past two decades has seen an annual average GDP rate of 7% but low pay and inequality persists.**

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The ILO has called for stronger implementation of minimum wage laws and strengthening of the frameworks for collective bargaining by workers. This is essential to combat persistent low pay in some sectors and to bridge the wage gaps between rural and urban, male and female, and regular and casual workers.

### Statistics:

- Overall, in 2009-10, a third of all of wage workers were paid less than the national minimum wage, which is merely indicative and not legally binding. That includes 41% of all casual workers and 15% of salaried workers.



- In 2011-12, the average wage in India was about Rs 247 rupees a day, almost double the 1993-94 figure of Rs128. However, average labour productivity (as measured by GDP per worker) increased more rapidly than real average wages. **Thus, India's labour share** — or the proportion of national income which goes into labour compensation, as opposed to capital or landowners — has declined.
- As per the Employment and Unemployment Survey (EUS) only a limited number of regular/salaried workers, mostly in the urban areas, and the highly-skilled professionals earned higher average wages.
- Although, the average labour productivity (as measured by the GDP per worker has increased), the labour share, which is the proportion of national income that goes into labour compensation has declined from 38.5% in 1981 to 35.4% in 2013.
- The NSSO estimates also indicate that the real average daily wage has doubled between 1993-94 and 2011-12. Wages have seen a faster growth for the most vulnerable categories including workers in rural areas, informal employment, casual workers, female workers and low-paid occupations. Nevertheless, there remain huge disparities.

### Wage policies for decent work and inclusive growth

- Though India was one of the first countries to introduce minimum wages through the Minimum Wages Act in 1948, there exist challenges in providing a universal wage floor for all workers. The minimum wage system in India is quite complex.
- The minimum wages are set by state governments for employees in selected **'scheduled' employment and this has led to 1709 different rates across the country.** As the coverage is not complete these rates are applicable for an estimated of 66 % of wage workers.
- A national minimum wage floor was introduced in the 1990s which has progressively increased to Rs176 per day in 2017 but this wage floor is not legally binding, in spite of a recurrent discussion since the 1970s.
- In 2009-10, nearly 15% of salaried workers and 41% of casual workers earned less than this indicative national minimum wage. About 62 million workers are still paid less than the indicative national minimum wage with the rate of low pay being higher for women than for men.

2011-12 is the most recent year for which the government of India has made wage data from a nationally representative survey available (the national Employment and Unemployment Survey set to take place in 2016-17 after five years was not undertaken, and has since been discontinued).

### Way Forward

The report calls for several recommendations to improve the current minimum wage system. Some of these are – extending legal coverage to all workers in an employment relationship, ensuring full consultation with social partners on minimum wage systems, undertaking regular evidence-based adjustments, progressively consolidating and simplifying minimum wage structures, and taking stronger measures to ensure a more effective application of minimum wage law. It also calls for collection of statistical data on a timely and regular basis.

The report also recommends other complementary actions to comprehensively address how to achieve decent work and inclusive growth. These include, fostering accumulation of skills to boost labour productivity and growth for sustainable enterprises, promoting equal pay for work of equal value, formalizing the informal economy and strengthening social protection for workers.

### World First Blockchain Bond by WB

#### Why in news?

The World Bank has mandated Commonwealth Bank of Australia to arrange the world's first blockchain bond to be created, allocated, transferred and managed with blockchain technology (ledger technology).

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The Kangaroo bond, referring to foreign bonds issued in Australia in the local currency, has been named bond-i, an acronym standing for Blockchain Offered New Debt Instrument (It's also a reference to Bondi Beach, an iconic spot in Sydney).

- It is a 2 year bond which will test how the technology might improve decades-old bond sales practices.
- The World Bank, whose bonds carry AAA rating, regularly uses its borrowing power to help develop new bond markets as well as pioneering new means for selling and trading the securities. It issues between \$50 billion and \$60 billion a year of bonds to back economic progress in developing countries.
- Australia is a popular test site for market developments because of its well-established financial infrastructure and the familiarity of international investors with the Australian dollar.
- **Russia's MTS, a telecoms operator**, and Sberbank claimed a world-first blockchain bond earlier this year. The deal, for 750 million roubles (\$11.20 million) of 182-day paper, was however privately placed, rather than offered for wider auction, as is the norm and the case with the World Bank deal.
- While there have been other prototypes or parallel simulation blockchain projects in the market before, World Bank bond will be the first time that capital is raised from public investors through a legally valid bond issuance that uses blockchain from start to finish.

- ✓ The Telangana State has inked a MoU with multinational IT services giant Tech Mahindra to establish what is **being billed as 'India's first Blockchain District'**.
- ✓ In 2017, Telangana and the neighboring state of Andhra Pradesh began developing early pilots to record their land registries on a blockchain.
- ✓ More recently, state officials in Telangana have embraced blockchain technology to bring transparency and mitigate fraud within government bodies.
- ✓ The Andhra Pradesh government is also a member of the Enterprise Ethereum Alliance (EEA), a working group of companies and organizations looking to leverage open-source Ethereum technology for enterprise applications.

## Concessional Financing Scheme

### Why in News?

The Union Cabinet recently approved the first extension of Concessional Financing Scheme (CFS) to support Indian Entities bidding for strategically important infrastructure projects abroad. Also, the scheme will now cover all Indian entities, compared to the earlier stipulation of minimum 75% Indian shareholding.

Under CFS, India has been supporting Indian Entities bidding for strategically important infrastructure projects abroad since 2015-16. Since the objectives of the Scheme continue to be relevant, it is proposed to extend the Scheme for another five years from 2018 to 2023.

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### Major Impacts

Prior to the introduction of CFS, Indian entities were not able to bid for large projects abroad since the cost of financing was very high for them and bidders from other countries were able to provide credit at superior terms, i.e., lower interest rate and longer tenures which works to the advantage of bidders from those countries.

Also, by having projects of strategic interest to India executed by Indian entities, the CFS enables India to generate substantial backward linkage induced jobs, demand for material and machinery in India and also a lot of goodwill for India.

### Implementation Strategy and Targets

- Under the Scheme, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) selects the specific projects keeping in view strategic interest of India and sends the same to Department of Economic Affairs (DEA).
- The strategic importance of a project to deserve financing under this Scheme is decided on a case to case basis, by a Committee chaired by Secretary, DEA and with members from Department of Expenditure (MEA), DIPP, Department of Commerce, Department of Financial Services and MHA. The Deputy National Security Adviser is also a member of this Committee.
- Once approved by the Committee, DEA issues a formal letter to Export-Import Bank of India conveying approval for financing of the project under CFS.
- The Scheme is presently being operated through the EXIM bank which raises resources from the market to provide concessional finance.
- Interest Equalisation support under the scheme will be around 625 cr by 2022-23.

### Background:

The scheme envisages Government of India to provide counter guarantee and interest equalization of 2 % to EXIM Bank to offer concessional finance to any foreign Govt. or foreign Govt. owned or controlled entity, if any Indian entity, succeeds in getting contract for the execution of a project.

Under the Scheme, EXIM Bank extends credit at a rate not exceeding LIBOR (avg. of six months) + 100 bps. The repayment of the loan is guaranteed by the foreign government.

### What is LIBOR

- ✓ LIBOR or ICE LIBOR (previously BBA LIBOR) is a benchmark **rate that some of the world's leading** banks charge each other for short-term loans.
- ✓ It stands for Intercontinental Exchange London Interbank Offered Rate and serves as the first step to calculating interest rates on various loans throughout the world.
- ✓ LIBOR is administered by the ICE Benchmark Administration (IBA) and is based on five currencies: U.S. dollar, euro (EUR), pound sterling, Japanese yen, and Swiss franc.
- ✓ The LIBOR serves seven different maturities: overnight, one week, and 1, 2, 3, 6 and 12 months. There are a total of 35 different LIBOR rates each business day. The most commonly quoted rate is the three-month U.S. dollar rate (usually referred **to as the "current LIBOR rate"**).

### PEPPER IT WITH

**Buyer's credit under NEIA, Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India, Floating Interest Rate, Concessional Loan or Soft loan, Federation of Indian Exporters Organisation (FIEO), Interest Subvention Scheme**

## State FC- strengthening the fiscal federalism

### Background

The State Finance Commission (SFC) is a unique institution created by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (CAs) to rationalise and systematise State/sub-State-level fiscal relations in India.

Its primary task is to rectify growing horizontal imbalances in the delivery of essential public services to citizens. But there has been inadequate appreciation of the significance of this institution by the Union, States as well as the professional community.

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### Issues

- The federalist development state of India can grow only through a process of evolutionary policy making which works towards cherished goals. The CAs left the task of adequately empowering local governments to discharge constitutional obligations to the States.
- Article 243I of the Constitution mandated the State to constitute a Finance Commission within one year of the CAs (before April 24, 1994) and thereafter every five years.
- This means fifth generation SFCs ought to have submitted reports by now. Till date, only Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala have submitted their fifth SFC reports. Many States are yet to cross the third SFC stage. The large majority has violated the mandate of the Constitution with impunity.
- A cursory survey of the composition of SFCs would reveal the overwhelming presence of serving and/or retired bureaucrats rather than academics. The States have to bear their share of the blame for this.

### Comparison of SFCs and UFCs

The Union Finance Commission (UFC) has been widely acknowledged as a professional and quasi-judicial body when compared to the SFC.

- UFCs (particularly from the third) have chosen a restrictive role of staying away from plan and investment allocations. SFCs normally could not do this although some have chosen the UFC path (Now that the Planning Commission has been dismantled, the 15th UFC has to spell out its decision-making domain).
- The SFC is undoubtedly modelled on the UFC created under Article 280 and exemplified in Articles 243I and 243Y. While the UFC is tasked with rectifying vertical and horizontal imbalances at the Union-State level, the SFC has to perform the same with reference to State/sub-State-level institutions. The Constitution treats a local government on a par with a State government, especially when it comes to sharing of financial resources.
- The task of the SFC to correct horizontal imbalances is extremely onerous when compared with the UFC as SFCs have to consider nearly 2.5 lakh local governments to promote minimum essential services in rural and urban areas.
- SFC is the institutional agency to implement the golden rule of cooperative federalism that every citizen should be assured minimum public goods irrespective of her choice of residence.
- UFCs had no data problem in reviewing the finances of the Union and States. The financial reporting system of the Union and States is well laid down. On the other hand, local governments with no proper budgetary system are in deep disarray and, because of that, SFCs face a crucial problem of reliable data.
- Unlike the UFC, no SFC can easily ignore Articles 243G and 243W (which speak of **planning “for economic development and social justice”**) and Article 243ZD (which mandates that every State constitute a district planning committee for spatial planning and environmental conservation at the sub-State level).

### Linking Role

Article 280(3) has been amended to add clauses (bb) and (c) in order to take measures to augment the resources of panchayats and municipalities on the basis of the recommendations **“made by the finance commission of the state”**. These sub-

clauses affirm the organic link between local governments and SFCs to fiscal federalism. It is only when inter-State disparities are reduced by the UFCs through their inter-se distribution criteria and intra-State disparities are reduced by SFCs through the horizontal distribution criteria that the Indian federation becomes a sustainable and inclusive nation-state.

### Conclusion

UFCs have failed to play a hand-holding role in placing decentralised governance properly in the cooperative federal map of India. The hard truth is that no UFC has done its homework in reading and analysing SFC reports. Without presenting a consolidated account of the reality at the sub-State level or highlighting which report went wrong, where and how, no UFC can legitimately guide States or contribute to improving the goals of constitutional amendments. All the terms of reference of UFCs (since the 11th) iterate the need for suggesting measures to augment the resources of panchayats and municipalities as a core task. But barring the 13th, have they made any concrete approach to redeem the situation and work towards a good local governance system? Their well-designed grant scheme to incentivise States was not given a fair trial.

SFCs have not been provided with the necessary environment to play their rightful role in Indian fiscal federalism. A great opportunity to build regional equity in India has been undermined.

### Main aspects of fiscal federalism in India

- 1) Division of functions (specified in the 7<sup>th</sup> schedule of the constitution)
- 2) Revenue power of the centre which can be divided into 4 categories
  - a. Taxes that are levied collected and retained by the Central government: e.g. Corporation Tax, Customs Duties;
  - b. Taxes that are levied and collected by the Centre but shared with the states: e.g. the net proceeds from Union Excise Duties under Article 270 and the net proceeds from Union Excise Duties under Article 272, respectively;
  - c. Taxes that are levied and collected by the centre but whose net proceeds are assigned to the states: e.g. all the eight items under Article 269 of the constitution and
  - d. Tax levied by the Centre but allocated and appropriated by states, such as exercise duties on medicinal and toilet preparations, etc.
- 3) Revenue Powers of the State: The State governments have been given exclusive tax powers in respect of land revenue; taxes on agricultural income; excise duties on goods containing alcoholic liquors for human consumption; opium, Indian hemp and other narcotic drugs; taxes on the sale or purchase of goods other than newspapers; capitation taxes, taxes on luxuries including taxes on entertainment, amusements, betting and gambling etc.
- 4) Division of Borrowing Powers: Under Article 292, the central government is empowered to borrow funds from within and outside the country as per the limits imposed by the Parliament. According to Article 293(3), the States can borrow funds within the Country. Article 293(2) empowers the Centre to provide loans to State subject to conditions laid down by Parliament.
- 5) Fiscal Imbalances in India: The Constitutional fiscal arrangement shows that fiscal imbalances were deemed inevitable as most of the powers for elastic taxes are given to the Central government. Further, the division of powers and functions itself leads to vertical federal fiscal imbalance while the differences in the endowment position of natural resources across States cause horizontal federal fiscal imbalance.

Visualising the fiscal imbalances, the Constitutional makers provided a mechanism of fiscal adjustment by way of fiscal transfers from the Central to the State Governments. This provision in the Constitution was made under Article 280 by way of setting up of a Finance Commission for every five years.

## How to reduce crude imports

### Why in News?

The oil industry has been witnessing significant turmoil and uncertainty in recent months. The primary benchmark for international oil prices, the Brent crude, reached a level (\$80.49 per barrel) in May that was not seen since 2014.

Histrionics around the US sanctions on Iran have also affected sentiments considerably. In recent weeks, tariffs imposed by the US administration and the increasing production from Saudi Arabia and Libya have caused abatement of prices.

### Concerns for India

With the global economy in a better position now than in the last few years and the oil supply glut disappearing, crude price might not fall sharply over the near term, as it did before. High oil prices is a double whammy for India: it would not only widen the **country's trade deficit but also impose a fiscal burden** on account of fertilizer, kerosene and LPG subsidies.

### What Govt. can do with respect to rising prices of fuels:

With domestic retail prices of transportation fuels at an all-time high, the expectation is that the excise duty on petroleum products might be lowered unless the recent fall in prices sustain. The government had collected around ₹2 trillion from such duties in 2017-18, which played a crucial role in fiscal management. So, lowering the excise duty would exert pressure on fiscal balance.

Alternatively, oil marketing companies (OMCs) may be asked to absorb losses but that would intrude on their capital expenditure plan. That would also send rather negative signals to markets, which have been watching out for any government moves on price control and passing over subsidy burdens to oil producing and marketing companies, and, in effect, rolling back pricing reforms that are of relatively recent vintage.

### Need of the hour

What we need now is a carefully devised strategy that is not driven by short-termism, but aims to gradually insulate the country from global oil price volatility. Such a strategy should be centered on three things: *expediting the migration to electric mobility, expanding the biofuel blending in petrol, and stimulating exports.*

Expediting the migration to electric mobility: Since the transport sector accounts for around 70% of the total diesel sales in the country, it is an appropriate sphere for a transition from traditional fuels to electric motors. A favourable incentive mechanism (subsidy up to 60% of the total cost of an electric bus) to help the adoption of electric buses gain traction is already in place.

So, what we now need to do is to get the pace of building electric vehicle (EV) supportive infrastructure to catch up with the addition of new electric buses to the public transportation system, mainly to facilitate a smooth take-off of EV bus services. The best approach thus is a multi-stage adoption. This calls for first identifying a specific set of routes for electric bus services in a particular big city and ensuring that all infrastructure needed for their seamless operation is in place before considering other sets of routes. Within the transport sector, trucks alone account for around 28% of the diesel consumption. Thus, creating dedicated electric corridors for trucks on the highways could go a long way in curbing oil imports.

Expanding the biofuel blending in petrol: Increasing the blending proportion of domestically available biofuels in cooking gas and transportation fuel is another way to

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- ✓ India recently set an ambitious plan to reduce crude oil import by 10 per cent by 2022 to ensure energy security and achieve self-sufficiency by enhancing indigenous production of petroleum products.
- ✓ Crude oil import currently accounts for 70-75 per cent of **India's total** crude oil consumption.
- ✓ India's energy future has four pillars - Energy access, energy efficiency, energy sustainability and energy security
- ✓ India's energy consumption will grow 4.5 % every year for the next 25 years



reduce India’s reliance on imported crude oil. As is known, ethanol is mainly used for blending in our country. That ethanol is mostly derived from sugarcane molasses means its production is contingent on weather patterns. Moreover, sugarcane, refining of which creates molasses, is a water-intensive crop, so fresh incentives to increase ethanol production may not be good economics in a country where water scarcity is a serious problem.

Hence, methanol, produced from coal, should be given more weightage when it comes to blending. Besides, biodiesel supply should be augmented by making jatropha farming more productive through genetic modification. If all these fuels together reduce oil imports by 20%, the country could save up to \$18 billion a year in terms of foreign exchange (assuming oil prices stay around their current level).

PEPPER IT WITH  
International Energy Forum, COP-21 agreement, Open Acreage and National Data Repository, Universal access to modern energy by 2030, Enhanced oil recovery policy, Discovered small fields

Near- to medium-term measures: It is imperative to explore how fuels can eventually be covered under the goods and services tax (GST), which is essential not only to reduce any undue burden on users but also to prevent leakages and achieve efficiency. To begin with, natural gas and aviation turbine fuels (ATFs) may be considered for inclusion, which might not cause substantial revenue loss for states but will foster confidence that other petroleum products will be brought under GST sooner rather than later.

Conclusion

The government has done well to not have resorted to administrative price controls, which would be at variance with the reform credibility that it earned through the implementation of structural reforms such as GST and the new insolvency and bankruptcy code. Further affirmation from the highest levels of the government on continuation of fuel price deregulation would go a long way in bolstering investor sentiment, which is essential to boost private investment.

The right option now is to use the current situation as an opportunity to push for initiatives that are in the best interest of the country. **Reducing the country’s reliance on oil** imports would bode well for energy security, and make our financial markets less volatile in the event of untoward developments in the oil market. Also, savings from reduced oil imports could in turn be used to finance infrastructure projects, which are **crucial for India’s long-term** growth prospects.

Digitalisation of Land record in India

Why in News?

Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DILRMP)—the erstwhile National Land Records Modernisation Programme—seeks to improve the quality of land records in the country, make them more accessible, and move towards government-guaranteed titles.

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A land title is a document that helps determine land ownership. This will be achieved through complete computerization of the property registration process and digitization of all land records. The scheme completed a decade in operation in August this year.

Background

The Land Reforms (LR) Division was implementing two Centrally Sponsored Schemes viz. (i) Computerisation of Land Records (CLR) & (ii) Strengthening of Revenue Administration and Updating of Land Records (SRA&ULR). In 2008, the Cabinet approved merger of these schemes into a modified Scheme named Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP).

About DILRMP

DILRMP is in the process of making a system of updated land records, automated and automatic mutation, integration between textual and spatial records, inter-connectivity between revenue and registration, to replace the present deeds registration and presumptive title system with that of conclusive titling with title guarantee. The DILRMP has 3 major components (a) Computerization of land record, (b) Survey/re-survey and

(c) Computerization of Registration.

The broad aim of DILRMP is to modernize land records management, reduce the scope for property disputes, make land records more transparent and move towards conclusive property titles. In short, the plan is to pull a system developed in the age of zamindari into the modern era.

Progress Report of DILRMP

- The DILRMP is being implemented across all states with differential progress. As of August, while two states (Karnataka and Odisha) and three Union territories have completed 100% computerization of land records, four states are yet to start the process.
- Nineteen states/Union territories have started issuing digitally-signed record of rights (RoRs), a record that shows how rights on land are derived for the land owner, and records the **property's transactions from time to time**. These states have also started linking RoRs to cadastral maps (a record of the area, ownership and value of land).
- Records have been digitized but they may not be up to date because mutation (transfer of ownership) records have been computerized in only 50% of the villages. Further, only about 21% of the villages have started real time updating of RoR and maps
- Maps form an important component of land records as they provide data on property boundaries and details on the exact limits of ownership. However, only about 48% of the cadastral maps have been digitized so far.
- Spatial data has been verified in just 45% of the villages and survey and re-survey work, which helps update spatial records, has been carried out in only 9% of the villages.

Initiatives by various state governments

- ✓ Bhoomi Project in Karnataka led the way even before the Union government got into the act. The state government began to digitize land records at the turn of the century. The relevant document—the record of rights, tenancy and crops—has been made available through kiosks.
- ✓ Rajasthan passed the Rajasthan Urban Land (Certification of Titles) Act in 2016. This law ensures that the state government is a guarantor for land titles in Rajasthan, and will provide compensation in case of issues of defective title.
- ✓ Andhra Pradesh has taken a leap into the future by tying up with a Swedish firm to use new blockchain technology to prevent property fraud.

Advantages of Digitisation

- I. Digitisation of land and property records directly **boost the government's** Digital India mission.
- II. It will reveal the total area of land owned by a person.
- III. A fresh survey of every parcel of land at regular intervals should be undertaken to update the records. This will also help, in avoiding confusion between government land and private land.
- IV. Transparency through digitisation will make it difficult for the general public to evade property tax.
- V. Digitisation can speed up the process of land acquisition, thereby, making it easier for the government to work on its Smart Cities mission or plan industrialisation.
- VI. For home buyers, digitisation will offer the correct details of the owner of a particular property. The buyer can also check if the land is under litigation.

Benefits of digitisation in real estate

1. Transparent land record management.
2. A single window to handle land records, including maintenance and updation of maps, survey and registration of properties.
3. Easier online approvals of plans and occupancy certificates.
4. Clarity over ownership status.
5. Greater ease of doing business in the sector, by making it simpler for the developers and buyers to check the authenticity of the land or the property.

While the scheme so far has looked at the digitization of land records, it has not addressed issues around land ownership. It is well known that land records in India are unclear and do not guarantee ownership because of the following reasons:

- 1) We have a system of registered sale deeds and not land titles. The Transfer of Property Act, 1882, provides that the right to an immovable property (or land) can be transferred or sold only by a registered document. These documents are registered under the Registration Act, 1908. Therefore, the transaction gets registered, and not the land title. This implies that even bona fide property transactions may not always guarantee ownership, as earlier transactions could be challenged.
- 2) Land ownership is established through multiple documents maintained by different departments, making it cumbersome to access them. Moreover, these departments work in silos and do not update the data in a timely manner, which results in discrepancies.
- 3) Cost of registering property is high in India, so people avoid registering transactions. While registering a sale deed, the buyer has to pay a stamp duty along with the registration fee. In India, stamp duty rates across states vary between 4% and 10%, compared to 1% and 4% in other countries. Further, registration fee is an additional 0.5% to 2%, on an average.
- 4) Under the Registration Act, 1908, registration of property is not mandatory for transactions such as acquisition of land by the government, property leased for less than one year, and heirship partitions. Thus, several property divisions are not recorded and, hence, do not correctly reflect the ownership of the property. This often leads to litigation related to rightful ownership.

### Impacts of Land Titles

Land titles are presumptive rather than conclusive in India. Unclear land titles impede development on several fronts. Nearly two-thirds of all pending cases in Indian courts are related to property disputes. NITI Aayog mentions that such property cases take an average of 20 years to settle. The result is that millions of Indians cannot use their principal asset as collateral to borrow from the formal financial system. The poor suffer the most.

Further, under the Smart Cities and AMRUT missions, cities are trying to raise their own revenue through property taxes and land-based financing. This necessitates the importance of providing a system of clear land titles.

### Steps to Resolve Unclear Land Titles

To address issues with unclear land titles, a move towards conclusive titling has been proposed. In this system, the government provides guaranteed titles and compensation in case of any ownership disputes. However, adopting such a system in India will require several measures. Several changes in existing laws that govern registration and transfer of land will be required. A system of registered property titles will have to be developed as the primary evidence of ownership. All existing land records will have to be updated to ensure that they are free of any encumbrance. Information on land records, which is currently spread across multiple departments, will have to be consolidated. Although the DILRMP aims to move towards conclusive titling, it only addresses these issues partially.

PEPPER IT WITH Encumbrance certificate, Digital India Initiative, Smart cities mission, AMRUT mission
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### Conclusion

The Indian push to digitize land records and establish conclusive rather than presumptive titles should have been completed by now. The government has now pushed the year of completion to 2021. The delay may have been avoidable, but is understandable. Clear land titles will ease a lot of constraints—from making it easier for the poor to borrow from the formal financial sector to easing commercial land acquisition for infrastructure projects instead of the misuse of eminent domain. Also, even as computerization continues, some more attention should be paid to the possibilities offered by new technologies such as blockchain.

## BIMS & Bhoomi rashi and PFMS linkage

### Why in News?

Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways recently launched Bidder Information Management System (BIMS) and Bhoomi Rashi and PFMS linkage - two IT initiatives of the Road Transport & Highways Ministry that are aimed at expediting pre construction processes relating to bidding and land acquisition (LA) respectively.

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### About BIMS

- It is aimed at streamlining the process of pre-qualification of bidders for EPC Mode of contracts for National Highway works with enhanced transparency and objectivity.
- The portal will work as a data base of information about bidders, covering basic details, civil works experience, cash accruals and network, annual turnover etc.
- The pre-qualification of bidders can be assessed from data already stored in the portal, so that technical evaluation can be carried out much faster.
- BIMS will be used by all the project implementation agencies of the Ministry for maintenance of technical information of civil works of contractors/ concessionaires, and for online technical evaluation of civil works bids.
- The bidders would be responsible for ensuring that their latest details are available on the BIMS portal. These details will be used by bidders to apply for any RFP for civil works on EPC mode that has been floated by the Ministry and its implementation agencies on the Central Public Procurement Portal (CPPP).
- The BIMS portal will be operated in conjunction with the CPPP portal for invitation of bids for civil works for EPC mode.

Institution of Annual Awards for Excellence in National Highways Projects was also announced for recognizing concessionaires and contractors who are performing exceptionally. It will be presented annually starting 2018 & are designed across 5 categories:

- Excellence in Construction Management,
- Excellence in Operation & Maintenance,
- Best Toll Plaza,
- Safe Highway and
- Innovation in Design or Construction Technology.

The best performers would be selected based on multiple rounds of rigorous assessment. Detailed, category-specific and quantifiable evaluation frameworks have been developed for this assessment by Quality Council of India.

### About Bhoomi Rashi

- The portal developed by MoRTH and NIC, comprises the entire revenue data of the country, right down to 6.4 lakh villages.
- The entire process flow, from submission of draft notification by the State Government to its approval by the Minister of State for RT&H and publication in e-Gazette, is online.
- The portal, created for expediting the process of publication of notifications for land acquisition, is now being fully utilized for issuing the notifications.
- Bhoomi Rashi portal has been instrumental in reducing the time taken for approval and publication of notifications pertaining to land acquisition

### About different colours of Milestones on roads

- ✓ National highways (Total length 103933 kms aprx. Till FY-17) is always yellow and white colour.
- ✓ State highways are always in dark cyan or green and white colour.
- ✓ City or district highway milestones are always black and white or only white in colour.
- ✓ Roads constructed under Pradhan mantri yojna is always in red or orange and black colour.

### Integration of Public Financial Management System (PFMS) with Bhoomi Rashi

- It is one of the key functionalities to facilitate payment related to compensation for

- LA to all the beneficiaries directly through the Bhoomi Rashi system.
- PFMS is a web-based online software application developed and implemented by the Office of Controller General of Accounts (CGA) to facilitate sound public financial management system for Government of India.
  - It provides various stakeholders with a real time, reliable and meaningful management information system and an effective decision support system, as part of the Digital India initiative of Gol.
  - With integration of Bhoomi Rashi with PFMS, payment of Compensation by the Ministry to the beneficiaries will be just-in-time, and without any parking of funds.

### Conclusion

These initiatives will help expedite the work of award and construction of highways projects significantly. The focus of this initiative is to reduce construction costs while enhancing quality, and for this many initiatives have been taken towards transformation and optimization of pre-construction, construction and maintenance processes.

PEPPER IT WITH  
RERA, PFMS, CPPP, PMSY,  
Golden Quadrilateral

## NPCI Launched UPI 2.0

### Why in News?

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) recently launched Unified Payments Interface (UPI) 2.0.

### About UPI

- UPI is a system that powers multiple bank accounts into a single mobile application (of any participating bank), merging several banking features, seamless fund routing & merchant payments into one hood. **It also caters to the “Peer to Peer” collect request** which can be scheduled and paid as per requirement and convenience.
- UPI allows a customer to pay directly from a bank account to different merchants, both online and offline, without the hassle of typing credit card details, IFSC code, or net banking/wallet passwords. The per transaction limit is Rs.1 lakh.
- UPI transactions have increased manifold since its inception in 2016. UPI 2.0 is aimed **at expanding UPI’s presence** especially in person-to-merchant payment space.

- **UPI’s high volume, low cost and highly scalable architecture built on an open source platform is key to India’s transformation to a digital payment economy.**

### New features

- In addition to current and savings accounts, customers can link their overdraft (OD) account to UPI in its latest version. Customers will be able to transact instantly and all benefits associated with OD account will be made available to the users.
- UPI mandate could be used in a scenario where money is to be transferred later by providing commitment at present. UPI 2.0 mandates are created with one time block functionality for transactions. Customers can pre-authorise a transaction and pay at a later date.
- Mandates can be created and executed instantly. On the date of actual purchase, the amount will be deducted and received by the merchant/individual user.
- UPI 2.0 has a feature whereby customers can check the invoice sent by merchant prior to making payment which will help customers to view and verify the credentials and

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### List of ATM’s all over India:

Type of ATM	What they stand for
On Site ATM	ATM's Inside the Bank
Off site ATM	ATM outside the bank premises but is located at other places, such as shopping centres, airports, railways station and petrol stations.
White Label ATM	ATM Provided by NBFC
Green Label ATM	ATM Provided for Agricultural Transaction
Orange Label ATM	ATM Provided for Share Transactions
Yellow Label ATM	ATM provided for E-commerce
Pink Label ATM	ATM for women banking
Brown Label ATM	ATM where hardware and the lease of the ATM machine is owned by a service provider but cash management and connectivity to banking networks is provided by a sponsor bank .

check whether it has come from the right merchant or not.

- o A quick response (QR) code feature has been introduced for customers to check the authenticity of merchants while scanning the code. It notifies the user with information to ascertain whether the merchant is verified UPI merchant or not. This provides an additional security to the QR as well as intent.

About NPCI

- It is an umbrella organisation for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India. It is an initiative of RBI and **Indian Banks’ Association** under the provisions of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, for creating a robust Payment & Settlement Infrastructure in India.
- Setup up in 2009 as the central infrastructure for various retail payment systems in India, it was envisaged by the RBI as the payment utility in the country.
- From a single service of switching of interbank ATM transactions through National Financial Service, the range of services has grown to Cheque Truncation System, National Automated Clearing House, Aadhaar Enabled Payment System, USSD based \*99#, RuPay card, Immediate Payment Service, Bharat Interface for Money, BHIM Aadhaar, National Electronic Toll Collection and Bharat Bill Pay.
- Considering the utility nature of the objects of NPCI, it has been incorporated as a “Not for Profit” **Company with an intention to provide infrastructure to the entire Banking system in India for physical as well as electronic payment and settlement systems.**
- The Company is focused on bringing innovations in the retail payment systems through the use of technology for achieving greater efficiency in operations and widening the reach of payment systems.

PEPPER IT WITH		
RuPay, National Financial Switch, IMPS, Cheque Truncation System, Bharat Bill Payment System, National Common Mobility Card, National Electronic Toll Collection		

**National Logistics Portal (NLP)**

Why in News?

The commerce ministry has stepped up work on developing a national logistics portal as part of its measures to ensure ease of trading and cut high logistics costs from 14% of the GDP to 10% by 2022. **India’s** logistics sector is highly defragmented

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The first phase of NLP (a digital platform to bring all stakeholders in the logistics sector on board to cut down transaction cost and time for businesses) is likely to be implemented by March, 2019.

About NLP

- The National Logistics portal will be implemented in phases and will fulfil the commitment of the Government of India to enhance trade competitiveness, create more jobs, provide a boost to #DigitalIndia and pave the way for India to become a global #logistics hub.
- The portal is being designed by the Department of Commerce.

PM-STIAC

- ✓ The government has scrapped two Scientific Advisory Committees for the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, and replaced them with a 21 member (Including a dozen special invitees), **Prime Minister’s Science, Technology and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC).**
- ✓ The PM-STIAC will be chaired by the **government’s Principal Scientific Advisor**, Dr K. Vijay Raghavan.
- ✓ The newly constituted body is expected to act as a high level advisory body to several ministries and execute mission-oriented programmes.

- There are four main components of the portal which include a logistics e-market place, a logistics certification platform, an integrated regulatory platform and a banking and financial services platform.
- In 2018-19 budget government had announced the creation of the portal that will be an online marketplace for trade and will connect businesses, create opportunities and bring together various government departments and private players.

Background

India’s logistics sector is very complex with more than 20 government agencies, 40 partnering government agencies, 37 export promotion councils, 500 certifications and 10,000 commodities, \$160 billion market size.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 Infrastructure status, Logistics Performance Index, National Logistics Index

As per the Economic Survey 2017-18, the Indian logistics sector provides livelihood to more than 22 million people and improving the sector will facilitate 10% decrease in indirect logistics cost, leading to a growth of 5-8% in exports. Further, the Survey estimates that the worth of Indian logistics market would be around \$215 billion in next two years, against \$160 billion now.

National Financial Inclusion Survey 2016-17 (NABARD)

Why in News?

NABARD All India Financial Inclusion Survey (NAFIS), conducted by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), revealed that farm households register higher income than the families solely dependent on non-farm livelihood activities in rural areas.

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About the Survey

- The first of its kind survey was conducted on a pan-India basis drawing samples from as many as 2016 villages in 245 districts and 29 states with reference year of 2015-16 and covered 40,327 rural households. The data was collected through the paperless method of Computer Aided Personal Interview. The survey was commissioned in 2016.
- The survey defined farm households as families having over Rs 5,000 as value of produce from agricultural operations in the year preceding the survey. 48 percent of the rural families are agricultural households.
- Apart from assessing the income levels of rural households, the survey mapped aspects like debt, saving, investment, insurance, pension and financial aptitude and behaviour of individuals.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 Mutual Fund, Self Help Groups, Jan Dhan Yojna, Old Age Pension, NSSO

Highlights of the Survey

- Incidence of Indebtedness (IOI), which is a proportion of households having outstanding debt on the date of the survey was 52.5 percent and 42.8 percent for agricultural and non-agricultural households respectively. All India IOI taking rural households together stood at 47.4 per cent.
- 43.5% agricultural households reported to have borrowed any money during last year from some source or the other. 60.4% of them reportedly borrowed from institutional sources exclusively.
- Rural households have access to banking and have savings but investment levels and pension and insurance coverage remain very low.
- **Farmers’ income grew at a** compounded growth rate of 12% per annum compared to Rs 77,112 per annum as per NSSO assessment in 2012-13. The income levels for 19 out of 29 states are above all India average.
- The annual income of rural households was ₹96,708. Agricultural households earned 23% more than non-agricultural households.
- 88.1 per cent of the households reported having a bank account while 33% households

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reported more than one savings account. Average savings per annum per saver households was reportedly Rs 17,488, of which 95 per cent is with institutional agencies.

- o 10.4 per cent of agricultural households also reported investment with the average investment per investing agricultural households was reportedly Rs 62,734. For all investments amounting more than Rs 10,000 in the year, 60% of the amount was funded through borrowings from either institutional or informal sources.
- o About 26% of agricultural households and 25% of non-agricultural households reported to have been covered under one or the other type of insurance. When assessed for type of pension received, 32% of all households with senior citizens reported being covered by old age pension.

## Zero Budget Natural Farming

### In News

Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) under Network Project on Organic Farming (NPOF) and All India Coordinated Research Projects (AICRP) on Integrated Farming Systems, has initiated an experiment on **“Evaluation of zero budget farming practices in basmati rice-wheat system”** at Modipuram (Uttar Pradesh), Ludhiana (Punjab), Pantnagar (Uttarakhand) and Kurukshetra (Haryana) from rabi 2017 to study the zero budget farming practices on productivity, economics and soil health including soil organic carbon and soil fertility.

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### What is ZBNF?

The word ‘budget’ refers to credit and expenses, thus the phrase ‘Zero Budget’ means without using any credit, and without spending any money on purchased inputs. ‘Natural farming’ means farming with Nature and without chemicals.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Masanobu Fukuoka’s One-  
Straw Revolution, Krishi  
Vigyan Kendra, RKVY, MSP

The father of ZBNF and Padma Shri Awardee, Sh. Subash Palekar has provided four important non-negotiable guidelines:

1. Bijamrita (Seed Treatment using local cowdung and cow urine),
2. Jiwamrita (applying inoculation made of local cowdung and cow urine without any fertilizers and pesticides),
3. Mulching (activities to ensure favorable microclimate in the soil), and
4. Waaphasa (soil aeration).

AP to become India first ZBNF state. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has launched a scale-out plan to transition 6 million farms/farmers to 100% chemical-free agriculture by 2024.

### Insect and pest Management under ZBNF

1. Agriastra
2. Brahmastra
3. Neemastra

### Initiatives to support ZBNF

- Promoting organic farming in the country through the dedicated schemes of Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY).
- In the revised guidelines of PKVY scheme during the year 2018, various organic farming models like Natural Farming, Rishi Farming, Vedic Farming, Cow Farming, Homa Farming, Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) etc.
- In AP the programme is a contribution towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on ‘No Poverty’, ‘Clean Water and Sanitation’, ‘Responsible Consumption and Production’, and ‘Life on Land’. It is led by Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) – a not-for-profit established by the Government to implement the ZBNF programme - and



supported by the Sustainable India Finance Facility (SIFF) – an innovative partnership between UN Environment, BNP Paribas, and the World Agroforestry Centre.

- NITI Aayog has advised States to adopt zero-budget natural farming under two existing schemes: the Paramparagat Krishi Yojana and the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana.

Significance

- ✓ In the context of the **government’s commitment to double farmers’ income by 2022**, a hike in MSP can only reduce farmgate losses to a limited extent, whereas reducing cost of production through **‘zero budget natural farming’ (ZBNF) stands to enhance the profit margins for farmers.**
- ✓ In pursuing the States to adopt ZBNF, the apex agency is seized of the fact that the zero-budget technique has resulted in an increase in the yields of crops like cotton by 11 per cent, paddy by 12 per cent, groundnut 23 per cent, and chilli 34 per cent at less than half the cost of cultivation.

**Exercise Pitch Black**

Why in News?

The Indian Air Force for the first time participated with fighter aircraft in Exercise Pitch Black 2018 (PB-18) in Australia.

It is a biennial multi-national large force employment warfare exercise hosted by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).

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Details

- The exercise provides unique opportunity for exchange of knowledge and experience with these nations in a dynamic warfare environment. Participation in multinational air exercise assumes importance in view of the continued engagement of the IAF with friendly foreign countries.
- The IAF participated with 4 Sukhoi Su-30MKI multirole fighters, an Ilyushin Il-78 tanker, a Lockheed Martin C-130J-30 stretched Super Hercules, and a Boeing C-17 transport aircraft.

Exercise Maitree 2018, platoon level joint military exercise between Indian Army and Royal Thai Army was held recently in Thailand. It is an annual event designed to strengthen the partnership between the two.

The exercise began with a cross training period involving familiarization training between two armies to evolve drills and procedures involved in counter insurgency & counter terrorist operations in urban, rural and jungle terrain under UN mandate.

Australia, India, Japan, and the United States have also reestablished the so-called Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD), an inter-governmental security forum last year, which aims to enable closer cooperation among its members to ensure a “free and open Indo-Pacific.” The QSD ceased its activity in 2007 following Australia’s withdrawal from it.

- The IAF contingent also included 45 Garud special forces personnel. The Indian contingent aimed to undertake simulated air combat exercises in a controlled environment and mutual exchange of best practices towards enhancing IAF operational capability.
- The IAF has participated in two multilateral air combat exercises over the last three years: the Red Flag exercise held in the United States in 2016 and the Blue Flag air combat drill in Israel in 2017.
- Over the last decade, IAF has been actively participating in operational exercises hosted by various countries, wherein collaborative engagements undertaken with the best air forces in the world.

PEPPER IT WITH  
 Malabar Naval Exercise, Blue Flag air combat drill, Red Flag Exercise

- With over 140 aircraft and 4000 personnel from 16 countries, Operation Pitch Black in Australia is one of the biggest exercises of its kind.

### Defence India start up challenge

#### Why in News?

Defence ministry recently launched Defence India Start up Challenge and threw up 11 challenges for start ups to come up with potential solutions for technological needs of the defence establishment and said it would ensure their ideas and prototypes will get a market. The challenge is part of IDEX (Innovation for Defence Excellence).

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These challenges are individual protection system with built-in sensors, see through armour, carbon fibre winding, active protection system, secure hardware based offline encrypt or device for graded security, development of 4G/LTE based tactical local area network, development of advanced technology based desalination system and bilge oily water separation system, artificial intelligence in logistics and SCM, remotely piloted airborne vehicles, laser weaponry and unmanned surface and underwater vehicles.

#### About iDEX

Announced by Prime Minister in April 2018, it is aimed at creation of an ecosystem to foster innovation and technology development in Defence and Aerospace by engaging Industries including MSMEs, Startups, Individual Innovators, R&D institutes and Academia and provide them grants/funding and other support to carry out R&D which has good potential for future adoption for Indian defence and aerospace needs.

iDEX will function as the executive arm of the Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO). The scheme mandates setting up of Defence Innovation Hubs across the country, to provide necessary incubation and infrastructure support to defence start ups and innovators.

#### Advanced Area Defence (AAD)

- ✓ DRDO conducted the successful test of the Ballistic Missile Interceptor AAD or Ashvin Advanced Defence Interceptor missile from Abdul Kalam Island, Odisha recently.
- ✓ The interceptor, 7.5-meter long single stage solid rocket propelled guided endo-atmospheric missile is capable of intercepting incoming targets at an altitude of 15 to 25 kms.
- ✓ It was launched against multiple simulated targets of 1500 km class ballistic missile. One target among simultaneously incoming multiple targets was selected on real time, the weapon system radars tracked the target and the missile locked on to it and intercepted the target.
- ✓ The complete event including the engagement and interception was tracked by a number of electro-optical tracking systems, radars and telemetry stations.
- ✓ All the mission objectives were successfully met.

#### Defence India Start Up Challenge:

Taking the iDEX initiative further, Defence India Startup Challenge "has been launched by Ministry in partnership with Atal Innovation Mission, aimed at supporting Startups/ MSMEs/ Innovators to create prototypes and/or commercialize products/solutions in the area of National Defence and Security.

#### The vision of the Challenge is two-fold:

- I. Help create functional prototypes of products/technologies relevant for national security (prototyping), and spur fast-moving innovation in the India defence sector;
- II. Help new tech products/technologies find a market and early customer (commercialization) in the form of the Indian Defence Establishment.

#### Who can Apply:

- a. Start-ups, as defined and recognized by Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.
- b. Any Indian company incorporated under the Companies Act 1956/2013, primarily a Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) as defined in the MSME Act, 2006.

c. Individual innovators are also encouraged to apply (research & academic institutions can use this category to apply).

Support to selected applications in the Challenge:

The selected applications will be funded up to Rs. 1.5 crores in the form of equity/other relevant structures. The funds will be disbursed in tranches based on the milestones decided by a high-powered selection committee.

PEPPER IT WITH  
Ballistic Missile Defence, Agni missile, Prithvi air defence and Prithvi Defence Vehicle, Koswa-First Iranian built fighter jet

Apart from the fund, selected applicants may also be given entry to accelerator programs run by iDEX partners, where they will be supported in technology and business development through mentorship under the innovation and entrepreneurship experts. The selected applicants may also be supported in terms of access to defence testing facilities and experts for their product/technology development.

**INTACH and Rajasthan heritage buildings**

- The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) has called for transforming heritage buildings in **Rajasthan into “economic assets” for the society.**
- Economic benefits could be derived from these properties as an alternative to paying for their upkeep on a regular basis.
- The demolition of heritage buildings would contribute to global warming. An exercise had been launched for mapping of natural heritage in Thar desert with the participation of local communities for modern planning.
- The trust was working for protection of natural heritage, geo-heritage, water bodies, stepwells, sacred groves, wall paintings and rock paintings.
- The mapping of natural heritage in the Thar desert area will build up the capacity of local communities. Since they have a better knowledge of their resources, their techniques should be documented and implemented for modern planning.
- INTACH was founded in 1984 and is a registered society under Societies Registration Act 1860. United Nations Economic & Social Council granted INTACH special consultative status in 2007.

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World Heritage Day

**Heritage Circuit and North East Circuit**

In News

The Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned two new projects under Heritage and North East Circuits of Swadesh Dashan Scheme for Rs. 164.95 Crores in Punjab and Tripura respectively.

North East Circuit in Tripura

The sites of Surma Cherra- Unakoti- Jampui Hills- Gunabati-Bhunaneshwari- Matabari-Neermahal- Boxanagar- Chotta khola- Pilak- Avangchaarra are covered with total project cost of Rs. 65 Crores.

The project envisaged infrastructural development of the sites with special emphasis on developing an Interpretation Centre, Tourist Visitor Centres, Cafeteria, Last Mile Connectivity, Illumination of sites and monuments, Wayside Amenities, Floating Jetties, Camping Grounds, Parking Facilities, Adventure Activities, Ghat Development at above sites.

PEPPER IT WITH  
HRIDAY, PRASAD,  
ADOPT A HERITAGE,  
INTACH

The North East Circuit includes tourist centric development in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim.

1. North East Circuit Bomdila-Bhalukpong-Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh
2. Circuit in Manipur: Imphal-Moirang-Khongjom-Moreh

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- 3. North East Tourist Circuit I & Circuit II in Sikkim
- 4. North East Circuit in Tripura

### Heritage Circuit in Punjab

The project covers sites of Anandpur Sahib – Fatehgarh Sahib – Chamkaur Sahib – Ferozpur – Amritsar – Khatkar Kalan – Kalanour – Patiala at the cost of Rs. 99.95 crores.

The project also includes development of Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar for Rs. 8 Crores, Jajah Haveli of Divan Todar Mal, Mir Miran Tomb, Sadna Kasai Tomb, and Development of Hussainiwala Border in Ferozepur.

Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation in association with Ministry of Tourism recently organized the 6th International Buddhist Conclave 2018 in Aurangabad.  
Theme: **‘Buddha Path – The Living Heritage’**.

### About Swadesh Darshan

- Ministry of Tourism (MoT) launched the Swadesh Darshan Scheme for integrated development of theme based tourist circuits in the country in 2014-15.
- The scheme is fully centrally funded for the project components undertaken for public funding.
- A National Steering Committee (NSC) will be constituted with Minister in charge of M/O Tourism as Chairman, to steer the mission objectives and vision of the scheme.
- 13 Thematic Circuits under Swadesh Darshan Scheme of India.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. North East India Circuit</li> <li>2. Buddhist Circuit</li> <li>3. Himalayan Circuit</li> <li>4. Coastal Circuit</li> <li>5. Wildlife Circuit</li> <li>6. Heritage Circuit</li> <li>13. Krishna Circuit</li> </ul> |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Spiritual Circuit</li> <li>8. Ramayana Circuit</li> <li>9. Desert Circuit</li> <li>10. Tribal Circuit</li> <li>11. Eco Circuit</li> <li>12. Rural Circuit</li> </ul> |
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### AESF-IV

#### Why in News?

The Election Commission of Sri Lanka and the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) convened the Fourth Asian Electoral Stakeholders Forum (AESF-IV) in Colombo, Sri Lanka, recently.

The theme of AESF-IV was “Advancing Election Transparency and Integrity: Promoting and Defending Democracy Together.” The Colombo AESF is the first to be held in South Asia. India was represented by Chief Electoral Officer of Maharashtra and an NGO.

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#### About AESF

- AESF-IV is an opportunity for Asian election commissions, election observers, non-government organizations, and interstate bodies to gather and discuss the state of elections and democracy in the region.
- The AESF is the largest gathering of its kind, and is sustained through a strong cooperation between the civil society and election commissions.
- The Forum covered a wide array of crucial election issues like the current state of democracy in Asia, the common electoral challenges in the region, and various good practices employed to make elections better.
- The event culminated with the endorsement of a landmark document, urging election stakeholders from within Asia and beyond to promote and defend democracy in the region. ANFREL and the Election Commission of Sri Lanka hope that through this document, cooperation and collaboration among election stakeholders will be revitalized in order to address the declining quality of democracy in Asia.
- The first AESF, held in Thailand in 2012, endorsed the Bangkok Declaration on

Free and Fair Elections. The second AESF gathered election stakeholders in Dili, Timor Leste in 2015 to create the Dili Indicators of Democratic Elections. Lastly, the Bali AESF, held in 2016, gathered hundreds of democracy advocates and government bodies to craft the Bali Commitment: Eight Keys to Electoral Integrity.

### Indian Army to climb world's fifth highest peak Mt Makalu

- In pursuit of achieving greater heights in the field of mountaineering, Indian Army is planning to attempt Mt Makalu (8485M), the fifth highest mountain peak in the world in 2019.
- As a precursor to it, an expedition to Mount Kamet (7756M), Joshimath District Chamoli, Uttarakhand is being conducted under the aegis of Army Adventure Wing in August-September 2018.
- Makalu is an isolated peak and is located in the Mahalangur Himalayas, 19 km southeast of Mount Everest, on the border between Nepal and Tibet, China.
- Mount Kamet is the third highest peak of India after Kanchanjunga and Nandadevi and the only highest peak available to climb within the country. It is located in Garhwal region of India.

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PEPPER IT WITH  
Kangchenjunga Peak, Nanda  
devi peak, Aravali range,  
Garhwal himalaya

### Concept Clearing Assignment

1. Briefly highlight the salient features of State Energy Efficiency Preparedness Index. How will this index help in urbanisation and achieving Smart Cities Project?
2. Enumerate the steps of election of Chairman of Rajya Sabha. Also discuss the powers of Chairman.
3. What is NOTA? Critically analyse the positive and adverse effect of NOTA in light of the SC verdict. It is a great tool of democracy in Lok Sabha but the same tool defeated the fairness in indirect elections of Rajya Sabha. Comment
4. Briefly discuss Data Localisation. Why Indian government is in favour of Data Localisation? Critically Analyse.
5. The report prepared by the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) show the cyber-attack data from China Russia, USA and Pakistan highlighting the plugholes of Indian cyber defence strategy. Suggest steps and initiative to combat cyber-crimes.
6. According to the World Bank, Indian diaspora remitted the most in the world (\$69 billion in 2017). If non-resident Indians or their families were to receive an amount similar to 2017 this year, and if the rupee were to continue to trade at the current exchange rate, it would translate into an extra \$3.5 billion. How desirable is it then, to have the rupee as strong as the dollar?
7. The seriousness, regularity, acceptance of recommendations and their implementation which characterise the Union Finance Commissions (UFCs) are conspicuously absent when it comes to SFCs. Is honouring the Constitution a matter of convenience?
8. A modern market economy requires a strong system of property rights. Do you think India is a mess on this front?
9. Present a report on Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme. How will the digitalisation help India in improving formal financial system?
10. The oil industry has been witnessing significant turmoil and uncertainty in recent months. Highlight the reasons for this exponential hike in oil prices and what initiatives the government should undertake to combat price hike of crude oil?
11. What is Fiscal federalism? Present an account on the main aspect of Fiscal Federalism and how it works in India.
12. According to India Wage Report: Wage policies for decent work and inclusive growth,

published by the ILO India's economy in the past two decades has seen an annual average GDP rate of 7% but low pay and inequality persists. Critically analyse the factors for low pay and inequality in India.

13. There is a continuous depreciation of Indian rupee since the past few months. The Indian rupee has been one of the worst performing major emerging market (EM) currencies in 2018, and the worst in Asia-Pacific. Discuss the reasons behind the depreciation of Indian Rupee against USD.
14. Briefly discuss Doctrine of *Parens Patriae*. How and why the Constitution of India does supports *Parens Patriae*? Elucidate.
15. As Kerala gets down to the job of rebuilding the infrastructure devastated by the floods, one crucial question is how, given the state's geographical peculiarities and high population density, to introduce scientific management of the state's 80 dams to prevent such a disaster in future. Elucidate.

### P.T Oriented Questions

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Which among the following is INCORRECT?           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Devaluation is a decrease in conversion rate which is done officially</li> <li>(b) Conversion rate reflects supply and demand of a currency</li> <li>(c) Devaluation can only occur in floating exchange rate system</li> <li>(d) Revaluation is an intentional change while appreciation is a change by market forces</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Consider the following statements about Mahadayi river and mark the correct one/ones           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It rises from the western ghats and is also known as Mandovi river</li> <li>2. Madei and Valpoi are tributaries of river Mahadayi</li> </ol>           Code:<br/>           (a) 1 only                      (b) 2 only<br/>           (c) Both 1 and 2              (d) Neither 1 nor         </li> <li>3. Consider the following statements about Unified Payment Interface (UPI)           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. UPI allows a customer to pay directly from a bank account to different merchants, both online and offline</li> <li>2. Per transaction limit in UPI is 1 lakh</li> <li>3. It was launched by National Payment Corporation of India</li> </ol>           Which among the following is/are correct?<br/>           (a) 1 and 2 only<br/>           (b) 2 and 3 only         </li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(c) 1 and 3 only<br/>(d) All of the above</li> <li>4. Consider the following statements about Blockchain bond issued by World Bank           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is a 2 year bond</li> <li>2. The bond has been arranged by world bank in collaboration of IMF</li> </ol>           Which of the statements/s given above is/are correct?<br/>           (a) 1 only                      (b) 2 only<br/>           (c) Both 1 and 2              (d) Neither 1 nor 2         </li> <li>5. Consider the following statements about composition of legislative council of states           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 1/3 are elected by members of legislative assembly</li> <li>2. 1/6 are nominated by governors</li> <li>3. 1/12 are elected by graduates</li> <li>4. 1/3 are elected by members of local bodies</li> </ol>           Code:<br/>           (a) 1,2 and 3 only<br/>           (b) 2,3 and 4 only<br/>           (c) 1,3 and 4 only<br/>           (d) All of the above         </li> <li>6. Consider the following statements about Advance Area Defence (AAD)           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is a single stage interceptor</li> <li>2. It is an endo-atmospheric missile</li> <li>3. It is capable of intercepting incoming targets at an altitude of 5 to 15 kms</li> </ol>           Which of the following are correct?         </li> </ol> |
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- Code:  
 (a) 1 and 2 only  
 (b) 2 and 3 only  
 (c) 1 and 3 only  
 (d) All of the above
7. Which among the following is not matched correctly?  
 (a) Exercise Maitree – Thailand  
 (b) Blue Flag Air Combat Drill- Nepal  
 (c) Red Flag Exercise-China  
 (d) Exercise Pitch Black- Australia
8. Consider the following statements and choose the correct one/ones  
 1. Project Navlekha is a wipro initiative  
 2. It aims to bring offline content online  
 Code:  
 (a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
 (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
9. Lakhwar multipurpose project is based on which among the following river?  
 (a) Ganga  
 (b) Yamuna  
 (c) Gandak  
 (d) Son
10. Intercontinental Exchange London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR) is based on which among the following currencies  
 1. US Dollar  
 2. Japanese Yen  
 3. Pound sterling  
 4. Swiss franc  
 5. Euro  
 Code:  
 (a) 1,2,3 and 4 only  
 (b) 2,3,4 and 5 only  
 (c) 1,2,3 and 5 only  
 (d) All of the above
11. Consider the following statements and choose the correct one/ones  
 1. Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission Council will be set up under Ayushman Bharat mission  
 2. It will be chaired by union health and family welfare minister  
 3. Under Ayushman Bharat beneficiaries will be chosen according to 2011 census
- Code:  
 (a) 1 and 2 only  
 (b) 2 and 3 only  
 (c) 1 and 3 only  
 (d) All of the above
12. Consider the following statements and choose the correct one/ones  
 1. Logistics is not included in infrastructure status  
 2. National Logistics Portal is a digital platform to bring all stakeholders in the logistics sector on board  
 Code:  
 (a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
 (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
13. Which among the following is correct?  
 (a) According to 2011 census, 1/4th of Indian population consists of SCs and STs  
 (b) Maximum percentage of scheduled caste population lies in Uttar Pradesh  
 (c) Madhya Pradesh has the highest percentage of scheduled tribe population  
 (d) None of the above
14. Consider the following statements about Concessional Financing Scheme and mark the correct one/ones  
 1. The scheme covers entities with minimum 75% of Indian shareholding  
 2. EXIM extends credit under the scheme  
 3. The repayment of the loan is guaranteed by foreign government  
 Code:  
 (a) 1 and 2 only  
 (b) 2 and 3 only  
 (c) 1 and 3 only  
 (d) All of the above
15. Consider the following statements about deputy chairman of Rajya Sabha  
 1. The date of election of deputy chairman is fixed by election commission of India  
 2. It is a constitutional position  
 Which of the following is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only  
(b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2  
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
16. Which among the following is NOT related to M.K Gandhi?  
1. Natal Indian congress  
2. Indian Opinion (newspaper)  
3. Phoenix farm  
Code:  
(a) 1 only  
(b) 2 only  
(c) 3 only  
(d) None of the above
17. Global innovation index is developed jointly by which among the following?  
1. INSEAD  
2. WIPO  
3. Cornell university  
Code:  
(a) 1 and 2 only  
(b) 2 and 3 only  
(c) 1 and 3 only  
(d) All of the above
18. Global Liveability Index is released by which among the following  
(a) World Bank  
(b) WIPO  
(c) Economist Intelligence Unit  
(d) Walk Free Foundation
19. Consider the following pairs: (CSE 2016)  
1. Annex—I Countries : Cartagena Protocol  
2. Certified Emissions Reductions : Nagoya Protocol  
3. Clean Development Mechanism : Kyoto Protocol  
Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?  
(a) 1 and 2 only  
(b) 2 and 3 only  
(c) 3 only  
(d) 1, 2 and 3
20. Who of the following had first deciphered the edicts of Emperor Ashoka? (CSE 2016)  
(a) Georg Bihler  
(b) James Prinsep  
(c) Max Muller  
(d) William Jones
21. With reference to the 'Gram Nyayalaya Act', which of the following statements is/are correct? (CSE 2016)  
1. As per the Act, Gram Nyayalayas can hear only civil cases and not criminal cases.  
2. The Act allows local social activists as mediators/reconciliators.  
Select the correct answer using the code given below.  
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
22. What is/are the purpose/purposes of the 'Marginal Cost of Funds based Lending Rate (MCLR)' announced by RBI? (CSE 2016)  
1. These guidelines help improve the transparency in the methodology followed by banks for determining the interest rates on advances.  
2. These guidelines help ensure availability of bank credit at interest rates which are fair to the borrowers as well as the banks.  
Select the correct answer using the code given below.  
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
23. With reference to the religious history of India, consider the following statements : (CSE 2016)  
1. The concept of Bodhisattva is central to Hinayana sect of Buddhism.  
2. Bodhisattva is a compassionate one on his way to enlightenment.  
3. Bodhisattva delays achieving his own salvation to help all sentient beings on their path to it.  
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?  
(a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only  
(c) 2 only (d) 1, 2 and 3
24. Satya Shodhak Samaj organized (CSE 2016)  
(a) a movement for upliftment of tribals in Bihar  
(b) a temple-entry movement in Gujarat  
(c) an anti-caste movement in Maharashtra  
(d) a peasant movement in Punjab



25. Delhi Dialogue X is related to  
(a) Disaster Management  
(b) India-Asean  
(c) BRICS  
(d) SAARC
26. Consider the following about UN MILITARY OBSERVER GROUP IN INDIA AND PAKISTAN (UNMOGIP) and choose the correct statement/s
1. It was established in 1949 to supervise the ceasefire between India and Pakistan.
  2. India at present considers UNMOGIP irrelevant after the Shimla Agreement and the consequent establishment of the Line of Control.
- Code:  
(a) 1 only  
(b) 2 only  
(c) 1 and 2  
(d) None
27. Project Sashakt was launched recently for  
(a) Non Performing Assets  
(b) Military Upgradation  
(c) Wildlife Conservation  
(d) Pollution Control
28. Consider the following about Nilgiri Thar and choose the correct statement/s
1. Eravikulam National Park is home to the largest population of Nilgiri Thar.
  2. It has been listed as Critically Endangered by IUCN.
  3. It is the state animal of Tamil Nadu.
- Code:  
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 1 and 3  
(c) 2 and 3 (d) All the above
29. Consider the following on Thanjavur Paintings and choose the correct statement/s
1. It is distinguished by its famous gold coating.
  2. It originated in the Maratha court of Thanjavur.
- Code:  
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) 1 and 2 (d) None
30. Qingdao Declaration of SCO is related to  
(a) Economic prosperity  
(b) Combating Terrorism  
(c) Elimination of trade barriers between member countries  
(d) Calling for peace in Middle East