



CURRENT CONNECT DECEMBER- 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.		
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 to 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 and aspects of S&T	Environment and disaster: government initiatives, various judgment, pollution, degradation and conservation efforts	International agreements and works of various international bodies, effort by individuals and misc.	Challenges to internal security, Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate, Cyber security, money laundering and its prevention.
GS- IV	Ethical issues related to family, society, education, Corruption etc.	Ethics in public and private administration	Issues	Related laws and rules	Governance/ Governance	Ethics in international issues	Personalities and their teachings	Other important topics			
Mis.											

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Guidelines for Children's Hostels

In News

The Ministry of Women and Child Development is formulating guidelines for children's hostels, prescribing the minimum standards of care that should be provided to children.

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Who is a child in need of care and protection?

The provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO Act) do not provide any definition of a child in need of care and protection. But no one can deny that a child victim of sexual abuse or sexual assault or sexual harassment is a child in need of care and protection. Similarly in a given case, a child accused of an offence and brought before the Juvenile Justice Board or any other authority might also be a child in need of care and protection.

Key Highlights

PEPPER IT WITH
JJ Act, **Children's**
Science Congress, CARA

- The Supreme Court in its Order in the case of "Exploitation of Children in Orphanages in the State of Tamil Nadu" Vs. **Union of India** has directed that the **definition of the expression 'child in need of care and protection' under Section 2 (14) of the JJ Act, 2015 should** not be interpreted as an exhaustive definition. The definition is illustrative and the benefits envisaged for the children in need of care and protection should be extended to all such children requiring State care and protection.
- Ministry for Women and Child Development, stated that Children staying at hostels, including those attached to schools, are as vulnerable as children at any other facility like child-care institutions (CCIs) and day-care centres.
- The Ministry decided to formulate a set of guidelines to ensure adequate safety, minimum standard of living conditions and periodic inspections at hostels.
- The Ministry has directed the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights to draft the guidelines in consultation with stakeholders concerned and planned to have these guidelines notified under the Juvenile Justice Act or the JJ Rules.
- To ensure safety and well-being of children even at school hostels, Ministry WCD will be sharing the guidelines with the Ministry of Human Resource Development for dissemination among schools providing boarding facility.
- The Ministry had notified all states/UTs to undertake inspection of all CCIs and related facilities and to ensure their registration. The Minister added that registration under the JJ Act is also mandatory for all CCIs running in the form of hostels.

Way Ahead

Even though a child in need of care and protection is defined in Section 2(14) of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 the definition does not specifically include some categories of children. Consequently, the view that since the JJ Act is intended for the benefit of children and is intended to protect and foster their rights, the definition of a child in need of care and protection must be given a broad interpretation. It would be unfortunate if certain categories of children are left out of the definition, even though they need as much care and protection as categories of children specifically enlisted in the definition. Beneficial legislations of the kind that we are dealing with demand an expansive view to be taken by the Courts and all concerned.

Chief Information Commission (CIC)

In News

The government has appointed Sudhir Bhargava as new Chief Information Commissioner along with four new Information Commissioners in the Central Information Commission (CIC) which had been functioning with just three of them as against a sanctioned strength of 11.

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About

The Central Information Commission has been constituted with effect from 12-10-2005 under the Right to Information Act, 2005. The jurisdiction of the Commission extends over all Central Public Authorities.

PEPPER IT WITH
RTI Act, Article 14,
Whistle Blower Bill

Composition: The CIC shall consist of the Chief Information Commissioner and such number of Central Information Commissioners not exceeding 10 as may be deemed necessary.

Eligibility Criteria:

Section 12(3) of the RTI Act 2005 states

The Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners shall be appointed by the President on the recommendation of a committee consisting of

1. The Prime Minister, who shall be the Chairperson of the committee.
2. The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha.
3. A Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister.

Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners

1. Section 12(5): The Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners shall be persons of eminence in public life with wide knowledge and experience in law, science and technology, social service, management, journalism, mass media or administration and governance.
2. Section 12(6): The Chief Information Commissioner or an Information Commissioner shall not be a Member of Parliament or Member of the Legislature of any State or Union territory, as the case may be, or hold any other office of profit or connected with any political party or carrying on any business or pursuing any profession.

Tenure:

- Section 13 of the RTI Act 2005 provides that the Chief Information Commissioner shall hold office for a term of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office and shall not be eligible for reappointment.
- Section 13(2) of the RTI Act 2005 provides that the Information Commissioner shall hold office for a term of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office and shall not be eligible for reappointment as such Information Commissioners provided.

Citizenship Rules, 2009

In News

Union Home Ministry has notified amendments to the Citizenship Rules, 2009. The Centre has made the changes under Section 18 of the Citizenship Act, 1955.

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Issue

The contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 has run into strong resistance in the Assam because it will pave the way for giving citizenship mostly to illegal Hindu migrants from Bangladesh in Assam, who came after March 1971, in violation of the 1985 Assam Accord.

PEPPER IT WITH
NRC, Assam Accord,
Golden Visa (UK), OCI

Amendment

The changes made under Section 18 of the Citizenship Act, 1955, create a separate entry in the form which will ask

the applicant: “Do you belong to one of the minority communities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan — Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis and Christians?”

What is the Citizenship Act 1995?

- Under Article 9 of the Indian Constitution, a person who voluntarily acquires citizenship of any other country is no longer an Indian citizen.
- Citizenship by descent: Persons born outside India on or after January 26, 1950, but before December 10, 1992, are citizens of India by descent if their father was a citizen of India at the time of their birth.

- From December 3, 2004, onwards, persons born outside of India shall not be considered citizens of India unless their birth is registered at an Indian consulate within one year of the date of birth.
- In Section 8 of the Citizenship Act 1955, if an adult makes a declaration of renunciation of Indian citizenship, he loses Indian citizenship.

Telecom Disputes Settlement & Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT)

In News

The telecom tribunal rejected the regulator’s order that had changed the definition of ‘significant market power’ (SMP) to identify predatory pricing, offering substantial relief to India’s older telcos.

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About

In order to bring in functional clarity and strengthen the regulatory framework and the disputes settlement mechanism in the telecommunication sector, the TRAI Act of 1997 was amended in the year 2000 and TDSAT was set up to adjudicate disputes and dispose of appeals with a view to protect the interests of service providers and consumers of the telecom sector and to promote and ensure orderly growth of the telecom sector

PEPPER IT WITH
DIPP, SWIFT, TRAI, Types of Tribunal, Eco Sensitive zones

Composition of TDSAT

- The Tribunal consists of a Chairperson and two Members appointed by the Central Government. The Chairperson should be or should have been a Judge of the Supreme Court or the Chief Justice of a High Court.
- A Member should have held the post of Secretary to the Government of India or any equivalent post in the Central Government or the State Government for a period of not less than two years or a person who is well versed in the field of technology, telecommunication, industry, commerce or administration.

Powers and Jurisdiction

- The Tribunal exercises jurisdiction over Telecom, Broadcasting, IT and Airport tariff matters under the TRAI Act, 1997 (as amended), the Information Technology Act, 2008 and the Airport Economic Regulatory Authority of India Act, 2008.
- The Tribunal exercises original as well as appellate jurisdiction in regard to Telecom, Broadcasting and Airport tariff matters. In regard to Cyber matters the Tribunal exercises only the appellate jurisdiction.
- The jurisdiction of TDSAT stands extended to matters that lay before the Cyber Appellate Tribunal and also the Airport Economic Regulatory Authority Appellate Tribunal

National Medical Devices Promotion Council

In News

The government will set up a National Medical Devices Promotion Council (NMDPC) under the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) in the Ministry of Commerce & Industry to promote the medical devices sector on the occasion of 4th WHO Global Forum on

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Medical Devices at Andhra Pradesh Medtech Zone in Vishakhapatnam.

National Medical Devices Promotion Council

- The Council will be headed by Secretary of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP).
- Apart from the concerned departments of

PEPPER IT WITH
Indian Medical Council (Amendment) Bill, MCI, National Medical Commission Bill, 2017

Government, it will also have representatives from health care industry and quality control institutions.

- The Medical Devices Industry (MDI) plays a critical role in the healthcare ecosystem and is indispensable to achieve the goal of health for all citizens of the country.
- The Andhra Pradesh Medtech Zone, Visakhapatnam, will provide technical support to the council.

Objectives of NMDPC

- Act as a facilitating and promotion & developmental body for the Indian MDI.
- Identify redundant processes and render technical assistance to the agencies and departments concerned to simplify the approval processes involved in medical device industry promotion & development.
- Enable entry of emerging interventions and support certifications for manufacturers to reach levels of global trade norms and lead India to an export driven market in the sector.
- Support dissemination and documentation of international norms and standards for medical devices, by capturing the best practices in the global market and facilitate domestic manufacturers to rise to international level of understanding of regulatory and non-regulatory needs of the industry.
- Drive a robust and dynamic Preferential Market Access (PMA) policy, by identifying the strengths of the Indian manufacturers and discouraging unfair trade practices in imports; while ensuring pro-active monitoring of public procurement notices across India to ensure compliance with PMA guidelines of DIPP and DoP.

Medical Devices Industry in India

- ✓ The Medical Devices industry in India is presently valued at USD 5.2 billion and contributes 4-5% to the USD 96.7 billion Indian health care industry. Currently, India has about 750–800 medical device manufacturers in the country, with an average investment of Rs 170–200 million and an average turnover of Rs 450–500 million.
- ✓ India is counted among the top 20 global medical devices market and is the 4th largest medical devices market in Asia after Japan, China and South Korea.

Way Ahead

The manufacturing and trade in MDI is growing steadily which includes a wide range of products. Although the industry has been growing in double digits but is predominantly import-driven with imports accounting for over 65% of the domestic market. The setting-up of the Council will spur domestic manufacturing in this sector as Indian companies and startups have stated moving towards creating innovative products.

Jammu and Kashmir Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018

In News

The State Administrative Council (SAC), under the chairmanship of Governor recently approved the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2018 and the Jammu and Kashmir Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018.

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Key Highlights

- Jammu and Kashmir has become the first State in the country to bring in a law banning **“sextortion”**, i.e. **sexual exploitation of women** by those in positions of authority or those in a fiduciary relationship or by a public servant.
- **As per International Association of Women’s Judges, extortion** lies at the intersection of sex and extortion under the overarching ambit of corruption. It had noted that it is a form of corruption in which sex, rather than money, is the currency of the bribe. Sextortion is thus an institutionalized system of blatant abuse of power

PEPPER IT WITH
AFSPA, Article 35A, Article 370, Article 368, Delhi Agreement

- The underlying idea is the element of quid pro quo where the perpetrator demands and accepts the sexual favour in exchange for a benefit that he is empowered to withhold or confer. The imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim allows the perpetrator to exert of psychological pressure, which most significantly is not very different from that of monetary corruption.
- It therefore cannot be denied that it is absolutely imperative that the illegal acts, unwarranted demands and in appropriate contacts are given a legal nomenclature, clearly defined and also made specifically punishable in law and that the critical **vacuum in the legislation in this regard is immediately addressed.”**
- Further, the newly inserted Section 354E of the Ranbir Penal Code defines sextortion as an abuse of authority or fiduciary relationship or official position (by a public servant), by employing physical or non-physical forms of coercion to extort or demand sexual favours from any women in exchange of some benefits or favours that the accused is empowered to grant or withhold.
- section 154, 161 and Schedule of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) and section 53A of the Evidence Act will be subjected to amendments in order to bring 'sextortion' at par with similar offences covered under the Ranbir Penal Code
- amendments are also being made to the Prevention of Corruption Act so as to change the definition of misconduct and add to it, the demand for sexual favours

“sexual favour” to mean “any kind of unwanted sexual activity ranging from sexually suggestive conduct, sexually explicit actions such as touching, exposure of private body parts to sexual intercourse, including exposure over the electronic mode of communication”.

Ranbir Penal Code:

Indian Penal code is not applicable to Jammu and Kashmir and in place of IPC, a similar criminal law Ranbir Penal Code applies in the state. The code was introduced by Ranbir Singh during the Dogra Dynasty and it came in effect from 1932. The provision of code was prepared by Thomas Babington Macaulay.

Seventh Schedule in Constitution

The Constitution of India has provided for a division of powers between the Central and state governments. Under the Seventh Schedule, there are three lists – the Union, State and Concurrent.

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Union List (List I) (Parliament Legislation)

- This list contains 97 items and comprises of the subjects which are of national importance and admit of uniform laws for the whole of the country. And the legislative powers to legislate these matters are solely vested in the union parliament
- The Union List has a range of subjects under which the Parliament may make laws.
- The integral subjects which falls within the ambit of Union List are: Defense, Foreign Affairs, Currency and Coinage, War and Peace, Atomic Energy, National Resources, Railways, Post and Telegraph, Citizenship, Navigation and Shipping, Foreign Trade, Inter-State Trade and Commerce, Banking, Insurance, National Highways, Census, Election, Institutions of higher education and others.

State List (List II)(State Legislation)

- This list contains 66 items and speaks about the subject matters those are related to local or state interest hence it directly falls within the legislative competence of state legislature.
- The major ones of the State List are: state court fees, prisons, local government, public order, police, public health and sanitation, hospitals and dispensaries, pilgrimages within India, intoxicating liquors, relief of disabled and unemployable, libraries, communications, agriculture, animal husbandry, water supply, irrigation and canals, fisheries, road passenger tax and goods tax, capitation tax and others.
- The State List lists subjects under which the legislature of a state may make laws.

Concurrent List (List III) (Parliament & State Legislation)

- This list is the most distinctive feature of Indian Constitution as it cannot be found in any other federal constitutions. Among the 47 items enumerated in the list, all can be legislated by both union parliament and the state legislature as both of them possess the concurrent power of legislation.
- The Concurrent List includes subjects that give powers to both the Centre and state governments. Subjects like Education including technical education, medical education and universities, population control and family planning, criminal law, prevention of cruelty to animals, protection of wildlife and animals, forests etc.
- However, given that there can be conflict when it comes to laws passed by Parliament and state legislatures on the same subject, the Constitution provides for a central law to override a state law.

Significance of Concurrent List

This particular list mostly serves as a device to loosen the excessive rigidity of the two-fold distribution. It is mostly reckoned as the twilight zone of the constitution as it allows the legislative power to vary from state legislature to parliament based on the importance of the matters. Like in case of not so important matters, state legislature takes the charge and in case of important ones, Parliament does the same. Also in terms of amplification of laws passed by union parliament state legislatures do have the rights to introduce supplementary laws for the same.

PEPPER IT WITH
Article 246, Article 248, PV
Rajamannar Committee,
Sarkaria Commission, 42nd
Amendment Act

Residuary power of Parliament

The framers of the constitution made the division of matters into three parts as described above. Matters those of national importance have been framed in Union List, those of purely State or local significance must be dealt by the State List, and the matters that are of common interest to the States and the Union were placed in the very Concurrent List. By this way, the framers did ensure the uniformity in legislation with due regard to the **country's diversity. Both Parliament and State legislature possess the exclusive powers to legislate on items in Union as well as State list respectively.** However, sensing the occurrence of a situation in which the legislation might be required on matters which are not present in any of the three Lists, the Founding Fathers came up with the residuary provisions in Article 248 of the Constitution and Entry 97 of the Union List according to which the residuary powers had been vested in Parliament.

Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016

In News

The Bill had gone to the standing committee, and as many as 27 amendments have been accepted by the government.

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Evolution of transgender legislation

1. In February 2014, the Supreme Court passed a landmark judgement, paving the way for enshrining the rights of transgenders in law. The apex court deemed that individuals had the right to the self-identification of their sexual orientation. It ruled that the fundamental rights granted by the Constitution are equally applicable to transgenders who constitute the 'third gender'.
2. The first effort at framing legislation for the same was made in December 2014 by Tiruchi Siva, a Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) Rajya Sabha MP. The Rights of **Transgender Persons Bill, 2014, was introduced as a Private Member's Bill in the Rajya Sabha.**
3. After consultation with legal experts and transgender activists, the 2015 draft Bill was sent to the Law Ministry. It was introduced in the Lok Sabha in August 2016 after considerable revision to the 2015 draft.
4. The ministry is set to re-introduce its original version of The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) 2016 Bill, in the winter session of Parliament.

Highlights of the Bill

1. The Bill defines a transgender person as one who is partly female or male; or a combination of female and male; or neither female nor male. In addition, the **person’s gender must not match the gender assigned at birth**, and includes trans-men, trans-women, persons with intersex variations and gender-queers.
2. A transgender person must obtain a certificate of identity as proof of recognition of identity as a transgender person and to invoke rights under the Bill.
3. Such a certificate would be granted by the District Magistrate on the recommendation of a Screening Committee. The Committee would comprise a medical officer, a psychologist or psychiatrist, a district welfare officer, a government official, and a transgender person.
4. The Bill prohibits discrimination against a transgender person in areas such as education, employment, and healthcare. It directs the central and state governments to provide welfare schemes in these areas.
5. Offences like compelling a transgender person to beg, denial of access to a public **place, physical and sexual abuse, etc. would attract up to two years’ imprisonment and a fine.**

Key Issues

- The Supreme Court has held that the right to self-identification of gender is part of the right to dignity and autonomy under Article 21 of the Constitution. However, **objective criteria may be required to determine one’s gender in order to be eligible for entitlements.**
- The Bill states that a person recognized as **‘transgender’ would have the right to ‘self-perceived’ gender identity.** However, it does not provide for the enforcement of such a right. A District Screening Committee would issue a certificate of identity to recognise transgender persons.
- **The definition of ‘transgender persons’ in the Bill is at variance with the definitions recognised by international bodies and experts in India.**
- **The Bill includes terms like ‘trans-men’, ‘trans-women’, persons with ‘intersex variations’ and ‘gender-queers’ in its definition of transgender persons.** However, these terms have not been defined.

Way Forward

The ambiguity in the definition of the "third sex" lends itself to misinterpretation. Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which has been used to criminalise non-heterosexual sex, draws many transgenders into its net. Non-conformist sexual orientation is scoffed at and transgenders often find themselves at the receiving end of disproportionate attention from law enforcement agencies.

However, the Supreme Court ruling in 2017, that the Right to Privacy was a fundamental right, and was thereby applicable to the protection of sexual orientation of citizens gave a reprieve to the LGBTQ community.

Draft National Child Protection Policy

In News

Women and child development ministry has drafted a policy dedicated to the protection of children.

Vision

All children in India stay safe and feel secure in all settings and circumstances.

Key Highlights

1. **As per the draft, the policy will apply to “all institutions, and organisations (including corporate and media houses), government or private sector”.**
2. The draft policy recommends that all organisations must **have a code of conduct based on “zero tolerance of child abuse and exploitation”.** It

PEPPER IT WITH
JJ Act, Children’s
Science Congress, CARA

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requires organisations to lay down that employees don't use language or behaviour that is "inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate".

3. Institutions should also designate a staff member to ensure that procedures are in place to ensure the protection of children as well as to report any abuse.
4. Any individual who suspects physical, sexual or emotional abuse must report it to the helpline number 1098, police or a child welfare committee.
5. This policy has four aspects — creating awareness, prevention, reporting and responding.

Challenges

- "The document needs to define what child protection is as well as what it means by institutions or organisations."
- Unlike the National Child Policy, 2013, the latest document doesn't talk about children who may need additional special protection measures: including those affected by migration, communal or sectarian violence, children forced into begging or in conflict with the law, and those infected with HIV/AIDS.
- This document needs to go into all these aspects, especially a reporting structure involving various nodal bodies and a monitoring mechanism for implementation of the guidelines.
- While it talks about organisations laying down a code of conduct, it doesn't explain what is acceptable behaviour such as conduct of teachers in schools.
- The norms should be designed in such a way that organisations can customise the policies according to the nature of their work.

Authorisation for accessing computers

In News

The Ministry of Home Affairs recently issued an order authorising 10 Central agencies to intercept, monitor, and decrypt "any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer.

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Agencies

The 10 agencies include Intelligence Bureau, Narcotics Control Bureau, Enforcement Directorate, Central Board of Direct Taxes, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence;, Central Bureau of Investigation, National Investigation Agency Cabinet Secretariat (RAW), Directorate of Signal Intelligence (For service areas of Jammu & Kashmir, North-East and Assam only), and Commissioner of Police, Delhi.

Key Highlights

- The MHA gave the authorisation under Section 69 (1) of the Information Technology Act,2000 which says that the Central government can direct any agency after it is **satisfied that it is necessary or expedient to do so in the "interest of the sovereignty or integrity of India, defence of India, security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognizable offence relating to above or for investigation of any offence.**
- The order mandates for a subscriber or service provider or any person in charge of the computer resource to extend technical assistance to the agencies.
- Non-compliance will invite seven-year imprisonment and fine.

Issues

1. The sweeping powers given to agencies to snoop phone calls and computers without any checks and balances is extremely worrisome. This is likely to be misused.
2. The order is against the right to privacy, which was a fundamental right.
3. This order by a govt wanting to snoop on every citizen is unconstitutional and in breach of the telephone tapping guidelines, the Privacy Judgement and the Aadhaar judgement.
4. It is crucial to acknowledge that every act of surveillance, whether justified or not, involves a serious violation of individual privacy; and further, a system of government

surveillance can have a chilling effect upon the exercise of rights, across the board, in any society.

- 5. A surveillance regime cannot have the executive sitting in judgment over the executive: there must be parliamentary oversight over the agencies that conduct surveillance
- 6. And equally important, all surveillance requests must necessarily go before a judicial authority, which can apply an independent legal mind to the merits of the request, in light of the proportionality standards discussed above.

CDSCO

In News

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has issued safety guidelines for Isotretinoin, an oral drug, which is used in the treatment of severe acne.

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Background

The sale, manufacture and distribution of Isotretinoin, which can cause birth defects in progeny if not taken without proper guidance. The directions have been given after taking recommendations from the Subject Experts Committee (SEC) with CDSCO.

About CDSCO

- The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) under Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare is the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) of India.
- It envisages uniform implementation of the provisions of the Act & Rules made there under for ensuring the safety, rights and well-being of the patients by regulating the drugs and cosmetics.
- CDSCO is constantly thriving upon to bring out transparency, accountability and uniformity in its services in order to ensure safety, efficacy and quality of the medical product manufactured, imported and distributed in the country.
- Under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, CDSCO is responsible for approval of Drugs, Conduct of Clinical Trials, laying down the standards for Drugs, control over the quality of imported Drugs in the country and coordination of the activities of State Drug Control Organizations by providing expert advice with a view of bring about the uniformity in the enforcement of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.
- CDSCO along with state regulators, is jointly responsible for grant of licenses of certain specialized categories of critical Drugs such as blood and blood products, I. V. Fluids, Vaccine and Sera.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Indian Medical Council
 (Amendment) Bill, MCI,
 National Medical Commission
 Bill, 2017

Information Technology [Intermediaries Guidelines (Amendment) Rules] 2018

In News

In its bid to crack down on spread of fake news and rumours circulated on online platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook and other online platforms, the central government has proposed stringent changes under the draft of Section 79 of the Information Technology (IT) that govern online content.

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Key Highlights

- The changes will require online platforms to break end-to-end encryption in order to ascertain the origin of **messages**. **The social media platforms to “deploy** technology based automated tools or appropriate mechanisms, with appropriate controls, for proactively identifying or removing or disabling access to unlawful information or content.

PEPPER IT WITH
 IT Act, CSIR, BIS, BEE

- As per the amendment, the social media platforms will need to comply with the central government **“within 72 hours” of a query. There should be a ‘Nodal person of Contact for 24X7 coordination with law enforcement agencies and officers to ensure compliance’.** **The social media platforms will be keeping a vigil on “unlawful activity” for a period of “180 days”.**
- The parameter for the government to judge an unlawful content would be that it does not violate the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency, and morality or in relation to contempt of court defamation or incitement to an offence on its computer resource.
- The changes proposed by the central government is aimed at curbing fake news or rumours being spread on social media and check mob violence ahead.
- The proposed amendments in the draft is bound to force social media platforms like Whatsapp, Facebook and Twitter to remain vigil and keep users on their toes before **posting or sharing anything that is deemed as “unlawful information or content”.**
- **The online platforms need to shoulder the “responsibility, accountability and larger commitment to ensure that its platform is not misused on a large scale to spread incorrect facts projected as news and designed to instigate people to commit crime.**

Background

The watershed moment in Indian judiciary concerning information technology was the Shreya Singhal verdict in 2015. The landmark ruling on March 24, 2015, struck down Section 66A of the IT Act, which allowed the arrest of those allegedly posting offensive content online.

The proposed changes have once again given rise to a debate on whether the government is intruding into the privacy of individuals.

AP get new High Court

In News

President recently issued orders for the creation of a separate high court for Andhra Pradesh which will start functioning from 1 January 2019 from Amravati.

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Key Highlights

In pursuance of article 214 of the Constitution and the Order issued by the Supreme Court of India constituted a separate High Court for the State of Andhra Pradesh, namely, the High Court of Andhra Pradesh, from the 1st day of January, 2019 with the principal seat of such High Court at Amaravati in the State of Andhra Pradesh and the High Court of Judicature at Hyderabad shall become the High Court for the State of Telangana.

PEPPER IT WITH
Article 231, Powers of HC, Mandamus, Writ

The new High Court for Andhra Pradesh will be the 25th High Court in the country. The new Andhra HC is expected to function from a temporary structure in Amaravati till a **permanent building is set up at the ‘Justice City’ being planned in Amaravati.**

Constitutional provisions for HC

- Under section 30 of Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014 provides that the High Court of Judicature at Hyderabad shall be the common High Court for the State of Telangana and the State of Andhra Pradesh till a separate High Court for the State of Andhra Pradesh is constituted under article 214 of the Constitution read with section 31 of the said Act.
- Under section 31 of the said Act provides that the principal seat of the High Court of Andhra Pradesh shall be at such place as the President may, by a notified Order.
- Article 214 provides that every State shall have a High Court,
- Article 231 states that Parliament may by law establish of a common High Court for two or more States but Article 231 shall not be a bar for constituting a new High Court as enumerated under Article 214.

- Article 216 provides that every High Court shall consist of a Chief Justice and such other number of judges as the President may from time to time deem necessary to appoint.
- Article 217 relates to appointment of HC judges.

Year End Review – 2018: Ministry of Tourism

DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

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1. Theme based circuits are being developed under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme spanning the entire country. A total number of 07 projects have been sanctioned during 2018-19 for a total amount of Rs.384.67 Crore.
2. Nine projects under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme have been inaugurated between in 2018.
3. Integrated development of identified pilgrimage destinations is being undertaken under the **‘National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive’ (PRASHAD) Scheme.**
4. Ministry of Tourism provided Central Financial Assistance for infrastructure development during 2018-19 to Cochin Port Trust and Mormugaon Port Trust.

TOURISM STATISTICS

1. Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) during the period January-November 2018 were 93, 67, 424 as compared to 88, 67, 963 in January-November 2017 registering a growth of 5.6% over the same period.
2. During January- November 2018, a total of 20,61,511 tourists arrived on e-Tourist Visa as compared to 14,56,615 during January- November 2017, registering a growth of 41.5% over the same period.
3. Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) during the period January- October 2018 were Rs. 1,58,846 Crore as compared to Rs. 1,41,965 Crore in January- October 2017 registering a growth of 11.9% over the same period.
4. During 2017, the number of Domestic Tourist Visits to the States/UTs was 1652.5 million as compared to 1615.4 million in 2016 showing growth of 2.3% in 2017 over 2016.

Initiatives taken

1. **Adopt a heritage’ project**
2. Bharat parv
3. Paryatan parv
4. India tourism mart 2018
5. Incredible india
6. International buddhist conclave
7. E-visa
8. Swachh bharat mission

PEPPER IT WITH Adarsh Smarak, ASI, PRASAD Scheme

Rajasthan abolishes minimum education criteria for local body election

In News

The Rajasthan government abolished the condition of a minimum educational qualification to contest local body elections and also decided to set up a committee to frame rules for its farm loan-waiver scheme.

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Background

- The cabinet abolished the minimum educational qualification needed for contesting civic polls and the decision was taken considering the constitutional right of every individual to take part in the democratic process.

- The election of mayors and chairmans in corporations would be held through the direct system instead of the indirect method.

Criteria

- For contesting the zila parishad or panchayat samiti polls, a contestant must have a minimum qualification of secondary education (Class X).
- To contest the sarpanch elections, an aspirant from the general category must have passed Class VIII and a SC/ST aspirant must have passed Class V.

SC verdict in past

- ✓ In 2016 what may be a precedent preventing illiterate persons from participating in grass roots democracy, the Supreme Court upheld a Haryana **State law mandating that only those having “minimum”** educational qualifications will be eligible to contest panchayat elections in the State.
- ✓ It is only education which gives a human being the power to discriminate between right and wrong, good and bad. Therefore, prescription of an educational qualification is not irrelevant for better administration.
- ✓ The SC interpretation is based on the fact that uneducated or illiterate people getting **elected to the local bodies can easily be misled by officials if they don’t know to write and read.**In such cases, administrative actions that they are going can pose many challenges.

PEPPER IT WITH ODOP, MPLAD

Criticism

Few experts are of the opinion that the requirement of minimum qualification for contesting elections is against the very spirit of 73rd and 74th amendments. It also violates the right of every citizen to vote and to contest elections, which form the basic structure of the constitution.

Transparency in Selection of Sportspersons

In News

Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports issued guidelines to ensure transparency in Selection of Sportspersons.

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Background

- The development and promotion of various disciplines of sports including selection of players for various national and international sports competitions is the responsibility of the concerned National Sports Federations (NSFs).
- The NSFs work in an autonomous environment and the Government is not directly involved in their functioning, including selection of sports persons. However, to ensure transparency in selection process Government has issued guidelines according to which selection of sportspersons for major international events is to be done by a Selection Committee.

PEPPER IT WITH National Youth Policy 2014, TOPS, NSF

Initiatives taken

1. Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS) through Sports Authority of India (SAI) has been implementing various sports promotional schemes to tap sports talents throughout the country irrespective of their financial status.
2. Under the Schemes – SAI Training Centres (STC), Special Area Games (SAG), sports talents belong to rural, tribal, coastal, hilly and backward areas of the country are selected.
3. The selected trainees are provided financial support in the form of expert coaches, sports equipment, boarding and lodging, sports kit, competition exposure, educational expenses, medical/ insurance and stipend as per the approved scheme norms.
4. Under the Scheme of Assistance to National Sports Federations, the Government supports the identified sportspersons, including those from weaker sections of society/teams for intensive coaching through national coaching camps, foreign exposures / competitions etc.

5. Under Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), customized training is being provided to identify sportspersons at the state-of-the-art sports institutes/ academies within the country and abroad.

Capacity Building Programme for EWRs of PRI

In News

The Government of India has initiated the Capacity Building Programme for Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

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73rd and 74th Amendment

Main Features

- A three-tier panchayat system shall be constituted in every state, comprising panchayats at the village, intermediate and district levels. However, states with populations not exceeding 20 lakhs could dispense with the intermediate level and have a two-tier system.
- The panchayats will enjoy a five-year term; if dissolved earlier, fresh elections will be completed within six months of the date of dissolution.
- The gram sabha (village assembly) will consist of all persons registered on the electoral rolls.
- In the directly elected seats of members in all panchayats, there will be reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), in proportion to their total population in a panchayat area, and one-third of these seats will be reserved for women belonging to these groups. Of the seats to be filled by direct election in every panchayat, there will be not less than one-third reservation of seats in panchayats for women, including the seats reserved for SC/ST women.
- The offices of Chairpersons in the panchayats at all levels will be reserved for the SC/STs and women as the State legislature may decide, provided that not less than **one-third of the Chairpersons'** positions shall be reserved for women. Likewise, there will be reservation in the offices of Chairpersons in panchayats at all levels for members of the SCs and STs, in proportion to their population in the state.
- The Governor of the State will appoint a State Finance Commission to review the financial position of the panchayats and make recommendations regarding the principles which should govern the distribution of the taxes, duties, tolls and fees between the State Government and the panchayats.

PEPPER IT WITH
WIP, PMMY, Balwan Rai
Mehta Committee, GVK
Rao Committee

MPVs

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs has envisaged engagement of Mahila Police Volunteers (MPVs) in the States and Union Territories who will act as a link between police and community and help women in distress.
- Haryana is the first state to adopt the initiative at Karnal and Mahendergarh District on a pilot basis under Nirbhaya Fund.
- one Mahila Police Volunteer (MPV) is envisaged per Gram Panchayat across the country

Background

The Capacity Building Programme undertaken by Ministry of Women and Child Development is a significant endeavour in creating a forum for EWRs to understand their roles and responsibilities in a more prolific manner. Although it is the first step towards harnessing the full potential of EWRs, but this is envisioned as a continuous process in order to instill confidence, courage, conviction, motivation and above all providing hand-holding support to EWRs for mainstreaming them in the governance process.

Factors for deterrence

1. The deeply entrenched stereotypical norms relegate women to the domestic space, with severely restricted engagement in public affairs, an area largely dominated by men.
2. The caste and class restrictions and the patriarchal system and mindset pervades the political space provided to women. Women are still not recognized as political entities and their perspective is seldom seen as integral to the design and delivery of services.
3. The lack of exposure of women themselves to politics and the absence of any experience in exercising their political responsibilities.
4. Low literacy levels, absence of education and limited or no exposure, all lead to a lack of confidence and many women are unable to comprehend the true spirit of decentralization and recognize the opportunities that it provides.

The project aimed to:

- ✓ Build capacities of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) for effective functioning and setting of **women's agenda**.
- ✓ Institutionalize mechanisms to strengthen capacity building of EWRs to better understand and perform their functions.
- ✓ Mobilize community and strengthen processes of constituency building to enable women to articulate their voices and participate in the electoral process.

Key interventions for building capacities of EWRs and other panchayat functionaries were:

1. environment building through the campaign approach like mock polling exercises, perspective building via nukkad nataks etc
2. building capacities of EWRs and other women leaders (Gender sensitization, women gathering etc)
3. **strengthening women's collectives and building networks**
4. activating the gram sabhas
5. strengthening information dissemination mechanisms with the help of SHGs, custom made IEC, etc
6. Engagement of women elected members and leaders in panchayats

Way Ahead

Experience sharing of EWRs needs to be actively encouraged, wider publicity to success **stories and greater exposure for women's groups through visits and sammelans is required.** It is clear that the **collaboration of partner organizations with SHGs, women's groups, trained citizen leaders and the people themselves, as part of the strategy of design and implementation, will help women assert their Rights in political scenario in effective and efficient way.**

Ujjwala Sanitary Napkins initiative

Key Highlights

- The Ujjwala Sanitary Napkins initiative has been launched by three oil marketing companies – IOCL, BPCL and HPCL
- The three companies will set up 100 manufacturing units at the Common Service Centres (CSC) covering 93 Blocks across 30 districts of Odisha at an estimated cost of ₹2.94 crore.
- It is aimed to educate women on female hygiene and health, improve accessibility to low cost eco-friendly sanitary pads and boost rural employment and economy.
- At least 10 Ujjwala beneficiary women will get employment at each CSC. Each facility will have a capacity to produce 1,200-2,000 pads per day and will have a sterilisation room to ensure that the napkins are sterilised before they are packed for use by rural women.
- The CSCs are also being provided with raw material, enough to make 45,000-50,000 pads. These napkins will be priced at ₹40 per pack, each containing eight pads.

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- The Ujjwala pads will be made of virgin wood pulp sheet, non-woven white sheet and a gel sheet which are all biodegradable in nature and will leave minimal carbon footprint.

State's startup ranking

Why in News?

Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) recently announced the **first ever States' Start-up** Ranking 2018. DIPP began this exercise in 2016. Gujarat was the best performer state. A total of

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27 States and 3 Union Territories participated in the exercise.

Objective

The Start-up India initiative of the Government of India envisages to build a robust Start-up ecosystem in the country for nurturing innovation and providing opportunities to budding entrepreneurs. The active support of State/UT Governments is crucial for achieving the overall objectives of the program. The core functioning of an enabling ecosystem in a State/UT is a function of the framework and policy put in place along with effective implementation of the same.

About the Ranking

- **The 'State/UT Startup Ranking Framework' is spread across 7** areas of intervention with a total of 38 action points and an overall score of 100 marks.
- The framework also provides the guidelines to support implementation of action points along with good practices against each action point.
- In order to evaluate States/UTs in a balanced and transparent manner, the implementation of action points by the State/UT Government and feedback from Startup ecosystem components have been given due weightage.
- Start-up ecosystem components include students, entrepreneurs, Start-ups, investors, incubators, accelerators and mentors.

- ❖ Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) are about creations of the mind, they are granted to creators of IP, for ideas which are new and original, by the respective governments. **No one can use others' IPR** without their permission. These rights come with limited monopoly and exclusivity. These rights can include patents, copyrights, trademarks, industrial designs, protection of geographical indications (GIs), IC lay-out designs, trade secrets and new plant varieties.
- ❖ Patent is a statutory right granted by the respective governments. It gives one the exclusive rights and bars others from making, using, selling and importing product or process, based on the patented **invention without one's prior permission.**
- ❖ Trademark is a sign that helps distinguish the products from a particular producer or enterprise from those of its competitors. By providing a distinctive sign to goods or services produced by an enterprise, trademarks create an enduring image in the **customers' mind.**

PEPPER IT WITH
Geographical Indicator, Seed Funding or Seed Capital, Incubators, National Report on the States' Start-up Ranking 2018

How are states identified

States have been identified as leaders across various categories such as Start-up policy leaders, incubation hubs, seeding innovation, scaling innovation, regulatory change champions, procurement leaders, communication champions, North-Eastern leader, and hill state leader.

On the basis of performance in these categories, the States have been recognised as the Best Performer, Top Performers, Leaders, Aspiring Leaders, Emerging States and Beginners.

Way forward

In order to achieve the vision of building a strong ecosystem in India, it is imperative that collaborative and concerted efforts are undertaken by Centre and States/UTs together for effectively nurturing and supporting Start-ups for their success.

Gender gap index 2018

Why in News?

India has been ranked 108th (out of 149) in the Geneva based **organisation’s World Economic Forum (WEF) annual report**-Gender Gap Index, same as 2017. The global list was topped by Iceland having closed more than 85.8 per cent of its overall gender gap. Iceland holds the top spot in the index for the 10th consecutive year.

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Highlights of the Report

- India has many challenges as it ranks 142nd out of 149 countries in the economic opportunity and participation sub-index.
- India was third-lowest in the world on health and survival, remaining the world’s least-improved country on this sub-index over the past decade. In fact, India actually widens the gender gap on this sub-index this year.
- However, on the positive side, India has slightly improved in wage equality for similar work indicator, where it stood at 72nd place.
- The country has also closed its tertiary education enrolment gap for the first time in 2018 and has managed to keep its primary and secondary gaps closed for the third year running.
- India has the second-largest artificial intelligence (AI) workforce but one of the largest AI gender gaps, with only 22 per cent of roles filled by women.
- The world has closed 68 per cent of its gender gap and at the current rate of change, it will take 108 years to close the overall gender gap and 202 years to bring about parity in the workplace.
- South Asia was the second-lowest ranking region in the index, with only 65 per cent of its gender gap now closed. India is slightly ahead of the regional average having closed 66 per cent.

	2006		2018	
	rank	score	rank	score
Global Gender Gap score	98	0.601	108	0.665
Economic participation and opportunity	110	0.397	142	0.385
Educational attainment	102	0.819	114	0.953
Health and survival	103	0.962	147	0.940
Political empowerment	20	0.227	19	0.382
rank out of	114		149	

Second Delta Ranking

The NITI Aayog recently released the Second Delta ranking for the Aspirational Districts which measures the incremental progress made by them between June 1, 2018 and October 31, 2018, across six developmental areas of Health and Nutrition, Education, Agriculture and Water Resources, Financial Inclusion, Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure. Transformation of Aspirational Districts programme aims to quickly and effectively transform some of the most underdeveloped districts of the country.

In the overall ranking, the most improved district was Virudhanagar, Tamil Nadu.

About the Report

- Since 2006, Global Gender Gap Index seeks to measure the relative gaps between women and men across four key areas: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. **In addition, this year’s edition** studies skills gender gaps related to Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- It does not seek to set priorities for countries but, rather, to provide a comprehensive set of data and a clear method for tracking gaps on critical indicators so that countries may set priorities within their own economic, political and cultural contexts.

PEPPER IT WITH
Nordic Countries, 4th Industrial
Revolution, Global Risk Report
of WFF

- The Index also points to potential role models by revealing those countries that—within their region or income group—are leaders in distributing resources more equitably between women and men, regardless of the overall level of available resources.

Background

Gender parity is fundamental to whether and how economies and societies thrive. Ensuring **the full development and appropriate deployment of half of the world’s total talent pool** has a vast bearing on the growth, competitiveness and future-readiness of economies and businesses worldwide.

Way Forward

The economies that will succeed in the fourth industrial revolution will be those that are best able to harness all their available talent. Proactive measures that support gender parity and social inclusion and address historical imbalances are therefore essential for the health of the global economy as well as for the good of society as a whole. So, India needs to make improvements across the board, from women’s participation to getting more women into senior and professional roles.

Partners’ Forum

In News

The Government of India, in association with the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH), is hosting a two-day international conference to improve the health and well-being of women, children and adolescents.

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The previous chapters were held in Johannesburg, South Africa (2014), New Delhi, India (2010) and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (2007). This is the second time India is hosting the **Partners’ Forum**.

About

Partners’ Forum is a **global health partnership launched in September 2005** to accelerate efforts to reduce child and maternal mortality, improve adolescent, child, newborn and maternal health. This partnership is an alliance of more than 1,000 plus members, across 10 constituencies in 92 countries: academic, research and teaching institutions; donors and foundations; health care professionals; multilateral agencies; non-governmental organizations; partner countries; global financing mechanisms and the private sector.

Specific goals of the Partners’ Forum include:

1. Greater political momentum, sustaining attention to the “Survive-Thrive-Transform” agenda of the Global Strategy, and its contribution to driving the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The voices of women, children and adolescents will be central to our messaging and framing.
2. Knowledge exchange, through sharing of lessons learned and best practices to innovate **and improve implementation strategies for results. The rigorously produced “Success Factors” case studies** (selected from more than 300 partner-led proposals) will anchor this effort.
3. Improved cross-sectoral collaboration through knowledge exchange and joint advocacy strategies.

PMNCH’s mission is to support the global health community to work successfully towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the health related **SDGs as articulated in the Strategy for Women’s Children’s and Adolescents’ Health in support of ‘Every Woman Every Child’ (EWEC) movement.**

PEPPER IT WITH
RMNCH+A, WASH,
Intensified Mission
Indradhanush, UHC

The Partners’ Forum will showcase learning from across six regions: Africa, Eastern Mediterranean, Europe, Americas, South East Asia and Western Pacific on six thematic areas:

1. Early Childhood Development (Germany & Chile);
2. Adolescent Health and Well-Being (USA & Indonesia);

3. Quality, Equity and Dignity (QED) in Services (India & Cambodia);
 - From India, Intensified Mission Indradhanush has been selected as one of the case studies under QED theme.
4. Sexual and Reproductive Health (Malawi & Malaysia) and;
5. Empowerment of Women, Girls and Communities (South Africa & Guatemala); and in Humanitarian and Fragile Settings (Sierra Leone & Afghanistan)

Digital Sky Platform

In News

India to start registration of drones, pilots, and operators Registration portal for online permission via newly launched portal Digital Sky.

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Digital Sky

1. It is an online IT platform developed for handling UIN (Unique Identification Number), UAOP (Unmanned Aerial Operator’s Permit) applications, permission to fly drones in India.
2. The mission of Digital Sky is to create a completely digital, paperless, and presenceless process, thus fast-forwarding to a future of on-demand seamless permissions for RPAS, operators, and pilots.
3. Its first of kind that implements 'no permission, no take-off' (NPNT) – a novel system of software-based self-enforcement to minimize deviations from the CAR.
4. The Digital Sky Platform is built to evolve with the evolving needs of this rapidly changing industry extending the functionality of the platform through Application Program Interfaces (APIs).
5. **The new policy called “Drone Regulations 1.0”** clarifies where, when and how drones can operate within India to provide oversight to security agencies.
6. To get permissions, RPAS operators or remote pilots will have to file a flight plan.
 - Green zones – Flying in the green zones, requires only intimation of the time and location via the portal or the app.
 - Yellow zones – Permission will be required for flying in yellow zones.
 - Red zones – Flights will not be allowed to fly

NAVIC

- The Tamil Nadu government has distributed 200 Navic- powered satellite- enabled communication devices developed by ISRO to 80 fishing boat groups.
- These gadgets will help the Tamilnadu fishermen know about cyclones and provide weather updates on a real- time basis.
- These gadgets are basically receivers which will produce a beep when alerts are received by the device. They are Bluetooth enabled and the alerts received can be read on the Navic app
- NAVIC is an independent regional navigation satellite system designed to provide position information in the Indian region and 1500 km around the Indian mainland.

Drone is a layman terminology for Unmanned Aircraft (UA). There are three subsets of Unmanned Aircraft, a) Remotely Piloted Aircraft, b) Autonomous Aircraft and c) Model Aircraft.

An aircraft and its associated elements, which are operated with no pilot on board is called as Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS).

RPAS

RPAS is one subset of UAS. A remotely piloted aircraft (RPA), its associated remote pilot station(s), the required command and control links and any other components, as specified in the type design.

Don'ts

- Don't fly a Nano drone above 50ft (15m) from the ground level
- Don't fly a Micro drone above 200ft (60m) from the ground level
- Don't fly drones more than 400ft (120m) from the ground level
- Don't fly drone near other aircraft (manned or unmanned)
- Don't fly drone near airports and heliports
- Don't fly drone over groups of people, public events, or stadiums full of people without permission
- Don't fly drone over government facilities/military bases or over/ near any no-drone zones.

The Minister for Civil Aviation has constituted task-force which is expected to release their final report on Drone 2.0 framework for RPAS; expected to include regulatory architecture for autonomous flying, delivery via drones and beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) flights.

PEPPER IT WITH
Soft Kill, BCAS, NETRA,
Kumar Rajesh Chandra
Committee

Challenges

- ✓ Safety
- ✓ Security
- ✓ Privacy
- ✓ Ecosystem
- ✓ Digital Enforceability
- ✓ Traffic Management

State of Maharashtra's Agribusiness and Rural Transformation (SMART)

In News

The govt. has launched SMART to revamp agricultural value chains, with special focus on marginal farmers across 10,000 villages.

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About SMART Project

- Maharashtra Village Social Transformation Foundation (MVSTF), Maharashtra State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MSRLM), and Maharashtra Agricultural Competitiveness Project (MACP) intend to collaboratively formulate and implement a state of Maharashtra Agribusiness and Rural Transformation -“SMART” Livelihood Project for Rural Maharashtra.
- The goal of the project is to enhance the enterprise formation, increasing access to markets; and promoting climate resilience and resource-use efficiency.
- It will cover almost one-fourth of Maharashtra. Its focus is on villages which are reeling under worst agriculture crisis compounded by lack of infrastructure and assured value chains to channelize farm produce.
- The project aims to transform Rural Maharashtra through “SMART” interventions in Agriculture and Livelihood sectors, assisted by World Bank.
- For implementing the Smart Sustainable farming Project in next 3 years the World Bank are giving Rs 1483. Maharashtra State government will provide Rs 565 Crore and the remained cost of the project is contributed by Village social transforming foundation of state Rs 71 Crore.

PEPPER IT WITH
IMPRESS, HEFA,
HEERA, RISE

Benefits of Smart Sustainable farming Project

1. Farmer's income will become double.
2. Improve the economy of the state.
3. Provide better infrastructure and tools.
4. Improve the crop production of the rural areas.

- 5. It seeks to ensure higher production of crops and create robust market mechanism to enable farmers to reap higher remunerations for the yield. It unites agriculture-oriented corporates and farmers by providing them common platform.
- 6. It will support resilience of agriculture production systems to better manage increasing production and commercial risks associated with climate change.

Saubhagya scheme

In News

Nine States have achieved complete household electrification under the Saubhagya scheme. They are Madhya Pradesh, Tripura, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Mizoram, Sikkim, Telangana and West Bengal. With this, 16 States in the country now have 100 per cent household electrification.

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About Saubhagya

- Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana – ‘Saubhagya’ a new scheme was launched by the PMin 2017. Under Saubhagya free electricity connections to all households (both APL and poor families) in rural areas and poor families in urban areas will be provided.
- Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) has been designated as nodal agency for the Saubhagya scheme.
- There are around 4 Crore un-electrified households in the country and they are targeted for providing electricity connections by December 2018.
- The prospective beneficiary households for free electricity connections under the scheme would be identified using SECC 2011 data. However, un-electrified households not covered under SECC data would also be provided electricity connections under the scheme on payment of Rs. 500 which shall be recovered by DISCOMs in 10 instalments through electricity bill.

PEPPER IT WITH
National Digital Communications
Policy-2018, IOT, M2M, UJALA

Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission

About

Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission (SPMRM) was announced in the Union Budget 2014-15. This was following the Rurban development model of urbanization of the rural areas, adopted in the state of Gujarat through which people living in the rural areas are given efficient civic infrastructure and associate services. Ensuring availability of amenities to rural populace is on the top priority of the central government as 69% of India’s population resides in villages.

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Key Highlights

- The Mission aims at development of rural growth clusters which have latent potential for growth, in all States and Union Territories (UTs), which would trigger overall development in the region.
- These clusters would be developed by provisioning of economic activities, developing skills & local entrepreneurship and providing infrastructure amenities. The Rurban Mission will thus develop a cluster of Smart Villages.
- This is a unique programme, designed to deliver catalytic interventions to rural areas on the threshold of growth.
- There is a funding support of up to 30% of the estimated investment for each Rurban cluster, given as Critical Gap Funding (CGF), while 70% of the funds is mobilized by the States through convergence with synergic State and Central programmes as well as private investment and institutional funding.

PEPPER IT WITH
NRuM, Mukhyamantri
Tirth Yatra Yojana, EMRS

- Upon being re-classified as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, the CGF is now shared between the Centre and the State in a ratio of 60:40 for Plain area States and 90:10 for Himalayan and NE States.

Substantial part of the works identified for development in the clusters is focused on provision of basic and economic amenities.

1. Provision of basic amenities

Provision of 24/7 Water Supply to all households,

Solid and Liquid Waste Management facilities at the household and cluster level

2. Provision of Economic Amenities

Agri Services and Processing, Tourism, and Skill development to promote Small and Medium Scale Enterprises.

Socially oriented insurance schemes

The socially oriented insurance schemes are currently being operated or partially sponsored by the Central Government targeted at vulnerable sections of the society are as follows:

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PMJJBY

- These schemes are offered/administered through both public and private sector insurance companies, in tie up with scheduled commercial banks, regional rural banks and cooperative banks.
- Available to people in the age group of 18 to 50 and having a bank account. People who join the scheme before completing 50 years can, however, continue to have the risk of life cover up to the age of 55 years subject to payment of premium.
- The scheme is being offered by Life Insurance Corporation and all other life insurers who are willing to offer the product on similar terms with necessary approvals and tie up with banks for this purpose.

PMSBY

- The Scheme is available to people in the age group 18 to 70 years with a bank account who give their consent to join / enable auto-debit on or before 31st May for the coverage period 1st June to 31st May on an annual renewal basis. Aadhar would be the primary KYC for the bank account.
- The risk coverage under the scheme is Rs.2 lakh for accidental death and full disability and Rs. 1 lakh for partial disability.
- The scheme is being offered by Public Sector General Insurance Companies or any other General Insurance Company who are willing to offer the product on similar terms with necessary approvals and tie up with banks for this purpose.

Life Cover under PMJDY

- The bank account comes with a RuPay debit card with a built-in accidental insurance cover of Rs. 1 lakh.
- This life insurance cover of Rs. 30,000/- under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, gives life insurance cover on death of the life assured, due to any **reason, to the deceased's** family. The scheme aims to provide security to families from economically weaker sections who cannot afford direct purchase of such insurance. The premium subscription for the life cover under PMJDY is borne by the Government of India.

Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana

- Under the scheme a total no. of 3.16 lakh annuitants are being benefited and the corpus amounts to Rs. 6,095 crore. For the benefit of citizens aged 60 years and above.
- The scheme is administered through Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC). Under the Scheme the subscribers on payment of a lump sum amount get pension at a guaranteed rate of 9% per annum (payable monthly).
- The scheme allows withdrawals of deposit amount by the annuitant after fifteen years of purchase of the policy.

PMFBY

- PMFBY provides a comprehensive insurance cover against failure of the crop thus helping in stabilising the income of the farmers.
- The Scheme covers all Food & Oilseeds crops and Annual Commercial/Horticultural Crops for which past yield data is available and for which requisite number of Crop Cutting Experiments (CCEs) are conducted being under General Crop Estimation Survey (GCES).
- Uniform maximum premium of only 2%, 1.5% and 5% of the sum insured to be paid by farmers for all Kharif crops, Rabi crops and commercial/horticultural crops.
- It is compulsory for loanee farmers availing crop loans for notified crops in notified areas and voluntary for non-loanee farmers.

Shiksha Setu

- Shiksha Setu is a mobile application launched by Haryana Government.
- The app contains all the information related to attendance, fee online admission and scholarships in all the Haryana Government colleges.
- To bring in Transparency in the education department and in the administration of colleges and to increase the connectivity between students, parents, teachers and administration.

PMVVY

- Govt launched PMVVY to protect elderly persons aged 60 years and above against a future fall in their interest income due to the uncertain market conditions, as also to provide social security during old age. The scheme provides an assured return of 8% per annum for 10 years.
- The differential return i.e. the difference between return generated by LIC and the assured return of 8% per annum is borne by Government of India as subsidy on annual basis.

RWBCIS

- WBCIS aims to mitigate the hardship of the insured farmers against the likelihood of financial loss on account of anticipated crop loss resulting from adverse weather conditions relating to rainfall, temperature, wind, humidity etc.
- **WBCIS uses weather parameters as “proxy”** for crop yields in compensating the cultivators for deemed crop losses. Pay-out structures are developed to the extent of losses deemed to have been suffered using the weather triggers.

PMJAY

- A centrally sponsored scheme which provides health coverage up to Rs. 5 lakh per family, per year for secondary and tertiary hospitalization to over 10.74 crore poor and vulnerable families.
- An entitlement-based scheme. It covers poor and vulnerable families based on deprivation and occupational criteria as per SECC data.
- It provides cashless and paperless services for the beneficiary at the point of service in any (public and private) empaneled hospitals across India.
- The ratio of premium under PMJAY is 60:40 between Centre and State except North Eastern States and 3 Himalayan States where the ratio is 90:10 with an upper limit for Centre.

Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)

In News

MoRD Signs MoU with Maruti Suzuki India Ltd for Training Rural Youth for Skill Development under Ddu-Gky.

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About DDU-GKY

1. DDU-GKY is the flagship placement linked skill-training programme under the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD).
2. The vision of DDU-GKY is **“Empowering the Rural Poor Youth into Economically Independent and Globally Relevant Workforce”**.
3. DDU-GKY is a part of the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), tasked with the dual objectives of adding diversity to the incomes of rural poor families and cater to the career aspirations of rural youth.
4. DDU-GKY is uniquely focused on rural youth between the ages of 15 and 35 years from poor families. As a part of the Skill India campaign, it plays an instrumental role in supporting the social and economic programs of the government like the Make In India, Digital India, Smart Cities and Start-Up India, Stand-Up India campaigns.

PEPPER IT WITH
Roshni, Himayat,

Champion Employers policy

- The **‘Champion Employers’ policy is designed to enable such** organizations to partner DDU-GKY to address their own HR and business needs
- The Champion Employers are the industry leaders who have the potential to provide training and captive employment to the DDU-GKY candidates. The policy seeks a strategic alignment of objectives of DDU-GKY with the HR strategy of organizations, which have a large potential to absorb trained manpower.

Swachch Bharat Grand Challenge Award

In News

As part of the Swachhta Pakhwada held from 1st to 15th November, 2018, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) organized a Swachch Bharat Grand Challenge.

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Swachch Bharat Grand Challenge

This challenge was organized to reward innovative solutions by DIPP recognized Start-ups in the country. Four areas selected for the grand challenge:

1. sanitation
2. waste management
3. water and wastewater management
4. air management

PEPPER IT WITH
Swachhta Hi Sewa’
Campagin, Swachh Digital
India

The 1st Prize money for the Swachch Bharat Grand Challenge was Rs. 2 lakh and 2nd Prize, Rs. 1 lakh along with a certificate of appreciation.

Swachhata Pakhwada

- Swachhata Pakhwada started in April 2016 with the objective of bringing a fortnight of intense focus on the issues and practices of Swachhata by engaging GOI Ministries/Departments in their jurisdictions.
- The Ministries observing Swachhata Pakhwada are monitored closely using online monitoring system of Swachhata Samiksha where action plans, images, videos related to Swachhata activities are uploaded and shared.

National Pension System

In News

The Union Cabinet recently approved a host of changes in NPS or National Pension System.

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About NPS

- National Pension System (NPS) is a pension cum investment scheme launched by Government of India to provide old age security to Citizens of India.
- It brings an attractive long term saving avenue to effectively plan your retirement through safe and regulated market-based return.
- The Scheme is regulated by Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA). National Pension System Trust (NPST) established by PFRDA is the registered owner of all assets under NPS.
- NPS can be broadly classified into two categories Government Sector and Private Sector.
- Any individual citizen of India (both resident and Non-resident) in the age group of 18-65 years (as on the date of submission of NPS application) can join NPS.

PEPPER IT WITH
Atal Pension Yojana,
PMFBY, FEMA

Can an NRI join NPS?

Yes, an NRI can open an NPS account. Contributions made by NRI are subject to regulatory requirements as prescribed by RBI and FEMA from time to time. However, OCI (Overseas Citizens of India) and PIO (Person of Indian Origin) card holders and HUFs are not eligible for opening of NPS account.

Changes in NPS

1. The Cabinet approved a proposal to make NPS fully tax-free on withdrawal. Subscribers will get full tax exemption on the 60% of the corpus that an investor is allowed to withdraw on maturity.
2. Currently, on retirement or on reaching the age of 60, NPS subscribers are allowed to withdraw 60% of the corpus while 40% has to be invested in annuity plans for getting regular pension payouts. Out of 60% of the accumulated corpus withdrawn by the NPS subscriber at the time of retirement, 40% is tax exempt and the balance 20% is taxable. And 40% of the total accumulated corpus utilised for purchase of annuity is already tax exempt.
3. **For central government employees covered under NPS, the government's contribution towards the pension scheme has been increased from the existing 10% to 14%. The employee's contribution remains unchanged at 10%.**
4. This benefit is also expected to be also extended to private subscribers. This will put NPS at par with ELSS or equity linked savings schemes in terms of lowest lock-in period of tax savings investments under Section 80C.
5. NPS provides two types of accounts - Tier I and Tier II. Tier I is a non-withdrawable account till retirement and is meant for savings for retirement while in Tier II accounts the subscriber is free to withdraw savings whenever he wishes. Tier II account is like a voluntary savings facility.

Rajiv Kumar Committee

- ❖ Union Government has constituted six-member committee to look at selling as many as 149 small and marginal oil and gas fields of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL) to private and foreign companies to boost domestic output.
- ❖ The committee will be headed by NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar

Key benefits

- ✓ Increase in the accumulated corpus of all central government employees covered under NPS.

- ✓ Greater pension payouts after retirement without any additional burden on the employee.
- ✓ Freedom of choice for selection of Pension Funds and investment pattern to central government employees.
- ✓ Benefit to approximately 18 lakh central government employees covered under NPS.
- ✓ Augmenting old-age security in a time of rising life expectancy.
- ✓ By making NPS more attractive, the government will be facilitated in attracting and retaining the best talent.

Freight Village Initiative

In News

The Ministry of Shipping has approved the development of a Rs 156 crore freight village in Varanasi adjoining the Inland Waterways Terminal on River Ganga.

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Freight Village Initiative

1. A freight village is a designated area where facilities for various modes of transportation, distribution of goods and other logistics are available in a synchronized manner on a large scale.
2. The objective of the project is to support economic development in the hinterland of the multimodal terminal at Varanasi and reduce logistics cost in the Eastern Transport Corridor and its influence zone.
3. It envisages establishment of multimodal logistics hub in Varanasi to promote the use of waterway transport on river Ganga (NW-1) between Haldia and Varanasi and of rail transport on Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) in the North bound direction which facilitates movement of freight from road to water and rail.
4. A World Bank pre-feasibility study has found Varanasi to be a suitable site for the freight village.
5. The Varanasi freight village is proposed to be developed over a land area of about 100 acres, which will be acquired in two phases.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Jal Marg Vikas
 project, Shahpurkandi
 Dam project

Dual-Fuel Usage

The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has notified dual-fuel(diesel as primary and CNG, Bio CNG as secondary) usage for agricultural and construction equipment vehicles.

List of Dual-Fuel Vehicles: Tractors, power tillers, construction equipment vehicles and combine harvesters

Impact

- It will serve as a cargo hub, and a centre for aggregation and value addition. It will also provide support to stimulate development of a professional logistics industry in Varanasi.
- The main function of freight villages is management and utilization of various modes of transport, synergizing them and decongesting the existing mode of transportation.
- This will allow relocation of retailers, warehouse operators and logistics service providers supplying the regional FMCG.



- The freight village can potentially cater to a diverse cargo profile including containers, bulk and break-bulk cargo, liquid bulk and bagged cargo.

Agriculture Export Policy, 2018

In News

The Union Cabinet has approved the Agriculture Export Policy, 2018.

The Government has come out with a comprehensive “Agriculture Export Policy” aimed at doubling the agricultural exports and integrating Indian farmers and agricultural products with the global value chains.

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Vision

“Harness export potential of Indian agriculture, through suitable policy instruments, to make India global power in agriculture and raise farmers’ income.”

Objective

- To double agricultural exports from present ~US\$ 30+ Billion to ~US\$ 60+ Billion by 2022 and reach US\$ 100 Billion in the next few years thereafter, with a stable trade policy regime.
- To diversify our export basket, destinations and boost high value and value added agricultural exports including focus on perishables.
- To promote novel, indigenous, organic, ethnic, traditional and non-traditional Agri products exports.
- To provide an institutional mechanism for pursuing market access, tackling barriers and deal with sanitary and phyto-sanitary issues.
- **To strive to double India’s share** in world agri exports by integrating with global value chain at the earliest.
- Enable farmers to get benefit of export opportunities in overseas market.

PEPPER IT WITH
APMC, Rural Godown
Scheme, MSP, GeM

Elements of the Agri-export Policy Framework

1. Strategic

- Policy Measures
- Infrastructure and Logistics Boost
- Whole Government Approach to boost exports
- Greater involvement of State Governments in Agri Exports

2. Operational

- Focus on Clusters
- Promoting Value added exports
- **Marketing and promotion of “Produce of India”**
- Infrastructure and Logistics to support agricultural exports
- Establishment of Strong Quality Regimen
- Self-sufficiency and export centric production
- Research & Development

Kandhamal Haldi

- **Odisha’s Kandhamal Haldi** (turmeric), famous for its healing properties, is all set to receive GI tag.
- The golden yellow spice, named after the district where it is produced, has been cultivated since time immemorial and is known for its medicinal value.

The Cabinet has also approved the proposal for establishment of Monitoring Framework at Centre with Commerce as the nodal Department with representation from various line Ministries/Departments and Agencies and representatives of concerned State Governments, to oversee the implementation of Agriculture Export Policy.

Significance

The Policy aims at addressing a whole range of issues which could potentially propel India into the top bracket of agricultural exports. It has often been recognized that integration in the global value chain is one of the most certain methods of adopting the best agricultural

practices along with attaining productivity gains and cost competitiveness. The objective of **doubling the farmer's income will invariably require high levels of income as well as improving in the food value chain.**

Facts

- India's share in global exports of agriculture products has increased from 1% a few years ago, to 2.2 % in 2016.
- It has often been suggested that an essential element of "Make in India" has to be "Bake in India", i.e. a renewed focus on value addition and on processed agricultural products.
- India's high value and value added agri produce in its agri export basket is less than 15% compared to 25% in US and 49% in China.
- GDP from Agriculture in India decreased to 4759.48 INR Billion in the first quarter of 2018 from 5666.82 INR Billion in the fourth quarter of 2017.
- At present, rice, wheat and marine products account for about 52% of the total farm exports.
- Organic agricultural export market is one of the major drivers of greening of agriculture in India. The current production of organic crops is around 14,000 tons (2003).
- The per capita availability of water as per 2001 census was 1816 cubic meters. This is down to 1545 cubic meters as per 2011 census.

Soil Health Cards (SHC)

In News

Indian farmers, who commonly overuse fertilisers in almost everything they grow, are being slowly nudged away from the dangerous practice, resulting in productivity gains, a study of the national soil-health-card scheme has shown.

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Key Highlights

1. Soil Health Card Scheme has been taken up for the first time in a comprehensive manner across the country. Under the scheme soil health cards are provided to all farmers so as to enable the farmers to apply appropriate recommended dosages of nutrients for crop production and improving soil health and its fertility.
2. Growers who followed scientific recommendations based on their soil profile for at least a year, as part of a national programme, are not only growing more with less inputs, but they also have cut down cultivation costs.
3. Farmers planting cotton, paddy and soyabean — crops picked by the Hyderabad-based National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management in a study commissioned by the farm ministry — have managed to lower costs by 4-10%. They have also cut down on reliance on fertilisers. Net farmer incomes grew between 30% and 40% as a result, the study states.
4. The current consumption of NPK ratio is 6.7:2.4:1, which is highly skewed towards nitrogen as against an ideal ratio of 4:2:1.

World Soil Day

- World Soil Day is celebrated every year on 5th of December by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of United Nations.
- **Theme: 'Be the Solution to Soil Pollution'.**
- An international day to celebrate Soil was recommended by the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS) in 2002.
- The date of 5 December for WSD was chosen because it corresponds with the official birthday of H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the King of Thailand, who officially sanctioned the event.

The unique features of SHC scheme are:-

- Collecting soil samples at a grid of 2.5 ha in irrigated area and 10 ha in un-irrigated areas.

- Uniform approach in soil testing adopted for 12 parameters viz. primary nutrients (NPK); secondary nutrient (S); micronutrients (B,Zn, Mn. Fe & Cu); and other (pH, EC & OC) for comprehensiveness.
- GPS enabled soil sampling to create a systematic database and allow monitoring of changes in the soil health over the years.

Facts

- Yields had increased by 7%, while costs were down by 5.1%. Overall, paddy farmers reduced urea use by about 21%, DAP by about 22% and potassium by 24%. Paddy yields went up by 5%.
- In the Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals 2, 3, 12, and 15 have targets which commend direct consideration of soil resources, especially soil pollution and degradation in relation to food security.
- 95% of our food comes from soil.
- 1/3 of our global soils are already degraded.

PEPPER IT WITH
Fertiliser Control Order, 1985,
Integrated Nutrient Management,
National Mission for Sustainable
Agriculture

Kimberley Process

Why in News?

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) Plenary 2018, was held in Brussels, Belgium. EU handed over the Chairmanship of KPCS to India from 1st January, 2019. This year was the fifteenth anniversary of KPCS. Since its launch in 2003.

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India is the founding member of KPCS and is actively involved in KP activities to ensure that almost 99% of the diamond trade in the world is conflict free. India is committed to maintain KP as an efficient and effective process in order to ensure the conflict diamond free status. It is at the forefront in addressing the issue of differentiation between Natural Diamonds and Lab Grown Diamonds and ensure responsible business in this area.

UN Panel of Auditors

- ❖ Comptroller and Auditor General Rajiv Mehrishi has become the Vice-Chair of the UN Panel of Auditors.
- ❖ The United Nations Panel of Auditors consists of External Auditors of the United Nations and its agencies.
- ❖ Presently, the panel consists of 11 countries - India, Germany, Chile, Canada, France, Italy, Philippines, Ghana, Indonesia, Switzerland and United Kingdom.

KPCS

- The Kimberley Process started when Southern African diamond-producing states met in Kimberley, South Africa, in 2000, to discuss **ways to stop the trade in 'conflict diamonds'** and ensure that diamond purchases were not financing violence by rebel movements and their allies seeking to undermine legitimate governments.
- In December 2000, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a landmark resolution supporting the creation of an international certification scheme for rough diamonds.
- The KPCS document sets out the requirements for controlling rough diamond production and trade. The KPCS entered into force in 2003, when participating countries started to implement its rules.

UAE

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has, in a landmark decision, decided to increase the representation of Emirati women in the Federal National Council to 50 per cent from the coming Parliamentary term.

The decision is aimed at achieving full empowerment of the Emirati women and put emphasis on their pioneering and effective role in all vital sectors of UAE.

- KP is open to all countries that are willing and able to implement its requirements. The KP has 54 participants, representing 81 countries, with the European Union and its Member States counting as a single participant.
- KP members account for approximately 99.8% of the global production of rough diamonds. In addition, the World Diamond Council, representing the international diamond industry, and civil society organisations, such as Partnership-Africa Canada, participate in the KP and have played a major role since its outset.
- KPCS imposes extensive requirements on its members to enable them to certify **shipments of rough diamonds as 'conflict-free'** and prevent conflict diamonds from entering the legitimate trade.
- **Under the terms of the KPCS, participating states must meet 'minimum requirements'** and must put in place national legislation and institutions; export, import and internal controls; and also commit to transparency and the exchange of statistical data. Participants can only legally trade with other participants who have also met the minimum requirements of the scheme, and international shipments of rough diamonds must be accompanied by a KP certificate guaranteeing that they are conflict-free.
- The Kimberley Process is chaired, on a rotating basis, by participating countries. KP participating countries and industry and civil society observers gather twice a year at intersessional and plenary meetings, as well as in working groups and committees that meet on a regular basis.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Iffy quotient, News whip,
 Indian Ocean Rim Association,
 FAO, US South Asia Strategy

World Customs Organization

Why in News?

The 80th Session of the Policy Commission Meeting of the World Customs Organization (WCO) concluded in Mumbai and discussed the issue of menace of illicit financial flows, including Trade Based Money Laundering and ways to control them.

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Details

- Other issues covered during the three-day Session included those related to Small Island Economies and how to bring them in the mainstream of the supply chain and Free Trade Zones.
- Member countries exchanged their experiences and best practices in different areas of cross border trade.
- The three day 80th Session of the Policy Commission Meeting of the WCO was organised by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs(CBIC), Government of India.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Interpol, UNEP, ADMM-Plus,
 ASEM, SCO, G4, Coffee club

WCO

- The World Customs Organization (WCO), established in 1952 as the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC) is an independent intergovernmental body whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.
- WCO represents 182 Customs administrations across the globe that collectively process approximately 98% of world trade. As the global centre of Customs expertise, the WCO is the only international organization with competence in Customs matters and can rightly call itself the voice of the international Customs community.
- The **WCO's governing body** – the Council – relies on the competence and skills of a Secretariat and a range of technical and advisory committees to accomplish its mission.

Qatar to withdraw from Opec in January 2019

In News

Qatar will leave the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in order to focus on gas production.

Details

- It has been a member of OPEC since 1961, and the decision to pull out after all these decades comes at a turbulent time in Gulf politics, with Doha under a boycott by former neighbouring allies, including Saudi Arabia for 18 months.
- Earlier, Qatar announced its plans to boost gas production to 110 million tonnes a year by 2024. Its oil production is around 6,00,000 barrels a day, making it the world's 17th largest producer of crude, according to WorldData.info.
- It also only holds around 2% of the world's global oil reserves, according to the CIA World Factbook.
- Some analysts saw Qatar's withdrawal as a "political decision to oppose Saudi Arabia", which alongside the U.S. and Russia is the biggest producer in OPEC. Although Qatar's move came out of the blue, analysts say it will have limited impact on the global market.

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Australia recognises West Jerusalem as Israel's capital

Australia has become one of the few countries to formally recognise West Jerusalem as Israel's capital, but says it will not move its embassy from Tel Aviv until a peace settlement is reached.

Qatar isolation (Background)

Early in June, powerful neighbouring Arab nations of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt moved to sever diplomatic and economic ties with Qatar by shutting off shipping routes and air space over Doha's alleged support for terrorism across the region, and its ties with Iran. Qatar, however, denies supporting Islamic extremism and has widely condemned the isolation as clear attack on its sovereignty.

The neighbours then issued a 13-point list of demands for Doha to comply with in order to restore erstwhile relations. Some demands include Qatar closing down news outlets such as Al-Jazeera, sever ties with radical Islamist groups like Muslim Brotherhood, scaled down ties with Shia-majority Iran and removing Turkish troops stationed in the country.

Georgia's first female president

Georgia on Sunday swore in its first female president, Salome Zurbishvili as opposition parties continue to denounce her election as fraudulent and demand snap parliamentary polls.

The inauguration paved the way for a new constitution to come into force, transforming the country into a parliamentary republic with a largely ceremonial president.

OPEC

- It is a permanent, intergovernmental Organization, created at the Baghdad Conference in 1960, by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.
- OPEC's objective is to co-ordinate and unify petroleum policies among Member Countries, in order to secure fair and stable prices for petroleum producers; an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations; and a fair return on capital to those investing in the industry.
- The founding countries were later joined by Qatar, Indonesia, Libya, the United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Nigeria, Ecuador, Gabon, Angola, Equatorial Guinea and Congo. This means that, currently, the Organization has a total of 15 Member Countries.

PEPPER IT WITH
GCI, IAEA, UNWTO Summit, Asia Pacific Policy Group, ICOMOS, International Nitrogen Initiative

WIPO's World Intellectual Property Indicators 2018

In News

World Intellectual Property Indicators 2018 report was released by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

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Highlights

- The number of patents granted by India shot up by 50 % in 2017, keeping up a trend of steep increases. The patents granted by India increased from 8,248 in 2016 to 12,387 last year. The WIPO said that the steep increase in the number was driven by patents granted to foreigners, which accounted for 85% of the total increase.
- The number of patents given to domestic entities has also shown an increasing trend: In 2016, 1,115 went to domestic individuals or entities and 7,133 to foreigners, and in 2015, 822 were granted to applicants in India and 5,200 to foreigners.
- Demand for IP (intellectual property) protection is rising faster than the rate of global economic growth, illustrating that IP-backed innovation is an increasingly critical component of competition and commercial activity.
- Globally, 1.4 million patents were granted in 2017. China's patent authority led the world in the number of patents granted with 420,144 and was followed by the US with 318,829.

7th round of India – South Korea CEPA negotiations

The 7th round of India – South Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) negotiations were held in South Korea.

During this period a delegation from the Indian sugar industry also visited South Korea. The Indian sugar industry delegation had detailed discussions with top representatives of all the three sugar refineries of South Korea. The meetings were arranged by the Indian Embassy in Seoul.

India

- India received a total of 46,582 patent applications last year, of them 14,961 were from Indian individuals or entities and 31,621 were from foreigners, and of them 9,222 came from the US.
- Pharmaceuticals accounted for 15.7 % of the Indian domestic applications for patents last year.
- While India ranked 10th in the number of patents given last year, no Indian company or university **figures in last year's global list of the top 50 patent applicants.**
- India, which has 1.6 million active trademarks, registered a total of 339,692 new one last year, 287,139 from domestic and 52,553 of foreigners.

PEPPER IT WITH BIMSTEC, Worlds Coustom Organisation, UNMOGIP, SAARC, APTA, RIMES

WIPO

WIPO is the global forum for intellectual property services, policy, information and cooperation. It is a self-funding agency of the United Nations, with 191 member states.

UN's Socio-Economic, Cultural panel

Why in News?

Preeti Saran, a former senior Indian diplomat, has been elected unopposed to an Asia Pacific seat on the UN's Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR).

She has been elected by acclamation the 18-member committee of experts that monitors the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR). Members of the CESCR serve in their personal capacities as experts and do not represent their countries even though they may have been nominated by their own nation.

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CESCR

- CESCR is the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by its States parties.
- All States parties are obliged to submit regular reports to the Committee on how the rights are being implemented. States must report initially within two years of accepting the Covenant and thereafter every five years.
- The Committee examines each report and addresses its concerns and recommendations to the State party **in the form of “concluding observations”**.
- In addition to the reporting procedure, the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which entered into force in 2013, provides the Committee competence to receive and consider communications from individuals claiming that their rights under the Covenant have been violated.
- The Committee may also, under certain circumstances, undertake inquiries on grave or systematic violations of any of the economic, social and cultural rights set forth in the Covenant, and consider inter-state complaints.
- The Committee meets in Geneva and normally holds two sessions per year, consisting of a three-week plenary and a one-week pre-sessional working group.

PEPPER IT WITH
 AIIB, International Energy Forum,
 International Maritime
 Organization, Heart of Asia Summit

UN launches new framework to strengthen fight against terrorism

Why in News?

UN Secretary-General launched a new framework to combat the scourge of international terrorism and coordinate efforts across the peace and security, humanitarian, human rights and sustainable development sectors.

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Details

- Termed the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, the framework is an agreement between the UN chief, 36 organizational entities, the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organisation, to better serve the needs of Member States when it comes to tackling the scourge of international terrorism.
- A Coordination Committee will oversee the implementation of the Compact and monitor its implementation. It is chaired by UN Under-Secretary-General for counter-terrorism, Vladimir Voronkov.
- At its meeting, the Coordination Committee also discussed strategic priorities for the next two years, based on the sixth review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, relevant Security Council resolutions and UN Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) assessments as well as Member States requests for technical help.

1st International Conference on Sustainable Water Management

The first International Conference under the aegis of National Hydrology Project, Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation was organised by Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) at Indian School of Business (ISB), Mohali on the **theme ‘Sustainable Water Management’**.

The Conference is aimed at fostering the participation of and dialogue between various stakeholders, including governments, the scientific and academic communities, so as to promote sustainable policies for water management, to create awareness of water-related problems, motivate commitment at the highest level for their solution and thus promote better management of water resources at local, regional, national and international levels.

- The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact Task Force will replace the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, which was established in 2005 to strengthen UN system-wide coordination and coherence of counter-terrorism efforts.

Significance

1. Policies that limit human rights only end up alienating the very communities they aim to protect, and which normally have every interest in fighting extremism. Such policies can effectively drive people into the hands of terrorists and undermine our efforts on prevention.
2. Despite recent successes against the ISIS and its affiliates, the threat posed by returning and relocating fighters, as well as from individuals inspired by them, remains high and has a global reach.
3. This year's Global Terrorism Index released by the Institute for Economic and Peace, which indicates that despite a 27% fall in the number of deaths from acts of terrorism worldwide, the impact of terrorism remains widespread, with 67 countries experiencing deadly attacks.
4. Terrorist organization like Da'esh and Al Qaida continue to twist religion to serve their ends. At the same time, neo-Nazi and far right groups are also using the Internet as a platform to mobilize support across borders, exploit economic anxieties, radicalize, recruit and carry out attacks. It is our duty to protect communities from violent extremist groups and their hate-speech whoever they are.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Qingdao declaration, Global Foreign Exchange Agency, India-Japan annual Summit, 2+2 dialogue

2023 as International Year of Millets

Why in News?

India's proposal to observe an International Year of Millets in 2023 has been approved at the 160th session of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Council held in Rome. In addition, the FAO Council also approved India's membership to the Executive Board of the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) for 2020 and 2021.

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This will enhance global awareness to bring back these nutri-cereals to the plate, for food and nutrition security. This international endorsement comes against the backdrop of India celebrating 2018 as the National Year of Millets for promoting cultivation and consumption of these nutri-cereals.

Millets

Millets are coarse grains and a repository of protein, fibre, vitamins and minerals. They include jowar (sorghum), ragi (finger millet), korra (foxtail millet), arke (kodo millet), sama (little millet), bajra (pearl millet), chena/barr (proso millet) and sanwa (barnyard millet). To boost production of millets, the minimum support price has been raised.

PEPPER IT WITH
 United Nation Day, International Conference on Primary Health Care, ADB, Asia Economic Integration Report

Compared to rice and wheat, millets need less water and chemicals. Besides, some millets can come up in marginal land and harsh weather conditions where no other crop can grow. Bajra, for instance, comes up well in the hot weather of Rajasthan. Little millet, foxtail millet and barnyard millet are known to assure minimum yield even in case of failure of the monsoon. So as global warming becomes an increasingly real phenomenon, millets can actually be a smart way of farming and eating.

Maldives has applied to rejoin Commonwealth

In News

The Maldives has applied to rejoin the Commonwealth, reversing a policy of isolation under autocratic leader Abdulla Yameen who suffered a shock defeat earlier. His successor, Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, wrote to the 53-member bloc seeking readmission two years after Yameen pulled

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the atoll nation out of it.

The Maldives' interest in re-joining the Commonwealth stems from a deep conviction that the values and principles enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter are more vital than ever.

The Commonwealth

- The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 53 independent and equal sovereign states. The Commonwealth is home to 2.4 billion people and includes both advanced economies and developing countries.
- Member countries are supported by a network of more than 80 intergovernmental, civil society, cultural and professional organisations. The last country to join the Commonwealth was Rwanda in 2009.
- **The Commonwealth is one of the world’s oldest political association of states.** Its roots go back to the British Empire when some countries were ruled directly or indirectly by Britain. Some of these countries became self-governing while retaining Britain’s monarch as Head of State. They formed the British Commonwealth of Nations.

PEPPER IT WITH
INF treaty, OPCW, World Soil Day, Oxytocin, Global hunger index, UNHRC, UNISDR

GCC summit

In News

The 39th Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit came to an end in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, without any major breakthroughs to resolve a diplomatic crisis that continues to grip the region. At the end of the summit, the council issued the **‘Riyadh Declaration’**.

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- The Gulf crisis, being described by observers as the elephant in the room, was not brought up at the annual summit. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Egypt have imposed an air, land and sea blockade on Qatar since June 2017.
- While the crisis was not explicitly mentioned during the meeting, a call for unity was issued at the end of the gathering in a joint communique.

PEPPER IT WITH
IORA, SDG Media Compact, International women entrepreneurs summit, Bondi bond, Iran Action Group

GCC

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern countries—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. The GCC was established in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 1981. The purpose of the GCC is to achieve unity among its members based on their common objectives and their similar political and cultural identities, which are rooted in Arab and Islamic cultures. Presidency of the council rotates annually.

UN agreement on migration

Why in News?

The first UN global agreement setting up a common framework on the management of international migration flows was formally adopted in Marrakech. But the criticism of 23 objectives outlined in the document has been raised in a number of countries, some of which stayed away from the conference.

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Representatives of 164 of the 193 UN member states arrived at the Bab Ighli conference centre to affirm their support for the global migration deal. Ten countries have formally notified the UN of their decision to pull out of the process — namely Austria, Australia, the Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Chile and the United States. The Global Compact for Migration will now be sent to the General Assembly, which will adopt a resolution to formally endorse the deal.

Global Compact for Migration

The aim of the Global Compact for Migration is to improve the cooperation and management of cross-border movements of people, the Global Compact also makes clear that it is legally non-binding, fully respecting the sovereignty of all States.

The Global Compact encompasses 23 objectives to help manage migration at all levels - global, national and local. Key objectives are

- Ease the pressures on host countries
- Enhance refugee self-reliance
- Expand access to third-country solutions
- Support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

India handed over to Myanmar the first 50 houses built by the country for the displaced minority Rohingya Muslims in the restive Rakhine province. The housing units were handed over after President Ram Nath Kovind and his Myanmar counterpart U Win Myint held delegation-level talks and decided to step up bilateral ties. India is building 250 houses in Rakhine province as part of a developmental project.

Significance

More than 60,000 migrants have died on the move since the year 2000. It is, indeed, the need of the hour to discuss migration, for the subject, is becoming a global tension by giving rise to illegal activities across borders like smuggling, terrorism.

Indian context

- Although India has hosted refugees of varying nationalities for decades, the country has done little beyond providing asylum. There have been some attempts to introduce a refugee law in the country, the latest being the Asylum Bill 2015, introduced as a private **member's bill**.

Refugee: Refugees are persons who are outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and, as a result, require international protection. The refugee definition can be found in the 1951 Convention and regional refugee instruments, as well as UNHCR's Statute.

Migrant: While there is no formal legal definition of an international migrant, most experts agree that an international migrant is someone who changes his or her country of usual residence, irrespective of the reason for migration or legal status. Generally, a distinction is made between short-term or temporary migration, covering movements with a duration between three and 12 months, and long-term or permanent migration, referring to a change of country of residence for a duration of one year or more.

- However, none has gone the distance and the government continues to adopt an ad hoc approach towards this group. Given that most refugees have been unable to return to their countries, leading to protracted refugee situations, there is an urgent need for the government to develop a uniform framework for their management during their stay in India.
- For instance, due to their unclear legal status and lack of uniform documentation, refugees have limited access to essential services and almost no avenues for livelihood. While some refugees have been able to generate income by working in the informal sector, many of them, especially vulnerable women like Nargis are at the mercy of touts and traffickers even within their own community.
- The solution to this may lie within the GCR, which calls for States to identify gaps and opportunities for employment and income generation for refugees in a bid to enhance their self-reliance.

PEPPER IT WITH
Global liveability report,
Resolution 2428, Resolution
2427, World Cities Summit

Moreover, it specifies the need to include the host community in enabling mapping skills, vocational training and capacity-building among refugee populations, thereby

fostering understanding and cooperation among the communities and paving the way for a socially cohesive approach.

- This is an opportune time for India to reassess the need for a national asylum policy which is compliant with the principles laid down in the GCR. This will not only re-establish India's place as a democratic regional power committed to core humanitarian principles but will also provide refugees such as Nargis a chance to give back to the country that has adopted her.

Golden Visa

Why in News?

UK government has put on hold plans to suspend "golden visa" category in reference to its use by super-rich foreign nationals, including Indians, to acquire fast-track settlement rights in Britain. The Tier 1 Investor Visa, used by many high net-worth Indians over the years, was to be suspended over fears of its misuse.

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Background

UK launched an investigation into Tier 1 Investor visas issued to wealthy Russians as relations between the UK and Russia nose-dived following the deadly nerve agent attack on former Russian double agent earlier this year.

PEPPER IT WITH International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, SDG Media compact, Hulhule island, G20

Transparency International UK, a non-profit anti-corruption body which had welcomed the crackdown, condemned the reversal, which it said is believed to be the result of opposition from other government departments.

Golden Visa

Under the scheme under review, a 2-million-pound investment bought a visa and indefinite leave to remain (ILR) after five years. An investment of 5 million pound cut down the eligibility period for ILR to three years and 10 million pound meant the investor could be eligible for permanent settlement within two years along with his or her dependents.

According to official figures, around 76 Indian millionaires have used this visa category to gain permanent settlement in Britain since 2009, with a peak of 16 Indian applicants in 2013 and seven last year. The highest number of the over 1,000 such visas issued last year went to Chinese and Russian millionaires.

International Whaling Commission

In News

Japan is considering pulling out of the International Whaling Commission, as Tokyo reportedly gears up to resume commercial whaling activity next year. Such a move would spark international criticism against Japan over whale conservation and deepen the divide between anti- and pro-whaling countries.

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After a tense September vote in Brazil, the IWC rejected Japan's bid to return to commercial whaling, prompting it to undertake a fundamental reassessment of its position as a member of the IWC. Japan insists whale stocks have now recovered sufficiently to allow commercial hunting to resume.

PEPPER IT WITH Mongolia oil refinery, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Nuclear suppliers group, International conference on ICT

IWC

The IWC was set up under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling which was signed in Washington DC in 1946. The preamble to the Convention states that its purpose is to provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks and thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry.

NABCB Accreditation Secures Recognition in Asia- Pacific Region

In News

The National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB), **India's national accreditation body**, has secured equivalence for its accreditation programme for Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems (OHSMS) Certification Bodies in Asia- Pacific region. It has signed the Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) of the Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (PAC).

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Significance

- Any industry carrying ISO 45001 certificate with NABCB logo will be recognized in the Asia Pacific region. The immediate beneficiary of this equivalence is the Indian Industry which is exporting products to various countries specially in the Asia Pacific region.
- It can also be used by regulators for establishing confidence in certified units as Goa Government has done by accepting OHSMS certification under NABCB accreditation in lieu of annual audits under **Factories' Act**.
- Now, NABCB can facilitate export of Indian goods into the world market by attesting that these are certified as per international standards by competent certifying bodies.
- NABCB is the third accreditation body in internationally equivalent in the region, the other two being the accreditation bodies of Hong Kong and Mexico.
- The MLA with PAC would facilitate signing MLA with International Accreditation Forum (IAF) to secure full international equivalence. IAF signatory member status signifies that the accreditation of certification bodies by NABCB for Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems will be accepted as internationally equivalent.

National Mathematics Day
 Famed Mathematician Srinivasa **Ramanujan's birth anniversary on** December 22 is celebrated as National Mathematics Day. It was in 2012 that then Prime Minister declared December 22 as National Mathematics Day.
 The mathematics wizard made a significant contribution to mock theta function that generalises the form of the Jacobi theta functions, while preserving their general properties.

the Asia Pacific Region to become
PEPPER IT WITH
 World Peace Index, UNSC non permanent members, IBSA, Tiananmen Massacre, NATO, OECD

NABCB

NABCB, a constituent Board of the Quality Council of India, is responsible for accreditation of certification/inspection bodies as per applicable international standards under an international system of equivalence.

Accreditation has become an essential tool for getting acceptance of inspection, testing and certification done in India internationally and it is referenced in many bilateral Free Trade Agreements like the India – Singapore Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement in which NABCB accreditation is a requirement for certification of electrical/electronic and telecom products. Thus, accreditation eliminates technical barriers to trade and facilitates export of Indian products in world market.

Chabahar Port

Why in News?

India formally took over operations at Chabahar port in Iran, giving a **major boost to the country's efforts to support war-torn Afghanistan**.

New Delhi's efforts to develop the port, which allows India to ship supplies to Afghanistan while bypassing Pakistan, received a fillip recently when Washington exempted Chabahar from Iran-related sanctions in November.

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Chabahar port

The Chabahar Agreement was signed in 2015 and approved by Iran's Guardian Council in 2016. Chabahar is being seen as a gateway for trade by India, Iran and Afghanistan with Central Asian countries.

PEPPER IT WITH
Global Wind Summit, SCO-Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure, OIC, REPLACE Campaign

According to a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed in May 2015, EXIM Bank is to extend a line of credit of \$150 million for developing the port and another \$85 million is allotted for supplying equipment to develop two berths at Chabahar.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

In News

Pakistan has said that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a bilateral economic project and has no military dimensions. US media report has alleged that China has hatched a secret plan to build fighter jets and other military hardware in Pakistan as part of the USD 60 billion project.

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The CPEC, which connects Gwadar Port in Balochistan with China's Xinjiang province, is the flagship project of Chinese President Xi Jinping's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

BRI

Belt and Road, or **yi dai yi lu**, is a **“21st century silk road,”** **confusingly made up of a “belt” of overland corridors** and a **maritime “road” of shipping lanes**. From South-east Asia to Eastern Europe and Africa, Belt and Road includes 71 countries that account for half the world's population and a quarter of global GDP.

PEPPER IT WITH
J-17 Thunder, T API Gas Pipeline, UN Refugee program,

As Belt and Road expands in scope so do concerns it is a form of economic imperialism that gives China too much leverage over other countries, often those that are smaller and poorer.

Trans Regional Maritime Network

In News

India inked Ascension Agreement to the Trans Regional Maritime Network (T-RMN) with Italy. The multilateral construct comprises of 30 countries and is steered by Italy.

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Significance

- This agreement is very important as it pertains to White Shipping awareness. The Indian Navy has signed White Shipping Information Exchange agreements with nineteen countries and operationalised them with twelve countries. White shipping refers to commercial shipping information of cargo ships and India alone cannot gather all the information.
- Under the T-RMN, information is available mainly through the Automatic Identification System (AIS), fitted on the merchant ships with more than 300 Gross Registered Tonnage as mandated by the International Maritime Organisation.
- Among the information that is available through AIS includes name, MMSI number, position, course, speed, last port visited, and destination. This is picked up through various AIS sensors including coastal AIS chains and satellite based receivers.
- The process of information sharing among the countries has been accorded renewed impetus at the highest level to enhance collective maritime security in the Indian Ocean region (IOR). India has inked several T-RMN agreements which facilitates information exchange on the movement of commercial traffic on the high seas and will contribute to increased maritime domain awareness.

PEPPER IT WITH
JCPOA, Press Freedom Index, UN Road Safety Trust Fund, AfCFTA, International Criminal Court

Yemen: ceasefire agreed for port city of Hodeidah

In News

Yemen's warring parties have agreed to an immediate ceasefire in the Red Sea port of Hodeidah, in a potential breakthrough at the end of a week of peace talks in Sweden.

More Info

- The agreement included the future deployment of UN-supervised neutral forces and the establishment of humanitarian corridors. Troops from both sides will withdraw from the entire Hodeidah area within a maximum of 21 days in a process overseen by a UN-chaired committee.
- If implemented on the ground, the deal would represent a breakthrough because the port is the gateway for the bulk of humanitarian aid coming into the country, and has been the subject of intense fighting. Ceasefires have also been agreed at two other ports, Salif and Ras Issa.

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Background

The UN-backed Yemeni government lost control of **Hodeidah and Sana'a to Iranian-backed** Houthi rebels in 2015. Despite heavy military support from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirate, the government, which is based in Aden, has been unable to take back either city.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Gulf of Oman, Suez Canal,
 Persian Gulf, Caspian sea,
 Black Sea, Red Sea,
 Mediterranean sea

The plan raises questions about the capacity of the UN to administer Hodeidah port, **including ensuring revenue from it is transferred to Yemen's central bank. If it fails, the risk remains that fighting for control of the port will continue.** Nearly 27% of the Houthi **movement's income comes from the port.**

Floating solar project

In News

The Shapoorji Pallonji Group, a diversified company which is emerging as an upcoming solar PV developer in the Indian market, has won a contract to develop **India's first large-scale** floating solar PV plant auctioned through Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI). This is a 50 MW plant which is part of 150 MW of floating solar power plants planned at Rihand Dam, Sonbhadra district, Uttar Pradesh.

Rihand Dam

Rihand Dam, also known as Govind Ballabh Pant Sagar, **is the country's** largest reservoir by volume and largest artificial lake, located on the Rihand River with its catchment area spread over Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

A problem several solar developers face is that of connectivity and transmission of the power they produce as mostly solar projects come up in rural areas because they need vast amounts of land – around six acres per MW. The Rihand floating projects will not have any such issues, and they can use the same transmission facilities as the hydropower station of the dam.

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Asbestos

- ❖ An executive at Johnson & Johnson said the main ingredient in its best-selling baby powder could potentially be contaminated by asbestos, the dangerous mineral that can cause cancer.
- ❖ Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral substance that can be pulled into a fluffy consistency.
- ❖ Asbestos fibers are soft and flexible yet resistant to heat, electricity and chemical corrosion.
- ❖ Pure asbestos is an effective insulator, and it can also be mixed into cloth, paper, cement, plastic and other materials to make them stronger.
- ❖ These qualities once made asbestos very profitable for business, but unfortunately, they also make asbestos highly toxic.

Advantages of having floating solar projects in India

Floating solar plants consist of an array of solar panels which are set up on a structure that floats on water body. They have advantage over ground-mounted solar plants owing to their cooling effect and negligible land requirement. Some of the significant advantages are:

- Increased output from solar PV system- Various studies have confirmed that there is an increase in electricity generation from floating solar PV plants owing to reduced operating temperature of solar modules. This is on account of the natural cooling effect of water.
- Water savings- Installation of floating solar PV plants would reduce the water loss on account of evaporation. Additionally, cleaning a typical ground-mounted solar PV plant requires huge amount of water. In floating solar PV plants the water utilised for cleaning can be reused and so, a large quantity of water can be conserved.
- Alternate source of energy at dams- A reservoir-based dam can have floating solar PV plants. The solar plants can be utilised during daytime. And the water that is conserved during daytime can be used at night to generate more power. This will reduce dependence on fossil fuel plants.

Issues

However, it is much more expensive than ground-mounted projects. The land-related costs for large-scale solar plants in India average under seven percent of the total project cost. But the cost of the floating platform on which the plants are mounted and the anchor cost to keep the plant fixed is estimated to be 20% of the total plant cost. Also, the transportation costs associated with floating devices are five times the costs of solar panels. Currently, in India, it is unclear whether there are any indigenous manufacturing bases for floating devices. NTPC developed its own floating device for a 100 kW solar PV plant in Kerala.

PEPPER IT WITH
ACROSS Scheme, Global Cooling Innovation Summit, STAPCOR 2018, Parakriti Program, Orange national park

Way forward

In India, floating solar is likely to face challenges in scaling up to the level of ground-mounted projects owing to higher costs. But with limited availability of land and the cost associated with the procurement of fertile land in states like Uttar Pradesh, floating solar can be the next thing to achieve the 100 GW of solar PV target by 2022. The 50 MW of floating project for which Shapoorji Pallonji has been selected could change the market dynamics.

Indian Pavillion at COP-24

In News

Union Environment Minister attended the inauguration of Indian Pavillion at the 24th meeting of Conference of Parties (COP-24) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which was held at Katowice, Poland.

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This pavilion reflects India's ambitious and bold actions on climate change. More than 20 sessions were organized, covering issues important for climate change adaptation and mitigation. **This year the theme of India Pavilion was 'One World One Sun One Grid' as in the first assembly of the International Solar Alliance.**

COP24

COP24 is the informal name for the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

PEPPER IT WITH
Green Good Deeds, Ujjwala scheme, Champion of Earth Award, Clean Air Program, Kyoto protocol

One of the most important tasks of the 24th Session of the of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24) is to work out and adopt a package of decisions ensuring the full implementation of the Paris Agreement, in accordance with the decisions adopted in

Paris (COP21) and in Marrakesh (CMA1.1). Moreover, COP24 included the so-called Facilitative Dialogue intended to support the implementation of national commitments.

UNFCCC

One of the three Rio Conventions, the UNFCCC's ultimate objective is to achieve the stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous interference with the climate system.

Accounting methods of climate fund questioned

In News

The Finance Ministry has issued a 'discussion paper' that has criticised the accounting methods used by developed countries to report how much money they have given, so far, to developing countries to address climate change.

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In 2019, developed countries are expected to make available \$100 billion annually to developing countries, according to a 2010 agreement in Cancun.

Background

Accounting procedures, regarding the flow of climate finance, is one of the most controversial issues debated at Katowice, Poland where countries gathered to agree upon a 'Rule Book' to implement the Paris Agreement of 2015, that commits countries to ensure the earth doesn't warm 2C beyond pre-industrial levels.

In 2016, developed countries published a road map to \$100 billion, which claimed that public climate finance levels had reached \$41 billion per year in 2013-14. In 2015, India had disputed this figure arguing it was only \$ 2.2 billion. The 2017 numbers also tell a similar story. Only around 12% of total pledges to climate funds have actually materialised into disbursements.

Skoch Award for National Significance
 Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Government of India has been conferred the Skoch Award for National Significance. The award has been conferred on the Ministry considering its purpose and critical role played in installing about 73 GW renewable energy capacity in the country. With 21 per cent of total installed capacity, within the year renewable energy grossed a magic figure of providing one billion units of electricity in the country. Today, India ranks 4 in the world in wind energy capacity and 5th in solar & total renewable energy capacity installed in the world. India has played a critical role in setting up of international solar alliance. Further, India moved a resolution during the first meeting for making it a global initiative.

No clarity

- It argues that the definition of climate finance in the UNFCCC has remained "imprecise and incomplete." There was no clarity on whether the developed countries' commitment to 'provide funds' meant funds committed or those that made it to their intended recipients.
- The total pledges to the Green Climate Fund, the largest multilateral fund, was a "meagre" \$10.3 billion. Further, most of the total climate finance has flowed into mitigation.
- The growth in the reported climate specific finance actually slowed down from 24% between 2014 and 2015 to 14% between 2015 and 2016.

PEPPER IT WITH National Environment Survey, IPCC, Gir national park, Dolphin research centre

Green Climate Fund

- The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is a new global fund created to support the efforts of developing countries to respond to the challenge of climate change.
- GCF helps developing countries limit or reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adapt to climate change. It seeks to promote a paradigm shift to low-emission and

climate-resilient development, taking into account the needs of nations that are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts.

- It was set up by the 194 countries who are parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2010, **as part of the Convention’s** financial mechanism.
- It aims to deliver equal amounts of funding to mitigation and adaptation, while being guided by the **Convention’s principles and provisions.**
- When the Paris Agreement was reached in 2015, the Green Climate Fund was given an important role in serving the agreement and supporting the goal of keeping climate change well below 2 degrees Celsius.

India Water Impact Summit-2018

Why in News?

India Water Impact Summit 2018 was jointly organized by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) and the Centre for Ganga River Basin Management and Studies (cGanga) in New Delhi.

It is an annual event where stakeholders get together to discuss, debate and develop model solutions for some of the biggest water related problems in the country. The discussions this year was on rejuvenation of the Ganga River Basin.

The Summit focused on three key aspects

1. Spotlight on 5 states: Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Delhi and Bihar. The objective is to showcase the efforts and works going on within the respective states.
2. Ganga Financing Forum: The 2018 Summit also introduces the inaugural Ganga Financing Forum that will bring a number of institutions to a common knowledge, information and partnership platform. The Hybrid Annuity Model has redefined the economic landscape of water and waste-water treatment in India. Additionally, the Government is also now encouraging development of smaller decentralised waste water treatment projects. The Financing Forum will bring together financial institutions and investors interested in Namami Gange programmes.
3. Technology and Innovation: Implementation of the pilot/demonstration programme known as the Environment Technology Verification (ETV) process. This will provide an opportunity to technology and innovation companies from around the world to showcase their solutions for addressing the problems prevalent in the river basin.

PEPPER IT WITH
Champions of earth award, WAYU, WWF T*2 program, UN Solar Project, ICAP

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Global Carbon Project

In News

Global carbon emissions are set to hit an all-time high of 37.1 billion tonnes of CO2 in 2018, according to researchers at the University of East Anglia (UEA) and the Global Carbon Project.

Highlights of the report

1. India, the third-highest contributor, is projected to see emissions rise by 6.3% from 2017. The 2.7% projected global rise in 2018 has been driven by appreciable growth in coal use for the second year in a row, and sustained growth in oil and gas use.
2. CO2 emissions have now risen for a second year, the study say, after three years of little to no growth from 2014 to 2016. The rise in 2017 was 1.6%.
3. The 10 biggest emitters in 2018 are China, U.S., India, Russia, Japan, Germany, Iran, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and Canada. The EU as a region of countries ranks third.
4. **China’s emissions accounted for 27% of the global total, having grown an estimated 4.7% in 2018 and reaching a new all-time high.**

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5. Emissions in the U.S., which has withdrawn from its commitment to the Paris Agreement, account for 15% of the global total, and look set to have grown about 2.5% in 2018 after several years of decline.
6. Limiting global warming to the 2015 Paris Agreement goal of keeping the global temperature increase this century to well below 2°C, would need carbon dioxide emissions to decline by 50% by 2030 and reach net zero by about 2050.
7. Though coal use contributed to the rise in 2018 from last year, it still remains below its historical high in 2013 but may exceed that if current growth continues.

Government rejects separate time zone for northeastern States

- ❖ A panel, formed to examine having a separate time zone for the northeastern States, **recommended against it** for “strategic reasons”.
- ❖ Such requests have been made on the ground that sunrise and sunset timings in these parts are much earlier than official working hours.
- ❖ The demand for a separate time zone is no new. In 2017, Arunachal Pradesh demanded a separate time zone for northeastern States stating that several work hours are wasted as offices open late and sun rises early.
- ❖ France has 12 time zones, while the U.S. has 11 and Australia has eight. Like India, China too has only a single time zone.

Global Carbon Project

The Global Carbon Project is a Global Research Project of Future Earth and a research partner of the World Climate Research Programme. It was formed to work with the international science community to establish a common and mutually agreed knowledge base to support policy debate and action to slow down and ultimately stop the increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

The overwhelming realization that anthropogenic climate change is a reality has focused the attention of the scientific community, policymakers and the general public on the rising atmospheric concentrations of the main greenhouse gases, carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), and nitrous oxide (N₂O). The GCP has approached this challenge by focusing comprehensively on the global biogeochemical cycles which govern these three greenhouse gases, including their natural and human drivers, and opportunities for low carbon pathways.

PEPPER IT WITH
Vienna Convention, Shifting cultivation, REDD, UNEP, Chilika lake, Pet coke

National Centre of Coastal Research (NCCR)

In News

The NCCR conducted a qualitative analysis of the litter on six different beaches on the eastern and western coasts. It found that plastic litter from tourism alone accounted for 40%-96% of all beach litter.

In addition to air and water pollution, India can now add one more category to its pollution worries: beach pollution. And here, tourism and fishing are the biggest culprits, contributing most of the plastic litter on beaches, according to a study.

Highlights

Tourists bring a wave of trash to beaches. At Fort Kochi, fishing litter accounted for 22% of **the total, followed by Elliot’s Beach at 15%, and Karwar beach at 10%**. Also, the proportion of biomedical litter was high in urban areas, such as **Elliot’s Beach and Fort Kochi Beach**.

After tourism, fishing was the next biggest source of litter. While fishing nets were a major contributor, the processing of fish on the beach also produced a lot of litter.

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Dal lake

Srinagar, Water bodies, including world famous Dal Lake, and taps were frozen on recently after the minimum temperature witnessed further drop and settled at minus 7.6 degree, coldest in December in 11 years in summer capital, Srinagar. Dal lake is a freshwater lake in Kashmir. Srinagar is located along its coast.

Way forward

- ✓ India needs a national marine litter policy to control and manage waste on land and prevent its entry into the marine environment.
- ✓ Most of the litter consisted of plastic bottles, cutlery, and thermocol. Experts suggest installation of debris booms and fin deflectors upstream as measures to reduce the quantity of floating solid waste entering coastal waters.
- ✓ India needs to start blue-flagging its beaches. **The ‘blue flag’ is a globally recognised eco-label awarded to beaches and marinas that adhere to strict environmental and safety norms.**

PEPPER IT WITH
Compensatory afforestation fund, Earth overshoot day, Nilgiri tahr, Red panda, GEF

Bioplastics

In News

Bioplastics, often promoted as a climate-friendly alternative to petroleum-based plastics may lead to an increase in greenhouse gas emissions, according to a study. The study from the University of Bonn in Germany, suggests that shifting to plant-based plastics could have less positive effects than expected.

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Bioplastics

- Plastics are usually made from petroleum, with the associated impacts in terms of fossil fuel depletion but also climate change. It is estimated that by 2050, plastics could already be responsible for 15% of the global CO2 emissions.
- Bioplastics, on the other hand, are in principle climate-neutral since they are based on renewable raw materials such as maize, wheat or sugar cane. These plants get the CO2 that they need from the air through their leaves.
- Producing bioplastics therefore consumes CO2, which compensates for the amount that is later released at end-of-life. Overall, their net greenhouse gas balance is assumed to be zero.
- Bioplastics are thus often consumed as an environmentally friendly alternative. However, at least with the current level of technology, this issue is probably not as clear as often assumed.

Indian Forest Act

- ❖ The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has started the **process of “comprehensively amending”** the backbone of forest governance in India—the Indian Forest Act, 1927 (IFA).
- ❖ The process would involve the examination of all the sections of the Act. The obsolete provisions will be weeded out and provisions fit for the present will be introduced.
- ❖ The amendments will also include definitions of terms like forests, pollution, ecological services etc. There is no definition of forest in any Indian law pertaining to forest or its governance.
- ❖ The legal definition of forests will have huge ramifications on the conservation of forests as well as the implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.

Report

- The production of bioplastics in large amounts would change land use globally. This could potentially lead to an increase in the conversion of forest areas to arable land. However, forests absorb considerably more CO2 than maize or sugar cane annually, if only because of their larger biomass.
- Experience with biofuels has shown that this effect is not a theoretical speculation. **The increasing demand for the “green” energy sources has brought massive deforestation to some countries across the tropics.**

PEPPER IT WITH
Aldabra giant tortoise, Ensemble Prediction system, IMD, Gaj Yatra, Singchung Bugun Community Reserve

- They simulated the effects of an increased demand for bioplastics in major producing countries. They used and extended a computer model that had already been used to calculate the impacts of biofuel policies. The study found that it takes a lot of time for the switch to bioplastics to pay off.
- The belief that bioplastics will reduce the amount of waste in the oceans may not even come true.

Regulatory Indicators for Sustainable Energy (RISE) 2018

RISE 2018: Policy Matters — a global stocktaking of policies and regulations to achieve SDG7 – measures country-level adoption of policies and regulations for electricity access, clean cooking, renewable energy and energy efficiency. The report was released on the sidelines of the 24th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24).

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- **With indicators covering 133 countries and representing 97 percent of the world’s population**, RISE 2018 provides a reference point for policymakers to benchmark their policies and regulatory frameworks against those of regional and global peers and identify any gaps that may hinder their progress toward universal energy access.
- It praised India's success in renewable energy auctions that delivered record-setting low prices for solar power and said the number of countries with strong policy frameworks for sustainable energy more than tripled -- from 17 to 59 -- in the eight years till 2017.

Key Highlights

1. From 2010-2017, the number of countries with strong policy frameworks for sustainable energy more than tripled – from 17 to 59.
2. **Many of the world’s largest energy-consuming countries** have significantly improved their renewable energy regulations while adopting clear targets for both renewable energy and energy efficiency in the run-up to the 2015 Paris Agreement.
3. Progress is no longer contained to developed countries: there are strong performers in every region of the developing world.
4. The countries that have increased their electricity access rates the most since 2010 have also shown a concurrent improvement in electricity access policies.
5. In 2017, 50 countries – almost double from 2010 – had developed significant policy frameworks to enable the uptake of renewable energy. About 93 percent of countries covered by RISE had adopted an official renewable energy target, compared to only 37 percent in 2010 and 84 percent of countries had regulations in place to support renewable energy deployment, while 95 percent allowed the private sector to own and operate renewable energy projects.
6. Still, clean energy policies continue to focus on electricity, while heating and transportation – which account for 80 percent of global energy use – continue to be overlooked.
7. The percentage of countries with advanced policy frameworks on energy efficiency grew more than ten-fold from 2 percent in 2010 to 25 percent in 2017. Most encouragingly,

India, Nepal, Bhutan plan joint task force to protect wildlife
 The governments of India, Nepal and Bhutan are actively considering having a joint task force for allowing free movement of wildlife across political boundaries and checking smuggling of wildlife across the Kanchenjunga Landscape, a trans-boundary region spread across Nepal, India and Bhutan.
 Setting up of a joint task force was a key requirement in the road map on achieving the objectives of free movement of wildlife and checking smuggling of wildlife.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Nipah virus, Green skill development program, South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network

these countries account for 66 percent of the world’s energy consumption. But the global average score on energy efficiency remains low, suggesting significant room for improvement.

- 8. Among the four SDG7 target areas, clean cooking continues to be the most overlooked and underfunded by policymakers.

Way ahead

The world is only about half way towards the adoption of advanced policy frameworks for sustainable energy. This puts at risk the achievement of SDG7 by 2030 and hinders progress towards the goal of keeping the rise in global temperatures to well below 2 degrees. Policy enforcement is a key challenge. While strong policy frameworks are critical, they must be backed by effective institutions and enforcement.

Eco-Sensitive Zone

Why in News?

The Supreme Court directed the Centre to declare "at the earliest" 10 km area around 21 National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries in the country as Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) to protect wild birds and animals.

There are 662 National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries in the country, and state governments and Union Territories administrations have not even moved any proposal to the Centre for declaring Ears in 21 such areas. The 21 National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries, without ESZ are in Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

ESZ

- The Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) notifies areas close to National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries as ESZ, aimed at creating "shock absorbers" for protected animals and birds by regulating and managing activities there.
- It can direct that certain industries and operations are not carried out, or subjected to safeguards, in ESZs.

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PEPPER IT WITH
 Pobitora Sanctuary, Hemis High Altitude National Park, Kishtewar National Park, Siroi National Park, Rajaji national park

Revised Guidelines for Ground Water Extraction

In News

In order to comply with various directions of the NGT and to address various shortcomings in the existing guidelines of ground water extraction, the Central Ground Water Authority, Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation notified revised guidelines for ground water extraction. The revised guidelines aim to ensure a more robust ground water regulatory mechanism in the country.

Salient features of the revised guidelines include

1. Encouraging use of recycled and treated sewage water by industries, provision of action against polluting industries, mandatory requirement of digital flow meters, piezometers and digital water level recorders
2. Mandatory water audit by industries abstracting ground water 500 m3/day or more in safe and semi-critical and 200 m3/day or more in critical and over-exploited assessment units
3. Mandatory roof top rain water harvesting except for specified industries and measures to be adopted to ensure prevention of ground water contamination in premises of polluting industries/ projects

Mount Etna
 A 4.8-magnitude earthquake hit Sicily around Europe’s most active volcano Mount Etna. Mount Etna is the highest active volcano in Europe, its topmost elevation being about 10,900 feet (3,320 metres).

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- 4. Exemption from requirement of NOC has been given to agricultural users, users employing non-energised means to extract water, individual households and Armed Forces Establishments during operational deployment or during mobilization in forward locations.

WCF

- One of the important features of the revised guidelines is the introduction of the concept of Water Conservation Fee (WCF). The WCF payable varies with the category of the area, type of industry and the quantum of ground water extraction and is designed to progressively increase from safe to over-exploited areas and from low to high water consuming industries as well as with increasing quantum of ground water extraction.
- Through this design, the high rates of WCF are expected to discourage setting up of new industries in over-exploited and critical areas as well as act as a deterrent to large scale ground water extraction by industries, especially in over-exploited and critical areas.
- The WCF would also compel industries to adopt measures relating to water use efficiency and discourage the growth of packaged drinking water units, particularly in over-exploited and critical areas.

Significance

- Ground water extraction in India is primarily for irrigation in agricultural activities, accounting for nearly 228 BCM (Billion Cubic Meter), which amounts to 90% of the annual ground water extraction. The remaining 10% of extraction (25 BCM) is for drinking & domestic as well as industrial uses. Industrial use is estimated to account for only about 5% of the annual ground water extraction in the country.
- India is the largest user of ground water in the world, extracting ground water to the tune of 253 bcm per year, which is about 25% of the global ground water extraction. **Out of the total of 6584 assessment units, 1034 have been categorized as ‘Over-exploited’ 253 as ‘Critical’, 681 as ‘Semi-Critical’ and 4520 as ‘Safe’ The remaining 96 assessment units have been classified as ‘Saline’ due to non-availability of fresh ground water due to salinity problem.**

PEPPER IT WITH
Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee, GM Mustard, Carbon Monitoring System program, Dam Safety Bill

CGWA

Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA), constituted under the Environment (Protection) Act of 1986 has the mandate of regulating ground water development and management in the country. CGWA has been regulating ground water development for its sustainable management in the country through measures such as issue of advisories, public notices, grant of No Objection Certificates (NOC) for ground water withdrawal.

ECO Niwas Samhita 2018

In News

Giving a further fillip to India’s energy conservation efforts, Ministry of Power has launched the ECO Niwas Samhita 2018, an Energy Conservation Building Code for Residential Buildings (ECBC-R). The Code was launched on the occasion of National Energy Conservation Day 2018.

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This Code has been prepared after extensive consultations with all stakeholders, consisting of architects & experts including building material suppliers and developers. The parameters listed in the Code have been developed based on large number of parameters using climate and energy related data. Initially, Part-I of the Code has been launched which prescribes minimum standards for building envelope designs with the purpose of designing energy efficient residential buildings.

Significance

- 1. The implementation of this Code will give a fillip to energy efficiency in residential sector. It aims to benefit the occupants and the environment by promoting energy efficiency in design and construction of homes, apartments and townships.

2. ECBC for commercial buildings was already in place and revised and updated version of ECBC for commercial buildings was launched in June 2017. It is estimated that energy demand in the building sector will rise from around 350 billion units in 2018 to approximately 1000 billion units by year 2030.
3. The Code is expected to assist large number of architects and builders who are involved in design and construction of new residential complexes in different parts of the country.
4. Implementation of this Code will have potential for energy savings to the tune of 125 Billion Units of electricity per year by 2030, which is equivalent to about 100 million ton of Co2 emission.

National Energy Conservation Awards

National Energy Conservation Day is celebrated every year on 14th December by Ministry of Power in association with Bureau of Energy Efficiency. In order to recognise the efforts of industry and other establishments towards promoting energy efficiency, on this Day, Ministry of Power organizes National Energy Conservation Awards event every year.

PEPPER IT WITH
Indus Dolphins, Gharial, UNCCD, Minimata convention, Ramsar sites, Sunderbans

BEE

BEE is a statutory body under Ministry of Power which is mandated to implement policy and programmes in the area of energy efficiency and conservation. The objective of such initiatives is to reduce energy intensity in our country by optimizing energy demand and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) which are responsible for global warming and climate change. India has committed to reduction of 33-35% GHG emission by 2030 as part of the document submitted to UNFCCC.

Mobile towers are harmless, CPCB

In News

A recently-declassified study of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) states that mobile towers do not have any negative effect on human health.

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- o The study, ‘Mobile tower installations in India & its impact on **environment**’ is one among several done in the previous decade by the CPCB, which had not been declassified since 2010. They have been published recently after the Supreme Court instructed to make public, all reports related to the impact of environmental pollution on health and the economy.
- o Based on safety limits prescribed by the International Commission on Non Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP), the review report had said that there was no **substantive or convincing evidence of cell phone radiation’s biological effects that could harm a person’s health. The ICNIRP standard uses the limit of 450 µW/cm2.**

Thermal effect of radiation

1. The report does admit that the current exposure safety standards are purely based on the thermal effect while ignoring the non-thermal effects of radiation.
2. In international standards, **“thermal effect”** of radiation refers to the heat that is generated due to absorption of microwave radiation which causes cellular and physiological changes in living beings. This effect may be responsible for genetic defects, effects on reproduction and development, central nervous system behavior and many similar serious health consequences.
3. Non-thermal effects of radiation have been shown to be responsible for fatigue, irritability, headaches, nausea, loss of appetite, sleep disturbance, disruption and other psychological disorders, memory loss and difficulties in concentration.
4. While stating that there was no impact of radiation from towers, the CPCB has said that this concern on health hazards needed further research, both national as well as international.

PEPPER IT WITH
National clean air program, Manas national park, BS VI fuels, Insect museum, Kaziranga national park

- 5. In 2015, the Department of Telecommunications had come up with new norms of radiation from mobile phone towers which came into force in September 2015. And the limits on power density from mobile phone towers were restricted to one-tenth of the existing limit.

Olive Ridley Turtle

In News

Around 3-km stretch of the beach from Sunapur to Anantpur at Bahuda in Ganjam district rookery is being developed as a possible olive ridley mass nesting site. The Bahuda rookery is located around 20 km to the south of Rushikulya rookery coast, a major mass nesting site of olive ridleys on the Indian coastline.

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Olive Ridley

- The Olive ridley turtles are the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles found in the world, inhabiting warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans.
- These turtles, along with their cousin the Kemps ridley turtle, are best known for their unique mass nesting called Arribada. The species is recognized as Vulnerable by the IUCN Red list.
- Though international trade in these turtles and their products is banned under CITES Appendix I, they are still extensively poached for their meat, shell and leather, and their eggs, though illegal to harvest, have a significantly large market around the coastal regions.
- However, the most severe threat they face is the accidental killing of adult turtles through entanglement in trawl nets and gill nets due to uncontrolled fishing during their mating season around nesting beaches.
- To reduce accidental killing in India, the Orissa government has made it mandatory for trawls to use Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs), a net specially designed with an exit cover which allows the turtles to escape while retaining the catch.
- The coast of Orissa in India is the largest mass nesting site for the Olive-ridley, followed by the coasts of Mexico and Costa Rica.

PEPPER IT WITH
Brazzaville declaration on
peatland, Animal welfare board of
India, CA/TS partnership, CITES

Ganges River Dolphins

1. Concerns

- 2. Rise in salinity in the water system that makes the Indian Sunderbans has resulted in the decrease of population of the Ganges River Dolphins in the region.
- 3. A recent study covering 100 km of rivers and channels around the Sunderbans have revealed that the national aquatic animal is no longer sighted in the central and eastern parts of the archipelago. Only in the western part of Sunderbans, where the salinity is lower, could researchers find some evidence of the species.
- 4. The rise in sea level, triggered by climate change, is one of the reasons for the increase in salinity of waters of rivers and channels. Hydrological modifications like water diversion and commission of large barrages upstream have had a great impact on the salinity profile of the rivers downstream in the Sunderbans.

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PEPPER IT WITH
Atal bhujaal yojana, Indian state of
forest report 2017, ASH TRACK,
Kolleru lake, Pelican bird festival

River Dolphin

- The Ganges River dolphin, or susu, inhabits the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems of Nepal, India, and Bangladesh.
- Classified as endangered by the IUCN Red List, the freshwater species was also once found in different tributaries of the Ganga in West Bengal.

- At present the population of the Ganges River Dolphin is confined to some pockets like Nabadweep, Kolaghat, Diamond Harbour and Namkhana.

India's Second Biennial Update Report (BUR) to UNFCCC

In News

The Union Cabinet has approved Submission of India's second Biennial Update Report (BUR) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change towards fulfilment of the reporting obligation under the Convention.

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Salient Features

- The scope of BUR is to provide an update to India's first BUR to UNFCCC. The BUR contains five major components — National Circumstances; National Greenhouse Gas Inventory; Mitigation Actions; Finance, Technology and Capacity Building Needs and Support Received and Domestic Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) arrangements.
- Submission of India's Second BUR will fulfil the obligation of India to furnish information regarding implementation of the Convention, being a Party.

PEPPER IT WITH
Environmental performance index, Xian smog tower, Chiru, Flemingo festival, Stubble burning

Background

India is a Party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Convention, in accordance with its Article 4.1 and 12.1, enjoins upon all Parties, both developed country Parties and developing country Parties to furnish information, in the form of a National Communication regarding implementation of the Convention. Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC in its sixteenth session decided that developing countries, consistent with their capabilities and the level of support provided for reporting, should also submit biennial update reports containing updates of national greenhouse gas inventories and information on mitigation actions, needs and support received. Biennial Update Reports shall be submitted every two years.

Great Indian Bustard

Why in News?

Wildlife organisations have got together to launch a campaign to save the Great Indian Bustard which in recent years has come under the critically endangered list. With the total global population of the Great Indian Bustard reaching and all time low at fewer than 150 individuals, this campaign is the need of the hour.

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Details

The wildlife organisations that have launched the campaign are The Corbett Foundation in collaboration with Conservation India and Sanctuary Nature Foundation. The campaign aims at highlighting the overhead power transmission lines that result in the death of these low flying birds with a limited field of vision. This is the primary threat to the survival of the species especially in the Great Indian Bustard Habitat.

PEPPER IT WITH
National adaptation fund for climate change, Blue flag, International conference on climate change

Many experts believe that these birds might be the first species to become extinct in Independent India. This grassland species is extinct from 95% of its range now. Rajasthan is the last stronghold of the Great Indian Bustard. Fewer than 150 birds survive, of which about 100 live in the Thar Desert. Gujarat has the next largest population of the bird – between 10 and 25 individuals.

GIB

1. The great Indian bustard can easily be distinguished by its black crown on the

- forehead contrasting with the pale neck and head.
- The biggest threat to this species is hunting, which is still prevalent in Pakistan. This is followed by occasional poaching outside Protected Areas, collisions with high tension electric wires, fast moving vehicles and free-ranging dogs in villages.
 - Other threats include habitat loss and alteration as a result of widespread agricultural expansion and mechanized farming, infrastructural development such as irrigation, roads, electric poles, as well as mining and industrialization.
 - Listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, in the CMS Convention and in Appendix I of CITES, as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List and the National Wildlife Action Plan (2002-2016). It has also been identified as one of the species for the recovery programme under the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India.

National Tiger Conservation Authority

In News

The NTCA maintains the official database of tiger mortality in the country, and compiles figures from reports sent by different States on the basis of recovery of bodies or seizure of body parts. The report was released recently.

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Highlights

- Till December 15, 2018, there were 95 cases of tiger deaths in the country. Of this, 41 cases of tiger deaths outside tiger reserves have been reported. Of them, 14 occurred in Maharashtra, which accounted for over 34% of all deaths outside tiger reserves in the country. A total of 19 tiger deaths were recorded in Maharashtra in 2018, so deaths outside tiger reserves comprise more than 70% of all tiger deaths in the State.
- In 2014, Maharashtra was home to 190 tigers, but more than a third of its tigers, live outside tiger reserves in the State. One of the major reason why tigers are dying in Maharashtra is because many of the tigers are living outside tiger reserves.
- After Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh recorded 22 deaths (11 outside and 11 inside tiger reserves), followed by Karnataka, with 15 deaths (six outside tiger reserves and nine inside) being recorded.

PEPPER IT WITH
Talanoa dialogue, Kyoto protocol,
sawfish, Snow leopard, Turtle
sanctuary, Secure Himalaya

NTCA

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) is a statutory body of the Ministry, with an overarching supervisory / coordination role, performing functions as provided in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. It is chaired by the Minister for Environment and Forests.

Volcano erupts in Indonesia

In News

A volcano erupted in Indonesia's North Sulawesi province. Ashes were spread toward south west and south of the crater and small tremors jolted the area.

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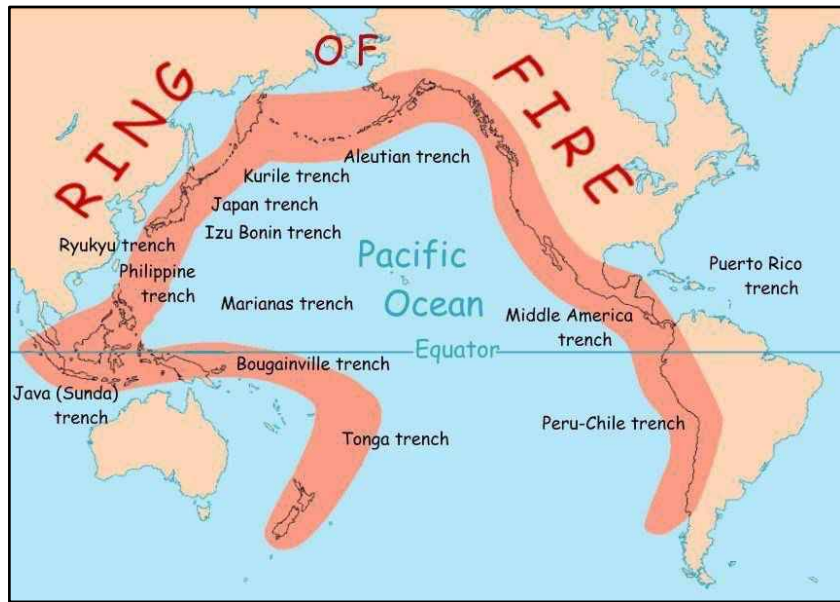
Mount Soputan is one of 129 active volcanoes in Indonesia which lies on a vulnerable quake-hit zone called "the Pacific Ring of Fire".

Ring of Fire

- The Ring of Fire is a string of volcanoes and sites of seismic activity, or earthquakes, around the edges of the Pacific Ocean. Roughly 90% of all earthquakes occur along the

Ring of Fire, and the ring is dotted with 75% of all active volcanoes on Earth.

- The Ring of Fire **isn't quite a circular** ring. It is shaped more like a 40,000-kilometer horseshoe. A string of 452 volcanoes stretches from the southern tip of South America, up along the coast of North America, across the Bering Strait, down through Japan, and into New Zealand. Several active and dormant volcanoes in Antarctica, however, "close" the ring.



- The Ring of Fire is the result of plate tectonics. **Tectonic plates are huge slabs of the Earth's crust, which fit together like pieces of a puzzle.** The plates are not fixed but are constantly moving atop a layer of solid and molten rock called the mantle. Sometimes these plates collide, move apart, or slide next to each other. Most tectonic activity in the Ring of Fire occurs in these geologically active zones.
- Most of the active volcanoes on The Ring of Fire are found on its western edge, from the Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia, through the islands of Japan and Southeast Asia, to New Zealand.

PEPPER IT WITH
Hot spots, Mount Fuji, Krakatau, Cooling ring, Jolting Japan, Plate tectonics, Earthquakes

COP24 (Poland)

In News

The UN climate conference in Katowice, Poland, concluded with agreement by 196 countries on plans for a common rulebook for bringing the Paris Agreement into force by 2020.

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The Rulebook

The rulebook outlines how governments should report their greenhouse gas emissions and contributions to climate finance, as well as rules about voluntary market mechanisms such as carbon trading. Governments also agreed to revise and enhance their climate action commitments, as described in so-called Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), before 2020.

What wasn't agreed?

Largely absent from these talks, which had a technical focus, was the key question of how countries will step up their targets on cutting emissions. On current targets, the world is set for 3C of warming from pre-industrial levels, which scientists say would be disastrous, resulting in droughts, floods, sea level rises and the decline of agricultural productivity.

What happens next?

The UN will meet again next year in Chile to thrash out the final elements of the Paris rulebook and begin work

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the **global body of the world's** leading climate scientists, warned two months ago that allowing warming to reach 1.5C above pre-industrial levels would have grave consequences, including the die-off of coral reefs and devastation of many species.

PEPPER IT WITH
Global wildlife program, 3rd National Wildlife Action Plan, Wood is Good, Mouse deer

on future emissions targets. But the crunch conference will come in 2020, when countries must meet the deadline for their current emissions commitments and produce new targets for 2030 and beyond that go further towards meeting scientific advice.

COP

The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the supreme body of the UNFCCC Convention. It consists of the representatives of the Parties to the Convention. It holds its sessions every year. The COP takes decisions which are necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the provisions of the Convention and regularly reviews the implementation of these provisions.

REDD+ has failed to achieve its objectives

In News

A new study by Delhi-based non-profit Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has revealed that Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+), the programme initiated by the United Nations in 2005 to mitigate climate change through enhanced forest management in developing countries, has largely failed to achieve its objectives.

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Issue

Large-scale finance for REDD+ has been a major issue as carbon markets have not materialised and international funding commitments for REDD+ have been much lower than expected, mentions the report, titled **'Rethinking REDD+'.**

Railway university in Vadodara
Government dedicated the first railway university of the country to the nation. The new university will function from the Pratap Vilas Palace of the erstwhile Gaekwad state, which houses National Academy of Indian Railways.

The report is an assessment of the REDD+ implementation experiences in India, Kenya and Tanzania. It highlights the need to rethink the REDD+ mechanism based on these experiences and the findings emerging from new research on the potential of forests to mitigate climate change.

Background

- Since its formalisation, REDD+ had emerged as the most prominent global mechanism to integrate the role of forests in climate change. It was touted as a win-win situation for biodiversity conservation, carbon sequestration and local livelihoods.
- More than 300 REDD+ initiatives have taken off since 2006. The mechanism has been enshrined in the Paris Agreement of 2015, and its implementation is transitioning from smaller, isolated projects to larger, jurisdictional programmes with support from bilateral and multilateral agencies.

PEPPER IT WITH
Parali I island, National mission for Green India, Indian green building council, TERI

REDD+

1. **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.
2. REDD+ aims to achieve climate change mitigation by incentivizing forest conservation. 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 through REDD+ actions.
3. 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+.

FSSAI launches new campaign to eliminate Trans-fats by 2022

In News

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) launched a new mass media campaign calling for the elimination of industrially produced Trans-fat in the food supply.

Key Highlights

1. Called “Heart Attack Rewind”, the 30 second public service announcement (PSA) - the first mass media campaign of its kind – will support FSSAI’s global target of eliminating Trans-fat in India by the year 2022, a year ahead of the global target by the World Health Organization (WHO) for complete elimination of trans fat.
2. “Heart Attack Rewind” will be broadcast in 17 languages for a period of four weeks on major digital platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Hotstar, and Voot.
3. Additionally, the campaign will also be placed on radio channels and outdoor hoardings in Delhi/NCR. A corresponding social media campaign will also highlight the harmful effects of Trans-fat on **people’s health.**

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National Children’s Science Congress

National Children’s Science Congress (NCSC), the annual event which provides a platform to children to showcase their creativity and ability to innovate, kicked off at SOA University Odisha. This is the second time that the NCSC is being held in Odisha.

NCSTC is mandated to communicate science and technology to the masses, stimulate scientific and technological temper and coordinate such efforts across the country. The event will be the 26th edition of the NCSC and this year’s theme is ‘Science, Technology and Innovation for a Clean, Green and Healthy Nation’. Children from 10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and five Gulf countries are expected to attend the event.

Significance

- Globally, trans fat intake leads to more than 500,000 deaths of people from cardiovascular disease every year. Trans fat are made by adding hydrogen to liquid vegetable oils to make them more solid, and to increase the shelf life of foods. Trans-fat are largely present in Vanaspati, margarine and bakery shortenings, and can be found in baked and fried foods. FSSAI is committed to reducing the industrially produced trans-fatty acids to less than 2% by the year 2022 in a phased manner.
- Earlier, WHO launched a comprehensive plan to eliminate industrially-produced trans fat from the global food supply by 2023. REPLACE provides a roadmap about how countries can remove and replace all trans fat from their food supplies with the intention to eradicate it from the globe.

PEPPER IT WITH
IROV-Tuna, Apsara reactor,
BARC, MRSA superbug, Call for
Code initiative, e-Cigarettes

FSSAI

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has been established under Food Safety and Standards, 2006 which consolidates various acts & orders that have hitherto handled food related issues in various Ministries and Departments.
- FSSAI has been created for laying down science based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption.
- Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the Administrative Ministry for the implementation of FSSAI. The Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is appointed by Government of India. The Chairperson is in the rank of Secretary to Government of India.

2018 Global Nutrition Report

In News

The report was released in Bangkok, Thailand, during the global event ‘Accelerating **the end of hunger and malnutrition**’, gathering decision-makers, researchers and practitioners from key organisations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Health Organisation, the European Union and UNICEF.

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About

- The Global Nutrition Report is the **world’s foremost publication on the status of** malnutrition around the world. It acts as a stock-take **on the world’s nutrition** – globally, regionally and country by country – and on efforts to improve it. It tracks progress on global nutrition targets, ranging from diet-related NCDs to maternal, infant and young child nutrition.
- The 2018 report highlights the worrying prevalence and universality of malnutrition in all its forms. In its fifth edition, the Global Nutrition Report provides a concrete overview of progress made and highlights solutions from around the globe calling on all stakeholders to act now to address malnutrition.

9 global targets for NCDs: WHO

- 1: A 25% relative reduction in the overall mortality from cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, or chronic respiratory diseases
- 2: At least 10% relative reduction in the harmful use of alcohol, as appropriate, within the national context
- 3: A 10% relative reduction in prevalence of insufficient physical activity
- 4: A 30% relative reduction in mean population intake of salt/sodium
- 5: A 30% relative reduction in prevalence of current tobacco use in persons aged 15+ years
- 6: A 25% relative reduction in the prevalence of raised blood pressure or contain the prevalence of raised blood pressure, according to national circumstances
- 7: Halt the rise in diabetes and obesity
- 8: At least 50% of eligible people receive drug therapy and counselling (including glycaemic control) to prevent heart attacks and strokes
- 9: An 80% availability of the affordable basic technologies and essential medicines, including generics, required to treat major NCDs in both public and private facilities

Key Highlights

- Malnutrition is a universal issue that no country in the world can afford to overlook. A third of reproductive-age women are anaemic, while **39% of the world’s adults are** overweight or obese and each year around 20 million babies are born underweight.
- Beyond health, slow progress on malnutrition is also impacting the social and economic development of countries. It is estimated that malnutrition in all its forms could cost society up to US\$3.5 trillion per year, with overweight and obesity alone costing US\$500 billion per year.
- Progress to date is simply not good enough. Significant steps are being made to address malnutrition. Globally, stunting among children under five years of age has fallen from 32.6% in 2000 to 22.2% in 2017. There has been a slight decrease in underweight women since 2000, from 11.6% to 9.7% in 2016.
- The 2018 assessment of progress against nine targets reveals only 94 of 194 countries are on track for at least one of the nine nutrition targets assessed. This means that most countries are significantly off-track on meeting all nine targets.
- The Report highlights that solutions already exist but finds effective ideas are not being adopted at scale. We now know more about what people eat, why it matters, and what needs to be done to improve diets. In Mexico, an evaluation of the sugar-sweetened beverage tax found that sales of targeted beverages fell by 9.7% across the population two years after the policy was implemented, compared with expected sales if it had not been.

India

- o India is facing a major malnutrition crisis as it holds almost a third of the world's burden for stunting. With 46.6 million children who are stunted, India tops the list of countries followed by Nigeria (13.9 million) and Pakistan (10.7 million).
- o India also accounted for 25.5 million children who are wasted, followed by Nigeria (3.4 million) and Indonesia (3.3 million).
- o More than half of the world's children impacted by wasting (26.9 million) live in South Asia. Of the three countries that are home to almost half (47.2 per cent) of all stunted children, two are in Asia, with India having 46.6 million (31 per cent) and Pakistan having 10.7 million.
- o India also figures among the set of countries that has more than a million overweight children. The other nations are China, Indonesia, India, Egypt, US, Brazil and Pakistan.
- o In four countries, more than a fifth of all children are overweight -- Ukraine, Albania, Libya and Montenegro. Of the 38.3 million children globally overweight, 5.4 million are in South Asia and 4.8 million are in East Asia. Prevalence of overweight children is the highest in upper-middle income countries and the lowest in low-income countries.
- o In urban areas, there are 7.1 per cent overweight children on average, whereas in rural areas 6.2 per cent children are overweight. It is slightly more common among boys (6.9 per cent) than girls (6.1 per cent).
- o As with obesity, among adults, women are more overweight than among men (39.2 pc and 38.5 pc respectively in 2016). Conversely, diabetes is more common among men than women (9.0 pc and 7.9 pc respectively in 2014).
- o India's national nutrition strategy – which is focused on addressing district-specific factors – draws on analyses such as these along with district specific nutrition profiles to enable diagnostic work and policy action to reduce inequalities and childhood stunting.

Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence
 India's first Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence established by the European Union was inaugurated at the Department of European Studies (DES) at Manipal Academy of Higher Education (Karnataka).
The award comes with a grant of €1,00,000 to pursue India-EU interdisciplinary studies in culture, literature, education and society. This is the fifth time that MAHE has been awarded grants under the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet initiative.
 Under the present award, the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence in India-EU Interdisciplinary Studies aims to strengthen and enhance the educational connect between India and EU.

PEPPER IT WITH
 WHO Global targets 2025,
 Navlekha, Horizon 2020, Thermal battery, RISECREEK, Blockchain technology

Way forward

The figures call for immediate action. Malnutrition is responsible for more ill-health than any other cause. The health consequences of overweight and obesity contribute to an estimated four million deaths, while undernutrition explains around 45% of deaths among children under five.

Indian Council of Medical Research

In News

The first comprehensive estimates of deaths, disease burden and life expectancy reduction associated with air pollution across states were collated under the India State Level Disease Burden Initiative—a joint initiative of the ICMR, Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) and Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), in collaboration with the health ministry.

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Key Highlights

1. Air pollution caused one in eight deaths in India last year, besides lowering the average life expectancy by 1.7 years.
2. About 77% of the populace is exposed to outdoor air pollution levels breaching the safe limit set by the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. North India recorded particularly high levels of pollutants.
3. In 2017, the mean ambient particulate matter PM2.5 annual exposure of 90 g/m3 was one of the highest in the world. The highest PM2.5 exposure level was in Delhi, followed by Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Haryana. The report said 1.24 million deaths in India in 2017 were due to air pollution, which included 670,000 deaths due to outdoor particulate matter air pollution and 480,000 deaths due to household air pollution.
4. The average life expectancy in India would have been 1.7 years higher if air pollution levels were less than the minimal level causing health loss. The highest increase was in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana.
5. Air pollution is now the leading risk factor for chronic obstructive lung disease in India, and a major contributor to pneumonia and lung cancer. With 18% of the global population, India suffered 26% of premature mortality and health loss attributable to air pollution globally.

Akademik Lomonosov

Akademik Lomonosov the world's first "floating" nuclear power plant (FNPP) for installation in remote areas, has been started and brought to 10 per cent of its capacity, Russian state-run atomic energy corporation Rosatom announced. An FNPP is basically a mobile, low-capacity reactor unit operable in remote areas isolated from the main power distribution system, or in places hard to access by land. They are designed to maintain both uninterrupted power and plentiful desalinated water supply in remote areas.

ICMR

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), New Delhi, the apex body in India for the formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research, is one of the oldest medical research bodies in the world. The ICMR functions under Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Its Governing Body is presided over by Health Minister.

Significance

- ✓ The upsurge in respiratory problems in the winter months with peak air pollution is well known, but what is now also becoming better understood is that air pollution is a year-round phenomenon particularly in north India which causes health impacts far beyond the seasonal rise of respiratory illnesses.
- ✓ The report also said that over half of deaths due to air pollution claimed people below 70 years. Air pollution now contributes more to the disease burden in India than tobacco use, primarily by causing lower respiratory infections, chronic obstructive lung disease, heart attacks, stroke, diabetes, and lung cancer.

PEPPER IT WITH
Digital literacy library,
Scutoid, Bombali strain, Blood
moon, Meghalayan age, Wings-
BSNL

Bullet Train

In News

The Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project may turn out to be a loss-making proposition and burden Maharashtra's already dwindling finances, the latest information obtained by an activist under the Right to Information (RTI) has revealed.

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Background

- As per the RTI response, a State Transport Department report has highlighted several objections raised by various departments over the economic viability of the Shinkansen

train, which could result in losses in the form of wasted Floor Space Index (FSI) and delayed loan repayment in the absence of proper frameworks.

- Both Planning and Finance departments have called for a thorough study of bullet train economics in other countries before a decision is taken on its feasibility in India. Additionally, the departments said the Centre must clarify the formula for sharing the loan burden if the project remains loss-making for a long period of time.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Jaitpur nuclear plant, UN
'Momentum for Change' climate
 action award, CSIR, Arsenic,
 Android things, Bogibeel bridge

High chance of losses

The estimated annual return of the project is less than the expenditure, hence the chances of losses are high. It need clarifications regarding sharing of such losses and expenditure.

Liability of State

The Finance Department had also forewarned that the Central government should bear the burden of the loan to the special purpose vehicle (SPV), without the State government bearing any guarantee towards the SPV. How the loan will be availed is yet to finalised.

Bullet train

Japan's high speed bullet trains, also known as Shinkansen trains, offer visitors an experience like no other with speeds reaching up to 320 km/hr. **India's bullet** train, with a capacity of 750 passengers, will travel at speeds between 320 km/hr and 350km/hr and is expected to reduce travel time between Ahmedabad and Mumbai to three-and-a-half hours or less from the present eight. The project is expected to be completed in seven years.

Zika warning

In News

India has asked the United States' public health agency, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to "withdraw or modify" an advisory it issued warning people against travelling to Rajasthan due to an outbreak of the Zika virus.

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Details

The CDC had said the virus was endemic to India and pointed out, there is an unusual increase in the number of Zika cases in Rajasthan and surrounding states. It cautioned pregnant women against travelling to such areas. This is because Zika infection during pregnancy can cause serious birth defects.

The National Institute of Virology in Pune has said that the gene responsible for causing microcephaly in Brazil is absent in the Indian strain after genome sequencing of the Zika virus spreading in India. The research findings of the virology institute have also been sent to CDC.

Zika Virus

- The Zika virus is transmitted mainly by Aedes mosquitoes, including Aedes aegypti, which also carries dengue.
- Most infected people either show no symptoms or only mild symptoms such as fever, rash, joint pain, conjunctivitis and, possibly, muscle pain and headaches that may last a week.
- Zika can be passed from a pregnant woman to her fetus. Infection during pregnancy can cause certain birth defects. There is no vaccine or medicine for Zika.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Mount Soputan, Pacific ring
 of fire, GravityRAT, CERN,
 LIGO, Gravitational waves

Atos wins deal to build supercomputers for India

In News

French IT services firm Atos has won a three-year contract to build the **first phase of supercomputers under India's Rs 4,500-crore** National Supercomputing Mission (NSM) as the country looks to create a cluster

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of machines for weather forecasting, drug discovery and data mining.

NSM

- The NSM is divided into two key tracks, build and buy, which are being spearheaded by the C-DAC and Bengaluru’s Indian Institute of Science respectively.
- **Atos has won the contract for the ‘build’ part** of the NSM for which it will partner CDAC in all three phases of the project.
- While Phase I involves assembling of the supercomputers, in Phase II, certain components like the motherboards would be manufactured locally, and in the third phase, the supercomputer would be designed in India by C-DAC.
- In the first phase, IIT-Kharagpur will have a 1.3 petaflop machine and IISER Pune and IIT-BHU will have a 650 teraflop computer each. Atos will source the components from France and assemble the supercomputers in Chennai.
- The NSM is being jointly implemented by the Department of Science and Technology and Department of Electronics and Information Technology at an estimated cost of Rs 4,500 crore over a period of seven years.
- The mission was announced three years ago with an intent to propel India higher in the global supercomputer rankings. The aim was to build a grid of 73 supercomputers across academic and research institutes in India, working on a wide range of applications, from weather forecasting to management. HPC is important in order for India to make significant progress in various areas, from drug discovery to astrophysics and bioinformatics.

Kaiga power station-1
 Karnataka’s Kaiga has once again made the country proud by creating a world record for the longest uninterrupted operation for 941 days, thereby breaking the earlier record of 940 days by the United Kingdom.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Internet of Things, Gene editing, Ransomware, Rare earth metals, Scramjet engines, Higgs boson

SPACE

CIMON

- It is a small robot endowed with artificial intelligence (AI) launched on a two-day trip to the International Space Station aboard SpaceX’s Dragon cargo capsule. No other AI-equipped machine has ever flown to space before.
- The mission of the bantam astronaut assistant — known as CIMON, short for "Crew Interactive Mobile Companion" — is relatively short and modest. But its work off-Earth could help pave the way for some pretty big things. CIMON’s mission is a technology demonstration designed to show researchers how humans and machines can interact and collaborate in the space environment.
- CIMON was developed by the European aerospace company Airbus on behalf of the German space agency, which is known by its German acronym, DLR. The robot’s AI is IBM’s famous Watson system.

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PEPPER IT WITH
 Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, High Resolution Imaging Science Experiment (HiRISE), NASA’s Kepler Space telescope, Ganganyaan, TESS

GSAT-11

- **Indian Space Research Organisation’s (ISRO)** heaviest and most-advanced high throughput communication satellite GSAT-11 was successfully launched from the Spaceport in French Guiana.
- The 5854-kg GSAT-11 will provide high data rate connectivity to users of Indian mainland and islands through 32 user beams in Ku-band and 8 hub beams in Ka-band.
- GSAT-11 will boost the broadband connectivity to rural and inaccessible Gram Panchayats in the country coming under the Bharat Net Project, which is part of Digital

India Programme. The Bharat Net Project aims to enhance the public welfare schemes like e-banking, e-health, e-governance among others.

- GSAT-11 will act as a forerunner to all future high throughput communication satellites.

Exseed Sat-1

- Elon Musk-led US space agency Space X launched **India's first privately built** satellite ExseedSAT 1 along with 63 other satellites from 17 countries.
- The mini communication satellite weighing just a kg with double the size of a Rubik's cube (10 cm x 10 cm x 10 cm) is made up of aluminium alloy. The satellite, which is the brainchild of a Mumbai-based startup Exseed Space, looks to serve the amateur radio community.
- The satellite with a lifespan of five years will allow people to receive signals on 145.9 Mhz frequency with the help of a TV tuner. Built in just 18 months, ExseedSAT 1 has paved the way for private-funded space missions.

Soyuz rocket

- A Soyuz rocket carrying Russian, American and Canadian astronauts took off from Kazakhstan and reached orbit. The Soyuz is the only means of reaching the ISS since the United States retired the space shuttle in 2011.
- Soyuz is a family of expendable launch systems developed by Russia. With over 1700 flights since its debut in 1966, the Soyuz is the most frequently used launch vehicle in the world.

Voyager 2

- NASA's Voyager 2 has entered interstellar space, leaving the solar system.
- Voyager 2, which launched in 1977, has spent more than four decades exploring our solar system, most famously becoming the only probe ever to study Neptune and Uranus during planetary flybys. Now, it has joined its predecessor Voyager 1 beyond the bounds of our sun's influence, a milestone scientists weren't able to precisely predict when would occur.
- The unmanned Voyager 1 and 2 probes on a mission to visit all the outer planets of the solar system. Voyager 2 is the only spacecraft to have visited all four gas giant planets — Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune — and discovered 16 moons, as well as phenomena like Neptune's mysteriously transient Great Dark Spot, the cracks in Europa's ice shell, and ring features at every planet.

OSIRIS-REx

- NASA's OSIRIS-REx spacecraft has discovered ingredients for water on a nearby skyscraper-sized asteroid, a rocky acorn-shaped object that may hold clues to the origins of life on the earth.
- The probe, on a mission to return samples from the asteroid to earth for study. Bennu orbits the Sun at roughly the same distance as the earth.
- Scientists believe asteroids and comets crashing into early earth may have delivered organic compounds and water that seeded the planet for life, and atomic-level analysis of samples from Bennu could provide key evidence to support that hypothesis.

NASA's ICESat-2

- NASA's ICESat-2 -- launched less than three months ago -- has mapped melting ice sheets in Antarctica and the resulting sea level rise across the globe, which could help improve climate forecasts.
- The Ice, Cloud and land Elevation Satellite-2 (ICESat-2) is measuring the height of sea ice to within an inch, tracing the terrain of previously unmapped Antarctic valleys, surveying remote ice sheets, and peering through forest canopies and shallow coastal waters.

'Farout' pink dwarf planet

- Scientists have discovered the most distant object known in our solar system, so remote and unusual they chose the nickname "**Farout**" for the slow-moving, icy, pinkish dwarf planet about 120 to 130 times further from the sun than Earth.

- There are roughly 50 dwarf planets in the solar system. The biggest are Pluto and Eris.

Saturn ring

- A new National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa) research confirms that Saturn is losing its iconic rings at the maximum rate.
- The rings are being pulled into Saturn by gravity as a dusty rain of ice particles under the influence of Saturn's magnetic field.
- Voyager 1 & 2 observations made decades ago and that has given an estimated loss rate of Saturn's rings.

GSAT-7A

- ISRO launched its military communication satellite GSAT-7A. The satellite GSAT-7A is the 35th Indian communication satellite weighing 2,250 kg. It is expected to add a new space-based dimension to the way Indian Air Force interlinks, operates and communicates with its aircraft as they fly and with command centres on ground.
- The GSLV-F11 space vehicle will release it to an eventual geostationary orbit about 36,000 km from Earth. However, it will become fully functional after a month of testing payloads. GSLV F-11 with indigenous cryogenic upper stage has a total of three stages before reaching the destined orbit using the onboard propulsion system.
- GSAT-7A will be the first satellite built primarily for the IAF to qualitatively unify its assets and improve combined, common intelligence during operations.
- Satellite using Ku band will enable superior real time aircraft-to-aircraft communication; and between planes that are in flight and their commanders on the ground.

Apollo 8

- NASA marked the 50th anniversary of its Apollo 8 mission.
- Apollo 8, the second manned spaceflight mission flown in the United States Apollo space program, and became the first manned spacecraft to leave low Earth orbit, reach the Moon, orbit it, and return.

Insight lander

The goal of the two-year mission is to create the first three-dimensional map of Mars' interior to better understand how rocky planets, like Mars and Earth, took shape billions of years ago. The \$993 million Mars Insight landed on Mars.

Cassiopeia

- Researchers have discovered a new exotic planet outside our solar system in the constellation Cassiopeia. Located 21 light years away from us, this planet, dubbed HD219134 b, has a mass almost five times that of Earth, which is considered a so-called "super-Earth". Unlike the Earth, however, it most likely does not have a massive core of iron, but is rich in calcium and aluminium alongside magnesium and silicon.
- A super-Earth is an extrasolar planet with a mass higher than Earth's, but substantially below those of the Solar System's ice giants, Uranus and Neptune, which are 15 and 17 times Earth's, respectively.

Hongyun project

- China launched its first communication satellite to provide broadband internet services worldwide in an apparent bid to rival Google and other international firms.
- The Hongyun project aims to build a space-based communications network to provide broadband internet connectivity to users around the world, especially those in the underserved regions.

Korolev crater

- The stunning Korolev crater in the northern lowlands of Mars is filled with ice all year round owing to a trapped layer of cold Martian air that keeps the water frozen.
- Images beamed back from the red planet by Mars Express probe, show that the lip around the impact crater rises high above the surrounding plain. When thin Martian air then passes over the crater, it becomes trapped and cools to form an insulating layer that prevents the ice from melting.

- Mars Express, so called because of the rapid and streamlined development time, represents ESA's first visit to another planet in the Solar System.

Ultima Thule

- Scientists from NASA's New Horizons mission released the first detailed images of the most distant object ever explored — the Kuiper Belt object nicknamed Ultima Thule. Its remarkable appearance, unlike anything we've seen before, illuminates the processes that built the planets four and a half billion years ago.
- New Horizons is an interplanetary space probe that was launched as a part of NASA's New Frontiers program.

Chang'e-4 Lunar probe mission

- China launched a rover destined to land on the far side of the moon, a global first that would boost Beijing's ambitions to become a space superpower. The Chang'e-4 lunar probe mission - named after the moon goddess in Chinese mythology is humanity's first probe to land on and explore the far side of the moon.
- No lander or rover has ever touched the surface there, positioning China as the first nation to explore the area.
- Unlike the near side of the moon that is "tidally locked" and always faces the earth, and offers many flat areas to touch down on, the far side is mountainous and rugged. It was not until 1959 that the Soviet Union captured the first images of the heavily cratered surface, uncloaking some of the mystery of the moon's "dark side".
- A major challenge for such a mission is communicating with the robotic lander: as the far side of the moon always points away from earth, there is no direct "line of sight" for signals. As a solution, China blasted the Queqiao ("Magpie Bridge") satellite into the moon's orbit, positioning it so that it can relay data and commands between the lander and earth.

Quake Sensor

The US space agency's unmanned Mars Insight lander, which touched down on the Red Planet last month, has successfully deployed its key, quake-sensing instrument on the alien world's surface.

The seismometer, known as the Seismic Experiment for Interior Structure, or SEIS, was made by the French space agency, CNES. Seismometer deployment is as important as landing InSight on Mars. The tool aims to help scientists better understand the interior of Earth's neighboring planet by studying ground motion, also known as marsquakes.

Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA)

- Astronomers have obtained stunning, high-resolution images of 20 nearby protoplanetary disks, depicting the birth of planets, using Chile's Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA).
- The observations are part of a major ALMA initiative known as the Disk Substructures at High Angular Resolution Project, or DSHARP campaign.
- According to the researchers, the most compelling interpretation of these observations is that large planets, likely similar in size and composition to Neptune or Saturn, form quickly, much faster than current theory would allow.
- It may also help explain how smaller rocky planets manage to survive in the chaos of young systems.
- The DSHARP campaign was designed to do precisely that by studying the relatively small-scale distribution of dust particles around 20 nearby protoplanetary disks. These dust particles naturally glow in millimeter-wavelength light, enabling ALMA to precisely map the density distribution of small, solid particles around young stars.

ALMA

- Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA), is currently the largest radio telescope in the world. This achievement is the result of an international association between Europe (ESO), North America (NRAO) and East Asia (NAOJ), in collaboration **with the Republic of Chile, to build the observatory of the "Dark Universe"**.

- This radio telescope is composed of 66 high-precision antennas giving ALMA a powerful “zoom” variable, which results in images clearer than the images from the Hubble Space Telescope.

BeiDou navigation satellite

- **China’s BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (BDS)**, touted as a rival to the widely-used American GPS, has started providing global services.
- The positioning accuracy of the system has reached 10 metres globally and five metres in the Asia-Pacific region. Its velocity accuracy is 0.2 metres per second, while its timing accuracy stands at 20 nanoseconds.
- Pakistan has become the first country to use the BeiDou system ending its reliance on the Global Positioning System (GPS).
- **Named after the Chinese term for the ‘Big Dipper’, the BeiDou system started serving China and the Asia-Pacific region. It will be the fourth global satellite navigation system after the US GPS, Russia’s GLONASS and the European Union’s Galileo. By the end of 2018, there were a total of 33 BDS satellites operating in orbit for BeiDou.**
- The total number of satellite navigation patent applications in China has reached 54,000, ranking first in the world.
- India too is building its navigational system called the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), with an operational name of NAVIC.

Issues with Payment Apps

Why in News?

Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has asked the central bank (Reserve Bank of India) to come up with regulations to oversee collection, usage and sharing of data by payment service providers.

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Issues

- Concerns were raised by the National Cyber Security Coordinator (NCSC) over collection **and storage of “sensitive personal data” by payment service providers** via applications such as Google Tez, WhatsApp, Paytm etc.
- NCSC recently pointed out that there was no agreement between the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), the banks and the applications that provided payment services. Additionally, there is no liability of NPCI and the payment service providers.
- There is a need for regulation on data flow of financial transaction. There is no provision to protect the interest of the consumer against the pilferage, leakage and sharing of data, which is of sensitive nature.
- Mobile banking transactions have increased from 10.89 million in May 2014 to 250 million in May 2018. Payments through this mode are expected to grow to \$1 trillion in 2023, according to a report by NITI Aayog.

- ❖ NPCI, the apex body for all retail payment systems in India, has a cap of ₹1 lakh as transaction limit per day on the UPI platform.
- ❖ **The Centre’s flagship UPI app**, Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM) is a simple app that links bank account based on the mobile number registered with the bank and is available in 13 languages.
- ❖ The Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 along with the Board for Regulation and Supervision of Payment and Settlement Systems Regulations, 2008 and the Payment and Settlement Systems Regulations, 2008 came into effect in 2008.
- ❖ Plastic money is a generic term that is used predominantly in reference to all types of bank cards, credit cards, debit cards, smart cards, etc.

- Mobile apps are equipped with almost all the features that online banking platforms provide. Payments can be done on the go anytime anywhere. So, its proper management is very important.

What Need's to be Done?

- NCSC recommended for scrutinising all aspects of a relation – legal, technical and financial, between all the stakeholders in the payments ecosystem.
- Payments service providers must comply with legal framework as well as regulations prescribed by the regulator,
- MeitY has suggested that RBI should lay down regulations, that would bind the collection, usage and sharing of data, by participants in the payments arena.

PEPPER IT WITH
Circular 32 of NPCI, Non-Bank
Prepaid Payment Instruments,
Near Field Communication

Background

Justice B.N. Srikrishna panel submitted the draft personal data protection bill 2018 and proposed that critical personal data of Indian citizens be processed in a data centre located within the country. Additionally, it also recommended penalties on the data processor for any violation of the data protection law, besides talking **about** “explicit consent” **and** individual rights such as right to be forgotten, right of correction, updation, and data portability.

RBI had directed all payments service providers to ensure that the data relating to payment systems operated by them were stored only in India. This came into effect in October 2018.

Angel Tax

Why in News?

Several start-ups have raised concerns on taxation of angel funds under Section 56 of the Income Tax Act and are of the view that the draconian Angel tax is torturing start-ups and killing genuine innovation.

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What is Angel Tax

It was introduced in 2012 as an anti-money laundering provision. Under the Section 56(2)(viib) of the Income-tax Act, companies with closely held shares, when issuing shares, are charged 30 per cent tax on the difference between funds raised as per the actual valuation and the fair-market value of the company. This is known as the angel tax.

Section 142 (1) empowers tax officials to ask for the tax returns, creditworthiness, bank details and correspondence of angel investors who have put money in a start-up. On the face of it, this section is meant to separate money launderers from genuine angel investors.

Government's Response

- Following concerns raised by investors regarding angel tax notices sent to start-ups, Commerce and Industry Ministry has taken up the issue.
- According to officials, notices issued on angel tax to start-ups may be for those that are not recognised by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP).
- The notices consider the value of funding received by start-ups, which is over and above **the enterprise value, as ‘income from other sources’ and therefore, consider that as taxable.**

The government launched the start-up India initiative in 2016 to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation and entrepreneurship. Start-ups also enjoy income tax benefit for three out of seven consecutive assessment years. To avail the concessions, start-ups would have to approach an eight-member inter-ministerial board of certification.

Need of the hour

- The main pain point for many start-ups is not that they are not getting recognised as **‘start-ups’ under DIPP norms, but the fact that their capital is getting treated as**

‘income’ and brought under the tax net. Taxing new investments coming into a start-up by treating capital as income may kill entrepreneurship.

- **Moreover, the DIPP’s norms stipulating that start-ups would be eligible to claim exemption from ‘Angel Tax’ only for proposed issue of shares is a big pain point.** Start-ups are ineligible to claim Angel Tax exemptions for shares issued in the past (prior to April 11, 2018).
- Government should consider watering down the angel tax provisions (Section 56) as **these provisions are not synchronous with government’s thrust on Start Up India, Stand Up India and ease of doing business.**

Background

In April 2018, government gave relief to start-ups by allowing them to avail tax concession if total investment including funding from angel investors does not exceed Rs 10 crore.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Inter-Ministerial Committee, Venture Capitalist, Fair Market Value

As per a notification by the Commerce and Industry Ministry, an angel investor picking up stakes in a start-up should have a minimum net worth of Rs 2 crore or should have an average returned income of over Rs 25 lakh in the preceding three financial years. Given this battery of conditions, it is no surprise that only two start-ups have so far qualified.

Angel Investor

- Angel investors invest in start-ups or entrepreneurs. The capital angel investors provide may be a one-time investment to help the business propel or an ongoing injection of money to support and carry the company through its difficult early stages.
- They provide more favourable terms compared to other lenders, since they usually invest in the entrepreneur starting the business rather than the viability of the business.
- Angel investors are focused on helping start-ups take their first steps, rather than the possible profit they may get from the business. Essentially, these investors are the opposite of venture capitalists.
- They are also called informal investors, angel funders, private investors, seed investors or business angels. These are affluent individuals who inject capital for start-ups in exchange for ownership equity or convertible debt.

Rules for selling online tightened by centre

Why in News?

Plugging some of the loopholes in the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) norms on e-commerce, the Centre has come up with a review policy explicitly stating who can sell on an e-commerce platform, and the distance that e-tailers must maintain with their vendors.

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The decision comes in the backdrop of several complaints by traditional retail stores alleging heavy discounts by online retailers to consumers are hurting their businesses.

Details

- Online marketplace players are now barred from selling the products of companies in which they hold stakes. The policy will come into effect from February 1, 2019.
- The online retail firms (e-commerce marketplace entity) are also prohibited from mandating any company to sell its products exclusively on its platform only.
- Services should be provided by e-commerce marketplace entity or other entities in which e-commerce marketplace entity has direct or indirect equity participation or common control, to vendors on the platform at arm's length and in a fair and non-discriminatory manner.
- Such services include fulfilment, logistics, warehousing, advertisement, marketing, payments and financing, among others. Cash back provided by group companies of marketplace entity to buyers shall be fair and non-discriminatory.

- Further, the online retailers will have to file a certificate along with a report of statutory auditor to Reserve Bank of India, confirming compliance of guidelines by September 30 of every year for the preceding financial year.
- Inventory of a vendor will be deemed to be controlled by e-commerce marketplace entity if more than 25% of purchases of such vendor are from the marketplace entity or its group companies.

FDI & e-commerce

- ✚ 2013: India allowed 100 percent FDI in single-brand retail **but didn't allow the same retailers to sell their goods online.**
- ✚ 2014: It allowed 51 percent FDI in multi-brand retail but a government change ensured that remained a policy only on paper.
- ✚ 2016: The new government then allowed 100 percent FDI only in e-commerce marketplace sites, shutting the door on inventory-based models but leaving a window open for line-blurring elements like private label sales. (Private labels are goods **sold under the retailer's brand.**)
- ✚ 2018: In the end of 2018, the government issued a new rule to shut the window on private labels but kept the vents open.
- ✚ 2019: The government issued a clarification that said that private labels sales are not banned.

Inventory and Market Based Model

- Inventory based model of e-commerce – It is an e-commerce activity where the inventory of goods and services is owned by e-commerce entity and is sold to the consumers directly.
- Marketplace based model of e-commerce – It means providing of an information technology platform by an e-commerce entity on the internet to act as a facilitator between buyer and seller and the e-commerce entity providing the platform has no inventory of its own.
- According to the current policy, 100% FDI is permitted in marketplace e-commerce activities. It is prohibited in inventory-based activities.

Data Info

- ❖ The Indian e-commerce market is expected to grow to US\$ 200 billion by 2026 from US\$ 38.5 billion as of 2017. Much growth of the industry has been triggered by increasing internet and smartphone penetration.
- ❖ The ongoing digital transformation in the **country is expected to increase India's total internet user base to 829 million by 2021 from 445.96 million in 2017.**
- ❖ **India's E-commerce revenue is expected to jump from US\$ 39 billion in 2017 to US\$ 120 billion in 2020, growing at an annual rate of 51 per cent, the highest in the world.**
- ❖ During 2018, electronics is currently the biggest contributor to online retail sales in India with a share of 48 per cent, followed closely by apparel at 29 per cent.

Effects

The effects will be felt through the industry and it may force a number of influential players to re-examine their respective business models going forward. Given the short time within which the changes are sought to be implemented, Marketplace Entities would need to quickly take measures to comply with such provisions. In the meanwhile customers can optimistically expect an extended "sale" season to continue.

PEPPER IT WITH
CAIT, e-commerce
policy, Walmart, Draft
e-commerce Policy

Expressing concern over tightening restrictions on foreign e-commerce companies operating in the country, leading American industry advocacy groups have said that such a move would have a long-term negative impact on the foreign direct investment as well as consumers.

Impact on consumers and small retailers

- ✓ Consumers may no longer enjoy the deep discounts offered by retailers that have a close association with marketplace entities.
- ✓ The absence of large retailers will, however, bring relief to small retailers selling on these platforms.

- ✓ Traders running traditional brick-and-mortar stores, who now find it difficult to compete with the large e-commerce retailers with deep pockets, could gain.
- ✓ Marketplaces are meant for genuine, independent sellers, many of whom are MSMEs (Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises). These changes will enable a level playing field for all sellers, helping them leverage the reach of e-commerce.

Way Forward

If the steps are implemented in proper spirit, mal-practices and predatory pricing policy and deep discounting of e-commerce players will be a matter of past. Government also needs to introduce an e-commerce policy and a regulator to monitor the sector.

Conclusion

These policy changes have the potential to change the dynamics of e-commerce sector in India. The changes are likely to impact the core business model of the likes of Amazon and Flipkart. The changes benefit brick and mortar small and medium retail players who for last some years had to face an onslaught of indiscriminate discounting by the online players.

Solutions beyond farm loan waivers

Why in News?

Farmer distress is a real and pressing problem, as evidenced by the protests currently taking place in various parts of the country. But by just announcing a farm loan waiver, the real problems are unaddressed.

The political system is essentially responding to a cry of distress by addressing the direct point of pain. It is their mounting debt burden that is pushing farmers to despair and suicides.

Issues with Loan Waiver

- How can one ensure that its benefit reaches small and marginal cultivators who are the ones who really require relief? And how does one guarantee that the same situation is not replayed five years later?
- Repeated loan waivers used every few years as election sops may be in the interest of political parties but are not in the interest of farmers.
- Only 15% of the marginal farmers (with less than 2 hectares of landholding) have access to formal credit, and loan waiver schemes typically cater to farmers who have availed of formal loans.
- A loan waiver is only an element of immediate relief. It is an acknowledgment that farmers have been pushed into debt due to the systemic failures of the government. Immediate relief should be accompanied by a long-term systemic solution to indebtedness.
- Farmer distress requires a serious response-but as in everything, there are choices. Economic analysis clearly shows that each rupee could achieve vast benefits—or could do as little as 80 paise. It is important to follow the evidence.

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- ❖ The NSSO Situation Assessment Survey (SAS) of Agricultural Households (2013) shows that 52% of farming households are indebted, with rates as high as 89-92% in some States.
- ❖ The cost difference for loan rates between the formal and informal sectors vary between 30-45%, annually.
- ❖ The NSSO SAS (2013) showed that the average debt from institutional sources for small and marginal farmers was only ₹17,570 per household, and ₹1,41,804 for medium and large farmers.
- ❖ The RBI did issue guidelines in 2014 for extending loans to Bhoomi Heen Kisan (landless farmers) and for a debt-swapping scheme to convert informal loans of farmers into bank loans, but they have remained on paper.
- ❖ Agriculture currently contributes just about 15% to the national output and about 50% of the population directly or indirectly depends on it for employment. This is unsustainable.

Ongoing Farmer's Movement

The unique aspect of the ongoing farmers' movement is that their demand goes beyond a one-time loan waiver — they want enactment of a law for freedom from indebtedness.

PEPPER IT WITH
Tata Trusts and Copenhagen
Consensus for the India Consensus
project, Price Deficiency Payment

The Indebtedness Bill

- It has been developed by the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee and incorporates two key elements of reform: a functional institutional credit system which is accessible and accountable to all cultivators, and protection from debt trap in bad years.
- Functional institutional credit system guarantees all farmer access to institutional credit; this covers not only land-owning farmers but also sharecroppers, tenants, tribals and women farmers, and animal-rearers. It requires the registration of all cultivators and providing them Kisan credit cards.
- This is critical because marginal and landless farmers are mostly excluded from institutional credit, thereby putting them at the mercy of predatory lending by moneylenders and input dealers. Tenant farmers who lease land from other land owners are especially vulnerable.
- Protection from debt trap in bad years aims at establishing **farmers' distress and disaster relief commissions** at the national and State levels, based on the model of **Kerala's Farmers' Debt Relief Commission**.
- Based on incidences of natural disasters, extensive pest attack and such calamities, the commission can recommend declaration of certain areas or crops as distress-affected in any particular year.
- Thereafter, it has the power to order measures of debt relief, which may include loan rescheduling, interest waiver, one-time settlement, discharge of debt in instalments, or, in an extreme situation, immediate discharge of debt. The State-level commission is also empowered to pass orders regarding non-institutional loans of distress-affected farmers.
- The principle is that farmers who suffer losses due to circumstances entirely out of their control deserve to be protected. Given that agriculture is a key national enterprise, the concepts of limited liability and bankruptcy protection need to be adapted to the farming sector.
- This approach provides targeted protection to distressed farmers when they require it, rather than allowing debt, distress and suicides to accumulate until an election year. At present, crop insurance with its inadequate coverage and payout is unable to fulfil that role, but distress relief would include any payout from crop insurance.

ENSURE Portal

Government recently launched a portal ENSURE- National Livestock Mission- Entrepreneurship Development and Employment Generation (EDEG) developed by NABARD and operated under the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries today.

National Livestock Mission has been conceived for the sustainable development of the livestock sector. Under the **Mission's component called EDEG, subsidy payment for activities related to poultry, small ruminants, pigs etc. through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) goes directly to the beneficiary's account.**

Way Forward

- ✓ Government should have long term planning and vision. Central and state governments need to work together in order to enhance the viability of the farming sector and investment in practically is required in every aspect of the farm economy.
- ✓ In addition to reforming the credit system, agriculture should be made profitable by ensuring fair remunerative prices, lowering the cost of cultivation, and promoting viable farmer collectives and sustainable models of agriculture.
- ✓ Proper emphasis is needed in compensation during drought and disasters, the failures of the crop insurance scheme, and the deficit due to prices falling below the announced Minimum Support Prices.

- ✓ The challenge before political parties and governments is to deliver on the institutional solutions demanded by farmers. The farming community is not likely to relent if governments adopt a business-as-usual approach and kick the can down the road for the next term.

Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) Framework

Why in News?

Recently, government had sought Parliament’s approval to provide ₹41,000 crore to PSBs in the current fiscal to provide capital to the banks under PCA, which will help them come out of restrictions imposed.

Although the government’s plan to inject additional capital into PCA banks sounds optimistic, it requires a robust monitoring and management system on the part of these banks to avoid falling again into the trap of non-performing assets.

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Issues

- Commercial banks, under the PCA framework of the RBI are sitting on a **pile of cash as they don’t have too many options to lend**, even as the banking system is scrambling for liquidity.
- The 11 public sector banks under the PCA, enjoying 25% market share among commercial banks, are facing restrictions on lending while their deposit mobilisation has been healthy.
- The average liquidity deficit in the banking system has been about ₹1 lakh crore since October with the shadow banks impacted the most as they are finding it difficult to raise funds following the IL&FS crisis. This, in turn, is affecting the loan market.
- Some **bank’s statutory liquidity ratio (SLR)** was about 27-28%, much higher than the RBI mandated 19.5%. As a result, they have no other option but to invest in government bonds. SLR is the minimum amount of liabilities that a bank must invest in government securities.

- ❖ Investments in government bonds is the most risk-free avenue to park funds which, in banking parlance, is known as ‘Lazy Banking.’ **While ‘lazy banking’** refers to the risk averse nature of banks, under PCA the situation is slightly different as their hands are tied.
- ❖ Return on assets (ROA) is a financial ratio that shows the percentage of profit a company earns in relation to its overall resources. It is commonly defined as net income divided by total assets.
- ❖ Capital adequacy ratio (CAR) or capital to risk weighted asset ratio (CRAR) is the capital needed for a bank measured in terms of the assets (mostly loans) disbursed by the banks. Higher the assets, higher should be the capital by the bank. A notable feature of CRAR is that it measures capital adequacy in terms of the riskiness of the assets or loans given.

About PCA Framework

1. RBI under its supervisory framework uses various measures/tools to maintain sound financial health of banks. PCA framework is one of such supervisory tools, which involves monitoring of certain performance indicators of the banks as an early warning exercise.
2. Its objective is to facilitate the banks to take corrective measures including those prescribed by the RBI, in a timely manner, in order to restore their financial health. The framework also provides an opportunity to the RBI to pay focussed attention on such banks by engaging with the management more closely in those areas.
3. RBI has set trigger points on the basis of CRAR, NPA and ROA. Based on each trigger point, the banks have to follow a mandatory action plan. Apart from this, the RBI has discretionary action plans too.

PEPPER IT WITH
 United Forum of Bank Unions, NPA, Jan Dhan Yojana, Mudra, social security insurance, PM’s housing scheme, Systematically Important Banks

4. The rationale for classifying the rule-based action points into **“mandatory” and “discretionary”** is that some of the actions are essential to restore the financial health of banks while other actions will be taken at the discretion of RBI depending upon the profile of each bank.
5. The PCA framework is, thus, intended to encourage banks to eschew certain riskier activities and focus on conserving capital so that their balance sheets can become stronger.
6. The framework was revised in 2017 and will be reviewed after three years. PCA norms allow the regulator to place certain restrictions such as halting branch expansion and **stopping dividend payment. It can even cap a bank’s lending limit to one entity or sector.**
7. Other corrective action that can be imposed on banks include special audit, **restructuring operations and activation of recovery plan. Banks’ promoters can be asked to bring in new management, too. The RBI can also supersede the bank’s board, under PCA.**

Conclusion

It is in operation since 2002 and the framework is not intended to constrain normal operations of the banks for the general public. If banks are not to be allowed to fail, it is essential that corrective action is taken well in time when the bank still has adequate cushion of capital to minimise the losses.

Panel on RBI’s Economic Capital Framework

Why in News?

Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in consultation with the government, has set up a six-member committee to review the economic capital framework of the central bank. It will be headed by former RBI

Governor Bimal Jalan and former Deputy Governor Rakesh Mohan will be deputy chairman.

Earlier, RBI’s Central Board had agreed to set up the panel in its meeting. The economic capital issue was a bone of contention, among other issues, between the central bank and the Finance Ministry.

Terms of Reference

- The committee will review status, need and justification of various provisions, reserves and buffers presently provided for by the RBI, **keeping in mind ‘public policy mandate of the RBI, including financial stability considerations.’**
- It will propose a suitable profits distribution policy taking into account all the likely situations of the RBI, including the situations of holding more provisions than required. The committee would submit its report within 90 days from the date of its first meeting.
- RBI has also entrusted the panel to suggest an adequate level of risk provisioning that the RBI needs to maintain. It will also "review global best practices followed by the central banks in making assessment and

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- ❖ Three committees - V Subrahmanyam (1997), Usha Thorat (2004) and Y H Malegam (2013) in the past have studied the issue of ideal size of RBI.
- ❖ While the Subrahmanyam committee recommended that contingency reserve should be built up to 12 per cent, the Thorat committee had said the reserve adequacy should be maintained at 18 per cent of the total assets.
- ❖ The RBI board did not accept the recommendation of the Thorat committee and decided to continue with the recommendation of the Subrahmanyam panel.
- ❖ The Malegam committee recommended that adequate amount of profits should continue to be transferred each year to contingency reserves.

PEPPER IT WITH
Argentina Crisis due to transfer of surplus, RBI Act, Public Sector Asset Rehabilitation Agency (PARA), America Merrill Lynch Report

provisions for risks which central bank balance sheets are subject to."

Background

- Economic capital framework refers to the risk capital required by the central bank while taking into account different risks. The buffer of 28 per cent of gross assets maintained by RBI which follows July-June financial year is well above the global norm which is around 14 per cent.
- In the economic survey 2016-17, it was mentioned that the RBI "is already exceptionally highly capitalised" and its capital transfer to the government can be used for recapitalising the banks and/ or recapitalising a public sector asset rehabilitation agency.
- The **central bank's core reserve**, contingency fund is only around 7% of its total assets and the rest of it is largely in revaluation reserves, which fluctuate with corresponding changes in currency and gold valuations. In 2017-18, the **central bank's contingency funds** and revaluation reserves stood at ₹2.32 trillion and ₹6.92 trillion respectively.
- RBI transfers the surplus to the government after keeping all provisions and contingency buffers, according to its statutory mandate under Section 47 of the RBI Act. The reserves are meant for unforeseen contingencies, including depreciation in the value of securities, risks arising from exchange rate operations and other systemic challenges.

Strategy Action Plan on unlocking the potential of MSME exports

Why in News?

The MSME ministry has recommended a detailed analysis of various trade agreements, including FTAs and bilateral and multilateral trade agreements, to identify areas of concern for MSMEs in the strategic action plan titled 'Unlocking the Potential of MSME Exports'.

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Importance of MSME Sector

The role of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the economic and social development of the country is well established. The MSME sector is a nursery of entrepreneurship, often driven by individual creativity and innovation. As per the NSSO survey 2015-16, the total number of MSMEs in India are 6.3 Crore employing over 111 million persons. It is the second largest employer after agriculture. The sector accounts for 45 % of total industrial production, 40% of total exports and contributes 30% of the country's GDP.

Challenges Faced by MSME

Awareness/ Know how: Limited information about products & services in demand; Working of the foreign markets, and in particular difficulties in accessing export distribution channels and in connecting with overseas customers; Lack of awareness

on export promotion and assistance programmes offered by the government; Unfamiliarity with legal and regulatory frameworks of the exporting and importing countries; No or zero awareness of IPR issues and various trade agreements.

Finance: Access to affordable trade finance; Costly product standards and certification procedures; Logistics cost – airport and shipping costs etc.

NIMZ and SEZ

- ❖ National Investment & Manufacturing Zones are one of the important instruments of National Manufacturing Policy, 2011. NIMZs are envisaged as large areas of developed land with the requisite ecosystem for promoting world class manufacturing activity.
- ❖ The main objective of Special Economic Zones is promotion of exports, while NIMZs are based on the principle of industrial growth in partnership with States and focuses on manufacturing growth and employment generation.
- ❖ NIMZs are different from SEZs in terms of size, level of infrastructure planning, governance structures related to regulatory procedures, and exit policies.

Technology: Lack of innovation, low-value addition and poor packaging due to low level of technology adoption; **Unable to meet importer’s quality standards and establishing suitable design and image for the export market**

Documentation: Time-consuming and cumbersome documentation process required to comply with foreign and domestic market regulations

Strategy Action Plan

Thus, in this regard a focused strategy action plan is proposed that aims to create a sustainable ecosystem for entire MSME development. The action plan aims to achieve the following objectives.

- o Target of USD 100 billion of exports from India by 2020
- o Evaluate readiness of MSMEs to export their products and services
- o Recognize areas where improvements are required in order to be able to export effectively and efficiently
- o Integration of MSMEs into Global Value Chain

Challenges addressed under the Strategic Action Plan

1. Capacity Building: Two tier training programme for skilling.
2. On-ground handholding support – Hub and Spoke Model:
 - (i) Market research and development: National Resource Centre (NRC) for MSME Exporters for short term which will act as a hub and dedicatedly work towards conducting new research and enhancing existing knowledge base on exports. It would also act as a networking hub, connecting industry, academia, export-linked institutions, large export houses and Government. The centre is intended to not only help MSME exporters, but also to act as a foundation for the entire MSME business eco-system
 - (ii) Access to on ground facilitation: Export Facilitation Centre (EFCs) will be the one stop service point for MSMEs that are interested in exporting their products and services. These centres will provide end-to end on-ground facilitation and handholding support to MSME exporters who are already trading overseas or are trying to access foreign markets. The objective is to help businesses target international customers and better understand international markets. Thus, it is proposed to establish 100 Export Facilitation Centres (EFCs), which will be run by a team of International Trade Advisors (ITAs).
3. Technology and Infrastructure
 - (i) Access to technology: Leveraging network of existing technology centres
4. Finance
 - (i) Access to Finance: Interest Subvention
 - (ii) Export Credit Hedge Fund: Overall credit demand as on 31st March 2018, of MSME sector is estimated to be three \$ 370 billion as against the supply of \$139 billion. Low income and North east states account for major addressable credit gap in MSME sector.
5. Market: For access to market, formulation of MSME export promotion scheme has been proposed
6. Governance Framework: A governing council is proposed for governance & to ensure efficient delivery of all export-related interventions as part of its action plan to boost shipments from micro, small and medium enterprises. It will be chaired by secretary, ministry of micro small and medium enterprises.

<p style="text-align: center;">PEPPER IT WITH</p> <p>Technology Centre Systems Programme (TCSP), MSME Export Promotion Council, National Resource Centre, Free Trade Agreement</p>
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Conclusion

Despite a reasonable growth story and substantial share in overall exports, MSMEs are often faced with many challenges that restrict their entry into the foreign market. Not only do these challenges need to be studied in detail but, an eco-system needs to be created in such a way that these enterprises shall be able to participate in the global value chain on its own and generate enough economies of scale.

Minimum Support Price for Minor Forest Produce

Why in News?

The Government has introduced Minor Forest Produce (MSP) for 17 new MFP items and has revised the MSP of 23 items of MFP. The scheme is in operation since the year 2013-14. It has been done upon receipt of recommendations of the MFP Pricing Cell (was constituted by TRIFED) for revision of MSP of the MFP items.

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Minor Forest Produce

- It is a subset of forest produce and got a definition only in 2007 when the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, was enacted.
- Section 2(i) of the Act defines a Minor Forest Produce (MFP) as all non-timber forest produce of plant origin and includes bamboo, brushwood, stumps, canes, Tusser, cocoon, honey, waxes, Lac, tendu/kendu leaves, medicinal plants and herbs, roots, tuber and the like.
- Thus, the definition of “minor forest produce” includes bamboo and cane, thereby changing the categorization of bamboo and cane as “trees” under the Indian Forest Act (IFA) 1927. IFA only defines forest produce and this term connotes to those products whether found in or brought from a forest.

Why is it Important

- **MFPs contribute up to 80 per cent of tribal communities’ cash income. A Planning Commission report had noted that MFP contributes to 20 to 40 per cent of the income of forest-dependent communities, especially the landless with a dominant population of tribals and “provides critical subsistence during lean seasons.”**
- The MFP economy, however, is also known to suffer from unorganised and uncertain market demands, affecting economic returns to these communities. It will ensure and institutionalise fair monetary returns to MFP gatherers for their efforts in collection, primary processing, storage, packaging, transportation etc.
- The new MFP under the scheme includes Mahua flowers (dried), Tejpatta (dried) and Kokum (dry) and will be operative with immediate effect. Ministry of Tribal Affairs has asked all the State Governments to bring these changes to the notice of State nodal agencies and the State implementing agencies.
- This activity has strong linkage to **women’s financial** empowerment as most of the MFPs are collected and used / sold by women. MFP sector has the potential to create about 10 million work days jobs annually in the country.

Schemes launched by Ministry of Tribal Affairs for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes

- ❖ Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Scheme is 100% grant from Government of India (since 1977-78).
- ❖ Grants-in-aid under Proviso to Article 275(1) of Constitution of India is 100% annual grant from Government of India to States.
- ❖ The scheme of Development of PVTGs covers 75 identified PVTGs in 18 States and UT of Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
- ❖ Institutional Support for Development & Marketing of Tribal Products / Produce (Central Sector Scheme)
- ❖ Support to National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation/State Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporations.
- ❖ Pre matric, Post Matric and National Overseas scholarships

Background

The scheme is applicable for implementation in all the States across India. Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India is the Nodal Ministry for implementation of the scheme which will announce Minimum Support Price (MSP) for the selected MFPs with the technical support from TRIFED.

TRIFED acts as the Central Nodal Agency for implementation and monitoring of the scheme through State level implementing agencies. State designated agencies undertakes procurement of notified MFPs directly from MFP gatherers (individual or collectives) at haats notified procurement centres at grass root level at prefixed MSP and ensure full & timely on the spot payment to MFP gatherers.

TRIFED

Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED) came into existence in 1987. It is a national-level apex organization functioning under the administrative control of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Govt. of India. TRIFED has its registered and Head Office located in New Delhi and has a network of 13 Regional Offices located at various places in the country.

PEPPER IT WITH
5th schedule of the constitution of India, Article 275, PVTGs

India’s Nine Point Agenda Against Fugitive Economic Offenders

Why in News?

India presented a nine-point agenda to G20 countries, calling for **“strong and active cooperation”** among them to comprehensively deal with fugitive economic offenders. It was presented in the second session of the G20 Summit on international trade, international financial and tax systems.

India will host the G-20 summit in 2022, the year the country would celebrate the 75th anniversary of its Independence.

9-Point Agenda Called for

1. Strong and active cooperation across G-20 countries to deal comprehensively and efficiently with the menace fugitive economic offenders.
2. Cooperation in the legal processes such as effective freezing of the proceeds of crime; early return of the offenders and efficient repatriation of the proceeds of crime should be enhanced and streamlined.
3. Joint effort by G-20 countries to form a mechanism that denies entry and safe havens to all fugitive economic offenders is required.
4. Principles of United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNOTC), especially related to "International Cooperation" **should be fully and effectively** implemented.
5. FATF should be called upon to assign priority and focus to establishing international co-operation that leads to timely and comprehensive exchange of information between the competent authorities and FIUs.
6. FATF should be tasked to formulate a standard definition of fugitive economic offenders.
7. FATF should also develop a set of commonly agreed and standardized procedures related to identification, extradition and judicial proceedings for dealing with fugitive economic offenders to provide guidance and assistance to G-20 countries, subject to their domestic law.

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India can make an extradition request to any country. While **India’s treaty partners** have treaty obligations to consider **India’s requests**, in the absence of a treaty, it is a matter for the foreign country to consider, in accordance with its domestic laws and procedures, whether the country **can agree to India’s extradition request** on the basis of an assurance of reciprocity. Amongst the 44 countries India has extradition treaties with, the United Arab Emirates has been the most amenable

Similarly, any country can make an extradition request to India. The legal basis for Extradition with States with whom India does not have an Extradition Treaty (“non-Treaty States”) **is provided by** Section 3(4) of the Indian Extradition Act, 1962.

PEPPER IT WITH
Iqbal Mirchi, Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi, Christian Mitchel, Fugitive Economic Offender Act

- 8. Common platform should be set up for sharing experiences and best practices including successful cases of extradition, gaps in existing systems of extradition and legal assistance, etc.
- 9. G-20 Forum should consider initiating work on locating properties of economic offenders who have a tax debt in the country of their residence for its recovery.

Who is a fugitive economic offender?

A person is declared a fugitive economic offender (FEO) only when an arrest warrant has been issued against him for specified offences over Rs 100 crore and when he has left the country and refuses to return to face prosecution. There are 55 economic offences covered which include tax evasion, money laundering, transactions defrauding creditors, benami transactions, counterfeiting government stamps or currency and dishonouring cheques. A fugitive economic offender loses the right to defend any civil claim.

Way Forward

The problem is not external and our focus should not be on what the other nations should be doing. We have to look inward. We have to follow our own laws and processes properly so that we are respected by the world as a rule of law state.

NITI Aayog releases Strategy for New India @ 75

Why in News?

Government think tank NITI Aayog unveiled its comprehensive national Strategy for New India, which defines clear objectives for 2022-23. Stakeholders have been consulted widely in preparing the strategy and **affirms that** “policymaking will have to be rooted in ground realities” rather than economic abstractions.

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Details

- The *Strategy for New India @75* is an attempt to bring innovation, technology, enterprise and efficient management together, at the core of policy formulation and implementation.
- It will encourage discussion and debate and invite feedback for further refining of the approach of the policy. Economic transformation cannot happen without public participation. Development must become a mass movement.
- The strategy is a detailed exposition across forty-one crucial areas, that recognizes the progress already made, identifies binding constraints, and suggests the way forward for achieving the clearly stated objectives. The forty-one chapters have been disaggregated under 4 sections: Drivers, Infrastructure, Inclusion and Governance.

The Ministry of Commerce & Industry is creating an action-oriented plan which will highlight specific sector level **interventions to bolster India’s march** towards becoming a USD 5 trillion economy before 2025. The focused plans will be on boosting services sector contribution to USD 3 trillion, manufacturing to USD 1 trillion and Agriculture to USD 1 trillion.

1. Drivers focuses on the engines of economic performance with emphasis on growth and employment, doubling of **farmers’ incomes; upgrading the science, technology and innovation eco-system;** and promoting sunrise sectors like fintech and tourism.
2. Infrastructure deals with the physical foundations of growth which are crucial to **enhancing the competitiveness of Indian business as also ensuring the citizens’ ease of living.**
3. Inclusion covers **the urgent task of investing in the capabilities of all of India’s citizens.** The three themes in this section revolve around the dimensions of health,

Public Enterprises Survey
Public Enterprise Survey presents an overview of the performance of all the CPSEs including their subsidiaries. The survey gives a detailed analysis of various aspects of the performance as well as sector-wise information.

education and mainstreaming of traditionally marginalized sections of the population.

- 4. Governance delves deep into how the governance structures can be streamlined and processes optimized to achieve better developmental outcomes.

Some key Highlights of the Strategy

- o Steadily accelerate economy to achieve GDP growth rate of about 8% on average during 2018-23 which will increase the economy to 4 trillion by 2022-23.
- o Increase the investment rate from the present 29% to 36% of GDP by 2022.
- o Complete codification of central labour laws into four codes by 2019.
- o Increase female labour force participation to at least 30 per cent by 2022-23.
- o Manufacturing sector to grow from 16% to 25% with more capital intensive industries.
- o Increasing of the tax base to provide more resources for human development.
- o Strong clusters of small enterprises as a principal strategy for the growth of a more competitive industrial sector
- o **Launch a mission “Explore in India”** by revamping minerals exploration and licensing policy.
- o Establishment of rail development authority, which has already been approved and also, double the share of freight transported by coastal shipping and inland waterways.
- o After Bharat Net programme is completed in 2019, all 2.5 lakh gram panchayats will be digitally connected. So, aim to deliver all government services at the state, district, and gram panchayat level digitally by 2022-23.
- o Implementing Ayushman Bharat programme and rolling out the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Abhiyaan.
- o Upgrade quality of school education system and skills. Conceptualize an **electronic national educational registry for tracking each child’s learning outcomes.**
- o By 2022-23, should complete projects that are already underway such as the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor and Dedicated Freight Corridors.
- o Government should continue to exit public sector undertakings that are not strategic in nature

FAME-India

Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles (FAME-India) Scheme was launched in 2015 to promote manufacturing of electric and hybrid vehicle technology and to ensure sustainable growth of the same, Department of Heavy Industry is implementing FAME-India Scheme-Phase-I.

The Phase-II of the scheme gives a push to electric vehicles (EVs) in public transport and seeks to encourage adoption of EVs by way of market creation and demand aggregation.

PEPPER IT WITH
Second Administrative Reforms Commission, Gross fixed capital formation

Conclusion

The shape of the development process matters more to people than the size of the GDP. Development must be by the people (more participative), of the people (health, education, skills), and for the people (growth of their incomes, well-being, and happiness). How well India is doing at 75 must be measured by the qualities of development, as experienced by its citizens, along these three dimensions. GDP growth will not be enough.

Russia Conducts Successful Flight-Test of Avangard HGV

Why in News?

Russia successfully carried out the launch of a liquid-fueled intercontinental-range ballistic missile (ICBM) carrying the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle payload.

The Avangard is a modernized Russian delivery vehicle, designed to maneuver in the upper atmosphere at speeds in excess of Mach 5.

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Avangard Hypersonic Glide Vehicle (HGV)

- The Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle can travel up-to 20 times the speed of sound or approximately 24,700 km per hour and can hit targets anywhere in the world within half an hour. The vehicle launches atop an intercontinental ballistic missile before sailing on top of the atmosphere toward its target.
- Avangard, also known as “Objekt 4202,” achieving such a speed is made possible by the use of “new composite materials” to stay within a stable range of 1,600 to 2,000 degrees celsius. This design translates into a missile that is not only more difficult, but impossible to intercept, according to Russian.
- A 2019 deployment schedule would put Russia ahead of China and the U.S. in the hypersonic, nuclear-capable boost-glider arms race. China’s hypersonic glider analogue to Avangard, the DF-ZF, is still in testing and appears to be on track for a 2020 release.

PEPPER IT WITH Agni V Missile, Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System

Information fusion Centre

Why in News?

Raksha Mantri recently launched the Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR). The setting up of IFC-IOR underscores the governmental approach and effort towards Security and Growth of All in the Region (SAGAR).

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Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region

- The IFC-IOR stems from the importance of the Indian Ocean to world trade and security, and the need for the various maritime nations and organisations to collaborate towards enhancing maritime safety and security on the seas of this region.
- In addition to utilising the collective wisdom and resources towards addressing myriad challenges in the region, IFC-IOR will help interface and integrate, wherein, all partners and stakeholders would benefit from each other’s best practices and expertise.
- It has been established at Gurugram, India and is collocated with Information Management and Analysis Centre which is jointly administered by the Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard.
- IFC-IOR is established with the vision of strengthening maritime security in the region and beyond, by building a common coherent maritime situation picture and acting as a maritime information hub for the region.

PCS 1x system
 Indian Ports Association (IPA) recently launched the Port Community System ‘PCS1x’. It is a cloud based new generation technology, with user-friendly interface. The platform offers value added services.
A unique feature of ‘PCS1x’ is that it can latch on to third party software which provides services to the maritime industry thereby enabling the stakeholders to access wide network of services.

Genesis

The Indian Ocean Region is vital to world trade and economic prosperity of many nations as **more than 75% of the world’s maritime trade and 50%** of global oil consumption passes through the IOR. However, maritime terrorism, piracy, human and contraband trafficking, illegal and unregulated fishing, arms running and poaching pose myriad challenges to maritime safety and security in the region. Response to these challenges requires enhanced situational awareness of the maritime activities in the region so as to enable security agencies function effectively.

PEPPER IT WITH Digital India, Make in India

Hand-in-Hand Military Exercise

- India and China resumed their annual Hand-in-Hand joint exercise. The exercise was last held in 2016 (Pune) and it was suspended in 2017 amid heightened tensions between the two following the disengagement of a standoff between their armed forces on the Doklam plateau.
- This year's iteration of the Hand-in-Hand** exercise was the 7th in the series and convened in China. The exercise involved tactical level operations in an International Counter Insurgency/ Counter Terrorist environment under UN mandate.
- The aim of the exercise is to build and promote close relations between armies of both the countries and to enhance ability of joint exercise commander to take military contingents of both nations under command.
- The exercise, wherein Indian and Chinese troops simulate various counter-terrorism scenarios - is alternatively held in China and India. It started in 2007 as a confidence-building measure between the two Asian giants and their armies.

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PEPPER IT WITH
 People Liberation Army, Doklam,
 Line of Actual Control, Border
 Personnel Meeting

Ex-AVIAINDRA

- It is a service-specific exercise between Indian Air Force and Russian Federation Aerospace Force (RFSAF) & was held at Air Force Station Jodhpur.
- The inaugural IAF-RFSAF Ex AVIAINDRA was conducted in 2014. AVIAINDRA-2018 is the second in a series of bilateral joint exercises between IAF and RFSAF.
- Planned in two phases, the exercise is unique wherein the foreign participant does not bring its air assets. In the first phase in Russia, which was held in September-18, the IAF pilots flew alongside their Russian counterparts in RFSAF aircraft.
- The exercise is a testimony of the Indo-Russian Military relationship and would enhance mutual cooperation and understanding between IAF and RFSAF.

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Clean Sea 2018: Indian Coast Guard conducted the Regional Level Marine Oil Pollution Response Exercise titled 'Clean Sea - 2018' at sea off Port Blair.

Adopt a Heritage Project

Why in News?

While over 93 monuments' adoption falling under green, blue and orange categories depending on footfall and visibility was put up by the Ministry of Tourism, 10 are the ones that have been finalised after completing the last step of adoption (signing the MoU) under the **central government's Adopt a Heritage Project**.

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About the Project

- Adopt a Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan is a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), and State/UTs Governments. The Project aims to develop synergy among all partners to effectively promote responsible tourism.
- It was launched in 2017 on World

Heritage park in Elum valley
 Pakistan is planning to construct a heritage park in Elum Valley (Khyber Pakthunkhwa province) to promote religious tourism as the site carries a historical significance to both the Hindus and Buddhists. According to Hindu belief, Lord Ram spent time meditating there during his 14 years of exile, while Buddhists believe it to be the site where a previous incarnation of Lord Buddha gave up his life.

Tourism Day. Under it, the government invites entities, including public sector companies, private sector firms as well as individuals, to develop selected monuments and heritage and tourist sites across India.

- The sites/monument are selected on the basis of tourist footfall and visibility and can be adopted by private and public sector companies and individuals — known as Monument Mitras — for an initial period of five years. The Monument Mitras, in turn, will get limited visibility on the site premises and on the Incredible India website.
- **The Monument Mitras are selected by the ‘oversight and vision committee,’** co-chaired by the Tourism Secretary and the Culture Secretary, on the basis of the bidder’s ‘vision’ for development of all amenities at the heritage site. There is no financial bid involved.
- It is essentially a non-revenue generating project. It is part of responsible tourism where the **‘Monument Mitra’ essentially spends his CSR funds** for upkeep and maintenance etc and gets limited visibility.
- The project primarily focusses on providing basic amenities that includes cleanliness, public conveniences, drinking water, ease of access for differently abled and senior citizens, standardized signage, illumination and advanced amenities that will result in more tourist footfalls, both domestic and foreign.

PEPPER IT WITH
Chand Baoli, Pangong so,
Fathepur Sikri, Red Fort,
Nandi Hills Fort, World
Tourism Day

Background

This is not the first time the government has tried to rope in the corporate sector to help maintain tourist sites and monuments. In 2011 National Culture Fund was formed under which 34 projects have been completed through public-private partnerships.

Another similar scheme ‘Campaign Clean India,’ in which the government had identified 120 monuments/destinations. Under this scheme, the India Tourism Development Corporation had adopted Qutab Minar as a pilot project in 2012, while ONGC adopted six monuments as part of its CSR.

Mayurbhanj Chhau

- Chhau dance is an Indian tribal martial dance which is popular in Seraikella (Bihar), Purulia (West Bengal) and Mayurbhanj (Orissa). Based on the place of their origin and development, the three dance styles are called Seraikella Chhau, Mayurbhanj Chhau and Purulia Chhau.
- The two styles of Saraikela and Purulia use masks, **but Mayurbhanj doesn’t**. So, it showcases a distinctive appeal with wide range of movements and dynamic choreography.
- Technically Mayurbhanj is richer than the other two styles. It is also called paika nrutya. The word paika is derived from the Sanskrit word padatika meaning the infantry - hence the name of the dance is paika (battle) nrutya (dance).
- The primary aim of this dance form is to develop physical strength, excitement and courage in the dancing warriors - the presiding deity of Mayurbhanj Chhau is Lord Bhairab (Bhairav).
- Mayurbhanj Chhau dance form has a long history. Originally a tribal dance, which originated from the forests of Mayurbhanj in the 18th century, it got the status of a martial art form in the 19th century.
- Slowly & steadily Mayurbhanj Chhau left its martial character and mellowed. Under the Royal Patronage it received proper attention & direction and showed a bright future and

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India’s first music museum
It will be set up with help from the Central Government in Thiruvaiyaru, Tamilnadu, the birth place of Saint Tyagaraja, one of the Trinity of Carnatic music (3 jewels of Carnatic music). The other two of the Trinity are Muthuswami Dikshitar and Syama Sastri.

PEPPER IT WITH
Tyagaraja Aaradhana Music Festiva,
Carnatic Music, Kritis

utmost perfection as a dance of excellent style in the field of eastern art and culture of India.

- Mayurbhanj Chhau- has highly evolved techniques of its own for which it differentiates itself from other forms of dance. These techniques of Mayurbhanj Chhau are based on various body movements.
- Project Chhauni, launched in 2016 is an Initiative of District Administration Mayurbhanj to Revive the lost glory of Mayurbhanj Chhau. It was initiated with an idea of facilitating the artistes of Mayurbhanj chhau with an apt scope of training and subsequent performance leading to a respectable livelihood.

Kamsale Dance

- Kamsale, a cymbal-like instrument, is played by dancers as an offering to Lord Mahadeshwara. It is a folk-dance form and the instrument used in the dance is also called kamsale. This is the main instrument used in the Kamsale dance.
- This form is popular mainly in the Kannada-speaking areas of Mysuru, Mandya, Kollegal, Chamarajanagara, Nanjangudu and outskirts of Bengaluru. This form incorporates both the elements of dance and martial arts.
- An 11th century percussion instrument, Kamsale belongs to the category of idiophones. It is referred to as Batlu and Kaitala in ancient texts such as the Basava Purana by Bheema Kavi, Chennabasava Purana by Virupakshapandita, Girija Kalyana by Harihara and Shabdamanidarpana by Keshiraja.
- Kamsale, also known as Beesu Kamsale is performed by the Haalu Kuruba / Kuruba Gowda community, who are devotees of Lord Male Mahadeshwara. It is a group dance performed by men-folk and the songs are sung in Kannada.
- Derived from the Sanskrit word 'Kamsya tala' meaning bronze cymbals, Kamsale resembling the cymbals, is played in pairs and usually made of bronze and, occasionally, in brass. The pairs are not identical like the jalra.

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PEPPER IT WITH
Somana Kunita, Jaggahalige
Kunita, Karadimajal, Krishna
Parijatha, Yakshagana

Hornbill festival

- The Hornbill Festival takes place between the 1st December, which happens to be the Nagaland Formation Day, till the 10th of December (Originally till 7th Dec), annually. The aim of the festival is to revive and protect the rich culture of Nagaland and display its extravaganza and traditions.
- Organized by the State Tourism and Art & Culture Departments of Nagaland, the festival showcases a mélange of cultural displays under one roof at a model village built at Kisama, a western Angami location situated 12 kms away from Kohima, the capital of Nagaland.
- Kisama falls on the historically famed Kohima-Imphal Road, once the theatre of the fiercest of battles fought between the defending British forces and an advancing Japanese army during World War II.
- The tribes of Nagaland celebrate their festivals with appreciation and fervor. More than 60% of the population of Nagaland depends on agriculture and therefore most of their festivals revolve around agriculture. They consider their festivals sacred and so participation in these festivals is essential.
- The Festival is named after the Indian Hornbill, the large and colourful forest bird **which is displayed in folklore in most of the state's tribes.**

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PEPPER IT WITH
Bihu Festival, Assam, Ambubachi
Mela, Ziro Festival of Music, Wangala
Festival, Nongkrem Dance Festival

- The Festival provides a colourful mixture of dances, performances, crafts, parades, games, sports, food fairs and religious ceremonies. The festival both exposes the culture and tradition of tribal peoples and reinforces Nagaland’s identity as a unique state in India’s federal union.

Dwijing Festival

- With the target of promoting River Tourism in the Rural Areas of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) and Assam, the festival was initiated in the year 2016-17 under the moniker of “AIE RIVER **WINTER FESTIVAL” on the bank of river Aie in the Chirang** district of BTC.
- Its name was changed in 2017-18 to “**DWIJING” meaning “RIVER BANK”** and it became the annual River Festival of the region. The 12-day long festival starts in the last week of December and ends in the first week of January.
- The river Aie, meaning 'Mother', originates from the Himalayas of Bhutan flowing through Chirang and Bongaigaon districts before meeting the river Brahmaputra.

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Karma Kagyu School

Why in News?

Ogyen Trinley Dorje took the citizenship of Commonwealth of Dominica without informing India. He is the 17th Karmapa Lama. The Dalai Lama as well as the Chinese government had, in 1992, recognised Ogyen Trinley Dorje as the rightful heir to the position, but India has not accepted that.

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Ogyen Trinley Dorje escaped from Tibet in 2000 as a 14-year old. His rival Trinley Taye Dorje had allegedly escaped to India from Tibet some years before but was never officially recognised in Dharamshala as the Karmapa.

About Karma Kagyu Lineage

- The Karma Kagyu lineage is one of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism. A lineage of direct oral transmission, it especially treasures meditation and, through interaction with a qualified teacher, can bring about the full and direct experience of the nature of mind.
- The Karma Kagyu methods were taught by the historical Buddha Shakyamuni to his closest students. These methods were later passed on through famous Indian meditation masters such as Padmasambhava, Tilopa, Naropa, Maitripa, and the great Tibetan yogis Marpa and Milarepa.
- In the 12th century, the monk Gampopa gave the teachings to the 1st Karmapa, whose successive conscious rebirths have kept the teachings alive and powerful to the present day.

PEPPER IT WITH
4 noble truth, eightfold path, monasteries, shrines

Paika Rebellion

Why in News?

Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi recently released commemorative stamp and coin on Paika Rebellion.

Department of Posts has been paying a tribute to eminent personalities who have made a significant contribution to public life especially freedom fighters.

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About Paika Rebellion

- The Paika Bidroha (Paika Rebellion) of 1817 in Odisha briefly shook the foundations of British rule in the eastern part of India. Paikas were essentially the peasant militias

of the Gajapati rulers of Odisha who rendered military service to the king during times of war while taking up cultivation during times of peace.

- They unfurled the banner of rebellion against the British under the leadership of Baxi Jagandhu Bidyadhara as early as 1817 to throw off the British yoke.
- Rulers of Khurda were traditionally the custodians of Jagannath Temple and ruled as the deputy of lord Jagannath on earth. They symbolised the political and cultural freedom of the people of Odisha.
- It took place when the British East India company wrested the rent-free land that had been given to the Paiks for their military service to the Kingdom of Khurda.
- The British established their sway over Bengal Province in 1803. The Gajapati King of Odisha Mukunda Deva-II was a minor then and initial resistance by Jai Rajguru, the custodian of Mukunda Deva-II, was put down brutally.
- In 1817, it was the Paikas under Baxi Jagabandhu, the hereditary chief of the militia army of the Gajapati King, who rose in rebellion, taking support of tribals and other sections of society. Baxi Jagabandhu was finally arrested in 1825 and died in captivity in 1829.
- The British were initially taken aback and then tried to regain lost ground but faced stiff resistance from the rebelling Paikas. Many a battle ensued with some victories to the rebels, but the British finally managed to defeat them within three months.

Buddhist Site Museum at Lalitgiri, Odisha

- ❖ Prime Minister recently inaugurated a museum in Lalitgiri, Odisha through video conference. It is one of the earliest Buddhist settlements in Odisha.
- ❖ Excavations at Lalitgiri have yielded ancient seals and inscriptions, which has been converted into a museum. In addition, the remains of four monasteries, showing cultural continuity from the post-Mauryan period till the 13th century CE have also been found.
- ❖ Lalitgiri, Ratnagiri and Udayagiri, the 3 famous Buddhist centres are together known as Diamond Triangle. Tantric Buddhism was practised at this site.

A Commemorative Postage Stamp on Rajkumar Shukla was released recently. He made a seminal contribution in the launch of the Champaran Satyagraha in 1917 by Mahatma Gandhi by drawing the attention of Gandhiji to the plight of peasants suffering under an oppressive system (3 Kathiya system) established by European indigo planters in Champaran, Bihar.

Lingayat and Veerashaiva

On News

The union government recently told the Karnataka High Court that it has rejected the recommendation of the state government to grant religious minority status to Lingayat and Veerashaiva communities.

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Lingayats

1. Lingayats are followers of Basavanna (12th century social reformer-philosopher-poet) and the sharanas, whose philosophy is expressed in thousands of vachanas. In several vachanas, the sharanas have rejected the Vedas, shastras, smritis and the Upanishads.
2. They also rejected the system of caste based on the varnashrama, rebuffed faith in karma based.
3. They scorned temple and idol worship. They rejected the phallic linga symbol of Shiva and opted for ishta linga, which represents inner conscience.

4. Basavanna and all sharanas rejected everything about the Hindu religion and rebelled against it. Basavanna had rejected all such Brahmanical notions.

Veerashaivas

1. Veerashaivas are the followers of the five peethas (religious centres), called pancha peethas. These peethas are set up on similar lines to the four peethas set up by Adi Shankara.
2. The Veerashaiva faith is identical to the Brahmanical belief that they are born from the ears of Brahma.
3. They believe that they are born straight out of the *Shivalingam* – the phallic symbol worshipped by Shaivas.
4. They claim *Siddhantha Shikhamani* said as their holy book.

Practice	Veerashaiva	Lingayat
The founder	Panchacharyas	Basavanna
Religious script	Vedas, Agama, <i>Siddhanta Shikhamani</i>	Vachana literature
Caste and gender equality	No equality. It puts Aradhyas at the top of the ladder, while there is no gender equality	Complete equality of men and women in religious, political and social practices
Worship	The statue of Shiva, and Shiva as envisaged in the Vedas	Shiva (ishta linga) as a formless
Temples and priests	Has a system of temples and priests	Bans temple worship. Worships only ishta linga

Who is Basavanna?

- Basavanna was a 12th-century social reformer
- The revolution that Basavanna led came years after the Buddha
- It was Basavanna and his contemporary Sharanas who launched a very strong spiritual, social and religious rebellion against Brahminical hegemony
- Basavanna had declared that "work is worship"
- He gave women equal status in his movement through the vachanas (verses)
- In order to take the social movement closer to the people, Basavanna and all the other Sharanas voiced their concerns in simple Kannada vachanas so that even lay people could comprehend them.

PEPPER IT WITH
Article 30, Vachana
Movement

Miscellaneous

Admiral's Cup Sailing Regatta

- The Indian Navy instituted the '**Admiral's Cup Regatta**' as a '**Fleet Race**' in a single crew Olympic class '**Laser Radial**' sail boat in 2010. It is hosted annually by Indian Naval Academy.
- 9th edition of the admiral cup, held at Ezhimala was won by Team Italy. A total of 31 teams participated with India being represented by 2 teams (INA and National Defence Academy).
- The participating teams compete in 16 races spread over four days with each country fielding by two boats. The edition saw the highest number of teams in a military event games.

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PEPPER IT WITH
Military World Games,
Khelo India Youth Games

National Integration tour

It is educational and motivational tours for youth of Jammu & Kashmir and North Eastern States, with an aim to provide an insight into the rich heritage of the country as well as various developmental and

industry initiatives that are underway. The initiative exposes them to various career options and enable them to interact with renowned personalities.

Concept Clearing Assignment

1. The e-commerce has transformed the way business is done in India. India's internet economy is expected to double from US\$125 billion in 2017 to US\$ 250 billion by 2020, majorly backed by ecommerce. Discuss the draft e-commerce policy of India.
2. Reserve Bank of India recently said that Non-bank prepaid payment instruments issuers are permitted to participate as members/associate members of authorised card networks. Does this mean mobile wallets will be on par with payment banks. Discuss.
3. The Rajasthan government abolished the condition of a minimum educational qualification contest local body elections. It is only education which gives a human being the power to discriminate between right and wrong, good and bad. Therefore, prescription of an educational qualification is not irrelevant for better administration. Justify
4. Govt of India has taken a number of initiatives for socio economic development of tribals. Discuss the importance of Minor Forest Produce and its potential to create employment, reducing poverty and increasing empowerment of women.
5. Briefly discuss Union, State and Concurrent List. Critically analyse the advantages of Residuary Powers of Parliament.
6. Bring out the key highlight of Freight Village Initiative. How it will impact the NW-1 corridor and help boost the economy of India?
7. Recently a panel was set by Reserve Bank of India for economic capital framework under the chairmanship of Bimal Jalan. Discuss the arrangements for sharing of surplus between the Reserve Bank of India and the government. Also throw light on the need for reviewing the existing arrangements.
8. What steps should be taken to create a mass movement of development in which every Indian recognises her role. How can growth become inclusive, sustained, clean, institutionalised and formalised? Discuss.
9. **It is clear that the collaboration of partner organizations with SHGs, women's groups, trained citizen leaders and the people themselves, as part of the strategy of design and implementation, will help women assert their Rights in political scenario in effective and efficient way. Highlight the factors of deterrence for political participation of women. Also suggest interventions to combat this situation in India.**
10. Discuss the challenges being faced by Micro Small and Medium Enterprises sector in foreign market. Suggest measures to create a sustainable ecosystem for the sector.
11. Discuss the nine point agenda presented by India in the G20 summit. Also, critically analyse the economic offenders Act which was passed by the parliament and got the assent of president in 2018.
12. Many banks under the Prompt Corrective Action Framework are resorting to investments in government bonds as they are facing lending curbs. Though banking system faces liquidity crunch, banks under lending restrictions see deposits grow. Discuss the probable outcomes of the PCA norms and suggest measures.
13. Discuss Angel Tax provisions. Do you think the developing countries like India need to give more focus on angel investors as being done by most of the developed nations and do away with angel tax provisions?
14. A farm loan waiver was among the first steps taken by the three new governments in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, and has understandably set off a debate about its usefulness. Since 2014, there have been similar moves in many States run by various parties. Do you think farm loan waiver is the real solution of farmers debt and suicide? Discuss.

15. Highlight the challenges which are need to be addressed in National Child Policy 2013 by draft National Child protection Policy. Enumerate the legislation provided in Indian Constitution for the safeguard of Child rights.

P.T Oriented Questions

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|--|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------|-------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|--|
| <p>1. Match the following articles with respect to special provision of states</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">1. Article 371 B</td> <td style="width: 30%;">State of Nagaland</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Article 371 E</td> <td>Andhra Pradesh</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Article 371 H</td> <td>Arunachal Pradesh</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. Article 371J</td> <td>Manipur</td> </tr> </table> <p>Code:
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 3 and 4 only
(d) 1 and 4</p> <p>2. Diabetes is a chronic disease in which the body either cannot produce insulin or cannot properly use the insulin it produces. Consider the following statements and choose the correct one/ones</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Insulin is a hormone that controls the amount of sugar or glucose in the blood 2. Gestational diabetes is a temporary condition that occurs during menstrual cycle of women 3. Type 1 diabetes is believed to be an auto immune condition <p>Code:
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) All of the above</p> <p>3. India International cherry blossom festival is held in</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">(a) Manipur</td> <td style="width: 50%;">(b) Nagaland</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(c) Meghalaya</td> <td>(d) Tripura</td> </tr> </table> <p>4. Consider the following statements about World Customs Organisation and choose the correct one/ones</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is an independent inter-governmental body 2. India is regional head of the Asia Pacific region of World Customs Organisation 3. There are six regions of the organisation <p>Code:
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) All of the above</p> | 1. Article 371 B | State of Nagaland | 2. Article 371 E | Andhra Pradesh | 3. Article 371 H | Arunachal Pradesh | 4. Article 371J | Manipur | (a) Manipur | (b) Nagaland | (c) Meghalaya | (d) Tripura | <p>5. Which among the following is INCORRECT</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Meghalaya is the only state which share's its border with only one state (b) UP shares its border with maximum number of states (c) 4 states in India share its boundary with 3 countries (d) None of the above <p>6. Consider the following statements about blue bond and choose the correct one/one</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It was launched by Seychelles 2. It is a financial instrument used to finance ocean and marine-based projects that have positive economic, environmental and climate benefits <p>Code:
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) None of the above</p> <p>7. Consider the following statements above Section 7 of RBI Act which was recently in news and choose the correct one/ones</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is a two step process involving consultation and intrusion 2. It gives general superintendence and direction of the affairs and business of the Bank to a Central Board of Directors 3. Giving control to Board of Directors effectively gives control to the Central Government <p>Code:
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) All of the above</p> <p>8. Consider the following statements about Global Tiger Initiative (GTI) which was launched in 2008 and choose the correct one/ones</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. World Bank and Global Environment Facility are among the founding members of initiative 2. The initiative is led only by the tiger range countries 3. Global Tiger Recovery Programme was launched by GTI <p>Code:</p> |
| 1. Article 371 B | State of Nagaland | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Article 371 E | Andhra Pradesh | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Article 371 H | Arunachal Pradesh | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Article 371J | Manipur | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (a) Manipur | (b) Nagaland | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (c) Meghalaya | (d) Tripura | | | | | | | | | | | | |

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) All of the above
9. Consider the following statements about Trojan asteroids
1. They share their orbit with a planet
2. Earth is the only planet without a Trojan asteroid
Which among the following is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
10. Which among the following are correct about cyclones
1. They occur mainly in the middle and high altitude belt of both the hemispheres
2. They have low atmospheric pressure
3. They move in anti-clockwise direction in the to the south
Which among the following are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) All of the above
11. Which among the following is correct about Talano dialogue
(a) The deals with the issues of illegal migrants
(b) It is a process designed to help countries implement their Nationally Determined Contributions
(c) It aims to promote consensus building and democratic involvement among the entrepreneurs
(d) It is a global dialogue forum on employment of child
12. Consider the following statements of East Asia Summit and choose the correct one
1. India is part of EAS since its inception in 2005
2. The summit has some priority areas of regional cooperation within the framework
3. All the members of ASEAN are its members
4. US, Russia, Mexico and Australia are also its members
Code:
(a) 1, 2 and 4 only
(b) 2,3 and 4 only
(c) 1,2 and 3 only
(d) All of the above
13. Global Innovation Index is published by
(a) World Economic Forum
(b) Cornell University
(c) World Intellectual Property Organisation
(d) Both (B) and (C)
14. Consider the following statements about private members bills
1. Its introduction in the house requires 1 month notice
2. It is introduced by any member of parliament excluding the members of the ruling party
Which among the following is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
15. Consider the following statements about Film and Television Institute of India and choose the correct one/one
1. It is a statutory and Autonomous body
2. It provides training for Acting, Direction and Production
Code:
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
16. Consider the following statements about India trade Promotion Organisation
1. It provides a broad spectrum of services to trade and industry and acts as a catalyst for growth of **India's trade**
2. It supports and assists small and medium enterprises to access markets
3. Its objective is to promote domestic and external trade of India
Code:
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) All of the above
17. Which of the following countries touches Red Sea
1. Sudan
2. Ethiopia
3. Djibouti
4. Eritrea
Code:
(a) 1,2 and 4 (b) 1,3 and 4
(c) 2 and 3 (d) 3 and 4

18. Consider the following about Namdapha Flying Squirrel and choose the correct one/s
1. It is endemic to Namdapha Tiger Reserve
 2. **It is one of 25 “most wanted lost” species of Global Wildlife Conservation’s “Search for Lost Species” initiative**
- Code:
 (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
 (c) 1 and 2 (d) None
19. Which among the following is the aim of Mission Rakshan Gyan Shakti
- (a) To make a defence system of India which will be totally indigenous
 - (b) To provide security to the coastal areas
 - (c) To promote self-reliance in Intellectual Property Rights in defence
 - (d) To give a boost to defence production
20. Right to Privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of Right to Life and Personal Liberty. Which of the following in the Constitution of India correctly and appropriately and appropriately imply the above statement? (UPSC-2018)
- (a) Article 14 and the provisions under the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution
 - (b) Article 17 and the Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV
 - (c) Article 21 and the freedoms guaranteed in Part III
 - (d) Article 24 and the provisions under the 44th Amendment to the Constitution
21. Which of the following led to the introduction of English Education in India? (UPSC-2018)
1. Charter Act of 1813
 2. General Committee of Public Instruction, 1823
 3. Orientalist and Anglicist Controversy
- Select the correct answer using the code given below:
 (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 only
 (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3
22. The Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE), a UN mechanism to assist countries transition towards greener and more inclusive economies, emerged at (UPSC-2018)
- (a) The Earth Summit on Sustainable Development 2002, Johannesburg
 - (b) The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development 2012, Rio de Janeiro
 - (c) The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 2015, Paris
 - (d) The World Sustainable Development Summit 2016, New Delhi
23. **With reference to the ‘Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture (GACSA);** which of the following statements is/are correct? (UPSC-2018)
1. GACSA is an outcome of the Climate Summit held in Paris in 2015.
 2. Membership of GACSA does not create any binding obligations.
 3. India was instrumental in the creation of GACSA.
- Select the correct answer using the code given below:
 (a) 1 and 3 only (b) 2 only
 (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3
24. **With reference to India’s satellite launch vehicles,** consider the following statements:
1. PSLV is launch the satellites useful for Earth resources monitoring whereas GSLVs are designed mainly to launch communication satellites.
 2. Satellites launched by PSLV appear to remain permanently fixed in the same position in the sky, as viewed from a particular location on Earth.
 3. GSLV Mk III is a four-staged launch vehicle with the first and third stages using solid rocket motors; and the second and fourth stages using liquid rocket engines.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 (a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3
 (c) 1 and 2 (d) 3 only
25. With reference to Indian history, who among the following is a future Buddha, yet to come to save the world? (UPSC-2018)
- (a) Avalokiteshvara
 - (b) Lokeshvara
 - (c) Maitreya
 - (d) Padmapani
26. Consider the following statements about Atmosphere & Climate Research-Modelling Observing

- Systems & Services (ACROSS) scheme
1. The scheme provides improved weather, climate and ocean forecast and services
 2. It is implemented by Ministry of Earth Sciences
- Code:
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
27. Consider the following statements about Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)
1. It increases maritime cooperation among the littoral states and Indian ocean region
 2. It includes more than 50 nations, lies within the Indian Ocean Region
- Code:
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
28. Strategic petroleum reserves (SPR) program envisions creation of additional crude oil reserves facilities in Private Public Partnership (PPP) mode. Which among the following are centres of SPR
1. Vishakhapatnam
 2. Mangalore
 3. Padur
- Code:
- (a) 1 and 2 only
 - (b) 2 and 3 only
 - (c) 1 and 3 only
 - (d) All of the above
29. Samudra Shakti is a bilateral military exercise between
- (a) India and Myanmar
 - (b) India and Indonesia
 - (c) India and Malaysia
 - (d) India and Seychelles
30. Consider the following statements about Global Digital Content Market and choose the correct one/ones
1. The conference was hosted by Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion in New Delhi
 2. It is organised by International Organisation for Intellectual Property Rights
- Code:
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
31. The term Domestic Content Requirement which has regularly been in news is related to
- (a) Domestic requirement in defence procurement
 - (b) Decreasing the green house gas emission in a country
 - (c) **India's** Solar Mission for renewable energy
 - (d) Green Climate Fund, as its funding is done this pattern