



CURRENT CONNECT JANUARY - 18

North Delhi	Central Delhi	Jaipur	Bhopal	Patna	Indore
2521, Hudson Line, Vijay Nagar, Near GTB Nagar Metro Station, Delhi 110009. Tel: 9717380832	1/1-A, 2nd Floor, Old Rajender Ngr. Market, Near Karol Bagh Metro Stn, Delhi - 110060. Tel: 9811293743	403-404, Apex Tower, Lal Kothi, Tonk Road Jaipur - 302015. Tel: 8290800441	43, R.R. Arcade, 2nd Floor, Zone II M.P.Nagar, Bhopal-462011. Tel: 7509975361	Above Toyota Showroom, Exhibition Road, Patna-800001. Tel: 9386337412	232-233, 2nd Floor ,Veda Building, Bhawar Kua Square, Indore - 452001. Tel: 9893772941

For any Query regarding Current Connect Pls. e-mail us at: cc@ksgindia.com

S.N.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
GS- I	Culture-Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.	Indian history significant events, personalities, issues and the Freedom Struggle	Post independence issues, National boundary and disputes	Indian society features, issues, globalization and diversity	Women - issues and developments	Urbanization - problems and remedies	Distribution of industries and resources - India and world	Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc	Culture- Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.		
GS- II	Indian constitution- Amendments, acts and bills.	Legislative, executive and judicial processes.	Constitutional, non-constitutional, judicial, quasi judicial, administrative and other types of bodies.	Federal structure and local bodies. Their powers and functions.	Government policies and various governance issues like transparency, accountability and - governance	Committees and schemes.	Non- government issues, self-help groups and role of civil society	Vulnerable sections of our society and social sector issues and initiatives.	International Relation-India and other countries, various Indian and international agreements, effects of other countries on India and international institutions.		
GS- III	Various measures to boost Indian economy- planning, policies, management.	Government budgeting and issues related to budget.	Agriculture, animal husbandry and transport	Food security- measures to boost food security and food processing. Issues related to land- land reforms	Industries and infrastructure 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 ant 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/e- Governance	Ethics in international issues	Personalities and their teachings	Other import ant topics			
Mis.											

INDEX

1.	Telecom Ombudsman	5
2.	PIO and OCI cards	6
3.	National Register of Citizens (NRC)	7
4.	Brahmaputra Board	8
5.	NARI & e-Samvad	10
6.	Jangalmahal Utsav	10
7.	Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojna (PMSSY)	11
8.	All India Whips' Conference	11
9.	High Risk Pregnancy portal	12
10.	Should we do away with Capital Punishment?	13
11.	UIDAI 2-tier security for AADHAAR data	14
12.	SFOORTI Application	16
13.	Model Code of Conduct	17
14.	National Voters' Day	18
15.	Disqualification of MLAs	18
16.	Mahadayi row	19
17.	Child Nutrition and Development Nodal Agency Bill, 2017	20
18.	The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017	21
19.	The Companies (Amendment) Act, 2017	22
20.	Bhima Koregaon - Boiling socio-political issue	23
21.	Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN)	24
22.	Website Accessibility Project	25
23.	Chief Minister-gi Hakshelgi Tengbang (CMHT)	27
24.	Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)	27
25.	Scheme for Adolescent Girls - Rapid Reporting System (SAG-RRS)	28
26.	Stree Swabhiman Initiative	29
27.	Indo-Myanmar agreement on land border crossing	30
28.	Spat over Hindi as official language at UN	30
29.	US puts Pakistan on Special Watch List	31
30.	Countries of Particular Concern	32
31.	Raisina Dialogue 2018	32
32.	India joins Australia Group	33
33.	Delhi Declaration	33
34.	AAI, Lao PDR sign civil aviation cooperation agreement	34
35.	China develops underwater surveillance networks in Indian Ocean, SCS	34
36.	UAE and Saudi Arabia end Tax-Free Living	35
37.	China starts collecting environment tax	36
38.	Species we lost in 2017 and the ones that managed to hold on	36
39.	Zojila Pass tunnel project	37
40.	Bomb Cyclone	38
41.	Plastic microbeads ban in UK	38
42.	Chiru goat	39
43.	Sikkim allows people to forge fraternal ties with trees	39
44.	Environmental Performance Index	40
45.	Himalayan Research Fellowships scheme	41
46.	Centre to declare 2018 as 'national year of millets'	41
47.	Bharat Bio typhoid shot	42
48.	Latte Levy	42
49.	China builds world's biggest air purifier	42
50.	Bio-toilet project	43
51.	Mankidia denied habitat in Similipal	43
52.	Star-Rating for Garbage Free Cities	44
53.	India registers significant decline in under five child mortality rates	45
54.	IWDRI-2018	46

55.	NASA to launch two missions to explore nearest space	47
56.	Pratyush-fastest supercomputer of India	47
57.	India misses Kala Azar elimination deadline	48
58.	ISRO launches 100th satellite	48
59.	IPrism	49
60.	iCreate	49
61.	New programmes of DST and SERB for young scientists and researchers	50
62.	Parker Solar Probe	51
63.	Unknown microbe identified in space	51
64.	Chemical ban has helped closing up of ozone layer hole	52
65.	Flamingo festival	52
66.	SpaceX launches secretive Zuma mission	52
67.	Largest volcanic eruption in the ocean	52
68.	First India-designed vaccine passes WHO test	53
69.	Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP)	53
70.	About the Affordable Medicines and Reliable Implants for Treatment (AMRIT)	54
71.	India commissions high performance computer system Mihir	55
72.	Growth of Indian Economy	55
73.	Electoral Bond	56
74.	CABE	57
75.	LEADS Index	58
76.	Global Manufacturing Index (WEF)	59
77.	Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF)	60
78.	International Dam Safety Conference	61
79.	Global talent competitiveness index	62
80.	Economic Survey	62
81.	NABARD (Amendment) Bill, 2017	64
82.	Global Forum for Food and Agriculture	65
83.	NKN and LEARN	66
84.	The Inclusive Development Index 2018	67
85.	Medaram's Jatara	68
86.	Chhau Dance	68
87.	Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre	69
88.	Maharashtra's public cloud policy	70
89.	Make II Procedure	72
90.	Agni-V Ballistic Missile	72
91.	Budapest Convention on Cyber Security	73
92.	Global Centre For Cybersecurity	74
93.	Vajra Prahar	74
94.	VINBAX-2017	75
95.	India's first floating market	75
96.	INTACH to document Heritage Sites along Mahanadi river	75
97.	Arunachal declared open defecation-free State	76
98.	Mewa Singh's Night frog	76
99.	India's second largest rooftop solar plant	76
100.	Iceland- illegal to pay Men more than Women	76
101.	Matunga station enters Limca Book for all-woman staff	77
102.	Nepal ends India's monopoly on internet access with new Chinese link	77
103.	First Zonal Railway to procure "Drone" cameras in Indian Railways	77
104.	India moves to stub out tobacco industry rights	78
105.	Concept Clearing Assignment	78
106.	PT- Oriented Questions	80

Telecom Ombudsman

In News

A Parliamentary panel has expressed concern over delay in setting up of an ombudsman to deal with consumer grievances in the telecom sector despite the regulator TRAI recommending it twice.

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

Need for Ombudsman

Asserting that existing grievance redressal mechanism for telecom is "grossly inadequate", the **Standing Committee on IT** has highlighted that "urgent steps" should be taken to amend the Consumer Protection Act in order to include telecom consumer complaints and financial claims of customers under its ambit. The data prepared by TRAI indicates that India’s mobile phone users are facing huge difficulties in ensuring the quality of their services. “There should be an Office of Telecom Ombudsman to solve consumer complaints,” as recommended by TRAI.

Recommendation of TRAI

The ombudsman can be established under rules framed by the Central Government, similar to the institution of the insurance ombudsman under the **Redress of Public Grievances Rules, 1998 (RPG Rules)**. These Rules were framed by the Central Government the Insurance Act, 1938. Section 35(1) of the TRAI Act contains a similar provision, which states that the Central Government may, by notification, make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act.

Alternatively, the Government can choose to create the ombudsman office through a legislation to be passed by the Parliament.

There should be a **three-stage grievance redressal mechanism** for telecom sector

1. Resolution by Telecom Service Providers (TSPs)
2. Resolution by Consumer Grievance Redressal Forum [CGRF]
3. Determination by Telecom Ombudsman

PEPPER IT WITH

TRAI, TCCMS, Consumer Protection Act, Telecommunication Interconnection Regulations, 2018

Mechanism

1. The telecom consumer should in the first instance approach the complaint center of the TSP to seek a solution. It will be the duty of the TSP to look into the request and address the consumer’s concerns within the time frames stipulated by the Authority.
2. In case the TSP fails to resolve the complaint in a manner that is satisfactory to the consumer within the prescribed time lines laid down by TRAI, the customer will have the option to seek further redress through an independent mechanism. This will consist of a process of a resolution based on fact 20 finding by CGRF, followed by, if necessitated, determination by the telecom ombudsman.
3. The decision of the Ombudsman will be final and binding on the parties. In order to function as an effective Body, Authority also recommends that, the ombudsman should have the power to levy penalties on the TSPs.

Other highlights

- CGRFs are proposed at LSA/State level by leveraging existing field formations of DoT like PG Cells, TERM Cells etc. that already has a reasonable presence across the country. The CGRF will be primarily responsible for settling the facts, facilitating mediation and will also offer a solution if the parties themselves cannot arrive at a settlement through TSPs.

- The ombudsman will have offices at national levels and sub-national levels covering each State. It should be technology-driven solution that can provide redress remotely to consumers using their phones, Internet etc.
- TSPs will be required to maintain video calling facilities at their local offices, which can be used by the consumer to interact with the CGRF or Ombudsman’s office, in case it is required

Benefits

1. The independent redressal system “aim to provide the consumers with a faster, low cost/cost-free and fair mechanism to settle their complaints”.
2. It will address the deteriorating redressal system and inducing transparency and put a check on ‘standardized response’ without looking into the specifics of complaints.
3. It will make the process simple and efficient than current legality prolonged mechanism where consumers spend lots of money as legal fee and are not redressed timely.
4. A more involved role by ombudsman will grant the necessary administrative structure to effectively handle public grievances for a sector like telecom increasing the quality of services.

PIO and OCI cards

In News

The scheme of converting the Person of Indian Origin (PIO) cards to OCI cards free of cost has been put to an end. However, the change of PIO cards to OCI cards would continue on payment of fees.

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

Terminology

Non-Resident Indians (NRI): As per the FEMA definition an Indian Citizen who stays abroad for (a) employment/ carrying on business or (b) vacation outside India or (c) stays abroad under circumstances indicating an intention for an uncertain duration of stay abroad is a non-resident. Persons posted in U.N. organizations and officials deputed abroad by Central/ State Government and Public-Sector Undertakings on temporary assignments are also treated as non-resident.

Non-resident foreign citizens of Indian Origin are treated on par with non-resident Indian citizens.

Person of Indian Origin (PIO): PIO means a foreign citizen (except a national of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Iran, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Nepal) who at any time held an Indian passport

Or

who or either of their parents/ grandparents/ great grandparents was born and permanently resident in India as defined in Government of India Act, 1935 and other territories that became part of India thereafter provided neither was at any time a citizen of any of the aforesaid countries (as referred above);

Or

who is a spouse of a citizen of India or a PIO

Citizenship Act 1955

How one can become Indian Citizen?

- Citizenship by Birth
- Citizenship by Descent
- Citizenship by Registration
- Citizenship by Naturalization
- Citizenship by incorporating a new territory

How a person can lose Nationality?

- By Renunciation
- By Termination
- Deprivation

PEPPER IT WITH

Citizen’s Charter, NPS for NRI, Rights of OCI

Overseas Citizen Of India (OCI): A foreign national, who was eligible to become citizen of India on 26.01.1950 or was a citizen of India on or at any time after 26.01.1950 or belonged to a territory that became part of India after 15.08.1947 is eligible for registration as Overseas Citizen of India (OCI). Minor children of such person are also eligible for OCI. However, if the applicant had ever been a citizen of Pakistan or Bangladesh, he/she will not be eligible for OCI.

Benefits of a PIO card

1. PIO card holders do not require a visa to visit India for a period of 15 years from the date of issue of the PIO card.
2. They are exempted from registration at FRRO/FRO if their stay does not exceeds 180 days, Incase if the stay exceeds 180 days, they shall have to register with FRRO/ FRO within the next 30 days.
3. They enjoy parity with NRIs in economic, financial and educational benefits.

Drawbacks of PIO card

1. It does not provide voting rights to the holder. Prior permission is needed to undertake mountaineering expeditions or any such related research work in protected areas.
2. Meanwhile, the PM promoted the idea of converting their PIO cards with OCI cards. The OCI cards also provided several benefits.
3. OCI is essentially a lifetime visa status offered by India to an Indian person who has given up his citizenship.

Benefits of OCI card

1. OCI cards give lifetime multiple entry visa to India. Also, person never have to register with the FRRO no matter how long is his stayal.
2. If person remain an OCI for 5 years, person can attain Indian citizenship and then live in India for a period of one year including short breaks.
3. Special immigration counters are provided at all international airports in India for OCI card holders.
4. An OCI cards holder can open special bank accounts in India just like NRIs and make investments. OCI holders can also buy non-farm property and exercise ownership rights.
5. An OCI card allows person to apply for a driver’s license, PAN card or open a bank account in India. Person get same economic, financial and educational benefits like NRIs and person can also adopt children.

Drawbacks of OCI card

An OCI card holder cannot vote, hold a government job or purchase agricultural or farm land. The person can also not run for public office or travel to restricted areas without permission.

National Register of Citizens (NRC)

In News

Nearly 32 years after the **Assam Accord** was signed, the first draft of an updated National Register of Citizens (NRC) for the State listed 1.90 crore names out of the 3.29 crore applicants who have been recognized as legal citizens of India. The NRC is being compiled following a Supreme Court directive to identify illegal immigrants in Assam.

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

What is NRC?

NRC means the register containing the names of Indian citizens. NRC updation basically means the process of enlisting the names of citizens based on **Electoral Rolls up to 1971 and 1951 NRC**.

What is NRC 1951?

National Register of Citizens, 1951 is a register prepared after the conduct of the Census of 1951, in respect of each village showing the houses or holdings in a serial order and indicating against each house or holding the number and names of persons staying therein. These registers covered each and every person enumerated during the Census of 1951 and were kept in the offices of Deputy Commissioners and Sub Divisional Officers according to instructions issued by the Government of India in 1951.

Issue Background

- ✓ NRC recently published the names of 1.9 crore people out of the 3.29 crore total applicants in Assam recognizing them as legal citizens of India. The rest of the names are under various stages of verification and scrutiny due to hint of illegal immigrants.
- ✓ In past Assam has faced influx from Bangladesh border in form illegal immigrants; since the early 20th century, is the only state having an NRC, first prepared in 1951. This illegal immigrant issue has posed serious inter and intra border turmoil posing threat to national security.
- ✓ The Supreme Court, which is monitoring the entire process, had ordered that the first draft of the NRC be published after completing the scrutiny of over two crore claims along with that of around 38 lakh people whose documents were under suspicions.

PEPPER IT WITH
Legacy Data, Citizenship Act 1955, NRC Sewa Kendras, Assam Accord

As per the latest Order of Supreme Court inclusion eligibility are:

1. All Indian Citizens including their children and descendants who have **moved to Assam post 24th March 1971** would be eligible for inclusion in the updated NRC on adducing satisfactory proof of residence in any part of the country (outside Assam) as on 24th March, 1971.
2. All the members of the Tea Tribes shall be covered under ‘**Original inhabitants of Assam**’ category provided for under Clause 3(3) of the Schedule of The Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.
3. All such original inhabitants shall be included on the basis **of proof to the satisfaction of the Registering Authority**. On establishment of the citizenship of such persons beyond reasonable doubt, their names shall be in the updated NRC.

Brahmaputra Board

In News

The 9th meeting of High Powered Review Board of Brahmaputra Board was held at **Borgos, Kaziranga in Assam** recently.

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

Brahmaputra Board

The Brahmaputra Board, **a statutory body** was set up under an Act of Parliament called the **Brahmaputra Board Act, (Act 46 of 1980)** under the Ministry of Irrigation (Now renamed as **Ministry of Water Resources**). It’s headquarter is located at **Guwahati, Assam**.

Key highlights of meeting

1. High Powered Review Board (HPRB) approved restructuring of Brahmaputra Board and advised that funds should be largely spent for works and limited funds should be spent for establishment costs including salary and wages.

2. HPRB ratified the project for **protection of Majuli Island** from flood and erosion for an amount of Rs. 237 crore.
3. A Mathematical Model Study prepared by IIT, Guwahati called **Brahma-ID** was also launched on this occasion. This project has been sponsored by Brahmaputra Board for an amount of Rs. 3.00 crore.
4. HPRB advised to take up actively afforestation and catchment area treatment in the upper riparian states to prevent soil erosion and sedimentation.
5. HPRB advised Brahmaputra Board to **constitute an Advisory Board** in all the basin States. The Advisory Board should include NGOs, political leadership, Water Resources Department officials so that they may become active stakeholders in the management of Brahmaputra basin.

Vision

"Leadership role in water resources management of Brahmaputra and Barak Basin for sustainable development of water resources to provide optimum benefit to the people with emphasis on control of flood and bank erosion"

Composition

The Board consists of **21 Members (4 full time Members and 17-part time Members)**, representing seven states of the North Eastern Region, North Eastern Council, concerned Ministries and Departments of the Government of India.

Jurisdiction

The jurisdiction of the Board includes both the **Brahmaputra and Barak Valley and covers all the States of the North Eastern Region, Sikkim and part of West Bengal** falling under Brahmaputra basin.

Way Forward

HPRB recognized the fact that Brahmaputra River offers great opportunities for economic growth and employment generation in the NE States through development of inland waterways, tourism, industry, agriculture and allied sectors. To this end, comprehensive DPRs need to be developed for integrated water management. These DPRs should be bankable which can be taken up for external funding with International Agencies like World Bank, JICA, and ADB etc.

Brahmaputra Board hopes to turn these challenges of flood, erosion and sedimentation into opportunities for great economic growth with the cooperation of all stakeholders. The vision for Brahmaputra to develop it as a great bridge to link India with South East Asia.

Brahmaputra Facts

- It originates from Chemayungdung glacier in south-west Tibet.
- It is called as Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibet.
- In India it enters ArP and it is called as Dihang.
- In Assam it is called as Brahmaputra i.e. it stretches from Sadiya(entry) to Dhubri (exit).
- In Bangladesh it is called Jamuna and it meets with Ganga to form Sunderbans delta.
- It forms biggest riverine island Majuli in Assam.
- The Pakhui Wildlife Sanctuary and the Kaziranga National Park are located near Kameng River a right bank tributary.
- Subansiri a right bank tributary in ArP also called as **Gold River** because of gold dust availability.

PEPPER IT WITH

CAMPA, Brahma-ID, Royal Manas National Park, Manas River, Sankosh River

NARI & e-Samvad

NARI

- ❖ In a path breaking initiative to empower women, the **Ministry of Women & Child Development**, inaugurated an online portal NARI recently.
- ❖ The portal will provide women citizens with easy access to information on government schemes and initiatives for women.
- ❖ The portal contains information about schemes being run by both Central as well as the States Governments.
- ❖ NARI will provide information to women on issues affecting their lives. There are tips on good nutrition, suggestions for health checkups, information on major diseases, tips for job search and interview, investment and savings advice, information on crimes and against women and reporting procedures, contacts of legal aid cells, simplified adoption procedures and much more.

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

PEPPER IT WITH
One Stop Centres, PMMVY,
NGO DARPAN

e-Samvad

- ❖ e-Samvad is a portal started by the **Ministry of Women and Child Development** to provide a **platform to interact with NGOs**, civil society and concerned citizens.
- ❖ This is a way for the Ministry to receive input on its schemes and programmes. Individuals and organisations can register themselves here to share their feedback, suggestions, best practices, grievances etc. with the Ministry.
- ❖ This will help in formulation of effective policies and measures for welfare of women and children.

Way Ahead

The Government – both Central and State – has implemented a number of schemes & legislations for women to provide them equal rights, economic opportunities, social support, legal aid, housing etc. However, there is often a lack of awareness of these provisions and difficulties in accessing their benefits. For example, many are unaware that One Stop Centres are available in 168 districts for women in difficult circumstances, PM Awas Yojana gives priority to registration of homes in the name of women and many State Governments offer financial support for the education of girl children. However, information related to women centric schemes/legislations are all scattered on different websites/portals.

Jangalmahal Utsav

In News

Tribes of West Bengal recently presented their cultural dance at Jangalmahal Utsav, inaugurated at the **Jhargam district of West Bengal**.

Facts

- The world Jangalmahal is used to refer four districts of the state — **Purulia, Bankura, Jhargram and West Midnapore**.
- The festival is organized in the state to promote tribal art and culture.
- Different folk songs and dances such as **Tusu, Bhadu, Ahira and Jhumur** are performed by the locals of the Jangalmahal area during the festival.
- To encourage afforestation, preservation of forests to avoid plastics, liquors, tobaccos and other harmful addictions.
- To build **'FOLK – CULTURAL PLATFORM'** in every district.

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

- To form self – help co – operative groups for collection, presentation of marketing of local products and to encourage handicrafts and cottage industries.
- To earmark and solve the problems of drinking water, irrigation, communication, marketing of local products with the help of administration.
- To add and highlight the tourist spots of Jangal Mahal in the tourism map of West Bengal.

GI recognition for Nilambur teak

Kerala’s Nilambur teak aka Malabar teak has found its place in the Geographical Indications (GI) Registry. The golden-brown teak is known for its log dimensions, desired wood figure and wide reputation in the world of trade.

Nilambur teak is the teak wood obtained from the forest areas, plantations and homesteads in **Nilambur Taluk** in Eranad Taluk in **Malappuram**.

Jal Mahotsav

Hanuwantiya Island, located on the banks of the **Indira Sagar dam in Madhya Pradesh**, plays host to India’s largest water carnival – Jal Mahotsav.

The 26th edition of the annual World Book Fair themed: **‘Environment and Climate Change’**.

Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojna (PMSSY)

In News

The Union Cabinet on recently approved setting up of an AIIMS in Bilaspur in Himachal Pradesh with an outlay of Rs. 1,350 crores under the **Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojna (PMSSY)**.

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

Objective

PMSSY aims at correcting the imbalances in the availability of affordable healthcare facilities in the different parts of the country in general, and augmenting facilities for quality medical education in the under-served States in particular. The scheme was approved in March 2006.

PMSSY has two components:

- (i) Setting up of AIIMS like Institutions
 - (ii) Upgradation of Government Medical College Institutions.
1. The first phase in the PMSSY has two components - setting up of six institutions in the line of AIIMS; and upgradation of 13 existing Government medical college institutions.
 2. In the second phase of PMSSY, the Government has approved the setting up of two more AIIMS-like institutions, one each in the States of West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh and upgradation of six medical college institutions.

All India Whips’ Conference

In News

The 18th All India Whips’ Conference was recently held at Udaipur, Rajasthan

Significance of Conference

The conference provides a platform to Whips of various political parties – ruling as well as opposition at the Centre as well as the States to exchange their views and experiences and discuss the challenges facing them in discharge of their Parliamentary duties and evolve norms for efficient working of parliamentary machinery.

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

PEPPER IT WITH
e-Sansad, e-Vidhan, Chief Whip, Allocation of Business

The entire purpose of this conference is to strengthen the parliamentary democracy, its institutions and ultimately serve the people at large.

Whip

Whip is that mechanism and instrument by which political parties in Indian Parliament practically exercise their influence by consolidating their numbers in the Parliament. Whip ensures that any member of a political party does not contravenes the stand taken by his political party on the floor of the house. The office of 'Whip', on the other hand, is mentioned neither in the **Constitution of India nor in the Rules of the House nor in a Parliamentary Statute**. It is based on the conventions of the parliamentary government.

Significance of whip

Every Political Party, whether ruling or opposition has its own Whip in the Parliament. He is appointed by the political party to serve as an assistant floor leader. He is charged with the responsibility of ensuring the attendance of his party members in large numbers and securing their support in favour of or against a particular issue. He regulates and monitors their behaviour in Parliament. The members are supposed to follow the directives given by the Whip otherwise against them disciplinary action can be initiated.

High Risk Pregnancy portal

In News

Haryana has become the first state in the country to launch High Risk Pregnancy (HRP) Portal.

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

HRP portal

- This innovative web application has been designed to track every high risk pregnant woman **till 42 days after delivery**, so that she receives adequate treatment during the **ante-natal period** for healthy outcome of pregnancy.
- This portal not only helps in early identification of high-risk pregnant cases up to the grass-roots level but also ensures their timely referral to the civil hospitals for further management and delivery by specialists.
- The High-Risk Pregnancy Policy has been implemented across the state for identifying 100 per cent name-based high-risk pregnancy cases, s, and ensuring their delivery by specialists at civil hospitals.

PEPPER IT WITH
JSY, Sukhibhava Scheme, PMMVY, MBP, IGMSY

Vision

This initiative will definitely increase the pace of decline in Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) and Still Birth Incidence as morbidity and mortality is quite high in high risk pregnant cases, if not managed timely.

A **high-risk pregnancy** is one that threatens the health or life of the mother or her fetus. It often requires specialized care from specially trained providers.

Some pregnancies become high risk as they progress, while some women are at increased risk for complications even before they get pregnant for a variety of reasons.

Risk factors for a high-risk pregnancy can include:

- **Existing health conditions**, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or being HIV-positive
- **Overweight and obesity**
- **Multiple births**
- **Young or old maternal age.** Pregnancy in teens and women age 35 or older increases the risk for preeclampsia and gestational high blood pressure.

Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan

The PMSMA has been launched by the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare** (MoHFW), Government of India. The program aims to provide assured, comprehensive and quality antenatal care, free of cost, universally to all pregnant women on the 9th of every month.

Goal of the PMSMA

The Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan envisages improvement in the quality and coverage of Antenatal Care (ANC) including diagnostics and counseling services as part of the **Reproductive Maternal Neonatal Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A) Strategy**.

As per RGI- SRS (2011-13), **MMR of India has now declined to 167/lakh live births against a global MMR of 216/lakh live births (2015)**. India has registered an overall decline in MMR of 70% between 1990 and 2015 in comparison to a global decline of 44%.

Key Feature

One of the critical components of the PMSMA is identification and follow up of **high risk pregnancies**. A sticker indicating the condition and risk factor of the pregnant women would be added onto MCP card for each visit:

- **Green Sticker**- for women with no risk factor detected
- **Red Sticker** – for women with high risk pregnancy

Should we do away with Capital Punishment?

In News

There is no viable method at present other than hanging to execute condemned prisoners. Lethal injections are unworkable and often fail, the Centre told the Supreme Court.

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

Issue Background

- ✓ The Supreme Court recently asked the Centre to respond to a plea challenging the legal provision that death row convicts will be hanged to death and come with more human ways to carry out the death sentence.
- ✓ The plea said that **Article 21 (right to life)** of the constitution also includes the right of a condemned prisoner to a dignified mode of execution, so that death becomes less painful.
- ✓ A bench comprising Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and D.Y. Chandrachud issued a notice to the Centre and sought its response on the PIL, which referred to the **187th Report of the Law Commission** against the present mode of execution.
- ✓ The court is hearing a **writ petition** which sought the court’s intervention to reduce the suffering of condemned prisoners at the time of death. A convict should not be compelled to suffer at the time of termination of his or her life. When a man is hanged to death, his dignity is destroyed as per Article 21 quoted in plea.

PEPPER IT WITH

Death Penalty Worldwide, European Convention on Human Rights (Protocol No. 13)

Constitutionality of Death Penalty

Section 354(5) in The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 clearly states that when any person is sentenced to death, the sentence shall direct that he be hanged by the neck till he is dead.

The court has already clarified that it is not questioning the constitutionality of death penalty, which has been well-settled by the apex court, including in **Deena versus Union of India** and in the **Bachan Singh case**. Section 354 (5), which mandates death by hanging, of the Code of Criminal Procedure has already been upheld and refused to strike down Section 354(5).

Alternatives

The present procedure can be replaced with intravenous lethal injection, shooting, electrocution or gas chamber in which death is just a matter of minutes. While in hanging, the entire execution process takes over 40 minutes to declare prisoner to be dead, the shooting process involves not more than few minutes. In case of intravenous lethal injection, it is over in 5 minutes.

The Bench had, in an earlier hearing, favoured a re-look at the practice of hanging to death as “the Constitution of India is an organic and compassionate document which recognises the sanctity of flexibility of law as situations change with the flux of time”.

Debate

The debate on capital punishment whether it should be abolished or not is one of long standing and frantic debates going on in the civil society and political sphere of India. Some of them believe that death penalty is a justifiable punishment and should not be scrapped from the constitution of India. The reason put behind to retain this law is that some of the heinous and ghastly crimes demand strict penalties. It sends a strong message of deterrence to future offenders warning and correcting them by striking fear of law and addressing justice to aggrieved.

But some Human Right organization like Amnesty International, DPW project etc. oppose the capital punishment on reason that killing a human is always inhumane and is like murdering with legal tools. These organizations have argued that there is no empirical data on the deterrence of the crime due to death penalty. For e.g. after Nirbhaya Rape trail in which offenders were awarded death penalty has not had significant effect of deterrence of the rape cases in the capital of India and other parts of India.

The constitutionality of death penalty need to be reformed in such a way that we can do away with the capital punishment and at the same time come up with strict and rigorous punishment that it reminds the offenders fear of law and deter them in future. The faster crime detection should be made the hallmark of our system which could curb the alarmingly increasing crime rates. The justice should be made speedy to throw the offenders from their comfort zone of using the loophole of slow procedure of judicial system which is unable to offer protection of law. These layers act as a safety valve against miscarriage of justice.

UIDAI 2-tier security for AADHAAR data

In News

Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) on recently introduced two new layers of security for **Aadhaar-Virtual ID and Limited KYC**. These security measures have been launched in the light of the recent media reports alleging Aadhaar data leak.

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

What is Virtual ID (VID)?

This is a temporary **16-digit**, randomly-generated number that an Aadhaar holder can use for authentication or KYC services along with his/ fingerprint instead in lieu of the Aadhaar number. The VID together with biometrics of the user would give any authorized agency limited details like name, address and photograph, which are enough for any verification.

PEPPER IT WITH

Aadhaar Act, PMUJ, PDS,
Grih Kalyan Kendra

How is it safer than handing out one's Aadhaar number?

For any given Aadhaar number, there will only be one active VID at any given time and the UIDAI claims that it can't be used to ferret out an individual's 12-digit unique identification number. Since the system-generated VID will be mapped to an individual's Aadhaar number at the back end, it will do away with the need for the user to share Aadhaar number with sundry service agencies. This will, in turn, reduce the collection of Aadhaar numbers by various agencies. VID's being temporary cannot be de-duplicated and as an added precaution, agencies that undertake authentication will not be allowed to generate VID's on behalf of Aadhaar holders.

What is limited KYC?

To address the issue, the UIDAI has brought in the concept of limited KYC. It has categorised its authentication user agencies (AUAs) into Global AUAs and Local AUAs wherein the latter will get access to only need-based or limited KYC details. AUAs, which by law are required to use Aadhaar number in their KYCs, will be categorised **as Global AUAs and have access to Full e-KYC and the ability to store Aadhaar numbers within their system.**

The Aadhaar-issuing body, however, has said that it will reserve the right to determine what demographic fields need to be shared with the Local AUAs in addition to the UID Token depending upon its need.

What is UID Token?

Once storage of Aadhaar number is restricted and since VID is temporary, agencies need a mechanism to uniquely identify their customers within their system. For this, a 72-character alphanumeric 'UID Token' will be generated for "system use". UID token allows an agency to ensure uniqueness of its beneficiaries, customers etc. without having to store Aadhaar number in their databases.

Why did UIDAI feel the need for this new two-tier security system?

While security of Aadhaar data has been a subject of debate ever since the idea was floated under the government, repeated allegations of leaks has severely eroded public confidence. The latest security breach was exposed by The Tribune, where Aadhaar details could be bought on WhatsApp for just Rs 500.

In a recent online survey, conducted by social engagement platform Local Circles, 52% of the respondents said they feared that their Aadhaar data might not be safe from unauthorised access by hackers and information sellers. Moreover, the survey, which had received over 15,000 votes, revealed that the public supports restricted access to biometric data. About 43% of the respondents said that access to Aadhaar data should be limited to verification of only name and address for e-KYC where it is mandatory. The limited KYC system along with the Virtual ID might go a long way in allaying the nation's doubts.

SFOORTI Application

In News

In a major digital initiative **to help plan the traffic flows and optimize freight operations**, Ministry of Railways have launched **Smart Freight Operation Optimisation & Real Time Information (SFOORTI)** App for Freight Managers which provides features for monitoring and managing freight business using Geographic Information System (GIS) Views and Dashboard.

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

Salient features of SFOORTI Application are as below:

- ❖ With this application, movement of freight trains on Geographic Information System (GIS) view can be tracked.
- ❖ Both passenger and freight trains can be tracked over Zones/Divisions/ Sections in single GIS View.
- ❖ Analysis of new traffic captured and traffic lost.
- ❖ This app provides a Bird’s eye view of all Freight Assets in a single window.
- ❖ Provides end to end Rake movement on Geospatial view.
- ❖ Expected Traffic at Interchange points to evaluate daily performance can be viewed.
- ❖ Performance of each zone and divisions with respect to loading and utilization of freight assets can be viewed.
- ❖ Sectional performance monitoring for sections, divisions and zones shall help in traffic routing.

Freight Operation Information System Map

View–A Geographic Information System (GIS) based monitoring and management tool has been designed and developed in CRIS which provides layered views of freight trains on Indian Railways network which can help plan the traffic flows and optimize freight operations. The FOIS Map View has been designed to cater to Divisional, Zonal and Board levels of management for improved freight operations. It provides Geo-Spatial view of freight train performances.

Importance of Freight traffic

1. Freight traffic is the major source of revenue for Indian Railways.
2. Only one-third of the 13000 trains running daily on IR are freight trains, but it accounts 65% of total revenue of IR.
3. Railway Freight traffic is vital for economic and industrial progress of the country.
4. Raw materials from producing centers to factories and finished/semi-finished products from factories to consumption areas or ports for export has to be carried. Eg: Coal reserves from Bengal and Bihar has to be transported to thermal and steel plants all over the country.

‘Nirman Samvaad’

It is A one-day Mega Conclave, a first ever interaction between the Ministry of Railways and the Construction Industry. The conclave was held recently in New Delhi.

It was a major event aimed at taking measures to ensure expeditious implementation of ambitious Railway Infrastructure Development Plans. It aims to streamline procedures and remove bottlenecks to ensure the fast track implementation of projects on the railways.

Model Code of Conduct

In News

The Election Commission has set up a **14-member panel** to study how social media and other digital platforms are used ahead of polls and make suggestions on how to adapt the Model Code of Conduct to these changes.

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

Composition of Committee

Election Commissioner Umesh Sinha will head the committee. It will consist of **8 EC officers, one member each from the ministries of information and broadcasting, law, and information and technology, as well as one senior representative each from the National Broadcasters Association and the Press Council of India.**

Section 126 in RPA Act, 1951

Prohibition of public meetings during period of forty-eight hours ending with hour fixed for conclusion of poll.

Any person who contravenes the provisions shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years or with fine, or with both.

Term of reference

1. Study and examine the present provision of Section 126 of RPA 1956 and identify critical gaps to regulate the violation of the said provision of the act, particularly during the prohibitory period of 48 hours before the completion of the poll.
2. Examine the type, category or growth of communication technology or media platform in the country and difficulties in regulating these media platform during multiple election during 48 hour prohibitory period is forced.
3. Impact of new media platforms and social media during the prohibitory period of 48 hours and its implication in view of the provision of section 126.

PEPPER IT WITH
Article 324, EVM, VVPAT,
Electoral roll

Model Code of Conduct

The MCC is a set of instructions to be followed by both political parties and candidates contesting elections. The MCC is a set of guidelines and instructions on general conduct, campaigning, meetings etc. during elections. The MCC is in place till the entire process of elections is complete.

The Model Code of Conduct comes into force immediately on announcement of the election schedule by the commission. The Code remains in force till the end of the electoral process.

The following are the important guidelines for general conduct when the MCC is in place.

1. No party or candidate should include in any activity which may aggravate existing differences or create mutual hatred or cause tension between different castes and communities, religious or linguistic.
2. Criticism of other political parties, when made, should be confined to their policies and programme, past record and work. Parties and Candidates should refrain from criticism of all aspects of private life, not connected with the public activities of the leaders or workers of other parties. Criticism of other parties or their workers based on unverified allegations or distortion should be avoided.
3. There should be no appeal to caste or communal feelings for securing votes. Mosques, Churches, Temples or other places of worship should not be used as forum for election propaganda.
4. All parties and candidates should avoid activities which are corrupt practices and offences under the election law, such as bribing of voters, intimidation of voters, impersonation of

voters, canvassing within 100 meters of polling stations, holding public meetings during the period of 48 hours ending with the hour fixed for the close of the poll, and the transport and conveyance of voters to and from polling station.

National Voters' Day

- National Voters Day is celebrated on January 25 every year since 2011. The aim is to encourage our voters to participate enthusiastically in the democratic process.
- The voting in elections is an important right in a democracy, with every single vote regarded as a sacred offering. Our Constitution empowers an independent Election Commission. And our election process makes every vote important, with the right to equality and freedom. As such Indian democracy is known through the world for its maturity and stability.
- The purpose of celebrating this day is to increase enrolment of voters, especially young voters. The day is also utilized to spread awareness among voters regarding effective participation in the electoral process.
- The theme for the 7th National Voters' Day, celebrated on the 25th January 2017, was 'Empowering Young and Future Voters.'
- **Interactive School Engagement** programme in which Electoral Registration Officers and District Election Officers besides the Chief Electoral Officers covered around 11,000 schools and 24 lac students across the country and interacted with the students in the age-group of 15-17 years to impart electoral awareness among them.

PEPPER IT WITH
Simultaneous Elections,
ECI, Maitreyi Yatra

Disqualification of MLAs

In News

The Election Commission of India (ECI) have recommended that 20 Aam Aadmi Party MLAs be disqualified on the office-of-profit charge.

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

Office of profit under Indian Constitution

- ✓ In India the concept of **“office of profit”** disqualifying the legislators was imported from Britain and it made appearance for the first time in the Act of 1909, which embodied the **Morley-Minto Reforms proposals**.
- ✓ The term office of profit has not been defined in the Constitution. But, **articles 102 (1) and 191 (1)** – which give effect to the concept of office of profit -- prescribe restrictions at the central and state level on lawmakers accepting government positions. Any violation attracts disqualification of MPs or MLAs, as the case may be.
- ✓ According to Article 102 (1) (a), a person shall be disqualified as a member of Parliament for holding any office of profit under the government of India or the government of any state, “other than an office declared by Parliament by law not to disqualify its holder”. Article 191 (1) (a) has a similar provision for the members of state assemblies.
- ✓ Certain offices were declared to be non-profit. A list of non-profit offices have been mentioned in Part II of the Schedule to the Parliament (**Prevention of Disqualification) Act, 1959**.

Article 102, Disqualifications for membership

1. A person shall be disqualified for being chosen as, and for being, a member of either House of Parliament
 - a) if he holds any office of profit under the Government of India or the Government of any State, other than an office declared by Parliament by law not to disqualify its holder;

- b) if he is of unsound mind and stands so declared by a competent court;
 - c) if he is an undischarged insolvent;
 - d) if he is not a citizen of India, or has voluntarily acquired the citizenship of a foreign State, or is under any acknowledgement of allegiance or adherence to a foreign State;
 - e) if he is so disqualified by or under any law made by Parliament Explanation For the purposes of this clause a person shall not be deemed to hold an office of profit under the Government of India or the Government of any State by reason only that he is a Minister either for the Union or for such State
2. A person shall be disqualified for being a member of either House of Parliament if he is so disqualified under the Tenth Schedule

PEPPER IT WITH

Anti-Defection law, 52nd and 91st amendment of Constitution of India

Mahadayi row

In News

Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra are currently involved in a dispute in the tribunal over controversial **Kalasa-Bhanduri Nala** project across Mahadayi River. Goa is only objecting to Karnataka’s plans for transfer of water from the deficit basin of **Mahadayi to Malaprabha**.

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

Issue Background

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

Bone of contentions

- ❖ Goa’s main contention is that Karnataka cannot divert water from an already-deficit Mahadayi basin to the Malaprabha river basin: 115 tmcft was available in the basin, while the requirement for the three States is 145 tmcft. It has said that any attempt to divert water from one river basin to the other will cause irreparable environmental damage. Karnataka claims 199.6 tmcft is available and the river is water-surplus. Of this, Karnataka wants 24.15 tmcft.
- ❖ Since the Mahadayi River is largely rain-fed between months of June through October, any diversion of waters by Karnataka would adversely affect the water needs of people of Goa. Given erratic monsoon patterns over the years, people of the region have been demanding drinking water and water to meet irrigation needs for agriculture.

Mahadayi River Fact

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

MWDT

On 16 November 2010, the central government had constituted the Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal (MWDT) headed by Justice JM Panchal.

In 2016, a major setback for Karnataka, MWDT rejected Karnataka’s claim on Mahadayi river water to divert 7.56 tmcft water from the Mahadayi river basin to Malaprabha River, in order to fulfill the drinking water needs of people living in border regions of north Karnataka.

PEPPER IT WITH
Vansadhara River Water Dispute, ISRWD Act, Kalasa-Bhanduri Nala project

Way Ahead

The extended term of the tribunal will expire on August 26, 2018. With the elections in Karnataka expected to be held between the last week of April and the first week of May, Mahadayi is bound to remain on the boil. The demand for “justified quantum” to be utilized for drinking purpose alone on “humanitarian grounds of Karnataka can’t be overlooked and should be addressed by MWDT in proportionate and efficient way without upsetting the water need of Goa.

Child Nutrition and Development Nodal Agency Bill, 2017

In News

Aiming to eradicate malnutrition among children, Private Member has proposed setting up a nodal agency, which would work in mission mode, for child nutrition and development.

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

Objective of Bill

To provide for the constitution of a Child Nutrition and Development Nodal Agency for operation and supervision of multi-sectoral programme in high, medium and low burdened districts in mission mode to identify and eradicate malnutrition amongst children; facilitate, coordinate and converge 'direct targeted interventions and schemes' as well as indirect multi-sectoral interventions' covering one or the other aspects of nutrition scheme presently functioning under various Ministries.

Key Highlights

Nodal Agency composition

- 1) a Chairperson
- 2) one member representing the respective Union Ministry responsible for the "direct targeted interventions and schemes" and "indirect multi-sectoral interventions" with regard to nutrition amongst children;
- 3) one representative from the
 - a. independent agency constituted
 - b. institutions of local-self Government
 - c. Anganwadi Workers (AWW) of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) and the Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANM) of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
 - d. National Rural Health Mission

PEPPER IT WITH
Pulse Polio programme, ICDS, RGSEAG, MDM,

Nodal Agency powers & functions

- 1) develop a mechanism for generating nationwide nutrition disaggregated data based on data collected by the National Family Health Survey, the Integrated Child Development Services and the State Councils;
- 2) classify each district in each State as high, medium or low burden district and ensure direct targeted intervention to be first focused towards most vulnerable districts and areas in each State as per the classification;
- 3) set malnutrition eradication targets and timelines for each State under a targeted Malnutrition Eradication Mission;

- 4) the agency would coordinate and administer policy implementation among various ministries responsible for implementing programmes aimed at eradicating malnutrition
- 5) the agency will submit to the Central government a report of its activities at end of every year

Way Ahead

Despite thousands of crores of rupees being spent and a number of Government schemes working towards child development, the status of health and nutrition of our children remains abysmal. Currently, all nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive schemes work in silos, and as a result, are not able to achieve the intended outcome. Therefore, the establishment of a nodal agency that will facilitate coordination of all ministries and departments and execute the schemes in a convergent manner is urgently required. The need of the hour is to involve all field functionaries in a productive manner. Consistent monitoring and evaluation of schemes using technological interventions and real-time data is utmost to improve the implementation and functioning of all schemes. The proposed Bill is a step to resolve some of the health and nutrition issues that currently plague the children of our nation.

The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017

In News

The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017 was introduced in the Lok Sabha, and will be taken up for consideration and passing. This Bill, which makes instant triple talaq or talaq-e-biddat a punishable offence, follows the Supreme Court in the case of **Shayara Bano vs. Union of India**.

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

What does the Bill say?

It makes the pronouncement of talaq-e-biddat "void and illegal." According to clause 3 of the Bill, "Any pronouncement of talaq by a person upon his wife, by words, either spoken or written or in electronic form or in any other manner whatsoever, shall be void and illegal."

PEPPER IT WITH
STEP, Annapurna Scheme, Dena Shakti Scheme, Udyogini Scheme

Key Highlight

- 1. The Bill makes all declaration of *talaq*, including in written or electronic form, to be void (i.e. not enforceable in law) and illegal. It defines *talaq* as *talaq-e-biddat* or any other similar form of *talaq* pronounced by a Muslim man resulting in instant and irrevocable divorce. *Talaq-e-biddat* refers to the practice under Muslim personal laws where pronouncement of the word 'talaq' thrice in one sitting by a Muslim man to his wife results in an instant and irrevocable divorce.
- 2. **Offence and penalty:** The Bill makes declaration of *talaq* a cognizable and non-bailable offence. (A cognizable offence is one for which a police officer may arrest an accused person without warrant.) A husband declaring *talaq* can be imprisoned for up to three years along with a fine.
- 3. **Allowance:** A Muslim woman against whom *talaq* has been declared, is entitled to seek subsistence allowance from her husband for herself and for her dependent children. The amount of the allowance will be decided by a First-Class Magistrate.
- 4. **Custody of minor children:** A Muslim woman against whom such *talaq* has been declared, is entitled to seek custody of her minor children. The determination of custody will be made by the Magistrate.

How does this protect Muslim women's rights?

- ✓ The woman upon whom talaq is pronounced will have to receive an allowance from her husband, and she retains custody of her children.

- ✓ Clauses 5 and 6 of the Bill say, " a married Muslim woman upon whom talaq is pronounced, shall be entitled to receive from her husband such amount of subsistence allowance for her and dependent children," and "shall be entitled to custody of her minor children in the event of pronouncement of talaq by her husband."
- ✓ The Bill says that this legislation will, "help in ensuring the larger Constitutional goals of gender justice and gender equality of married Muslim women and help subserve their fundamental rights of non-discrimination and empowerment."

The Companies (Amendment) Act, 2017

In News

The Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2017 which seeks to bring about major changes in the Companies Act, 2013, was passed by the Rajya Sabha recently by a voice vote. The Act provides for more than 40 amendments to the Companies Act, 2013, which was passed.

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

Background

The enactment of the “**Companies Act, 2013**” was one of the most significant legal reforms in India in the recent past, aimed at bringing Indian company law in tune with global standards. The Act incorporated recommendations made by various committees, such as the Naresh Chandra Committee, Dr. J J Irani Committee, Vepa Kamesan Committee, etc.

Key Highlights

1. The Amendment Act amends the Companies Act, 2013 in relation to structuring, disclosure and compliance requirements for companies.
2. The Companies Act 2013 limits the number of intermediary companies through which investments can be made in a company. Similarly, it limits the number of layers of subsidiaries a company can have. The Amendment Act removes these limits.
3. The Companies Act 2013 required an individual who has a beneficial interest in the shares of a company to disclose the same. The Amendment Act also requires a group of persons who exercise beneficial control (above 25%) in a company to disclose such interest.
4. Under the Companies Act 2013, a separate offer letter should be issued to individuals to whom a private offer of shares has been made. The Amendment Act removes the requirement of such offer letter, but retains the provision related to notifying the Registrar of the return of allotment.
5. The Companies Act 2013 permits the appointment of members at the level of Joint Secretary to the quasi-judicial tribunal. Under the Amendment Act, a technical member must be at least of the level of an Additional Secretary.
6. The Amendment Act deletes provisions related to prohibition of forward dealing and insider trading. (They are regulated under the SEBI (Prohibition of Insider Trading) Regulations, 2015.)
7. The Amendment Act allows independent directors to have pecuniary interest up to 10% of their income. The amount may be modified by the central government.
8. The Amendment Act replaces the term *shares* with *voting power*. Preferential shareholders, who do not have voting power are excluded.

The **CLC** consisted of a former judge of the Delhi High Court, representatives of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, the Institute of Cost Accountants of India, the Institute of Company Secretaries of India and the industry. The CLC co-opted representatives from RBI and SEBI as members.

9. If at any time the number of members of a company is reduced, in the case of a public company, below seven, in the case of a private company, below two, and the company carries on business for more than six months, every person who is a member of the company during the shall be severally liable for the payment of the whole debts of the company.
10. The Members of the Tribunal and the Technical Members of the Appellate Tribunal shall be appointed on the recommendation of a Selection Committee consisting of—
 - ❖ Chief Justice of India or his nominee—Chairperson
 - ❖ a senior Judge of the Supreme Court or Chief Justice of High Court—Member
 - ❖ Secretary in the Ministry of Corporate Affairs—Member
 - ❖ Secretary in the Ministry of Law and Justice—Member

Why Amendment was needed?

The 2013 Act prohibits companies from making investments in other companies through more than two layers of intermediary companies. In addition, the central government may specify a cap on the number of layers of subsidiaries that a holding company can have. These provisions sought to address issues related to i) tracing the source of investments in companies and their ultimate use, and ii) use of multiple levels of subsidiaries to siphon funds. The Companies Law Committee (CLC) recommended that such caps must be deleted as they would affect the company’s structuring and ability to raise funds. The CLC noted that certain provisions in the 2013 Act would ensure transparency in the functioning of a company and its subsidiaries. These include provisions that require; i) the consolidation of financial statements of a holding company and its subsidiaries, and ii) the disclosure of beneficial ownership of one’s shares in a company. By removing the cap on the number of layers of subsidiaries, the 2017 Amendment Act is in line with the CLC’s recommendations.

Bhima Koregaon - Boiling socio-political issue

In News

The usually peaceful celebrations of **Bhima Koregaon battle** every year to commemorate the battle of 1818, took an unusually violent turn on January 1. The history of 200 years is seen as a metaphor of Dalit triumph against the caste-based tyranny during the Peshwa rule.

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

Why is Koregaon-Bhima important?

The **Koregaon Ranstambh** (victory pillar) is a memorial for British East India Company soldiers killed in a battle on January 1, 1818, in which a small group of infantrymen — about 500 of them Mahars (a Scheduled Caste community) — held off a numerically superior force from the army of Peshwa Bajirao II. The Mahars fought alongside the British, some accounts say, because the Peshwa had scorned their offer to join his army. After Dr. Ambedkar visited the site on January 1, 1927, it became a place of pilgrimage for Dalits, an assertion of pride

What triggered the violence?

Sambhaji (Shivaji’s son and successor) was captured by the Mughals; according to legend, he was tortured and his mutilated corpse thrown into the Bhima river. **Govind Mahar**, a Dalit, gathered the dismembered parts of his body and performed the last rites; later, Mahars of the village erected a memorial to Sambhaji. Govind Mahar’s tomb stands near Sambhaji’s in **Vadhu-Budruk** village, near Bhima-Koregaon.

On December 29, a board came up in Vadhu-Budruk hailing Govind Mahar, which, locals say, irked the Marathas in the village, who believe that their ancestors performed Sambhaji’s last

rites. Mahar's tomb was vandalised. The issue of who performed the last rites of Sambhaji fanned the violence.

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

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

Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN)

In News

The GIAN course on **Sustainable Urban planning** using remote sensing and Geographic Information System, GIS has been launched at Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur's outreach center in NOIDA recently.

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

GIAN

Ministry of HRD launched a new program in 2015 titled GIAN in Higher Education aimed at tapping the talent pool of scientists and entrepreneurs, internationally to encourage their engagement with the institutes of Higher Education in India so as to augment the country's existing academic resources, accelerate the pace of quality reform, and elevate India's scientific and technological capacity to global excellence.

GIAN is envisaged **to catalyse higher education institutions** in the country, and that it will initially include all IITs, IIMs, Central Universities, IISc Bangalore, IISERs, NITs and IIITs subsequently cover good State Universities where the spinoff is vast.

Objectives

- To increase the footfalls of reputed international faculty in the Indian academic institutes.

National Knowledge Network (NKN)

Approved in 2010 by Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure (CCI) for a period of 10 years, NKN is aimed at establishing a strong and robust Indian network which will be capable of providing secure and reliable connectivity.

- Provide opportunity to our faculty to learn and share knowledge and teaching skills in cutting edge areas.
- To provide opportunity to our students to seek knowledge and experience from reputed International faculty.
- To create avenue for possible collaborative research with the international faculty
- To increase participation and presence of international students in the academic Institutes.

PEPPER IT WITH
HEERA, Swachh Vidyalaya, RUSA,



Key Highlights

1. This course is being conducted under the Global Initiative on Academic Network (GIAN) Program of the Ministry of Human Resource Development and actively supported by NITI Aayog and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
2. This course aims to give participants state-of-the-art remote sensing and GIS skills which will allow them to rise to the challenge of managing the rapidly changing urban environment of Indian cities.
3. It will focus on issues such as water resource management, water pollution and strategic emplacements for water treatment facilities.
4. The course is being coordinated by the Department of Earth Sciences at IIT Kanpur and the Department of Geography, University of Durham, UK.
5. The funding for the courses by the Institutes shall be partially supported through various schemes including but not limited to the Plan / Non-Plan Funds of the Institute, other designated funds from TEQIP, UGC, AICTE, DST, DSIR and other Government entities

Way Ahead

This course is expected to contribute significantly to build trained manpower for the Smart Cities Mission launched by the Government with an objective to promote sustainable and inclusive cities that provide core infrastructure and give a decent quality of life to its citizens, a clean and sustainable environment and application of ‘Smart’ Solutions.

Website Accessibility Project

In News

In an initiative to empower Persons with Disabilities, 100 websites of various State Governments/UTs under Accessible India Campaign were launched by the Ministry for Social Justice and Empowerment on the occasion of ‘National Conference on Improving Accessibility’.

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

What is Web Accessibility?

Web accessibility means that people with disabilities can use the Web. More specifically, Web accessibility means that people with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the Web, and that they can contribute to the Web. Web

PEPPER IT WITH
Article 9 of UNCRPD, Deen Dayal Rehabilitation Scheme,

accessibility also benefits others, including older people with changing abilities due to aging.

Web accessibility encompasses all disabilities that affect access to the Web, including **visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, and neurological disabilities.**

Key Highlights

- ❖ The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) initiated a 'Website Accessibility Project' for State Government/Union Territories under Accessible India Campaign through **ERNET** India, an autonomous scientific society under the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), to make total 917 websites accessible and providing funds for the same.
- ❖ The aim of the conference was to sensitize and bring awareness among different stakeholders including the officials of state government on accessibility in the context of recently enacted Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016.

Accessible India Campaign/Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan

- ✓ A nationwide campaign that will enable persons with disabilities to gain universal access, equal opportunity for development, independent living and participation in all aspects of life in an inclusive society.
- ✓ It is launched by Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
- ✓ For creating universal accessibility for Persons with Disabilities, the campaign has been divided into three verticals: **Built Environment; Transport and Information & Communication Technology (ICT) ecosystem.**
- ✓ Under the campaign, atleast 50% of all the government buildings of National Capital and all the State capitals will be made fully accessible for persons with disabilities 2018.

Way Forward

The Web is an increasingly important resource in many aspects of life: education, employment, government, commerce, health care, recreation, and more. It is essential that the Web be accessible in order to provide **equal access** and **equal opportunity** to people with disabilities complimenting the Right to Equality in Constitution of India. An accessible Web can also help people with disabilities more actively participate in society.

Accessible India Campaign is a right step towards inclusive society which will seek cooperation of Government institutions to seek “accessible police stations”, “accessible hospitals”, “accessible tourism”, and “accessible digital India” etc.

A National Conference of the State channelizing Agencies, Public Sector Banks and Regional Rural Banks of NHFDC held recently under Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry for Social Justice and Empowerment.

The **National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (NHFDC)** has been set up by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India. It is wholly owned by Government of India and has an authorised share capital of Rs. 400 crores. **NHFDC functions as an Apex institution** for channelising the funds to persons with disabilities through the State Channelising Agencies (SCAs) nominated by the State Government.

Chief Minister-gi Hakshelgi Tengbang (CMHT)

In News

Manipur govt. recently launched the CMHT, a pioneering health assurance scheme for the poor and disabled people.

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

About CMHT scheme

1. The CMHT will provide cashless treatment to the poor at government hospitals, health centres and other empanelled selected private hospitals.
2. The scheme will provide cover up to Rs 2 lakh per eligible family identified from the Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC) in the treatment of seven critical identified critical ailments - cardiovascular diseases, kidney ailments, neurological conditions, liver ailments, cancer, neo-natal diseases and burns per year.
3. To mark the launch of the scheme, Health Cards were distributed for the scheme to some selected beneficiaries. The beneficiaries may get themselves enrolled for the scheme with the help of ASHA workers at the kiosks opened in nearby PHCs, CHCs and District Hospitals.
4. The most special aspect of the scheme is its innovative features. Firstly, CMHT will have convergence with Government of India programme like Jana Aushadhi Programme and Free Diagnostic Programme.

PEPPER IT WITH

Chief Minister-gi
Sotharabashing gi Tengbang

Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)

In News

The Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation during last week released Central Assistance (CA) of Rs. 246.9 crore for 9 prioritized projects under **PMKSY for Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP)**.

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

PMKSY

The overreaching vision of PMKSY is to ensure access to some means of protective irrigation to all agricultural farms in the country, to produce 'per drop more crop', thus bringing much desired rural prosperity.

PMKSY has been formulated amalgamating ongoing schemes viz. AIBP of Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation; Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) of Department of Land Resources; and On Farm Water Management (OFWM) component of National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) of Department of Agriculture and Cooperation.

PEPPER IT WITH

Paramparagat Krishi Vikas
Yojana, Rashtriya Gokul
Mission

- ✓ The scheme is implemented by Ministries of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development.
- ✓ All the States and Union Territories including North Eastern States are covered under the programme.
- ✓ The National Steering Committee (NSC) of PMKSY under the chairmanship of PM, will provide policy direction to programme framework and a National Executive Committee (NEC) under the chairmanship of Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog will oversee the programme implementation at national level.

Programme Components

A. Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP)

- To focus on faster completion of ongoing Major and Medium Irrigation including National Projects.

B. Har Khet ko Pani

- Creation of new water sources through Minor Irrigation (both surface and ground water)
- Repair, restoration and renovation of water bodies; strengthening carrying capacity of traditional water sources, construction rain water harvesting structures (Jal Sanchay);
- Ground water development in the areas where it is abundant, so that sink is created to store runoff/ flood water during peak rainy season.
- Creating and rejuvenating traditional water storage systems like Jal Mandir (Gujarat); Khatri, Kuhl (H.P.); Zabo (Nagaland); Eri, Ooranis (T.N.); Dongs (Assam); Katas, Bandhas (Odisha and M.P.) etc. at feasible locations.

C. Per Drop More Crop

- Promoting efficient water conveyance and precision water application devices like drips, sprinklers, pivots, rain - guns in the farm (Jal Sinchan);
- Topping up of input cost particularly under civil construction beyond permissible limit (40%), under MGNREGS for activities like lining inlet, outlet, silt traps, distribution system etc.
- Secondary storage structures at tail end of canal system to store water when available in abundance (rainy season) or from perennial sources like streams for use during dry periods through effective on - farm water management;
- Information Communication Technology (ICT) interventions through NeGP - A to be made use in the field of water use efficiency, precision irrigation technologies, on farm water management, crop alignment etc. and also to do intensive monitoring of the Scheme.

D. Watershed Development

- Effective management of runoff water and improved soil & moisture conservation activities such as ridge area treatment, drainage line 5 treatment, rain water harvesting, in - situ moisture conservation and other allied activities on watershed basis.
- b) Converging with MGNREGS for creation of water source to full potential in identified backward rainfed blocks including renovation of traditional water bodies

Scheme for Adolescent Girls - Rapid Reporting System (SAG-RRS)

In News

Ministry of Women and Child Development launched the **Phase -1** i.e. the beneficiary module of the Rapid Reporting System for the Scheme for Adolescent Girls - a web based on line monitoring for the Scheme for Adolescent Girls (AGs) recently.

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

RSS

The RRS will facilitate the monitoring of the scheme and taking corrective measures by ensuring faster flow of information, accurate targeting of the beneficiaries and reduction of leakages. This Portal has been developed in collaboration with **National Informatics Centre (NIC)**.

PEPPER IT WITH
Anganwadi Services Scheme,
ICPS, SABLA, Nirbhaya Fund

About SAG-RRS

1. SAG-RRS aims at empowering AGs 11 to 18 year by improving their nutritional and health status, upgradation of home skills and vocational skills. The girls would be equipped with information on health and family.

2. The Scheme would cover AGs under all ICDS projects in selected 200 districts in all the States/UTs in the country.
3. In order to give appropriate attention, the target group would be subdivided into **two categories, viz. 11-15 & 15-18 years** and interventions planned accordingly.
4. Scheme is to be implemented through Centre and State share in the ratio of 50:50, for nutrition component 60:40 for the rest of the activities for State and UTs with legislation, 90:10 for NE and three Himalayan States and 100% for UTs without legislation.

Objective

The Scheme aims to mainstream out of school AGs into formal education and non-formal education. The Scheme also aims to mainstream out of school into formal education and non-formal education.

Implementation

- ✓ MWCD is implementing the Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG) across the country.
- ✓ The scheme would be implemented using the plate form of integrated child development service scheme. Anganwadi centers (AWCs) will be focal point for the delivery of the services.
- ✓ However, where infrastructure and other facilities are inadequate in Anganwadi Center, alternative arrangements will have to make in school/ Panchayats Community building etc.

Stree Swabhiman Initiative

In News

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has launched an initiative by common services centres (CSCs) on women’s health and hygiene named ‘Stree Swabhiman’.

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

Stree Swabhiman Initiative

- 1) It aims to create a sustainable model for providing adolescent girls and women an access to affordable sanitary products by leveraging CSCs.
- 2) Under the ‘Stree Swabhiman’ project, sanitary napkin micro manufacturing units are being set up at CSCs across India, particularly those operated by women entrepreneurs
- 3) Besides promoting women’s health and hygiene, the initiative will also provide employment opportunities to women in rural communities as each facility will employ 8-10 women.
- 4) **Common Service Centers (CSC) are going to implement this initiative at the root level across the country.**

PEPPER IT WITH
Digi Pay, PMGDISHA, e-Swavlambika scheme

Common Services Centre (CSC) scheme

CSC programme is an initiative of the Ministry of Electronics & IT (**MeitY**), Government of India. CSCs are the access points for delivery of various electronic services to villages in India, thereby contributing to a digitally and financially inclusive society.

CSCs are the access points for delivery of essential public utility services, social welfare schemes, healthcare, financial, education and agriculture services, apart from host of **B2C & G2C** services to citizens in rural and remote areas of the country. It is a pan-India network catering to regional, geographic, linguistic and cultural diversity of the country, thus enabling the Government’s mandate of a socially, financially and digitally inclusive society.

CSCs enable the three vision areas of the Digital India programme:

- 1) Digital infrastructure as Utility to Every Citizen
- 2) Governance and services on demand

3) Digital empowerment of citizens

CSC 2.0 scheme is a service delivery-oriented entrepreneurship model with a large bouquet of services made available for the citizens through optimum utilization of infrastructure already created in the form of SWAN, SSDG, e-District, SDC, and NOFN/BharatNet.

CSC 2.0 aims at creating and strengthening the institutional framework for rollout and project management, thereby, supporting the State and District administrative machinery and handholding of VLEs (village level entrepreneurs).

Indo-Myanmar agreement on land border crossing

In News

The Union Cabinet has approved an agreement between India and Myanmar on land border crossing which would enhance economic interaction between people of the two countries.

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

Key Highlights

1. There are already free movement rights for people ordinarily residing in the border areas of both countries.
2. The agreement will facilitate movement of people on the basis of valid passports and visas which will enhance economic and social interaction between the two countries.
3. It is expected to provide connectivity and enhance interaction of the people from north-eastern states of India with those of Myanmar.
4. The agreement will safeguard the traditional rights of the largely tribal communities residing along the border which are accustomed to free movement across the land border.

PEPPER IT WITH
Rohingya Crisis
States bordering Myanmar
Kaladan Project

Spat over Hindi as official language at UN

In News

The External Affairs Ministry has emphasized on making Hindi as one of the official languages at the United Nations.

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

Background

The ministry said Hindi was not confined to India only. It is also spoken in Suriname, Fiji (the combined population of Surinam and Fiji is less than 1 million) and Ghana, apart from 800 million Indians.

For the Government of India, obtaining official language status for Hindi at the UN is an attractive way of enhancing its stature among languages and propagating the greater use of Hindi.

Problems

All Indians don't speak Hindi. Even our Constitution does not pronounce Hindi as the national language.

The current rules do not make it easy. It may be possible for India to get the required two-thirds support. However, it is apparent that it cannot get all these countries — 129 out of 193 members, to be precise — to share the expenditure, as the rules stipulate.

Even if the funding part was taken care of, it will be a gross waste of resources to spend millions of dollars every year to fund the required translation and interpretation work.

PEPPER IT WITH
Classical languages of India
8th Schedule of Constitution

Conclusion

It makes no sense for a country like India, which prides itself on its multilingualism, to make a case for Hindi at the UN. It will be quite incongruous for India to spend good money on interpretation and translation at the UN, when many of its own representatives use English. Far more than gaining greater global recognition for Hindi is at stake here. As a country known for its linguistic pluralism, India should not give an impression on the global stage that it has one pre-eminent language. The government must not embark on this needless pursuit.

About UN official languages

There are six official languages of the UN. These are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

UN rules to make any language official:

- Support of two-third member countries (129 nations) is required out of the total 193-member nations
- Besides, all member nations will have to bear the cost of making Hindi one of the official languages of the UN.

US puts Pakistan on Special Watch List

The US has placed Pakistan on a ‘Special Watch List’ for “severe violations” of religious freedom, making it the only country to be put under the newly-formed list.

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

Pakistan continues to harass its religious minorities, has state-sanctioned discrimination against groups such as the Ahmadis, and tolerates extra-judicial violence in the guise of opposing blasphemy.

About CPC

The Special Watch List is for countries that engage in or tolerate severe violations of religious freedom but may not rise to the level of the CPC. The Special Watch List designation is being seen as a step below designating it as Country of Particular Concern, which would have automatically kicked in economic and political sanctions.

PEPPER IT WITH
Coalition Support Fund, CPEC, Gwadar Port, TAPI pipeline

Pakistan, notably, is the first ever country to be placed in this list, which is a new category created by the Frank R Wolf International Religious Freedom Act of 2016. The 2016 Frank R Wolf International Religious Freedom Act amended the IRF Act to require the President to designate a ‘Special Watch List’ of countries deemed not to meet all of the CPC criteria but who engaged in or tolerated severe violations of religious freedom. IRF stands for International Religious Freedom.

The US Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIS) which has been seeking to designate Pakistan as CPC, however, expressed its disappointment with the decision.

Significance

The protection of religious freedom is vital to peace, stability, and prosperity, these designations are aimed at improving the respect for religious freedom in these countries.



Countries of Particular Concern

- US Congress passed the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998 that established the Department of State's Office of International Religious Freedom headed by an Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom.
- The IRFA requires the preparation and transmittal to Congress of an Annual Report on International Religious Freedom detailing the status of religious freedom in each foreign country, violations of religious freedom by foreign governments, and United States' actions and policies in support of religious freedom.
- Separately, the IRFA also requires that each year the President designate as a "Country of Particular Concern" each country the government of which has engaged in or tolerated systematic, ongoing and egregious violations of religious freedom.
- The IRFA requires an annual review of the status of religious freedom worldwide and the designation of countries that have "engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom" during the reporting period. The IRFA defines particularly severe violations of religious freedom as systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom, including violations such as torture, degrading treatment or punishment, prolonged detention without charges, abduction or clandestine detention, or other flagrant denial of the right to life, liberty, or the security of persons.
- On December 22, 2017, the Secretary of State re-designated Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan as CPCs. The Secretary also designated Pakistan a Special Watch List Country.

Raisina Dialogue 2018

The third edition of the Raisina Dialogue kicked off with a triple-whammy featuring Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu, his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi and Minister of External Affairs.

The theme of this year's iteration is **"Managing Disruptive Transitions: Ideas, Institutions and Idioms"** and it began on something of a disruptive note.

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

About Raisina Dialogue

1. The Raisina Dialogue is a multilateral conference committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the global community. Every year, global leaders in policy, business, media and civil society are hosted in New Delhi to discuss cooperation on a wide range of pertinent international policy matters.
2. The Dialogue is structured as a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral discussion, involving heads of state, cabinet ministers and local government officials, as well as major private sector executives, members of the media and academics.
3. The conference is hosted by the Observer Research Foundation in collaboration with the Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs.

PEPPER IT WITH
Sangri-La Dialogue, India-Japan defence ministerial dialogue

India joins Australia Group

In News

After gaining entry into two export control regimes - **MTCR and Wassenaar**, India joined the Australia Group (AG), which seeks to ensure that exports do not contribute to the development of chemical or biological weapons.

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

Background

On 19 January 2018 India formally became the 43rd member of the Australia Group (AG), the cooperative and voluntary group of countries working to counter the spread of materials, equipment and technologies that could contribute to the development or acquisition of chemical and biological weapons (CBW) by states or terrorist groups.

Significance

- ❖ India is now a member of the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Wassenaar Arrangement and now the Australia Group, three of four non-proliferation regimes. The only one remaining is the Nuclear Suppliers Group, which is stonewalled due Chinese objections.
- ❖ AG membership will help in establishing India's credentials further. Australian Group is a cooperative and voluntary group of countries working to counter the spread of materials, equipment and technologies that could contribute to the development or acquisition of chemical and biological weapons by states or terrorist groups.

PEPPER IT WITH
Wassenaar Arrangement
MTCR, NSG

About AG

The Australia Group (AG) is an informal forum of countries which, through the harmonisation of export controls, seeks to ensure that exports do not contribute to the development of chemical or biological weapons. Coordination of national export control measures assists Australia Group participants to fulfil their obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention to the fullest extent possible.

Delhi Declaration

In News

India's 69th Republic Day celebrations, held on January 26 this year, were marked by the presence of leaders from all ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

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

Key highlights

- ❖ This celebration was preceded by the Delhi Declaration, which called for deepened counterterrorism ties between India and ASEAN. The declaration touched upon **countering the misuse of the internet and the social media, addressing terrorism financing, terrorist recruitment, and a host of other issues.**

Dharma-Dhamma Conference
 President of India inaugurated 4th International Dharma-Dhamma Conference on "State and Social Order in Dharma-Dhamma Traditions" at Rajgir in Nalanda district.
 Nalanda University, in collaboration with the Centre for Study of Religion and Society, India Foundation, Ministry of External Affairs and the Vietnam Buddhist University, organised the conference from January 11 to 13 at Rajgir International Convention Centre.
 It is being organised as part of the commemorative events to celebrate the Silver Jubilee year of ASEAN-India Dialogue Partnership.

- ❖ A significant dictum included the need to combat cross-border terrorism and deprive terrorists of sanctuaries. The declaration also featured text calling for “compliance with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding counterterrorism” and to note efforts on the negotiations of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) at the United Nations (UN).
- ❖ In addition, the statement said they would strengthen cooperation to combat other transnational crimes, including people smuggling, trafficking in persons, illicit drug trafficking, cybercrime, and piracy and armed robbery against ships.

Way Ahead

This assumes significance as India has always accused Pakistan of “cross-border terrorism”, and many ASEAN countries have, in the past few years, been victims of terrorist attacks in Indonesia and Thailand among others. The language formulation in the Delhi declaration is a marked change from the 2012 Vision statement, where there was no explicit mention of terrorism and only had a commitment to foster greater security cooperation.

PEPPER IT WITH
 TPP, South China Sea Dispute, ASEAN India free trade agreement, Talanoa Dialogue of UNFCC

AAI, Lao PDR sign civil aviation cooperation agreement

In News

Celebrating 25 years of the India-ASEAN relationship, the Airports Authority of India (AAI) has signed a historic agreement with Lao Air Traffic Management, Department of Civil Aviation, Lao PDR, for providing SkyRev360, a comprehensive e-data gathering, invoicing and collection system.

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

SkyRev360

1. SkyRev360 has been developed in collaboration with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) under the Government of India's Make in India initiative.
2. This unique system is one of its kind and would help airport operators world- wide in avoiding revenue leakages, reducing redundancies, reduction in disputes, easy integration with all external systems and also help in curtailing the debt collection period to the minimum.
3. The system is compatible to any of the radar systems in the world and can be hosted on cloud servers too.

China develops underwater surveillance networks in Indian Ocean, South China Sea

China has developed a new underwater surveillance network to help its submarines get a stronger lock on targets while protecting the nation’s interests along the maritime Silk Road, which includes the Indian Ocean.

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

About

- The system, which has already been launched, works by gathering information about the underwater environment, particularly water temperature and salinity, which the navy can then use to more accurately track target vessels as well as improve navigation and positioning.

PEPPER IT WITH
 B&R Initiative, Habantota Port

- The Chinese system is based on a network of platforms — buoys, surface vessels, satellites and underwater gliders — that gather data from the South China Sea, and the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans.
- That information is then streamed to three intelligence centres — in the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea, the southern province of Guangdong, and a joint facility in South Asia — where it is processed and analysed.

Significance

- ✓ China is seeking to establish logistic bases in the Indian Ocean, much to the chagrin of India.
- ✓ The first such base was opened by China in Djibouti last year and it acquired the Hambantota port of Sri Lanka on 99 years lease for debt swap and currently developing the Gwadar port in Pakistan as part of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.
- ✓ China is involved in maritime disputes in the South and East China Seas. It claims almost all of the South China Sea and has also laid claims on the Senkaku islands under the control of Japan in the East China Sea, believed to harbour vast natural resources below their seabed.
- ✓ The US has been periodically deploying its naval ships and fighter planes in the South China Sea to assert freedom of navigation in the disputed areas.
- ✓ For submarines patrolling the sea route, or “road”, element of China’s global trade and infrastructure development plan known as the ‘Belt and Road Initiative’, which included the 21st century Maritime Silk Road, the system’s ability to not only measure, but also predict temperature and salinity at any location, any depth and at any time will be invaluable.
- ✓ The new surveillance system should enable submarines to steer a much safer course through difficult waters.

UAE and Saudi Arabia end Tax-Free Living

Background

The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, where residents had long enjoyed a tax-free and heavily subsidized existence, introduced International Monetary Fund (IMF)-backed value-added tax (VAT) on January 1, following an oil slump.

A 5% levy is imposed on most goods and services to boost revenue as the collapse in crude prices since 2014 sparked cutbacks.

UAE is expected to raise around \$3.3 billion from the tax. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia, which unveiled the biggest budget in its history, plans to spend \$261 billion this fiscal year as the government forecasts a boost in revenue from the introduction of VAT. As part of economic diversification efforts, the kingdom is broadening its investment base and boosting other non-oil income.

The IMF has recommended oil-exporting countries in the Gulf introduce taxes as one way to raise non-oil revenue. The IMF also recommends Gulf countries to introduce or expand taxes on business profits.

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

PEPPER IT WITH
GCC, Qatar crisis, OPEC

Significance

VAT is part of a long-term tax reform to help Gulf states reduce their dependence on oil revenues. VAT is an important component of the fiscal adjustment and revenue diversification plans of GCC countries and these measures are necessary for long-term fiscal sustainability.

The cost of living in the UAE is expected to rise about 1.5% this year because of the VAT.

China starts collecting environment tax

China started collecting an environment tax to better protect the environment and cut pollutant discharge, as the country’s Environmental Protection Tax Law took effect.

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

The introduction of the tax called an end to the “pollutant discharge fee” which China had been collecting for nearly 40 years.

Significance

1. This is China’s first tax clearly designed for environmental protection, which will help establish a “green” financial and taxation system and promote pollution control and treatment of pollutants.
2. Under the Environmental Protection Tax Law, which targets enterprises and public institutions that discharge listed pollutants directly into the environment, companies will pay taxes for producing noise, air and water pollutants as well as solid waste.
3. Tackling pollution has been listed as one of the “three tough battles” that China aims to win in the next three years, according to the Central Economic Work Conference earlier this month.

Species we lost in 2017 and the ones that managed to hold on

According to the updated IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) red list, here are the species that were marked

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

EXTINCT

1. **Christmas Island Pipistrelle:** This small bat found exclusively on Christmas Island, Australia was listed as critically endangered last year. Predation, loss of habitat, and diseases were pointed out as causes for its extinction.
2. **Christmas Island Whiptail-skink:** Another species endemic to Christmas Island, this lizard went extinct this year. Non-native predators and insecticide poisoning drove it over the edge.
3. **Christmas Island chained gecko:** The species is listed as extinct in the wild, which means it is now found only in a captive breeding programme.
4. **Gunthers Dwarf Burrowing skink:** Though no record of the skink has been made for more than 125 years, this native of South Africa was officially confirmed to be extinct only this year.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Red Headed Vultures,
 Orangutans, Hectors
 Dolphin

Critically endangered

1. **Western Ringtail Possum:** The number for this species has declined by almost 80 per cent in the past 10 years. Australia’s increasingly dry and hot climate has led to its dramatic decline.
2. **Yellow-breasted Bunting:** Loss of roosting site and use of pesticides are major causes of their decline.

- 3. **Plains Wanderer:** Exposure to pesticides, habitat loss, predation by foxes have all affected the survival of this small quail-like bird
- 4. **Green Poison Frog, Perret's Toad, and Rose's Mountain Toad** are also listed as critically endangered.

Vulnerable

- 1. **Snow Leopard:** Setting up of protected areas, anti-poaching measures, vaccination have helped save the mountain species of Asia.
- 2. **North Brown Kiwi & Okarito Kiwi:** Conservation efforts by the Australian Government and captive breeding has aided the change in their status.
- 3. **Aberdarecisticola:** Their status of this Kenyan warbler bird was changed after re-assessment in its habitat
- 4. **Ouvea Parakeet:** Native to Ouvea Island of France, conservation efforts by local population has helped increase its population.
- 5. **C. Duncanensis (Tortoise):** which was termed 'extinct in the wild' last year has recovered fully. A native to the Pinzon Island in Equador, it faced constant trouble from non-native rats who feed on its eggs. In order to save these endemic species of the island, conservationists started captive breeding programme and a rat eradication programme which proved a huge success and now the tortoise is down listed as vulnerable.

Zojila Pass tunnel project

In News

The Union Cabinet has approved the construction of Asia's longest bi-directional Zojila Pass tunnel at an estimated cost of Rs 6,089 crore, which will reduce the travel time through Zojila Pass to 15 minutes from the current 3.5 hours.

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

About Zojila tunnel

- 1. Zojila tunnel will be the longest bi-directional tunnel in Asia. Its construction period will be seven years because of a very difficult terrain where in some areas temperature dips to minus 45-degree celsius. The tunnel shall be an engineering marvel as first of its kind in such a geographical area.
- 2. Zojila pass is situated at an altitude of 11,578 feet on Srinagar-Kargil-Leh National Highway which remains closed during winters (December to April) due to heavy snowfall and avalanches cutting off Leh-Ladakh region from Kashmir.
- 3. The project will be implemented by the ministry of road transport and highways (MoRT&H) through the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL).

PEPPER IT WITH
Nathu-La, Doklam

Significance

- ✓ The 14.2-km long tunnel project in Jammu and Kashmir will provide all-weather connectivity between Srinagar, Kargil and Leh, which remains cut-off from the rest of India during winters due to heavy snowfall.
- ✓ The project would enhance the safety of travellers crossing Zojila Pass and reduce the travel time from 3.5 hours to 15 minutes.
- ✓ Defense forces have to face hard time ensuring supplies to border posts during winters. This pass is most strategic for the entire Kargil sector which has seen intrusion and war in the past.
- ✓ The project will bring about all round economic and socio-cultural integration of these regions.

Bomb Cyclone

In News

A giant winter “bomb cyclone” walloped the United States east coast with heavy snow and freezing cold making travel conditions treacherous and causing bone-chilling misery.

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

About Bomb Cyclone (Bombogenesis)

- Bomb cyclones are winter storms that can rival the strength of hurricanes and are so called because of the process that creates them: bombogenesis.
- It's a term that refers to a storm (generally a non-tropical one) that intensifies very rapidly. Bomb cyclones tend to happen more in the winter months and can carry hurricane-force winds and cause coastal flooding and heavy snow.
- Storms occur when a rising column of air leaves an area of low pressure at the Earth's surface, which in turn sucks in the air from surrounding areas. As that air converges, the storm starts to spin faster and faster, like a twirling ice skater who pulls in her arms, which leads to higher wind speeds. The closer you are to the center of the storm, the stronger the winds.
- Bombogenesis tends to occur when a strong jet stream high in the atmosphere interacts with an existing low-pressure system near a warm ocean current like the Gulf Stream. The jet stream pulls air out of the storm's rising column of air, causing the surface low to deepen.

Plastic microbeads ban in UK

Plastic microbeads can no longer be used in cosmetics and personal care products in the UK, after a long-promised ban came into effect. The ban initially bars the manufacture of such products and a ban on sales will follow in July.

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

Significance

Thousands of tonnes of plastic microbeads from products such as exfoliating face scrubs and toothpastes wash into the sea every year, where they harm wildlife and can ultimately be eaten by people. The UK government first pledged to ban plastic microbeads in September 2016, following a US ban in 2015.

A group of British lawmakers is calling for a new £0.25 (\$0.34) tax on disposable coffee cups. They hope a "latte levy" would force consumers to use recyclable cups and reduce waste.

The huge problem of plastic pollution choking the oceans has gained a high profile with recent revelations that there are five trillion pieces of plastic floating in the world's seas and that the debris has reached the most remote parts of the oceans, Microbeads are a small but significant part of this which campaigners argued was the easiest to prevent.

Pressure is now mounting for action on plastic bottles – a million are bought every minute around the world and they make up a third of the plastic litter in the seas. In December, the UK's environmental audit committee (EAC) of MPs called for a deposit return scheme, which has successfully increased recycling rates in other countries.

Chiru goat

In News

India’s environment ministry has ruled out the possibility of conservation breeding of the Chiru goat, a ‘near threatened’ species whose underfur is used for making the famous Shahtoosh shawls.

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

Background

Last year, the parliamentary standing committee on science & technology, environment & forests had recommended to the ministry of environment, forest and climate change (MoEFCC) to conserve and breed the Chiru goat, which can then be given to the shawl makers. The panel said this would provide a sustainable livelihood opportunity to the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

PEPPER IT WITH
Snow Leopard, Hemis National Park, Hangul

MoEFCC has clarified that conservation breeding of the Tibetan antelope for these shawls is not possible. The environment ministry informed that “it takes 3-5 hides to make a single shawl, and the wool cannot be sheared or combed, so to collect the fur the animals have to be killed.

Stumbling blocks

1. Chiru inhabits the high-altitude Tibetan plateau and requires large a expanse of land for its movement and ranging patterns to fulfil its feeding and breeding requirements. Rearing the goat in captivity is extremely difficult.
2. Any attempt to do conservation breeding of Chiru at very high-altitude regions of Ladakh (more than 3,800m) may neither be economical nor feasible as humans cannot be posted there continuously for more than 2-3 months.
3. The quality of wool depends on the cold and harsh climatic factors operating at high altitudes (3,800m up to 5,500m) where this animal occurs in nature. It therefore, may not serve the purpose, if it is kept in captivity below this altitude.

Chiru Goat

- Chiru goat, which is also known as the Tibetan antelope, has long been hunted for its underfur (Shahtoosh), which is renowned for its quality and has traditionally been transported to Srinagar, where it is woven into an extremely fine fabric used to make shawls.
- The main stronghold of the species is in the Chang Tang area of north-western Tibet.
- In 2017, the Chiru goat species was assessed as ‘near threatened’ by IUCN because their current population can only be maintained with continued high levels of protection in its natural range and strict controls on trade of the shawls made from its underfur.

Sikkim allows people to forge fraternal ties with trees

In News

Recently the Government of Sikkim came up with a unique way of preserving trees by encouraging people to forge a relationship of brotherhood or sisterhood with trees through a practice locally known as Mith/Mit or Mitini.

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

Key Highlights

- A recent notification by the Forests, Environment & Wildlife Management Department, Government of Sikkim titled Sikkim Forest Tree (Amity & Reverence) Rules 2017 states that the “State government shall allow any

As per the Forest Survey of India, 2015 the forest cover of Sikkim is 47.80 % of the State’s total geographical area. Over the past few years the State government has also started an initiative of identifying heritage trees where 21 trees of 25-ft. girth and above and 32 trees of 20-25 ft. girth have been demarcated as heritage trees.

person to associate with trees standing on his or her private land or on any public land by entering into a Mith/Mit or Mitini relationship.”

- The notification also states that a person can also adopt a tree “as if it was his or her own child in which case the tree shall be called an adopted tree.”
- A third way to forge a relationship with a tree is by “preserving a tree in remembrance of a departed relative in which case the tree shall be called a smriti tree.”
- In case an individual wants to forge a relationship with a tree which does not stand on his or her land but another’s, the person concerned shall execute an agreement with the owner and compensate him or her in terms of the market value of the timber or the wood contained in the tree. In the second scenario if the person desires to enter into a relationship with a tree located on public land then permission from the said department or agency needs to be taken.
- The Sikkim Forest Tree (Amity & Reverence) Rules also prohibit felling or damage to any tree registered as Mith/Mit or Mitini, adopted or smriti and points out that any such violation shall be treated as a forest offence.

PEPPER IT WITH
 ODF states
 Manas National Park
 Orange National Park

Environmental Performance Index

India is among the bottom five countries on the Environmental Performance Index 2018, plummeting 36 points from 141 in 2016, according to a biennial report by Yale and Columbia Universities along with the World Economic Forum.

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

The 10th EPI report ranks 180 countries on **24 performance indicators** across 10 categories covering environmental health and ecosystem vitality.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Green Climate Fund,
 International Solar Alliance,
 UNFCCC, Paris Agreement

While India is at the bottom of the list in the environmental health category, it ranks 178 out of 180 as far as air quality is concerned. Its overall low ranking — 177 among 180 countries — was linked to poor performance in the environment health policy and deaths due to air pollution categories. Switzerland leads the world in sustainability, followed by France, Denmark, Malta and Sweden in the EPI, which found that air quality is the leading environmental threat to public health.

The report was released on the sidelines of the ongoing World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Key highlights

1. It said deaths attributed to ultra-fine PM2.5 pollutants have risen over the past decade and are estimated at 1,640,113 annually in India.
2. Overall, India (at 177) and Bangladesh (179) come in near the bottom of the rankings, with Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nepal rounding out the bottom five.
3. India’s low scores are influenced by poor performance in in the Environmental Health policy objective. Deaths attributed to PM2.5 have risen over the past decade and are estimated at 1,640,113, annually [Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, 2017].
4. Despite government action, pollution from solid fuels, coal and crop residue burning, and emissions from motor vehicles continue to severely degrade the air quality for millions of Indians.
5. As countries develop, increased population growth in large cities, as well as increased industrial production and automotive transportation, continue to expose people to high levels of air pollution.

Reason for poor performance

India’s low scores are influenced by poor performance in in the Environmental Health policy objective. Deaths attributed to PM-2.5 have risen over the past decade and are estimated at 1,640,113, annually [Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, 2017].

Despite government action, pollution from solid fuels, coal and crop residue burning, and emissions from motor vehicles continue to severely degrade the air quality for millions of Indians.

Himalayan Research Fellowships scheme

In News

The union environment ministry has decided to start a ‘Himalayan Research Fellowships scheme’ to create a young pool of trained environmental managers, ecologists and socio-economists.

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

Key features

- This pool will help generate information on physical, biological, managerial and human aspects of Himalayan environment and development.
- The fellowship scheme will be executed through various universities and Institutions working in the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) and preference will be given to the Institutions from north-eastern states.
- The financial support will be provided under the National Mission on Himalayan Studies (NMHS) and the fellowships will be awarded for a maximum period of three years.
- Some of the broad thematic areas that are being focused on for research under the NMHS are water resource management including rejuvenation of springs and catchments, hydropower development, assessment and prediction of water-induced hazards, livelihood options including ecotourism opportunities, biodiversity management including recovery of threatened species and skill development.
- This is among the series of programmes that MoEFCC is running for conservation and protection of Himalayas.

PEPPER IT WITH

National Mission on Himalayan Studies
 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
 National Afforestation Programme & Green India Mission

Centre to declare 2018 as ‘national year of millets’

Nutrient-rich millets have got a boost with the Union government deciding to declare 2018 as the ‘national year of millets’. This decision has been taken following a request by Karnataka, which is the country’s leader in the millet sector.

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

Significance

- ✓ According to experts, dedicating a year for millets will not only increase awareness about its health benefits, but also result in higher demand for these drought-resistant varieties, resulting in remunerative prices for poor and marginal farmers.
- ✓ 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).

Bharat Bio typhoid shot

Bharat Biotech has received a pre-qualification from the World Health Organisation (WHO) for Typbar Typhoid Conjugate Vaccine.

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

Significance

This paves the way for supplies of the vaccine to UNICEF, Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) and Gavi supported countries.

Typbar Typhoid Conjugate Vaccine

Typbar TCV is the first typhoid vaccine clinically proven to be administered to **children from 6 months** of age to adults and confers long-term protection against typhoid fever.

A release said the product had been evaluated in human challenge studies at Oxford University and typhoid conjugate vaccines had been recommended by WHO’s Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation had supported efforts that helped generate data for the pre-qualification.

Latte Levy

- UK MPs on the Environmental Audit Committee are asking for the Government to introduce a “latte levy” – essentially a 25p charge on every disposable coffee cup bought by consumers.
- It is estimated that the UK throws away around 2.5bn disposable coffee cups a year and almost all are incinerated, exported or sent to landfill because their plastic lining makes them expensive to recycle.
- Evidence heard by the committee during its inquiry claimed that less than one per cent of coffee cups are recycled because there are only three facilities in the UK that can split the paper and plastic components.
- And last year researchers at Cardiff University concluded that charging 25p for every coffee cup would help cut the number used by up to 300m a year.

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

China builds world’s biggest air purifier

In an attempt to fight air pollution, China has constructed an experimental air purifying tower, touted to be the world’s biggest at a height of over 100 meters (328 feet).

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

The tower, built in **Xian in Shaanxi province**, has brought a positive effect on the chronic smog problem in the country.

The polluted air is sucked into the glasshouses of the tower and is then heated up by the solar energy. The hot air then moves through multiple cleaning filters and helps in reducing the pollution.

Significance

The tower has managed to produce more than 10 million cubic metres (353 million cubic feet) of clean air a day since its launch. The quality of air had improved after observations were made over a distance of 10 square kilometers in the past few months.

The tower was able to bring down the smog to moderate levels the day when air quality was severe.

Bio-toilet project

In News

The Comptroller and Auditor General’s (CAG) report on these bio-toilets echoes the findings of investigation into the widespread malfunctioning of bio-toilet: The CAG found 1,99,689 defects in 25,000 toilets.

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

The district administration of **West Khasi Hills** is the first in the North-East to provide access to sanitary bio-toilets in public places and along the national highway which is funded by the **Swacch Bharat Mission**.

Bio-Toilets

The bio-toilets, which are fitted below the coach floor underneath the lavatories, the human waste is collected from toilet and is acted upon by a colony of anaerobic bacteria that convert human waste mainly into water and bio-gases (mainly **Methane CH4 & Carbon Dioxide CO2**). **Anaerobic digestion** process is applied for the digestion of human excreta in the bio-toilets that are being fitted in passenger coaches of Indian Railways. No human excreta is thrown out on the railway track from a bio-toilet fitted in trains.

PEPPER IT WITH
Composite Ecological Task Force, USOF

DRDO scientists brought the bacteria '**Psychrophile**' from Antarctica which is used in Bio-toilet.

Way Ahead

- ✓ Confronting “irresolvable issues” on the non-functioning of the DRDO toilets, the Indian Railways have begun exploring other options including the procurement of the vacuum toilets commonly used in aircraft or trains in western countries.
- ✓ The Chennai-based Integral Coach Factory (ICF) has already floated a global tender to acquire vacuum toilets. “To begin with, these will be fitted in premier trains including the Rajdhani, Shatabdi and the Durontos.”
- ✓ The idea is to develop “hybrid toilets” by fitting vacuum toilets atop the bio-digesters already installed. Subsequently, lavatories will mainly have vacuum toilets, with just one big bio-digester installed in half portion of the guard’s cabin at the end of the train.
- ✓ This policy U-turn means not only that has time and money invested in the bio-digesters has been wasted but also that the railways will now need to pump in more funds to execute its green toilets plan.

Mankidia denied habitat in Similipal

In News

Mankidia were denied **habitat rights** inside the **Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR)** under the historic **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006**, as the State Forest Department has objected on grounds that tribal could be attacked by wild animals, especially tigers.

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

Who are Mankidia?

Mankidia, **one of the 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) in Odisha** is a marginalized group that critically depends on making rope with **siali fibre** that’s richly available in **Similipal**, would now be deprived of the non-timber forest produce.

PEPPER IT WITH
Dharma-Dhamma Conference, Magha Bihu

Other identified Odisha PVTG tribes are **Bondas, Didai, Hill Khadia and Paudi Bhuyan**.

What is Habitat?

Habitat’ as defined under Section 2(h) of the FRA (Forest Rights Act) includes the area comprising the customary habitat and such other habitats in reserved forests and protected forests of primitive tribal groups and pre-agricultural communities and other forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes.

What is PVTG?

Tribal communities are often identified by some specific signs such as primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness to contact with the community at large and backwardness. Along with these, some tribal groups have some specific features such as dependency on hunting, gathering for food, having pre-agriculture level of technology, zero or negative growth of population and extremely low level of literacy. **These groups are called Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.** There are total **75 PVTGs** identified.

PVTGs characteristics

PVTGs have some basic characteristics -they are mostly homogenous, with a small population, relatively physically isolated, social institutes cast in a simple mould, absence of written language, relatively simple technology and a slower rate of change etc.

Similipal Tiger Reserve

- Similipal, which derives its name from ‘Simul’ (Silk Cotton) tree, is a national park and a Tiger Reserve situated in the northern part of Orissa’s Mayurbhanj district.
- The tiger reserve is spread over 2750 sq km and has some beautiful waterfalls like Joranda and Barehipani.
- The park is surrounded by high plateaus and hills, the highest peak being the twin peaks of Khairiburu and Meghashini.
- The park is known for the tiger, elephant and hill mynah.
- UNESCO added this National Park to its list of Biosphere Reserves in May 2009.

Star-Rating for Garbage Free Cities

In News

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs recently launched the ‘**Protocol for Star Rating of Garbage-Free Cities**’ in Goa.

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

Star-Rating Initiative

The star-rating initiative, developed by the **Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban** will be rating cities on a **7-star rating system** based on multiple cleanliness indicators for solid waste management, which will include Door to Door Collection, bulk generator compliance, source segregation, sweeping, scientific processing of waste, scientific land filling, plastic waste management, construction and demolition management, dump remediation & citizen grievance redressal system etc.

The most significant feature of the Star-rating is that it provides stakeholders with a single metric to rate a city’s cleanliness, rather than evaluating them separately with multiple factors that contribute to a city’s overall cleanliness and garbage free status.

The **SMART** rating is being called as Single metric, Measurable, Achievable, Rigorous verification, Targeted.

Multiple cleanliness indicators:

1. Is door to door garbage collection system in place in all parts of the area
2. If people of the area segregate waste at source
3. How often sweeping is done
4. How effectively waste is managed through scientific processing
5. Status of scientific landfills
6. The way plastic waste is being managed
7. Construction and demolition management
8. Dump remediation
9. Citizen grievance redressal system

PEPPER IT WITH
UNFCCC, Swachh
Survekshan, SBM-U, NMCG

If the city is aiming for a 3-star rating or above, then it is a mandate that the city should be Open Defecation Free (ODF).

Aim

SBM-Urban’s objective of achieving a ‘clean India’ is encapsulated in the Vision statement of the star-rating protocol, stating that “All cities achieve “Garbage Free” status in any public, commercial or residential locations, all legacy waste to be scientifically managed its municipal solid waste, plastic waste and construction & demolition waste. It is expected that the Star-rating initiative will be another effective tool for achieving the objectives of Swachh Bharat Mission of “Open Defecation Free and Garbage Free India”.

Way Forward

Strategies for waste reduction, separation, processing, management and recycling and reuse are feasible, low-cost alternatives to the open incineration of solid waste, which is common now in developing cities. Where incineration is unavoidable, then combustion technologies with strict emissions controls are critical.

Improved collection, management and disposal of urban waste is one important strategy that can yield multiple improvements in both climate and health. Using anaerobic digestion, methane emissions can be captured from sewage, livestock manure, and landfill solid waste, and used as biogas or bio-methane, a fuel for cooking, heating or power needs. Sustainable waste management activities can serve as a catalyst for local economic development as well.

India registers significant decline in under five child mortality rates

Present scenario

- Sample Registration System (SRS) Bulletins 2016 showed a significant decline in under-five child mortality. According to the bulletin, under-five child mortality (U5MR) of India showed an impressive decline by 9%, 4 points decline from 43 per 1000 in 2015 to 39 in 2016. The rate of decline has doubled over the last year.
- Not only this, number of under-five deaths for the first time in the country have come down to below 1 million with nearly 120,000 fewer under-five deaths in 2016 as compared to 2015. Most of the states have shown good progress in reduction of under-five child mortality from the previous year, except Chattisgarh, Delhi and Uttarakhand, which have shown a slight increase over the previous year and Telangana, which has shown no change in 2016.
- According to the SRS Bulletin, the gender gap in India for child survival is reducing steadily; the gender difference between female and male under-five mortality rates has now reduced to 11% which was as high as 17% in 2014. The current under-five mortality for male child is

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

PEPPER IT WITH
One Stop Centre
Scheme
SWADHAR Greh
Initiative
Mahila E-Haat

37 per 1000, while for female child is 41 per 1000 live births. Amongst the bigger states, seven states (Chattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, MP, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana) have reversed the gender gap in survival of female child, while four of these have reversed the gender gap for under-five survival. These are Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.

- Telangana, West Bengal, Odisha, Punjab and Delhi have depicted less than 5% gap in mortality of female child and are within striking distance to reverse the gender gap. The maximum gender gap in survival of under-five for female child is in Bihar (46% higher mortality for female child), followed by Haryana (23%), Kerala (20%), Assam, Karnataka (19%) and Rajasthan (17%).
- Further, the SRS Bulletin also shows that the neonatal mortality rate has reduced by 1 point from 25 per 1000 live births to 24 per 1000.

Significance

- ✓ The results signify that the strategic approach of the Government is yielding dividends and the efforts of focusing on low performing states is paying off. India with the current rate of decline of U5MR is on track to meet the SDG target for under-five child mortality of 25 by 2030.
- ✓ These remarkable achievements are the result of countrywide efforts to increase the health service coverage through various initiatives of the Government that include strengthening of service delivery; quality assurance; RMNCH+A interventions; strengthening human resources and community processes; information and knowledge; drugs and diagnostics, and supply chain management, etc.

IWDRI-2018

The two-day International Workshop on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (IWDRI) was successfully concluded, setting the stage for taking the dialogue on resilient infrastructure forward at the global level.

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

The Workshop identified Best Practices in the Infrastructure Sector, as well as key issues in existing practices and ways to address them. Priority areas for collaboration on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure were also identified.

The Workshop was organised by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) jointly with United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR).

PEPPER IT WITH
 World Conference on
 Disaster Management
 UNISDR
 National Disaster
 Management Plan 2016

Significance

- Resilient infrastructure is important not only for the aggregate economic growth but also for ending poverty.
- Our actions today, through investment in infrastructure, can reduce or increase the future risk. We need to shape policies that seek to not only reduce risk but also stop the creation of new risks.
- If we are able to build complete resilience in the country, there are studies which suggest that our GDP could go up by upto 2 per cent.
- This workshop has explored new dimensions, opportunities and challenges to resilient infrastructure. Deliberations were crucial not only for achieving the targets identified in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction but also for achieving Prime Minister’s 10-point agenda, outlined during the Asian Ministerial Conference on DRR 2016.

NASA to launch two missions to explore nearest space

About mission

- NASA has announced that it would launch two missions to explore the little-understood area of 96 km above Earth’s surface.
- The Global-scale Observations of the Limb and Disk (GOLD) mission will be launched in January 2018, and the Ionospheric Connection Explorer (ICON) will be launched later this year.
- NASA said the two missions were complementary. ICON will be in low-Earth orbit, at 560 km above Earth, like a close-up camera while GOLD will be in a geostationary orbit over the Western Hemisphere, about 35,398 km above the planet’s surface. It will help in full-disk view of the ionosphere and the upper atmosphere beneath it every half hour.
- GOLD will also explore how the upper atmosphere reacts to geomagnetic storms, which are temporary disturbances of Earth’s magnetic field caused by solar activity. At night, GOLD will examine disruptions in the ionosphere, which are dense, unpredictable bubbles of charged gas that appear over the equator and tropics, sometimes interfering with radio communications.

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

PEPPER IT WITH
 Icon and Gold program of NASA
 GSLV MK3
 IRNSS

Aim

GOLD and ICON will team up to explore the ionosphere, a boundary area between Earth and the space where particles have been cooked into a sea of electrically-charged electrons and ions by the Sun’s radiation. These layers of near-Earth space are increasingly becoming a part of human domain as it is home to radio signals used to guide airplanes, ships and Global Positioning System satellites.

One of the missions’ goals is to measure how upper atmosphere changes in response to hurricanes and geomagnetic storms.

Pratyush-fastest supercomputer of India

India’s supercomputing prowess moved up several notches after it unveiled Pratyush, an array of computers that can deliver a peak power of 6.8 petaflops. One petaflop is a million billion floating point operations per second and is a reflection of the computing capacity of a system.

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

About

- Pratyush is the fourth fastest supercomputer in the world dedicated for weather and climate research, and follows machines in Japan, USA and the United Kingdom. It will also move an Indian supercomputer from the 300s to the 30s in the Top500 list, a respected international tracker of the world’s fastest supercomputers.

Top five fastest supercomputers of the world

Rank	Site	Rpeak (TFlop/s)	Power (KW)
1	National Supercomputing Center in Wuxi, China	1,25,435.9	15,371
2	National Super Computer Centre in Guangzhou, China	54,902.4	17,808
3	Swiss National Supercomputing Centre, Switzerland	25,326.3	2,272
4	Japan Agency for Marine Earth Science and Technology, Japan	28,192	1,350
5	DOE/SC/Oak Ridge National Laboratory, United States	27,112.5	8,209



Rpeak values are based on clock rate of CPU

Source: Top500.org

- The machines will be installed at two government institutes: 4.0 petaflops HPC facility at IITM, Pune; and 2.8 petaflops facility at the National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecast, Noida.
- A key function of the machine’s computing power would be monsoon forecasting using a dynamical model. This requires simulating the weather for a given month (say March) and letting a custom-built model calculate how the actual weather will play out over June, July, August and September.
- With the new system, it would be possible to map regions in India at a resolution of 3 km and the globe at 12 km.

India misses Kala Azar elimination deadline

India has missed the 2017 deadline announced for elimination of Kala Azar (black fever). In fact, endemic blocks have increased from 61 to 68 in 17 districts of Bihar and Jharkhand.

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

A request to the Ministry of Rural Development for expediting construction of concrete houses, pending since 2001-02, was the primary reason behind the failure to control the disease.

KA vector needs to be eliminated to end Kala Azar. As the endemic blocks have majority of houses made from wood, it is very difficult to eliminate the vector as it dwells in the wooden structure and escapes various measures to kill it. Hence, to stop the infection transmission, pucca houses need to be built. Secondly even after treatment of Kala Azar patients, it is the PKDL cases which become a source for future KA cases.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Swine Flu
 Tourette syndrome
 Seasonal affective disorder

Elimination is defined as reducing the annual incidence of Kala Azar (KA) to less than 1 case per 10,000 people at the sub-district level.

Further, a little-known skin condition called Post Kala Azar Dermal Leishmaniasis (PKDL) — a red flag for transmission of KA — has been growing steadily over the past few years.

About KA

- ❖ Kala azar is the second largest parasitic killer in the world. Along with Chagas disease and sleeping sickness, kalaazar is one of the most dangerous neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). Only malaria is more-deadly.
- ❖ Kala azar is caused by bites from female phlebotomine sandflies – the vector (or transmitter) of the leishmania parasite.
- ❖ Initially, leishmania parasites cause skin sores or ulcers at the site of sand fly bites. If the disease progresses, it attacks the immune system. Kala azar presents after two to eight months, with more generalised symptoms including prolonged fever and weakness.

ISRO launches 100th satellite

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched a Cartosat-2 series weather observation satellite, along with 30 other spacecraft, using its Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C40), which lifted off from the SatishDhawan Space Centre (SDSC) at Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.

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

The PSLV-C40 successfully placed the Cartosat-2 series satellite in a sun synchronous orbit. This successful launch comes about four months after Isro’s PSLV-C39 failed following a technical snag involving its heat shield.

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

Cartosat-2

Cartosat-2 Series Satellite is the primary satellite carried by PSLV-C40. This remote sensing satellite is similar in configuration to earlier satellites in the series and is intended to augment data services to the users.

The imagery sent by satellite will be useful for cartographic applications, urban and rural applications, coastal land use and regulation, utility management like road network monitoring, water distribution, creation of land use maps, change detection to bring out geographical and manmade features and various other Land Information System (LIS) as well as Geographical Information System (GIS) applications.

IPrism

- The Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM), Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), in collaboration with ASSOCHAM and ERICSSON India, has launched a one of its kind Intellectual Property (IP) Competition 'IPrism' for college and university students.
- This competition invites students to submit films on piracy & counterfeiting under two categories of 30 and 60 seconds. Another category in the competition is for a mobile gaming app on IP.
- The competition aims to foster a culture of innovation and creativity in the younger generation. It will provide young creators a unique opportunity to see their creations recognized on a national platform.
- Counterfeiting and Piracy cause significant loss to the industry and pose serious safety threats to the consumers. Generating awareness can help in tackling such crimes since limited knowledge about their adverse social and economic impact leads to circulation and consumption of pirated content and fake goods.

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

The National IPR Policy was adopted on 12th May, 2016 to create a vibrant IP ecosystem in the country. Creating IPR Awareness through outreach and promotional activities is the first and foremost objective of the Policy. CIPAM, a professional body under DIPP, has been actively involved in many activities including a nation-wide IPR awareness campaign.

iCreate

Indian Prime Minister and his Israeli counterpart inaugurated the iCreate centre in Ahmedabad. Called as the **International Centre for Entrepreneurship and Technology (iCreate)**, the venture has been started to promote and nurture entrepreneurs by providing them finance, mentors and technology.

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

What is iCreate?

A joint venture between Gujarat Mineral Development Corporation Limited (GMDC) and Gujarat Entrepreneurship and Venture Promotion Foundation (GEVPPF), iCreate is an independent centre to promote 'Start-up India' scheme. The centre aims to provide technology and assistance to "the innovative and imaginative minds in their entrepreneurial journey."

The 'i' of iCreate has been kept in small letters for a reason. The biggest hurdle towards creativity is 'I' becoming big.

Business leaders from various sectors have associated with the project.



How does iCreate function?

iCreate provides 13-week grooming program to equip an individual with the right skill and tools required in the entrepreneurial world. At the end of this, the participants have the option to pitch their idea for further development. The proposals are evaluated by an independent panel and selected subsequently. Financial assistance up to Rs 50,000 is provided by the venture for few deserving pitches. Apart from this, a platform is also provided for the participants to meet leaders from various sectors.

PEPPER IT WITH
Jerusalem, West Bank
Two Nation Solution

Students, existing entrepreneurs, traders, small sized businessmen can participate in the program. The skeleton business panel will be evaluated by the mentors and further guidance will be provided.

New programmes of DST and SERB for young scientists and researchers

Union Minister for Science & Technology announced four schemes to promote young scientists and researchers in the country. The scheme primarily aims at early recognition and reward to young talent in the field of science.

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

TARE Scheme

In a bid to tap the potential of trained faculty in Universities, colleges and private academic institutions, 500 teachers will be assisted under the Teacher Associateship for Research Excellence (TARE) scheme. It will connect them to leading public funded institutions like IIT, IISc or national institutions like CSIR, preferably nearer to their place of work to pursue research. They will be paid Rs. 5 lakh yearly, and a monthly out-of-pocket expense of Rs. 5,000. This will be in addition to the salary from their existing employer.

PEPPER IT WITH
CSIR
Vajra Scheme
Farmer Zone

Overseas Visiting Doctoral Fellowship

This scheme offers support to 100 PhD scholars for training in universities/laboratories abroad upto 12 months during their doctoral research. They would be given a monthly fellowship equivalent to US \$ 2000, one-time contingency allowance of Rs. 60,000/- to cover travel and visa fee.

The Distinguished Investigator Award

It offers a maximum of 100 fellowships to principal investigators of SERB/DST projects. This one-time career award will be judged on the basis of a completed project. This is aimed at giving early recognition and reward to young scientists.

The selected 100 researchers will be given a monthly fellowship of Rs. 15,000/- for three years and an optional research grant, based on peer review of the project proposal submitted.

AWSAR

AWSAR(Augmenting Writing Skills for Articulating Research) of National Council of Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC), DST has been initiated to encourage, empower and endow popular science writing through newspapers, magazines, blogs, social media, etc. by young PhD Scholars and Post-Doctoral Fellows during the course of their higher studies and research pursuits. As over 20,000 youth are awarded PhD in S&T every year in India, the scheme aims to tap this tremendous potential to popularize & communicate science and also to inculcate scientific temperament in the masses.

AWSAR carries monetary incentive of Rs.10,000/- each for 100 best entries from PhD scholars in a year along with a Certificate of Appreciation besides getting the story published/projected in mass media.

In addition, three leading stories from the selected hundred would also be awarded cash prize of Rs. 1,00,000/-, Rs. 50,000/- and Rs. 25,000/- respectively. Further, twenty entries would be selected from articles submitted exclusively by Post-Doctoral Fellows relating to their line of Research for monetary incentive of Rs. 10,000/- each and the most outstanding story to be given a cash prize of Rs. 1,00,000/-.

Parker Solar Probe

NASA's historic Parker Solar Probe mission will revolutionize our understanding of the sun, where changing conditions can propagate out into the solar system, affecting Earth and other worlds. Parker Solar Probe will travel through the sun's atmosphere, closer to the surface than any spacecraft before it, facing brutal heat and radiation conditions — and ultimately providing humanity with the closest-ever observations of a star.

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

In order to unlock the mysteries of the sun's atmosphere, Parker Solar Probe will use Venus' gravity during seven flybys over nearly seven years to gradually bring its orbit closer to the sun. The spacecraft will fly through the sun's atmosphere as close as 3.9 million miles to our star's surface, well within the orbit of Mercury and more than seven times closer than any spacecraft has come before. (Earth's average distance to the sun is 93 million miles.)

Launch Window: July 31 – Aug. 19, 2018
Launch Site: NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Florida
Launch Vehicle: Delta IV-Heavy with Upper Stage

Flying into the outermost part of the sun's atmosphere, known as the corona, for the first time, Parker Solar Probe will employ a combination of in situ measurements and imaging to revolutionize our understanding of the corona and expand our knowledge of the origin and evolution of the solar wind. It will also make critical contributions to our ability to forecast changes in Earth's space environment that affect life and technology on Earth.

Aim

The primary science goals for the mission are to trace how energy and heat move through the solar corona and to explore what accelerates the solar wind as well as solar energetic particles. Scientists have sought these answers for more than 60 years, but the investigation requires sending a probe right through the 2,500 degrees Fahrenheit heat of the corona. Today, this is finally possible with cutting-edge thermal engineering advances that can protect the mission on its dangerous journey. Parker Solar Probe will carry four instrument suites designed to study magnetic fields, plasma and energetic particles, and image the solar wind.

Unknown microbe identified in space

Astronauts aboard the International Space Station (ISS) have for the first time identified microbes in space without having to samples back to Earth for tests.

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

Way Ahead

The ability to identify microbes in space could aid in the ability to diagnose and treat astronaut ailments in real time, as well as assisting in the identification of DNA-based life on other planets. It could also benefit other experiments aboard the orbiting laboratory.

Chemical ban has helped closing up of ozone layer hole

- With the declining levels of ozone-destroying chlorine, scientists have for the first time observed less ozone depletion.
- The findings showed that an international ban on chlorine-containing manmade chemicals called chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) has resulted in about 20 per cent less ozone depletion during the Antarctic winter from 2005 to 2016.
- The Antarctic ozone hole should continue to recover gradually as CFCs leave the atmosphere, but complete recovery will take decades.

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

Flamingo festival

The Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary, considered one of the biggest habitat for some hundreds of pelicans and other birds, hosted the 'Flamingo Festival,' in Doravari Satrammandal, in Nellore district.

Elaborate arrangements are being made for the annual fete, to be held in the second week of March in Sulluripeta division in the district. Located about 20 km north of the Pulicat Lake on the Andhra Pradesh-Tamil Nadu border, the sanctuary is spread in about 459 hectares.

Different species of migratory birds, roosting migrants and some rare and endangered species from various parts of the world visit the habitat from October to March every year.

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

SpaceX launches secretive Zuma mission

SpaceX blasted off a secretive U.S. government payload known as Zuma, a mission whose nature — and the agency behind it — remains a mystery.

SpaceX chief executive Elon Musk's goal is to perfect the technique so that rockets can one day become just as reusable as airplanes, thereby lowering the cost of space travel.

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

Largest volcanic eruption in the ocean

Researchers have found that the world's largest deep ocean volcanic eruption happened in New Zealand. Named as Havre, the deep ocean volcanic eruption was first discovered in 2002. A solidified volcanic rock known as pumice raft – 400 square kilometres in size – found floating in the ocean near New Zealand in 2012 showed that underwater eruption had occurred.

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

The eruption involved 14 aligned vents causing a 'massive rupture'. When this rock was produced by the volcano, it rose through the water column onto the sea surfaced and then it was dispersed by wind and sea currents.

It was a large-scale eruption, approximately equivalent to the biggest eruption we've seen on land in the 20th Century.

First India-designed vaccine passes WHO test

For the first time, a vaccine conceived and developed from scratch in India has been “pre-qualified” by the World Health Organisation.

The Rotavac vaccine, developed by the Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech Limited last year, was included in India’s national immunization programme. To be “pre-qualified” means that the vaccine can be sold internationally to several countries in Africa and South America.

The Rotavac vaccine protects against childhood diarrhoea caused by the rotavirus and was built on strain of the virus isolated at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences here over 30 years ago.

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

PEPPER IT WITH
Mission Indradhanus
Polio Vaccination

India included the Rotavac in its national immunisation in 2016, with about 35 million doses delivered till date. A dose costs between ₹ 55-60, according to the company.

The Pune-based Serum International also has developed a rotavirus vaccine called Rabishield that has also been included in India’s immunization programme.

Rotavirus is responsible for an estimated 36% of hospitalisations for childhood diarrhoea around the world and for an estimated 200,000 deaths in low- and middle-income countries.

Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP)

In News

Recent data put out by the Union Health Ministry’s IDSP has indicated that food poisoning is one of the commonest outbreaks reported in 2017. This is apart from acute diarrhoeal disease (ADD).

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

Objective

Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) is a **centrally sponsored scheme under NHM** implemented in all States & UTs. The main objectives and strategies include strengthening /maintaining a decentralized laboratory based IT-enabled disease surveillance system for epidemic prone diseases to monitor disease trends and to detect and respond to outbreaks in early rising phase through trained **Rapid Response Teams**.

The International Health Regulations (2005) or 'IHR (2005)' are an international law which helps countries working together to save lives and livelihoods caused by the international spread of diseases and other health risks. The IHR (2005) aim to prevent, protect against, control and respond to the international spread of disease while avoiding unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade. The IHR (2005) are also designed to reduce the risk of disease spread at international airports, ports and ground crossings.

Target Achieved

Presently, more than 90% districts report weekly data through e-mail/portal (www.idsp.nic.in). The weekly data are analyzed by SSU/DSU for disease trends. Whenever there is rising trend of illnesses, it is investigated by the RRT to diagnose and control the outbreak

Organization Structure

- Central Surveillance Unit (CSU):** Integrated administratively and financially with National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).

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

- 2. **State Surveillance Unit (SSU):** One in each State/UT with a regular officer identified as State Surveillance Officer (SSO). Supported by 7 contractual staff.
- 3. **District Surveillance Unit (DSU):** One in each district with a regular officer as District Surveillance Officer (DSO). Supported by 3 contractual staff

PEPPER IT WITH
Intensified Mission
Indradhanush, NVBDCP

IDSP Reporting

The data is being collected on ‘S’ syndromic; ‘P’ probable; & ‘L’ laboratory formats using standard case definitions. The data collected also includes meteorological data, historical data, and remote sensing inputs.

The top 4 diseases making up these alerts are Acute Diarrhea disease, food poisoning, measles, and dengue.

Significance

IDSP is a disease surveillance scheme under the Ministry of Health and Family Affairs in India, assisted by the World Bank. The scheme aims to strengthen disease surveillance for infectious diseases to detect and respond to outbreaks quickly. A large amount of data on disease reports are collected in order to be able to identify the outbreak of a disease, identify its causes and take corresponding preventive and responsive measures. An early warning system has been put into place in order to take timely preventive steps.

About the Affordable Medicines and Reliable Implants for Treatment (AMRIT)

In News

In a bid to make low-cost medicines more accessible, the health ministry is working to increase the number of AMRIT pharmacy stores by four times from the existing 111 outlets.

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

ABOUT AMRIT

- 1. In a bid to reduce the cost of treating the two health issues, cancer and heart diseases, that are on the rise in India, the Ministry of Health and Family welfare has this scheme.
- 2. The AMRIT pharmacy would be selling 202 cancer and 186 cardio-vascular drugs, and 148 types of cardiac implants at very affordable prices.
- 3. Patients can buy medicines and implants at 50 to 60 percent cheaper prices than the open market from AMRIT outlet.
- 4. The project has been floated in a tie-up with government-owned HLL Lifecare Ltd (HLL) which is deputed to establish and run the AMRIT chain of pharmacies across the country.
- 5. The primary goal of AMRIT is to make available and accessible, at very affordable rates, all drugs, implants, surgical disposables that are not dispensed free of cost by the hospitals.

PEPPER IT WITH
Social Marketing Scheme,
Free Supply Scheme, NLEP,
AMRUT

Significance

Cancer treatment in India has been largely unaffordable for the poor and the middle class, given it costs Rs. 2.5 lakh for six months of treatment. The cancer drug market is unregulated, thus riddled with high prices as compared to their product cost. Retailers charge dynamic rates based on the patient’s income group, offering marginal discounts. This results in most of the middle-

class patients ending up paying 70 to 80 per cent of the MRP and disallowing them of health care a basic right in constitution. With the help of AMRIT scheme the under-privileged patient are provided medicines etc. at the subsidies rates.

India commissions high performance computer system Mihir

India has commissioned its High-Performance Computer (HPC) system - named 'Mihir' (meaning Sun) - at the National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting at Noida, Uttar Pradesh.

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

The facility will improve India's capacity in weather forecasting and help it to come out with weather forecast down to the block level (for about 6500 blocks) across the country later this year. At present, such facility is available at district level.

PEPPER IT WITH
SahasraT
Aaditya

The new system will be India's largest HPC facility in terms of peak capacity and performance and will propel India's ranking from the 368th position to the 30th in the list of top 500 HPC facilities in the world.

Growth of Indian Economy

Why in News?

Indian economy is projected to grow at 7.2% in 2018-19 and 7.4% in 2019-20 as per the **World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2018** report of the United Nations. The report indicates that the outlook for India remains largely positive, underpinned by robust private consumption and public investment as well as ongoing structural reforms.

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

- Recently, Moody’s rating agency upgraded India’s local and foreign currency issuer rating to **Baa2 with a stable outlook from Baa3** on the expectation that continued progress in India’s economic reforms will enhance India’s growth potential over time.
- According to World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business 2018 Report, **India’s ranking improved by 30 positions to 100th rank in 2018**. As per the World Economic Forum, India’s rank in Global Competitiveness Index is 40 out of 137 countries in 2017-18.
- The gross FDI flows to India in 2016-17 amounted to US\$ 60.2 billion, as compared to US\$ 55.6 billion in 2015-16 and US\$ 45.1 billion in 2014-15.
- **Share of public sector** in total Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) increased to 25.2% in 2015-16 from 22% in 2014-15 in 2015-16 (the latest year for which data is available).

The Government of India has taken various initiatives to improve the confidence in the Indian economy and boost the growth of the economy and which, inter-alia, include; **fillip to manufacturing, concrete measures for transport and power sectors as well as other urban and rural infrastructure and comprehensive reforms in the foreign direct investment policy**. The confidence in the Indian economy has increased on account of policy measures taken up by the government and Reserve Bank of India.

- Push to infrastructure development by giving infrastructure status to affordable housing, higher allocation to highway construction, and focus on coastal connectivity.
- For highways development the **Bharatmala Pariyojana** has been launched.

- The government has announced a phased program for bank recapitalization to the tune of about Rs 2.11 lakh crore over the next two years. This is expected to encourage banks to enhance lending.
 - The **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code** was enacted to achieve insolvency resolution in a time bound manner.
 - Lower income tax for companies with annual turnover up to Rs 50 crore and, a major push to digital economy.
 - The introduction of the Goods and Services Tax has provided a significant opportunity to improve growth momentum by reducing barriers to trade, business and related economic activities.
 - Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reduced the repo rate by 200 basis points in 3 years (2015 to 2017).
 - RBI undertook many steps to address the vulnerabilities in the banking system, that inter-alia include, issuing the framework to revitalise the distressed assets in the economy and establishment of **Central Repository of Information on Large Credits to reduce information asymmetry.**
- ❖ WESP report is a joint product of **the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA), UNCTAD and the five UN regional commissions** (Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)).
 - ❖ The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) also contributed to the report.
 - ❖ The world economy has strengthened as lingering fragilities related to the global financial crisis subside.
 - ❖ India will be the fastest growing major economy in the world according to the report.
- PEPPER IT WITH**
GFCF, ESCAP, UNWTO,
Global Financial Crisis, CSO

Electoral Bond

In order to cleanse the system of political funding in the country and in keeping with the government's desire to move to a cashless economy, electoral bonds scheme has been floated. **The scheme, announced during the 2017 Budget**, aims to account the donations made to all major political parties.

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

- An electoral bond is designed to be a bearer instrument like a Promissory Note — in effect, it will be similar to a bank note that is **payable to the bearer on demand and free of interest.**
- It can be purchased by any citizen of India or a body incorporated in India.
- The electoral bonds **will not bear the name of the donor.** In essence, the donor and the party details will be available with the bank, but the political party might not be aware of who the donor is.
- The intention is to ensure that all the donations made to a party will be accounted for in the balance sheets without exposing the donor details to the public.
- The bonds will be issued in **multiples of ₹1,000, ₹10,000, ₹1 lakh, ₹10 lakh and ₹1 crore and will be available at specified branches of State Bank of India.**
- They can be bought by the donor with a KYC-compliant account. Donors can donate the bonds to their party of choice which can then be cashed in via the party's verified account within 15 days.

- Every political party in its returns will have to disclose the amount of donations it has received through electoral bonds to the Election Commission. The entire transactions would be through banking instruments.
- The bonds will be available for purchase **for a period of 10 days each in the beginning of every quarter**, i.e. in January, April, July and October as specified by the Central Government. **An additional period of 30 days** shall be specified by the Central Government in the year of Lok Sabha elections.

Every party that is registered under section 29A of the **Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951** (43 of 1951) and has secured **at least one per cent of the votes polled in the most recent Lok Sabha or State election** will be allotted a verified account by the Election Commission of India. **Electoral bond transactions can be made only via this account.**

History of Election Funding in India

- In 1979, political parties were exempted from income- and wealth tax, provided they filed annual returns including audited accounts, listed donations of Rs 10,000 and above, and disclosed the identities of such donors.
- An amendment to the Companies Act in 1985 restored **corporate funding which was banned in 1968**. Companies could donate up to 5% of their average net profit over the previous three years.
- **Dinesh Goswami Committee Report (1990), and the Indrajit Gupta Committee Report (1998), recommended partial state funding of elections.**
- In 1998, the government provided **partial state subsidy in the form of allocation of free time for national and state parties on state TV and radio.**
- In 2003, the NDA government made individual and company donations **fully tax-deductible**. However, the cap on how much companies could contribute remained.
- The government now wants to remove this limit through the Electoral Bonds; individual cash contributions to parties have been capped at Rs 2,000.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Kanwar Lal Gupta vs Amar Nath Chawla & Ors, Income Tax Act-1961, Election Commission of India, Promissory notes

CABE

- The 65th Meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) was held under the Chairmanship of Union Human Resource Development Minister in January 2018.
- Several aspects of different level of education and how efforts can be made to improve educational levels of the students was discussed at the meeting.
- At the meeting the National Assessment Survey (NAS) District-wise report card was released. NCPCR also launched **POSCO-EBox**, an online complaint system for confidential registration of complaints regarding sexual offence against children.
- Education is a national agenda which empowers the individual, family, society and the nation. The meeting resulted in adoption of following resolutions:
 1. To launch **‘Operation Digital Board’** in all schools in five years which will be undertaken jointly by Centre, State, CSR, and community. Students will be empowered with 360 degree information with interesting learning experience and teacher accountability will also increase.
 2. To ensure Quality, Equity, Accessibility, Accountability and Affordability in education by pro-active action and plan.

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

- 3. Commitment to promote **Swacch Bharat, Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat, Padhe Bharat, Sugamya Bharat and physical education.**
- 4. Resolve to promote human value education, life skill education, experiential learning to bring out good human beings out of the education system.

PEPPER IT WITH

Swachh Mahavidyalaya, Unnat Bharat, Digital Initiatives in Higher Education, Physical Education

About CAFE

The Central Advisory Board of Education, the oldest and the most important advisory body of the Government of India in education was first established in 1920 and dissolved in 1923 as a measure of economy. **It was revived in 1935 and has been in existence ever since.** The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) is the highest advisory body to advise the Central and State Governments in the field of education. The Board meets at least once every year and it cannot have a gap of more than two years between two consecutive meetings of the Board

Following are the main functions of CABE :

- a) To review the progress of education from time to time.
- b) To appraise the extent and manner in which the education policy has been implemented by the Central and State Governments, and other concerned agencies, and to give appropriate advice in the matter.
- c) To advice regarding coordination between the Central and State Governments/UT Administrations, State.

LEADS Index

- The **Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS)** index, a composite indicator to assess international trade logistics across states and Union territories, is based on a stakeholders’ survey **conducted by Deloitte for the ministry of commerce and industry.** It was topped by Gujarat.
- Logistics, or the management of the flow of resources such as cargo, documents, information and funds through a range of activities and services between points of origin and destination, is a key parameter in deciding the trade competitiveness of a state or country.
- LEADS is loosely based on the World Bank’s biannual Logistics Performance Index (LPI), on which India was ranked 35 among 160 countries in 2016, up from 54 in 2014.
- LEADS is based on **eight parameters:** infrastructure, services, timeliness, track and trace, competitiveness of pricing, safety of cargo, operating environment and regulatory process. The study is based on a perception-based survey of 2,885 respondents across the country over a six-week period.
- The study found that supply chain efficiencies and economies of scale are yet to be unlocked, mostly due to suboptimal investment in building scale in infrastructure, automation, human capital and technology.
- **It highlighted problems** such as inadequate terminal capacity, poor last-mile terminal connectivity and issues in regulatory services provided by government agencies, among others.

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

In a major push to developing an integrated logistics framework in the country, including industrial parks, cold chains and warehousing facilities, the government last year granted **infrastructure status to the logistics sector,** enabling the industry to access cheaper finances.

India’s logistics cost is **13% of GDP (among highest in the world)**

- It also underlined issues specific to certain states. For example, respondents reported that labour unions created impediments for trade efficiency in states like West Bengal, Kerala, Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh.
- The study identified **indicative focus areas such as** enhancing capacity, developing integrated and balanced multimodal logistics and transport infrastructure, focussing on standardization, developing regulatory infrastructure, modernizing logistics infrastructure and transport fleet.

Global Manufacturing Index (WEF)

The World Economic Forum (WEF) has ranked **India at 30th position** on a global manufacturing index - below China's 5th place but above other BRICS peers, Brazil, Russia and South Africa.

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

The report, which analyses development of modern industrial strategies and urges collaborative action, has categorised **100 countries into four groups** –

- I. Leading (strong current base, high level of readiness for future)
- II. High Potential (limited current base, high potential for future)
- III. Legacy (strong current base, at risk for future)
- IV. Nascent (limited current base, low level of readiness for future)

The report has been developed in collaboration with **A T Kearney and calls for new and innovative approaches to public-private collaboration are needed to accelerate transformation.**

Japan has been found to have the best structure of production in the Geneva-based WEF's first 'Readiness for the future of production report'.

The 25 'leading' countries are in the best position to gain as production systems stand

on the brink of exponential change. **India has been placed in the 'Legacy'**. China figures among 'leading countries', while Brazil and South Africa are in 'nascent' ones.

- India, **the 5th-largest manufacturer in the world** with a total manufacturing value added of over USD 420 billion in 2016, its manufacturing sector has grown by over 7 per cent per year on average in the past three decades and accounts for **16-20 per cent of India's GDP**.
- The demand for Indian manufactured products is rising. India has room for improvement across the drivers of production, except for demand environment where it ranks in the top 5.
- WEF listed human capital and sustainable resources as the two key challenges for India and said the country needs to continue to raise the capabilities of its relatively young and fast-growing labour force.
- This entails upgrading education curricula, revamping vocational training programmes and improving digital skills, the WEF said, while adding that India should continue to diversify its energy sources and reduce emissions as its manufacturing sector continues to expand.

PEPPER IT WITH

Fourth industrial revolution, Make in India Programme, Labour Laws in India

Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF)

Why in News?

Himachal Pradesh launched the Zero Budget Natural Farming project with the motive that farmers of the state would adopt organic farming.

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

ZBNF is a set of farming methods, and also a grassroots peasant movement, which has spread to various states in India. It has attained wide success in southern India, especially the southern Indian state of Karnataka where it first evolved.

- The neoliberalization of the Indian economy led to a deep agrarian crisis **that is making small scale farming an unviable vocation**. Privatized seeds, inputs, and markets are inaccessible and expensive for peasants.
- Indian farmers increasingly find themselves in a **vicious cycle of debt**, because of the high production costs, high interest rates for credit, the volatile market prices of crops, the rising costs of fossil fuel based inputs, and private seeds.
- More than a quarter of a million farmers have committed suicide in India in the last two decades. Various studies have linked farmer's suicides to debt. Debt is a problem for farmers of all sizes in India. **Under such conditions, 'zero budget' farming promises to end a reliance on loans and drastically cut production costs, ending the debt cycle for desperate farmers.**
- The word 'budget' refers to credit and expenses, thus the phrase **'Zero Budget' means without using any credit, and without spending any money on purchased inputs**. 'Natural farming' means farming with Nature and without chemicals.
- The practices not only protect soil from degradation but also help in retaining soil fertility. They also lower the cost of inputs of farmers and give better capacity to increase their income.

- ❖ The basic "toolkit" of ZBNF methods was put together by **Palekar**.
- ❖ Legumes are of the **dicot group and are nitrogen-fixing plants**.
- ❖ Rice and wheat are examples of **Monocots** which supply other elements like potash, phosphate and sulphur.

Some other principles of ZBNF

- I. Intercropping
- II. Contours and bunds
- III. Local species of earthworms
- IV. Cow dung

PEPPER IT WITH

Mr Subhash Palekar,
Doubling of Farmer income,
Monsoon, Climate Change,
Spiritual Farming

The four pillars of ZBNF are:

1. **Jivamrita/Jeevamrutha** is a fermented microbial culture. It provides nutrients, but most importantly, acts as a catalytic agent that promotes the activity of microorganisms in the soil, as well as increases earthworm activity.
 - Jeevamrutha is prepared by putting 200 liters of water in a barrel; Add 10 Kg fresh local cow dung and 5 to 10 liters aged cow urine; Add 2 Kg of Jaggery (a local type of brown sugar), 2 Kg of pulse flour and a handful of soil from the bund of the farm. Stir the solution well and let it ferment for 48 hours in the shade. Now jeevamrutha is ready for application. 200 liters of jeevamrutha is sufficient for one acre of land.
2. **Bijamrita/beejamrutha** is a treatment used for seeds, seedlings or any planting material. Bijamrita is effective in protecting young roots from fungus as well as from soil-borne and seedborne diseases that commonly affect plants after the monsoon period. It is composed of

similar ingredients as jeevamrutha - local cow dung, a powerful natural fungicide, and cow urine, a strong anti-bacterial liquid, lime, soil. Bijamrita is also applicable as a seed treatment.

3. **Acchadana - Mulching.** In general there are three types of mulching:
 - a) Soil Mulch: This protects topsoil during cultivation and does not destroy it by tilling. It promotes aeration and water retention in the soil.
 - b) Straw Mulch: Straw material usually refers to the dried biomass waste of previous crops, but it can be composed of the dead material of any living being (plants, animals, etc).
 - c) Live Mulch (symbiotic intercrops and mixed crops): It is essential to develop multiple cropping patterns of monocotyledons (monocots; Monocotyledons seedlings have one seed leaf) and dicotyledons (dicots; Dicotyledons seedlings have two seed leaves) grown in the same field, to supply all essential elements to the soil and crops.
4. **Whapasa - moisture:** Whapasa is the condition where there are both air molecules and water molecules present in the soil, and ZBNF encourages reducing irrigation, irrigating only at noon, in alternate furrows.

International Dam Safety Conference

Why in News?

India hosted the International Dam Safety Conference - 2018 at Thiruvananthapuram. The two-day conference **was organized by Central Water Commission** in association with Kerala Water Resources Department (KWRD), Kerala State Electricity Board, National Institute of Technology-Calicut and College of Engineering, Trivandrum.

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

- These conferences bring together dam professionals and experts in the various inter-related disciplines from within India and around the world to discuss, reflect and share technology and experience in addressing dam safety issues and strategies to address them.
- Seven dam safety guidelines and manuals developed under DRIP was also released for implementation during the conference. A software programme - **Dam Health and Rehabilitation Monitoring Application (DHARMA)** - will also be launched during the conference.
- Globally India ranks third after China and the United States in terms of number of large dams (5254 large dams in operation and 447 large dams under construction) with a total storage capacity of about 283 billion cubic meters.
- About 80 percent of these large dams are more than twenty-five years old, and about 213 dams exceed the age of 100 years and were built in an era whose design practices and safety considerations do not match with the current design standards and the prevailing safety norms.
- DRIP project is being run in the seven states of Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand. It was launched in the year 2012 with a financial outlay of Rs. 2100 Crores. **For more information on DRIP please visit CC October (2017).**

Organised as an annual event, it was fourth in the series, being organized under the aegis of ongoing Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP); CWC is managing DRIP **with the financial assistance from the World Bank** to rehabilitate more than 200 dams in India. The earlier conferences were organized in the years **2015, 2016 and 2017.**

PEPPER IT WITH
CWC, Jal Mahotsav, NDRF

Global talent competitiveness index

- The report is published by **INSEAD, the Business School for the World, in partnership with the Adecco Group and Tata Communication** and is a comprehensive annual benchmarking measuring **how countries and cities grow, attract and retain talent**, providing a unique resource for decision makers to understand the global talent competitiveness picture and develop strategies for boosting their competitiveness.

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

- India moved up on the index of talent competitiveness to the 81st position from 92, but still remains a laggard among the BRICS nations. **The report also warned that the country faces "serious risk of worsening brain drain".**
- In addition to the talent competitiveness ranking, this year's report investigated the theme of **'Diversity for competitiveness'**. Three types of diversity were distinguished: cognitive, identity and preference (or value).
- This year's edition also revealed that the top ten countries have several key characteristics in common and share one major feature: **they all have a well-developed educational system providing the social and collaboration skills needed for employability in today's labour market.**
- The in-depth supplementary analysis of the 2018 report reveals how organisations, cities and nations are approaching diversity. It reveals that diversity is not an end in itself but must always be accompanied by a culture of inclusion in order to flourish and have real impact. Targets and statistics cannot replace cultural acceptance and openness.

Switzerland topped the list which is released annually on the first day of the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting. **This was the 5th edition of the index (first launched in 2013) and covered**

Economic Survey

The Economic Survey points to an accelerated GDP growth in the coming year following the initial slowdown after the implementation of demonetisation and the rollout of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). India needs to gradually move from being a net consumer of knowledge to becoming a net producer. **The survey paints the picture of an economy that gives reason for both optimism and caution.**

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

- The key factors contributing to the positive prognosis are the reform measures: the July 1 implementation of the Goods and Services Tax and the steps taken to address the **twin balance sheet problem in the banking sector**. The latter includes the push to use the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code** for debt resolution and the initiative to recapitalize public sector banks.
- On the fiscal front, the survey contends that the Centre needs to reappraise its priorities. The onus, it argues, has to be squarely placed on establishing and maintaining policy credibility.

To this end, it argues against “**setting overly ambitious targets for consolidation**, especially in a pre-election year” that are based on optimistic and unrealistic assumptions.

- Instead, it recommends a “modest consolidation” that would signal a return to the path of calibrated deficit reductions. In doing so, it appears that the Survey is signalling that the government may have to retain the elbow room to stabilise the GST, complete the recapitalisation exercise and, most crucially, support agriculture.
- Devoting an entire chapter to ‘**Climate, Climate Change and Agriculture**’, it stressed on the dangers climate change poses to the outlook for farm growth. With the potential to reduce annual agricultural incomes — by as much as 20-25% for unirrigated areas — the Survey calls for a range of mitigation measures including extensive provision of efficient irrigation technologies and a wholesale review of the **cereal-centric approach to policy**.
- Technologies of drip irrigation, sprinklers, and water management must be employed to meet this challenge of rising water scarcity and depleting water resources for irrigation.
- Citing job creation and education as key priorities, it sets out a plan for rapid economic expansion by recommending that policymakers keep their sights trained on strengthening “**the only two truly sustainable engines — private investment and exports.**”
- Under GST, the number of unique indirect taxpayers increased by over 50% (3.4 million). In comparison to developed countries, India collects a lower share of direct taxes in total taxes. Several states in India have not devolved enough taxation powers to local bodies.
- The distribution of GST base among states is linked to their GSDP, which has a high correlation with its export share in the GSDP.
- The government and the judiciary must coordinate to introduce reforms to facilitate ease of doing business. Judicial capacity should be strengthened in the lower courts to reduce the burden on higher courts. **The tax department must limit its appeals, given that their**

Highlights

- ✓ Large increase in registered direct and indirect taxpayers.
- ✓ Extreme weather adversely impacts agricultural yields.
- ✓ Formal non-agricultural payroll much greater than believed.
- ✓ India’s firm export structure is substantially more egalitarian than in other large countries.
- ✓ Clothing incentive package boosted exports of readymade garments.
- ✓ GDP growth estimated to be 6.5% in 2017-18 as compared to 7% in 2016-17.
- ✓ The average GDP growth rate from 2014-15 till 2017-18 is expected to be 7.3% as compared to the average 7.5% between 2014-15 and 2016-17.
- ✓ The GVA (at constant prices) is estimated at 6.1% in 2017-18 as compared to 6.6% in 2016-17.
- ✓ With a share of 3.4%, India is 8th largest exporter of commercial services.
- ✓ Real estate and construction together are the second largest providers of employment.
- ✓ India requires around USD 4.5 trillion worth of investments till 2040 to develop infrastructure
- ✓ State’s prosperity is positively correlated with their international and inter-state trade
- ✓ Five states account for 70% of India’s exports - Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana.
- ✓ The top 1% of Indian firms account for only 38% of exports, unlike in other countries, where they account for a substantially greater share.

PEPPER IT WITH

Hard core formal sector, GVA, Rebate of State levies, Happy Seeder Machines, Delhi’s Air Pollution

success rate is less than 30% at all three levels of judiciary. The government must increase its expenditure on the judiciary, improve the courts case management and court automation system, and create subject specific benches.

- While India has made notable progress in women development, the preference for son is resulting to a **skewed sex ratio**, the Survey has pointed out. The data highlights another seemingly known fact that Indian society exhibits a strong desire for a male child. Indian parents continue to have children until they get the desired number of sons.

NABARD (Amendment) Bill, 2017

In News

A bill to increase authorized capital of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) by six times to Rs30,000 crore **and enable exit of Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** was passed by Parliament after the government assured that there is no plan to have private holding in it.

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

Key Highlights

Increase in capital of NABARD: The Bill allows the central government to increase this capital to Rs 30,000 crore. The capital may be increased to more than Rs 30,000 crore by the central government in consultation with the RBI, if necessary.

PEPPER IT WITH
 NABARD, GFC, Rural
 Infrastructure Development
 Fund

Transfer of the RBI's share to the central government:

The Bill provides that the central government alone must hold at least 51% of the share capital of NABARD. The Bill transfers the share capital held by the RBI and valued at Rs 20 crore to the central government. The central government will give an equal amount to the RBI.

Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME): The Bill replaces the terms 'small-scale industry' and 'industry in the tiny and decentralized sector' with the terms 'micro enterprise', 'small enterprise' and 'medium enterprise' as defined in the MSME Development Act, 2006.

Under the 1981 Act, NABARD was responsible for providing credit and other facilities to industries having an investment of upto Rs 20 lakh in machinery and plant. The Bill extends this to apply to enterprises with investment upto Rs 10 crore in the manufacturing sector and Rs five crore in the services sector.

Significance

1. It will enable NABARD to augment its business and enhance its activities which would facilitate promotion of integrated rural development and securing prosperity of rural areas including generation of more employment.
2. It will enable NABARD for providing and regulating credit and other facilities for the promotion and development of agriculture, micro, small, and medium enterprises and handicrafts in rural areas for promoting integrated rural development.
3. As RBI is also a regulator, its 0.4% equity will be transferred to the centre and as a result, 100% equity will come to the government. This will end the conflict in role of RBI as banking regulator which would be a loss of supervisory institution in rural credit activity.

Global Forum for Food and Agriculture

In News

The **10th Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA)** was held in recently in Berlin, Germany. Union Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare is leading the Indian delegation to 10th Global Forum for Food & Agriculture 2018 which includes the **10th Berlin Agriculture Ministers’ Conference**.

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

GFFA

GFFA is an international conference that focuses on central questions concerning the future of the global agri-food industry. It is held during International Green Week (IGW) and will be taking place in its current shape for the eighth time. The forum gives representatives from the worlds of politics, business, science and civil society an opportunity to share ideas and enhance understanding on a selected topic of current agricultural policy. The GFFA is organised by the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection (BMEL) in cooperation with GFFA Berlin e.V., the Senate of Berlin and Messe Berlin GmbH.

Key Fact

- The theme of this year’s event is **“Shaping the future of livestock – sustainably, responsibly, efficiently”**. The discussions will focus on sustainable and productive animal production among other issues.
- Bilateral meetings with counterparts of Germany, Uzbekistan and Argentina are proposed on the sideline of GFFA to discuss issues to further enhance cooperation in agriculture and allied sectors.

PEPPER IT WITH
SDG 1&2, FAO, Zero Hunger Programme

Significance

1. The first area is the contribution of livestock production to the **eradication of poverty, hunger and all forms of malnutrition, the SDGs number 1 and 2**.

FAO estimates that more than half of the world’s rural poor are livestock farmers and pastoralists. They rely on livestock to survive. GFFA aspires to provide these people with appropriate skills, knowledge and technologies. It also aspire to make sure that smallholders and pastoralists will not be pushed aside by large capital-intensive operations.

2. The second area that it want to highlight is the **impact of livestock on climate change and the environment**. Livestock emits more greenhouse gases than other food sources. But a low-carbon livestock sector is possible to achieve.
3. The third important area of work is **animal health, particularly where it is linked to human health**. The emergence of diseases will likely intensify in the coming years, as rising temperatures favour the proliferation of insects. Zoonotic diseases with pandemic potential pose a big threat for people, animals and the environment.

The **Berlin Agriculture Ministers’ Conference** was the political highlight of the GFFA. It is the largest conference of agriculture ministers in the world and gives impetus to international debates at the beginning of every year.

The recently ended Berlin Agriculture Ministers’ Conference under the auspices of the 10th GFFA (organized by Federal Ministry of Agriculture).

The theme of the meeting as **“Agriculture and Water – Key to Feeding the World”**, and pointed out that climate change, land degradation and many trends such as urbanization, population growth, migration have increased the competition for the demand of water, resulting in the need for more ‘sustainable stewardship’ of water.

Way Forward

During the GFFA there will be a Cooperation Market where associations, companies, universities and the BMEL will showcase their activities in the agri-food sector. This – along with the Business Lounge – provides all the GFFA participants with an opportunity to withdraw from the bustle and conduct bilateral talks in a more relaxed atmosphere. It also helps in Food and Agriculture Organization works to optimize the contribution of livestock to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

NKN and LEARN

India's National Knowledge Network (NKN) and Sri Lanka's LEARN which connect to educational institutions between the two countries have now been linked with each other through high capacity internet.

This dedicated high speed internet connectivity will boost the collaboration among the academic institutions of India and Sri Lanka.

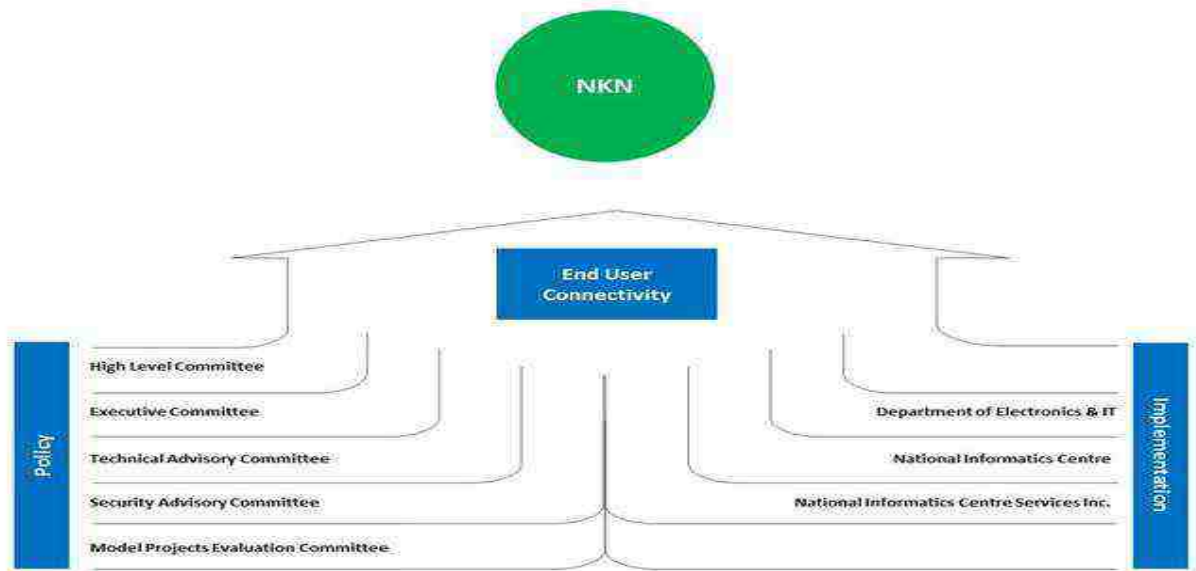
GS CONNECT											
GS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
I											
II									■		
III										■	
IV											
M											

NKN

NKN aims to connect all universities, research institutions, libraries, laboratories, healthcare and agricultural institutions across the country to improve access to knowledge and meet communication and computational need of the institutions.

NKN has already connected over 1,648 institutions under various categories throughout the country.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Right to education, Sarv Siksha Abhiyaan, BRICS network



Similarly Lanka Education And Research Network (LEARN) also connects leading educational institution in Sri Lanka.

Role of NKN:

1. Establishing a high-speed backbone connectivity which will enable knowledge and information sharing amongst NKN connected institutes
2. Enabling collaborative research, development and innovation amongst NKN connected institutes
3. Facilitating advanced distance education in specialized fields like engineering, science, medicine etc.
4. Facilitating an ultra-high-speed e-governance backbone
5. Facilitating connection between different sectorial networks in the field of research.

The Inclusive Development Index 2018

Key Highlights

- India was ranked at the 62nd place among emerging economies on an Inclusive Development Index, much below China’s 26th position and Pakistan’s 47th.
- Norway remains the world’s most inclusive advanced economy, while Lithuania again tops the list of emerging economies.
- The index takes into account the “living standards, environmental sustainability and protection of future generations from further indebtedness.
- The 2018 index, which measures progress of 103 economies on three individual pillars — growth and development; inclusion; and inter-generational equity — has been divided into two parts. The first part covers 29 advanced economies and the second 74 emerging economies.
- The index has also classified the countries into five sub-categories in terms of the five-year trend of their overall Inclusive Development Growth score — receding, slowly receding, stable, slowly advancing and advancing.
- Performance is mixed among BRICS economies, with the Russian Federation ranking 19th, followed by China (26), Brazil (37), India (62) and South Africa (69).

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

PEPPER IT WITH
MDG, SDG, Addis Ababa Action Agenda

About IDI

The Inclusive Development Index (IDI) is an annual assessment of 103 countries’ economic performance that measures how countries perform on eleven dimensions of economic progress in addition to GDP. It has 3 pillars; growth and development; inclusion and; intergenerational equity – sustainable stewardship of natural and financial resources.

The IDI is a project of the World Economic Forum’s System Initiative on the Future of Economic Progress, which aims to inform and enable sustained and inclusive economic progress through deepened public-private cooperation through thought leadership and analysis, strategic dialogue and concrete cooperation, including by accelerating social impact through corporate action.

Medaram’s Jatara

In News

The government is likely to declare **Medaram’s Sammakka-Sarakka/Saralamma Jatara a national festival this year**. Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs released ₹2 crore as Centre’s contribution towards conducting the massive event which is held bi-annually to **honour the twin goddesses Sammakka and her daughter Sarakka**.

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

About the Medaram’s Sammakka-Sarakka/Saralamma Jatara

Sammakka Saralamma Jatara or Medaram Jatara is a tribal festival of honouring the goddesses celebrated in the state of Telangana, India. The Jatra begins at Medaram in Tadvai Mandal in Warangal district.

Why is it celebrated?

It commemorates the fight of a mother and daughter, Sammakka and Saralamma, against an unjust Kakatiya rulers who tried to annex their land and forests. It is believed that after Kumbha Mela, the Medaram jatara attracts the largest number of devotees in the country.

PEPPER IT WITH
Goa bird festival, Pongal, Uttarayan, Maghi, Saaji

Other Facts

1. Medaram is a remote place in the **Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary**, a part of Dandakaranya – largest surviving forest belt of Deccan.
2. This is a festival with no Vedic or Brahmanic influence celebrated with tribal rituals only.
3. Sammakka-Sarakka Jatara held by forest dwelling **Koya tribe of Telangana** and surrounding States.
4. Once declared a national festival, Jatara can be considered for ‘intangible cultural heritage of humanity’ tag of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). **UNESCO had given the tag to Kumbh Mela**.
5. People from Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh come for the festival.

Chhau Dance

In News

A traditional Indian Chhau dance show will be staged at National Palace Museum(NPM) in Taipei City as part of efforts to strengthen cultural exchanges between Taiwan and the South Asian nation. It will be jointly organized by **NPM and India-Taipei Association, “Chhau Nritya: Dancing Tales from India”**.

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

About Chhau Dance

- Chhau dance is a tradition from eastern India that enacts episodes from epics including the Mahabharata and Ramayana, local folklore and abstract themes. Chhau dance is intimately connected to regional festivals, notably the spring festival Chaitra Parva. Its origin is traceable to indigenous forms of dance and martial practices.
- Chhau is taught to male dancers from families of traditional artists or from local communities. The dance is performed at night in an open space to traditional and folk melodies, played on the reed pipes "mohuri" and "shehnai."

- The word *Chhau* is derived from the Sanskrit word ‘*Chhaya*’ which essentially means masks, shadow or image while other scholars believe that the word is derived from ‘*Chhauni*’ which means military camp.
- There are three subtypes of this dance form; namely **Purulia Chhau**(West Bengal), **Seraikella Chhau**(Jharkhand) and **Mayurbanj Chhau**(Orissa), the first two use masks.
- **Purulia Chhau Dance is listed on UNESCO’s the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.**
- Instrumental music and a variety of drums like the Dhol, Dhumba, Nagara, Dhansa and Chadchadi provide the accompaniment.

Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre

In News

To deal with cybercrimes such as financial frauds, circulation of communal and pornographic contents, the Union Home Ministry is planning to set up an apex coordination centre-Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre. It is set up at Delhi.

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

Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)

The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre will be set up under the newly created Cyber and Information Security (CIS) division of the Ministry of Home Affairs. CIS will have four wings, namely security clearance, cybercrime prevention, cyber security and information security. The I4C will assist in centralising cyber security investigations, prioritise the development of response tools and bring together private companies to contain the menace.

PEPPER IT WITH
 CERT-IN, UNESCAP,
 UNCTAD, CIS, Cyber
 Terrorism, Aarambh
 India

Objective

- ✓ The India Cybercrime Centre will aim to develop the evolving jurisprudence on cybercrimes and also will aim to look at all kinds of cybercrimes which are targeted against persons, property or nations.
- ✓ One of the objectives of the India Cybercrime Centre is to empower the users of Internet in India. They would able to be more sensitized about the emerging trends on cybercrime.

What is cybercrime?

Cybercrimes can be defined as the *unlawful acts where the computer is used either as a tool or a target or both.* This is general term that covers crimes such as phishing, spoofing, DoS (Denial of Service) attack, credit card fraud, online transaction fraud, cyber defamation, child pornography, kidnapping a person using chat rooms, stalking a person using Internet as medium, unauthorized access to computer system, cyber terrorism, creation and distribution of virus, spamming etc.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (**MeitY**) has announced the **Cyber Surakshit Bharat** initiative in association with **National e-Governance Division (NeGD)** and industry partners.

To spread awareness about cybercrime and building capacity for safety measures for Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs) and frontline IT staff across all government departments, Cyber Surakshit Bharat will be operated on the three principles of Awareness, Education and Enablement.

The Indian parliament had passed a new law pertaining to cybercrime “**Information Technology Act, 2000**”. This law deals with the technology in the field of e-commerce, e-governance, e-banking as well as penalties and punishments in the field of cybercrime.

What are different types of cybercrime?

- 1. Cybercrime against person
- 2. Cybercrime against property
- 3. Cybercrime against government
- 4. Cybercrime against society

1. Cybercrime against person:

- I. Cyber stalking
- II. Cybercrime hacking
- III. Cracking
- IV. Defamation
- V. Online fraud
- VI. Child pornography
- VII. Spoofing

2. Cybercrime against property:

- I. Transmitting virus
- II. Cyber Squatting
- III. Cyber Vandalism
- IV. Intellectual Property Crimes

3. Cybercrime against government:

- I. Cyber Warfare
- II. Cyber Terrorism

4. Cybercrime against society:

- I. Online Gambling
- II. Cyber Trafficking

The International Conference on Cyberlaw, Cybercrime & Cyber Security 2017 aimed to examine and analyze the emerging Cyberlaw, Cybercrime and Cyber security trends of today’s times.

The International Conference on Cyberlaw, Cybercrime & Cybersecurity has been supported by more than 87 international and national organizations. These include UNESCO, ITU, UNU-EGOV, Council of Europe, Europol Cybercrime Centre, and Internet Corporation for Assigned Names & Numbers (ICANN) etc.

There is difference between Hacker and a Cracker. **Hacker** uses their knowledge to find the flaws in the security of systems whereas **Cracker** uses their knowledge to break the law.

Way Forward

Since users of computer system and internet are increasing worldwide, where it is easy to access any information easily within a few seconds by using internet which is the medium for huge information and a large base of communications around the world. Certain precautionary measures should be taken by netizens while using the internet which will assist in challenging this major threat Cyber Crime. The India Cybercrime Centre should also be engaging in capacity building and contributing to trainings on legal and policy issues pertaining to cybercrime and what strategies need to be adopted by the law-enforcement agencies in going forward in the detection, investigation and prosecution of cybercrimes. The India Cybercrime Centre should also engage in research and development of emerging cybercrime jurisprudence that is happening worldwide and how the same could be made applicable in the context of the Indian ecosystem.

Maharashtra’s public cloud policy

In News

Maharashtra is the first state which has come out with a public cloud policy virtually mandating its departments to shift their data storage onto the cloud, creating a \$2 billion opportunity for the industry.

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

Key Highlights

- ❖ The objective is to use public cloud in cases wherever the Right to Information Act is applicable, and then go in for enhanced security features for private and sensitive data, which will also be stored on the cloud,
- ❖ The State policy is compliant with the Union government’s **National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy, 2012**, which mandates facilitation of access to government-owned shareable data in human readable and machine-readable forms.
- ❖ A **four-member committee** under the secretary of the information technology department has been formed to oversee the implementation of the policy.
- ❖ Once the policy is implemented and the data stored on the cloud, the access to the public cloud services will either be free or on a **pay-per-usage model**.
- ❖ This will accelerate e-governance, and open an area for private sector investments, taking new technologies to all the departments as the government is the biggest data creator and consumer.

What is a public cloud?

The public cloud is defined as computing services offered by third-party providers over the public Internet, making them available to anyone who wants to use or purchase them. They may be free or sold on-demand, allowing customers to pay only per usage for the CPU cycles, storage or bandwidth they consume. **Microsoft Azure** is an example of a public cloud. In a public cloud, you share the same hardware, storage and network devices with other organizations or cloud “tenants.” You access services and manage your account using a web browser.

Advantages of public clouds:

1. Lower costs
2. No maintenance
3. Near-unlimited scalability
4. High reliability

PEPPER IT WITH
iCreate, Data
protection law, IT Act

What is a private cloud?

A private cloud consists of computing resources used exclusively by one business or organisation. The private cloud can be physically located at your organisation’s on-site datacenter or it can be hosted by a third-party service provider. But in a private cloud, the services and infrastructure are always maintained on a private network and the hardware and software are dedicated solely to your organisation. In this way, a private cloud can make it easier for an organisation to customise its resources to meet specific IT requirements.

Advantages of a private clouds:

1. More flexibility
2. Improved security
3. High scalability

In an unprecedented move, Maharashtra government has announced a 1% reservation in the open category for orphans in the state.
Eligibility: Only children who have no idea who their parents were and what their caste is will be covered under this reservation.

What is a hybrid cloud?

Often called “the best of both worlds,” hybrid clouds combine on-premises infrastructure, or private clouds, with public clouds so organisations can reap the advantages of both. In a hybrid cloud, data and applications can move between private and public clouds for greater flexibility and more deployment options. For instance, you can use the public cloud for high-volume, lower-security needs such as web-based email and the private cloud (or other on-premises infrastructure) for sensitive, business-critical operations like financial reporting.

Advantages of hybrid clouds:

1. Control—your organisation can maintain a private infrastructure for sensitive assets.

- 2. Flexibility
- 3. Cost-effectiveness
- 4. Ease—transitioning to the cloud does not have to be overwhelming because you can migrate gradually—phasing in workloads over time.

Make II Procedure

Why in News?

As a major boost to **‘Make in India’ in Defence**, the Defence Acquisition Council has cleared a simplified ‘Make-II’ procedure which will enable greater participation of industry in acquisition of defence equipment.

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

This process will greatly help import substitution and promote innovative solutions. This simplified **‘Make-II’ procedure will amend the existing ‘Make Procedure’ in Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP)-2016**. Following are the salient features of Make-II procedures:

- The industry can suggest projects, especially among those items which are currently being imported. Start-ups or individuals can also suggest proposals.
- The potential ‘Make-II’ projects will be approved by a collegiate comprising of DRDO, HQ (IDS), Department of Defence under a committee chaired by Secretary (Defence Production).
- There will be no limit to the number of industry who may respond to the Expression of Interest for development of the prototype subject to meeting the minimum qualification criteria.
- There is no limit to the number of industry players who may show interest and offer prototype.
- The industry who develops the product will retain the title and ownership and all other rights in intellectual property. However, for some specified reasons like National Security, Government shall have ‘March-in’ rights.
- ‘Make-II’ procedure reduces the total time from in-principle approval to placing of order by 50 percent. The estimated time to finish the whole process has come down to 69 to 103 weeks.
- Projects involving developmental cost of less than three crores will be reserved for MSME.

PEPPER IT WITH

T-72 tanks, Contract Negotiation Committee, DPP-

Agni-V Ballistic Missile

Why in News?

India recently successfully tested Agni-V, validating the **long-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile’s reliability**. This was the fifth test of the missile where all the five missions have been successful. The missile travelled for 19 minutes and covered 4900 kms.

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

- All objectives of the mission have been successfully met. This successful test of Agni-5 reaffirms the country's indigenous missile capabilities and further strengthens our credible deterrence.
- Agni-V, with a range of over 5,000 km, is India's longest range ballistic missile and can reach most parts of China, **making it the mainstay of India's triad to deliver nuclear weapons.**
- Agni-V is the most advanced missile in the Agni series with new technologies incorporated in it in terms of navigation and guidance, warhead and engine.
- The missile is so programmed that after reaching the peak of its trajectory, it will turn towards the Earth to continue its journey towards the intended target with an increased speed due to the attraction of the Earth's gravitational pull.

- ❖ The first two successful flights of Agni-V in 2012 and 2013 were in open configuration.
- ❖ The third, fourth and fifth launch from a caister, integrated with a mobile sophisticated launcher, were in its deliverable configuration that enables launch of the missile with a very short preparation time as compared to an open configuration
- ❖ It is a nuclear-capable **intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).**
- ❖ The other Agni series missiles in India's armoury are the **Agni-1 with 700km range, Agni-2 with 2,000km range, Agni-3 and Agni-4 with 2,500km to over 3,500km range.**

PEPPER IT WITH
 Ring Laser Gyro based Inertial Navigation System (RINS), Micro Navigation System (MINS), DRDO

Budapest Convention on Cyber Security

Why in News?

India was reconsidering its position on becoming a member of the Budapest Convention **because of the surge in cybercrime**, especially after a push for digital India.

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

The move, however, is being opposed by the Intelligence Bureau (IB) on the grounds that sharing data with foreign law enforcement agencies infringes on national sovereignty and may jeopardise the rights of individuals.

About the Convention

- The Convention on Cybercrime of the Council of Europe (CETS No.185), known as the Budapest Convention, is the only **binding international instrument on this issue.**
- It serves as a guideline for any country developing comprehensive national legislation against Cybercrime and as a framework for international cooperation between State Parties to this treaty.
- The Budapest Convention is supplemented by a Protocol on **Xenophobia and Racism committed through computer systems.**
- It is the only binding multilateral treaty instrument aimed at combating cybercrime. **It was drafted by the Council of Europe with active participation from its observer states in 2001.**

PEPPER IT WITH
 INTERPOL, Net Neutrality, Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), Cyber and Information Security (CIS)

- It is open for ratification **even to states and organisations that are not members of the Council of Europe.**
- Budapest Convention is a criminal justice treaty that provides States with:
 - a) The criminalisation of a list of attacks against and by means of computers
 - b) Procedural law tools to make the investigation of cybercrime and the securing of electronic evidence in relation to any crime more effective and subject to rule of law safeguards and
 - c) International police and judicial cooperation on cybercrime and e-evidence.

With the evolution of the information society and its dependence on information and communications technologies (ICT), the vulnerability of societies worldwide to cybercrime has increased considerably. What measures should India take to avoid the problem of cybersecurity. What can be the possible reason for India for not becoming a member of the Budapest convention.

Global Centre For Cybersecurity

Why in News?

In a bid to safeguard the world from hackers and growing data breaches — especially from nation-states — the **World Economic Forum (WEF) announced a new Global Centre for Cybersecurity.**

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

The centre will become operational from March and will be headquartered in Geneva. It will function as an autonomous organization under the auspices of the World Economic Forum.

The centre will focus on the following aims:

- I. Consolidating existing cybersecurity initiatives of the World Economic Forum
- II. Establishing an independent library of cyber best practices
- III. Helping partners to enhance knowledge on cybersecurity
- IV. Working towards an appropriate and agile regulatory framework on cybersecurity
- V. Serving as a laboratory and early-warning think tank for future cybersecurity scenarios

Cybersecurity has been the most pressing issue of our times. There is an urgent need of a platform to ward off cyber criminals. The centre will help bring all the stakeholders together in achieving that.

Vajra Prahar

- Vajra Prahar’ is **a Indo-US Special Forces joint training exercise** conducted alternately in India and the US.
- Though the exercise **began in 2010**, there was a gap of three years between 2012 and 2015. The last edition was held in Jodhpur in March 2017.
- In line with the increasing military cooperation between India and the US, this edition of the joint military exercise was held at Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) in Seattle. **The exercise mainly focused on special operations in urban areas.**

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

- The aim of the exercise is to promote military relations between the two countries by enhancing interoperability and mutual exchange of tactics between Special Forces.
- The objectives of the joint training is to share the best practices between the two armies and to develop joint strategies by sharing expertise of conducting operations in a counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism environment, while capitalising on the rich repository of experiences of each other armies.

VINBAX-2017

- Armies of **India and Vietnam held a six day-long military exercise in Jabalpur**, Madhya Pradesh, reflecting growing defence ties between the two countries.
- It is the first military exercise between them. The exercise, christened 'VINBAX' reflects growing defence ties between the two nations.
- India and Vietnam have been exploring ways to strengthen defence cooperation.
- They had signed a protocol on defence cooperation in 1994. The partnership was thereafter elevated to strategic level in 2007 and a pact on boosting bilateral defence cooperation was signed in 2009.
- **The strategic partnership was elevated to a comprehensive strategic partnership in September 2016.**
- Earlie in 2016, India had also announced to set up a satellite tracking and imaging centre in southern Vietnam that will give Hanoi access to pictures from Indian earth observation satellites that cover the region, including China and the South China Sea.

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

India's first floating market

India's first floating market is open in Kolkata's Patuli area in West Bengal. The market houses over 200 shops.

Set up by the Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority (KMDA), the market functions solely on boats at the lake in Patuli, where shopkeepers sell fruits, vegetables, fish among other produce. The floating market is 500 meters long and 60 meters wide.

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

INTACH to document Heritage Sites along Mahanadi river

- Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) has launched a programme for documentation of the tangible and intangible heritage sites along both sides of Mahanadi river.
- INTACH was founded in 1984 in New Delhi with the vision to spearhead heritage awareness and conservation in India and is recognized as one of the world's largest heritage organizations.
- INTACH has pioneered the conservation and preservation of not just natural and built heritage but intangible heritage as well.
- Headquartered in New Delhi, it operates through various divisions such as Architectural Heritage, Natural Heritage, Material Heritage, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Heritage Education and Communication Services (HECS) etc.

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

PEPPER IT WITH
Hirakud Dam, Kendrapada delta, Satkosia Gorge

About Mahanadi River

- It originates in Chhattisgarh and covers a length of 900 km approx.
- The major tributaries of the river are the **Hasdo and Tel.**
- It is a seasonal river and is discharged at False point (Odissa) in Bay of Bengal.

Arunachal declared open defecation-free State

- Arunachal Pradesh emerged as the second State in the Northeast, after Sikkim, to be declared Open Defecation Free.
- Arunachal has 21 districts and the State attained the feat much before the national deadline of October 2, 2019.
- The project undertaken under Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) SBM (G) saw the light of day only after the State government extended an incentive of Rs 8,000 per toilet. This is in addition to the Centre’s support of Rs 12,000, raising the grant for constructing a toilet to Rs 20,000.
- The State government also launched Swachh Arunachal Mission on October 2 this year at Tawang which envisaged the Swachh Protocol (Cleanliness Protocol) aimed at ensuring sustainability of assets created under SBM (Gramin).

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

Mewa Singh’s Night frog

Scientists have discovered the Mewa Singh’s Night frog, belonging to a genus endemic to the Western Ghats, from Kozhikode’s Malabar Wildlife Sanctuary.

Frogs in the genus Nyctibatrachus, commonly known as night frogs, are found only in the Western Ghats mountain range. The addition of the Mewa Singh’s night frog to this group brings the total number of night frogs to 36.

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

India's second largest rooftop solar plant

- State-owned gas utility GAIL India Ltd has commissioned the country's second largest rooftop solar power plant.
- The firm has installed a 5.76 MWp (Mega Watt peak) solar plant at its petrochemical complex at Pata in Uttar Pradesh.
- Tata Power Solar had in December 2015 commissioned a 12 MW solar rooftop project in Amritsar, which is the largest rooftop solar plant.
- India plans to have 40 GW of rooftop photovoltaics (PV) by 2022. This is part of its target of having 175 GW of non-hydro renewables capacity by 2022- made up of 60 GW onshore wind, 60 GW utility-scale solar, 10 GW bio-energy, 5 GW small hydro and 40 GW roof-top solar.

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

Iceland becomes the first country in the world to make it illegal to pay men more than women

- Iceland has become the first country in the world to enforce equal pay between men and women.
- The legislation, which took effect on January 1 2018, means larger firms will have to prove their male staff are not paid more than their female employees or face fines.

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

- Companies with 25 members of staff and over are obliged to obtain government certification of their equal-pay policies or face being slapped with financial penalties.
- The legislation currently affects larger firms only.

Matunga station enters Limca Book for all-woman staff

The Matunga suburban station on the Central Railway (CR) has found its way into the Limca Book of Records for having an all-woman staff. The achievement comes six months after Matunga became the first railway station in the country to be run by an all- woman staff.

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

The station is being manned exclusively by women staffers since July 2017, a first on the Indian Railways. A team of 41 women staffers at the station includes personnel from the RPF, commercial and operating departments.

Nepal ends India’s monopoly on internet access with new Chinese link

Nepal ended India’s monopoly on internet access by opening a new optical fibre link across the Himalayan Mountains to China reflecting China’s growing engagement in a region seen as India’s backyard.

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

Earlier, landlocked Nepal was totally dependent on India for access to the worldwide web through connections at Biratnagar, Bhairahawa and Birgunj, for which it pays a substantial sum as fees and royalties. Besides state-run Indian firms, Nepal has been acquiring bandwidth from private players such as Tata and Airtel and BSNL

The Chinese optical fibre link enters Nepal at Rasuwa, 175 km north of the capital Kathmandu. A successful test of the link was conducted before it became operational.

West Central Railways has become the first Zonal Railway to procure “Drone” cameras in Indian Railways

Indian Railways has decided to deploy “Drone” cameras (UAV/NETRA) for various railway activities especially project monitoring and maintenance of tracks and other railway infrastructure. It has been given directions to Zonal Railways to procure such cameras. This is in-line with Railways’ desire to use technology to enhance safety and efficiency in train operations.

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

Under this initiative, West Central Railways with headquarter at Jabalpur (M.P) has become the first Zonal Railway to procure “Drone” cameras in Indian Railways.

Significance

1. “Drone” cameras shall be deployed to undertake monitoring activities of relief and rescue operation, project monitoring, progress of important works, conditions of track and inspection related activities.
2. It shall also be used to assess preparedness of Non-Interlocking (NI) works, crowd management during fairs and melas, to identify scrap and also for aerial survey of station yards.
3. It is going to be instrumental in providing real time inputs related to safety and maintenance of tracks and other railway infrastructure.

India moves to stub out tobacco industry rights

- The Indian government is pushing the Supreme Court to apply a rarely used doctrine that would strip the \$11 billion tobacco industry’s legal right to trade, an effort aimed at deterring tobacco companies from challenging tough new regulations.
- Government has for the first time asked the top court to classify tobacco as “res extra commercium”, a Latin phrase meaning “outside commerce.”
- If applied, the doctrine - which harkens back to Roman law - would have far reaching implications: in denying an industry’s legal standing to trade, it gives authorities more leeway to impose restrictions.
- Supreme Court’s application of the doctrine to alcohol in the 1970s paved the way for at least two Indian states to ban it completely and allowed courts to take a stricter stance while regulating liquor - something constitutional law experts say could happen with tobacco if a similar ruling was made.

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

CONCEPT CLEARING ASSIGNMENT

1. How Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017 will help in ensuring the larger Constitutional goals of gender justice and gender equality of married Muslim women and help sub-serve their fundamental rights of non-discrimination and empowerment?
2. The debate about the right to freedom of expression today needs a multi-dimensional approach. The nexus between the opposition to freedom of expression and a casteist outlook is an important dimension in India. This is an attempt to see the right to freedom of expression through the lens of caste and its influence. How would Mahatma Gandhi have responded to the glaring contradictions in India today?
3. Bring out the salient features of Star-Rating Initiative. How it is helping in achieving Clean India Drive under Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban?
4. The organizations like Amnesty International etc. have argued that there is no empirical data on the deterrence of the crime due to death penalty. Do you think India should do away with constitutionality of Section 354(5) and seek for other alternatives? Critically Analyse.
5. What is limited KYC and UID token? How the proposed 2-tier security mechanism is safer than handing one Aadhaar number?
6. According to some reports, Indian economy will again turn out to be the fastest growing major economy in the world. What is the prospect of economic development in India. Also discuss the factors affecting growth of Indian economy.
7. Elections and political parties are a fundamental feature of Parliamentary democracy. Elections cost money. The electoral bonds are aimed at ending the political funding evils in India. Discuss how electoral bonds can bring transparency to the funding of election in the largest democracy of the world.
8. Government of India is looking at logistics as a separate subject but still India accounts for very high logistics cost as a ratio of GDP. What steps can be taken to reduce the logistics cost. Discuss?

9. Zero Budget Natural Farming practise advises farmers to use cow dung, urine, plants, human excreta, earthworms and similar biological fertilizers for crop protection. How is ZBNF different from Organic Farming.
10. As a borderless problem, urgent action is needed to create a safe operating environment for new technologies like Artificial Intelligence, robotics, drones, self-driving cars and the Internet of Things (IoT). As a developing nation, what steps can India take to cope up with these issues.
11. The economic survey of India points to an accelerated GDP growth in the coming year. Discuss the factors which will lead to GDP growth. Also, critically analyse the impact of global slowdown on Indian economy.
12. India missed the deadline announced by union government to eliminate the kala azar (visceral leishmaniasis). India has been trying to eliminate kala azar for decades but with little success. Discuss the reasons that is leading the target of eliminating Kala Azar out reach.
13. Recently a particularly vulnerable tribal group of Odisha was denied habitat rights under Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. Discuss the impact of habitat rights on the tribal groups.
14. The 25th Anniversary of ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations under the theme of "Shared Values, Common Destiny" was held in India. What commitments should India take to affirm its position in the ASEAN nation?
15. The present Union Government is pushing hard to include Hindi as one of the official language of United Nation (UN). What can be the reason behind this when Hindi is not even the national language of India.

PT- ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Consider the following statements and choose the correct one/s

- 1) The Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioner get security of their tenure.
- 2) Chief Election Commissioner can't be further employed by government.

Code:

- a) 1 only b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 2 d) None

2. Consider the following statements and choose the correct one/s:

- 1) Soil health cards are issued every 3 years, to all farmers of the country.
- 2) It indicates the status of the soil in terms of 12 parameters.

Code:

- a) 1 only b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 2 d) None

3. Consider the following statements about Atal Innovation Mission and choose the correct one/s

- 1) It is a flagship program of Ministry of Science and Technology.
- 2) It is a scheme to promote research in neglected fields of S&T.

Code:

- a) 1 only b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 2 d) None

4. Consider the following statements about E-cigarette and choose the correct one/s

- 1) It delivers nicotine with flavorings and other chemicals to users in vapor instead of smoke.
- 2) It is proved safe by different health agencies.

Code:

- a) 1 only b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 2 d) None

5. Which of the following states neighbor Myanmar.

- 1) Meghalaya
- 2) Nagaland
- 3) Arunachal Pradesh
- 4) Assam

Code:

- a) 1,2 and 3 b) 1 and 2
- c) 2 and 3 d) All the above

6. Consider the following statements about international maritime organisation and choose the correct one/s

- 1) It is headquartered in Vienna.
- 2) It is an independent organisation dealing with matters related to shipping.

Code:

- a) 1 only b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 2 d) None

7. Consider the following statements and choose the correct one/ones

- 1) Jerusalem is located between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea.
- 2) It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Code:

- a) 1 only b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 2 d) None

8. Consider the following about PRASAD Scheme and choose the correct one/s

- 1) It is a scheme aimed to beautify and improve the amenities and infrastructure at pilgrimage centres.
- 2) 13 cities have been recognised under this scheme.

Code:

- a) 1 only b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 2 d) None

9. World Migration Report is published by which among the following?

- a) UN
- b) International Organisation for Migration
- c) International Labour Organisation
- d) World Bank

10. Consider the following statements about National Green Tribunal and choose the correct one/s

- 1) National Green Tribunal is a quasi-judicial body.
- 2) It consists of a chairperson and 5 other members.
- 3) The members of NGT are appointed

- by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).
Code:
a) 1 and 2 b) 1 and
c) 2 and 3 d) All the above
11. Sendai framework is related to which among the following
a) Disaster Management
b) Sustainable Development
c) Climate Change
d) Ozone layer depletion
12. Consider the following about Majuli Island and choose the incorrect one/s
1) It is the first island to be declared district in India
2) Brahmaputra River flows north of this island
3) It is inhabited by Garo Tribe people.
Code:
a) 1 and 2
b) 1 and 3
c) 2 and 3
d) All the above
13. Consider the following statements about Volte Services and choose the correct one/s
1) It gives data accessibility even during calls.
2) It enables call quality that is much superior to the previous networks.
Code:
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) 1 and 2
d) None
14. Consider the following statements about Rooppur Nuclear Plant and choose the correct one/s
1) It is a joint initiative of India and Russia in Bangladesh.
2) It will be the largest nuclear power project of Bangladesh.
Code:
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) 1 and 2
d) None
15. Consider the following statements about Clean Sea 2017 and choose the correct one/s
1) It was an exercise conducted by Indian Coast Guard.
2) It was held in Arabian Sea.
Code:
- a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) 1 and 2
d) None
16. The program DARPAN launched by Ministry of Communication is related to
a) Financial Inclusion
b) Broadband
c) Clear network in rural areas
d) Farmer Welfare
17. Consider the following statements about Project Mausam and choose the correct one/s
1) It is aimed at establishing cross cultural linkages and to revive historic maritime cultural and economic ties with 39 ASEAN countries.
2) It is an attempt to counter Chinas B & R initiative.
Code:
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) 1 and 2
d) None
18. Kimberley process is related to
a) Plastic waste
b) Conflicted Diamonds
c) Migration
d) Under-water resources
19. Consider the following about WASSENAAR ARRANGEMENT and choose the correct one/s
1) It is related to missile technology.
2) China is permanent member of WASSENAAR ARRANGEMENT.
Code:
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) 1 and 2
d) None
20. Consider the following about Bodhi Parva and choose the correct one/s
1) It is a BIMSTEC festival of Buddhist Heritage.
2) It was recently hosted by India to celebrate 20th anniversary of BIMSTEC.

- Code:
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) 1 and 2
d) None
21. Which of the following pair of islands are separated from each other by ten-degree channel (Previous year UPSC)
a) Andaman and Nicobar
b) Nicobar and Sumatra
c) Maldives and Lakshadweep
d) Sumatra and Java
22. Which of the following diseases have been eradicated from India (Previous year UPSC)
1) Diphtheria
2) Chickenpox
3) Smallpox
Code:
a) 1 and 2
b) 3 only
c) 1,2 and 3
d) None
23. Which of the following phenomenon might have influenced the evolution of organisms. (Previous year UPSC)
1. Continental Drift
2. Glacial Cycles
Code:
a) 1 only b) 2 only
c) 1 and 2 d) None of above
24. Which of the following is the largest committee of Parliament (Previous year UPSC)
a) The committee on public accounts
b) The committee on estimates
c) The committee on public undertakings
d) The committee on petitions
25. In the south Atlantic and south-eastern pacific regions in tropical latitudes, cyclone doesn't originate. What is the reason (Previous year UPSC)
a) Sea surface temperatures are low
b) ITCZ seldom occurs
c) Coriolis force is too weak
d) Absence of land in that region
26. A decrease in tax to GDP ratio in an economy indicates (Previous year UPSC)
(1) Slowing economic growth rate
(2) Less equitable distribution of national income
Code:
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) 1 and 2
d) None of above
27. Which of the following were economic critiques of colonised India (Previous year UPSC)
1) Dadabhai Naoroji
2) G. Subramania Iyer
3) R.C. Dutt
Code:
a) 1 only
b) 1 and 2
c) 2 and 3
d) 1,2 and 3
28. Consider the following about Higher Education Funding Agency (HEFA) and choose the correct one/s
1) It is a not for profit organisation
2) It will leverage fund from market beside the capital provided by Ministry of HRD.
Code:
a) 1 only b) 2 only
c) 1 and 2 d) None
29. Incheon strategy is related to:
a) Air pollution
b) Women Empowerment
c) Migration
d) Persons with Disability
30. Punchhi Commission was setup to look into which among the following?
a) Electoral Reforms
b) Centre-State relationship
c) Anti-Defection law
d) Parliamentary Privileges