

My Notes....

NATIONAL

KARTARPUR CORRIDOR INAUGURATED

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 9 November 2019 inaugurated the Kartarpur corridor, flagging off the first batch of over 500 Indian pilgrims, including former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Union minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal. The corridor links Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan, the final resting place of Sikhism founder Guru Nanak Dev, to Dera Baba Nanak shrine in this Punjab district. Modi flagged off the first batch of pilgrims led by Akal Takhat Jathedar Giani Harpreet Singh to Gurdwara Darbar Sahib through the corridor, which was thrown open days ahead of the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev on November 12.

What

1. India had signed an agreement with the neighbouring nation on October 24 on the modalities for operationalisation of the corridor at 'Zero Point' of the international boundary at Dera Baba Nanak.
2. The first batch of pilgrims included Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh, former chief minister Parkash Singh Badal, Sukhbir Singh Badal and Navjot Singh Sidhu.
3. Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee members and all the 117 MLAs and MPs from Punjab were also part of the 'jatha' (delegation).
4. The state-of-the-art passenger terminal building, with a design inspired by 'Khanda'- a symbol of faith in Sikh community has been constructed on 15 acres of land.
5. The fully air-conditioned building, akin to an airport, has over 50 immigration counters for facilitating about 5,000 pilgrims a day.
6. It has all necessary public amenities such as kiosks, washrooms, child care and first-aid facilities, prayer rooms and snacks counters. The project was executed by the central government agency Land Ports Authority of India.
7. On November 22 last year, the Union Cabinet had passed a resolution to celebrate the historic occasion of the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev in a "grand and befitting manner" throughout the country and across the globe.

Flashback

1. The Kartarpur Corridor is connecting the Sikh shrines of Dera Baba Nanak Sahib (located in Punjab, India) and Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur (in Punjab, Pakistan).
2. Currently under planning, the corridor is intended to allow religious devotees from India to visit the Gurdwara in Kartarpur, 4.7 kilometres (2.9 miles) from the Pakistan-India border, without a visa.
3. The Kartarpur Corridor was first proposed in early 1999 by the prime ministers of India and Pakistan, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif, respectively, as part of the Delhi-Lahore Bus diplomacy.
4. On 26 November 2018, the foundation stone for the Kartarpur corridor was laid down on the Indian side. Two days later, the foundation stone was laid down on the Pakistani side.

AYODHYA VERDICT

Nine years after the Allahabad High Court ruling, the Supreme Court on 9 November 2019 ruled that the Hindus would get the entire disputed 2.77 acres in Ayodhya. This is the land on which the now demolished Babri Masjid once stood. The

Muslims will get alternate land either in the surplus 67 acres acquired in and around the disputed structure by the central govt or any other prominent place. The entire 2.77 acres will remain with the receiver and will be handed over to a trust to be formed in 3 months to build a temple. The Nirmohi Akhara is not the sebaite, the court held. Instead it will get to be a member of the trust.

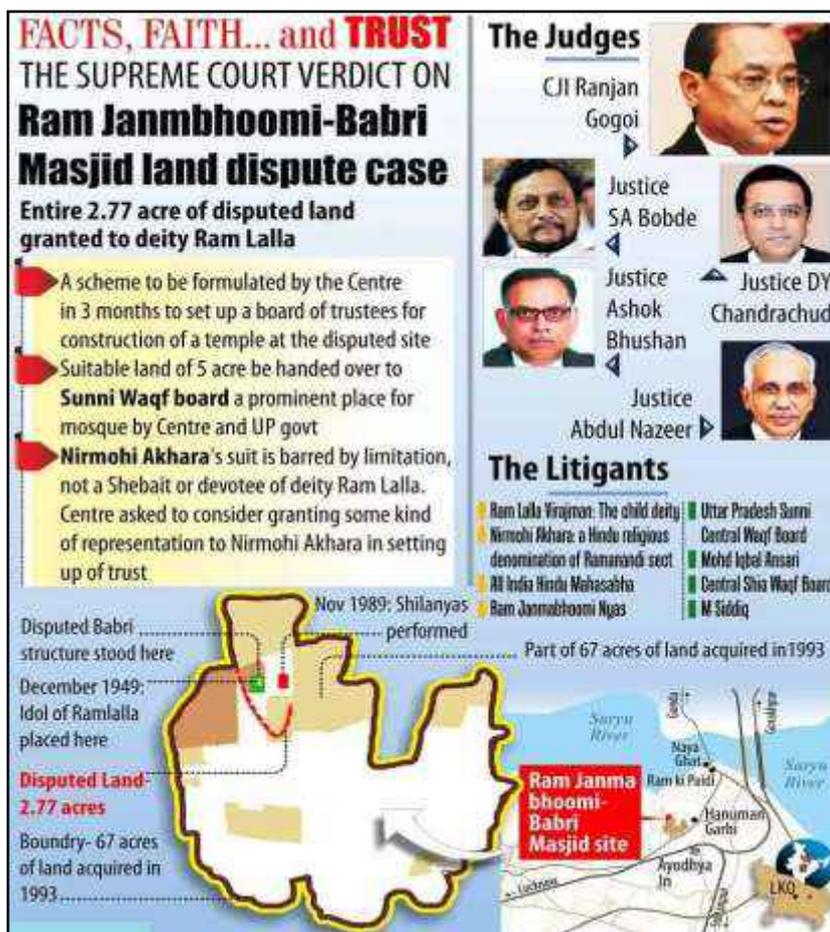
What

1. Ram Janambhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute involving 2.77 acres of land had commenced on August 6 and concluded on October 16, and the apex court pronounced the verdict on 9 November 2019.

2. In the unanimous verdict the court cleared the way for the construction of a Ram Temple at the disputed site, and directed the Centre to allot a 5-acre plot to the Sunni Waqf Board for building a mosque.

3. In one of the most important and most anticipated judgements in India's history, a 5-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi put an end to the more than a century old dispute that has torn the social fabric of the nation.

4. The arguments in the matter were the second longest after the landmark Keshvanand Bharti case in 1973 during which the proceedings for propounding the doctrine of basic structure of the Constitution continued for 68 days.
5. The third longest hearing in the top court was on the validity of Aadhaar scheme and had lasted for 38 days in the top court which came into existence in 1950.
6. The Allahabad High Court had in 2010 partitioned the land between Hindus and Muslims in a 2:1 ratio.
7. The deity, Ram Lalla, and the sebaite, the Nirmohi Akhara, had got two shares. The Uttar Pradesh Sunni central Wakf Board got a third of the share.
8. The land on which the now demolished Babri Masjid structure once stood went to the Ram Lalla. The Ram Chabutra and the Sita Rasoi went to the Akhara.
9. The Muslims were to get a share after adjustment by metes and bounds for exit and entry into each person's share.



FACTS, FAITH... and TRUST
THE SUPREME COURT VERDICT ON
Ram Janmbhoomi-Babri
Masjid land dispute case

Entire 2.77 acre of disputed land granted to deity Ram Lalla

- ▶ A scheme to be formulated by the Centre in 3 months to set up a board of trustees for construction of a temple at the disputed site
- ▶ Suitable land of 5 acre be handed over to **Sunni Waqf board** a prominent place for mosque by Centre and UP govt
- ▶ **Nirmohi Akhara's** suit is barred by limitation, not a Shebait or devotee of deity Ram Lalla. Centre asked to consider granting some kind of representation to Nirmohi Akhara in setting up of trust.

The Judges

- CJI Ranjan Gogoi
- Justice SA Bobde
- Justice Ashok Bhushan
- Justice DY Chandrachud
- Justice Abdul Nazeer

The Litigants

- Ram Lalla Virajman: The obid deity
- Nirmohi Akhara: a Hindu religious denomination of Ramarandi sect
- All India Hindu Mahasabha
- Ram Janambhoomi Nyas
- Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board
- Mohd Inqel Ansari
- Central Shia Waqf Board
- M Siddiq

Disputed Babri structure stood here
 December 1949: Idol of Ramlalla placed here
 Disputed Land- 2.77 acres
 Boundry- 67 acres of land acquired in 1993

Nov 1989: Shilanyas performed
 Part of 67 acres of land acquired in 1993

Ram Janmbhoomi-Babri Masjid site

Map labels: Naya Ghat, Ram ki Patti, Hanuman Garhi, Ayodhya In, Lucknow, LKO, Gollha, Saryu River, Gollha.

10. Both parties were unhappy with the judgement and had appealed to the top court. The court had stayed the judgement.

INDIA JUSTICE REPORT 2019

Maharashtra and Kerala are top in the India Justice Report 2019 and Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state ranked last, the India Justice Report (IJR) 2019 says. The report is an initiative of Tata Trusts in collaboration with Centre for Social Justice, Common Cause, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, DAKSH, TISS- Prayas and Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy. The report said even the best-performing states have been unable to score even 60% in their performance on capacity across policing, judiciary, prisons and legal aid.

What

1. The ranking is based on measuring the capacity of police, prison system, judiciary and legal aid in each state in terms of budgets, human resources, personnel workload, diversity, infrastructure and trends against its own declared standards or benchmarks.

2. Overall, Maharashtra scored 5.92 out of 10 followed by Kerala (5.85), Tamil Nadu (5.76), Punjab (5.53), Haryana (5.53) and Karnataka (5.11). Uttar Pradesh even fell behind the scores of smaller states with a score of 3.32.

3. Karnataka fell behind due to its poor performance in judiciary in which it was ranked a lowly 16, while it ranked third in prisons, sixth in policing and seventh in legal aid.

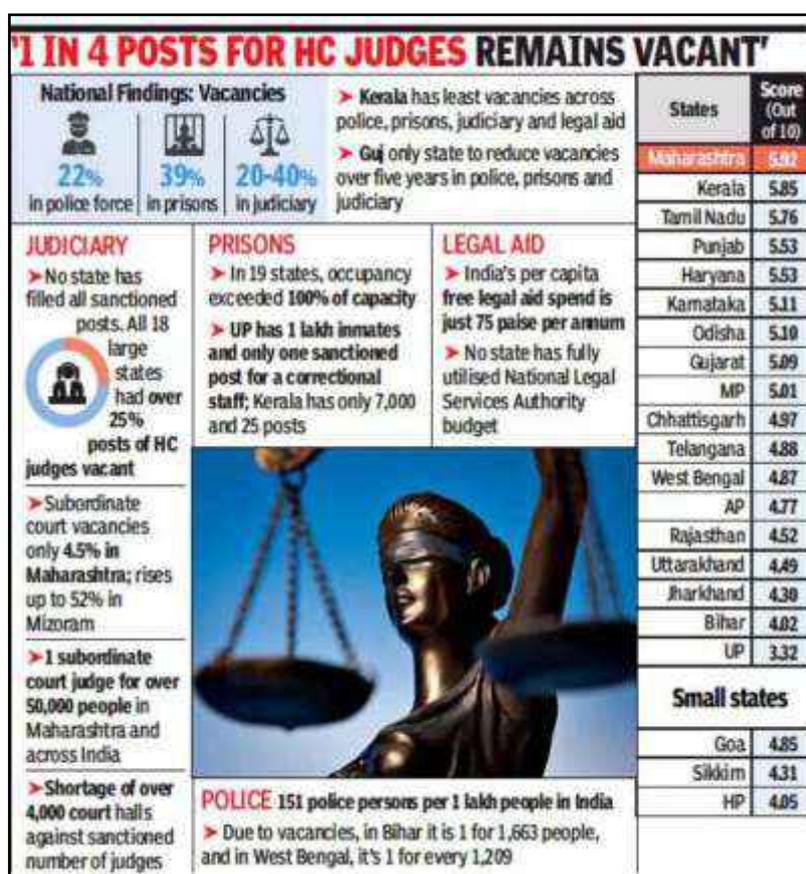
4. To Karnataka's credit, the report says, it is the only state to have very nearly filled officer-

level reservations in all caste categories. While it has filled all quota posts in ST and OBC categories, the vacancies in SC category is only 4%.

5. Nationally, a majority of states are unable to meet their declared caste quotas. Only six states and UTs — Daman and Diu, Meghalaya, Goa, Manipur, Gujarat and Kerala — had managed to meet or exceed their SC quota.

6. Similarly, only Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Bihar, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Telangana had managed to reach or exceed their ST quotas. Only Meghalaya, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Assam and Karnataka had met their declared OBC quotas.

7. Only seven states and UTs utilised their entire prisons budget, including Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh, while no large or mid-sized state utilised its



entire prison budget, with West Bengal having utilised 99% of its budget, followed by Kerala (98%) and Karnataka (97%).

PANEL FOR DAL LAKE

Jammu and Kashmir government has set up a ten-member committee to declare Srinagar's famous Dal Lake and its surrounding areas as an eco-sensitive zone (ESZ), following concerns over its shrinking size. Pollution and encroachments have resulted in the Dal Lake shrinking from its original area of 22 square kilometers to about 10 square kilometers, according to an assessment by the Dredging Corporation of India (DCI) in 2017.

What

1. The DCI also found that the world-famous lake's capacity has shrunk to about 40 per cent and that its water quality has deteriorated.
2. The committee shall finalize the draft notification within a period of one month, all facilities and infrastructure to the committee shall be provided by the Housing and Urban Development Department.
3. The committee comprises of Chief Conservator for Forests, Director of the Tourism Department, Vice-Chairman of the Lakes and Waterways Development Authority, Director of Industries Department, Commissioner of Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), Kashmir's Regional Wildlife Warden, Regional Director of the State Pollution Control Board, Director of the Agriculture Department, the Chief Town Planner and a representative of the Law Department.
4. The DCI assessment also found that intense pollution by untreated sewage and solid wastes that flow into the lake, encroachments of water channels and clogging has diminished the circulation and inflows into the lake, leading to extensive growth of the weed water hyacinth which has emerged as a health hazard.
5. Further, it established that the depth of the lake has reduced at many places due to siltation and encroachment, and that continuing night soil discharge from the 800 to 900 houseboats causes extreme pollution in the water body.

What are Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs)?

1. Eco-Sensitive Zones or Ecologically Fragile Areas are areas within 10 kms around Protected Areas, National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries.
2. ESZs are notified by MoEFCC, Government of India under Environment Protection Act 1986.
3. In case of places with sensitive corridors, connectivity and ecologically important patches, crucial for landscape linkage, even area beyond 10 km width can also be included in the eco-sensitive zone.
4. The basic aim is to regulate certain activities around National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries so as to minimise the negative impacts of such activities on the fragile ecosystem encompassing the protected areas.

ZONAL COMMITTEES OF LAND RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

Ministry of rural development has set up four zonal monitoring committees, headed by a joint secretary level officer, to undertake comprehensive monitoring and impact assessment of key programmes of department of land resources under the ministry as progress under the schemes remains slow. The programmes under scrutiny include the watershed development component of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana and Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP). The entire monitoring will be under the supervision of additional secretary in the department.

What

1. In order to have a comprehensive concurrent monitoring and impact assessment of the programmes/schemes implemented by the department, the senior officers posted in the department should be assigned states/regions to conduct regular field visits and assess the status of the programmes implemented by department, department said in its office order dated November 11.
2. Under the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana, the department undertakes development of rainfed portions of net cultivated area and cultivable wastelands in association with states.
3. DILRMP is a 100% grant scheme from the centre for computerisation of all existing land records including mutations (or transfers) and digitization of maps.

Monitoring committee

1. Northern zone monitoring committee - It will oversee implementation of schemes in Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir (UT) and Ladakh (UT), Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, NCT of Delhi (UT) and Chandigarh (UT).
2. Southern zone monitoring committee - Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Lakshadweep (UT), Puducherry and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
3. The eastern zone monitoring committee - Odisha, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar, Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram.
4. Western zone monitoring committee - Maharashtra, Goa, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Nagaland, Tripura, Daman & Diu, Dadra & Nagar Haveli.
5. The co-ordinator of each zonal committee will submit the report state-wise or scheme-wise to the concerned division alongwith a copy to the concerned programme division for further appropriate action.

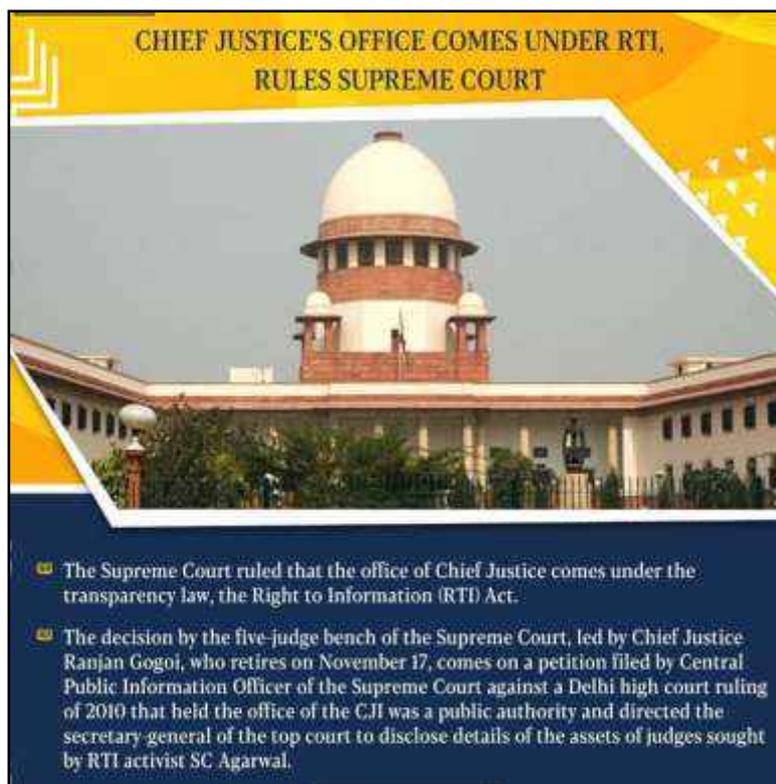
SC OPENS OFFICE OF CJI TO RTI

The Office of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) is a public authority under the Right to Information (RTI) Act and is liable to provide information sought in public interest, a five-judge Constitution Bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi declared on 13 November 2019. "Transparency and accountability should go hand-in-hand," the main judgment authored by Justice Sanjeev Khanna and supported by Chief Justice Gogoi and Justice Deepak Gupta said.

What

1. Justice Khanna wrote that transparency would only further strengthen judicial independence. The Bench upheld the Delhi High Court judgment of 2010 which had concluded that the CJI is a public authority and does not hold information on the personal assets of fellow judges in a fiduciary capacity. Information held by a person in a fiduciary capacity is exempt from disclosure under RTI.
2. Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, in his separate opinion, said the CJI and the judges of the Supreme Court are constitutional offices and not a hierarchy. Hence, there is no such fiduciary relationship among them.
3. On the aspect of disclosure of assets of sitting Supreme Court judges, the Bench said private assets though may amount to "personal information" under Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act, the Public Information Officer should take a considered decision in favour of disclosure if larger public interest is at stake.
4. In 2009, Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, as a Single Judge Bench of the Delhi High Court, had declared **the CJI's office to have a duty to disclose the details of** personal assets of other apex court judges.
5. All power – judicial power being no exception – is held accountable in a modern Constitution, Justice Bhat had concluded in 2009.

6. A three-judge Bench of the Delhi High Court, sitting in appeal, had upheld the the Single Judge Bench's conclusions. Consequently, the Supreme Court's Central Public Information officer had moved the apex court, contending that disclosures of its judges' "personal assets" under RTI would affect their judicial independence.
7. The case stems from an RTI request made by activist Subhash Chandra Agarwal in the Supreme Court for the complete correspondence between the Collegium and the government on certain judicial appointments.



GOVERNMENT WITHDRAWS DRAFT BILL OF FOREST ACT

The government on 15 November 2019 announced that it has decided to withdraw a contentious draft bill to amend the Indian Forests Act, 1927. The zero draft proposed in March this year had sparked protests among various tribal organizations over some of the proposed changes, which pitted the forest-dwellers against the government. The tribal organizations argued that if it became a law, the bill would give government the power to divest the forest dwellers of their rights.

What

1. However, Union Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Prakash Javadekar, said that a wrong impression was created that the government wants to amend the IFA, 1927 or do away with pro-tribal provisions of the Act.
2. **"It was a 'zero draft'.** It was mistakenly taken as a 'government draft' and circulated. Eleven

Flashback

- In 2015, the National Democratic Alliance government set up the TSR Subramanian Committee to suggest **changes in India's forest governance**.
- One of its key recommendations was to amend the IFA, 1927. Earlier, the MB Shah Commission too suggested amendments in 2010.
- From the onset, the process to amend the IFA has been shrouded in secrecy. On September 23, 2016, the MoEF&CC constituted a committee dominated by forest bureaucrats.
- It comprised the principal chief conservator of forests of four states — Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and Manipur; the then Inspector General of Forest Rekha Pai; the then Deputy Inspector General of Forest (forest policy) Noyal Thomas, and Assistant Director General (Wildlife) MS Negi.

- states have drafted their own forest laws.
3. This was just prepared by ministry officials to study how various forest laws can be put together in one draft and circulated. But now we have decided to withdraw the complete draft.
 4. The state has considerable population of Scheduled Tribe (ST) community and the move could be aimed at appeasing the large voter-base.
 5. Forest dwellers have played an integral role in the preservation of forests. They are the important stakeholders in forest development and government will take measures to sustain their livelihood. The tribal organizations welcomed the move, but questioned the misleading statements of the Union Minister.
 6. It is interesting, but misleading, because the letter was sent by the Environment Ministry on March 7 by IG (Forests) to all forest departments of all states, stating that it was a comprehensive first draft of the amendment, inviting comments and asking state governments to hold consultations.
 7. So the statements are quite contradictory. Secondly, it's too late to withdraw, as some states have already begun consultations.
 8. **The draft Bill had stirred up a hornet's nest** as it proposed to give management powers to forest officers and greater immunity to using firearms to prevent offences. According to tribal organizations, this was even higher than powers available to certain categories of public servants under Section 197 of Criminal Procedure 1973, akin to immunity granted in conflict zones.

COMMITTEE FOR LIABILITIES BETWEEN J&K, LADAKH

The Centre has constituted a three-member committee for division of assets and liabilities of Jammu and Kashmir between two successor Union territories, which came into existence on October 31. This was conveyed to members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on home affairs by senior officials led by Union home secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla. An advisory committee has been constituted under Section 84 of the J&K Reorganisation Act for apportionments of assets, rights and liabilities between UT of J&K and Ladakh, Bhalla and his team of officers told the committee headed by Congress leader Anand Sharma.

What

1. The 14th Finance Commission award has been apportioned between the UTs of J&K and Ladakh in the ratio of 70 percent and 30 per cent for the remaining five months of the 2019-20 fiscal.
2. All the seventh central pay commission-mandated allowances have been approved for government employees of the UTs of J&K and Ladakh.
3. Earlier, the home ministry had announced that former defence secretary Sanjay Mitra would be the chairman of the committee, retired IAS officer Arun Goyal and retired Indian Civil Accounts Service (ICAS) officer Giriraj Prasad Gupta would be its members.
4. As per Section 84 of the Act, the assets and liabilities of the existing state of Jammu and Kashmir have to be apportioned between the Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.
5. On August 5, the Centre announced the abrogation of the special status given to Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 and division of the state into the two UTs.
6. The apportionment of the assets and liabilities of the existing state of Jammu and Kashmir shall be subject to the recommendations of a committee constituted by the central government.
7. According to Section 85 of the Act, the central government, by an order, can establish one or more advisory committees for apportionment of assets, rights and liabilities of the companies and corporations constituted for the existing state of Jammu and Kashmir between the two Union territories.

INTERNATIONAL

INDIA PULLS OUT OF RCEP PACT

India on 4 November 2019 pulled out of the 16-nation Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement, capping six years of talks to clinch the **world's biggest free-trade** deal in the face of stiff resistance from domestic industries and political circles and reluctance of partners like China to grant it meaningful concessions despite hard negotiations in recent weeks.

What

1. India would, from now on, generally seek to sign trade pacts with only those countries with which it has trade surplus (unlike the RCEP grouping).
2. It could explore the possibility of a trade pact with the US and the UK (after the Brexit), and also resume negotiations with the EU for the proposed free trade agreement (FTA). Interestingly, a joint statement of RCEP nations after 4 November 2019 **summit doesn't mention about India's decision to pull out.**
3. **It merely said:** "India has significant outstanding issues, which remain unresolved. All RCEP participating countries will work together to resolve these outstanding issues in a mutually satisfactory way. **India's final decision will depend on satisfactory resolution of these issues.**"
4. This joint statement of RCEP nations suggests other nations are probably keeping the doors open for India to join back should it so decide.
5. India has participated in good faith in the RCEP discussions and had negotiated hard with a clear eyed view of our interests.
6. India was willing to back the RCEP deal at the **leaders' summit provided it got an assurance from partners that its concerns on safeguard mechanism for domestic industry, tariff concessions etc would be addressed and changes would accordingly be made in the final text of the agreement before it's ready to be signed next year.** However, some members were not willing to wait longer and negotiate with India.
7. Former Niti Aayog vice-chairman Arvind Panagariya said without India, the RCEP **isn't a huge deal, as others already have some kind of agreements among themselves.**

What is the RCEP?

1. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a trade deal that was being negotiated between 16 countries.
2. They include the 10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) and the six countries with which the bloc has free trade agreements (FTAs) — India, Australia, China, Korea, Japan, and New Zealand.
3. **The purpose of the deal is to create an "integrated market" spanning all 16 countries.**
4. This means that it would be easier for the products and services of each of these countries to be available across the entire region.
5. The **RCEP is billed to be the "largest" regional trading agreement yet** — the countries involved **account for almost half of the world's population**, contribute over a quarter of world exports, and make up around 30% of the global Gross Domestic Product (the value of all goods and services produced in a year).
6. Negotiations to chart out the details of this deal have been on since 2013, and all participating countries had earlier aimed to finalise it by November 2019.

8. Most RCEP members wanted to conclude the negotiations in 2019 so that a deal could be formally signed in 2020 (after the announcement by the leaders).
9. **Safeguards for domestic industry, particularly, remain a crucial part of India's** negotiations. A source had earlier said that India was planning to employ an "auto-trigger" safeguard mechanism for imports from not just China but also Australia and New Zealand to better protect domestic players from irrational spike in imports. However, the move was resisted.

ICC APPROVES PROBE FOR ROHINGYA

The International Criminal Court approved a full investigation into Myanmar's alleged crimes against the Rohingya, as the Southeast Asian nation faced mounting legal pressure worldwide over their fate. Judges backed a prosecution request to probe allegations of crimes against humanity and persecution over Myanmar's 2017 bloody military crackdown against the minority Muslim group.

What

1. The ICC decision comes after a week in which former democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi was named in an Argentine lawsuit over crimes against the Rohingya, and Myanmar faced a separate genocide lawsuit at the UN's top court.
2. More than 740,000 Rohingya people were forced to flee over the border into sprawling camps in Bangladesh, in violence that United Nations investigators say amounts to genocide.
3. The Hague-based ICC, set up in 2002 to try the world's worst crimes, said it had "authorised the prosecutor to proceed with an investigation for the alleged crimes within the ICC's jurisdiction" relating to Myanmar.
4. These include allegations of "systematic acts of violence", deportation as a crime against humanity, and persecution on the grounds of ethnicity or religion against the Rohingya. Myanmar has long denied accusations it committed ethnic cleansing or genocide.
5. Myanmar is not signed up to the ICC but the court ruled last year that it has jurisdiction over crimes against the Rohingya minority because Bangladesh, where they are now refugees, is a member.
6. Chief ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda was allowed to open a preliminary investigation on Myanmar in September 2018, and formally applied to begin a full-scale formal probe in July this year.
7. The wheels of international justice have turned slowly when it comes to abuses against the Rohingya, but this week they finally creaked into action.
8. West African nation The Gambia launched a case at International Court of Justice, the UN's top court also based in The Hague, accusing Myanmar of genocide.
9. First hearings by the case, which Gambia filed on behalf of the 57-nation Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, are due to take place in December.
10. The ICJ normally deals with more legalistic disputes and border issues between states, but has recently been drawn into cases involving alleged breaches of UN conventions on genocide and terrorism.
11. The ICC case meanwhile will focus on individual, not state responsibility, which could in theory lead to arrest warrants being issued for Myanmar's generals.
12. The country insists its own investigative committee is able to look into alleged atrocities -- even though critics dismiss the panel as toothless and biased.
13. The Rohingya garner little empathy inside Myanmar with many people supporting the 2017 military campaign, buying the official line it was a necessary defence against militants and that the Muslim minorities are not citizens.

US FORMALLY MOVES TO EXIT THE PARIS AGREEMENT

The United States formally notified the United Nations on 4 November 2019 that it was withdrawing from the Paris Agreement on climate change. Today the United States began the process to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, said US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo. The announcement is not unexpected as United States President Donald Trump had announced plans to exit the global climate agreement in June 2017. However, the ramifications of the exit of a major economy and big emitter, the US is the second biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, at a time when countries need to step up efforts to slow down the warming of the planet will have to be addressed. This is likely to be a key issue at the upcoming annual UN sponsored climate summit, which is being hosted in Madrid, Spain in December.

What

1. US announcement in 2017 a formal move to withdraw from the 2015 pact had to wait till this year because of a provision in the Paris Agreement.
2. The 2015 pact had lock in period of three years from the date of its entry into force—the Paris Agreement entered into force on November 4, 2016.
3. 4 November 2019 notification begins the formal year long process for the US to withdraw from the agreement. This will mean that the US will continue to be part of the discussions that will be held in December in Madrid.
4. For many it was déjà vu. In 2001, US President George W Bush announced that the US was withdrawing from the Kyoto Protocol, the first international climate agreement.
5. Bush had said that the 1997 agreement would hurt the US economy and give unfair advantage to other countries since developing countries were not required to cut their greenhouse gas emissions.
6. Arguments that Trump echoed in his 2017 announcement. Many experts say that the lack of US participation in the 1997 agreement severely undermined the efforts to cut emissions to slow down global warming.
7. While the US exit from the 2015 agreement is not unexpected there are concerns about how it will impact the global effort to slow down warming and effectively tackle climate change.
8. The rising incidence of extreme weather events that are likely induced or exacerbated by climate change makes it imperative for countries to step up efforts to **restrict temperature increase to “well below 2 degrees C” in order to limit the extent of adverse impacts of warming.**
9. The UN climate science panel gives a time frame of 12 years for countries to prevent the worst impacts of warming. The US withdrawal will mean that other

Flashback

1. The **Paris Agreement, in which Trump’s** predecessor Barack Obama and Prime Minister Narendra Modi played instrumental roles, was **adopted at the UN climate conference “COP 21”** held in the French capital in 2015 with an aim to reduce the hazardous greenhouse gas emissions.
2. Although Trump announced his decision to withdraw from the historic agreement on June 1, 2017, the process began on 4 November 2019 with the formal notification and the US will be out of the pact on November 4, 2020.
3. Agreement of December 12, 2015 on November 4, 2019. The US had signed the Paris Agreement on April 22, 2016 and expressed its consent to be bound by the agreement by acceptance on 3 September 2016.
4. In accordance with the provisions of its article 28, paragraph 1, the United States of America could withdraw from the Paris Agreement as from today by giving written notification to the Secretary-General.

countries would have to step up their efforts to curb greenhouse emissions. This could mean increased pressure on developing countries such as China and India, the largest and third largest emitters.

11TH SUMMIT OF BRICS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has attended 11th BRICS summit in Brazil on 13 November 2019. The theme of 11th Brics Summit is 'Economic Growth for an Innovative Future'. PM Modi said he is looking forward to holding discussions with the leaders from the four nations - Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa - on greater cooperation in a wide range of areas. BRICS brings together five major emerging economies comprising 42 per cent of the world's population, having 23 per cent of the global GDP and around 17 per cent of the share in world trade.

The outcome

1. Together BRICS speak in favour of strict compliance with the norms of international law and the central role of the United Nations in international affairs.
2. The group accounts for almost a third of the global GDP at purchasing power parity. Last year BRICS even outperformed G7 on this indicator.
3. The new areas of BRICS cooperation spearheaded by Brazil were strengthening of cooperation on science, technology and innovation; enhancement of cooperation on digital economy; invigoration of cooperation on the fight against transnational crime, especially against organized crime, money laundering and drug trafficking; and encouragement to the rapprochement between the New Development Bank (NDB) and the BRICS Business Council. And its BRICS Chairmanship managed to achieve serious progress in all main pillars of cooperation.
4. The New Development Bank (NDB) created by the BRICS countries has worked successfully.
5. Only this year, the NDB Board of Directors has approved 12 new investment projects in the BRICS countries.
6. Since the start of its operation in 2015, 44 investment projects worth over USD 12 billion have been approved by the NDB Board of Directors.
7. The work to strengthen the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) has been ongoing.
8. Its total capital of USD 100 billion is to be a guarantor of the BRICS financial stability in case of crisis.
9. Jim O'Neill, chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management, coined the Bric concept in 2001. South Africa was admitted by the other Bric leaders in December 2010, adding the "S" to the original grouping.

JCC MEETING ON CPEC

Pakistan and China have agreed to set a new direction to the USD 60 billion CPEC for future cooperation by largely shifting away from infrastructure projects and scouting for copper, gold, oil and gas sectors. The decision to expand the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor scope to copper, gold, oil and gas sectors was taken during the 9th Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) meeting that was co-chaired by Planning Minister Khusro Bakhtiar and National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) Vice-Chairman Ning Jizhe.

What

1. The JCC meeting was fruitful, discussions successful and the agreed framework is promising," Chinese Ambassador Yao Jing said, while addressing the media along with the planning minister.
2. The Chinese ambassador said the JCC had set a new direction for the CPEC. He said the discussions also took place to shift the Chinese manufacturing unit to Pakistan and providing Chinese financing facilities for future projects.
3. The planning minister stated that copper and mineral development would benefit both the countries as China remained one of the largest copper importers.
4. He maintained that the revival of the Pakistan Steel Mills with the help of China could also reduce the import bill by USD 4 billion.
5. The minister declared that Pakistan's security challenges had roots in its neighbourhood and to meet the challenges, there was a need to completely fence the country's borders with Afghanistan and Iran.

Flashback

1. China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a collection of infrastructure projects that are currently under construction throughout Pakistan.
2. CPEC is intended to rapidly modernize Pakistani infrastructure and strengthen its economy by the construction of modern transportation networks, numerous energy projects, and special economic zones.
3. On 13 November 2016, CPEC became partly operational when Chinese cargo was transported overland to Gwadar Port for onward maritime shipment to Africa and West Asia, while some major power projects were commissioned by late 2017.

BIMSTEC CONCLAVE

Three agreements have been signed between Ranong Port (Thailand) and port trusts of Chennai, Visakhapatnam and Kolkata, with an aim to reduce sea travel time between the two countries to more than a half. The memoranda of understanding (MoUs) were signed during the two-day BIMSTEC conclave of ports which concluded in Visakhapatnam on 7 November 2019. It was the first such conclave.

What

1. The MoUs will contribute to BIMSTEC objective of strengthening connectivity and is part of India's Act East Policy, said an official release.
2. These MoUs will enhance economic partnership by cutting down the sea travel time between India and Thailand from 10-15 days to seven days.
3. The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) links five countries from South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, India and Sri Lanka) and two from South-East Asia (Myanmar and Thailand).

Flashback

1. BIMSTEC is the sub-regional organization came into being in 1997 through the Bangkok Declaration.
2. Initially, it was formed with four Member States with the acronym '**BIST-EC**' (**B**angladesh, **I**ndia, **S**ri-Lanka and **T**hailand Economic Cooperation).
3. **It became renamed 'BIMST-EC' in 1997**, following the inclusion of Myanmar.
4. With the admission of Nepal and Bhutan in 2004, the name of the **grouping was changed to 'Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)**.

4. The BIMSTEC region brings together 1.67 billion people or 22 per cent of the world's population and a combined gross domestic product of USD 3.71 trillion.
5. While inaugurating the conclave, Union Minister of State for Shipping (Independent Charge) Mansukh Mandaviya said India was keen on forging deep relations with BIMSTEC member countries.

TIGER TRIUMPH

The first ever joint exercise involving the Army, Navy and Air Force of both India and the United States and commanded by each other, the tri-services joint exercise between the two countries, announced by US President Donald Trump during Prime Minister **Narendra Modi's event in Texas** in September, started in Visakhapatnam on 13 November 2019. **The exercise, 'Tiger Triumph', ends on November 21.**

What

1. Although it is a Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercise, **defence sources said there will be exercises for a "limited threat scenario" as well.**
2. For India, Naval ships Jalashwa, Airavat and Sandhayak, Army troops from 19 Madras and 7 Guards, and MI-17 helicopters and Rapid Action Medical Team (RAMT) from the Air Force will participate. The US will be represented by US Navy Ship German-town, with troops from US Third Marine Division.
3. The exercise is part of strengthening the Indo-US strategic partnership, and **defence sources said it is the "next best thing in the absence of a strategic alliance".**
4. The two countries will work out the modalities of how their forces can operate under the command of forces of the other nation.
5. Unlike other joint exercises that India holds with other countries, sources said **Tiger Triumph is "not under any UN mandate". It means exercise will be a simulation where the joint forces will "go to a hypothetical third nation for HADR".**
6. The exercise will prepare the joint forces to conduct humanitarian and relief work in the region in case a third nation ever asks for such assistance, which is not covered by a UN mandate.
7. A common structure will be shared by forces of the two nations, with US marines also coming under the Indian command for certain exercises, sources said. For the exercises on land, India will hold the command, while the command will be shared for exercises in sea.
8. The US recently renamed its Pacific Command as the US Indo-Pacific Command, **signifying India's growing significance.**
9. The first ever 2+2 dialogue between the two countries took place in 2018.

ECONOMY

RBI PANEL FOR CIC

The Reserve **Bank of India's (RBI's)** working group set up to review the extant regulations on core investment companies (CICs) has favoured restricting the number of **layers of such entities within a group to two by 2021.** "Any CIC within a group shall not make investment through more than a total of two layers of CICs, **including itself,"** said the panel in its report. If the recommendation is implemented, it will cut down the room for leverage by companies.

What

1. The **RBI's recent Financial Stability Reports (FSR)** had pointed to the central bank's discomfort over the high level of pledged shares by India Inc, and the risks arising out of the systemic inter-connectedness of various financial players.

2. Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) guidelines on governance seek to avoid multiple structures. So, the RBI panel's advice to limit CIC to two levels is another reform for better financing arrangement. However, its timing is an issue, as business houses are already under pressure. RBI panel for maximum of two-layered core investment companies by 2021
3. The Companies Act of 2013 restricts the group structure to maximum of three layers (which includes the top layer), but non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) have been exempted from this so far. And this, in turn, has facilitated the "proliferation of multiple layers of CICs in a group (with cross-holdings)".
4. Under the current structure, with no restriction on the number of CICs which can exist in a group, there can be "multiple gearing" on the same capital; this can cause excessive leveraging.
5. Considering that a CIC can borrow 2.5 times of its adjusted net worth (ANW), if there exists two CICs in a group, then a capital of ~100 can be leveraged about 11.25 times. This is much more than what is allowed for NBFCs.
6. With the addition of more CICs, the scope of leverage at the group level could increase exponentially. Operating companies and NBFCs, if any, are eligible to raise funds directly from banks and the market, besides getting funds from group CICs.

What is the FSR?

1. The FSR reflects the collective assessment of the Sub-Committee of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) on risks to financial stability.
2. It gives a picture of the resilience of the financial system.
3. The Report also discusses issues relating to the development and regulation of the financial sector.
4. The report analyses the overall state of the various segments as well as highlights the risk-related issues that could cause potential challenges.

SC SCRAPS FINANCE ACT RULES ON TRIBUNALS

Supreme Court on 13 November 2019 struck down provisions of the amended Finance Act 2017, which had changed the structure and powers of various judicial tribunals, such as the National Green Tribunal and Income Tax Appellate Tribunal. However, the court referred to a larger bench the question of whether the Finance Act could be passed as a Money Bill.

What

1. The court has directed the government to frame fresh rules for the appointment of tribunal members. Till the new rules are formulated, the appointments will be as per existing laws, and not under the Finance Act 2017.
2. The judgment was delivered by a bench comprising CJI Ranjan Gogoi, Justices NV Ramana, DY Chandrachud, Deepak Gupta and Sanjiv Khanna.
3. The petitioners — which included NGO Social Action for Forest and Environment (SAFE) — had pleaded that the passing of Finance Act as a Money Bill was wrong, and provisions in it would adversely affect "functioning and independence" of the NGT.
4. Appearing for the government, Attorney General K K Venugopal had said the court **could not review the Speaker's decision to certify a Bill as a Money Bill**.
5. The new rules, under Tribunal, Appellate Tribunal and other Authorities (Qualifications, Experience and other Conditions of Service of Members) Rules, 2017, under Section 184 of the Finance Act, had placed the quasi-judicial bodies under the Centre's control.

6. The tribunal had been placed under the very ministries against which they were to pass orders.

RULES UNDER INSOLVENCY LAW NOTIFIED

The Government on 15 November 2019 notified rules under the insolvency law to deal with resolution of financial service providers, excluding banks. The corporate affairs ministry has notified the Insolvency and Bankruptcy (Insolvency and Liquidation Proceedings of Financial Service Providers and Application to Adjudicating Authority) Rules, 2019 (Rules).

What

1. It will provide a generic framework for insolvency and liquidation proceedings of systemically important Financial Service Providers (FSPs) other than banks.
2. The special framework provided under Section 227 of the Code for financial service providers is essentially aimed at serving as an interim mechanism to deal with any exigency pending introduction of a full-fledged enactment to deal with financial resolution of banks and other systemically important financial service providers.
3. The move also comes against the backdrop of instances of various FSPs facing problems.
4. Significantly, Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) for an FSP will be initiated "only on an application by the appropriate regulator".
5. The latest move comes against the backdrop of instances of financial stress faced by certain entities that are into financial services.
6. Separately, the government will notify specific categories of FSPs that do not fall under the systemically important category and would be resolved under the normal provisions of the Code as ordinarily applicable to corporate debtors.
7. The rules shall apply to such FSPs or categories of FSPs, as will be notified by the central government under section 227 from time to time in consultation with appropriate regulators, for the purpose of their insolvency and liquidation proceedings.
8. The license or registration which authorises the FSP to engage in the business of providing financial services will not be suspended or cancelled during the interim-moratorium and the CIRP.
9. The regulator concerned can also constitute an advisory committee of three or more experts to advise the administrator in the operations of the FSP during the CIRP.
10. The provisions of interim-moratorium or moratorium shall not apply to any third-party assets or properties in custody or possession of the FSP, including any funds, securities and other assets required to be held in trust for the benefit of third parties.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

COP25 TO TAKE PLACE IN MADRID

United Nations has confirmed that this year's climate change talks will take place in Madrid in December, after Chile withdrew as host this week because of massive street protests in the South American country. The talks, known as COP25, will be held between December 2 and 13, as originally planned.

What

1. The conference is aimed at fleshing out the details of the implementation of the landmark Paris Agreement climate pact, amid calls for urgent action from environmental groups and climate protesters. Chile will assume the presidency of the climate talks while in Madrid.
2. The so-called Conference of the Parties (COP) is the formal meeting of parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
3. On 30 October 2019, Chile withdrew as host of an APEC summit this month at which the United States and China had been expected to sign a deal to ease their trade war.

Hosts by rotation

1. The venue for the COP meeting is rotated among the five UN-identified regions — Africa, Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America and Caribbean, and Western Europe and Others.
2. The countries in the region have to propose a candidate, and a host is usually decided at least two years in advance.
3. If no one else agrees to do it, Bonn in Germany, as the headquarters of the UNFCCC secretariat, has to step in and host the event.
4. The rotation cycle has not been followed very strictly. The first and second COPs were both held in western Europe (Berlin and Geneva), and so were the fifth and sixth (Bonn and the Hague).
5. After the 2012 COP in Doha, the event has not returned to Asia. That is because Fiji, the host in 2017, lacked the resources to organise an event of this scale; as a compromise, the event had to be held in Bonn under the Fijian presidency.

COP25: The event

1. The signatories to the 1992 UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) meet to discuss and decide on steps that countries need to take to fight climate change.
2. This will be the 25th edition of the meeting, hence COP25. It is the same meeting that, at COP3, delivered the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, the first international agreement to fight climate change.
3. The Kyoto Protocol was later deemed to be inadequate, and after several years of negotiations, COP21 in 2015 delivered the Paris Agreement.
4. In subsequent years, countries have been trying to finalise the rules and procedures that will govern the implementation of the Paris Agreement.
5. One of the most important tasks at the upcoming COP is to complete the negotiations over the rulebook.

BROWN TO GREEN REPORT 2019

Extreme weather events led to around 16,000 deaths and economic losses of \$142 billion in G20 nations on average every year during 1998-2017 with India reporting the highest number of deaths among them and figuring in the list of top five countries in terms of economic losses during the period, said a global report that analysed the climate action track records of the global economic power group.

What

1. The 'Brown to Green Report 2019', released by the Climate Transparency, however, noted that India is the only country among G20 nations that is close to **1.5 degree Celsius temperature rise 'pathway'** - a scenario which the scientific community has pitched for at this juncture to save the world from the disastrous consequences of average temperature rise.
2. "Limiting global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius instead of 3 degree celsius avoids over 70% of climate-related impacts in the water, health and agriculture sectors, said the report, highlighting the necessity of ramping up climate action targets by top emitters.
3. The G20 countries are together responsible for approximately 80% of global GHG emissions.
4. Covering 80 indicators, the **report is the world's most comprehensive review of** G20 climate action, mapping achievements and drawbacks in efforts to reduce emissions and adapt to climate impacts as part of their respective climate actions goals - called Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) — which countries had submitted to the UN climate body as part of the Paris Agreement targets.
5. India has the most ambitious NDC compared to its fair share of global emissions to limit global warming to 1.5 degree celsius. However, India still needs to act now to prepare sectors for stringent emission reductions.
6. It also noted that India is currently investing most in renewable energy while Brazil and Germany are the only G20 countries with long-term renewable strategies.
7. Brazil leads with 82.5% renewables, while Saudi Arabia, South Korea and South Africa lag behind with shares of only 0-5%, said the report while referring to the countries shares of renewables in their respective total energy mix.
8. Though other countries such as China, Indonesia, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the EU and its member states are also projected to meet or surpass their NDC targets, the report noted that the NDC targets of **these nations are, in fact, not yet "highest possible ambition" as required by the Paris Agreement.**
9. According to the findings of the report, the three G20 countries - South Korea, Canada and Australia - are the laggards who are off track from implementing their **"already unambitious NDCs.**
10. The report found that the **G20 nations' CO2 emissions went up in all sectors in** 2018, with the highest rise (4.1%) in the buildings sector compared to 2017. While power sector recorded an increase of 1.6%, the transport sector emissions increased by 1.2% in 2018.
11. The report noted that the G20 countries provided more than \$127 billion in fossil fuel subsidies in 2017. Diverting only a fraction of these fossil fuel subsidies towards renewables could pay for the clean energy transition and reduce emissions significantly, said Climate Transparency which is a global partnership that brings together experts from research organisations and NGOs in majority of the G20 countries.

Flashback

1. The Brown to Green Report 2019 is the **world's most comprehensive** review of G20 climate action. It provides concise and comparable information on G20 country mitigation action, finance and adaptation.
2. Developed by experts from 14 research organisations and NGOs from the majority of the G20 countries, the report covers 80 indicators. It informs policy makers and stimulates national debates.

12. Just one year before the critical deadline, the findings give us hope that countries will find the political will to commit to higher emission reduction targets in 2020 as they promised under the Paris Agreement.

SAFAR'S STUDY

Central Pollution Control Board Member Secretary Prashant Gargava said stubble burning contributed significantly to air pollution in Delhi this year with the share of farm fire smoke in particulate matter peaking to 44 percent. According to the Ministry of **Earth Sciences' air quality monitor SAFAR**, smoke from stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana accounted for 44 per cent of pollution in Delhi on November 1, the highest this year.

What

1. Crop residue burning has contributed a lot. This year, its contribution was almost 44-45 percent bringing all the smoke to Delhi.
2. The CPCB member secretary also stressed the need to quickly and heavily invest in public transportation to reduce vehicular emissions.
3. As policymakers, we have to quickly and heavily invest in public transportation. I **head a task force to deal with similar situations ... the biggest difficulty is how do I do with the transportation?**
4. Delhi has around 5,500 buses and 370 kilometers of metro network. Around 42 lakh people travel through buses, while 50.13 lakh opt for metro trains every day.
5. Power plants emit sulphur dioxide and it's **contribution to particulate matter** pollution is huge. It is almost 25-30 percent of particles.

About SAFAR

1. The System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research (SAFAR) is a national initiative introduced by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) to measure the air quality of a metropolitan city, by measuring the overall pollution level and the location-specific air quality of the city.
2. The system is indigenously developed by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune and is operationalized by the India Meteorological Department (IMD).
3. It has a giant true color LED display that gives out real-time air quality index on a 24x7 basis with color-coding (along with 72 hours advance forecast).
4. The ultimate objective of the project is to increase awareness among the general public regarding the air quality in their city so that appropriate mitigation measures and systematic action can be taken up.
5. **SAFAR is an integral part of India's first Air Quality Early Warning System** operational in Delhi.

AQI is calculated for eight major air pollutants:

1. Ground-level ozone
2. PM10
3. PM2.5
4. Carbon monoxide
5. Sulfur dioxide
6. Nitrogen dioxide
7. Ammonia
8. Lead

SPACE X LAUNCHES 60 MORE MINI SATELLITES

SpaceX launched 60 mini satellites, the second batch of an orbiting network meant to provide global internet coverage. The Falcon rocket blasted into the morning sky, marking the unprecedented fourth flight of a booster for SpaceX. The compact flat-panel satellites just 575 pounds (260 kilograms) each will join 60 launched in May. SpaceX founder and chief executive Elon Musk wants to put thousands of

these Starlink satellites in orbit, to offer high-speed internet service everywhere. He plans to start service next year in the northern US and Canada, with global coverage for populated areas after 24 launches.

What

1. This also marked the first time SpaceX used a previously flown nose cone. The California-based company reuses rocket parts to cut costs.
2. Stacked flat inside the top of the rocket, the newest satellites were going to maneuver even higher following liftoff, using krypton-powered thrusters.
3. SpaceX said there was a potential problem with one of the 60 that could prevent it from moving beyond its initial 174 mile-high (280 kilometer-high) orbit. In that case, the faulty satellite will be commanded to re-enter and burn up harmlessly in the atmosphere. Each satellite has an autonomous system for dodging space junk.
4. In September, however, the European Space Agency had to move one of its satellites out of the way of a Starlink satellite. SpaceX later said it corrected the problem.
5. SpaceX is among several companies interested in providing broadband internet coverage worldwide, especially in areas where it costs too much or is unreliable. According to Musk, Starlink revenue can help SpaceX develop rockets and spacecraft for traveling to Mars, his overriding ambition.
6. Additionally, the components of each satellite are 100 percent demisable and will quickly burn up in Earth's atmosphere at the end of their life cycle - a measure that exceeds all current safety standards.
7. Starlink is targeted to offer service in parts of the U.S. and Canada after six launches, rapidly expanding to global coverage of the populated world after 24 launches.

MISCELLANEOUS

RAFALE DEFENCE DEAL

The Supreme Court on 14 November 2019 gave clean chit to the Modi government on the purchase of 36 fully-loaded Rafale fighter jets from French company Dassault Aviation, rejecting the plea for registration of an FIR by the CBI for alleged commission of cognisable offence in the deal.

What is the Rafale deal issue?

1. In 2016, the Defence Ministry of India signed a deal with France's Dassault Aviation for purchase of 36 new Rafale fighter jets for 7.87 billion euro.
2. The opposition Congress party accused BJP govt of buying the aircraft at nearly three times the price that was being negotiated by a Congress-led govt before PM Narendra Modi came to power in 2014.
3. On November 14, 2019, the Supreme Court of India rejected petitions seeking a probe into the matter.
4. The first Rafales aircraft is due to arrive in India in May 2020. The deliveries are expected to be completed by 2022.
5. The Indian Air Force has been keen to acquire at least 36 more Rafale jets. The infrastructure to accommodate these is already in place.

INDIA TO HOST MEN'S HOCKEY WORLD CUP

India will host the Men's Hockey World Cup for the second consecutive time **after the country was picked to host the game's showpiece event in 2023** by

the International Hockey Federation (FIH) in Lausanne. According to the FIH, the **Men's Hockey World Cup** will be held in India from January 13 to 29. In another decision **made by the Executive Board during the FIH's last meeting of the year**, Spain and the Netherlands were named as the co-**hosts of the 2022 Women's World Cup** scheduled to be held from July 1 to 22. The venues will be announced by the host nations at a later date.

What

1. **India will, thus, become the first country to stage four men's Hockey World Cups** after having hosted the showpiece in 1982 (Mumbai), 2010 (New Delhi) and 2018 (Bhubaneswar). **The Netherlands' had hosted three men's tournaments.**
2. The country will be completing 75 years of independence in 2023 and so Hockey India wanted to host the World Cup to showcase the growth of the sport in the country on that occasion.
3. India was among the three nations — Belgium and Malaysia are the other two — to **have presented bids to host the next edition of the men's World Cup.**
4. **For the Women's World Cup, five countries** — Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Malaysia and New Zealand — had presented their bids. The competition format of the 2023 World Cup will be the same as the last edition.

T.N. SESHAN DEAD

Former Chief Election Commissioner Tirunellai Narayanaier Seshan who cracked the whip on money and muscle power in elections and proved to be a nemesis for political parties was died in Chennai on 10 November 2019. He was 87. His wife, **Jayalakshmi, had died early last year. His end came at his house on St. Mary's Road in Alwarpet.**

What

1. Seshan's work as CEC got an international recognition when he was given the Ramon Magsaysay award for 1996.
2. He was the only one to hold the post of CEC for six years from 1990 to 1996 in the last 50 years. He was known to follow a no-nonsense approach, and had enforced, in his own way, discipline on political parties and contestants.
3. He earned the wrath of several politicians including former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa **who had once described him as an "embodiment of arrogance".**
4. In July 1997, he had unsuccessfully contested in the Presidential election against K.R. Narayanan, who was backed by almost all the parties in the country. **Against Narayanan's 9,56,290 votes, Seshan could poll only 50,631 votes.**
5. Two years later, in the Gandhinagar parliamentary constituency, the Congress fielded him against the then Union Home Minister L.K. Advani of the BJP. Seshan lost by a margin of around 2 lakh votes.
6. Born on December 15, 1932 in Palakkad, Kerala, Mr. Seshan belonged to the 1955 batch of Tamil Nadu cadre officers of the IAS.
7. An alumnus of the Madras Christian College, he, as an IAS officer, did a year-long course in management at the Harvard University in the 1960s.

HOW OLD IS NILE RIVER

The Nile River flowing through Egypt could be six times as old as previously thought, according to a study which estimated it to have originated at least 30 million years ago. The study, published in the journal Nature Geoscience, assessed the links between the geographical and physical features — or topography — of the Nile River to the flow of molten rocks **in the Earth's mantle**. **The researchers, including those from the University of Texas (UT) at Austin in the US, connected the tilted nature of the Nile's topography to a conveyor belt of mantle rock pushing up against the Ethiopian Highlands in the south, and pulling the surface down in the north.**

What

1. This gentle gradient, they said, keeps the Nile on a consistent northward course from its beginning to the end. The study said the Nile would have turned west long ago — probably changing the course of history along with it — **if it weren't for the mantle movement keeping the river on course.**
2. According to the researchers, the slow movement of the deep mantle is one of the **key forces shaping the Earth's landscape and geological processes.**
3. **The Earth's mantle is** composed of solid rock flowing like a fluid over long periods, and different areas of the mantle have different circulation patterns.
4. As part of the study, the researchers traced the geological history of the Nile by studying ancient volcanic rock in the Ethiopian Highlands and correlating it with the huge deposits of river sediment buried under the Nile Delta.
5. Based on the findings, the researchers said the Ethiopian Highlands have remained at a similar height for millions of years due to the support of the mantle rock from below.
6. It was unclear how the landscape retained its physical features until now, the researchers said. When the scientists ran computer simulations to re-create **40 million years of the Earth's plate tectonic activity, the model showed** the arrival of a hot mantle plume which likely led to the outpouring of lava that formed the Ethiopian Highlands, while also activating a conveyor belt in the mantle that persists to this day.
7. The researchers said the simulation reproduced changes in the landscape almost exactly as they had expected, along with small details in the landscape such as whitewater rapids found along the length of the Nile.
8. Combining diverse geological data with state-of-the-art, landscape modeling was key for the study, the researchers said, who now hope to apply the same technique to other rivers such as the Yangtze and Congo.

MAURITIUS PM TAKES OATH

Mauritius's incumbent Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth was sworn in for a five-year term on 12 November 2019 after elections in which his coalition consolidated its grip on parliament. Jugnauth, 57, took over from his father in 2017 without going through a vote, and the decisive victory of his centre-right Morisian Alliance in the November 7 elections has strengthened his legitimacy.

What

1. Jugnauth held the finance portfolio in the previous government, but he is now handing it over to Renganaden Padayach, former deputy governor of the Bank of Mauritius.

2. The Morisian Alliance claimed 42 of 70 seats in parliament, trouncing the centre-left National Alliance of Navin Ramgoolam, which got 17 seats, and the Mauritian Militant Movement of Paul Berenger, which garnered nine seats.
3. Since attaining independence from Britain in 1968, Mauritius has become one of the most stable democracies in Africa.
4. The vote last week was peaceful across the Indian Ocean island nation which has evolved from a poor, agriculture-based economy to a relatively wealthy financial services hub and tourist beacon.
5. During the campaign, Jugnauth touted his stewardship of the economy, which grew at nearly four percent in 2018, and an infrastructure drive that included construction of an underground train.
6. But Mauritius, situated roughly 1,800 kilometres (1,100 miles) off the eastern coast of Africa, is not without its problems.
7. Youth unemployment, at 22 percent, is high and income inequality is seen as deepening in the diverse country of 1.3 million.

UNICEF REPORT

India had the second-highest number of deaths of children under the age of five in 2018 due to pneumonia, a curable and preventable disease that claimed the life of one child every 39 seconds globally, according to a new report by the UN. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) said that globally, pneumonia claimed the lives of more than 800,000 children under the age of five last year – or one child every 39 seconds. Most deaths occurred among children under the age of two, and almost 153,000 within the first month of life.

What

1. The report said just five countries were responsible for more than half of child pneumonia deaths: Nigeria (162,000), India (127,000), Pakistan (58,000), the Democratic Republic of Congo (40,000) and Ethiopia (32,000).
2. **This “forgotten epidemic” is now responsible for 15 percent of deaths in children** under the age of five, and yet, just three per cent of global infectious disease research spending is allocated to the disease, the UN agency said.
3. In addition, the strong link between child pneumonia deaths and poverty is undeniable. Lack of access to drinking water, inadequate health care, and the burden of undernutrition and indoor air pollution are major drivers of vulnerability to the disease. Around half of all pneumonia-related deaths are associated with air pollution.
4. Sounding the alarm about this forgotten epidemic, the UNICEF and other health and **children's organisations launched an appeal for global action and will in January host** world leaders at the Global Forum on Childhood Pneumonia in Spain.
5. Every day, nearly 2,200 children under the age of five die from pneumonia, a curable and mostly preventable disease. Strong global commitment and increased investments are critical to the fight against this disease.
6. Only through cost-effective protective, preventative and treatment interventions delivered to where children are will we be able to truly save millions of lives, UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore said.

7. Pneumonia is caused by bacteria, viruses or fungi, and leaves children fighting for breath as their lungs fill with pus and fluid. More children under the age of five died from the disease in 2018 than from any other. About 437,000 children under five died due to diarrhoea and 272,000 due to malaria.
8. The UN agency said that the children whose immune systems is weakened by other infections like HIV or by malnutrition, and those living in areas with high levels of air pollution and unsafe water, are at a far greater risk.
9. While the disease can be prevented with vaccines, and easily treated with low-cost antibiotics if properly diagnosed, yet tens of millions of children are still going unvaccinated – and one in three with symptoms do not receive essential medical care.
10. The report also expressed concern that children with severe cases of pneumonia may require oxygen treatment, which is rarely available in the poorest countries to the children who need it.
11. The organisations are urging governments in the worst-affected countries to develop and implement pneumonia control and prevention strategies and call on richer nations and donors to boost immunisation coverage by lowering the cost of key vaccines.
12. An estimated 18 million more health workers are needed by 2030 to prevent, diagnose and treat pneumonia as well as to reach the Sustainable Development Goals targets for Universal Health Coverage.

DUSTLIK 2019

The first-ever India-Uzbekistan Joint Exercise ‘Dustlik 2019’ **took off at** Tashkent in Uzbekistan in the presence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Uzbek counterpart Major General Bakhodir Nizamovich Kurbanov. The ten-day drill started from 4 November 2019 was conducted at Chirchiq Training Area near Tashkent where the armies from both countries train alongside each other.

What

1. **Displaying India’s increasing strategic reach an** Indian Air Force (IAF) C-130 aircraft airlifted Indian Army troops from Jamnagar to Tashkent. The next edition of Ex- Dustlik will be conducted in India in 2020.
2. Before departing for Russia for the India-Russia Intergovernmental Commission on Military-Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-MTC) in Moscow from Nov 5-7, Singh who is in Uzbekistan called for isolating nations adopting terrorism as state policy.
3. Identifying ‘Military-Technical Cooperation’ **as an area of huge potential, Singh** offered to help in the modernisation and capacity building of the forces of that country.
4. New Delhi has already offered to develop a state-of-the-art IT complex in Armed Forces Academy of Uzbekistan for the benefit of their soldiers. At the end of his talks with his counterpart, both sides have inked an MoU for military medicine to Uzbekistan.
5. With growing Chinese presence in the region, relations with Uzbekistan is important **for India’s security, connectivity and counter-**terrorism efforts. Last year the two countries had announced that they will work together for a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan which is beneficial for the region.
6. Uzbekistan which has a strong military in the region and is a key player in the region will be of great importance for India from a security point of view.

7. Though the CIS nations have huge reserves of gas, uranium and gold, its relations with its neighbouring countries namely Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are rough due to water issues.

CHIEF GUEST AT THE REPUBLIC DAY 2020

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro on November 13 accepted Prime Minister **Narendra Modi's invitation to be the chief guest at India's Republic Day** celebrations next year. Mr. Modi, who is in Brazil for the 11th BRICS Summit which will focus on building mechanisms for counter-terrorism cooperation and strengthen **India's ties with the world's five major economies**, met Mr. Bolsonaro on the sidelines of the meeting and spoke about diversifying cooperation for the benefit of the people.

What

1. The two leaders are meeting over four months after they met in Osaka, Japan for the two-day G20 Summit during which Mr. Modi congratulated Mr. Bolsonaro on being elected as the President of Brazil and welcomed him in the BRICS family.
2. The Brazilian President, who was elected in January, announced last month that Indian tourists would be exempted from visas to enter Brazil for tourism or business.
3. The U.S., Australia, Japan and Canada are already exempt from short-term tourist and business visas. The next country should be India, he was quoted as saying by Brazilian newspaper Folha de S.Paulo.