

CURRENT AFFAIRS

MONTH : OCTOBER 2018

UPSC/MPSC

### *Swasth Bharat Yatra national campaign*

To sensitise people about eating safe food and be healthy. Campaign has been launched in association with states and led by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

What is FSSAI?

**Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** is an autonomous body established under the [Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India](#). The FSSAI has been established under the [Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006](#) which is a consolidating statute related to food safety and regulation in India. FSSAI is responsible for protecting and promoting [public health](#) through the [regulation](#) and supervision of [food safety](#).

Zero hunger is one of the goal under sustainable development goals by united nations development programme.

### *LPG set to make Kerala the first smoke-free State.*

Kerala is now set to become the first smoke-free State in the country with public sector oil companies eyeing 100% LPG penetration here

#### ***Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana:***

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana aims to provide LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) connections to poor households.

Under the scheme, an adult woman member of a below poverty line family identified through the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) is given a deposit-free LPG connection with financial assistance of Rs 1,600 per connection by the Centre.

***Identification of households:*** Eligible households will be identified in consultation with state governments and Union territories. The scheme is being implemented by the **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas**.

A report from the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare places household air pollution (HAP) as the second leading risk factor contributing to India's disease burden. A large section of Indians, especially women and girls, are exposed to severe (HAP) from the use of solid fuels such as biomass, dung cakes and coal for cooking. According to the World Health Organization, solid fuel use is responsible for about 13% of all mortality and morbidity in India (measured as Disability-Adjusted Life Years), and causes about 40% of all

pulmonary disorders, nearly 30% of cataract incidences, and over 20% each of ischemic heart disease, lung cancer and lower respiratory infection.

### ***‘Prakriti’ programme***

To promote awareness about forests and environment and stimulate interest among the students of NVS and KVS in maintaining a balanced environment and for acquiring skills that reflect care and protection towards forests, environment and society.

The Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) has signed two Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) and Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS).

The ***main objective*** behind the agreements is to provide a platform for the school children to learn practical skills towards sustainable use of the resources.

They aim to make the Indian youth more sensitive towards national and global issues of environment and thus, help them become responsible citizens.

The agreements also aim to mobilise a cadre of youth for raising a peoples’ movement, which is committed to the conservation of forest and environment.

### **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP)**

Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana’ is a campaign launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. Of India (Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers) to provide quality medicines at affordable prices to the masses through specialkendra’s known as Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra.

***Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra (PMBJK)*** have been set up to provide generic drugs, which are available at lesser prices but are equivalent in quality and efficacy as expensive branded drugs.

***Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI)*** is the implementing agency of PMBJP.

### ***What is a Generic Medicine?***

Generic medicines are unbranded medicines which are equally safe and having the same efficacy as that of branded medicines in terms of their therapeutic value. The prices of generic medicines are much cheaper than their branded equivalent.

Central Warehouse of Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana has been set up at Bilaspur, Gurugram. It has been setup by the Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI)

**Ask Disha ((Digital Interaction to Seek Help Anytime)**

initiative by IRCTC is aimed at facilitating accessibility by answering users' queries pertaining to various services offered to railway passengers. It is a computer programme designed to simulate conversation with users, especially over the internet.

**#Self4Society app**, - developed by MyGov, has been launched by the government to help coordinate volunteer work undertaken by professionals.

***About #Self4Society App:***

- This platform will help to create better synergies among so many CSR and other initiatives and lead to a much better outcome of the efforts of professionals.
- Companies have observed that a spirit of service and volunteering improves employee satisfaction and reduces employee attrition.
- The app will have incentives, gamification and intra- and inter-company competitions, and social networking.

***Main Nahin Hum' portal and its significance:***

- The portal, which works on the theme 'Self4Society', will enable IT professionals and organisations to bring together their efforts towards social causes on one platform. The platform has been developed by MyGov.
- The portal will also help the employees in identifying the volunteering opportunities for social causes and they can also collaborate with other employees on such projects.
- In doing so, the portal is expected to help catalyse greater collaboration towards the service of the weaker sections of society, especially by leveraging the benefits of technology.

**The World Economic Forum (WEF) has released the Global Competitiveness Report 2018.**

***ASEM:***

- The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation bringing together the 28 European Union member states, 2 other European countries, and the European Union with 21 Asian countries and the ASEAN Secretariat.
- The ASEM dialogue addresses political, economic and cultural issues, with the objective of strengthening the relationship between the two regions, in a spirit of mutual respect and equal partnership.

- It was officially established on 1 March 1996 at the first summit in Bangkok, Thailand.
- The ASEM Summit is a biennial meeting between the Heads of State and Government, the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

### Oneer™

CSIR has developed an affordable Water Disinfection System “Oneer™”. The device will go a long way in meeting the requirements of potable water in rural and urban areas.

It is useful for continuous treatment of water and eliminates all disease causing pathogens such as virus, bacteria, fungi, protozoa and cyst to provide safe drinking water to domestic and communities settings as per National and International standards prescribed for potable water (BIS, WHO etc.).

### Hyperion

A team of scientists at the European Southern Observatory (ESO) have cited the most massive structure in the early universe known to date. The galaxy proto-supercluster found has been named Hyperion.

- The galaxy has been found using new measurements made by the visible multi-object spectrograph of ESO’s Very Large Telescope .

### *visible multi-object spectrograph:*

The VIMOS, an instrument that measures objects at a distance of billions of light years away, in practice allows experts to see what the early universe was like in the distant cosmic past. The spectrograph is hosted by the Chile-based Very Large Telescope.

### *Dawn mission:*

- NASA’s Dawn mission was aimed at studying the asteroid **Vesta** and **dwarf planet Ceres**.
- Dawn is the only mission ever to orbit two extraterrestrial targets. It orbited giant asteroid Vesta for 14 months from 2011 to 2012, then continued on to Ceres, where it has been in orbit since March 2015.

### **Dharma Guardian:**

What is it? It is a joint military exercise between India and Japan.

Why in News? The first edition of this joint military exercise will be held in Mizoram.

Aim: The exercise is aimed at developing mutual understanding and respect between militaries of both countries, as also facilitate in tracking worldwide phenomenon of terrorism.

### ***About FATF:***

What is it?

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 on the initiative of the G7. It is a “policy-making body” which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in various areas. The FATF Secretariat is housed at the OECD headquarters in Paris.

### **Objectives:**

The objectives of the FATF are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.

### **Functions:**

The FATF monitors the progress of its members in implementing necessary measures, reviews money laundering and terrorist financing techniques and counter-measures, and promotes the adoption and implementation of appropriate measures globally. In collaboration with other international stakeholders, the FATF works to identify national-level vulnerabilities with the aim of protecting the international financial system from misuse.

After an on-site assessment of the steps taken by Pakistan to curb terror financing and money laundering, a visiting Financial Action Task Force (FATF) team has finalised a report with 40 recommendations for de-listing Islamabad from its grey list from September next year.

Minister of Railways and Coal will receive the University of Pennsylvania's top prize in energy policy for his leadership in reforming India's power sector through various initiatives. The Carnot Prize is intended to honour those leading revolutions in energy policy.

### ***What is the Third Pole?***

The Hindu Kush-Himalayan region spans an area of more than 4.3 million square kilometres in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan. The region stores more snow and ice than anywhere else in the world outside the polar regions, giving its name: 'The Third Pole'. The Third Pole contains the world's highest mountains, including all 14 peaks above 8,000 metres, is the source of 10 major rivers, and forms a formidable global ecological buffer.

The 27th **Fusion Energy Conference** (FEC 2018) was held recently in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

- It was organised by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and hosted by Department of Atomic Energy .

### ***Fusion Energy Conference (FEC 2018):***

- The 27th IAEA Fusion Energy Conference (FEC 2018) aims to provide a forum for the discussion of key physics and technology issues as well as innovative concepts of direct relevance to the use of nuclear fusion as a source of energy.
- The scientific scope of FEC 2018 is intended to reflect the priorities of this new era in fusion energy research.
- With the participation of international organizations such as the ITER Organization and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), as well as the collaboration of more than forty countries and several research institutes, including those working on smaller plasma devices, it is expected that this conference will, like previous conferences in the series, serve to identify possibilities and means for continuous and effective international collaboration in this area.

India's longest river bridge with total length of 19.3 kilometers will be built on Brahmaputra river in Assam.

Key facts:

- This bridge will connect Dhubri of Assam to Fulbarani of Meghalaya. This bridge will reduce the distance between these two places by 203 kms. At

present, India's largest river bridge is Dholad-Sadia bridge, its length is 9.15 kilometers.

- Japanese Finance Agency (JICA) has approved the loan for this project as part of road infrastructure improvement package in the north-east after assessing the economic benefit of the big project.

### ***About the Intermediate- Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty:***

The 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty required the United States and the Soviet Union to eliminate and permanently all of their nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometers

The treaty marked the first time the superpowers had agreed to reduce their nuclear arsenals, eliminate an entire category of nuclear weapons, and utilize extensive on-site inspections for verification. As a result of the INF Treaty, the United States and the Soviet Union destroyed a total of 2,692 short-, medium-, and intermediate-range missiles by the treaty's implementation deadline of June 1, 1991.

U.S. President Donald Trump has announced that he would "terminate" the INF Treaty in response to a long-running dispute over Russian noncompliance with the treaty.

Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention was held in New Delhi *organised by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation*

### **Swachh Bharat Mission**

The objectives of Swachh Bharat include eliminating [open defecation](#) through the construction of household-owned and community-owned [toilets](#) and establishing an accountable mechanism of monitoring toilet use. The mission will also contribute to India reaching [Sustainable Development Goal 6](#) (SDG 6)

Swachh Survekshan Grameen Awards 2018 to top ranked states and districts. The rankings were based on the National Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2018 of the Union Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation.

### **Swachh Sarvekshan annual cleanliness survey**

**Swachh Sarvekshan**, commissioned by [Ministry of Urban Development](#) and carried out by [Quality Council of India](#), is an extensive sanitation survey across several hundred cities to check the progress and impact of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and to foster a spirit of competition among the cities.

SBM G(gramin)—ministry of drinking water and sanitation

SBM U(urban)---ministry of urban development

Since the inception of the program, the rural sanitation coverage of India has increased significantly, from 39% in October 2014 to over 90% as of September 2018. Over 78 million household toilets have been constructed under the Mission. As a result, 25 States/Union Territories, over 513 districts, and 5,04,316 villages have declared themselves as free from open defecation.



Assam Government has become the *first Indian state to offer a Wage Compensation Scheme for pregnant women working in the tea gardens of the state.*

*Aim:* The scheme is aimed at providing better health and nutrition supplements to the pregnant women. It stresses on providing proper healthcare facilities to the pregnant women working in the tea gardens of the state.

The maternal mortality rate of women working in the tea plantations of Assam is unusually high. In the Annual Health Survey of 2012-13, Assam recorded one of the highest maternal mortality rates in India, with over 300 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. The MMR in the state's tea gardens was even higher, as it was recorded to be 404. The national average during 2014-16 was 130. Also, almost 50% of the pregnant women aged between 15 and 49 years in the state were recorded to be anaemic, which is a leading contributor to maternal mortality. The bulk of the workforce in Assam's tea gardens is women.

Under the scheme, an amount of Rs 12,000 will be given to the pregnant women so that they can take care of themselves and the unborn baby without compromising the livelihood of their family.

The women would also be given a maternity leave

### *Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism' (CCIT)*

The Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism is a proposed treaty which intends to criminalize all forms of international terrorism and deny terrorists, their financiers and supporters access to funds, arms, and safe havens. It is a draft proposed by India in 1996 that is yet to be adopted by the UNGA.

#### *it calls for*

- Universal definition of terrorism: no good terrorist or bad terrorist.
- Ban on all groups regardless of country of operation, cut off access to funds and safe havens.
- Prosecution of all groups including cross border groups.
- Amending domestic laws to make cross-border terror an extraditable offence.
- It also addresses, among other things, the issue of Pakistan's alleged support for cross-border terrorism in south Asia.

## **UN Champions of the Earth Award 2018:**

### ***Champions of the Earth Award:***

- The Champions of the Earth award, the UN's highest environmental recognition, was founded in 2005.
- The award celebrates exceptional figures from the public and private sectors and from civil society, whose actions have had a transformative positive impact on the environment.
- The award also recognises the efforts for promoting new areas of levels of cooperation on environmental action.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been awarded with the UN's highest environmental honour- Champions of the Earth Award, bestowed upon five other individuals and organisations

### **Global Geopark Network status**

Geological Survey of India has chosen heritage locations in Maharashtra and Karnataka for UNESCO Global Geopark Network status. The Geopark tag is akin to that of a 'World Heritage Site' for historical monuments that can bring India's famed geological features to the global stage.

*Lonar Lake* in Maharashtra and *St. Mary's Island and Malpe beach* in coastal Karnataka are the candidates for UNESCO Global Geopark Network status.

## **Indian-Ocean Rim Association**

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Inauguration of the second IORA Renewable Energy Ministerial Meeting.

21 countries in the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) recently adopted the Delhi Declaration on Renewable Energy in the Indian Ocean Region. The declaration was the outcome of the 2nd IORA Renewable Energy Ministerial Meeting.

it calls for collaboration among IORA member states in meeting the growing demand for renewable energy in the Indian Ocean littorals, development of a common renewable energy agenda for the Indian Ocean region and promote regional capacity building

The **Indian Ocean Rim Association** (IORA), formerly known as the Indian Ocean Rim Initiative and Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), is an [international organisation](#) consisting of coastal states bordering the [Indian Ocean](#).<sup>[4]</sup> The IORA is a regional forum, tripartite in nature, bringing together representatives of Government, Business and Academia, for promoting co-operation and closer interaction among them. It is based on the principles of Open

Regionalism for strengthening Economic Cooperation particularly on Trade Facilitation and Investment, Promotion as well as Social Development of the region

The objectives of IORA are as follows:<sup>[6]</sup>

1. To promote sustainable growth and balanced development of the region and member states
2. To focus on those areas of economic cooperation which provide maximum opportunities for development, shared interest and mutual benefits
3. To promote [liberalisation](#), remove impediments and lower barriers towards a freer and enhanced flow of goods, services, investment, and technology within the Indian Ocean rim.

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) has identified six priority areas, namely:

1. maritime security,
2. trade and investment facilitation,
3. fisheries management,
4. disaster risk reduction,
5. academic and scientific cooperation and
6. tourism promotion and cultural exchanges.

### [International Solar Alliance](#)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently inaugurated the first Assembly of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) in New Delhi

**International Solar Alliance (ISA)** is an alliance of more than 121 countries initiated by [India](#), most of them being **sunshine countries**, which lie either completely or partly between the [Tropic of Cancer](#) and the [Tropic of Capricorn](#). The primary objective of the alliance is to work for efficient exploitation of [solar energy](#) to reduce dependence on [fossil fuels](#).

It is headquartered in India, in Gurugram

The focus is on solar power utilization. The launching of such an alliance in Paris also sends a strong signal to the global communities about the sincerity of the developing nations towards their concern about climate change and to switch to a low-carbon growth path. India has pledged a target of installing 100GW by 2022 and reduction in emission intensity by 33–35% by 2030 to let solar energy reach to the most unconnected villages and communities and also towards creating a clean planet.<sup>[8]</sup> India's pledge to the Paris summit offered to bring 40% of its electricity generation capacity (not actual production) from non-fossil sources (renewable, large hydro, and nuclear) by 2030.<sup>[9]</sup> it is based on world co operation.

### **World Peace Monument' dome:**

The world's largest dome has been inaugurated at the Maharashtra Institute of Technology (MIT)'s World Peace University (MIT-WPU) campus at Loni Kalbhor.

- named after the 13th century poet-saint and philosopher Dnyaneshwar — a pivotal figure of the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra.

### **Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana Camp**

#### **About Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana:**

- The Scheme aims at *providing Senior Citizens, belonging to BPL category and suffering from any of the age related disability/infirmity* Low vision, Hearing impairment, Loss of teeth and Locomotor disability, with such assisted-living devices which can restore near normalcy in their bodily functions, overcoming the disability/infirmity manifested.
- This is a **Central Sector Scheme**, fully funded by the Central Government. The expenditure for implementation of the scheme will be met from the “Senior Citizens’ Welfare Fund”.
- Under the scheme, *free of cost distribution of the devices*, commensurate with the extent of disability/infirmity that is manifested among the eligible senior citizens will take place.
- In case of multiple disabilities/infirmities manifested in the same person, the assistive devices will be given in respect of each disability/impairment.
- Beneficiaries in each district will be identified by the State Governments/UT Administrations through a Committee chaired by the Deputy Commissioner/District Collector.
- As far as possible, *30% of the beneficiaries in each district shall be women.*

#### **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.**

#### **Global Skills Park (GSP):**

Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India have signed a \$150 million Loan Agreement to establish a **Global Skills Park (GSP) in Madhya Pradesh.**

- It will be the First Multi-Skills Park in India, to enhance the quality of Technical and Vocational Education And Training (TVET) System in the State and create a more skilled workforce.
- The Project will engage international TVET partners to support advanced training at the GSP who will bring global best practices in TVET management, training infrastructure, industry cooperation, and quality assurance.
- The GSP campus will consist of core Advanced Training Institutes including the Center for Occupational Skills Acquisition and the Center for

Advanced Agricultural Training as well as other support services focusing on entrepreneurship, training of trainers, and skill-related research.

- The campus will have training facilities focusing on skills for manufacturing, service, and advanced agricultural jobs, benefitting about 20,000 trainees and trainers.

### ***Udyam Abhilasha***

It is a National Level Entrepreneurship Awareness Campaign launched by Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) The campaign has been launched in 115 Aspirational Districts identified by NITI Aayog in 28 States.

- The campaign would create and strengthen cadre of more than 800 trainers to provide entrepreneurship training to the aspiring youths across these districts thus encouraging them to enter the admired segment of entrepreneurs.
- SIDBI has partnered with CSC e-Governance Services India Limited, a Special Purpose Vehicle, (CSC SPV) set up by the Ministry of Electronics & IT, Govt. of India for implementing the campaign through their CSCs.

### ***The objectives of the missionary campaign include:***

- To inspire rural youth in aspirational districts to be entrepreneurs by assisting them to set up their own enterprise.
- To impart trainings through digital medium across the country.
- To create business opportunities for CSC VLEs.
- To focus on women aspirants in these aspirational districts to encourage women entrepreneurship.
- To assist participants to become bankable and avail credit facility from banks to set up their own enterprise.

### ***Methanol Cooking Fuel Program of India***

the Namrup-based Assam Petrochemicals Limited (APL) has rolled out the country's first methanol-based cooking fuel project- 'Green and Clean Fuel Pilot Project on Methanol Cooking Stove'.

### ***Boost to NITI Aayog's Programme:***

This is India's first step towards realising the concept of 'Methanol Economy', the flagship programme of NITI Aayog. Through the programme, the NITI

Aayog has been working on a roadmap to replace 20% of the country's crude imports through methanol alone.

***Methanol as an alternative fuel:***

Methanol is a promising fuel as it is clean, cheaper than fossil fuels and a good substitute for heavy fuels. India imports methanol from Saudi Arabia and Iran at present. Across the world, methanol is emerging as a clean, sustainable transportation fuel of the future.

***Why Methanol?***

Methanol can be used as an energy producing fuel, transportation fuel and cooking fuel, cutting down India's oil import bill by an estimated 20% over the next few years. Unlike CNG, using methanol as a transportation fuel would require minimal alteration in the vehicles.

- Methanol is a clean-burning fuel that produces fewer smog-causing emissions — such as sulphur oxides (SO<sub>x</sub>), nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) and particulate matter — and can improve air quality and related human health issues.
- Methanol is most commonly produced on a commercial scale from natural gas. It can also be produced from renewable sources such as biomass and recycled carbon dioxide.
- As a high-octane vehicle fuel, methanol offers excellent acceleration and power. It also improves vehicle efficiency.

***Methanol as an enduring solution to human energy needs?***

Methanol has the potential to be an enduring solution to human energy needs is because the belched out CO<sub>2</sub> (greenhouse gas emission) both from using Methanol and while producing Methanol can be tapped back to produce Methanol. Thereby a seamless loop of CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration cycle is created to perpetually burn fuels without polluting the environment at all. CO<sub>2</sub> from steel plants, Thermal Power plants, Cement Plants etc. can be tapped in large quantities to produce Methanol.

***Future of Work in India” survey report has been released by the World Economic Forum (WEF)***

***Highlights and findings of the report:***

***Major gender gap in Indian corporates:*** Four out of five retail firms hire less than 10% women. Companies in India experiencing the highest growth prefer

hiring men and technology-led job growth benefits men more than women. Notably, while one in three companies preferred hiring men, only one in 10 companies said they wanted to hire more women, accentuating the gender gap rampant in the country.

The report found that just 2.4% of these have half or more female employees, and as many as 71% have fewer than 10%. Out of this 71%, 30% companies have no female employees, and another 32% have less than 5%.

### **Parker Solar Probe mission**

NASA's historic mission- Parker Solar Probe- to solve the mysteries of the Sun has successfully completed its flyby of Venus on October 3<sup>rd</sup>.

This mission will revolutionize our understanding of the sun, where changing conditions can propagate out into the solar system, affecting Earth and other world.

### **Gaganyaan 2022**

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Russia's Roscosmos State Corporation for Space Activities (ROSCOSMOS) have signed an MoU to work together for Gaganyaan

- It is India's first manned space mission. Under it, India is planning to send three humans (Gaganyatris) into space i.e. in low earth orbit (LEO) by 2022 i.e. by 75th Independence Day for period of five to seven days.

### **India for Humanity initiative:**

- Context: Union Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has launched India for Humanity initiative to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and honour of his service to humanity. It will feature year-long series of artificial limb fitment camps in a number of countries spanning globe.

### **UNHRC**

India has been re-elected to UNHRC for a period of three years beginning January 1, 2019, getting 188 votes in the Asia-Pacific category, the highest number of votes among all candidates.

### ***Background:***

India had previously been elected to the Geneva-based Human Rights Council for the 2011-2014 and 2014-2017 terms.



### ***About UNHRC:***

- The UN body was established in 2006 with the aim of promoting and protecting human rights around the globe, as well as investigating alleged human rights violations.
- It is made up of 47 member states, which are selected by the UN General Assembly on a staggered basis each year for **three-year-long terms**.
- Members meet around **three times** a year to debate human rights issues and pass **non-binding** resolutions and recommendations by majority vote.
- The council also carries out the **Universal Periodic Review** of all UN member states, which allows civil society groups to bring accusations of human rights violations in member states to the attention of the UN.

### **100k Genome Asia Project**

- A non-profit consortium called **GenomeAsia 100K** has announced an ambitious plan **to sequence 100,000 Asian individuals in hopes of accelerating precision medicine applications for Asian populations**.
- It will also leverage on big data analytics and advances in data science and artificial intelligence. Participants from 12 South Asian countries and at least seven North and East Asian countries will be selected.
- In the first phase, the project will focus on creating phased reference genomes for all major Asian ethnic groups—representing a major step forward in understanding the population history and substructure of the region.
- The sequencing of 100,000 individual genomes will be paired with microbiome, clinical and phenotype information to allow deeper analysis of diseased and healthy individuals in the context of inferred local ancestries

### **International Day for Disaster Reduction 2018**

#### ***Sendai Framework:***

The “Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030” was adopted during the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai, Japan in March, 2015

The new Framework is the successor instrument to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters.



## **#metoo**

**Context:** The Centre recently announced its plan to set up a panel of judges to look into the legal and institutional framework to curb sexual harassment at workplaces following the **#MeToo campaign** on social media.

- However, as early as 2013, the **Justice J.S. Verma Committee**, in its landmark report on gender laws, had recommended setting up of an employment tribunal instead of an internal complaints committee (ICC) in sweeping changes to the Sexual Harassment at the Workplace Bill.
- The panel was formed in the aftermath of the December 16 Nirbhaya gangrape in 2012 and the ensuing nationwide protests, and submitted its report on January 23, 2013.

### ***Background:***

The Committee, chaired by Justice Verma termed the **Sexual Harassment Bill** “unsatisfactory” and said it did not reflect the spirit of the **Vishakha guidelines** — framed by the Supreme Court in 1997 to curb sexual harassment at the workplace.

## **Data Localisation**

### ***What's the issue?***

The US companies want Donald Trump administration to put pressure on Indian authorities in a bid to seek relaxation on the RBI order of ensuring implementation of data localisation by 15 October. US companies have been lobbying with the Finance Ministry and the RBI over the issue.

U.S trade groups, representing companies such as Amazon, American Express and Microsoft, have opposed India's push to store data locally.

### ***What does Data Localization mean?***

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

### ***Why government is in favour of data localisation?***

- Greater use of digital platforms in India for shopping or social networking have made it a lucrative market for technology companies, but a rising number of data breaches have pushed New Delhi to develop strong data protection rules.

Justice B.N.Shrikrishna committee was appointed on data protection.

19. Data security has assumed significant importance in the digitized world due to rising cyber-crimes. The Justice B. N. Srikrishna Committee Report addresses issues related to data security. What, in your view, are the strengths and weaknesses of the Report relating to protection of personal data in cyber space? (250 Words, 15 Marks)

### *Sikkim wins FAO's Future Policy Award 2018*

**Context:** Sikkim has been awarded UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) Future Policy Gold Award (Gold Prize) for its achievement in becoming the world's first totally organic agriculture state.

#### ***Background:***

Sikkim became the first fully organic state of India in 2016. Over the years around 75000 hectares of land in the state has been converted into certified organic farms following the guidelines as prescribed by **National Programme for Organic Production.**

Within 1.24 million tonnes of organic production in the country around 80000 million is supplied by Sikkim alone.

#### ***Organic farming and its significance:***

Organic cultivation doesn't involve the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers and thus helps to maintain a harmonious balance among the various complex ecosystems. Also it improves the quality of the soil which further improves the standards of the crops produced there. In the long term, organic farming leads in subsistence of agriculture, bio-diversity conservation and environmental protection. It will also help in building the soil health resulting in sustainable increased crop production.

**85. With reference to organic farming in India, consider the following statements:**

1. The National Programme for Organic Production' (NPOP) is operated under the guidelines and directions of the Union Ministry of Rural Development.
2. The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority' (APEDA)

functions as the Secretariat for the implementation of NPOP.  
3. Sikkim has become India's first fully organic State.  
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Answer.b**

**Explanation:**

Ministry of Commerce has implemented the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) since 2001. India Organic is a certification mark for organically farmed food products manufactured in India. The certification is issued by testing centres accredited by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA).

Sikkim has become India's first fully organic state by converting around 75,000 hectares of agricultural land into sustainable cultivation. Sikkim produces around 80,000 million tonnes of farm products. The total organic production in the country is estimated to be around 1.24 million tonnes while the total area under organic farming is 0.723 million hectares. A number of other states in India like Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Kerala are now trying to become organic.

8. Sikkim is the first 'Organic State' in India. What are the ecological and economical benefits of Organic State? (150 Words, 10 Marks)

***About Environment Pollution Control Authority (EPCA):***

EPCA was constituted with the objective of 'protecting and improving' the quality of the environment and 'controlling environmental pollution' in the National Capital Region. The EPCA also assists the apex court in various environment-related matters in the region.

EPCA is Supreme Court mandated body tasked with taking various measures to tackle air pollution in the National Capital Region. It was notified in 1998 by Environment Ministry under Environment Protection Act, 1986.

***Composition:***

Besides the chairman, the EPCA has 14 members, some of whom are the environment secretary of the National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCT), chairperson of the New Delhi Municipal Council, transport commissioner of the NCT, the commissioners of various municipal corporations of Delhi and professors at IIT Delhi and Jawaharlal Nehru University.

***Functions:***

- To protect and improve quality of environment and prevent and control environmental pollution in National Capital Region.
- To enforce Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in NCR as per the pollution levels.

**Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)**

- An emergency protocol under the Graded Response Action Plan which involve a series of measures on basis of the Air Quality Index are set to be implemented. When the mark is between moderate and poor category, the burning of garbage will be stopped and pollution control regulations will be enforced.
- If the air quality drops to very poor category, additional measures will be taken including stopping of diesel gensets, enhancing parking fees and increasing frequency of metro and buses.

**Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**

***What you need to know about RCEP?***

RCEP is proposed between the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) and the six states with which ASEAN has existing FTAs (Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand).

RCEP negotiations were formally launched in November 2012 at the ASEAN Summit in Cambodia. RCEP aims to boost goods trade by eliminating most tariff and non-tariff barriers — a move that is expected to provide the region's consumers greater choice of quality products at affordable rates. It also seeks to liberalise investment norms and do away with services trade restrictions.

***India's Concerns with member countries:***

Greater access to Chinese goods may have impact on the Indian manufacturing sector. India has already got massive trade deficit with China. There are demands by other RCEP countries for lowering customs duties on a number of products and greater access to the market than India has been willing to provide.

***Challenges ahead for India:***

More developed countries such as Australia and Singapore are unwilling to accommodate India's demands to liberalise their services regime and allow freer mobility of Indian workers.

***International Conference on Status and Protection of Coral Reefs  
(STAPCOR – 2018)***

***Context:*** The International Conference on Status and Protection of Coral Reefs (STAPCOR – 2018) is being held at *Bangaram coral Island of Territory of Lakshadweep*.

***Theme:*** “Reef for Life”

***Organizers:*** It was jointly organized by Department of Environment and Forest, Union Territory of Lakshadweep Administration with the technical support of Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) and in association with Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Environmental Information System (ENVIS) in consonance with declaration of year 2018 as 3rd decadal International year of Reefs.

***What is STAPCOR?***

The effect of climate change and global warming along with El-Nino on the corals has lead to heavy bleaching internationally during the year 1998. This led to the foundation of STAPCOR with a decision to have a international conference in every 10 years to review the status and progress of coral reefs all over the world.

***The goals of the 3rd IYOR – 2018 are to:***

- Strengthen awareness about ecological, economic, social and cultural value of coral reefs and associated ecosystems.
- Improve understanding of the critical threats to reefs and generate both practical and innovative solutions to reduce these threats.

- Generate urgent action to develop and implement effective management strategies for conservation and sustainable use of these ecosystems.

### ***Background:***

The first IYOR was designated in 1997 in response to the increasing threats on coral reefs and associated ecosystems. The hope was to increase awareness of the value of and threats to coral reefs, and to promote conservation, research and management efforts on a global scale.

### ***What are Corals?***

Corals are invertebrates belonging to a large group of colourful and fascinating animals called Cnidarians. Other animals in this group include jellyfish and sea anemones. Each individual coral animal is called a polyp, and most live in groups of hundreds to thousands of genetically identical polyps that form a 'colony'. The colony is created by a process called budding, where the original polyp literally grows copies of itself.

### ***Hard and Soft Corals:***

Corals are generally classified as either "hard" or "soft". There are around 800 known species of hard coral, also known as 'reef building' or scleractinian corals. Soft corals, or octocorals, which include seas fans, sea feathers and sea whips, don't have the rock-like calcareous skeleton, instead they grow wood-like cores for support and fleshy rinds for protection.

Soft corals also live in colonies, that often resemble brightly coloured plants or trees, and are easy to tell apart from hard corals as their polyps have tentacles that occur in multiples of 8, and have a distinctive feathery appearance. Soft corals are found in oceans from the equator to the north and south poles, generally in caves or on ledges. Here, they hang down in order to capture food floating by in the currents.

### ***What are coral reefs?***

Coral reefs have evolved on earth over the past 200 to 300 million years, and have developed a unique and highly evolved form of symbiosis. Coral polyps have developed this relationship with tiny single-celled algae known as zooxanthellae. Inside the tissues of each coral polyp live these zooxanthellae, sharing space and nutrients.

This symbiosis between plant and animal also contributes to the brilliant colors of coral that can be seen while diving on a reef. It is the importance of light that drives corals to compete for space on the sea floor, and so constantly

pushes the limits of their physiological tolerances in a competitive environment among so many different species. However, it also makes corals highly susceptible to environmental stress.

### **Invest India**

Invest India, the country's investment promotion body, has won United Nations (UN) Award for excellence in promoting investments in sustainable development.

- Invest India received this award for excellence in servicing and supporting major global wind turbines company in establishment of blade manufacturing plant in India while committing to train local staff and produce 1 gigawatt (GW) of renewable energy. Implementation of this project is expected to reduce India's wind energy cost significantly.

### ***What is Invest India?***

Invest India is the *National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency* of India and acts as the first point of reference for investors in India.

Invest India is set up as *a non profit venture under the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion*, Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Government of India.

***A joint venture:*** Operationalized in early 2010, Invest India is set up as a joint venture company between the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce & Industry (35% equity), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) (51% equity), and State Governments of India (0.5% each).

### ***UN Investment Promotion Award:***

The awards are given annually by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) since 2002 as part of its investment promotion and facilitation programme.

- It honours investment promotion agencies (IPAs) and their governments for their achievements.
- It also seeks to showcase best practices in attracting investment into Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)-related projects that can inspire investment promotion practitioners in developing and developed countries.

**Seoul Peace Prize** Committee has decided to confer 2018 Seoul Peace Prize on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

- PM Modi has been selected for award in recognition of his dedication for improving international cooperation, raising global economic growth, accelerating Human Development of people in India by fostering economic growth and furthering development of democracy through anti-corruption and social integration efforts.

### **Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF)**

***What to study?***

***For Prelims and Mains: Features and significance of FIDF.***

***Context:*** The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for creation of special Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF).

- The approval entails an estimated fund size of Rs.7,522 crore, comprising Rs.5,266.40 crore to be raised by the Nodal Loaning Entities (NLEs), Rs. 1,316.6 crore beneficiaries contribution and Rs.939.48 crore budgetary support from the Government of India.
- National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), National Cooperatives Development Corporation (NCDC) and all scheduled Banks (hereinafter referred as Banks) shall be the ***nodal Loaning Entities***.

### **National Monitoring Framework on Sustainable Development Goals**

***Context:*** The Union Cabinet has approved the constitution of a High Level Steering Committee for periodically reviewing and refining the National Indicator Framework (NIF) for monitoring of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with associated targets.

***Composition of the committee:***

- The High Level Steering Committee will be chaired by Chief Statistician of India and Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
- ***Special invitees:*** The Secretaries of data source Ministries and NITI Aayog members and Secretaries of other related Ministries.



### **BS Norms**

- The Supreme Court has banned the sale and registration of motor vehicles conforming to the emission standard Bharat Stage-IV in the entire country from April 1, 2020.
- ***What are BS norms?***
- The BS — or Bharat Stage — emission standards are norms instituted by the government to regulate the output of air pollutants from internal combustion engine equipment, including motor vehicles. India has been following the European (Euro) emission norms, though with a time-lag of five years.

India wins Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management Award, 2018.