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Comprehensive NEWS Analysis

23-09-2018

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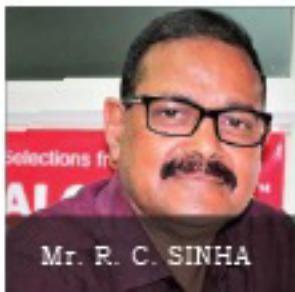
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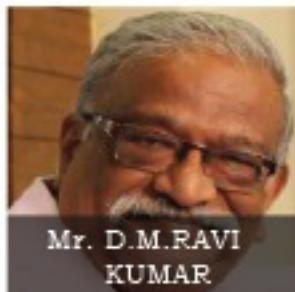
Week 05

# OUR TEAM

## GENERAL STUDIES



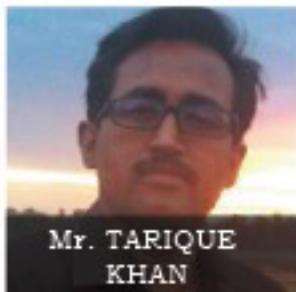
Mr. R. C. SINHA



Mr. D.M.RAVI KUMAR



Mr. SAROJ SAMAL



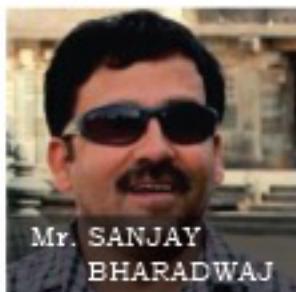
Mr. TARIQUE KHAN



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Mr. SAROJ SAMAL

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### MATHEMATICS

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### GEOGRAPHY

Mr. PRIYESH SINGH SENGAR

## OTHER OPTIONALS

ANTHROPOLOGY

POLITICAL SCIENCE

TELUGU LITERATURE

HISTORY

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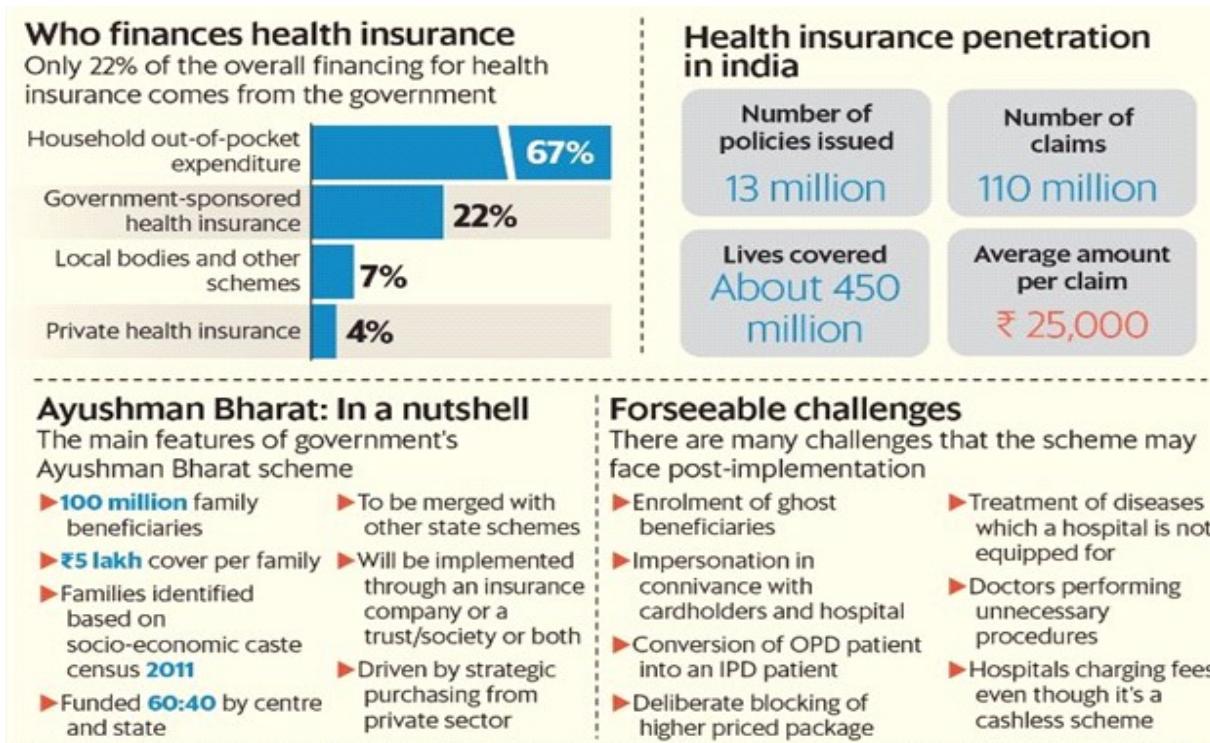
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# Polity and Governance

## 1. Ayushman Bharat

### Context:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently rolled out the Centre's flagship scheme — Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Abhiyaan, also known as Ayushman Bharat or the National Health Protection Mission (AB-NHPM).



- This is the world's largest health scheme which will serve a population that equals 27-28 European countries. The beneficiaries are almost equal to the population of Canada, Mexico and US put together.
- Meant to help the poor and the economically deprived, the scheme will be available for 10.74 crore beneficiary families and about 50 crore Indian citizens.

### Ayushman Bharat:

- Ayushman Bharat is the National Health Protection Scheme, which will cover over 10 crore poor vulnerable families (around 50 crore beneficiaries) providing coverage of up to Rs.5 lakh (per family per year) for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation.
- It will subsume the on-going centrally sponsored schemes –Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) and the Senior Citizen Health Insurance Scheme (SCHIS).
- **Coverage:** The scheme has the benefit cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family per year. To ensure that nobody is left out (especially women, children and elderly) there will be no cap on family size and age in the scheme. The benefit cover will also include pre and post-hospitalisation expenses.

- **Target:** The target beneficiaries of the proposed scheme will be more than 10 crore families belonging to poor and vulnerable population based on SECC database. Benefits of the scheme are portable across the country and a beneficiary covered under the scheme will be allowed to take cashless benefits from any public/private empanelled hospitals across the country.
- **Role of state governments:** State Governments will be allowed to expand AB-NHPM both horizontally and vertically. States will be free to choose the modalities for implementation. They can implement through insurance company or directly through Trust/ Society or a mixed model.
- **Council:** For giving policy directions and fostering coordination between Centre and States, it is proposed to set up Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission Council (AB-NHPCM) at apex level Chaired by Union Health and Family Welfare Minister.

### **Who is eligible?**

- It will be an entitlement based scheme with entitlement decided on the basis of deprivation criteria in the SECC database.
- The different categories in rural area include families having only one room with kucha walls and kucharoof; families having no adult member between age 16 to 59; female headed households with no adult male member between age 16 to 59; disabled member and no able bodied adult member in the family; SC/ST households; and landless households deriving major part of their income from manual casual labour.
- Also, automatically included families in rural areas having any one of the following: households without shelter, destitute, living on alms, manual scavenger families, primitive tribal groups, legally released bonded labour. For urban areas, 11 defined occupational categories are entitled under the scheme.

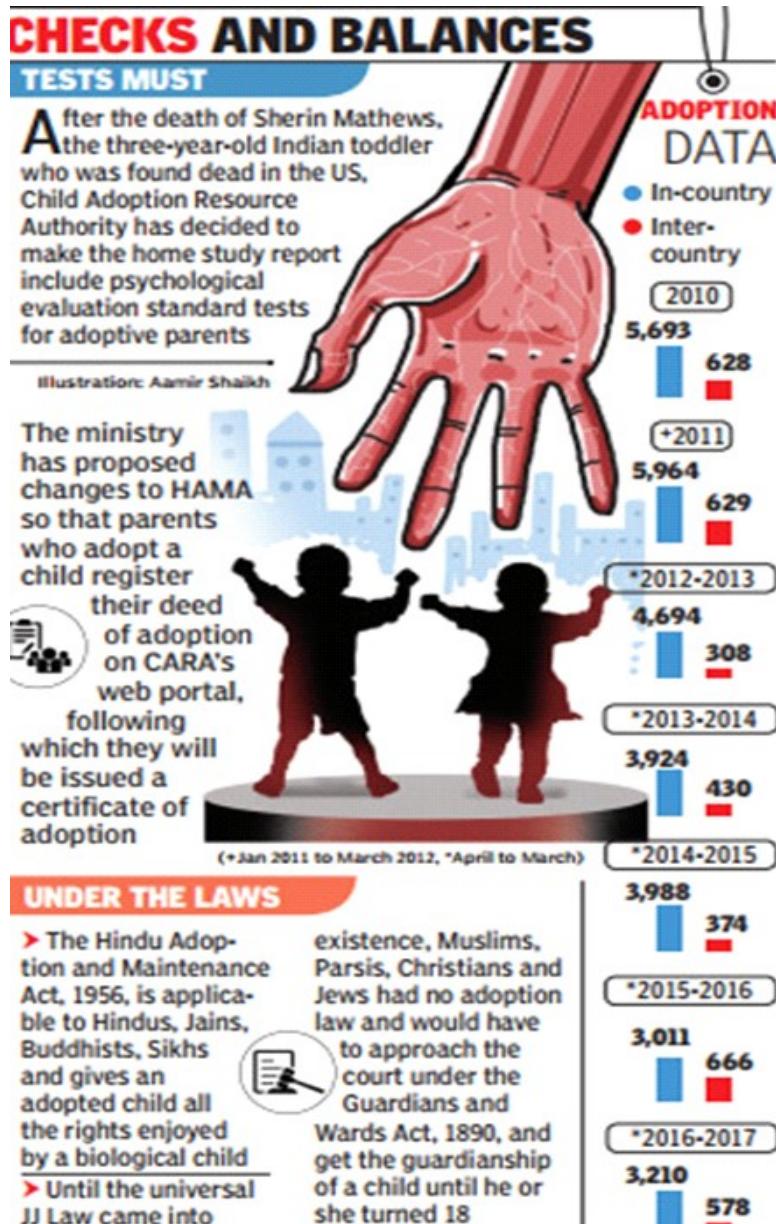
### **Why Ayushman Bharat?**

- According to health ministry officials, the 71st round of National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) revealed that 85.9% of rural households and 82% of urban households have no access to healthcare insurance/assurance.
- More than 24% households in rural India and 18 per cent population in the urban area have met their healthcare expenses through some sort of borrowing. The Ayushman Bharat intends to change this status quo.

## 2. Child Adoption Regulatory Authority (CARA)

### Context:

Child Adoption Regulatory Authority (CARA) has allowed individuals in a live-in relationship to adopt children from and within India.



body of Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India.

- It functions as the nodal body for adoption of Indian children and is mandated to monitor and regulate in-country and inter-country adoptions.
- CARA is designated as the Central Authority to deal with inter-country adoptions in accordance with the provisions of the Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption, 1993, ratified by Government of India in 2003.
- CARA primarily deals with adoption of orphan, abandoned and surrendered children through its associated /recognised adoption agencies.

- **Exception:** CARA has barred applicants in a live-in relationship from adopting a child on the ground that “the Authority would like the children to be placed only with a stable family and individuals in a live-in relationship cannot be considered as stable family.”

- **Eligibility:** The eligibility criteria under Adoption Regulations, 2017, permit single women to adopt a child of any gender, while single men can adopt only boys. When a married couple seeks to adopt a child, it needs to give its consent for adoption and should be stable marriage for at least two years. Applicants have to be physically, mentally and financially stable to raise a child.

### About CARA:

- Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) is a statutory

### **3. Parliament must make laws to keep criminals away from politics: SC**

#### **Context:**

The Supreme Court (SC) had refused to bar candidates facing criminal charges from contesting elections, leaving the matter in the hands of Parliament, political parties and politicians.

#### **Need for the move:**

- According to political scientist Milan Vaishnav's book, When Crime Pays: Money and Muscle in Indian Politics, 24% of MPs had criminal cases pending against them in 2004 and 12% had serious cases registered against them
- By 2014 the numbers had risen to 34% and 21%, respectively.
- At present, a charge sheet does not debar a person from contesting elections and cases usually take years to be decided.
- As a tentative measure, on 1 November 2017, the apex court directed the centre to set up special fast-track courts to try the more than 1,581 cases pending against legislators across the country.
- The centre had asked for <sup>1</sup> 65 lakh for setting up each of these courts, bringing the total to <sup>1</sup> 7.8 crore for the 12 fast-track courts that have been set up in 11 states.

#### **Supreme Court recommendations:**

- Parliament must legislate to ensure that people facing serious criminal cases do not enter the political mainstream.
- The court also laid guidelines to curb corruption in politics and ensure that voters are able to make informed choices.
- It directed candidates to provide details about all criminal cases pending against them.
- Political parties were asked to publish the criminal antecedents of candidates of their parties on their websites and widely circulate this information on other fora.

#### **Representation of Peoples Act 1951:**

Section 8 deals with Disqualification of representatives on conviction for certain offences. This section states that:

- 1) A person convicted of an offence punishable under certain acts of Indian Penal Code, Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967, Prevention of Corruption Act 1988, Prevention of Terrorism Act 2002 etc. **shall be disqualified**, where the convicted person is sentenced to —
  - a) only fine, for a period of six years from the date of such conviction;
  - b) Imprisonment, from the date of such conviction and shall continue to be disqualified for a further period of six years since his release.

- 2) A person convicted for the contravention of-
  - (a) Any law providing for the prevention of hoarding or profiteering; or
  - (b) Any law relating to the adulteration of food or drugs; or
  - (c) Any provisions of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.
- 3) A person convicted of any offence and sentenced to imprisonment for not less than two years **shall be disqualified** from the date of such conviction and shall continue to be disqualified for a further period of six years since his release.

### **Way forward:**

People are the supreme power in the democratic country. Accordingly the People of India solemnly resolved that India is a democratic country. In the broader sense embracing not only political democracy but also social, economic and inclusive democracy by curbing corruption in politics and ensure that voters are able to make an informed choice.

## **4. Publishing poll candidate's propaganda is paid news**

### **Context:**

Election Commission of India recently told the Supreme Court that repeated publication of propaganda lauding the achievements of a candidate in an election is nothing but “paid news”.

- The EC has asked the court to declare whether it amounts to “paid news” if widely circulated daily newspapers cover statements issued by, and in the name of, a candidate.

### **Concerns:**

- Such news are not only laudatory of his or her record and achievements but also are a direct appeal to voters by the candidate. Therefore, politicians cannot say that it is part of their fundamental right to free speech to spew out “motivated propaganda”.
- If such motivated propaganda is allowed in the name of free speech during the election period, candidates with a strong network of connections will exploit their sphere of influence in society. This will have the unequal advantage of encashing such silent services.

### **Background:**

- The commission has moved the court in appeal against a decision of the Delhi High Court to set aside the disqualification of a MP in Madhya Pradesh.
- ECI’s National Level Committee on Paid News found that five newspapers, with a wide circulation, had published 42 news items that were biased and one-sided and aimed at furthering the prospects of the leader. Some of the reports were advertisements in favour of him. The committee concluded that the items fitted the definition of “paid news”.

## **Delhi HC order and why was it challenged?**

- The Delhi HC order had not only overturned the EC's order on disqualification, but it also stated that the Commission's remit is limited to election expenditure incurred by candidates and not content of speech. While the EC does not usually move court on its own, this was seen as a fit case as it was felt that the Delhi HC order had dealt a major blow to the fight against paid news. It was also felt that unless the legal position on the issue was corrected, the EC's role and power to check paid news in elections will be irreparably undermined. Legal advice taken also weighed in favour of moving the Supreme Court.

### **Paid news menace:**

- Over 600 paid news complaints were forwarded by EC to Press Council of India with reference to the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the government had informed Parliament. EC has repeatedly been asking the law ministry to treat paid news as a cognisable offence and the 2015 Law Commission reports call for amendments in laws to check the menace. The UPA government had also set up a Group of ministers to examine the issue.

### **Need of the hour:**

- The ECI has written to the Union government before, suggesting that paid news be made an electoral offence under the RPA. A Law Commission report from 2015 also recommends amending the RPA to this effect.

## **5. Severe acute malnutrition**

### **Context:**

The National Technical Board on Nutrition (NTBN) has approved guidelines proposed by WCD Ministry for severe acute malnutrition. The measures are part of the community-based health management of children suffering from SAM.

- Severely malnourished children must be fed freshly cooked food prepared from locally available cereals, pulses and vegetables. This is to be distributed by anganwadi centres, as part of the country's first-ever guidelines for nutritional management of children suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM).
- The guidelines outline the role of anganwadi workers and auxillary nurse midwives (ANMs) in identifying severely wasted children. According to the recommendations, anganwadi workers have to provide modified morning snacks, hot cooked meals and take home ration for SAM children.
- They have to segregate those with oedema or medical complications and sending them to the nearest health facility or nutrition rehabilitation centres. The remaining children are enrolled into

“community based management”. This includes provision of nutrition, continuous monitoring of growth, administration of antibiotics and micro-nutrients as well as counselling sessions and imparting of nutrition and health education.

- The morning snacks and hot-cooked meals, which are served at anganwadis to children between the age of three to six years, should be “prepared freshly and served at the centralised kitchen/ anganwadi centres. Locally available cereals, pulses, green leafy vegetables and tubers, vitamin C rich fruits, as well as fresh milk and 3-4 eggs every week” have also been prescribed.
- Importantly, the government has also revised the method to be used to measure wasting and advised calculating weight based on the height of children instead of the mid-upper arm circumference.

### **What necessitated this?**

- The government had, till now, only put in place guidelines for the hospitalization of severely wasted children who develop medical complications.

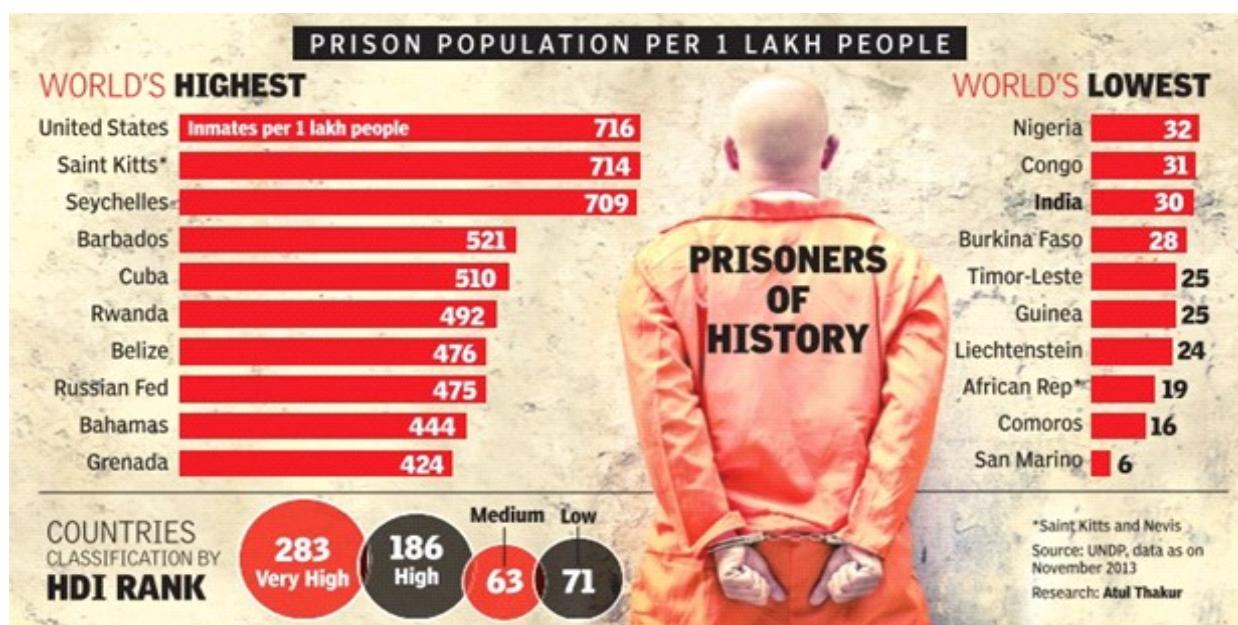
### **What is severe acute malnutrition?**

- Severe acute malnutrition is the most extreme and visible form of undernutrition. Its face is a child – frail and skeletal – who requires urgent treatment to survive.
- Children with severe acute malnutrition have very low weight for their height and severe muscle wasting. They may also have nutritional oedema – characterized by swollen feet, face and limbs. About two thirds of these children live in Asia and almost one third live in Africa.
- Severe acute malnutrition is a major cause of death in children under 5, and its prevention and treatment are critical to child survival and development.
- Across the globe, an estimated 16 million children under the age of 5 are affected by severe acute malnutrition. This number is staggering – most importantly, because children with severe acute malnutrition are nine times more likely to die than well-nourished children. These deaths are the direct result of malnutrition itself, as well as the indirect result of childhood illnesses like diarrhoea and pneumonia that malnourished children are too weak to survive.
- Severe acute malnutrition can increase dramatically in emergencies. But despite what we see in the headlines, the majority of cases occur in developing countries not affected by emergencies. These settings are plagued by chronic poverty, lack of education, poor hygiene, limited access to food and poor diets. The result is significant barriers to sustainable development in these nations.

## 6. Prison reforms

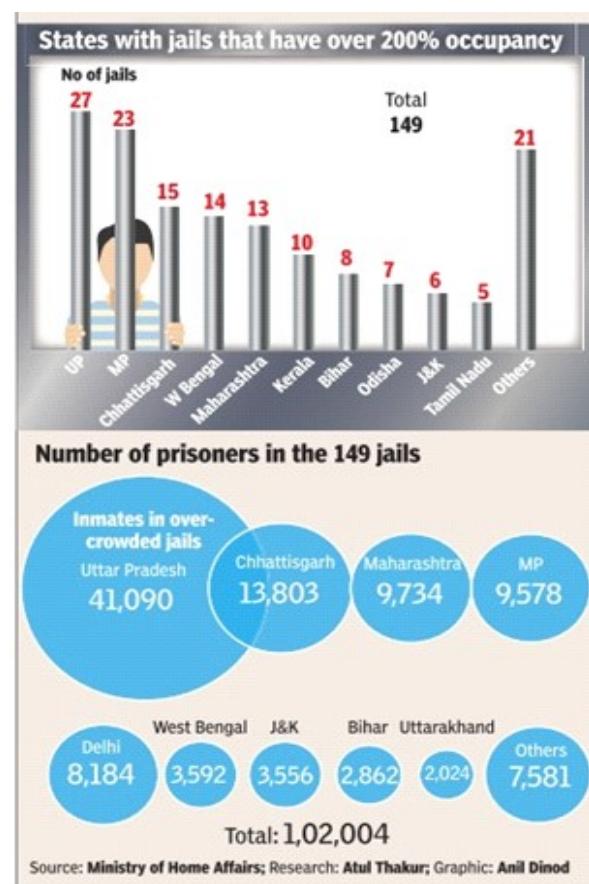
### Context:

The Supreme Court has constituted a three-member committee to look into the problems of jails in India and suggest reform measures. The committee headed by former SC judge Justice Amitava Roy will look into the aspect of jail reforms across the country and suggest measures to deal with them.



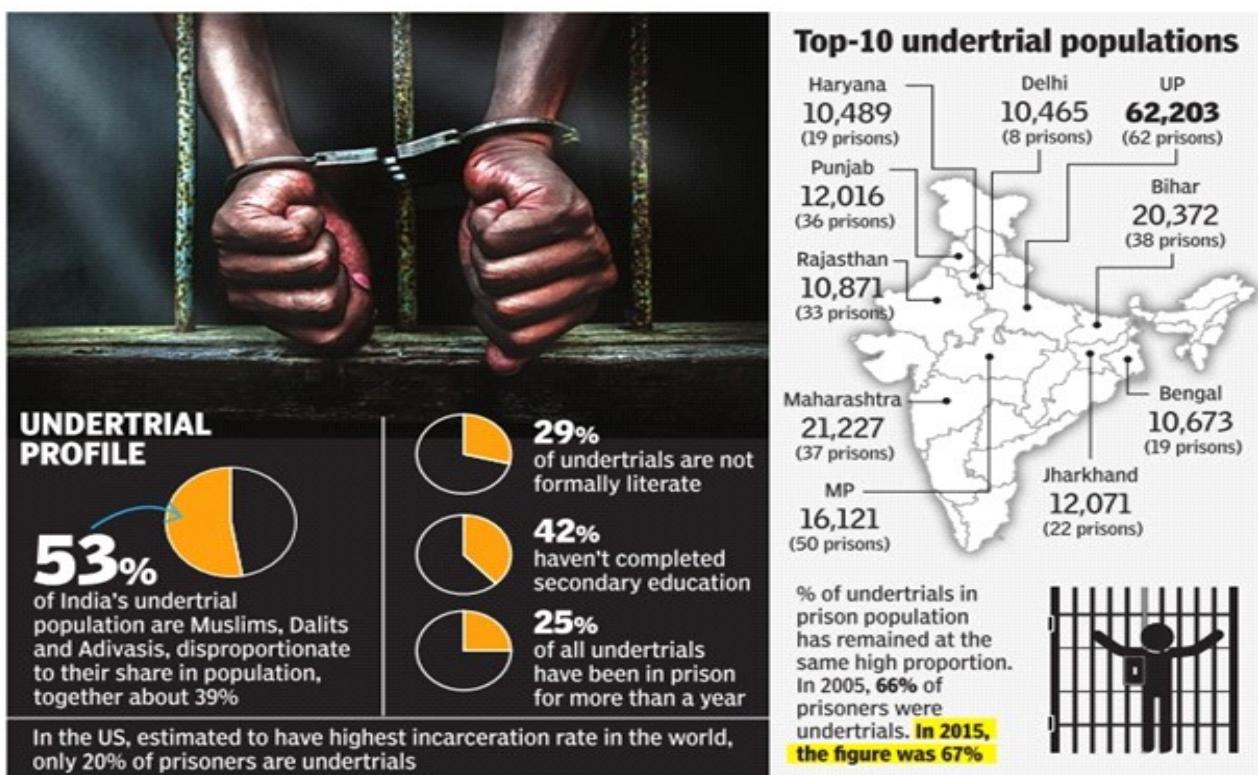
### Terms of reference:

- The committee's duties will include looking into the problems of jails across the country including overcrowding in prisons, issue of human rights of prisoners and issues concerning women prisoners languishing in cells for years.
- After studying the problems, the committee would be required to suggest measures to deal with them.



### Background:

- The Supreme Court had said on August 8, 2018 that it would constitute a committee under the chairmanship of its retired judge to look into the problems in jails, on a day-to-day basis and suggest measures to tackle the problems.
- The SC had expressed its displeasure saying that the government had collected a huge amount under the orders of the apex court but the funds were not being utilised properly.



## No wonder India's prisons are so overcrowded

Most prisons in India are overcrowded, avg occupancy rate in Indian prisons is 114%

### Top 10 overcrowded prisons

Chhattisgarh	234%
Delhi	227%
Meghalaya	178%
UP	169%
MP	140%
Uttarakhand	136%
Kerala	118%
Punjab	118%
Jharkhand	114%
Maharashtra	113%

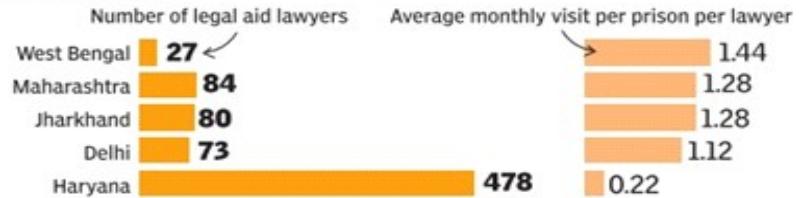
Undertrials are those awaiting trial or whose trials were still ongoing, and who have not been convicted

## Poor state of legal aid

The home ministry agrees that only "the poor and indigent... have continued to languish as under-trials" and notes "the lack of adequate legal aid" is the principal reason for "continued detention ... where bail is a matter of right". Although an accused in criminal case has the right to free legal aid, but here, too, a sorry picture...

### Among states with largest undertrial populations...

Haryana has highest number of legal aid lawyers, but avg prison visits by them is 0.22 times a month...



## What is Sec 436A?

It says that where an undertrial has been detained for a period equal to half of the maximum sentence specified for the offence for which he/she is charged, they are eligible for release on personal bond, with or without sureties

\*Amnesty International India filed nearly 3,000 RTI applications to gather the data for the study

But despite home ministry's guidelines, many prison officials across states are still unaware of how section 436A CrPC is to be applied

## Need for reforms:

- NHRC figures show that prisoners cut off from family and friends had a 50% more chance of committing suicide than those outside. The average suicide rate among the general public for this period is 11 (per 100,000) whereas the average suicide rate in prison is 16.9 (per 100,000). In other words, the average suicide rate in prisons is over 50% more than in normal conditions.
- Indian prisons face three long-standing structural constraints: overcrowding, thanks to a high percentage of undertrials in the prison population, understaffing and underfunding. The inevitable outcome is sub-human living conditions, poor hygiene, and violent clashes between the inmates and jail authorities.

- Besides, while 33% of the total requirement of prison officials still lies vacant, almost 36% of vacancy for supervising officers is still unfulfilled. In the absence of adequate prison staff, overcrowding of prisons leads to rampant violence and other criminal activities inside the jails.

### Way ahead:

- Indian jails have often been dubbed as a university for grooming criminals due to pathetic and inhumane conditions. In the absence of a robust Whistleblower Protection Act and structural changes to address the issues of overcrowding and understaffing, India's prisons will continue to be heaven for politically connected criminals and hell for socio-economically disadvantaged undertrials, some regular media uproars notwithstanding.
- Fundamental rights of prisoners cannot be placed in the back-burner and the Centre and the states need to be more pro-active in sensitising staff about the need to treat prisoners as humanely as possible.

## 7. National e-Vidhan Application

### Context:

The government recently inaugurated the two-day National Orientation workshop on National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA). The government also launched a new website for NeVA.

### About NeVA:

NeVA is a member-centric, decentralized digital application that makes information available on digital platform about day to day functioning of Legislative Houses covering various businesses of the Houses.

The application would host a secure page for each Member of the House for submitting Questions & other Notices.

The mNeVA (NeVA-mobile app) is a device neutral and user friendly app that has made information on conduct of business in Legislatures accessible anytime, anywhere to everyone.

It is a work-flow based app deployed in Cloud (Meghraj) which helps the Chair of the House to conduct the proceedings of the House smoothly and the members to carry out their duties in the House efficiently.

NeVA has made live for Rajya Sabha in respect of Monsoon Session 2018 and information in respect of Lok Sabha is being updated.

### e-Vidhan Project:

e-Vidhan is a Mission Mode Project to digitize and make the functioning of State Legislatures paperless. This is part of Digital India programme. It is to be used by the Legislatures as well as all the Government Departments.

## **8. India ranks 158th in ‘human capital’ score, behind Sudan**

### **Context:**

Recently, the study, published in journal The Lancet, says that India is ranked at 158 out of 195 countries in 2016, an improvement from its position of 162 in 1990.

India ranks 158th in the world for its investments in education and health care, according to the first-ever scientific study ranking countries for their levels of investment in human capital.

### **What is human capital?**

Human Capital is a measure of the skills, education, capacity and attributes of labour which influence their productive capacity and earning potential.

According to the OECD, human capital is defined as:

“The knowledge, skills, competencies and other attributes embodied in individuals or groups of individuals acquired during their life and used to produce goods, services or ideas in market circumstances”.

- Individual human capital – the skills and abilities of individual workers
- Human capital of the economy – The aggregate human capital of an economy, which will be determined by national educational standards.

### **Why in news?**

- India ranks 158th in the world for its investments in education and health care, according to the first-ever scientific study ranking countries for their levels of investment in human capital.
- The nation is placed behind Sudan (ranked 157th) and ahead of Namibia (ranked 159th) in the list. The U.S. is ranked 27th, while China is at 44th and Pakistan at 164th.

### **Ranks of other south Asian countries:**

- Countries ranking below India in terms of human capital are: Pakistan (164), Bangladesh (161) and Afghanistan (188).
- Countries in the region that have fared better than India in terms of human capital are: Sri Lanka (102), Nepal (156), Bhutan (133) and Maldives (116).

### **Highlights of the study:**

- The study, conducted by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the request of the World Bank, is the first of its kind to measure and compare the strength of countries’ “human capital”. The study underscores that when a country’s human capital score increases, its economy grows.
- Findings show the association between investments in education and health and improved human capital and GDP — which policy-makers ignore at their own peril.

- As the world economy grows increasingly dependent on digital technology, from agriculture to manufacturing to the service industry, human capital grows increasingly important for stimulating local and national economies.
- Learning is based on average student scores on internationally comparable tests.
- Components measured in the functional health score include stunting, wasting, anaemia, cognitive impairments, hearing and vision loss, and infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis.

### **Countries that showed the most dramatic increase in human capital:**

- The study places Finland at the top.
- Turkey showed the most dramatic increase in human capital.
- Asian countries with notable improvement include China, Thailand, Singapore, and Vietnam.
- Within Latin America, Brazil stands out for improvement.
- The greatest increase among sub-Saharan African countries was in Equatorial Guinea.

## **9. Central Zonal Council**

### **Context:**

The 21st Central Zonal Council meeting was held in Lucknow and was chaired by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh.

- The Council discussed various issues including road transport, Pradhanmantri Gramin Sadak Yojna, measures to tackle Naxal violence, modernization of Police, infrastructure development of airports, minimum support price, National health mission and issues related to primary schools.

### **What are zonal councils?**

- Zonal councils have been established by the Parliament to promote interstate cooperation and coordination. They are statutory bodies established under the States Reorganisation Act 1956 and not constitutional bodies. They are only deliberative and advisory bodies.

### **There are 5 five Zonal councils namely:**

1. The Northern Zonal Council, comprising the States of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, National Capital Territory of Delhi and Union Territory of Chandigarh.
2. The Central Zonal Council, comprising the States of Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.
3. The Eastern Zonal Council, comprising the States of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, and West Bengal.

4. The Western Zonal Council, comprising the States of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and the Union Territories of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli.
5. The Southern Zonal Council is composed of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and the Union Territory of Puducherry.

### **Composition:**

- Chairman – The Union Home Minister is the Chairman of each of these Councils.
- Vice Chairman – The Chief Ministers of the States included in each zone act as Vice-Chairman of the Zonal Council for that zone by rotation, each holding office for a period of one year at a time.
- Members- Chief Minister and two other Ministers as nominated by the Governor from each of the States and two members from Union Territories included in the zone.
- Advisers- One person nominated by the Planning Commission (which has been replaced by NITI Ayog now) for each of the Zonal Councils, Chief Secretaries and another officer/Development Commissioner nominated by each of the States included in the Zone.
- Union Ministers are also invited to participate in the meetings of Zonal Councils depending upon necessity.

### **The main objectives of setting up of Zonal Councils are:**

- Bringing out national integration.
- Arresting the growth of acute State consciousness, regionalism, linguism and particularistic tendencies.
- Enabling the Centre and the States to co-operate and exchange ideas and experiences.
- Establishing a climate of co-operation amongst the States for successful and speedy execution of development projects.

The North Eastern States i.e. (i) Assam (ii) Arunachal Pradesh (iii) Manipur (iv) Tripura (v) Mizoram (vi) Meghalaya (vii) Sikkim and (viii) Nagaland are not included in the Zonal Councils and their special problems are looked after by the North Eastern Council, set up under the North Eastern Council Act, 1972.

## **10. Study on spending on education and health care by various countries**

### **Context:**

A study on spending on education and health care by various countries by various countries has been released. The study is based on analysis of data from sources, including government agencies, schools, and health care systems.

**Details:**

- The study was conducted by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the request of the World Bank.
- It is the first of its kind to measure and compare the strength of countries' "human capital".
- The study underscores that when a country's human capital score increases, its economy grows.

**India's relative performance:**

- India ranks 158th in the world for its investments in education and health care. The nation is placed behind Sudan (ranked 157th) and ahead of Namibia (ranked 159th) in the list.
- South Asian countries ranking below India in this report include Pakistan (164), Bangladesh (161) and Afghanistan (188).
- Countries in the region that have fared better than India in terms of human capital include Sri Lanka (102), Nepal (156), Bhutan (133) and Maldives (116).

**Concerns:**

India has improved its performance from its position of 162 in 1990. However, India is falling behind in terms of health and education of its workforce, which could potentially have long-term negative effects on the Indian economy.

**Global performance:**

- The study places Finland at the top.
- The U.S. is ranked 27th, while China is at 44th and Pakistan at 164th.
- Turkey showed the most dramatic increase in human capital between 1990 and 2016.
- Asian countries with notable improvement include China, Thailand, Singapore, and Vietnam.
- Within Latin America, Brazil stands out for improvement.
- All these countries have had faster economic growth over this period than peer countries with lower levels of human capital improvement.
- In addition, the greatest increase among sub-Saharan African countries was in Equatorial Guinea.

**Significance of human capital:**

- The findings show the association between investments in education and health and improved human capital and GDP which policy-makers ignore at their own peril. As the world economy grows increasingly dependent on digital technology, from agriculture to manufacturing to the service industry, human capital grows increasingly important for stimulating local and national economies.

## 11. Supreme Court allows live streaming of cases

### Context:

Ushering in more transparency in the judiciary's work, the Supreme Court has given its nod to live-streaming of court proceedings, saying this will bring more accountability and enhance the rule of law.

### Pilot project:

- As per the court's order, the project must be implemented in a progressive, structured and phased manner, with certain safeguards to ensure that the purpose of live-streaming of proceedings is achieved holistically and that it does not interfere with the administration of justice or the dignity and majesty of the court hearing the matter and/or impinge upon any rights of the litigants or witnesses.
- As a pilot project, only cases of constitutional and national importance being argued for final hearing before the Constitution Bench be live-streamed initially. For this, it said, permission of the court concerned will have to be sought in writing in advance.
- Consent of parties to the proceedings must be insisted upon, and if there is no unanimity between them, the court concerned can take the appropriate decision in the matter. The court concerned will also have the power to revoke permission at any stage of the proceedings.
- There must be a reasonable time-delay (say 10 minutes) between the live court proceedings and the broadcast, in order to ensure that any information which ought not to be shown, as directed by the court, can be edited from being broadcast.
- Till a full-fledged module and mechanism for live-streaming of the proceedings of the Supreme Court over the internet is evolved, it can be live-streamed in designated areas within the court via intranet.

### What necessitated this?

- Although courts in India are ordinarily open to all members of the public, sometimes they are denied the opportunity to witness the proceedings due to logistical issues and infrastructure restrictions. By providing 'virtual' access of live court proceedings to one and all, it will effectuate the right of access to justice or right to open justice and public trial, right to know the developments of law and including the right of justice at the doorstep of the litigants.
- It will "reduce the public's reliance on second-hand narratives to obtain information about important judgments of the court and the course of judicial hearings". Society will be able to view court proceedings first-hand and form reasoned and educated opinions about the functioning of courts. This will help reduce misinformation and misunderstanding about the judicial process.

## **Significance of the move:**

- This is a giant step by the Supreme Court to move towards a regime of transparency.
- Live streaming will deal head on with the problem of distance. Given that the court is located in New Delhi, many people cannot afford to be present physically in Supreme Court to follow the arguments, even if the case directly affects them in some way. In fact, even litigants are often unable to travel to court because of the cost and distance involved, leaving it entirely to their lawyers to run the case.
- A live telecast of proceedings also has the potential to reduce unwarranted delays in the cases caused by the occasionally cavalier attitude of lawyers. With the client's eye firmly on them, lawyers are likely to expedite cases. Further, this will provide an opportunity to young lawyers to showcase their talents to the world and has the potential to break the stranglehold of a select few over the legal profession.
- Live streaming could act as a welcome check on the judiciary. With the public watching, there is every chance that there will be a reduction in the sometimes unnecessary oral comments that cause much controversy but have no judicial bearing.

## **What next?**

- Supreme Court Rules, 2013, will have to suitably amended to provide for the regulatory framework to incorporate the changes.
- Besides, live telecast comes with some drawbacks. As seen in the Parliament, there is a tendency to grandstand among lawmakers, who want to show their electorate that they are indeed working hard. The court has to make sure proceedings are unaffected by the introduction of a new technology.

## **12. National Digital Communications Policy-2018**

### **Context:**

The Union Cabinet has approved the National Digital Communications Policy-2018 (NDCP-2018) and re-designation of the Telecom Commission as the “Digital Communications Commission”.

### **Impact:**

- The NDCP-2018 envisions supporting India's transition to a digitally empowered economy and society by fulfilling the information and communications needs of citizens and enterprises by establishment of a ubiquitous, resilient and affordable digital communications infrastructure and services.
- The ‘Customer focused’ and ‘application driven’ NDCP-2018 shall lead to new ideas and innovations, after the launch of advanced technology

such as 5G, IOT, M2M, etc. which shall govern the telecom sector of India.

### **The key objectives of the policy are:**

- Broadband for all.
- Creating four million additional jobs in the Digital Communications sector.
- Enhancing the contribution of the Digital Communications sector to 8% of India's GDP from ~ 6% in 2017.
- Propelling India to the Top 50 Nations in the ICT Development Index of ITU from 134 in 2017.
- Enhancing India's contribution to Global Value Chains.
- Ensuring Digital Sovereignty.
- These objectives are to be achieved by 2022.

### **The policy aims to:**

- Provide universal broadband connectivity at 50 Mbps to every citizen.
- Provide 1 Gbps connectivity to all Gram Panchayats by 2020 and 10 Gbps by 2022.
- Ensure connectivity to all uncovered areas.
- Attract investments of USD 100 billion in the Digital Communications Sector.
- Train one million manpower for building New Age Skill.
- Expand IoT ecosystem to 5 billion connected devices.
- Establish a comprehensive data protection regime for digital communications that safeguards the privacy, autonomy and choice of individuals.
- Facilitate India's effective participation in the global digital economy.
- Enforce accountability through appropriate institutional mechanisms to assure citizens of safe.
- Secure digital communications infrastructure and services.

### **The policy advocates:**

- Establishment of a National Digital Grid by creating a National Fibre Authority.
- Establishing Common Service Ducts and utility corridors in all new city and highway road projects.
- Creating a collaborative institutional mechanism between Centre, States and Local Bodies for Common Rights of Way, standardization of costs and timelines.
- Removal of barriers to approvals.

- Facilitating development of Open Access Next Generation Networks.

### Background:

- As the present world has entered the era of modern technological advancements in the Telecom Sector such as 5G, IoT, M2M etc., a need was being felt to introduce a ‘customer focused’ and ‘application driven’ policy for the Indian Telecom Sector, which can form the main pillar of Digital India by addressing emerging opportunities for expanding not only the availability of telecom services but also telecom based services.
- Accordingly, the new National Digital Communications Policy – 2018 has been formulated, in place of the existing National Telecom Policy- 2012, to cater to the modern needs of the digital communications sector of India.



# International Relations

## 13. Country Partnership Framework

### Context:

The World Bank Group (WBG) Board of Executive Directors has endorsed a new Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for India.

- The CPF aims to support India's transition to a higher middle-income country by addressing some of its key development priorities — resource efficient and inclusive growth, job creation and building its human capital.
- The India CPF represents the largest country programme of the WBG, reflecting the strong collaboration between India and the Group's institutions — The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), International Finance Corporation (IFC) and Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA). The WBG expects to deliver \$25-30 billion during this CPF period, ending in FY22.
- With a fast growing economy, global stature, and its unique experience of lifting the highest number of poor out of poverty in the past decades, India is well-positioned to become a high middle-income country by 2030.
- The future of India lies in the States of India. The country's transition to high middle-income status will be determined in large part by the effectiveness of India's federal compact. In this context, an important focus of the CPF will be to deepen engagement with India's States and invest in the institutions and capabilities of the states and local governments to address their development priorities.

### What is Country Partnership Framework (CPF)?

- The World Bank Group's Country Partnership Framework (CPF) aims to make our country-driven model more systematic, evidence-based, selective, and focused on the Bank's twin goals of ending extreme poverty and increasing shared prosperity in a sustainable manner. The CPF replaces the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS). Used in conjunction with a Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD), the CPF guides the World Bank Group's (WBG) support to a member country.
- A Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD) informs each new CPF. The aim of the SCD is to identify the most important challenges and opportunities a country faces in advancing towards the twin goals. This is derived from a thorough analysis, and informed by consultations with a range of stakeholders.

### Way ahead:

- The WBG will focus on three broad areas under the new CPF: promoting a resource efficient growth path, particularly in the use of land and

water, to remain sustainable; enhancing competitiveness and enabling job creation; and investing in human capital — in health, education, skills — to improve quality and efficiency of service delivery.

- Within these, some areas of deeper WBG's engagement will include addressing the challenge of air pollution, facilitating jobs for women, increasing the resilience of the financial sector and investing in early years of children's development. Across the sectors, the WBG will invest in harnessing the impact of new technology.

## 14. Global Media Compact to raise awareness of SDGs

### Context:

UN has announced Global Media Compact to raise awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals. India's ministry of information and broadcasting is part of it.

### About SDG Media Compact:

- SDG Media Compact is an initiative marking a new drive to advance awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were unanimously adopted by all world leaders at the United Nations in 2015.



- The Compact seeks to inspire media and entertainment companies around the world to leverage their resources and creative talent to advance the Goals.
- The Compact is an initiative of the United Nations, in collaboration with the UN Foundation and with the support of FleishmanHillard.

### Significance:

- The SDG Media Compact is inclusive and aims to embrace media companies from all regions and all platforms. Participating

organizations will have the opportunity to create content partnerships with the United Nations, whereby the organization will increase its efforts to source and share high-value media content and newsworthy opportunities relating to the SDGs. Regular monitoring and review meetings will gauge engagement.

- Collectively, the founding members of the SDG Media Compact already comprise an audience in the billions spanning over 80 countries on 4 continents and many more companies are expected to join.

### About the SDGs:

- The 17 Sustainable Development Goals were adopted by world leaders at the historic Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015. Encompassing everything from health, to gender equality, and education, the Goals will mobilize efforts around the world to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.



## Economy

### 15. Total expense ratio

#### **Context:**

Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has announced changes to total expense ratio (TER) of mutual funds.

#### **What is total expense ratio and why is it important for investing in mutual funds?**

- Mutual funds are investments where an investor entrusts his/her money with an investment manager (of an asset management company) to manage the money smartly and efficiently. This money management comes at a cost, which is usually charged as a percentage of the investment.
- The official regulator of mutual funds has laid down rules on how much an asset management company can charge an investor to manage their funds. For an investor this is important because it is a charge (called total expense ratio or TER in short) levied on their investment, and the money they get back from their investment is reduced by this figure.
- So, for an investor, TER is an important number to focus on since it has a direct impact on their returns. However, it is not the only number to look at and investors should evaluate funds based on various parameters such as consistency of performance and risk levels.

#### **What are the changes made by SEBI now to TER?**

- SEBI has, across the board, lowered the TER that a fund house can charge its investors. The reduction is higher for larger funds and lower for smaller funds — larger and smaller being a measure of how much money a fund manages.

### 16. Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN)

#### **Context:**

The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal to convert Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) into a government-owned company. The government will now own 100% of the IT backbone to the new indirect tax regime.

- Currently, the Centre and states together hold 49% stake in GSTN. The remaining 51% is held by five private financial institutions – HDFC Ltd, HDFC Bank Ltd, ICICI Bank Ltd, NSE Strategic Investment Co and LIC Housing Finance Ltd.

#### **What necessitated this?**

- GST, which subsumed over a dozen local taxes, was rolled out on July 1, 2017. Over 1.1 crore businesses are registered on the GSTN portal. With enhanced role of GSTN from just collecting taxes to data analytics,

the government felt that it should now be the majority owner in the IT backbone provider.

## What is GSTN?

- The GSTN was floated to aid the rollout of the new indirect tax regime. The company will provide information technology support to all stakeholders for smooth implementation of the new taxation regime across the country and will be the repository of all information related to taxation and entities registered under GST.

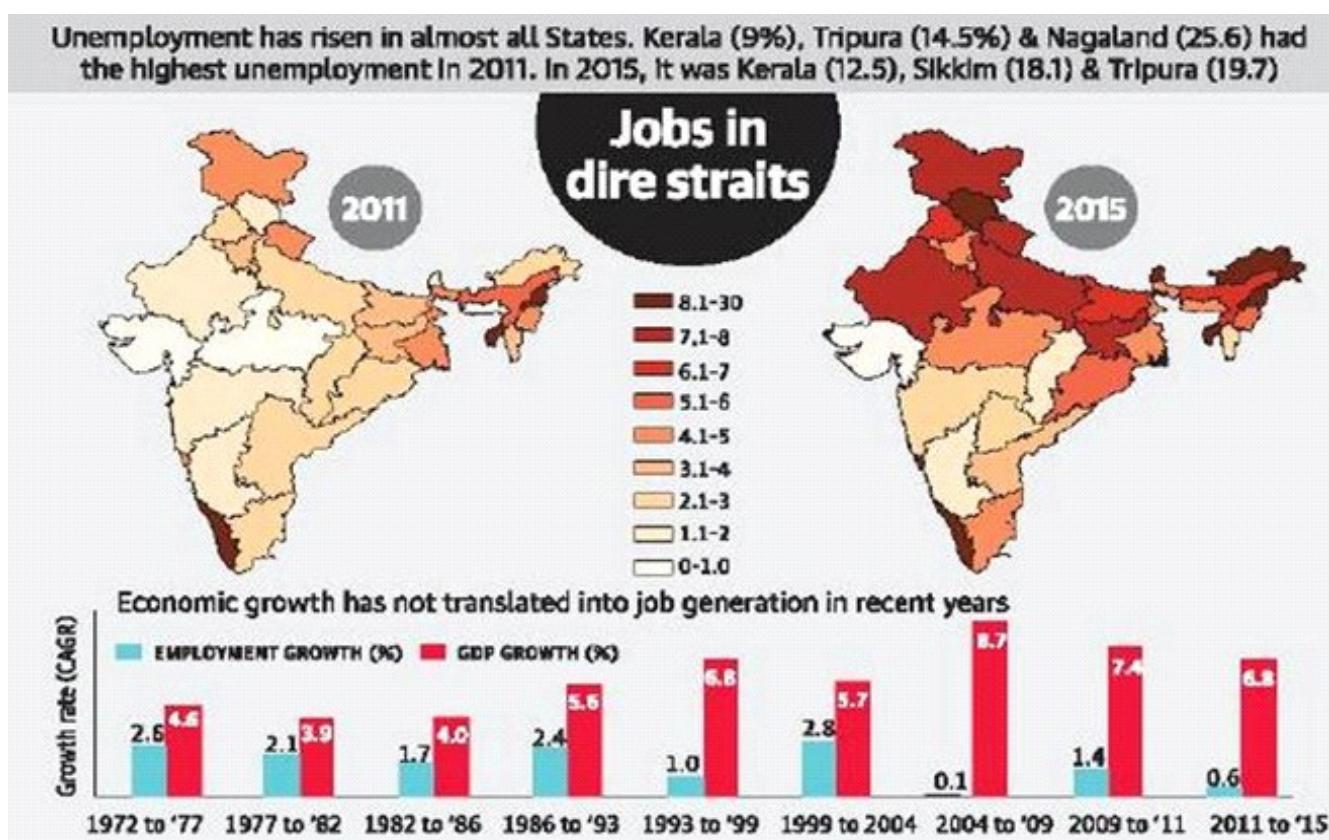
## 17. Unemployment among educated youth at 16%: study

### Context:

National Employment Policy that takes these unemployment trends into account, the State of Working India 2018, a new study released by Azim Premji University's Centre for Sustainable Employment

### Unemployment trends:

- With higher growth rates not having translated into more jobs and increases in productivity failing to spur a commensurate rise in wages
- In 1970s and 80s, when GDP growth was around 3-4%, employment growth was about 2%. Currently, the ratio of GDP growth to employment growth is less than 0.1." That means that a 10% increase in GDP results in a less than 1% increase in employment.
- The worrying fact that rural wage growth collapsed in 2014, and has not risen since



## **Outcomes of the study:**

- Unemployment has risen to more than 5% overall, and the study slices the data to show that in geographic terms, north Indian States are the most severely affected, while in demographic terms, young people with higher education levels suffer an unemployment rate as high as 16%.
- According to the study in the organised manufacturing sector, though the number of jobs has grown, there has also been an increase in the share of contract work, which offers lower wages and less job security.
- Labour productivity in the sector is six times higher than it was 30 years ago; however, managerial and supervisory salaries have only tripled in the same period, while production workers' wages have grown a measly 1.5 times.
- Women's participation in the paid workforce is still low, but the situation is unequal across States.
- In Uttar Pradesh, only 20 women are in paid employment for every 100 men, while that figure jumps to 50 in Tamil Nadu and 70 in Mizoram and Nagaland.
- With regard to earnings, the caste gap is actually larger than the gender gap. Dalits and Adivasis are over-represented in low-paying occupations, and severely under-represented in higher-paying ones, the study reveals they earn only 55-56% of upper caste workers' earnings.

## **Way forward:**

- Increasing the Startups by providing credit facilities at subsidised rate to increase workforce requirement. Reforms in Education system to ensure student from school level get modern education and practical approach. Increasing Foreign Investment by Subsidies and Flexible laws.
- Subsidy to Industry setup in Rural Areas to provide employment opportunities to Rural Population. Creating awareness among masses about Gender Equality and Women Empowerment to increase women employment will tackle the current problem.

## **18. The importance of the first REIT issue in India**

### **Context:**

Ten years, several consultation papers and countless relaxations in regulations later, real estate investment trusts (REITs) in India are set to become a reality. The Embassy Office Parks REIT, once listed, will be the first in India.

### **What is a REIT?**

- A REIT is a platform that allows investors to make securitized real

estate investments in small amounts.

- It works much like a mutual fund, pooling capital from various investors into one basket.
- Through REITs, lease-generating real estate assets can be broken into several parts and converted into a paper investment or securitized.
- They also help make investments in real estate more accessible, long-term and income-oriented.

Globally, there are two major kinds of REITs:

1. Equity
2. Mortgage

REITs are regulated and managed as a trust, which means there is accountability and audit of how investor funds are being used.

### **Is this a good time for a REIT listing?**

- India's residential sector has been in the doldrums for over five years, but the commercial office space has attracted global investors.
- There has also been concern over the dismal response to the listing of infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs).
- Unlike REITs, InvITs do not have ownership of assets but only the license to operate and have no contractual obligations.
- Analysts say the Embassy-Blackstone REIT, given the top quality asset and tenant base and its growth potential, will bring in investors.

### **What has taken REITs so long in India?**

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) issued the draft guidelines in 2008, but notified them in 2014.
- Then it was said that a REIT can have at most three sponsors and investment in completed, income-generating properties must be at least 80% of REITs assets.
- The 2016 budget exempted REITs from dividend distribution tax and allowed foreign investment into them.
- In 2016, Sebi said REITs' investment managers should project the fund's revenues, property-wise operating cash flows for at least 3 successive years in the offer documents. On 28 July 2017, Embassy Office Parks REIT was registered with Sebi.

### **How much is Embassy Parks aiming to rise with the REIT listing?**

- Embassy Office Parks, co-sponsored by Blackstone Group and Embassy Group, aims to raise 5,250 crore through listing the REIT.

### **What is Blackstone's role in shaping India's commercial office sector?**

- Blackstone Real Estate has committed \$5.3 billion across 31 investments in India. Of this, it has invested \$3.9 billion in office

assets of over 100 million sq. ft, making it the top office space investor in India.

- The company opened its real estate division in India in 2007 and made its first transaction in 2008, with a minority stake in Synergy Property Development Services. It started buying office assets in 2011.

## **19. Make it large—a significant trend in the Indian pharmaceutical industry**

### **Context:**

- The pharmaceutical sector recorded deals worth over \$2.1 billion so far in 2018, compared with \$1.9 billion across the 12 months of 2017.
- The spike in activity could be attributed to Aurobindo Pharma Ltd's agreement to acquire the dermatology business and three manufacturing units of Sandoz for \$1 billion, which is the largest outbound deal by an Indian pharmaceutical company.
- This transaction will make Aurobindo the second-largest generics company in the US by prescriptions and the second in the dermatological drugs segment.

### **Inorganic growth through large deals:**

While the pharma segment witnessed a decline in deal volumes, a key trend emerging is the inclination of investors to place selective, yet large bets, to support inorganic growth.

### **Focus on outbound deals to widen reach:**

- Strategic M&A (mergers and acquisition) deals alone accounted for nearly 70% of the deal activity in 2018, with outbound deals continuing to be the dominant focus area for Indian companies.
- These acquisitions provide access to new markets or further scope of value addition in existing markets. The US market remained a strategic priority as demonstrated by the big-ticket acquisitions by Lupin and Cipla in recent years.
- Large global pharma companies also seek to extract value and reshape their portfolios through divestments, while at the same time strengthening their balance sheets.
- The monetization of non-core assets allows these companies to focus on key areas and utilize the sale proceeds to enhance shareholder returns through share buybacks and dividends.
- Indian companies in their quest to achieve scale and category leadership will evaluate outbound acquisition opportunities, which provide quality manufacturing assets and complex generic product portfolios.

- They are also evaluating in-licensing opportunities of tying up with companies with mid-to-late stage pipeline candidates or interesting technologies.

## **PE participation is encouraging**

- Tailwinds in the sector have accelerated private equity (PE) deal activity with 14 deals aggregating nearly \$700 million, till date, compared with \$600 million during the previous year.
- Sovereign wealth funds have also demonstrated their confidence in the segment, having been a part of the largest PE deals this year—Chrys Capital, GIC and CPPIB's \$350 million investment in Mankind Pharma.
- Excluding the Mankind transaction, average deal values for PE transactions have increased from \$20 million in previous years to \$26 million this year. Further, PE transactions were witnessed across various segments of the pharma space.

## **Platform plays in domestic Pharma**

- An emerging trend in the PE segment is the creation of platform plays in the domestic pharma sector. These platforms have the potential to scale organically, and through bolt-on acquisitions (a bolt-on acquisition refers to a target that is added to a PE backed platform company to enhance value).
- A recent example is True North's collaboration with Glenmark for their domestic orthopedic and pain management business for \$92 million with a long-term objective to build a domestic specialty pharmaceutical company.
- In 2016, Samara Capital had acquired Adcock Ingram's business in India and has added to the portfolio through acquisition of select brands of Novartis in 2017.

## **Outlook**

- Indian companies will remain acquisitive as they prepare for the next leg of specialty generics-driven growth and will evaluate cross-border deals to acquire brands and capabilities in niche therapies.
- Major domestic consolidation is unlikely due to the reluctance of promoters to sell and high valuation expectations.
- Smaller divestments of tail-end brands or manufacturing facilities will continue as companies streamline their portfolios and focus on their core strengths. Also, some consolidation is expected in the mid-sized firms due to the prevailing growth challenges and to address succession issues.
- PE interest in the sector has increased considerably with some large bets being placed in proven companies and the establishment of

domestic specialty platforms that is being complemented by several bolt-on acquisitions.

- Globally, pharma companies have used M&A as a standard lever for growth as it provides access to specialty products and, now, Indian companies are using this lever boldly and decisively.

## 20. Discounting logic: on e-commerce policy

### Context:

A task force of the Union Commerce Ministry has submitted the draft National Policy on Electronic Commerce.

### Important facts:

- India's e-tail business, estimated to be worth around \$25 billion, is still a fraction of the overall retail sector in the country.
- However, the sector witness some frenetic activity, including the merger between Singapore based Flipkart, and global giant Wal-Mart.
- Over the coming decade, the e-commerce pie is expected to swell to \$ 200 billion, fuelled by smart phones, cheaper data access and growing spends.
- According to the first eight months of 2017-18, over 50,000 e-commerce grievances were made to the Consumer Affairs Ministry helpline.
- Traditional retailers too have voiced concerns about large e-tail players with deep pockets pricing them out of the market, and have been seeking a level playing field.

### The draft policy proposes:

- The creation of a single national regulator to oversee the entire industry.
- Operationalizing its different features would require action from multiple ministries and regulators.
- This would also need amendments to existing legislation and rulebooks.
- The aim is to prevent large players from pricing out the competition through unfair trade practices.

### Concern areas of draft policy:

- E-tailer costs are also likely to rise on account of proposed norms on storing and processing data locally, while consumers and firms could both question the plan to stipulate payments via Rupay cards.
- Among the ideas in the draft policy are a sunset clause on discounts that can be offered by e-commerce firms and restrictions on sellers backed by marketplace operators.
- The aim may be to prevent large players from pricing out the competition through unfair practices, but taken too far such licensing and price controls can depress the sector.

- Foreign direct investment restrictions on players who can hold their own inventory are sought to be lifted, but there must be a majority Indian partner and all products have to be made in India.
- The proposed e-commerce policy could drive away those planning online retail forays — and the opportunity to create jobs and benefit consumers would be lost.

## 21. Financial Inclusion Index

### **Context:**

Financial Inclusion Index has been launched.

### **Financial Inclusion Index:**

- Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance will release an Annual Financial Inclusion Index (FII). The single composite index gives a snap shot of level of financial inclusion that would guide Macro Policy perspective.
- The index will be a measure of access and usage of a basket of formal financial products and services that includes savings, remittances, credit, insurance and pension products.

### **The index will have three measurement dimensions:**

- Access to financial services.
- Usage of financial services.

### **Utility of the Index:**

- The various components of the index will help to measure financial services for use of internal policy making.
- Financial Inclusion Index can be used directly as a composite measure in development indicators.
- It enables fulfillment of G20 Financial Inclusion Indicators requirements.
- It will also facilitate researchers to study the impact of financial inclusion and other macro-economic variables.

## 22. Psbloansin59minutes.com

### **Context:**

Finance and Corporate Affairs Ministry has launched a web portal which is a transformative initiative in MSME credit space. The web portal psbloansin59minutes.com will enable in principle approval for MSME loans up to Rs. 1 crore within 59 minutes from SIDBI and 5 Public Sector Banks (PSBs).

### **About the Portal “PSBLoansin59min”:**

- It is one of its kind platforms in MSME segment which integrates advanced fintech to ensure seamless loan approval and management.

The loans are undertaken without human intervention till sanction and or disbursement stage.

- The Portal sets a new benchmark in loan processing and reduces the turnaround time from 20-25 days to 59 minutes. Subsequent to this in principle approval, the loan will be disbursed in 7-8 working days.
- The solution uses sophisticated algorithms to read and analyse data points from various sources such as IT returns, GST data, bank statements, MCA21 etc. in less than an hour while capturing the applicant's basic details.
- The system simplifies the decision making process for a loan officer as the final output provides a summary of credit, valuation and verification on a user-friendly dashboard in real time.

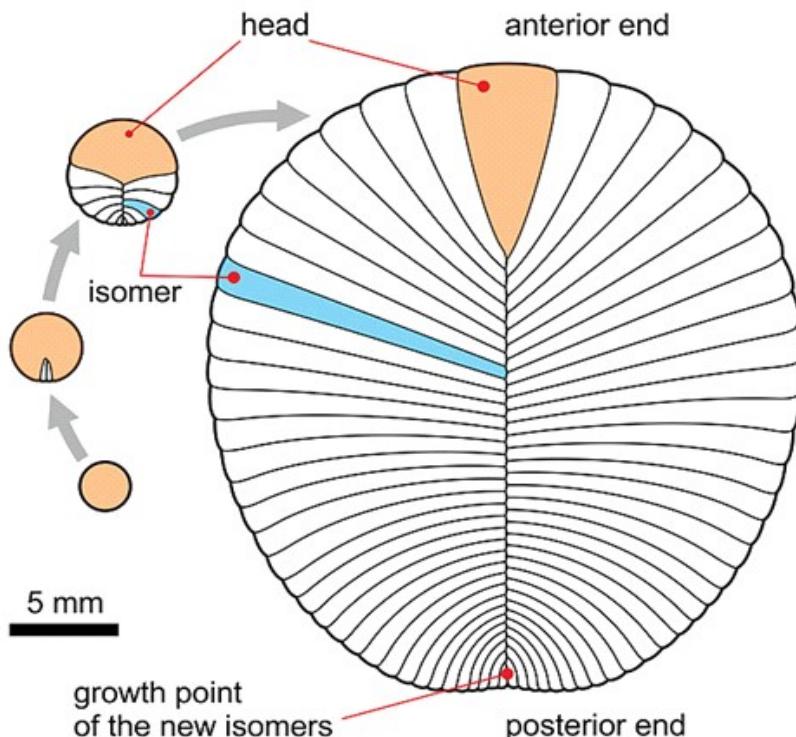


# Geography and Environment

## 23. Dickinsonia

### Context:

The fossils of this animal were recently discovered.



- It is the earliest animal on geological record — a strange oval creature with rib like segments running along its body that lived on Earth 558 million years ago.
- Researchers found the fossil in a remote area near the White Sea in the northwest of Russia.
- Dickinsonia grew up to 1.4 metres in length.
- It was part of the Ediacara Biota that lived on Earth 20 million years prior to the ‘Cambrian explosion’ of modern animal life.

- The ‘Cambrian explosion’ was when complex animals and other macroscopic organisms — such as molluscs, worms, arthropods and sponges — began to dominate the fossil record.

## 24. Neelakurinji plants

### Context:

Tamil Nadu government has announced a novel scheme for the protection of the exotic Neela kurinji (*Strobilanthes kunthianus*) plants that flower only once in 12 years.

### Neelakurinji:

- Kurinji or Neelakurinji (*Strobilanthes kunthianus*) is a shrub that is found in the shola forests of the Western Ghats in South India.
- Nilgiri Hills, which literally means the blue mountains, got their name from the purplish blue flowers of Neelakurinji that blossoms only once in 12 years.
- Some Kurinji flowers bloom once every seven years, and then die. Their seeds subsequently sprout and continue the cycle of life and death.

- The Paliyan tribal people living in Tamil Nadu used it as a reference to calculate their age.

## 25. World Wildlife Foundation's (WWF) 'Tx2' programme

### Context:

Nepal is set to become the first country in the world to double its tiger population as part of the World Wildlife Foundation's (WWF) 'Tx2' programme which aims to double the number of tigers all over the world.

The government of Nepal recently announced that there are now an estimated 235 wild tigers in the nation, nearly double the number from around 121 in 2009.

### Significance:

- The success of Nepal in doubling tiger numbers has been largely attributed to the country's political commitment and the adoption of innovative tools and approaches towards tiger conservation.
- Nepal was the first country to achieve global standards in managing tiger conservation areas, an accreditation scheme governed by the Conservation Assured Tiger Standards (CA|TS).

### About 'Tx2' programme:

- The World Wildlife Foundation had launched its ambitious TX2 programme at the St Petersburg Tiger Summit in 2010. The programme aims to double the world tiger population by 2022, which is the year of the tiger in the Chinese calendar.

### WHAT IS WWF'S ROLE?

WWF remains a major driving force behind Tx2. It aims at:

- Driving political momentum to ensure tigers remain a top priority for world leaders.
- Professionalizing wildlife protection by training rangers, developing conservation standards (CA|TS) and technology (SMART) to achieve Zero Poaching.
- Tackling the illegal wildlife trade through our partnership with TRAFFIC.
- Focusing efforts in key tiger landscapes.
- Ensuring there is space for both tigers and people in the future.

### WHO ARE THE TIGER RANGE COUNTRIES?

- Wild tigers are found in a variety of habitats across Asia. There are currently 13 tiger range countries; Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam.

## 26. Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)

### Context:

In the series of meetings of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Working Group (IWG) on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), the 3rd meeting is being held at Headquarters Eastern Naval Command, Vishakhapatnam.

### About IONS:

- IONS, the 21st century's first significant international maritime security initiative launched in February 2008, provides a forum for discussion of regional maritime issues and promotes friendly relationships among member nations. It presently has 24 members and eight observer navies.
- It is a voluntary initiative that seeks to increase maritime co-operation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region by providing an open and inclusive forum for discussion of regionally relevant maritime issues and, in the process, endeavors to generate a flow of information between naval professionals that would lead to common understanding and possibly agreements on the way ahead.
- Under the charter of business adopted in 2014, the grouping has working groups on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Information Security and Interoperability (IS&I) and anti-piracy now renamed as maritime security.

## 27. Ease of Living index

### Context:

Ease of Living index has been released.

### Details:

- Andhra Pradesh has topped Ease of Living Index rankings under AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation).
- It is followed by Odisha and Madhya Pradesh.

### About the Ease of Living index:

- The index has been developed to allow city managers to get a grip on the city's baseline and compare its performance across key indicators. The first edition of index released in January 2018 had ranked 111 Indian cities and was topped by Pune.
- The index covers 116 cities that are smart city contenders, capital cities, and cities with population of 1 million plus.
- The index captures the quality of life based on the data collected from the urban local bodies on four parameters, which were further broken down into 15 categories.

- The four parameters include institutional (governance), social (identity, education, health, security), economic (economy, employment) and physical factors (waste water and solid waste management, pollution, housing/ inclusiveness, mixed land use, power and water supply, transport, public open spaces).
- Institutional and social parameters carry 25 points each, physical factors have a weightage of 45 points and economic factors five points totalling to a 100 mark scale on which cities were evaluated.

### **About AMRUT:**

- AMRUT is the new avatar of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM).
- It adopts a project approach to ensure basic infrastructure services relating to water supply, sewerage, storm-water drains, transportation and development of green spaces and parks with special provision for meeting the needs of children.
- Under this mission, 10% of the budget allocation will be given to states and union territories as incentive based on the achievement of reforms during the previous year.
- AMRUT will be implemented in 500 locations with a population of one lakh and above. It would cover some cities situated on stems of main rivers, a few state capitals and important cities located in hilly areas, islands and tourist areas.
- Under this mission, states get the flexibility of designing schemes based on the needs of identified cities and in their execution and monitoring. States will only submit state annual action Plans to the centre for broad concurrence based on which funds will be released. But, in a significant departure from JNNURM, the central government will not appraise individual projects.
- Central assistance will be to the extent of 50% of project cost for cities and towns with a population of up to 10 lakhs and one-third of the project cost for those with a population of above 10 lakhs.
- Under the mission, states will transfer funds to urban local bodies within 7 days of transfer by central government and no diversion of funds to be made failing which penal interest would be charged besides taking other adverse action by the centre.

## Science & Technology

### 28. NASA balloon mission

#### Context:

Scientists have begun to analyze the photos captured by the NASA balloon mission.

- The mission recently captured the images of noctilucent clouds or polar mesospheric clouds (PMCs). These images may help scientists better understand turbulence in the atmosphere, as well as in oceans, lakes and other planetary atmospheres.

#### About the Mission:

- NASA's polar mesospheric clouds (PMCs) Turbo mission launched a giant balloon on July 8 to study PMCs at a height of 50 miles above the surface. For five days, the balloon floated through the stratosphere from its launch at Esrange, Sweden, across the Arctic to Western Nunavut, Canada.
- During its flight, cameras on board the balloon captured six million high-resolution images filling up 120 terabytes of data storage — most of which included a variety of PMC displays, revealing the processes leading to turbulence.

#### Objectives of the mission:

- The mission aimed at studying atmospheric motions, such as airflow over mountains or the motions caused by thunderstorms, which can cause disturbances in the atmosphere which are generated through something called gravity waves.
- Besides, with this mission, scientists want to understand the processes of matter in near-Earth space, including how matter there interacts with Earth's atmosphere and weather.

#### What are PMCs?

- Polar mesospheric clouds (PMCs) form 50 miles above the poles during summer. They're mostly made up of ice crystals and appear like faint lines in the sky. The clouds are only visible during twilight, when the angle of the sun reflects off them and causes them to shine a bright electric blue or white colour.
- These clouds are affected by what is known as atmospheric gravity waves – caused by the convecting and uplifting of air masses, such as when air is pushed up by mountain ranges.
- The waves play major roles in transferring energy from the lower atmosphere to the mesosphere

## 29. Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite

### Context:

Nasa's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite, better known as TESS, has discovered "super-Earth" and "hot Earth" planets in solar systems at least 49 light-years away, marking the satellite's first discovery since its April launch.



- The two newly discovered planets are Pi Mensae c, a "super-earth" planet 60 light-years away orbiting its sun every 6.3 days and LHS 3844 b, a "hot-earth" planet 49 light-years away that orbits its sun every 11 hours.

### About TESS mission:

- The Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) is a NASA mission that will look for planets orbiting the brightest stars in Earth's sky. It was led by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with seed funding from Google.
- **Mission:** The mission will monitor at least 200,000 stars for signs of exoplanets, ranging from Earth-sized rocky worlds to huge gas giant planets. TESS, however, will focus on stars that are 30 to 100 times brighter than those Kepler examined. This will help astronomers better understand the structure of solar systems outside of our Earth, and provide insights into how our own solar system formed.
- **Orbit:** TESS will occupy a never-before-used orbit high above Earth. The elliptical orbit, called P/2, is exactly half of the moon's orbital period; this means that TESS will orbit Earth every 13.7 days. Its closest point to Earth (67,000 miles or 108,000 kilometers) is about triple the distance of geosynchronous orbit, where most communications satellites operate.

- It will use transit method to detect exoplanets. It watches distant stars for small dips in brightness, which can indicate that planet has passed in front of them. Repeated dips will indicate planet passing in front of its star. This data has to be validated by repeated observations and verified by scientists.

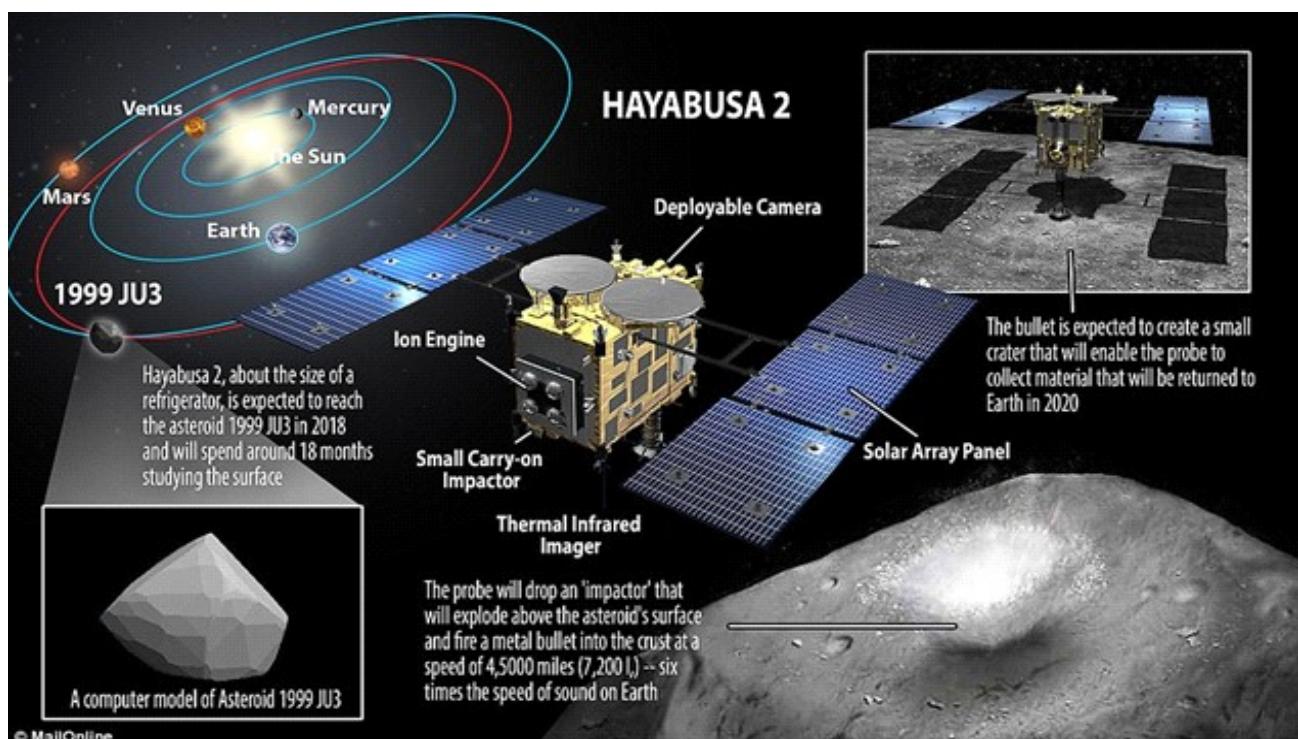
### Significance of the mission:

- TESS is designed to build on the work of its predecessor, the Kepler space telescope, which discovered the bulk of some 3,700 exoplanets documented during the past 20 years and is running out of fuel.
- Nasa expects to pinpoint thousands more previously unknown worlds, perhaps hundreds of them Earth-sized or “super-Earth” sized – no larger than twice as big as our home planet.
- Those are believed the most likely to feature rocky surfaces or oceans and are thus considered the best candidates for life to evolve. Scientists have said they hope TESS will ultimately help catalog at least 100 more rocky exoplanets for further study in what has become one of astronomy’s newest fields of exploration.

## 30. Hayabusa 2

### Context:

Hayabusa2, a Japanese space probe has released a pair of exploring rovers towards an egg-shaped asteroid- the Ryugu asteroid, to collect mineral samples that may shed light on the origin of the solar system.



### The mission:

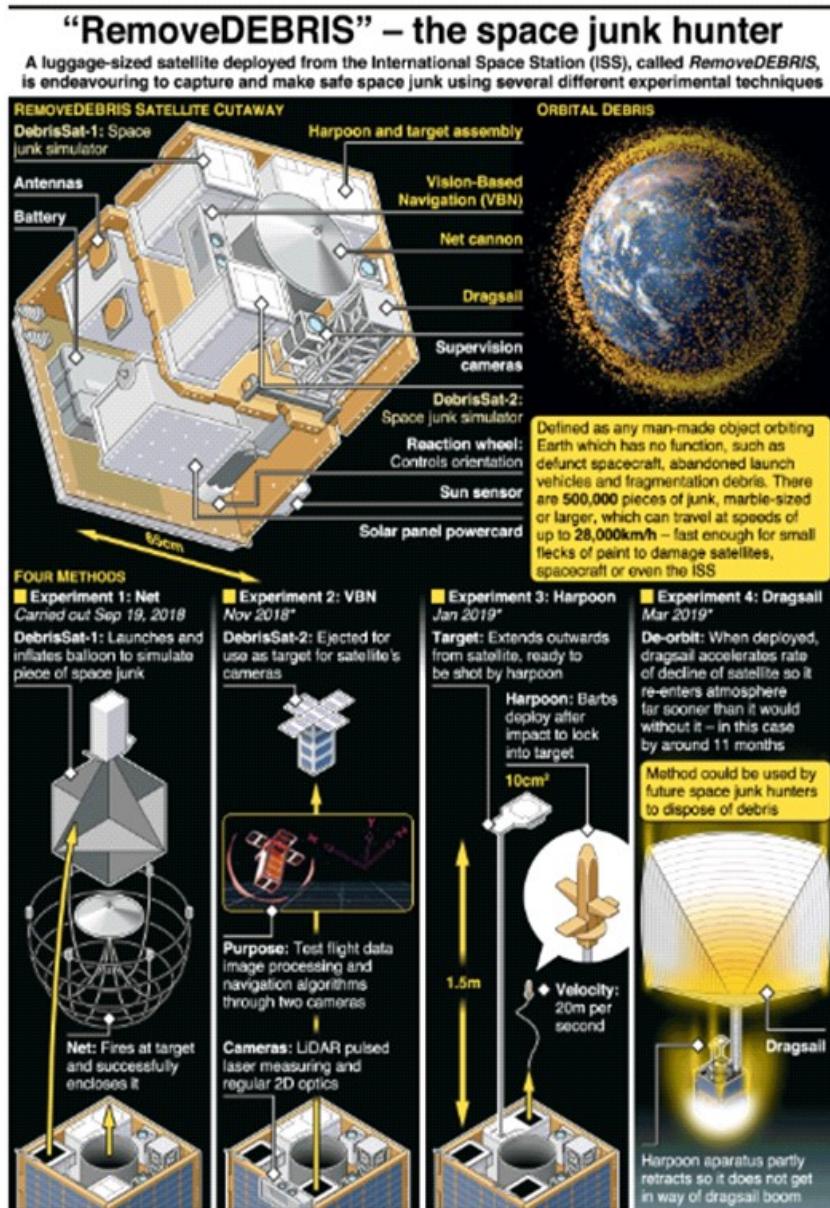
- If the mission is successful, the rovers will conduct the world's first moving, robotic observation of an asteroid surface.

- Taking advantage of the asteroid's low gravity, they will jump around on the surface — soaring as high as 15 metres and staying in the air for as long as 15 minutes — to survey the asteroid's physical features with cameras and sensors.

## About Hayabusa 2:

- Hayabusa 2 is an unmanned explorer. It was launched in 2014 aboard Japan's main H-IIA rocket from Tanegashima Space Centre for its six-year mission to bring back mineral samples from the asteroid.
- The probe will also release a French-German landing vehicle named Mobile Asteroid Surface Scout (MASCOT) for surface observation.
- Hayabusa2, about the size of a large fridge and equipped with solar panels, is the successor to JAXA's first asteroid explorer, Hayabusa — Japanese for falcon.
- If all goes well, soil samples will be returned to Earth in late 2020.

## 31. RemoveDEBRIS



### Context:

RemoveDebris system has successfully completed its capture test.

- Back in June, the RemoveDEBRIS system was deployed from the International Space Station. On September 16th, the group began to proceed with in-space testing.

- Operating over 186 miles (300 km) above the Earth, the RemoveDEBRIS system set out to capture a tiny satellite known as a CubeSat. With a net shooting off at around 44 MPH (20 meters per second) and a vision based navigation including cameras and LiDAR, the net was able to quickly capture the runaway CubeSat.

## About RemoveDebris mission:

- RemoveDebris is an EU (European Union) research project to develop and fly a low cost in-orbit demonstrator mission that aims to de-risk and verify technologies needed for future ADR (Active Debris Removal) missions.
- RemoveDebris is aimed at performing key ADR technology demonstrations (e.g., capture, deorbiting) representative of an operational scenario during a low-cost mission using novel key technologies for ADR. The project is based on and aimed at contributing to global/European ADR roadmaps.
- A microsatellite called here RemoveSAT, will release, capture and deorbit two space debris targets, called DebrisSats, in sequence using various rendezvous, capture and deorbiting technologies thus demonstrating in orbit, key ADR technologies for future missions in what promises to be the first ADR technology mission internationally.

## Background:

- Space junk is an ever-growing problem with more than 7,500 tonnes of redundant hardware now thought to be circling the Earth. Ranging from old rocket bodies and defunct spacecraft through to screws and even flecks of paint – this material poses a collision hazard to operational missions.
- The rising population of space debris increases the potential danger to all space vehicles, but especially to the International Space Station (ISS), space shuttles, satellites and other spacecraft.

## 32. NASA's MAVEN spacecraft

### Context:

NASA's MAVEN spacecraft has beamed back a selfie to mark its four years orbiting Mars and studying the upper atmosphere of the red planet.

- MAVEN completed its primary mission in November 2015 and has been operating in an extended mission since that time, continuing its investigation of Mars' upper atmosphere and exploring additional opportunities for science that the new relay orbit will bring.

### Accomplishments:

- The MAVEN mission was launched on November 18, 2013, and went into orbit around Mars on September 21, 2014.
- During its time at Mars, the spacecraft has acquired compelling evidence that the loss of atmosphere to space has been a major driver of climate change on Mars.
- It also discovered two new types of Martian auroras — diffuse aurora and proton aurora. Neither type has a direct connection to the local or global magnetic field or to magnetic cusps, as auroras do on Earth.

- MAVEN has demonstrated that the majority of the carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) on the planet has been lost to space and that there is not enough left to terraform the planet by warming it, even if the CO<sub>2</sub> could be released and put back into the atmosphere.

### **About MAVEN mission:**

- Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution (MAVEN) mission was developed by NASA to study the Martian atmosphere while orbiting Mars. MAVEN was launched aboard an Atlas V launch vehicle.
- Mission goals include determining how the planet's atmosphere and water, presumed to have once been substantial, were lost over time.

### **MAVEN mission has four primary scientific objectives:**

1. Determine the role that loss of volatiles to space from the Martian atmosphere has played through time.
2. Determine the current state of the upper atmosphere, ionosphere, and interactions with the solar wind.
3. Determine the current rates of escape of neutral gases and ions to space and the processes controlling them.
4. Determine the ratios of stable isotopes in the Martian atmosphere.

## **33. Scientists grow human oesophagus in lab**

### **Context:**

In a first, scientists have successfully grown oesophageal organoids — miniature, functional versions of the human food pipe — using stem cells, paving the way for new ways to study and test drugs against gut disorders.

- The human oesophageal tissue was grown entirely from pluripotent stem cells (PSCs), which can form any tissue type in the body.
- The research may lead to personalised diagnostic methods and focused in part on developing regenerative tissue therapies to treat or cure GI disorders.
- In addition to being a new model to study birth defects like esophageal atresia, the organoids can be used to study diseases like eosinophilic esophagitis and Barrett's metaplasia, or to bioengineer genetically matched esophageal tissue for individual patients.

### **What is Oesophagus?**

- The oesophagus is a muscular tube that actively passes food from the mouth to the stomach.
- It is also called as gastro-intestinal tract (GI tract or gullet or food pipe).
- There are a number of lymph nodes close to the oesophagus.

## **The oesophagus has four layers:**

- The mucosa – the inner layer, which is moist to help food pass smoothly into the stomach.
- The submucosa – this contains glands that produce mucus (phlegm), which keeps the oesophagus moist.
- The muscularis – the muscle layer, which pushes food down to the stomach.
- The adventitia – the outer layer, which attaches the oesophagus to nearby parts of the body.

## **Diseases associated:**

- The organ can be affected by congenital diseases, such as oesophageal atresia — a narrowing or malformation of the oesophagus caused by genetic mutations.
- There are several diseases that can afflict people later in life. Some include oesophageal cancer, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), or a rare ailment called achalasia — a disease affecting the muscles of the lower oesophagus that prevents contraction of the organ and the passage of food.

## **34. Prithvi Defence Vehicle (PDV) Mission**

### **Context:**

India successfully conducted an interceptor missile test off the Odisha coast, achieving a major milestone in developing a two-layer Ballistic Missile Defence system. The interceptor was launched from Abdul Kalam Island, earlier known as Wheeler Island of the Integrated Test Range (ITR).

### **About Prithvi Defence Vehicle (PDV) mission:**

- PDV mission is for engaging the targets in the exo-atmosphere region at an altitude above 50 km of the earth's atmosphere DRDO.
- The PDV is slated to replace the existing Prithvi Air Defense (PAD)/ Pradyumna Ballistic Missile Interceptor, which has a maximum interception altitude of 80 kilometers.
- The new two-stage solid-fueled PDV interceptor is fitted with an Imaging Infrared (IIR) seeker, developed by DRDO, to distinguish between incoming warheads and decoys.
- It is guided by high-accuracy Inertial Navigation System (INS) supported by Redundant Micro Navigation System for estimating point of interception.

## Miscellaneous

### 35. Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha

#### Context:

The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, inaugurated the centenary celebrations of the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha on September 22, 2018.

#### About Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha:

- The organisation was established by Annie Besant in 1918 with support from Mahatma Gandhi, who became the founder president of the Sabha, who held the post till his death.
- In 1964, the institution was recognised by the Indian Government as one of the Institutes of National Importance.
- It was established to propagate the study of Hindi in the then Madras Presidency and princely states of Banganapalle, Cochin, Hyderabad, Mysore, Pudukkottai, Sanduru and Travancore.
- The first Hindi class was taken by Gandhi's son Devdas Gandhi.

### 36. Sikkim's first-ever airport inaugurated

#### Context:

Sikkim's first-ever airport was recently inaugurated by the Prime Minister Narendra at Pakyong. The airport was constructed by the Airports Authority of India.

- The Pakyong Airport, the country has hit a century of airports. Until now, Sikkim was the only state in India remaining without a functional airport. The development not only eases connectivity to the Himalayan state but also brings it on the air-map of the world.
- The airport's location makes it strategically relevant from the country's security point of view. The Indian Air Force (IAF) will find this airport convenient for the landing and taking off of its aircrafts.
- The airport is not only India's 100th functional airport but also one of the country's five highest airports.

### 37. Indian Culinary Institute

#### Context:

Indian Culinary Institute (ICI) has been inaugurated at Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh. It is promoted by Union Ministry of Tourism.

- The main objective of setting up of the Indian Culinary Institute (ICI) is to institutionalize a mechanism to support efforts intended to preserve, document, promote and disseminate Indian Cuisine, meet the sectoral requirement of specialists specific to Indian Cuisine, as also of promoting Cuisine as a Niche Tourism product.

- The ICIs will be Centres of Excellence which will offer structured regular programmes of study specific to culinary arts and culinary management leading to graduate and post graduate level degrees, promote research and innovation, organize demand driven certificate and diploma courses, document and create data base specific to Indian cuisine and commission studies and survey on cuisine.

### **Need:**

- The need for ICI was felt as the formal education specific to Indian cuisine, a culinary art, with pan India sweep is conspicuous by its absence. There is no regular credible institutional source at apex level for supply of cuisine specialists to the Sector. Also, there was no institutional mechanism to document and disseminate knowledge related to cuisine and gastronomy.

### **Significance:**

- In India, at present, there is a dearth of state-of-the-art training ground to groom top-of-the-line chefs of international standards. To fill this void, the Indian Culinary Institute would provide the appropriate training platform at par with the elite “Chef Schools” functioning in different parts of the developed world.
- This effort will facilitate building a super-speciality food production work-force to assure positions of culinary experts in the hospitality industry. The ICIs will also help the local youth to get trained in these streams as well as create entrepreneurs and make them self-sufficient.
- The hotel and tourism industry in the proximity of these institutes will also get benefitted by getting the trained and skilled manpower which in turn will enhance their business.

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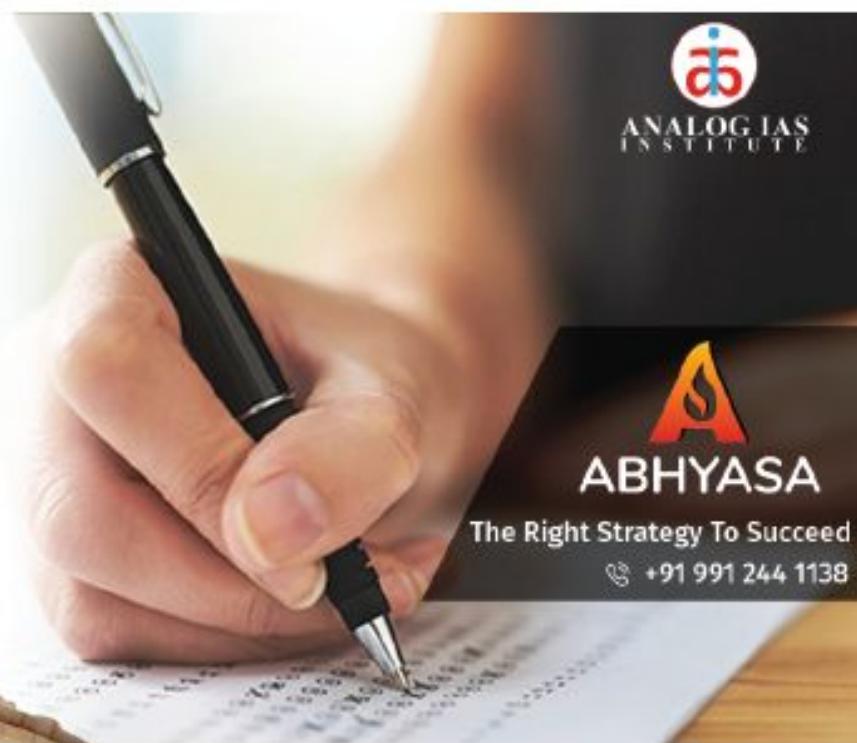
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## Abhyasa Program Structure

	Multiple Choice Questions (PRELIMS)	Descriptive Questions (MAINS)	Total Marks
<b>Daily Test</b>	<b>10</b> (10*1 = 10 marks)	<b>1</b> (1*10= 10 Marks)	<b>20</b>
<b>Weekly Test</b>	<b>20</b> (20*1 = 20 marks)	<b>2</b> (2*10= 20 Marks)	<b>40</b>
<b>Fortnightly Test</b>	<b>30</b> (30*1 = 30 marks)	<b>3</b> (3*10= 30 Marks)	<b>60</b>
<b>Monthly Test</b>	<b>50</b> (50*1 = 50 marks)	<b>5</b> (5*10= 50 Marks)	<b>100</b>
<b>3 Months Test</b>	<b>100</b> (100*1 = 100 marks)	<b>10</b> (10*10= 100 Marks)	<b>200</b>
<b>Total Questions</b>	<b>4250+</b>	<b>500+</b>	

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62



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100



Mourya  
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105



Mishra  
HT No : 262146

144



149



187



295



296



360



412



417



474



480



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614



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828



832



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886

