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Comprehensive NEWS Analysis

16-09-2018

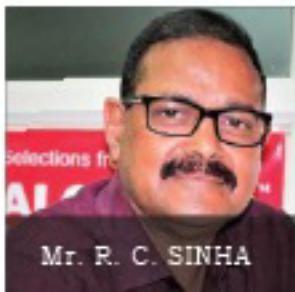
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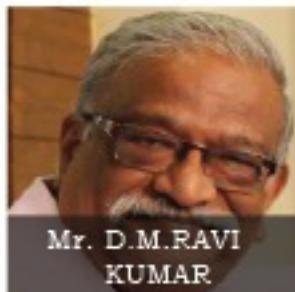
September
Week 04

OUR TEAM

GENERAL STUDIES



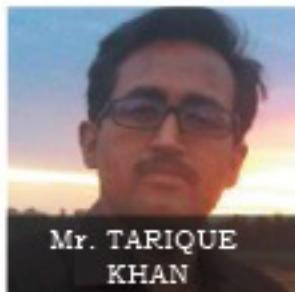
Mr. R. C. SINHA



Mr. D.M.RAVI KUMAR



Mr. SAROJ SAMAL



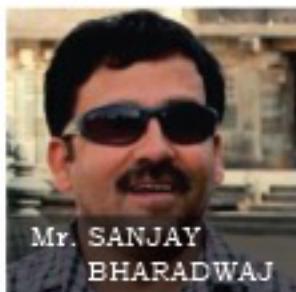
Mr. TARIQUE KHAN



Mr. PRIYESH SINGH SENGAR



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Dr. ATUL TRIPATHI

Mr. KOUSHIK

Mr. PRANAY AGARWAL

Mr. CHETAN PRAKASH

Mr. NIHIL SAREEN

Mr. RAVI TEJA

Mr. UDAY SIMHA

Mr. SIVA KUMAR

Mr. VIJAY

OPTIONALS



SOCIOLOGY

Mr. SAROJ SAMAL

Public Administration



Mr. R.C. SINHA



Mr. D.M.RAVI KUMAR



MATHEMATICS

Mr. VINNAKOTA SRIKANTH



GEOGRAPHY

Mr. PRIYESH SINGH SENGAR

OTHER OPTIONALS

ANTHROPOLOGY

POLITICAL SCIENCE

TELUGU LITERATURE

HISTORY

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Polity and Governance

1. The Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana

Context:

In a first of its kind scheme in the country, the Madhya Pradesh government launched and implemented on a pilot basis a price differential scheme, popularly known Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana (BBY)

What is Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana (BBY)?

- The Madhya Pradesh government launched and implemented on a pilot basis a price differential scheme, popularly known Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana (BBY), for eight kharif crops—soybean, groundnut, sesame, ramtil (all oilseeds), maize (cereal), moong, urad and tur (pulses) in 2017.
- The basic purpose of the scheme was to compensate farmers in the event of a price crash and to that extent hedge the price risk faced by them.
- One of the novelties of the scheme from the government's perspective was that it need not physically procure the commodities and can save on those costs and related leakages.

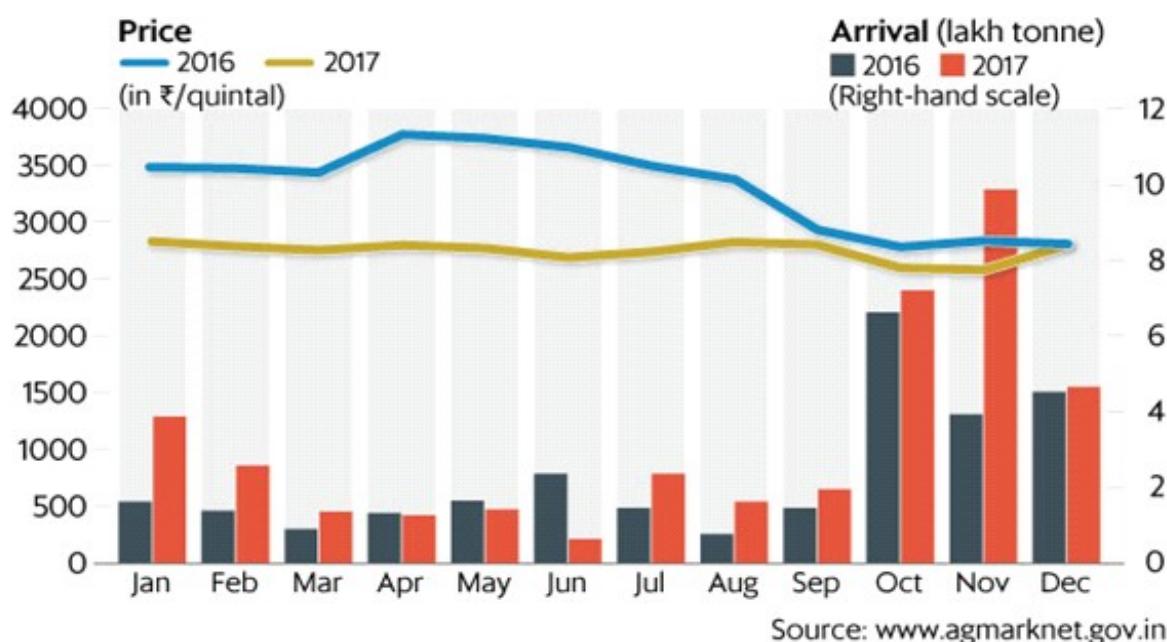
How does the scheme work?

- Farmers who register under the scheme are compensated only if their selling price (SP) is lower than the government set minimum support price (MSP).
- The actual amount of compensation or deficiency payment made to a farmer is determined by a modal price, which is a marker of average market price within the state and markets outside the state where the commodity is traded.
- So when a farmer's selling price is lower than MSP but higher than the modal price, then the difference between the MSP and actual price is paid to the farmer.
- If the SP is lower than both MSP and modal price, the payout is capped at the difference between MSP and modal price.

How did the scheme perform in its first edition?

- Many experts and commentators have been critical of the scheme especially with respect to cartelization and prices being depressed, attributing it to the scheme.
- This column explores how far this criticism is substantiated by empirical evidence in terms of price trends and learnings from the scheme for policymaking and implementation.

Prices and arrivals of soybean in Madhya Pradesh



How has the scheme fared? Glass half full or empty?

- The total registration for kharif 2017 under BBY was close to 25% of the total operational holdings in the state and about a third of the kharif area was covered by BBY.
- For soybean, which is the main kharif crop in Madhya Pradesh, close to 50% of the area under the crop was covered under the scheme (Madhya Pradesh ranks first both in terms of area and production of soybean in the country).
- So, in terms of coverage, the scheme cannot be termed a failure. An early announcement would have raised these numbers.

The way forward

- The post-harvest span for the identified crops needs to cover the full arrival period so that arrivals are spaced out and possibility of prices crashing is pre-empted.
- Currently, the registration announcement is delayed and lags behind the arrival of the crop in the mandis. This will benefit small and marginal farmers, who have limited holding capacity and are in a hurry to offload their produce, the most.
- Further, the auction system needs to be improved so that collusion is not possible, and, for this, e-NAM (electronic national agriculture market) could be an appropriate intervention.
- The use of technology in agriculture mandis, whether it is for price discovery or assaying, will go a long way in bringing about much needed transparency.

- The need of the hour is to improve upon the scheme and analyse the various policy interventions that can address this risk the best. In short, we need horses for courses as no one intervention is a panacea.

2. Sex offenders' registry launched with 4.4 lakh entries

Context:

The first-of-its-kind national sex offenders' registry has launched names and details of some 4.4 lakh people convicted for various sexual offences across the country.

Sex offenders' registry:

- India became the ninth country in the world to have a National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO), accessible only to law enforcement agencies for the purpose of "investigation and monitoring".



Tightening the grip

A lowdown on the National Sex Offenders Registry, which is aimed at curbing crimes against women and children

Who will maintain the database?
The National Crime Records Bureau will store the data. It can be accessed only by the law enforcement agencies and will be out of bounds for the general public

Which other countries have similar database?
The U.S., the U.K., Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, and Trinidad & Tobago

What are the details stored with the registry?
Name, address, photograph and fingerprint details of those convicted in sexual assault cases

How long will the data be stored by the NCRB?
Will be stored for 15 years for those posing low danger, 25 years for those posing moderate danger, and lifetime for habitual offenders involved in violent crimes like gang-rapes

How many entries have been made so far?
4.4 lakh entries of convicts from year 2005 have been included in the registry till date

- The proposal to set up a registry was mooted by the UPA government after the 2012 Nirbhaya gang rape case in New Delhi.
- The database is for those convicted for sexual offences 2005 onwards. It includes name, address, photograph and fingerprint DNA samples, and PAN and Aadhaar numbers, of convicted sexual offenders.
- The database will be maintained by the National Crime Records Bureau that will also track whether the State police were updating the records on time.
- The database will include offenders convicted under charges of rape, gang rape, Protection of Children from Sexual Offenders Act (POCSO) and eve teasing.
- Union Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi expressed concern over sexual assaults in children's shelter homes and increasing incidents of NRI grooms abandoning their brides.

Features of the Registry:

- India's registry will store data for 15 years in the case of those classified as posing "low danger", 25 years for those presenting "moderate danger"

and through lifetime for “habitual offenders, violent criminals, convicts in gang rape and custodial rapes”.

- The registry will also store information on arrested and charge sheeted offenders but with a clause that limits access to officers with the requisite clearance. Juvenile offenders are likely to be included in the database at a later stage
- This will not only aid the victims/complainants but also help the civil society organizations and responsible citizens to anonymously report such complaints.
- The complaints registered through this portal will be handled by police authorities of respective State/UTs.
- There are other features, such as a victim or complainant can track his/her report by opting for ‘report and track’ option using his/her mobile number.

Way forward:

With the launch of this database, the Government hopes to convey the message ahead of elections next year that the safety of women and children is its top priority. Recently, it set up a National Mission for the Safety of Women, headed by the Union Cabinet Secretary, to undertake specified actions, including setting up Special Fast Track Courts, strengthening forensic facilities, appointing additional public prosecutors, and providing appropriate medical and rehabilitation facilities to victims.

3. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)

Context:

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) recently marked the anniversary of the launch of scheme as Matru Vandana Saptah.

- National level achievement of the scheme post an year’s implementation on grounds is 48.11 Lakhs of women enrollment under the scheme till September 13, 2018, out of which 37.30 Lakhs have been paid the maternity benefit which accounts to a total fund disbursement of Rs1168.63 Crores.

About PMMVY:

- Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) is a maternity benefit rechristened from erstwhile Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY). The IGMSY was launched in 2010.
- The scheme is a conditional cash transfer scheme for pregnant and lactating women of 19 years of age or above for first live birth.
- It provides a partial wage compensation to women for wage-loss during childbirth and childcare and to provide conditions for safe delivery and good nutrition and feeding practices.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)

Remarkable Increased in Number of Beneficiaries



Pan-India expansion of Maternity Benefit Programme since 1 January 2017

Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers to get upto ₹ 6,000

More than 22 lakh beneficiaries enrolled (as on 6 April 2018)

Payment of ₹ 272 crores made to 11.47 lakh beneficiaries

PMMVY- Common Application Software (PMMVY-CAS) launched on 1 September 2017

- Exceptions:** The maternity benefits under Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) are available to all Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers (PW&LM) except those in regular employment with the Central Government or State Government or Public Sector Undertaking or those who are in receipt of similar benefits under any law for the time being in force.

- Funding:** The scheme is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme under which

cost sharing ratio between the Centre and the States & UTs with Legislature is 60:40 while for North-Eastern States & three Himalayan States; it is 90:10. It is 100% Central assistance for Union Territories without Legislature.

Need for special attention:

- Under-nutrition continues to adversely affect majority of women in India. In India, every third woman is undernourished and every second woman is anaemic. An undernourished mother almost inevitably gives birth to a low birth weight baby. When poor nutrition starts in-utero, it extends throughout the life cycle since the changes are largely irreversible.
- Owing to economic and social distress many women continue to work to earn a living for their family right up to the last days of their pregnancy. Furthermore, they resume working soon after childbirth, even though their bodies might not permit it, thus preventing their bodies from fully recovering on one hand, and also impeding their ability to exclusively breastfeed their young infant in the first six months.

4. Swayangsiddha Initiative

Context:

To combat human trafficking, the West Bengal government has rolled out a scheme, Swayangsiddha, in its different districts. As per the NCRB data West Bengal has highest recorded case of trafficking among the States.

Highlights of the scheme:

- Swayangsiddha, which means self-reliance, will be executed by the West Bengal Police.
- The scheme aims to empower young boys and girls to make informed choices so that they are less vulnerable to trafficking and child marriage.
- Swayangsiddha Groups have been formed in schools and colleges with interested students. These groups were formed with students between the age group of 12 to 21 years.

Objectives of the mission:

- Raising awareness on human, gender and child rights and strengthening prevention of human trafficking and child marriage using a converging approach.
- Engaging youth from different schools and colleges to combat human trafficking and child marriage.
- Strengthening response mechanism in collaboration with Police and child protection committees to build safe community.
- Strengthening access to schemes and entitlements on education, training, livelihood and food security for vulnerable groups.

5. National AIDS Control Organization (NACO)

Context:

The National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) has released the report HIV Estimations 2017.

Key facts:

- The HIV Estimations 2017 is the 14th round in the series of HIV Estimations under National AIDS Control Programme (NACP).



- NACO undertakes HIV estimations biennially in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) – National Institute of Medical Statistics (NIMS).
- The first round of HIV estimation in India was done in 1998, while the last round was done in 2015.

Highlights of the report:

- As per the report, in 2017, India had around 21.40 lakh people living with HIV (PLHIV) with adult prevalence of 0.22%.
- Around 87.58 thousand new HIV infections and 69.11 thousand AIDS related deaths happened in 2017 while around 22,675 mothers needed Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) for prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV.

- HIV Estimations 2017 corroborate the previous rounds in terms of characteristic of the HIV epidemic in India i.e. national prevalence and incidence remains low, but the epidemic is high in some geographical regions and population group.
- The rate of decline in annual new HIV infections has been relatively slower in recent years.
- The report concludes that, overall, the impact of the programme has been significant with more than 80% decline in estimated new infection from peak of epidemic in 1995. Similarly, estimated AIDS related death declined by 71% since its peak in 2005.

Need for data on this:

- The objective of HIV Estimations is to provide updated information on the status of HIV epidemic in India at national and State/UT level.
- Estimations of adult HIV prevalence, annual new infections (HIV incidence), AIDS-related mortality and prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) needs are produced as outcomes of HIV estimations.
- The modelled estimates are needed because there is no direct reliable way of measuring these core indicators which are used to track the epidemic and monitor and evaluate the response in countries around the world.

Way ahead:

- The report highlights the significant achievement of National AIDS response on prevention as well as on treatment front but has also indicated that there is no place for complacency as country move forward on ambitious goal of attaining the 'End of AIDS' by 2030.

About National AIDS Control Organization:

- It is a division of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare that provides leadership to HIV/AIDS control programme in India through 35 HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Societies.
- In 1986, following the detection of the first AIDS case in the country, the National AIDS Committee was constituted in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- As the epidemic spread, need was felt for a nationwide programme and an organization to steer the programme. In 1992 India's first National AIDS Control Programme (1992-1999) was launched, and National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) was constituted to implement the programme.

6. Portals to strengthen Women Safety launched

Context:

The government has launched two portals to strengthen Women Safety:

Objectives:

- Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) portal to check objectionable online content.
- National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO) to aid in monitoring & investigation of sexual crimes.

Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) portal:

- The portal will receive complaints from citizens on objectionable online content related to child pornography, child sexual abuse material, sexually explicit material such as rape and gang rape.
- The portal is convenient and user friendly that will enable complainants in reporting cases without disclosing their identity. This will not only aid the victims/complainants but also help the civil society organizations and responsible citizens to anonymously report complaints pertaining to child pornography, child sexual abuse material or sexually explicit material such as rape and gang rape.
- Complainants can also upload the objectionable content and URL to assist in the investigation by the State Police. The complaints registered through this portal will be handled by police authorities of respective State/UTs. There are other features such as a victim or complainant can track his/her report by opting for “report and track” option using his/her mobile number.
- The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) will proactively identify such objectionable content and take up with intermediaries for its removal. For this NCRB has already been notified as the Government of India agency to issue notices under Section 79(3)b of IT Act.

National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO):

- The National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO), which is accessible only to law enforcement agencies, will assist in effectively tracking and investigating cases of sexual offences.
- It is a central database of “sexual offenders” in the country which will be maintained by the NCRB for regular monitoring and tracking by the State Police. The database is accessible only to the law enforcement agencies for investigation and monitoring purpose.
- The database will include offenders convicted under charges of rape, gang rape, POCSO and eve teasing. At present the database contains 4.4 lakh entries.
- The State Police have been requested to regularly update the database from 2005 onwards. The database includes name, address, and

photograph and fingerprint details for each entry. However, the database will not compromise any individual's privacy.

Way ahead:

- The two portals launched are part of efforts in the direction of strengthening security of women and children. However, the field level challenges have to be overcome by the Police at the ground level to ensure speedy justice to the victims. The security agencies should fully utilize potential of the two portals and update the database regularly for greater effectiveness.
- There is also need for time bound completion of investigation in sexual crimes to instill deterrence among potential offenders.

7. Aspirational Districts Program

Context:

In a bid to understand and address the challenges faced by the district administrations in implementing skill programs and help develop capacities, the government has approved a plan for visits of the senior officers of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurships to the 'Aspirational Districts' between October 2, 2018 and January 26, 2019.

The plan:

- The visit of officers of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurships will begin with a meeting with Districts Collector / CEO-Zila Parishad and other State level officers implementing the programs.
- The team will also have interactions with Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras, training providers, ITIs, Polytechnics and JSS administrations.
- The team would also have conversation with students and industry present in these districts. This will enable a stock taking of the available skill ecosystem vis-à-vis the available data and provide good understanding of challenges to be addressed at the district level to make youth employable.

About Aspirational Districts Programme:

- Launched in January this year, the 'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' programme aims to quickly and effectively transform some of the most underdeveloped districts of the country.
- The broad contours of the programme are Convergence (of Central & State Schemes), Collaboration (of Central, State level 'Prabhari' Officers & District Collectors), and Competition among districts driven by a Mass Movement or a Jan Andolan.
- With States as the main drivers, this program will focus on the strength of each district, identify low-hanging fruits for immediate improvement, measure progress, and rank districts.

Focus of the programme:

- To enable optimum utilization of their potential, this program focuses closely on improving people's ability to participate fully in the burgeoning economy. Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure are this programme's core areas of focus.

Significance of the scheme:

- If these districts are transformed, there would be tremendous improvement in the internal security environment of the country. If Prabhari officers can bring convergence in the development efforts of different Ministries and state Governments and the schemes specially launched by Home Ministry in these districts, it would serve as a great opportunity to ensure rapid development in the country.

8. Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojna

Context:

The Employee's State Insurance (ESI) has approved a scheme named 'Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojna' for Insured Persons (IP) covered under the Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948.

About Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojna:

- **Aim:** It aims to financially support those who lost their jobs or rendered jobless for whatsoever reasons due to changing employment pattern.
- Its beneficiaries will be insured persons covered under Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948 for period of two years continuously.
- **Cash assistance:** Under the scheme, relief will be payable in cash directly to bank account of insured persons in case of unemployment. This financial assistance will be given to insured persons even while they search for new engagement. Beneficiary insured workers will be paid money, from their own contribution towards ESI scheme, in cash through bank account transfer.
- Under this scheme, workers will be able to draw 47% of their total contributions towards ESIC after remaining unemployed for at least three months from date of leaving their previous jobs. They can choose to receive the cash at one go or in instalments. It will be applicable to all factories and establishments employing at least 10 workers.

About ESI:

- ESI is self-financing social security and health insurance scheme for Indian workers.
- It is autonomous corporation by statutory creation under Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India.
- It is managed by Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) according to rules and regulations stipulated there in the ESI Act 1948.

9. Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)

Context:

Noting that Rs.12,000 crore of the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) funds remains unspent, the Central Information Commission (CIC) has asked the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Rajya Sabha Chairman to come out with a legal framework to ensure its transparency and hold parliamentarians and political parties accountable for their obligations under the scheme.

Need for legal framework:

- MoSPI report showed that in February 2018, funds allotted to MPLADS but unspent stood at ₹ 4,773.13 crore, while 2,920 instalments of ₹ 2.5 crore were yet to be released. That resulted in a total backlog of ₹ 12,073.13 crore.

Structure of the proposed framework:

- The framework should make transparency a legal obligation, with all MPs and parties required to present the public and Parliament with a comprehensive report on the number of applications received for their constituency, works recommended, works rejected with reasons, progress of works and details of beneficiaries.
- Liabilities for any breach of duties should also be imposed. Further, the framework should prohibit and prevent MPs using the funds for their private works, or diverting them to private trusts or to their own relatives.
- District administrations must provide regular information — work-wise, MP-wise, and year-wise details on progress — which are to be compiled by the MoSPI and made available to the public.

About MPLAD scheme:

- It was launched in December, 1993, to provide a mechanism for the Members of Parliament to recommend works of developmental nature for creation of durable community assets and for provision of basic facilities including community infrastructure, based on locally felt needs.
- **Works under the scheme:** Works, developmental in nature, based on locally felt needs and always available for the use of the public at large, are eligible under the scheme. Preference under the scheme is given to works relating to national priorities, such as provision of drinking water, public health, education, sanitation, roads, etc.
- **Funds:** Funds are released in the form of grants in-aid directly to the district authorities. The funds released under the scheme are non-lapsable. The liability of funds not released in a particular year is carried forward to the subsequent years, subject to eligibility.

- **Execution of works:** The MPs have a recommendatory role under the scheme. They recommend their choice of works to the concerned district authorities who implement these works by following the established procedures of the concerned state government. The district authority is empowered to examine the eligibility of works sanction funds and select the implementing agencies, prioritise works, supervise overall execution, and monitor the scheme at the ground level.
- **Recommendation of works:** The Lok Sabha Members can recommend works in their respective constituencies. The elected members of the Rajya Sabha can recommend works anywhere in the state from which they are elected. Nominated members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha may select works for implementation anywhere in the country.

10. ‘e-Sahaj’ portal

Context:

The Government has launched an online ‘e-Sahaj’ portal for grant of Security Clearance. The portal will facilitate an applicant to submit application online and also to view the status of his application from time to time.

About Security clearances:

- MHA is the nodal Ministry for security clearances in certain sensitive sectors before issue of licence/permit, permission, contract etc, to companies/ bidders/individuals by the administrative Ministry.
- The objective of national security clearance is to evaluate potential security threats, including economic threats, and provide risk assessment before clearing investment and project proposals in key sectors.
- The aim is to strike a healthy balance between meeting the imperatives of national security and facilitating ease of doing business and promoting investment in the country.

Significance of the portal:

- With the introduction of online portal, the process has become standardized, resulting in a process which will be faster, transparent and easy to monitor. Various functionaries can access the application and documents online and take timely decisions.

Background:

- MHA has cleared about 1,100 cases of security clearance in the past one year. Although the given timeline is 90 days, MHA strives to decide Security Clearance cases in 60 days (average time per case in 2018 is 53 days), which is being reduced further.
- In 2016, there were 209 cases which were over 6 months old; in 2017, this came down to 154 cases and further down to 47 cases in 2018.

11. Southern Zonal Council

Context:

The 28th meeting of the Southern Zonal Council was recently held under the Chairmanship of the Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh in Bengaluru.

- The Council reviewed the progress of the implementation of the recommendations made at the last meeting relating to security to fishermen, introduction of peninsular tourism trains, uniformity in allocation of funds in proportion to population of SC/ST for scholarship for all the courses etc.

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.

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ADMISSIONS OPEN FOR NEW BATCHES

JULY 09 MONDAY	JUNE 09 SATURDAY	JULY 02 MONDAY	JUNE 25 MONDAY	JULY 02 MONDAY
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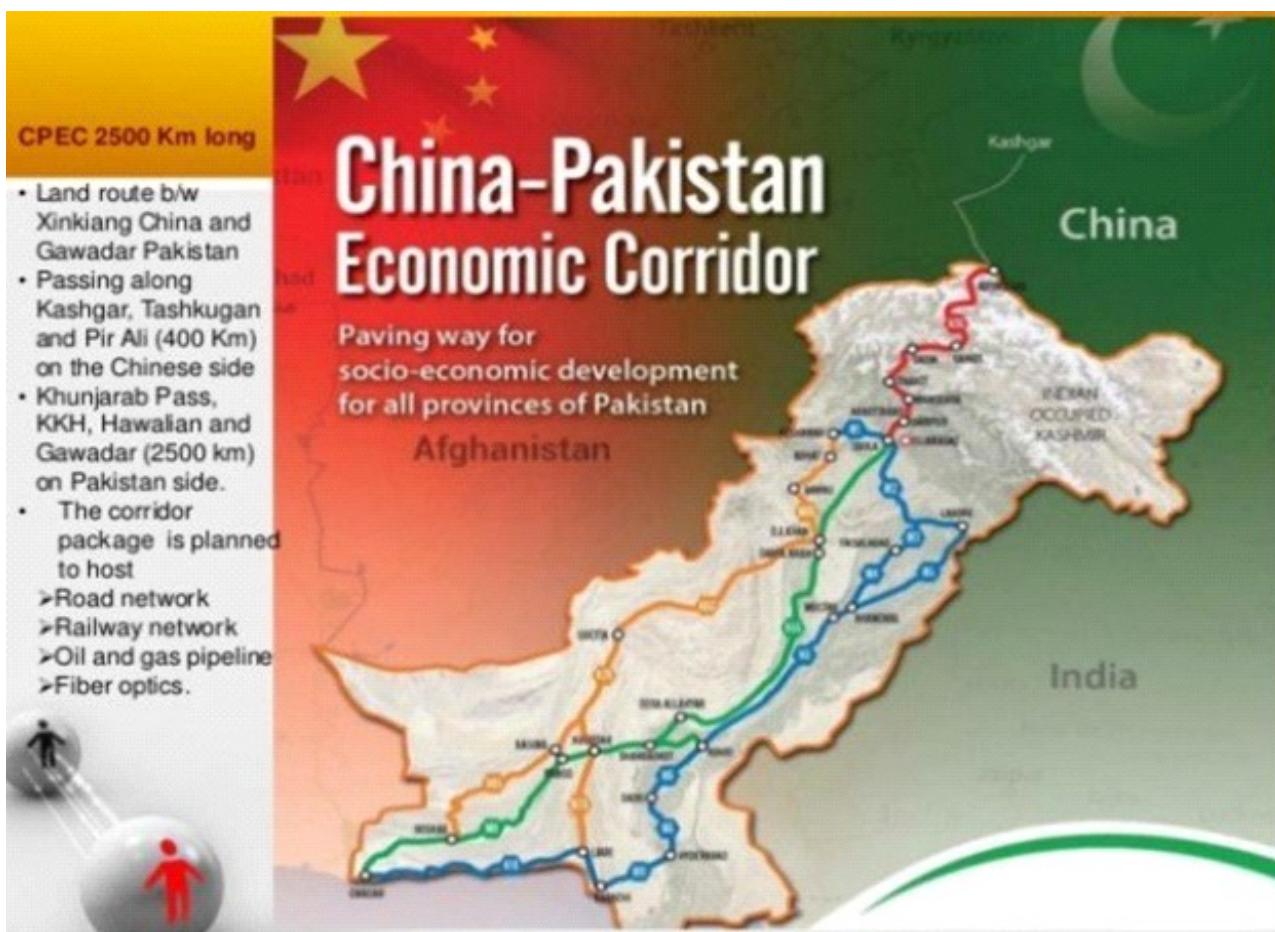
International Relations

12. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

Context:

Pakistan has invited Saudi Arabia to join the CPEC as the third “strategic partner”. Saudi participation in this mega project will ensure huge investment in Pakistan through this platform.

- Saudi Arabia has a history of bailing out Pakistan financially. In 2014, six months after Pakistan obtained its last IMF bailout, Saudi Arabia loaned it \$1.5 billion that the government used to strengthen its rupee currency.



About CPEC:

- The CPEC is the flagship project of the multi-billion dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a pet project of Chinese President Xi Jinping, aimed at enhancing Beijing's influence around the world through China-funded infrastructure projects.
- The 3,000 km-long China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) consisting of highways, railways, and pipelines is the latest irritant in the India-China relationship.
- CPEC eventually aims at linking the city of Gwadar in South Western Pakistan to China's North Western region Xinjiang through a vast network of highways and railways.

- The proposed project will be financed by heavily-subsidised loans, that will be disbursed to the Government of Pakistan by Chinese banking giants such as Exim Bank of China, China Development Bank, and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China.

But, why is India concerned?

- Many experts are not in favour of India supporting CPEC. This is so because any Indian participation would inextricably be linked to the country's legitimate claims on PoK.
- CPEC rests on a Chinese plan to secure and shorten its supply lines through Gwadar with an enhanced presence in the Indian Ocean. Hence, it is widely believed that upon CPEC's fruition, an extensive Chinese presence will undermine India's influence in the Indian Ocean.
- It is also being contended that if CPEC were to successfully transform the Pakistan economy that could be a "red rag" for India which will remain at the receiving end of a wealthier and stronger Pakistan.
- Besides, India shares a great deal of trust deficit with China and Pakistan and has a history of conflict with both. As a result, even though suggestions to re-approach the project pragmatically have been made, no advocate has overruled the principle strands of contention that continue to mar India's equations with China and Pakistan.

Way ahead:

Only by respecting the sovereignty of countries involved, can regional connectivity corridors fulfil their promise and avoid differences and discord. China is a country which is very sensitive on matters concerning its sovereignty. So it is expected that they would have some understanding of other people's sensitivity about their sovereignty. Meanwhile, India must uphold its specific reservations on the project and draft a strategy to revert suitably in case CPEC is offered formally through official channels.

13. U.S., China step up trade war, slap tit-for-tat tariffs

Context:

The trade rivalry between the U.S. and China escalated to an unprecedented level on Tuesday, with both countries announcing new tariffs on imports from each other. The new tariffs on both sides will go into effect on September 24.

Change in tariffs:

- The U.S. has announced 10% tariff on \$200 billion of imports from China, whose retaliatory tariffs between 5% and 10% will apply to \$60 billion of imports from the U.S.
- U.S. tariffs will apply to \$250 billion of Chinese goods and Chinese tariffs will apply to \$110 billion of U.S. goods.

Trading blows

The U.S. has imposed 10% tariff on goods worth \$200 bn made in China, starting September 24. A brief timeline of the tussle

Jan. 22: U.S. imposes tariffs of 30% and 20% on solar cell & washing machine imports

Mar. 9: U.S. President Donald Trump imposes tariffs of 25% and 10% on steel and aluminium imports from all nations, including China

Apr. 2: China slaps duties on \$3 bn of U.S. imports. Including fruits, nuts and wine



May 28: U.S. accuses China of theft of technology

Jul. 6: Tariffs begin on \$34 bn of Chinese imports

Jun. 21: Chinese President Xi Jinping vows to hit back

Aug. 23: Tariffs begin on \$16 bn of Chinese imports. Beijing responds with \$16 bn levy on U.S. imports

- The rate of the new tariffs will be raised to 25% by the end of 2018, the U.S. administration has said.
- Around 5,000 American items are expected to face the new measures, including aircraft, soya bean oil, smoked beef, coffee and flour, according to a provisional list released last month.

China's notion:

China will be forced to take synchronous counter-measures to safeguard our legitimate rights ... as well as the global free trade order.

Way forward:

With President Donald Trump threatening to impose tariffs on all Chinese imports and Beijing appearing ready to retaliate, the two largest economies might be hurtling towards a prolonged trade war that could impact the world economy.

14. The economics of RCEP and potential outcomes for India

Context:

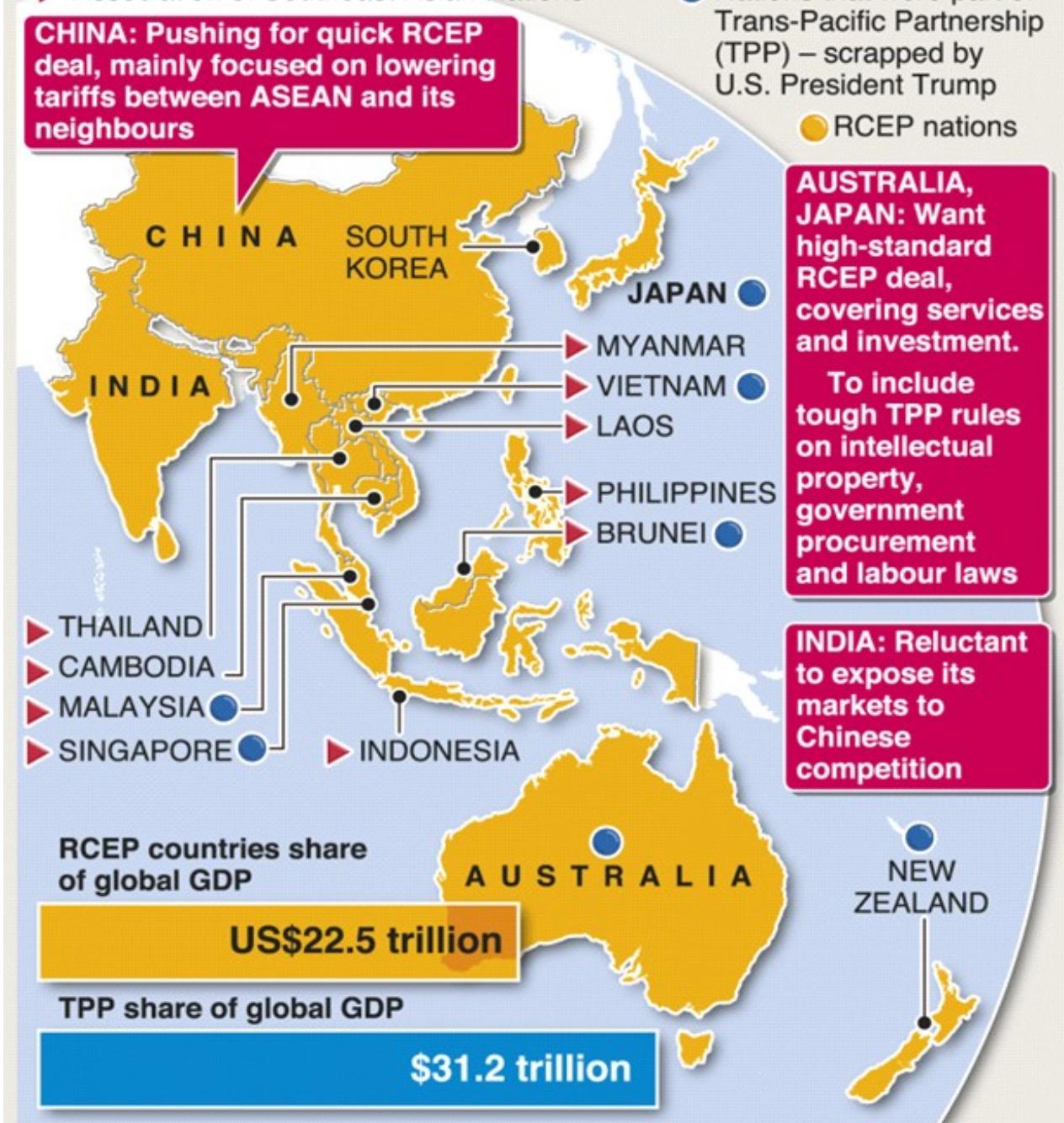
The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement is under negotiation and has remained a much-contested subject in recent times

Tug of war over Asia trade deal

China and Japan are pushing different visions of a massive Asian trade pact that excludes the U.S. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership will account for 30% of global gross domestic product

- ▶ Association of Southeast Asian Nations

CHINA: Pushing for quick RCEP deal, mainly focused on lowering tariffs between ASEAN and its neighbours



Sources: Japan Times, Financial Times, ERIA, Australia DFAT

What is RCEP?

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) and the six Asia-Pacific states with which ASEAN has existing free trade agreements (Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand).

RCEP negotiations & what's at stake for India

- The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement is under negotiation and has remained a much-contested subject in recent times
- If India is out of the RCEP, it would make its exports price uncompetitive vis-à-vis other RCEP members' exports in each RCEP market
- The ensuing export-losses contributing to foreign exchange shortages and the subsequent extent of depreciation of the rupee can only be left to imagination

India's efforts in ensuring private sector exports

- India's policymakers are trying to balance the objectives of efficiency-yielding calibrated import liberalization, without sacrificing on the domestic sensitivities
- It has to be matched with ensuring reciprocal market access for the Indian private sector's exports in the markets of RCEP

Gains for India

- There are enormous export gains that could accrue to India from RCEP under varying scenarios
- This assumes even greater importance since our focus has been on products with favourable terms of trade for India
- Thus per-unit foreign exchange realization from these products will be greater than per-unit foreign exchange expenditure on imports of similar products within intra-industry trade pattern
- Some of the sectors that have been identified as potential sources of India's export growth impulses under RCEP to the tune of approximately \$200 billion

Way Forward

- There are more compelling trade and economic reasons for RCEP to become India-led in future
- India must play its due role to get its due place in the regional economic configurations.

15. India, Bangladesh jointly inaugurate work for Agartala-Akhaura rail project

Context:

India, Bangladesh jointly inaugurates work for Agartala-Akhaura rail project. Two other projects were also inaugurated which include the power supply to Bangladesh from West Bengal and an inland waterways transport over River Feni.



Agartala-Akhaura rail project:

It is a 45-km dual gauge line between Agartala in Tripura and Akhaura, a sub-district of Chittagong in Bangladesh.

- The project is developed as a part of India's \$4.5 billion third line of credit extended to Bangladesh for its infrastructure and social sector development.
- The Agartala-Akhaura rail project will lend full connectivity from east to west of Bangladesh, apart from enabling trade relations between the two neighbors.

- Once completed, the railway link is expected to cut the distance between Agartala and Kolkata by more than 1,000 km; it will also enhance India's access to Chittagong port in Bangladesh.

16. A new Chinese threat warrants a review of NFU policy

Context:

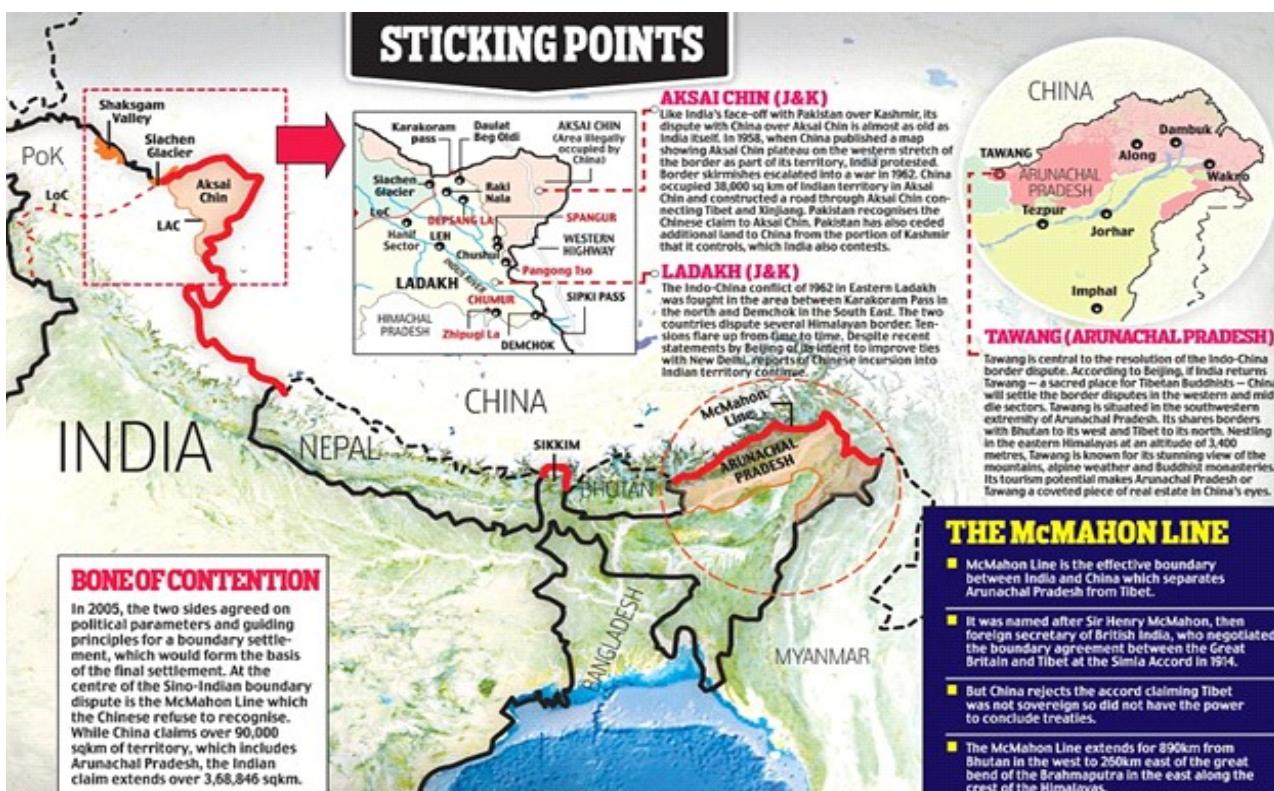
If India decides to stay with the NFU policy after any future review, it should qualify it further to deter destructive conventional attacks on its major population, industrial and commercial centres.

What had happened?

- China is developing an India-specific long-range rocket that can fly over the Himalayas from Tibet with an electromagnetic propulsion system, similar to what is used in a railgun or to launch aircraft from aircraft carriers.
- Chinese state media reported that the rocket system is being designed to hit the heartland of India.
- This is the first time that China has explicitly named India to develop a weapon system and talked about striking India's mainland.

This tells us two things,

- i. China does not think it can impose its will on India in a border conflict.
 - ii. China is considering the feasibility of waging a total war with India and not limiting itself to a border conflict that it cannot win.
- By declaring the development of an India-specific rocket, China has revealed that it now considers India a threat.



- It is trying to deter India from undertaking tactical military operations against China to stop its “salami slicing” by threatening to strike India’s industrial, commercial and population centres.
- The idea is that once the system is ready, it will be deployed in large numbers as it is relatively cheap and will give China the capability to launch saturation strikes on major north Indian cities.
- This would overwhelm India’s air defence system and cause a lot of damage. This is similar to China’s war planning against Taiwan.
- It has more than 2,000 missiles pointed at the latter to overwhelm the air defence and deliver crippling strikes that will destroy 90% of the island.
- China is sending a message to India that it is willing to wage total war to deter any Indian action on the border or in the wider Indo-Pacific region.
- It may be part of China’s psychological warfare against India, but it does have other weapon systems already deployed in Tibet to strike at India’s heartland.
- China’s major industrial, commercial and population centres are located on its east coast, about 4,000km from India. New Delhi does not have any conventional capability to strike them.
- India only has a limited number of Agni series of missiles that can strike these areas, but they are all intended for nuclear weapons delivery, not conventional warheads.
- It will be very expensive to make a large number of Agni V missiles with conventional warheads that can strike all parts of China.

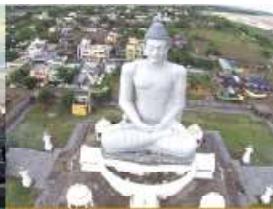
- Although India has tried to “reset” its ties with China post Doklam, satellite imagery shows that China has fortified its positions in Doklam, avoiding India’s narrow redlines, thereby blunting India’s tactical advantage in a strategic location.
- China’s overwhelming conventional firepower superiority over India will leave only the nuclear option for India.
- But India has pledged no first use (NFU) of nuclear weapons and will use them if it is attacked first with nuclear weapons.
- India’s nuclear doctrine says that if attacked with weapons of mass destruction, such as chemical and biological weapons, India will respond with nuclear weapons.

Conclusion:

A review of India’s nuclear doctrine is long overdue. There are opinions in the country against continuing with the NFU policy.

Countries around the world are developing even more potent conventional weapons that fly at hypersonic speed and can accurately strike targets within minutes.

China has an advanced hypersonic weapons programme. While India, too, has such a programme, it will be years before it matures and it won’t be a cost-effective solution, especially in response to China’s saturation strikes.

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ADMISSIONS OPEN FOR NEW BATCHES				

Economy

17. Government moves to stabilise rupee

Context:

The government has announced a plan to check “non-essential imports”, boost exports and initiated five measures to attract dollar inflows into the country to trim the widening current account deficit that is seen as a factor behind the rupee’s sharp slide against the dollar.

The five measures include:

1. Mandatory hedging conditions for infrastructure loans through the external commercial borrowing (ECB) route will be reviewed.
2. 20 percent exposure limits of foreign portfolio investors’ corporate bond portfolio to a single corporate group, company and related entities will be removed, and 50 percent of any issue of corporate bonds will be reviewed.
3. Manufacturing sector entities will be permitted to avail external commercial borrowings up to \$50 million with a minimum maturity of one year instead of the earlier period of three years.
4. Masala Bond issues done in the current financial year will be exempted from withholding tax.
5. Restrictions on Indian banks’ market making in Masala Bonds, including restrictions on underwriting of such bonds, will be removed.

Significance:

- These five concrete steps announced would help increase inflows by \$8-10 billion.
- The measures are essentially on the capital account side where the aim is to infuse more dollars into the economy through routes like ECBs, FPI, Masala Bonds etc.
- There is intent to put some curbs on imports and give a push to exports. There can be no debate that all these measures are positive for the rupee as they attack the fundamentals of demand and supply for dollars.

What necessitated this?

- The pressure on rupee and the current account may not be a short-term phenomenon. That’s because of rising interest rates in the US, high crude oil prices and its impact on emerging markets and the trade war between the US and China. Therefore, the government’s intervention was necessary.

Will it help?

- The measures announced by the government will work if the primary reason is weaker fundamentals. In case it is a global phenomenon,

then it may not really help to correct the fall though it could cause some reversal in the first two or three sessions.

- Also, it should be remembered that what the government has announced will take time to work through. There will be a review by companies on the hedging requirements for infra loans from global markets. For this to work, it will take time for companies to take such decisions.

Why Indian Rupee is Falling Against the US Dollar?

Turkish currency turmoil: The Indian currency had plunged by Rs 1.08, or 1.57 per cent, to a record low of 69.91 against the US currency amid fears that Turkish currency turmoil could turn out into global financial crisis.

- The Spike in oil prices has pulled down the rupee, by pushing up dollar demand.
- Global Trade war fears triggered by the US and China's retaliatory import tariffs have also weakened the Rupee.
- The Chinese yuan has fallen sharply in the last few sessions. This also has triggered a dollar flight from many emerging economies. The Spurt in dollar outflow has pulled down most Asian currencies, including the rupee.

18. Govt proposes to merge Dena Bank, Vijaya Bank and Bank of Baroda

Context:

The Centre has proposed the amalgamation of state-owned Bank of Baroda, Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank to create India's third largest bank as parts of reforms in the public sector banking segment.

- The proposal will now need the approval of the boards of these individual banks. The banks' boards will shortly meet and take up the decision.
- The merger of these three state-owned banks is a part of the government's agenda of consolidation of public sector banks. The consolidation was proposed by the Alternative Mechanism.
- The Union Cabinet in August 2017 approved amalgamation of Public Sector Banks through Alternative Mechanism (AM) with an aim to facilitate consolidation among the Nationalised Banks to create strong and competitive banks.

Why merger is good?

- The merger benefits include getting economies of scale and reduction in the cost of doing business.
- Technical inefficiency is one of the main factors responsible for banking crisis. The scale of inefficiency is more in case of small banks. Hence, merger would be good.

THE NEW BANK IN NUMBERS



Total business
₹14.82 trillion



Total branches
9,489



CRAR*
12.25%



Tier-1 capital
9.32%



Net NPAs

5.71%

(Dena Bank: 11.04%; BoB:
5.4% and Vijaya Bank 4.10%)

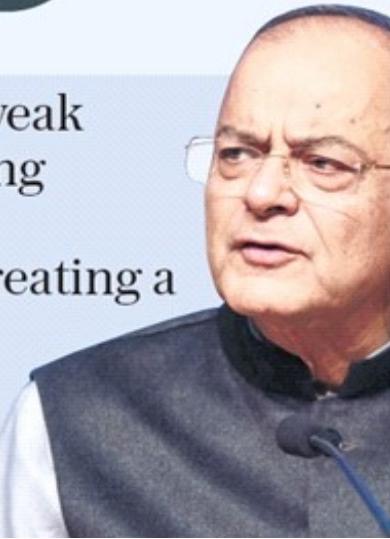


Employees
85,675

*Capital to risk assets ratio

We do not want a merger of relatively weak banks. You can have two well-performing banks absorbing a third one in the amalgamation process and hopefully creating a mega bank. The lending ability of this bank will be far higher and it will have the ability to expand its operations.

Finance minister Arun Jaitley



- Mergers help small banks to gear up to international standards with innovative products and services with the accepted level of efficiency.
- Mergers help many PSBs, which are geographically concentrated, to expand their coverage beyond their outreach.
- A better and optimum size of the organization would help PSBs offer more and more products and services and help in integrated growth of the sector.
- The size of each business entity after merger is expected to add strength to the Indian Banking System in general and Public Sector Banks in particular.
- This will also end the unhealthy and intense competition going on even among public sector banks as of now. In the global market, the Indian banks will gain greater recognition and higher rating.
- The volume of inter-bank transactions will come down, resulting in saving of considerable time in clearing and reconciliation of accounts.
- The burden on the central government to recapitalize the public sector banks again and again will come down substantially. This will also help in meeting more stringent norms under BASEL III, especially capital adequacy ratio.

- A great number of posts of CMD, ED, GM and Zonal Managers will be abolished, resulting in savings of crores of Rupee. This will also reduce unnecessary interference by board members in day to day affairs of the banks.
- After mergers, bargaining strength of bank staff will become more and visible. Bank staff may look forward to better wages and service conditions in future. The wide disparities between the staff of various banks in their service conditions and monetary benefits will narrow down.
- Customers will have access to fewer banks offering them wider range of products at a lower cost. From regulatory perspective, monitoring and control of less number of banks will be easier after mergers. This is at the macro level.

Concerns associated with merger:

- Immediate negative impact would be from pension liability provisions (due to different employee benefit structures) and harmonisation of accounting policies for bad loans recognition.
- There are many problems to adjust top leadership in institutions and the unions.
- Mergers will result in shifting/closure of many ATMs, Branches and controlling offices, as it is not prudent and economical to keep so many banks concentrated in several pockets, notably in urban and metropolitan centres.
- Mergers will result in immediate job losses on account of large number of people taking VRS on one side and slow down or stoppage of further recruitment on the other. This will worsen the unemployment situation further and may create law and order problems and social disturbances.
- The weaknesses of the small banks may get transferred to the bigger bank also. New power centres will emerge in the changed environment. Mergers will result in clash of different organizational cultures. Conflicts will arise in the area of systems and processes too.
- When a big bank books huge loss or crumbles, there will be a big jolt in the entire banking industry. Its repercussions will be felt everywhere.
- Also, India right now needs more banking competition rather than more banking consolidation. In other words, it needs more banks rather than fewer banks. This does not mean that there should be a fetish about small-scale lending operations, but to know that large banks are not necessarily better banks.

Way ahead:

- Merger is a good idea. However, this should be carried out with right banks for the right reasons. Merger is also tricky given the huge challenges banks face, including the bad loan problem that has plunged many public sector banks in an unprecedented crisis.

- Since mergers are also about people, a huge amount of planning would be required to make the consolidation process smoother. Piecemeal consolidation will not provide a lasting solution and what is required is an integrated approach from all stakeholders including the government.

19. UNDP report lauds India's strides in reducing poverty in past decade

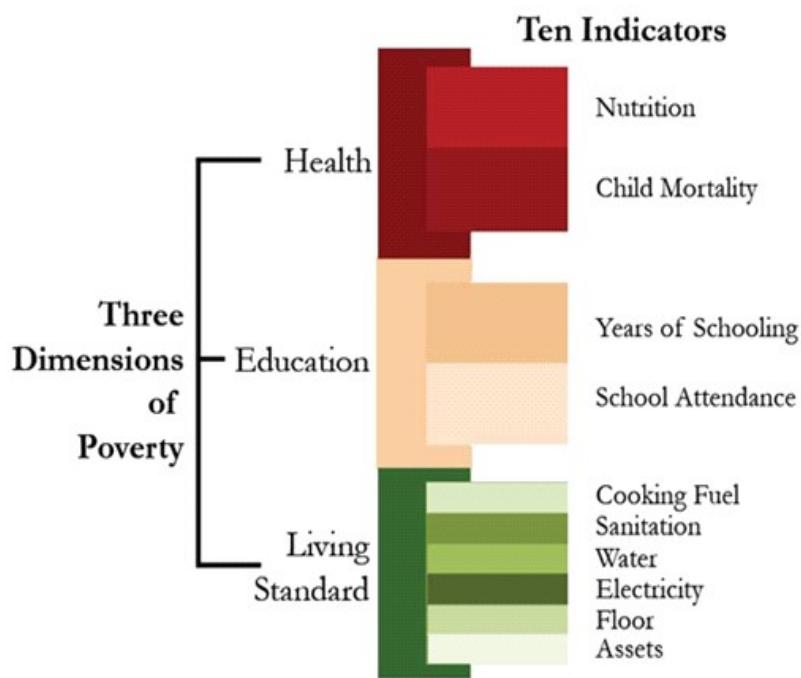
Context:

According to MPI 2018 released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, there are 271 million fewer poor people in India in this period.

Multi dimensional poverty Index:

The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) reflects the deprivations that a poor person faces simultaneously with respect to education, health and living standards. This reflects the same three dimensions of welfare as the HDI but the indicators are different in each case and are linked to the MDGs. The components of MPI are:

1. **Education** (each indicator is weighted equally at 1/6)
 - **Years of Schooling:** deprived if no household member has completed five years of schooling
 - **Child Enrolment:** deprived if any school-aged child is not attending school in years 1 to 8
2. **Health** (each indicator is weighted equally at 1/6)
 - **Child Mortality:** deprived if any child has died in the family
 - **Nutrition:** deprived if any adult or child for whom there is nutritional information is malnourished
3. **Standard of Living** (each indicator is weighted equally at 1/18)
 - **Electricity:** deprived if the household has no electricity
 - **Drinking water:** deprived if the household does not have access to clean drinking water or clean water is more than 30 minutes walk from home
 - **Sanitation:** deprived if they do not have an improved toilet or if their toilet is shared
 - **Flooring:** deprived if the household has dirt, sand or dung floor
 - **Cooking Fuel:** deprived if they cook with wood, charcoal or dung
 - **Assets:** deprived if the household does not own more than one of: radio, TV, telephone, bike, or motorbike, and do not own a car or tractor



Hence, 'poverty' is determined with regard to not only income or expenditure but also access to a number of other necessities.

- The MPI can be used to create a comprehensive picture of people living in poverty, and permits comparisons both across countries, regions and the world and within countries by ethnic group, urban/rural location, as well as other key household and community characteristics.

- These characteristic make the MPI useful as an analytical tool to identify the most vulnerable people – the poorest among the poor, revealing poverty patterns within countries and over time, enabling policy makers to target resources and design policies more effectively.

MPI-2018:

- In the decade between 2005-06 and 2015-16, India has halved its Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)—54.7 per cent to 27.5 per cent.
- The source of the 2018 report is the 2015-16 National Family Health Survey (NHFS) IV
- According to MPI 2018 released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, there are 271 million fewer poor people in India in this period.
- The report adds, "despite the massive gains made in reducing multidimensional poverty, 364 million Indians continue to experience acute deprivations in health, nutrition, schooling and sanitation."
- It notes that traditionally disadvantaged groups, in terms of castes, religions etc, continue to be the poorest though they have experienced the biggest decadal reduction in MPI.
- This, the report points out, is in keeping with global trends wherein global MPI has reduced by half mainly due to greater progress among the poorest groups.
- Of the 104 countries for which the 2018 MPI is calculated, the report has found that some 1.3 billion people live in multidimensional poverty, which is almost a quarter of the population of these countries
- About 46 per cent of this 1.3 billion are living in severe poverty and face extreme deprivation in at least half of the MPI dimensions.

- About 196 million MPI poor people in India, accounting for more than half of all multidimensionally poor in India, live in the four states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh while Delhi, Kerala and Goa have the lowest incidence of multidimensional poverty.

Way forward:

- In terms of absolute numbers, India accounts for both the highest and a staggering number of multi-dimensionally poor people.
- 528 million Indians are poor, which is more people than all the poor people living in Sub-Saharan Africa combined.
- Multidimensional poor children were “simultaneously deprived” in 58% of the indicators.

The findings are “deeply disturbing”, this is a wake-up call to the international community which has adopted the global Sustainable Development Goals and takes seriously Goal 1, the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions

20. Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering

Context:

Almost three months after Pakistan was placed on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list for failing to curb terror funding, Pakistan’s recent action against terror financing, particularly on the “legal” front, was found to be “unsatisfactory”, according to a review by the Asia Pacific Policy Group (APPG).

Reasons for the poor performance:

- Not much has been achieved by Pakistan, especially on the legal side (like freezing of assets, attachment of funds, militant groups infrastructures etc).

What next?

- Another review for Pakistan will be held in December this year following which a final evaluation report will be prepared. For Pakistan, the first deadline is January 2019 failing which they may face more heat. By then, Pakistan will have to publish updated lists of persons and entities proscribed under the Anti-Terrorism Act and the UN-designated entities.

About APG:

- It is the FATF-style regional body for the Asia-Pacific region. It is an inter-governmental organisation founded in 1997 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Composition:

- The APG consists of 41 member jurisdictions and a number of observer jurisdictions and international/regional observer organisations.

- Under the APG's Terms of Reference (updated 2012) membership is available for jurisdictions with a presence in the Asia-Pacific region who commit to the policy objectives of the organisation including undergoing a mutual evaluation (peer review) to determine the level of compliance of the member with the international standards against money laundering and terrorist financing.
- Observer status is available to any jurisdiction in the Asia-Pacific region interested in becoming a member or any other jurisdiction which supports the goals and work of the APG.
- International organisations which support the work of the APG may also join as supporting observers.

Role of members:

- Jurisdictions that join the APG, either as members or as observers, must commit to implement the international standards against money laundering, the financing of terrorism and proliferation financing (WMD), in particular the Recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). These standards were substantially updated in 2012 and are supplemented by a complex assessment methodology in 2013 which forms the benchmark for mutual evaluations.

The APG has five primary functions:

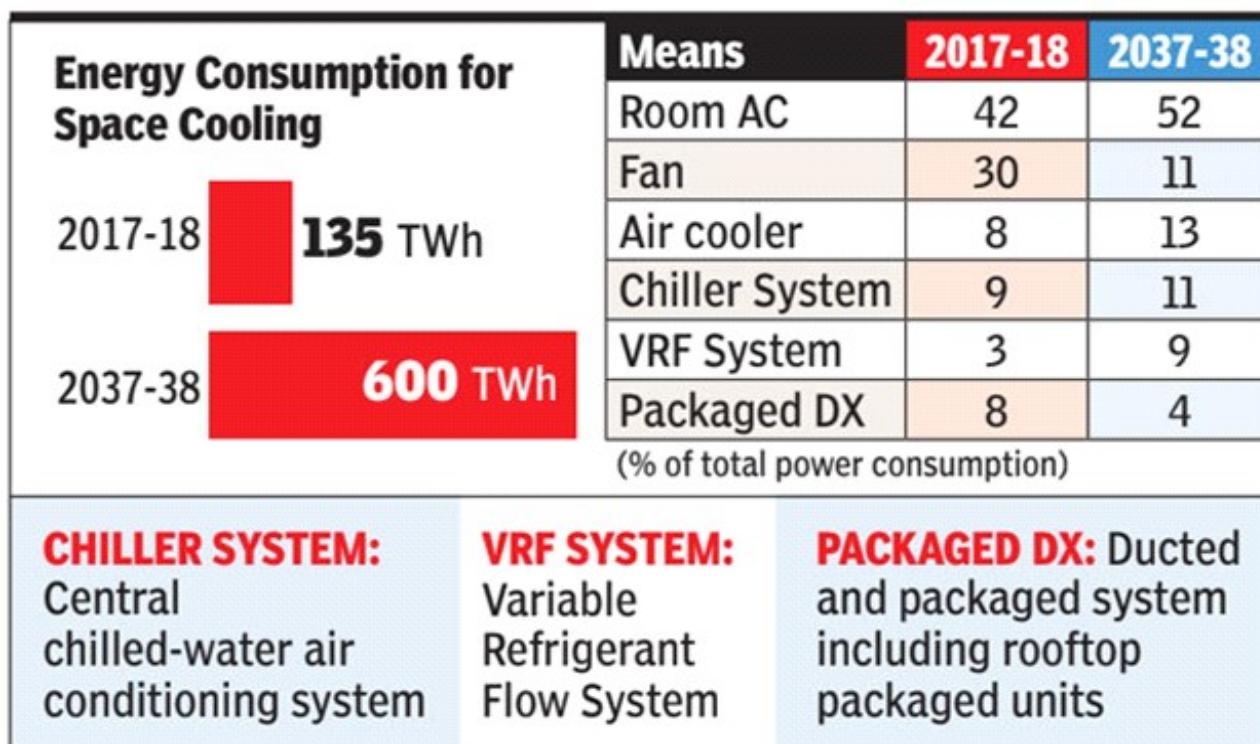
- **Mutual evaluations:** The APG assesses the levels of compliance by its member jurisdictions with the global AML/CFT standards through a mutual evaluation (peer review) programme;
- **Technical assistance and training:** The APG Secretariat coordinates bi-lateral and donor-agency technical assistance and training in the Asia/Pacific region for its member jurisdictions in order to improve compliance with the global standards;
- **Typologies research:** Research and analysis into money laundering and terrorist financing methods and trends is a key function of the APG to assist policy and law makers as well as law enforcement agencies and the general public to identify and respond to new and emerging trends, methods, risks and vulnerabilities;
- **Global engagement:** The APG contributes to international AML/CFT policy development and actively engages with the global network of FSRBs. The APG also participates in a number of FATF working groups and in its plenary meetings; and
- **Private sector engagement:** Private sector engagement is critical to the APG's overall objectives. The APG actively engages with financial and non-financial institutions, NPOs, training centres and universities in the Asia-Pacific to better inform the general public and specialists about global issues relating to money laundering, terrorist financing and proliferation financing.

Geography and Environment

21. India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP)

Context:

MoEFCC has released the draft India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP). ICAP has been prepared by the ministry after extensive deliberations and multi-stakeholders engagement in public domain for receiving comments.



Significance:

India is the first country in world to develop such a document (ICAP), which addresses cooling requirement across sectors and lists out actions which can help reduce the cooling demand.

The overarching goal is to provide sustainable cooling and thermal comfort for all while securing environmental and socio-economic benefits for the society.

The goals emerging from the suggested interventions stated in ICAP are:

- Reduction of cooling demand across sectors by 20% to 25 % by year 2037-38.
- Reduction of refrigerant demand by 25% to 30% by year 2037-38.
- Reduction of cooling energy requirements by 25% to 40% by year 2037-38.
- Training and certification of 100,000 servicing sector technicians by the year 2022-23, in synergy with Skill India Mission.

The broad objectives of the India Cooling Action Plan include:

- Assessment of cooling requirements across sectors in next 20 years and the associated refrigerant demand and energy use.
- Map the technologies available to cater the cooling requirement including passive interventions, refrigerant-based technologies and alternative technologies such as not-in-kind technologies.
- Suggest interventions in each sector to provide for sustainable cooling and thermal comfort for all.
- Focus on skilling of RAC service technicians.
- Develop an R&D innovation ecosystem for indigenous development of alternative technologies.

22. Policy on ‘jhum’ cultivation

Context:

A recent NITI Aayog report has recommended that the Ministry of Agriculture should take up a “mission on jhum cultivation” to ensure inter-ministerial convergence.

Need of the hour:

- Various authorities often have divergent approaches towards shifting cultivation. This creates confusion among grass-roots level workers and jhum farmers said the report.
- Therefore, shifting cultivation fallows must be legally perceived and categorised as ‘regenerating fallows’ and credit facilities must be extended to those who practise shifting cultivation.
- Land for shifting cultivation should be recognised as “agricultural land” where farmers practise agro-forestry for the production of food rather than as forestland.

What is Jhum cultivation?

- Jhum cultivation, also known as the slash and burn agriculture, is the process of growing crops by first clearing the land of trees and vegetation and burning them thereafter. The burnt soil contains potash which increases the nutrient content of the soil.
- This practice is considered as an important mainstay of food production for a considerable population in North-East India.

Issues with Jhum Cultivation:

- The report notes that between 2000 and 2010, the land under shifting cultivation dropped by 70 %. People are returning to fallow land left after shifting in a shorter span.
- Earlier the cultivators returned to fallows after 10-12 years, now they are returning in three to five years which has impacted on the quality of the soil.

23. Chiller Star Labelling Program

Context:

Ministry of Power, Government of India launched Chiller Star Labelling Program, an ambitious program to encourage the deployment of Energy Efficient chiller systems in the country.

Highlights:

- The Chiller Star Labelling Program has been formulated by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE).
- The program envisages providing star rating in terms of its energy performance. Initially, the program is launched on voluntary basis and will be valid upto 31st December 2020.
- This initiative will promote advancement technology for central HVAC (Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) systems and will also facilitate energy efficient solutions for the large commercial and industrial applications.

What are Chillers?

- Chillers are used extensively for space conditioning of buildings and for industrial process cooling applications. The size of Indian chiller market which stood at 1 Million Tonne per year at 2017, is projected to grow at a CAGR of 3.6% fuelled by a growth in the retail, hospitality and infrastructure projects.
- Chillers, being energy intensive system, contribute more than 40% of the total energy consumption in commercial buildings. Therefore, it is important to optimize energy performance of chillers and create awareness amongst the end users to adopt transition towards energy efficient chillers.

24. Nahargarh Biological Park

Context:

Rajasthan's first lion safari has been inaugurated at Nahargarh Biological Park.

- The park is located on Delhi-Jaipur National Highway in the Aravalli foothills, nearly 12 kilometers from state capital Jaipur.
- Lions in this park were brought from Junagarh, Gujarat under an exchange programme.
- The park will serve for breeding lions and also centre of attraction for tourists. It will provide new habitat to lions and also add tourism venue to the Pink City.

25. Swachhata Hi Seva movement

Context:

'Swachhata Hi Seva' movement has been launched across the country on September 15, 2018.

Aim: Over the next two weeks leading to October 2 – Gandhi Jayanti – the Swachhata Hi Seva movement aims to ensure a high standard of cleanliness across the country, which was Mahatma Gandhi's dream for the nation.

Significance of the campaign:

- The campaign for a Swachh Bharat or clean India, which began four years ago, was made into a nation-wide movement today.
- October 2, 2018 will mark the beginning of the 150th year of Mahatma Gandhi's birth, and the government plans to realise his dream of a clean India.

About the campaign:

- The campaign is being coordinated by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, the convening Ministry for the Swachh Bharat Mission.
- The objective of the campaign is to mobilise people and reinforce the "Jan Aandolan" for sanitation to contribute to Mahatma Gandhi's dream of a Clean India.
- It will see large scale mobilisation of people from all walks of life to undertake shramdaan for cleanliness and construction of toilets and to make their environments free from open defecation. There will be targeted cleaning of public and tourist places.
- Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation has made elaborate plans along with the State Governments to involve people from various walks of life and make this an unprecedented people's campaign.
- Reaching out to the poor and marginalised and providing them with sustainable sanitation services would be the hallmark of this campaign.

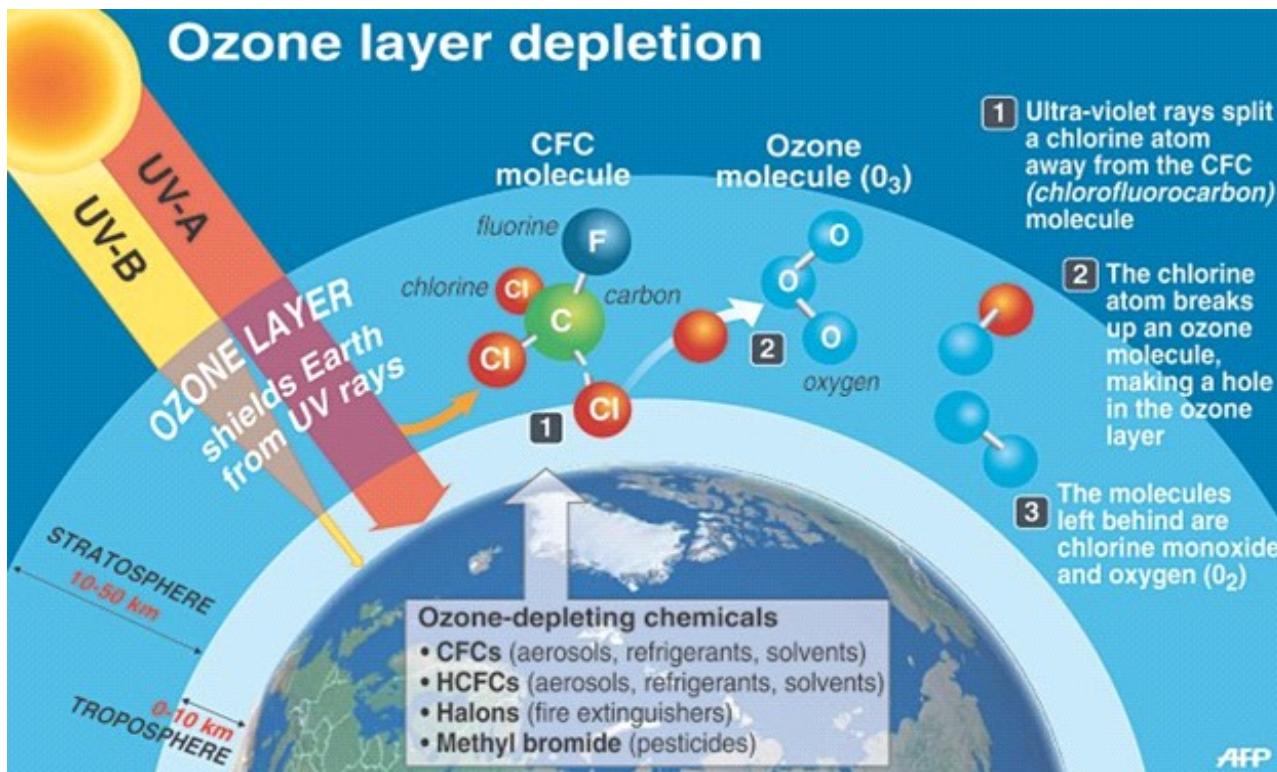
Background:

- Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is a campaign which was launched on 2 October 2014, and aims to eradicate open defecation by 2019, and is a national campaign, covering 4,041 statutory cities and towns.
- Its predecessors were the "Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan" and before that the "Total Sanitation Campaign". The mission was divided into two parts — urban and rural.

26. International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer

Context:

The International Day for Preservation of Ozone Layer (or World Ozone Day) is observed every year on September 16 for the preservation of the Ozone Layer.



2018 Theme: 'Keep Cool and Carry On: The Montreal Protocol'.

Significance of the day:

In 1994, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 16 September the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, commemorating the date of the signing, in 1987, of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

About Ozone layer:

The ozone layer absorbs most of the Sun's ultraviolet light which is harmful to human life and other life forms. The layer absorbs about 97 to 99% of ultraviolet rays and maintain the ozone-oxygen cycle. Dobson unit is a unit which is used to measure the ozone in the atmosphere at a standard temperature and pressure.

Montreal protocol:

The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer was designed to reduce the production and consumption of ozone depleting substances in order to reduce their abundance in the atmosphere, and thereby protect the earth's fragile ozone Layer. The original Montreal Protocol was agreed on 16 September 1987 and entered into force on 1 January 1989.

The Montreal Protocol includes a unique adjustment provision that enables the Parties to the Protocol to respond quickly to new scientific information and agree to accelerate the reductions required on chemicals already covered by the Protocol. These adjustments are then automatically applicable to all countries that ratified the Protocol.

Montreal Protocol stipulates that the production and consumption of compounds that deplete ozone in the stratosphere-chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons, carbon tetrachloride, and methyl chloroform—are to be phased out by 2000 (2005 for methyl chloroform). These compounds significantly deplete the stratospheric ozone layer that shields the planet from damaging UV-B radiation.

Background:

The phaseout of controlled uses of ozone depleting substances and the related reductions have not only helped protect the ozone layer for this and future generations, but have also contributed significantly to global efforts to address climate change; furthermore, it has protected human health and ecosystems by limiting the harmful ultraviolet radiation from reaching the earth.

27. CPCB report on river pollution

Context:

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has released a report on the extent of pollution in rivers in India.

Background:

- Based on the recommendations of the National Green Tribunal, the CPCB last month apprised the States of the extent of pollution in their rivers.

Key findings:

- **Increase in numbers:** The number of polluted stretches of the country's rivers has increased to 351 from 302 two years ago, and the number of critically polluted stretches — where water quality indicators are the poorest — has gone up to 45 from 34.
- Several of the river's stretches — in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh — are actually far less polluted than many rivers in Maharashtra, Assam and Gujarat. These three States account for 117 of the 351 polluted river stretches.
- The most significant stretches of pollution highlighted by the CPCB assessment include the Mithi river — from Powai to Dharavi — with a BOD (Biochemical Oxygen Demand) of 250 mg/l; the Godavari — from Someshwar to Rahed — with a BOD of 5.0-80 mg/l; the Sabarmati — Kheroj to Vautha — with a BOD of 4.0-147 mg/l; and the Hindon — Saharanpur to Ghaziabad — with a BOD of 48-120 mg/l.

Background:

- The CPCB, since the 1990s, has a programme to monitor the quality of rivers primarily by measuring BOD, which is a proxy for organic pollution — the higher it is, the worse the river.
- The health of a river and the efficacy of water treatment measures by the States and municipal bodies are classified depending on BOD, with a BOD greater than or equal to 30 mg/l termed ‘priority 1,’ while that between 3.1-6 mg/l is ‘priority 5.’
- The CPCB considers a BOD less than 3 mg/l an indicator of a healthy river.

Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB):

Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), statutory organisation, was constituted in September, 1974 under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974. Further, CPCB was entrusted with the powers and functions under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.

Functions:

- To promote cleanliness of streams and wells in different areas of the States by prevention, control and abatement of water pollution.
- To improve the quality of air and to prevent, control or abate air pollution in the country.

Biochemical oxygen demand (BOD):

- Biochemical oxygen demand is the amount of oxygen required for microbial metabolism of organic compounds in water.
- BOD value is most commonly expressed in milligrams of oxygen consumed per litre of sample during 5 days of incubation at 20 °C.
- BOD can be used as a gauge of the effectiveness of wastewater treatment plants.

28. World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

Context:

7th UNWTO Global Summit on Urban Tourism is being held in Seoul, capital of South Korea.

- **Theme:** ‘A 2030 Vision for Urban Tourism’.
- **Organized by:** World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and Seoul Metropolitan Government and supported by Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of South Korea and Seoul Tourism Organization.
- **Significance:** The summit provides unique platform to discuss key issues shaping future of urban tourism in the context of the 2030 Urban Agenda. It brings together high-level representatives from National Tourism Administrations, city authorities and related

stakeholders, serving as platform to exchange experiences and expertise.

About UNWTO:

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.

Members:

- UNWTO's membership includes 158 countries, 6 Associate Members and over 500 Affiliate Members representing the private sector, educational institutions, tourism associations and local tourism authorities.
- As the leading international organization in the field of tourism, UNWTO promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability and offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide.
- UNWTO encourages the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, to maximize tourism's socio-economic contribution while minimizing its possible negative impacts, and is committed to promoting tourism as an instrument in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), geared towards reducing poverty and fostering sustainable development worldwide.
- UNWTO generates market knowledge, promotes competitive and sustainable tourism policies and instruments, fosters tourism education and training, and works to make tourism an effective tool for development through technical assistance projects in over 100 countries around the world.

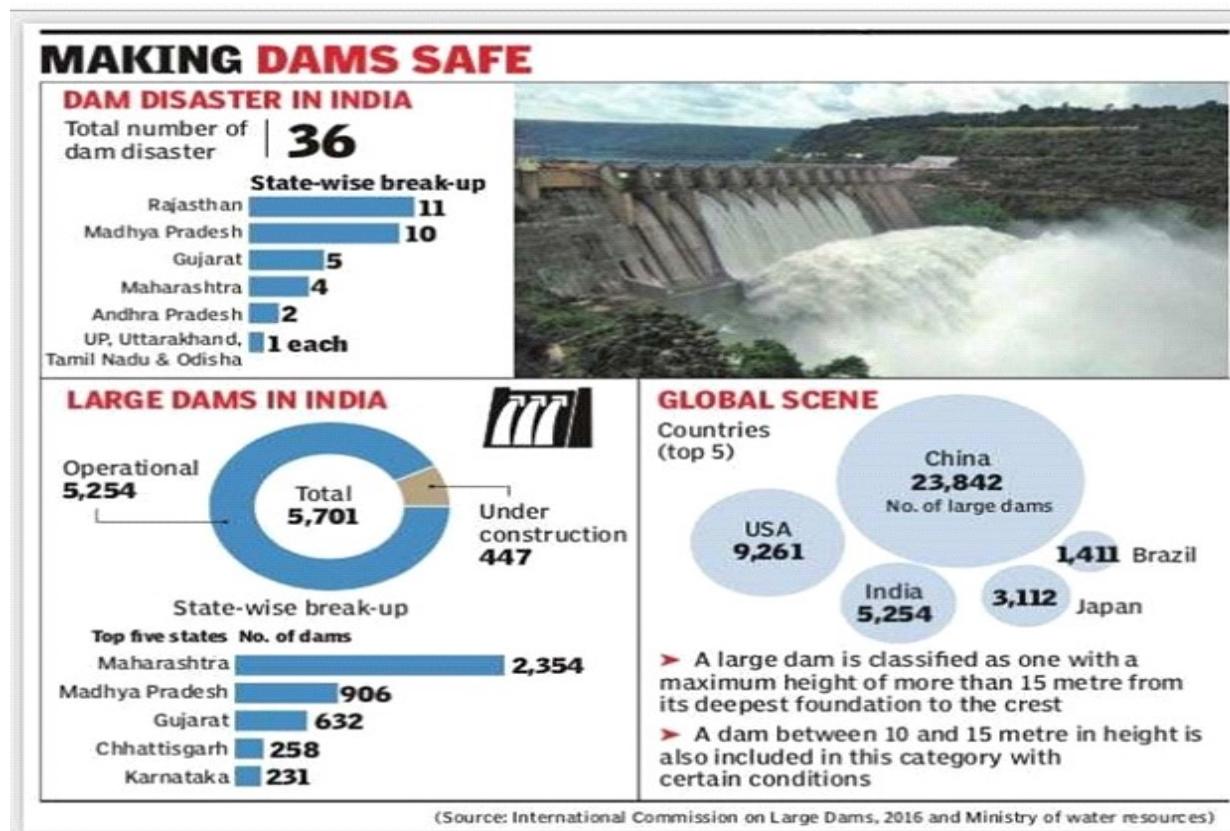
29. Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP)

Context:

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the Revised Cost Estimate of Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP) at the revised cost of Rs 3466 crore with the financial assistance of the World Bank to improve safety and operational performance of 198 Dams.

About DRIP:

- The Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR), Government of India, with assistance from the World Bank, is implementing the DAM REHABILITATION AND IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (DRIP), which would be a six-year project.
- The Central Dam Safety Organisation of Central Water Commission, assisted by a Consulting firm, is coordinating and supervising the Project implementation.



- **Goals:** The project originally envisaged the rehabilitation and improvement of about 223 dams within four states namely, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Tamil Nadu and later Karnataka, Uttarakhand (UNVNL) and Jharkhand (DVC) joined DRIP and total number of dams covered under DRIP increased to 250. The project will also promote new technologies and improve Institutional capacities for dam safety evaluation and implementation at the Central and State levels and in some identified premier academic and research institutes of the country.
- **The project development objectives of DRIP are:** (i) to improve the safety and performance of selected existing dams and associated appurtenances in a sustainable manner, and (ii) to strengthen the dam safety institutional setup in participating states as well as at central level.

Significance of the project:

- The project will improve the safety and operational performance of selected existing dams and mitigate risks to ensure safety of downstream population and property.
- The primary beneficiaries are both urban and rural communities dependent on reservoir and downstream communities, who are prone to risk associated with dam failure or operational failure.
- Through institutional strengthening component, effectiveness of Dam Safety Organisations will be increased to take the lead to make dams safe from structural and operational point of view through capacity building of staff and officials.

Science & Technology

30. India's first indigenous anti-nuclear medical kit

Context:

In a major shot in the arm for paramilitary and police forces, scientists at Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS) claim to have developed India's first indigenous medical kit that may ensure protection from serious injuries and faster healing of wounds resulting from nuclear warfare or radioactive leakage.

- The kit has been developed for the armed, paramilitary and police forces only as they are the first ones likely to get exposed to radiation — be it during nuclear, chemical and biomedical (NCB) warfare or a rescue operation after a nuclear accident.

About the kit and its components:

- The kit has over 25 items, including radio-protectors that provide 80-90% protection against radiation and nerve gas agents, bandages that absorb radiation as well as tablets and ointments.
- Developed in India for the first time, it's a potent alternative to similar kits that were till now being procured from strategically advanced nations such as the US and Russia at much higher prices.

The contents:

- The contents include an advanced form of Prussian blue tablets, highly effective in incorporating Radio Cesium (Cs-137) and Radio Thallium, among the most feared radioisotopes in nuclear bombs that destroy human body cells.
- The kit also has an Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA) injection that traps uranium in the guts and blood of victims during a nuclear accident or warfare. When EDTA is injected into the veins, it "grabs" heavy metals and minerals and removes them from the body.
- The kit also has Ca-EDTA Respiratory Fluid, which is the inhalation formula for chelation, or grabbing, of heavy metals and radioactive elements deposited in lungs through inhalation at nuclear accident sites.
- The kit also has a radioactive urine/biofluid collector which is cost-effective, easy to store and can safely dispose of the urine of a person affected by radiation. The collector has silk at its base, more than enough to jellify 500 millilitre of urine, which could be disposed of safely.
- The kit has anti-gamma ray skin ointment that protects and heals the radiation damage on the skin.
- Also part of the kit is the amifostine injection, a US Food and Drug

Administration (FDA) approved conventional radiopharmaceutical that limits damage from gamma radiation.

- Another medicine in the form of a tablet is Indranil 150 mg. It is being introduced as a reserve emergency drug for services, rescue workers and places where high acute exposures are expected and lives will be at stake.

Significance of the kit:

- During radioactive accidents thousands of patients may be rushed to hospitals. In several cases, if not most, they will also have traumatic, orthopaedic, surgical injuries or burns.
- The blood of such patients will have radioactive elements and will require wound dressing with significantly higher absorption capacity so that nothing leaks and infects others. Such highly absorptive dressings and gauze also make it safer for the medical staff to handle radioactive patients as the chance of their own contamination is reduced.
- The kit is a potential alternative to those being procured from nations such as the US and Russia at much higher prices. Such medicines will help everyone and not just soldiers. This will also help the victims affected in terrorist attacks.

31. ICESat

Context:

NASA is preparing to launch its \$1 billion (about Rs. 7,210 crores) ICESat-2 mission, using advanced lasers to uncover the true depth of the melting of Earth's ice sheets. The satellite mission, called ICESat-2, should provide more precise information on how these frozen surfaces are being affected by global warming.

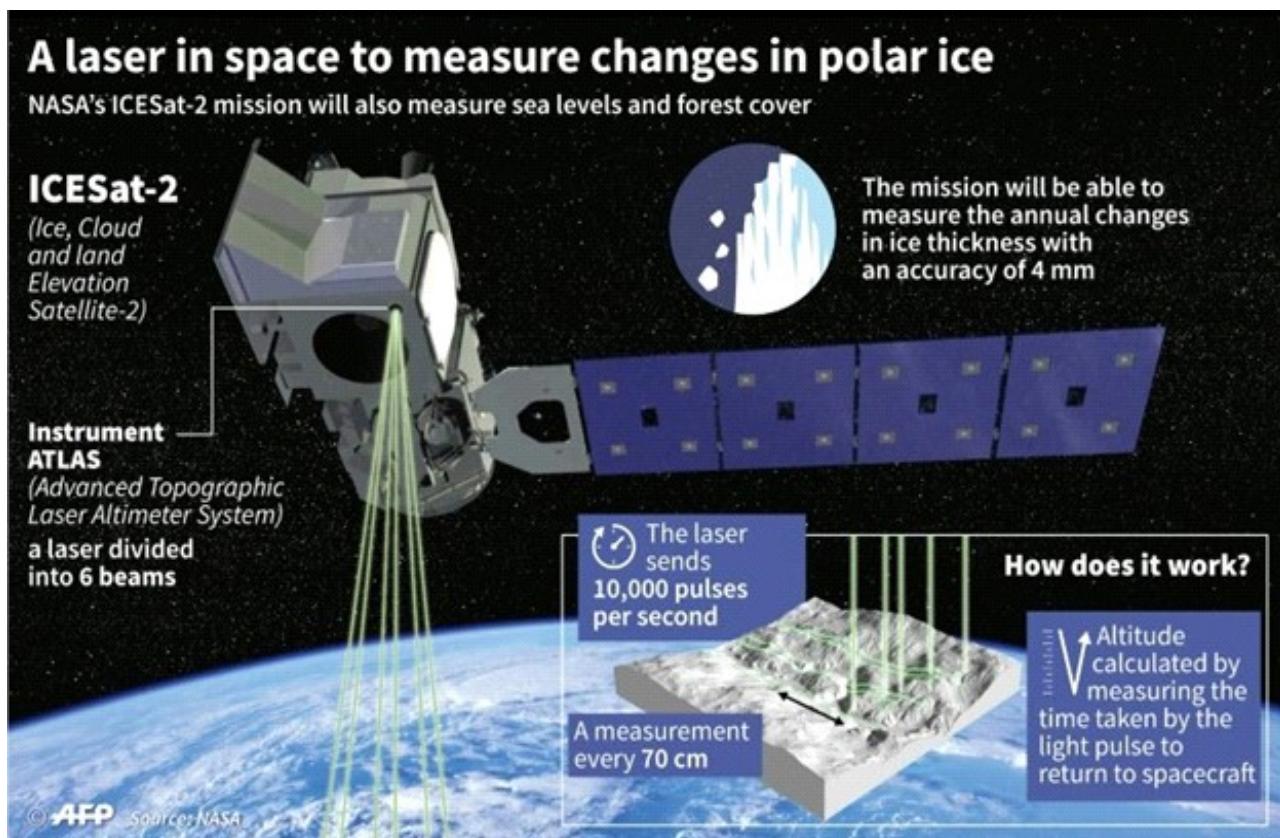
- As the name suggests, ICESat-2 is a follow-on project. The original spacecraft flew in the 2000s and pioneered the laser measurement of the height of polar glaciers and sea-ice from space. But the mission was plagued by technical problems that limited its observations to just a couple of months in every year.

About ICESat- 2 mission:

- ICESat-2 will measure the average annual elevation change of land ice covering Greenland and Antarctica to within the width of a pencil, capturing 60,000 measurements every second.
- ICESat-2's Advanced Topographic Laser Altimeter System (ATLAS) measures height by timing how long it takes individual light photons to travel from the spacecraft to Earth and back.

The satellite mission has four science objectives:

- Measure melting ice sheets and investigate how this effects sea level rise.



- Measure and investigate changes in the mass of ice sheets and glaciers.
- Estimate and study sea ice thickness.
- Measure the height of vegetation in forests and other ecosystems worldwide.

How it works?

- ATLAS will fire 10,000 times each second, sending hundreds of trillions of photons to the ground in six beams of green light. With so many photons returning from multiple beams, ICESat-2 will get a much more detailed view of the ice surface than its predecessor.
- As it circles Earth from pole to pole, ICESat-2 will measure ice heights along the same path in the polar regions four times a year, providing seasonal and annual monitoring of ice elevation changes. Beyond the poles, ICESat-2 will also measure the height of ocean and land surfaces, including forests.

Significance of the mission:

- ICESat-2 will improve upon NASA's 15-year record of monitoring the change in polar ice heights. It started in 2003 with the first ICESat mission and continued in 2009 with NASA's Operation IceBridge, an airborne research campaign that kept track of the accelerating rate of change.
- The new observational technologies of ICESat-2 will advance the knowledge of how the ice sheets of Greenland and Antarctica contribute to sea level rise.

Why is this mission important?

- Antarctica and Greenland lose billions of tonnes of ice every year – the result largely of warm water being able to melt land glaciers where they meet the ocean. This wastage is slowly but surely pushing up sea-levels worldwide.
- In the Arctic, the seasonal floes have also been in retreat. Sea-ice in the far north is thought to have lost two-thirds of its volume since the 1980s. And although this has no direct impact on the height of the oceans, the reduced ice-cover is working to amplify temperature rises in the region.

32. 'Sputum sample transportation' Project

Context:

A pilot project for utilizing services of Department of Post for transport of sputum specimen for TB Diagnosis was launched by the Health Ministry.

- Sputum is a thick fluid that is produced in the lungs and the airways leading to the lungs. A sample of sputum is usually collected by the person coughing.

TB Sputum Test:

- The sputum test is often the first TB test to be used in countries with a high rate of TB infection.
- Sputum microscopy is inexpensive and simple, and people can be trained to do it relatively quickly and easily.

Need for and significance of postal transportation of Sputum:

- Most of the patients are not diagnosed because the specimen does not reach the laboratory due to non-availability of specimen transport mechanisms.
- Transport of collected specimen also spares the patient's from travelling to the reference laboratory. Prompt transport of specimen followed by efficacious testing will enable appropriate management of the TB patients and reduced disease transmission.

33. EyeROV TUNA

Context:

India's first underwater robotic drone EyeROV TUNA was recently handed over to Naval Physical and Oceanographic Laboratory (NPOL) of Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO).

- It has been designed and developed indigenously by Kochi-based start-up IROV Technologies Pvt Ltd (EyeROV).
- It is smart micro-ROV (Remotely Operated Vehicle) or underwater drone. This underwater drone will be used by NPOL for research and

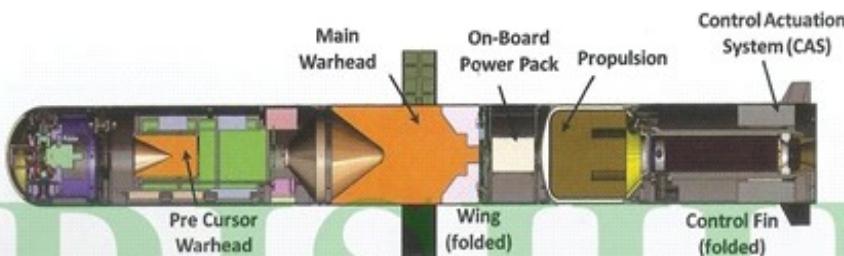
development activities which in turn would result in commercial product for defence purposes.

- It is designed to perform visual inspection and surveys of submerged structures up to depth of 100 metres.
- It is also equipped to perform variety of functions, including inspection of ship hulls, undersea cables or bridge moorings, fish farms, dams, port structure and bridge foundations and also in various underwater research operations. Its commercial use will eliminate need for costlier and riskier manual inspection by divers.

34. Man Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MPATGM)

MPATGM (MAN-PORTABLE ANTI-TANK GUIDED MISSILE)

Man Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MPATGM) is a 'Fire & Forget', 3rd Generation Anti-Tank missile with 'Top' attack and 'Direct' attack capabilities. It is intended for use by the Infantry Battalions against armoured vehicles and is perceived as a replacement for 2nd Generation MILAN & KONKURS ATGMs.



Brief Specifications:

Missile:

- Weight: 14.5 kg
- Length: 1.3 m
- Diameter: 120 mm
- Operational Range: 200 m to 2.5 km
- Lock-On-Before-Launch (LOBL) Guidance with a passive homing IIR Seeker
- High SSKP (Single Shot Kill Probability)
- 'Soft' Launch Propulsion system for Gunner safety

Launcher System:

- Command Launch Unit (CLU) consisting of Target Acquisition System (TAS) & Command Control Unit (CCU)
- Weight: 14.25 kg

Future Activities:

- Ballistic Flight tests to prove 'Soft' Launch Propulsion, followed by Control Flight tests by the end of 2016.

Other Projects Undertaken

QRSAM, NGARM, SFDR, SLCM and XRSAM.

Context:

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) recently conducted first successful trials of indigenously developed third generation Man Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MPATGM).

About MPATGM:

- The MPATGM is a third-generation anti-tank guided missile (ATGM), which has been under development by DRDO in partnership with Indian defense contractor VEM Technologies Ltd. since 2015.

- Fitted with a high-explosive anti-tank (HEAT) warhead, the MPATGM reportedly boasts a top attack capability and has a maximum engagement range of about 2.5 kilometers.
- The Indian Army needs over 40,000 missiles for its infantry and mechanized units. While it has rejected the US-built Javelin system, a formal decision on the procurement on the Israeli SPIKE system is awaited.

35. ISRO launches two U.K. satellites

Context:

ISRO's PSLV-C42 lifted off for the launch of two satellites from the United Kingdom – NovaSAR and S1-4 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre. The two satellites, owned by Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd (SSTL) were placed in a circular orbit around the poles, 583 km from Earth.

- The commercial arm of ISRO, Antrix Corporation earned more than ¹ 220 crore on this launch.
- This would be the 44th flight of the PSLV and the third launch by ISRO this year. The PSLV-C-42 is the lightest version of the PSLV flying in its core-alone version without the six strap-on motors.
- The NovaSAR is a technology demonstration mission designed to test the capabilities of a new low cost S-band SAR platform. It will be used for ship detection and maritime monitoring and also flood monitoring, besides agricultural and forestry applications.
- The S1-4 is a high-resolution Optical Earth Observation Satellite, used for surveying resources, environment monitoring, urban management and for disaster monitoring.

36. 'Smart fence' pilot project

Context:

India's first 'smart fence' pilot project has been launched along the India-Pakistan International Border in Ploura, Jammu and Kashmir.

Key facts:

- The pilot project involves deploying of laser-activated fences and technology-enabled barriers to plug vulnerable gaps along the frontiers.
- The smart fencing uses a number of devices for surveillance, communication and data storage.
- The innovative system provides for round-the-clock surveillance on the border, even in different weather conditions be it dust storm, fog or rain.
- It also reportedly comprises automated surveillance technology and alarm detection systems.

Significance:

- The smart fence pilot project is expected to be a massive boon for monitoring security situations in border areas. It is a technological solution devised to make the security system at the borders more strong and effective. The system will virtually make it impossible for terrorists to infiltrate into the Indian side of the border.

37. Maharashtra to set up cyber varsity

Context:

The Maharashtra Government has taken the first step towards setting up a varsity dedicated to mitigating cyber threats. It has set aside ₹ 80 crore for the first round of its funding and the proposal for the project will be tabled in the State cabinet's consideration in the first week of October.

Role and functions:

- The new Cyber University will train 3,000 professionals to fight online space cyber attacks, internet crimes, and conduct cyber forensics. It will also impart training in 15 other Internet of Things (IoT) areas such as Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- The varsity will provide for and prepare internet professionals on the lines of the Microsoft Certified Professional Program. The courses will cost less than Rs. 5 lakh for courses in data analytics, cloud computing, blockchain, AI, cyber forensics and cyber investigations.

38. International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

Context:

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has announced that it will establish its South Asia Area Office and Technology Innovation Centre at New Delhi.

About International Telecommunication Union (ITU):

- The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is an agency of the United Nations (UN) whose purpose is to coordinate telecommunication operations and services throughout the world. Originally founded in 1865, as the International Telegraph Union, the ITU is the oldest existing international organization. ITU headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland.

The ITU consists of three sectors:

- Radiocommunication (ITU-R) — ensures optimal, fair and rational use of the radio frequency (RF) spectrum.
- Telecommunication Standardization (ITU-T) — formulates recommendations for standardizing telecommunication operations worldwide.

- Telecommunication Development (ITU-D) — assists countries in developing and maintaining internal communication operations.

Membership:

- There are 193 Member States of the ITU, including all UN member states except the Republic of Palau, plus the Vatican City.
- Membership of ITU is open to only UN members, which may join the Union as Member States, as well as to private organizations like carriers, equipment manufacturers, funding bodies, research and development organizations and international and regional telecommunication organizations, which may join ITU as non-voting Sector Members.

Functions:

- The ITU sets and publishes regulations and standards relevant to electronic communication and broadcasting technologies of all kinds including radio, television, satellite, telephone and the Internet.
- The organization conducts working parties, study groups and meetings to address current and future issues and to resolve disputes. The ITU organizes and holds an exhibition and forum known as the Global TELECOM every four years.
- Another important aspect of the ITU's mandate is helping emerging countries to establish and develop telecommunication systems of their own.
- Although the recommendations of the ITU are non-binding, most countries adhere to them in the interest of maintaining an effective international electronic communication environment.

39. The case for making Pluto a planet again

Context:

Scientists are arguing that denying Pluto planetary status is invalid and erroneous. A team of scientists is indicating that the basis on which Pluto was rejected as a planet does not have any support in research literature.

Background:

- When Pluto was discovered in 1930, it was the ninth planet in the solar system based on an overestimation of its size. However, Pluto seemed to look out of place among the other larger planets after the discovery of swarms of ice dwarfs – icy rocks in the Kuiper Belt, at the very edge of the solar system billions of miles from the sun. Due to this, some astronomers suggested that Pluto could be just another Kuiper Belt Object (KBO) and not a planet.

How is a planet defined?

- In 2006, the International Astronomical Union (IAU) laid out some guidelines for a celestial body to be called a planet. The IAU said that there were three conditions that must be fulfilled for a celestial body

to be termed as a planet: 1) it must be round; 2) it must orbit the sun; and 3) it must have “cleared the neighbourhood” of its orbit.

Why was Pluto rejected?

- According to the IAU’s definition, Pluto does not meet the criteria, as Neptune’s gravity influences it, and Pluto shares its orbit with frozen gases and objects in the Kuiper belt.

Pluto downgraded to “dwarf planet”:

- After several years of intense debate, astronomers finally reached a consensus in August 2006. They decided to demote Pluto in an extreme redefinition of planethood that seemed to favour scientific reasoning over historic and cultural influences. The decision meant that Pluto will not be a planet anymore.
- Pluto stood apart from the other discovered planets. Not only because of its small size, but because its elongated orbit was tilted with respect to other planets, and it goes inside Neptune’s orbit as part of its 248-year journey around the sun.

Key facts:

- Pluto has five known moons, the largest of which is Charon. Charon is about half the size of Pluto itself, making it the largest satellite relative to the planet it orbits in our solar system.
- Pluto orbits the Sun about 3.6 billion miles (5.8 billion km) away on average.
- A year on Pluto is 248 Earth years. A day on Pluto lasts 153 hours, or about 6 Earth days.
- Pluto has a thin atmosphere of nitrogen, methane and carbon monoxide. The atmosphere has a blue tint and distinct layers of haze.

40. IAEA safeguards

Context:

India has decided to place four more reactors under the IAEA safeguards. Accordingly, two Russian-designed Pressurized Light Water Reactors and two Pressurized Heavy Reactors being built with Indian technology will be covered.

- With this, a total of 26 Indian nuclear facilities will be under the international nuclear energy watchdog.

IAEA safeguards:

- Safeguards are a set of technical measures applied by the IAEA on nuclear material and activities, through which the Agency seeks to independently verify that nuclear facilities are not misused and nuclear material not diverted from peaceful uses. States accept these measures through the conclusion of safeguards agreements.

- The objective of IAEA Safeguards is to deter the spread of nuclear weapons by the early detection of the misuse of nuclear material or technology. This provides credible assurances that States are honouring their legal obligations that nuclear material is being used only for peaceful purposes.
- **Need and implementation:** IAEA safeguards are an essential component of the international security system. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the centrepiece of global efforts to prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons. Under the Treaty's Article 3, each Non-Nuclear Weapon State is required to conclude a safeguards agreement with the IAEA.
- **Significance:** Within the world's nuclear non-proliferation regime, the IAEA's safeguards system functions as a confidence-building measure, an early warning mechanism, and the trigger that sets in motion other responses by the international community if and when the need arises. Over the past decade, IAEA safeguards have been strengthened in key areas.

About IAEA:

- The IAEA is the world's centre for cooperation in the nuclear field. It was set up as the world's "Atoms for Peace" organization in 1957 within the United Nations family. The Agency works with its Member States and multiple partners worldwide to promote the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies.
- It seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.
- IAEA reports to both the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council.
- The IAEA has its headquarters in Vienna, Austria.
- The IAEA serves as an intergovernmental forum for scientific and technical cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear technology and nuclear power worldwide.

41. Missile 'Prahari'

Context:

Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) successfully flight tested the indigenously developed surface-to-surface tactical missile 'Prahari', from Launch Complex-III, ITR, Balasore.

About Prahari:

- 'Prahari', developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), is capable of filling the gap between the multi-barrel rocket system 'Pinaka' and medium-range ballistic missile 'Prithvi'. It can also engage multiple targets in different directions.

- It has length of 7.3 meter, diameter of 420 mm and weighs 1,280 kg. It has operational range of 150 km and flight altitude of 35 km.
- It is a solid-fuelled short-range missile fitted with inertial navigation system.
- The missile is equipped with state-of-the-art navigation, guidance and electromechanical actuation systems with advanced on board computer.
- It is a quick-reaction, all-weather, all-terrain, highly accurate battlefield support tactical weapon system.



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ADMISSIONS OPEN FOR NEW BATCHES

JULY 09 MONDAY	JUNE 09 SATURDAY	JULY 02 MONDAY	JUNE 25 MONDAY	JULY 02 MONDAY
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Miscellaneous

42. Hindi Diwas 2018

Context:

National Hindi Divas or Hindi Day is observed every year on September 14 in India to promote Hindi as Matra Bhasha (mother tongue) of India. The day is a celebration of the Hindi language and its cultural heritage and values among the people of the country and abroad.

- The Constituent assembly of India adopted Hindi as the official language of the country on September 14, 1949 under Article 343.
- It started being observed as Hindi Day after stalwarts like Beohar Rajendra Simha, Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, Kaka Kalekar, Maithili Sharan Gupt and Seth Govind Das lobbied hard for the cause.
- Hindi language is spoken by as many as 250 million people as the original language and it is the fourth language of the world.

43. Paryatan Parv

Context:

The second edition of 'Paryatan Parv' of the Ministry of Tourism has begun across the country.

- The Paryatan Parv will showcase the cultural diversity of the country, with cultural performances, crafts bazaar, food court showcasing folk and classical dance & music, handicrafts & handlooms and cuisine from all regions and States of the country.
- The Ministry of Tourism, in collaboration with other Central Ministries, State Governments and Stakeholders is organizing "Paryatan Parv" across the country.
- The programme is being organized with the objective of drawing focus on the benefits of tourism, showcasing the cultural diversity of the country and reinforcing the principle of "Tourism for All".

44. Pacific Asia Travel Association gold awards

Context:

Kerala Tourism has won two prestigious gold awards of Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) for its innovative marketing campaigns.

- These awards were won by Kerala Tourism's Yalla Kerala print campaign and Live Inspired Posters under PATA's Travel Advertisement Print and Travel Poster categories respectively.
- Both campaign and posters were developed and designed by Stark Communications which is advertising agency of Kerala Tourism.

About PATA awards:

- These awards are given by PATA and are sponsored by Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO).
- The Awards are presented to outstanding entries in four principal categories: Marketing; Education and Training; Environment, and Heritage and Culture.
- These awards are presented every year in recognition of the achievements of 25 separate organisations and individuals.

45. World's first hydrogen train

Context:

Germany has rolled out the world's first hydrogen-powered train, signalling the start of a push to challenge the might of polluting diesel trains with costlier but eco-friendly technology.

- Hydrogen trains are equipped with fuel cells that produce electricity through a combination of hydrogen and oxygen, a process that leaves steam and water as the only emissions. Excess energy is stored in ion lithium batteries on board the train.

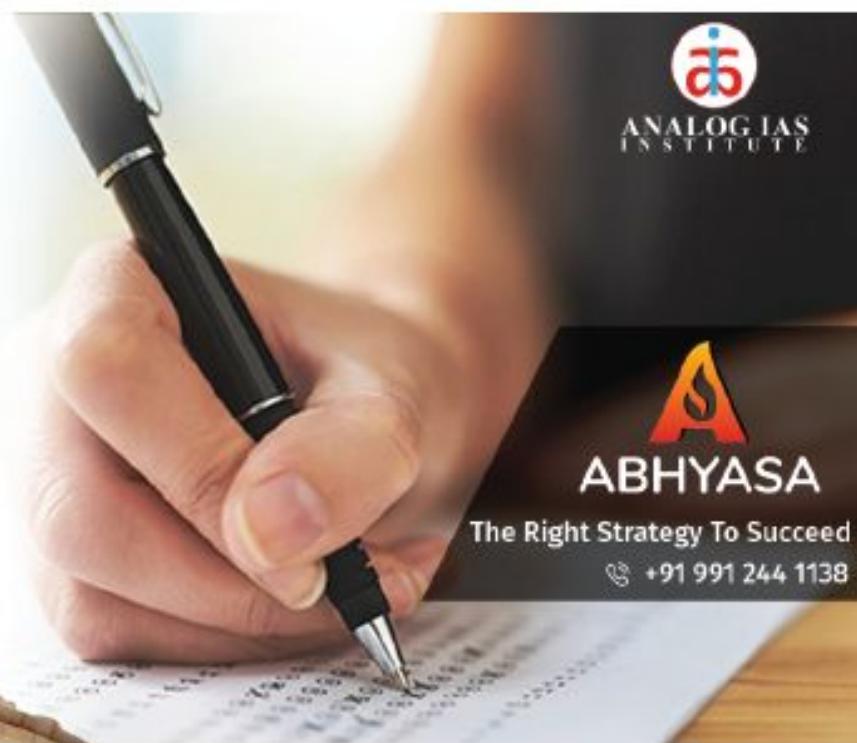
46. National Sports Awards

Context:

National Sports Awards 2018 have been announced.

Key facts:

- National Sports Awards are given every year to recognize and reward excellence in sports.
- Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award is given for the spectacular and most outstanding performance in the field of sports by a sportsperson over a period of four year.
- Arjuna Award is given for consistency outstanding performance for four years.
- Dronacharya Award for coaches for producing medal winners at prestigious International sports events.
- Dhyan Chand Award for life time contribution to sports development.
- Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar is given to the corporate entities (both in private and public sector) and individuals who have played a visible role in the area of sports promotion and development.
- **MAKA Trophy:** Overall top performing university in inter-university tournaments is given Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy.



Abhyasa Program Structure

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

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83



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Mishra
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144



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360



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