

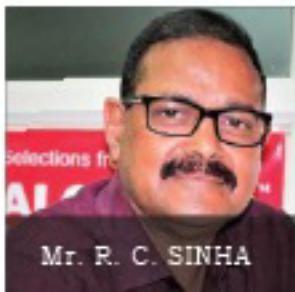


समिक्षा
Comprehensive **NEWS** Analysis

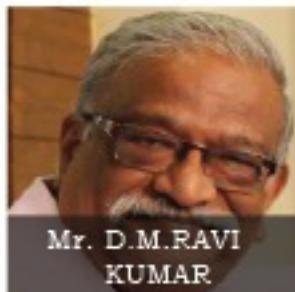


OUR TEAM

GENERAL STUDIES



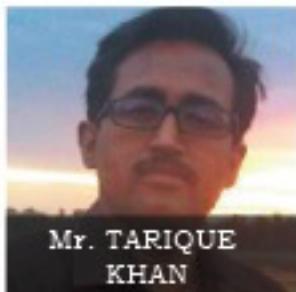
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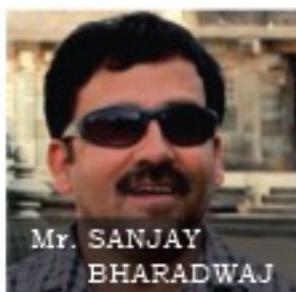
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OTHER OPTIONALS

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POLITICAL SCIENCE

TELUGU LITERATURE

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Polity and Governance

1. Odisha approves proposal for legislative council

Context:

The Odisha government has approved a proposal for setting up a legislative council in the state. A resolution will be brought in the monsoon session of the Odisha Legislative Assembly.



- The proposed legislative council will have 49 members. The members of the proposed council will get salary and allowance as given to the members of the legislative Assembly.

What are the Legislative Councils, and why are they important?

- India has a bicameral system i.e., two Houses of Parliament. At the state level, the equivalent of the Lok Sabha is the Vidhan Sabha or Legislative Assembly; that of the Rajya Sabha is the Vidhan Parishad or Legislative Council.
- A second House of legislature is considered important for two reasons: one, to act as a check on hasty actions by the popularly elected House and, two, to ensure that individuals who might not be cut out for the rough-and-tumble of direct elections too are able to contribute to the legislative process.

Why do we need a second house?

- Opposition to the idea of Legislative Councils is centred on three broad arguments. One, they can be used to park leaders who have not been able to win an election. Two, they can be used to delay progressive legislation. Three, they would strain state finances.
- Opinion in the Constituent Assembly was divided on the question of having a Legislative Council. The idea was backed on the above grounds; it was also suggested that having a second chamber would allow for more debate and sharing of work between the Houses.

Creation of a legislative council:

- Under Article 169 of the constitution, Parliament may by law create or abolish the second chamber in a state if the Legislative Assembly of that state passes a resolution to that effect by a special majority.

Strength of the house:

- As per article 171 clause (1) of the Indian Constitution, the total number of members in the legislative council of a state shall not exceed one third of the total number of the members in the legislative Assembly of that state and the total number of members in the legislative council of a state shall in no case be less than 40. (The exception is J&K, where the Legislative Council has 36 members vide Section 50 of the constitution of the state.)

How are members of the Council elected?

- About 1/3rd of members are elected by members of the Assembly, another 1/3rd by electorates consisting of members of municipalities, district boards and other local authorities in the state, 1/12th by an electorate consisting of teachers, and 1/12th by registered graduates.
- The remaining members are nominated by the Governor from among those who have distinguished themselves in literature, science, art, the cooperative movement, and social service. Legislative Councils are permanent Houses, and like Rajya Sabha, one-third of their members retire every two years.

Do Rajya Sabha and Vidhan Parishads have similar powers?

- Not really. The constitution gives Councils limited legislative powers. Unlike Rajya Sabha which has substantial powers to shape non-financial legislation, Legislative Councils lack the constitutional mandate to do so. Legislative Assemblies have the power to override suggestions/amendments made to a legislation by the Council.
- Also, while Rajya Sabha MPs can vote in the election of the President and Vice-President, members of Legislative Councils can't. MLCs also can't vote in the elections of Rajya Sabha members.

2. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna

Context:

The Centre has approved construction of nearly 1.12 lakh more affordable houses for urban poor in eight states under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna, with Andhra Pradesh bagging the largest share of over 37,000 housing units.

- According to the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry, which is mandated to implement the scheme, the total number of houses being funded under the PMAY (Urban) is close to 55 lakh across the country so far.

About PMAY-Urban:

- The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) Programme launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA), in Mission mode envisions provision of Housing for All by 2022, when the Nation completes 75 years of its Independence.
- The Mission seeks to address the housing requirement of urban poor including slum dwellers through following programme verticals:
 - Slum rehabilitation of Slum Dwellers with participation of private developers using land as a resource.
 - Promotion of Affordable Housing for weaker section through credit linked subsidy.
 - Affordable Housing in Partnership with Public & Private sectors.
 - Subsidy for beneficiary-led individual house construction / enhancement.

Key facts:

- The beneficiaries are poor and people living under EWS and LIG categories in the country.
- The scheme is divided into three phases. In the first phase, a total of 100 cities will be covered from April 2015 to March 2017. In phase two, 200 cities will be covered from April 2017 to March 2019. In the third phase, the leftover cities will be covered from April 2019 to March 2022.
- The government is providing an interest subsidy of 6.5% on housing loans which can be availed by beneficiaries for 15 years from start of loan date.
- The government will grant Rs 1 lakh to all the beneficiaries of the scheme. In addition, Rs 1.5 lakh will be given to all eligible urban poor who want to construct their houses in urban areas or plan to go for renovation in their existing houses. One can also avail loans under this scheme to build toilets in existing houses.

3. Report on “Wrongful Prosecution

Context:

The Law Commission of India has submitted its Report titled ‘Wrongful Prosecution (Miscarriage of Justice): Legal Remedies’ to the Government of India.

- The High Court of Delhi in the case of Babloo Chauhan had expressed grave concern about the state of innocent persons being wrongfully prosecuted, incarcerated for crimes that they did not commit.
- The Court highlighted the urgent need for a legislative framework for provided relief and rehabilitation to victims of wrongful prosecution,

incarceration and asked the Law Commission to undertake a comprehensive examination of the aforesaid issued and make a recommendation thereon to the Government of India.

What is wrongful prosecution?

- Internationally, the issue of wrongful prosecution, incarceration, and conviction of innocent persons is identified as ‘miscarriage of justice’ that takes place after a person has been wrongfully convicted but is later found to be factually innocent basis a new fact / proof coming to light.
- As per the law commission, ‘Wrongful prosecution’ would include cases where the accused and not guilty of the offence, and the police and / or the prosecution engaged in some form of misconduct in investigating and / or prosecuting the person. It would include both the cases where the person spent time in prison as well as where he did not; and cases where the accused was found not guilty by the trial court or where the accused was convicted by one or more courts but was ultimately found to be not guilty by the Higher Court.

Highlights of the report:

- This report looks at the issue from the context of Indian Criminal Justice system and recommends ‘wrongful prosecution’ to be the standards of miscarriage of justice, as against ‘wrongful conviction’ and ‘wrongful incarceration’.
- The Report gives an overview of the remedies available under the existing laws and discusses their inadequacies (also noted by the High Court in the aforementioned Order).
- The Commission recommends enactment of a specific legal provision for redressal of cases of wrongful prosecution – to provide relief to the victims of wrongful prosecution in terms of monetary and non-monetary compensation (such as counselling, mental health services, vocational / employment skills development etc.) within a statutory framework.
- The Report enumerates the core principles of the recommended framework- defining ‘wrongful prosecution’ i.e., cases in which claim for compensation can be filed, designation of a Special Court to decide these claims of compensation, nature of proceedings – timeline for deciding the claim, etc., financial and other factors to be considered while determining the compensation, provisions for interim compensation in certain cases, removal of disqualification on account of wrongful prosecution / conviction etc.
- A draft Bill is also annexed with the Report as the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill, 2018.

4. Strategic Partnership (SP) model

Context:

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), in a landmark decision, has approved procurement of 111 Utility Helicopters for the Indian Navy at a cost of over Rs. 21,000 crores.

Salient features

The Strategic Partnership (SP) policy is intended to promote Indian private sector participation in defence manufacturing. It came into effect on May 31, 2017

Four segments were identified for acquisition under this route:

- Fighter Aircraft
- Helicopters
- Submarines
- Armoured Fighting Vehicles (AFVs) / Main Battle Tanks (MBTs)



HAL Dhruv helicopter

- It enables participation of private Indian firms in 'Make In India' in defence
- Policy does acknowledge Indian private sector's "Limited experience in defence manufacturing"

- This is the first project under the MoD's prestigious Strategic Partnership (SP) Model that aims at providing significant fillip to the Government's 'Make in India' programme.

What is Strategic Partnership (SP) model?

- The strategic partner model is intended to enhance competition, increase efficiencies, facilitate faster and more significant absorption of technology, create a tiered industrial ecosystem, ensure development of a wider skill base, trigger innovation and enable participation in global value chains as well as promote exports.
- Under the model, the government intends to boost private sector participation and create domestic expertise in four key areas, namely, fighter aircraft, helicopters, submarines, and armoured vehicles and main battle tanks.
- One company would be selected for each area based on its competence, which would then tie up with the foreign Original Equipment Manufacturer selected through the procurement process, to build the platform in India with significant technology transfer.

Significance:

- The SP model, if implemented well, is likely to have a number of benefits for both the private sector and the larger Indian defence industry.

- From the private sector's point of view, the biggest benefit would be the opportunity to participate in some big ticket contracts – estimated to be worth over two lakh crore rupees in the initial phase of execution – which were hitherto reserved for the DPSUs and OFs.

Bridging the trust gap:

- At the same time, the model would also go a long way in bridging the long-standing trust gap between the Indian private sector and MoD, with the latter perceived to be friendlier toward public sector entities.
- Strategic Partners, being private sector companies, are expected to exploit their dynamism, competitiveness, profit orientation, and exposure to the civilian sector for efficient utilisation of the technology, manpower and infrastructure developed in the process.
- The model has a long-term vision of promoting India as a manufacturing hub for defence equipment thus enhancing self-sufficiency and establishing an industrial and R&D ecosystem, capable of meeting the future requirements of the Armed Forces.

Concerns:

- Despite potential benefits, there are two concerns which need to be addressed to make SPs contribute in a meaningful and time-bound manner.
- The first and foremost concern is the lack of institutional capacity and ability to guide the new process to its logical conclusion.
- There is also a concern regarding the long-term viability of SPs largely due to the privileged position enjoyed by public sector entities.

Way ahead:

- Time and again, the MoD has deviated from its own promise of fair play in award of contracts and handed over large orders to DPSUs and OFs on nomination. It would be futile to expect SPs to make major investments if the government does not provide a level-playing field to the private sector.

5. Centre asks states to ban e-cigarettes

Context:

In a move to protect health risks to children, adolescents and women of reproductive age, the health ministry has asked states to ban Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) including e-cigarettes, Vape, e-Sheesha, e-Hookah etc.

- States are asked to ensure that devices that enable nicotine delivery are not sold (including online sale), manufactured, distributed, traded, imported and advertised in their jurisdictions, except for the purpose & in the manner and to the extent, as may be approved under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Rules made thereunder.

- The move comes in the wake of the Delhi HC recently taking strong exception to the Centre for delay in coming up with regulatory measures to tackle the “new emerging threat” of e-cigarettes in the country.

E-CIGARETTES, GOOD OR BAD?

1 Touted as an alternative to smoking, e-cigarettes haven't found favour with the authorities

- The Centre has called them a health hazard and said it will ban them. The Delhi government has echoed the view
- Punjab, Haryana and UT of Chandigarh have declared it an unapproved drug under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1945

BANNED IN Karnataka, Kerala, Mizoram, Maharashtra, J&K, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar

Tamil Nadu also mulling over imposing a ban

2 Here is exactly what e-cigarettes are

Known by different names, such as e-cigs, e-hookahs, vape pens, vapes and electronic nicotine delivery systems, they look like regular cigarettes, cigars or pipes; some resemble pens

3 And how they work

- Battery operated; they work by heating a liquid that usually contains nicotine – the addictive drug in regular cigarettes
- The resulting vapour is inhaled by users; bystanders can also breathe in the aerosol thus produced

4 But they don't come cheap

Anywhere between Rs 3,000 and Rs 30,000 in India; refill costs between Rs 700 and Rs 1,000, depending on size and flavour

5 Those who support them say

They are less harmful than regular cigarettes and help kick the butt

6 But the jury is out...

Findings of some of the researches

PLOS ONE, 2018 Study of 1,284 US adult smokers showed e-cigarettes did not help smokers quit at rates higher than smokers who did not use these products

PAEDIATRICS, 2018 Many volatile compounds in e-cigarettes were found to be carcinogenic; prolonged usage adds to cancer risk

CENTRE FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, US, STUDY Most adult e-cigarette users do not stop smoking and are, instead, continuing to use both products

7 E-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is

- Highly addictive
- Toxic to developing fetuses
- Harmful to adolescent brain development
- Health danger to pregnant women

8 The industry, however, claims

- Vaping is a healthier alternative. It helps quit smoking; govt is biased against them

PREVALENCE

There is no data in India on use of e-cigarettes. But in the US, 3% of adults are regular users, at least 15% have tried them

What are e-cigarettes?

- An electronic cigarette (or e-cig) is a battery-powered vaporizer that mimics tobacco smoking. It works by heating up a nicotine liquid, called “juice.”
- Nicotine juice (or e-juice) comes in various flavors and nicotine levels. e-liquid is composed of five ingredients: vegetable glycerin (a material used in all types of food and personal care products, like toothpaste) and propylene glycol (a solvent most commonly used in fog machines.) propylene glycol is the ingredient that produces thicker clouds of vapor.
- Proponents of e-cigs argue that the practice is healthier than traditional cigarettes because users are only inhaling water vapor and nicotine.

Why its hard to regulate them?

- As e-cigarettes contain nicotine and not tobacco, they do not fall within the ambit of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003 (COTPA), which mandates stringent

health warnings on the packaging and advertisements of tobacco products.

Need for regulation:

- The current unregulated sale of e-cigarettes is dangerous for a country like India where the number of smokers is on the decline (WHO Global Report, 2015) as it increases the possibility of e-cigarettes becoming a gateway for smoking by inducing nicotine addiction and perpetuating smoking by making it more attractive, thereby encouraging persons to become users of tobacco as well as e-cigarettes.

WHO report on e-cigarettes and effects:

- As per the report, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) (also known as e-cigarettes) emits nicotine, the addictive component of tobacco products. In addition to dependence, nicotine can have adverse effects on the development of the foetus during pregnancy and may contribute to cardiovascular disease.
- The WHO report further says that although nicotine itself is not a carcinogen, it may function as a “tumour promoter” and seems to be involved in the biology of malignant disease, as well as of neurodegeneration.
- Foetal and adolescent nicotine exposure may have long-term consequences for brain development, potentially leading to learning and anxiety disorders.
- The evidence is sufficient to warn children and adolescents, pregnant women, and women of reproductive age against ENDS use and nicotine.

Why ban them?

- Studies say ENDS have cancer-causing properties, are highly addictive and do not offer a safer alternative to tobacco-based products. Experts say e-cigarettes are just a mechanism to deliver nicotine in an attractive format.

Way ahead:

- The government should also impose appropriate restrictions on the sale and advertisement, online and otherwise, of e-cigarettes, including proper health warnings, in order to plug the existing regulatory vacuum.
- This should be done with immediate effect, and simultaneously the government should also commission independent scientific research on the benefits and risks posed by these products in the Indian context.

6. Marriage certificate must for official work in Meghalaya

Context:

The State government in matrilineal Meghalaya has made it mandatory for married people to produce marriage certificates for all official purposes.

- The government has also decided to deny government jobs and benefits to men who have abandoned their families and are not providing for maintenance of their children. Some of these men live with other women.

What necessitated this?

- The step has been taken in view of increasing cases of broken marriages and women being forced to fend for themselves and their children. The abandonment of families by men lead to a spike in school dropouts and juvenile crimes.
- Also, most marriages in the Khasi society are not registered, and this makes it difficult for abandoned women to fight for the maintenance of their children.

Significance of the move:

- The government's order cannot stop divorce, but marriage certificates will help abandoned women fight for the maintenance of their children after their husbands abandon them.

7. Anti-lynching measures

Context:

A panel headed by Union Home Secretary Rajiv Gauba, which deliberated on measures to check incidents of lynching, submitted its report to a Group of Ministers headed by Home Minister Rajnath Singh.



Points of concern

The expert panel deliberated on measures to curb incidents of mob lynchings

<p>Social media: The expert panel concurred on the need to make social media platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube, accountable for not blocking malicious posts</p>	<p>Penalty: The panel suggested that an FIR could be launched against top officials of such platforms for not complying with government orders</p>
Course of action: Social media platforms have reportedly agreed to improve their compliance rates following the Centre's call for doing so	

In May-June, more than 20 people were lynched based on fake posts or rumours floating on various social media platforms

The proposal:

- As per the suggestion made, media platforms — Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and Twitter — would be made accountable for not blocking such malicious posts/videos when brought to their notice and “FIR could be lodged against their country heads” for non-compliance of government orders and they could be prosecuted under law.

Background:

- From May-June, more than 20 people were lynched based on fake posts or rumours floating on various social media platforms. Last month, the Home Ministry issued advisories to States and Union Territories following Supreme Court's directives to check incidents of lynching.
- The Centre asked them to appoint an officer in each district at the level of Superintendent of Police, set up a special task force to gather intelligence, and closely monitor social media contents to prevent mob attacks on suspicion of being child-lifters or cattle smugglers.

Need for coordination between the centre and states on this matter:

- The Union Government is highly concerned about the incidents of mob violence in some parts of the country. Government has already condemned such incidents and made its stand clear in the Parliament that, as per the Constitutional scheme, 'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects.
- State Governments are responsible for controlling crime, maintaining law and order, and protecting the life and property of the citizens. They are empowered to enact and enforce laws to curb crime in their jurisdiction.

Recent directions of the Supreme Court on the issue of mob violence:

- Condemning mob lynching incidents across the country and the Supreme Court had urged the Parliament to enact a new law to deal with the crime. The court passed a slew of directions in this regard to deal with the mob lynching. Here are the directions:
 - There shall be a "separate offence" for lynching and the trial courts must ordinarily award maximum sentence upon conviction of the accused person to set a stern example in cases of mob violence.
 - The state governments will have to designate a senior police officer in each district for taking measures to prevent incidents of mob violence and lynching.
 - The state governments need to identify districts, sub-divisions and villages where instances of lynching and mob violence have been reported in the recent past.
 - The nodal officers shall bring to the notice of the DGP about any inter-district co-ordination issues for devising a strategy to tackle lynching and mob violence related issues.
 - Every police officer shall ensure to disperse the mob that has a tendency to cause violence in the guise of vigilantism or otherwise.
 - Central and the state governments shall broadcast on radio, television and other media platforms about the serious consequences of mob lynching and mob violence.

- Despite the measures taken by the State Police, if it comes to the notice of the local police that an incident of lynching or mob violence has taken place, the jurisdictional police station shall immediately lodge an FIR.
- The State Governments shall prepare a lynching/mob violence victim compensation scheme in the light of the provisions of Section 357A of CrPC within one month from the date of this judgment.
- If a police officer or an officer of the district administration fails to fulfill his duty, it will be considered an act of deliberate negligence.

Need for an anti-lynching law:

- At present there is no law that criminalises mob killings. The Indian Penal Code has provisions for unlawful assembly, rioting, and murder but nothing that takes cognisance of a group of people coming together to kill (a lynch mob).
- Under Section 223 (a) of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), to prosecute together two or more people accused of the same offence committed in the course of the “same transaction”. But the provision falls far short of an adequate legal framework for prosecuting lynch mobs.

8. Project Navlekha

Context:

Google has unveiled Project Navlekha to make online content relevant for more Indian users especially in local languages.

About Project Navlekha:

- Navlekha in Sanskrit means “a new way to write.”
- Google is using its expertise in artificial intelligence for Project Navlekha, using which, it will quickly render any PDF with Indian language content into editable text, overcoming issues that usually occur when you try to copy text in Indian languages from a PDF.
- The project aims to bring 135,000 local language publishers online by making web hosting smooth and simple.
- It will allow local publishers who do not have websites to make their offline content fit for online publishing in less than a minute. It also comprises tool that uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to allow publishers to simply scan documents or PDFs and create instant web pages on the platform.
- The project will provide a handy online publishing tool for local language newspapers and content companies—90% of which do not have a website.

- The registered publishers on Navlekha will also be provided with free web hosting, along with a branded domain for three years. They'll also have AdSense support to begin monetising their content.
- Under Navlekha project, Google will help these publishers to receive training and support and a branded page domain for the first three years.

Significance of the project:

- At present, amount of online content in Indian languages is only 1% of what is available in English. India is important market for Google as it has second largest population of internet users in the world. Hence, with the new project the amount of resources available for Indians in local languages will increase.

ADMISSIONS OPEN FOR NEW BATCHES

ASHOK NAGAR +91 991 244 1138	MADHAPUR +91 990 856 4438 <small>WEEKEND BATCH</small>	NEW DELHI +91 880 028 3132	VISAKHAPATNAM +91 998 513 6789	GUNTUR +91 996 335 6789
09 MONDAY	09 SATURDAY	02 MONDAY	25 MONDAY	02 MONDAY

International Relations

9. Remembering the Haitian revolution

Context:

The United Nations' International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition is observed every year on August 23 to remind people of the tragedy of the transatlantic slave trade, the largest deportation in history.



- The International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition was first celebrated in many countries, in particular in Haiti, on August 23, 1998, and in Senegal on August 23, 1999.
- The day is commemorated to pay tribute to all those who fought for freedom and worked hard to abolish the slave trade and slavery throughout the world. This commitment and the actions used to fight against the system of slavery had an impact on the human rights movement.

Steps taken by the UNESCO:

- To honour the history of the slave trade and its abolition, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in 2017, added to its World Heritage List the Mbanza Kongo, Vestiges of the Capital of the former Kingdom of Kongo (Angola) and the Valongo Wharf Archaeological Site (Brazil), as an acknowledgement of their “outstanding universal value.”
- UNESCO also started an initiative in 1994 known as the ‘Slave Route’ project to contribute to a better understanding of the causes, forms of operation, issues and consequences of slavery in the world.

The Haitian revolution:

- The night of August 22-23, 1791, in Saint-Domingue, in what is Haiti and the Dominican Republic today, saw the beginning of the uprising that would play a crucial role in the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade.
- Men and women sold into slavery, revolted against the slave system to obtain freedom and independence for Haiti. The rebellion weakened the Caribbean colonial system, sparking an uprising that led to abolishing slavery and giving the island its independence.
- It marked the beginning of the destruction of the slavery system, the slave trade, and colonialism. The large and well-organized uprising, better known as the Haitian Revolution, lasted 13 years and ended with the independent nation of Haiti.
- In 1888, nearly 85 years later, Brazil became the last nation in America to abolish slavery.

Outcomes and impact:

- The success of the rebellion, led by the slaves is a deep source of inspiration today for the fight against all forms of servitude, racism, prejudice, racial discrimination and social injustice that are a legacy of slavery.

10. Sweden launches ‘feminist foreign policy’ manual

Context:

Sweden has released a handbook of its “feminist foreign policy” for rights groups and foreign governments, showcasing lessons from the Scandinavian nation’s flagship approach to promoting women’s rights globally.

- The manual is derived from four years of work to place gender equality at the heart of the country’s international agenda.
- Sweden began its feminist foreign policy “in response to the discrimination and systematic subordination that still mark the daily lives of countless women and girls around the world”.
- Its goals include the promotion of economic emancipation, fighting sexual violence and improving women’s political participation.
- Projects cited in the manual include an action plan for five war-torn and post-conflict nations — Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and the Palestinian Territories — building in targets for women’s rights and empowerment for the first time.
- The handbook highlights Sweden’s work in Congo to promote “positive masculinity” in the country, where it has run initiatives such as promoting social media debate on men’s role in society.

Way ahead:

- It's "too early" to draw any conclusions about whether the feminist approach leads to significant change. While gender equality was "an object in itself", it is "essential" in achieving more general government objectives, like peace, security and sustainable development.

11. SCO Peace Mission Exercise

Context:

The 2018 SCO Peace Mission Exercise is being held in Russia.

- As part of the SCO initiatives, the SCO Peace Mission Exercise is conducted biennially for the SCO member states.
- The exercise will involve tactical level operations in an international counter insurgency or counter-terrorism environment under the SCO Charter.
- At least 3,000 soldiers from China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, India and Pakistan are participating in the drill.

Significance:

- The previous SCO counter-terrorism drills were mainly limited to the Central Asian nations. But due to the entry of India and Pakistan, the SCO's counter-terrorism mission has expanded to South Asia.
- The 2018 exercise will be the first for India and Pakistan since becoming full members of the SCO in 2017. It also will be the first time India and Pakistan take part in a military exercise together since their independence, though their militaries have previously worked on United Nations peacekeeping missions.

About SCO:

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, also known as the Shanghai Pact, is a Eurasian political, economic, and military organization which was founded in 2001 in Shanghai by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Apart from Uzbekistan, the other five countries have been a part of the Shanghai 5 since 1996. The cooperation was renamed to Shanghai Cooperation organization after Uzbekistan joined the organization in 2001.
- **New members:** India and Pakistan joined SCO as full members in June 2017 in Astana, Kazakhstan.
- **The SCO's main goals are:** strengthening mutual trust and neighborliness among the member states; promoting their effective cooperation in politics, trade, the economy, research, technology and culture, as well as in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, and other areas; making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region; and moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order.

12. G20 Digital Economy Ministerial Meeting

Context:

In the framework of the Argentinian presidency of G20, the 2018 edition of Digital Economy ministerial meeting is being held in Salta, Argentina. The ministerial meeting was preceded by the second meeting of the G20 Digital Economy Task Force.

- Argentina has selected the theme, 'Building consensus for fair and sustainable development,' for the 2018 G20 Leaders' Summit, and has identified three key issues for the agenda: the future of work, infrastructure for development, and a sustainable food future.

Digital Economy Task Force:

- The Digital Economy Task Force (DETF) was established under the 2017 German presidency, based on the decision adopted in Hangzhou in 2016 under the Chinese Presidency.
- In Antalya, under the Turkish presidency in 2015, G20 leaders recognized the modern period as a critical era of digital transformation, influenced by the advent of new technologies as key elements for economic development.

About Digital economy:

- The digital economy refers to a broad range of activities which include: the use of knowledge and information as factors in production, information networks as a platform for action, and how the information and communication technology (ICT) sector spurs economic growth.

Challenges to digital economy:

- Important challenges include providing high-speed internet for all by 2025, creating inclusive growth and new jobs through digital trade, promoting lifelong digital learning, and closing the gender gap.

About G20:

- The G20 is made up of 19 countries and the European Union. The 19 countries are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, France, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Origin:

- The G20 was born out of a meeting of G7 finance ministers and central bank governors in 1999 who saw a need for a more inclusive body with broader representation to have a stronger impact on addressing the world's financial challenges. The G7 invited leading markets – both developed and emerging – to form a new ministerial-level forum: the G20.

Significance:

- In 2008, amidst the global financial crisis, the world saw a need for new consensus-building at the highest political level. Since then, the G20 summits have been attended by heads of state or government, and the G20 was instrumental in stabilizing the world economy. Since then, its agenda has expanded to include additional issues affecting financial markets, trade, and development.

Global Impact:

- Collectively, G20 members represent all inhabited continents, 85% of global economic output, two-thirds of the world's population, and 75% of international trade.
- G20 policy-making is enriched by the participation of key international organizations regularly invited to G20 meetings, guest countries invited at the president's discretion, and engagement groups composed of different sectors civil society.

13. Indian Ocean Conference

Context:

The third edition of Indian Ocean Conference is being held at Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam.

- This year, the Indian Ocean Conference will emphasise on better cooperation, strategic collaboration and governance architectures. This conference will serve a platform to the countries to come closer and exchange better views on the economic and strategic importance of the region and neighbourhood.
- **Theme:** "Building Regional Architectures".

About Indian Ocean Conference:

- The Indian Ocean Conference initiated by India Foundation along with its partners from Singapore, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh is an annual effort to bring together Heads of States/Governments, Ministers, Thought Leaders, scholars, diplomats, bureaucrats and practitioners from across the region.
- Two successful editions of the Conference have been hosted so far in 2016 and 2017 in Singapore and Sri Lanka respectively. Both the Conferences were supported by the Ministry of External Affairs of India and had participation from over 35 countries with a global media coverage.

14. China may scrap limit on number of children

Context:

China is planning to scrap the limit on the number of children couples can have. A draft civil code that would end decades of controversial family planning policies has been prepared.

- The code would get rid of a policy that has been enforced through fines but was also notorious for cases of forced abortions and sterilisation in the world's most populous country.
- The code omits any reference to "family planning" — the current policy which limits couples to having no more than two children.
- Other proposed changes include a one-month cooling off period before a divorce, during which either party can withdraw their application.

The long history of limits on the number of children a couple can have:

- The Communist Party began enforcing a one-child policy in 1979 to slow population growth. The limit was raised to two children in 2016 as the nation scrambled to rejuvenate its greying population of some 1.4 billion.

The need for removal of restrictions:

- Concerns are mounting that an ageing and shrinking workforce could slow down its economy, while gender imbalances could lead to social problems. Also, childbirths have not increased as much as forecast since the two-child policy came into force.

Why One Child Policy was adopted by China?

- One child policy was adopted by China in 1979 out of the Malthusian fears that unchecked population growth would lead to economic and environmental catastrophe. It was also a response to concerns about food shortages.

What is Malthusian theory all about?

- Thomas Robert Malthus was the first economist to propose a systematic theory of population. He articulated his views regarding population in his famous book, *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), for which he collected empirical data to support his thesis. He argued that if left unchecked, a population will outgrow its resources, leading to a host of problems.

Why China changed its policy?

- China has a population of over 1.4 billion, 30% of which is over the age of 50. There is also huge gender imbalance. Now, China needs more people for joining workforce. The working population in China is coming down and elderly population is going up. So Communist Party of China has changed one-child policy to a two-child policy as the country is looking further ahead that China to have larger families.

What's good about One Child Policy?

- Helps to ease the over population problems.
- It is seen as practical by some families.
- Lowers the poverty rate.

Why it isn't a good idea?

- The enforcement is unequal.
- It is a human rights violation.
- Shrinking work population.
- Gender imbalance due to the strong cultural preference of boys for labor and work.
- Increase in abortions and female infanticide.
- Extra babies end up being illegal and never becoming a citizen, due to fines.
- Intrudes on people's personal values and opinions.

Why such policies are not suitable for India?

- The implications of such a policy being enforced in India would surely have been more disastrous than it did in China.
- India is way behind China in basic development indicators like life expectancy, IMR and maternal mortality rate. The preference of a male child, the regional disparities in development, and the growing intolerance against minorities in the present milieu would be further magnified with the state entering homes and enforcing such strict norms.
- The fact that women are at the receiving end of such policies in a patriarchal society is another story in itself. The burden of limiting family size falls on the woman, and most often female sterilizations are promoted rather than giving the couple the choice of contraception.
- Limiting family size cannot be an end in itself at the neglect of basic needs and services like food security, housing, education, and health. It is important for a state to universalize these basic services than to impose a diktat of population control. When China imposed a one-child policy, it had already created a strong base for its population, despite which the consequences were severe. Therefore, it would be disastrous for India to even walk that path.

15. Venezuela crisis

Context:

Venezuela, once a rich oil reserve country, is now battering an unprecedented economic crisis. Hyperinflation, mass migration, food shortage, increasing number of crimes and grinding poverty has pushed the nation into a deep turmoil.

What is the Venezuela crisis?

- Hyperinflation is the biggest problem faced by Venezuela. The inflation rate there is expected to reach a stunning one million per cent this

year, putting it on par with the crises of Zimbabwe in the 2000s and Germany in the 1920s, according to the International Monetary Fund.

- The government claims that the country is the victim of an “economic war” and that the major issues are due to opposition “plots” and American sanctions.

What caused this increase?

- The plummeting oil prices since 2014 is one of the main reasons why Venezuela’s currency has weakened sharply. The country, which has rich oil reserves largely depended on it for its revenue. But when the oil price dropped drastically in 2014, Venezuela which received 96 per cent of its revenue from the oil exports, suffered a shortage of foreign currency. This made import of basic essentials like food and medicines difficult.

Impacts:

- Venezuela’s imports are down 50% from a year ago. Venezuela’s minimum wage is now about the equivalent of \$1 a month, making basics unaffordable for many. With a shortage of the import goods, the black market has got a free hand in the country. Prices have been doubling every 26 days on average.
- A survey from February this year found that almost 90% of Venezuelans live in poverty and more than 60% surveyed said that they had woken up hungry because they did not have enough money to buy food, reported Reuters. Apart from food, the country is also facing medicine shortage. The economic crisis has also hit the public health system, making medicine and equipment inaccessible to its people.
- As the country slips into poverty, many are turning towards crime to make money. A recent Gallup study placed Venezuela at the bottom of its 2018 Law and Order index, with 42 per cent of surveyed Venezuelans reporting they had been robbed the previous year and one-quarter saying they had been assaulted.

Mass migration:

- Angered by the economic crisis in the country, many Venezuelans have started leaving the country. Of the 2.3 million Venezuelans living abroad, more than 1.6 million have fled the country since the crisis began in 2015, according to the UN.
- The pace of departures has accelerated in recent days, sparking a warning from the UN. The majority have crossed into neighbouring Colombia and then to Ecuador, Peru and Chile. Others have gone south to Brazil.

16. Asian Electoral Stakeholder Forum

Context:

The fourth edition of Asian electoral stakeholders forum (AESF-IV) was held in Sri Lanka to discuss the state of elections and democracy in the

region. It was jointly organized by Election Commission of Sri Lanka and Asian network for free elections (ANFREL).

- This was for first time AESF was held in South Asia.
- **Theme:** ‘Advancing Election Transparency and Integrity: Promoting and Defending Democracy Together’.

The key objectives of AESF-IV are:

- To provide a venue for Election Management Bodies (EMBs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and other stakeholders to share and learn about the present electoral challenges as well as best practices in the region.
- To develop and endorse the “Colombo Strategy to Promote and Defend Electoral Democracy in Asia”.
- To institutionalize capacity building efforts in making elections more meaningful and credible through cooperation among stakeholders.
- To promote inclusiveness in elections by paying special attention to sectoral cooperation.

About AESF:

- The AESF is the largest gathering of its kind, and is sustained through a strong cooperation between the civil society and election commissions.
- The Forum will cover a wide array of crucial election issues like the current state of democracy in Asia, the common electoral challenges in the region, and various good practices employed to make elections better.
- It provides opportunity for Asian election commissions, election observers, non-government organizations (NGOs) and interstate bodies to gather and discuss state of elections and democracy in the region. It also provides platform for institutionalizing capacity building efforts to pave the way for more meaningful and credible election through cooperation among stakeholders.

17. RCEP Ministerial Meeting

Context:

6th RCEP Trade Ministers' Meeting is being held at Singapore.

- India has been constructively engaged in the RCEP negotiations with an aim to work towards a high quality, balanced and inclusive outcomes that take into consideration sensitivities and interests of member countries.

What you need to know about RCEP?

- RCEP is proposed between the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Brunei, Burma (Myanmar),

Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) and the six states with which ASEAN has existing FTAs (Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand).

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

India's Concerns with member countries:

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

Challenges ahead for India:

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

Way ahead:

- The negotiations on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, among 16 Asian and Pacific Ocean countries, have entered a decisive phase. Most potential member-countries of the grouping would like to see a “substantive agreement” on the trade deal by the end of this year.
- At a meeting in Singapore countries which still have issues with the outline of the agreements reached so far may be told politely to step aside and allow a smaller group to go ahead with finalising the RCEP.

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ADMISSIONS OPEN FOR NEW BATCHES				
JULY 09 MONDAY	JUNE 09 SATURDAY	JULY 02 MONDAY	JUNE 25 MONDAY	JULY 02 MONDAY

Economy

18. BIS to set standards for the services sector

Context:

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has kicked off the process to set new standards to measure quality of services offered to consumers across different sectors, including telecom, aviation, e-commerce and healthcare.

- In this regard, BIS had recently called for a meeting of industry bodies to “persuade them to be part of the process and give their inputs.”

Significance of the Service Sector and need for standards:

- Service sector is one of the key sectors of the Indian economy with a huge potential to grow into one of the largest markets of the world. Standards can play a major facilitative role in this regard. It is important that the standardization needs and priorities of the sector are determined.
- The process was initiated after concerns over lack of standardization, particularly with regards to after-sales service, in their feedback to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs.

Background:

- An online survey had found that in the absence of defined customer service standards in the country, a majority of consumers were not happy with after-sales services. As per the poll, 43% feel that mobile handset and computer manufacturers are the worst in after-sales services, followed by white goods firms (38%) and automobile companies (11%). About 93% of respondents said brands should at least acknowledge complaints from users within 72 hours. Many consumers complained that customer service numbers of many companies do not work.

About BIS:

- The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) is the national Standards Body of India working under the aegis of Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution.
- It is established by the Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 1986.
- The Minister in charge of the Ministry or Department having administrative control of the BIS is the ex-officio President of the BIS.
- **Composition:** As a corporate body, it has 25 members drawn from Central or State Governments, industry, scientific and research institutions, and consumer organizations.
- It also works as WTO-TBT enquiry point for India.

19. Odisha to come up with single revenue code

Context:

The Odisha government has proposed to come up with a single revenue act by merging various revenue laws enacted at different point in times.

- In this regard, the state government has prepared the draft ‘Odisha Land and Revenue Code’ by taking into consideration the Odisha Survey and Settlement Act, 1958, the Odisha Special Survey and the Settlement Act 2012, the Odisha Government Land Settlement Act, 1962, the Odisha Prevention of Land Encroachment Act, 1972, the Odisha Land Reforms Act, 1960, the Odisha Consolidation of Holdings and Prevention of Fragmentation of Land Act 1972 and the Odisha Estates Abolition Act, 1951.

Need for a uniform revenue code:

- The need for a single Revenue Code arises out of the fact that there are many revenue Acts in vogue in Odisha governing the land revenue administration which were enacted years back and are unable to meet the changing needs.
- Existence of so many revenue Acts and Rules often create confusion among the field-level revenue functionaries in interpretation of such laws which ultimately leads to delay in disposal of cases and sufferings for the public.
- The main purpose is to end the numerous laws and introduction of a single code having simplified procedures and enabling provisions for speedy disposal of the revenue cases which will benefit the public.

What next?

- The code will be published inviting suggestions and objections from all sections and after scrutiny of feedbacks, necessary changes will be effected and steps will be taken for enactment of the code.

20. North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

Context:

The United States and Mexico have agreed to overhaul the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), putting pressure on Canada to agree to new terms on auto trade and dispute settlement rules to remain part of the



North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

three-nation pact. If talks with Canada are not wrapped up by the end of this week, Trump plans to notify Congress that he has reached a deal with Mexico, but would be open to Canada joining.

Highlights of the new deal:

- The deal would require 75% of auto content to be made in the NAFTA region, up from the current level of 62.5%. A fact sheet describing the bilateral agreement specified the content would be made in the United States and Mexico.
- The deal improves labour provisions, in part by requiring 40% to 45% of auto content to be made by workers earning at least \$16 per hour. That measure could move some production back to the United States from Mexico and should lift Mexican wages.
- The United States relented on its demand for an automatic expiration for the deal, known as a “sunset clause.” Instead, the United States and Mexico agreed to a 16-year lifespan for the deal, with a review every six years that can extend the pact for 16 years.
- Mexico agreed to eliminate dispute settlement panels for certain anti-dumping cases, a move that could complicate talks with Canada, which had insisted on the panels.

What is NAFTA?

- NAFTA is the initialism for the North American Free Trade Agreement, an agreement signed by Canada, Mexico, and the United States that reduced or eliminated trade barriers in North America. (Since the U.S. and Canada already had a free trade agreement (signed in 1988), NAFTA merely brought Mexico into the trade bloc.)
- Negotiations for the trade agreement began in 1990 under the administration of George H.W. Bush and were finalized under Bill Clinton’s presidency in 1993. The agreement went into effect on January 1, 1994.

What was the purpose of NAFTA?

- In 1993 the European Union (EU) created a “single market”—one territory without any internal borders or other regulatory obstacles to the free movement of goods and services. This allowed every country and business in the EU to have access to more than 500 million consumers.
- NAFTA, which was approved that same year, was designed to have a similar effect, providing a way to allow the exchange of goods and services to flow more freely across national borders without the artificial restrictions.
- NAFTA provided for progressive elimination of all tariffs on any goods qualifying as North American. The deal also sought to protect intellectual property, establish dispute-resolution mechanisms, and,

through corollary agreements, implement labor and environmental safeguards.

Why is NAFTA controversial?

- NAFTA was controversial when first proposed, mostly because it was the first [free trade agreement] involving two wealthy, developed countries and a developing country. Some people felt that allowing free trade with a developing country provides an incentive for U.S-based business to move their operations to that country.
- Since its implementation NAFTA has remained a prime target of trade protectionists (those who advocate taking measures such as taxing imports to “protect” domestic industries from foreign competition).

21. SAARC Agri Cooperative Business Forum

Context:

The first South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Agri Cooperative Business Forum was held recently in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Theme: ‘Organizing and Strengthening Family Farmers’ Cooperatives to attain the Sustainable-Development-Goals-1 and 2 in South Asia’.

About SAARC Agri Cooperative Business Forum:

- Organized by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of United Nations and Asian Farmers’ Association with the support from International Fund for Agricultural Development.
- Aim: To provide platform to bring together representatives both from government and non-governmental entities from member states of SAARC as well as from regional and international organizations.

About SAARC:

- SAARC stands for South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. It is a geopolitical cooperation maintained for mutual benefits between eight south Asian nations: India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Maldives.
- SAARC Summits are held annually. There have been, however, times when the summits skipped a year.
- The diplomatic summits can only take place when all the members of SAARC are present.
- SAARC Secretariat is based in Kathmandu. It is responsible for monitoring the activities of the cooperation.
- The body was founded in Dhaka in 1985.

SAFTA:

- In a landmark move, SAARC nations unanimously decided to form South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA). Although the agreement was

reached at the 12th SAARC summit in 2004, it came into force on 1 January 2006.

- The agreement not only created a free trade area of 1.8 billion people in SAARC nations (except Afghanistan), but also removed trade barriers to increase the level of economic cooperation.

22. Barriers to cashless economy

Context:

The Reserve Bank of India's second annual report shows that since demonetization cash transactions have increased.

- Nearly two years after demonetization, about 99.3% of the notes sucked out of circulation has been returned. Besides, the value of bank notes in circulation has increased by 37.7% over the year, reaching Rs 18,037 lakh crore by the end of March 2018.

Outcomes of demonetization:

- Over the last two years, at least three of major claims of demonetization have collapsed.
- First, it was supposed to flush out black money and end corruption. The government predicted that Rs 3 lakh crore in currency would not return to the banks. This has proved to be false, as most of the cash has returned.
- Second, demonetization was to help detect fake currency, which apparently funded terror and distorted the economy. The government claimed that at any point of time, there was Rs 400 crore in fake currency notes floating in the economy. Nine months after demonetization, it was claimed that Rs 11.23 crore in fake currency had been detected. Now, the Reserve Bank reports a huge jump in fake Rs 2,000 notes, which were introduced after demonetization.
- Third, demonetization was to pave the way to a cashless economy and the gleaming new world of digital India. Two years later, the amount of cash with the public has reached a record high, the bank has claimed.

Background:

- On November 8, 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that all Rs 500 and Rs 1000 notes, comprising 86% of the total value of the currency in circulation at that time, would no longer be recognized as legal tender.

What is a cashless economy?

- It is a situation in which the flow of cash within an economy is non-existent and all transactions have to be through electronic channels such as direct debit, credit and debit cards, electronic clearing, payment systems such as Immediate Payment Service (IMPS), National Electronic Funds Transfer and Real Time Gross Settlement.

Benefits of a cashless economy:

- Usage of cashless mechanisms would ensure that loopholes in public systems get plugged, and the intended beneficiaries are able to avail the benefits due to them. It also leads to increased efficiency in welfare programmes as money is wired directly into the accounts of recipients.
- Efficiency gains can also be seen as transaction costs across the economy come down. It also provides an on-ramp to financial inclusion and enables e-commerce growth.
- Reducing use of cash would also strangulate the grey economy, prevent money laundering and even increase tax compliance, which will ultimately benefit the customers at large.

Benefits for individuals:

- No need for queues outside ATMs.
- No cashout during long holidays.
- No waiting for a deposited cheque to be credited.
- No risk of carrying currency notes in the wallet.

What perpetuates use of cash in India?

- A high propensity to save in and use cash.
- Cash intensive supply chains require many merchants to transact in cash.
- A large shadow and remittance based economy is also to be blamed for the situation.
- Gender imbalance in use of digital payments has further aggravated the problem. This is due to insufficient focus on financial literacy.
- Also, costs of point-of-sale terminals and operating costs are still high in India.

23. O-SMART scheme

Context:

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for the umbrella scheme “Ocean Services, Technology, Observations, Resources Modelling and Science (O-SMART)”, for implementation during the period from 2017-18 to 2019-20 at an overall cost of Rs.1623 crore.

Highlights of the scheme:

- The scheme encompasses a total of 16 sub-projects addressing ocean development activities such as Services, Technology, Resources, Observations and Science.
- The services rendered under the O-SMART will provide economic benefits to a number of user communities in the coastal and ocean sectors, namely, fisheries, offshore industry, coastal states, Defence, Shipping, Ports etc.

Significance and benefits of the scheme:

- Currently, five lakhs fishermen community are receiving the related information daily through mobile which includes allocation of fish potential and local weather conditions in the coastal waters. The scheme will help in reducing the search time for fishermen resulting savings in the fuel cost.
- Implementation of O-SMART will help in addressing issues relating to Sustainable Development Goal-14, which aims to conserve use of oceans, marine resources for sustainable development. This scheme (O-SMART) also provide necessary scientific and technological background required for implementation of various aspects of Blue Economy.



- The ocean advisory services and technologies being rendered and developed under the scheme play a pivotal role in

the development activities over dozen sectors, working in the marine environment including the coastal states of India, contributing significantly to the GDP.

- The State of Art Early Warning Systems established under the O-SMART Scheme will help in effectively dealing with ocean disasters like Tsunami, storm surges. The technologies being developed under this Scheme will help in harnessing the vast ocean resources of both living and non-living resources from the seas around India.

Significance of the Blue Economy:

- As the resources on land are not adequate enough to meet the future demands, India is also embarking on blue economy for effective and efficient use of the vast ocean resources in a sustainable way, which would require a great deal of information on ocean science, development of technology and providing services.
- Further, the coastal research and marine biodiversity activities are important to be continued also in the context of achieving United Nations Sustainable Development Goal-14 to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Geography and Environment

24. Commute-related pollution: Kolkata shines among megacities

Context:

A report, titled 'The Urban Commute and How it Contributes to Pollution and Energy', compiled by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), has been released.

Exhausting fumes

A ranking of cities in terms of overall emissions and energy consumption



Space Jam: Vehicles jostling on the Howrah Bridge in Kolkata. ■ AFP

1. Bhopal

2. Vijayawada

3. Chandigarh

4. Lucknow

5. Kochi

6. Jaipur

7. Kolkata

8. Ahmedabad

9. Pune

10. Mumbai

11. Hyderabad

12. Bengaluru

13. Chennai

14. Delhi

- The report is an analysis of 14 cities in India on how they fare when it comes to pollution and energy consumption from urban commuting.
- In the study, with an aggregate of toxic emissions from urban commuting practices, such as particulate matter and nitrogen oxides, the cities were ranked based on calculations of heat trapping (CO₂).
- The study took two approaches to rank the cities one based on overall emission and energy consumption and the other on per person trip emissions and energy consumption.

Performance of various cities:

- Kolkata is the top-performing megacity. Bhopal leads the list on the lowest overall emissions.

- Delhi and Hyderabad are the two cities that fare at the bottom of the table in terms of pollution and energy use.
- In terms of overall emissions and energy consumption, Bhopal was followed by Vijayawada, Chandigarh and Lucknow.
- Kolkata, which comes in at the sixth place on overall emissions, won among the six megacities.
- In fact, smaller cities such as Ahmedabad and Pune ranked below Kolkata for overall emissions.
- Delhi ranked at the bottom of the table for overall emission. Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Chennai fared a little better than Delhi.

Concerns and causes:

- Motorization in India is explosive. Initially, it took 60 years (1951-2008) for India to cross the mark of 105 million registered vehicles. Thereafter, the same number of vehicles was added in a mere six years (2009-15).
- According to the report, though metropolitan cities scored better than megacities due to lower population, lower travel volume and lower vehicle numbers, they were at risk due to a much higher share of personal vehicle trips.

Lessons from the study:

- Importance of public transport: Kolkata provides a resounding message that despite population growth and rising travel demand, it is possible to contain motorization. This is possible only with a well-established public transport culture, compact city design, high street density and restricted availability of land for roads and parking. Both Kolkata and Mumbai have grown with a unique advantage of a public transport spine well integrated with existing land use patterns.
- Independent of income levels: Mumbai had the highest GDP but a lower rate of motorization compared with other megacities, proving that income levels were not the only reason for deciding a population's dependence on automobiles.
- Meanwhile Chennai was the first city to adopt a non-motorized transport (NMT) policy in 2004 that aims to arrest the decline of walking or cycling by creating a network of footpaths, bicycle tracks and greenways.

25. Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)

Context:

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), one of India's premier avian research institutes, has started operating its first regional centre on the campus of Wetland Research and Training Centre near Chilika Lake.

- With opening up its branch in Odisha, the BNHS would be engaged in identifying the air route of the foreign birds flocking the Chilika lake during winter, sample collection, training related to bird census, publishing bird migration atlas books, examining various diseases among the birds and to review the condition of the Nalabana bird sanctuary along with counting the birds.

About Chilika Lagoon:

- It is the largest coastal lagoon in India and the second largest lagoon in the world after The New Caledonian barrier reef in New Caledonia.
- It is the largest wintering ground for migratory waterfowl found anywhere on the Indian sub-continent.
- It is one of the hotspot of biodiversity in the country, and some rare, vulnerable and endangered species listed in the IUCN Red List of threatened Animals inhabit in the lagoon for atleast part of their life cycle.
- On account of its rich bio-diversity and ecological significance, Chilika was designated as the 1st “Ramsar Site” of India.
- The Nalaban Island within the lagoon is notified as a Bird Sanctuary under Wildlife (Protection) Act, the National Wetlands, mangroves and coral reefs Committee of Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India, have also identified the lagoon as a priority site for conservation and management.
- Chilika Lagoon lies in the districts of Puri, Khurda and Ganjam of Odisha State along the eastern coast of India. It is well connected to the Chennai and Kolkata through National Highway No 5, and the Chennai Kolkata rail line passes along the western bank of the Lagoon Balugaon, with Balugaon, Chilika and Rambha being the main stations along the Western shoreline of the lagoon.

About BNHS:

- The Bombay Natural History Society, founded on 15 September 1883, is one of the largest non-governmental organisations in India engaged in conservation and biodiversity research.
- BNHS is the partner of BirdLife International in India. It has been designated as a ‘Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation’ by the Department of Science and Technology.
- Logo:** The BNHS logo is the great hornbill.

Internet of Birds:

IT consultancy firm Accenture and the Bombay Natural History Society have developed Internet of Birds platform that identifies bird species found in India using Artificial Intelligence technology, including machine learning and computer vision, from digital photos that are uploaded by the public.

26. Cheetah reintroduction project

Context:

The Madhya Pradesh forest department has written to the National Tiger Conservation Authority to revive the plan to reintroduce cheetahs in the State's Nauradehi sanctuary. The ambitious project, conceived in 2009, had hit a roadblock for want of funds.

5 Animals which have Extinct from India

	<i>Indian Cheetah</i> mostly found in Rajasthan and Gujarat. It Extinct during Mughal Era due to excessive hunting and sports.
	<i>Indian Aurochs</i> once lived in hot and dry areas of India. We can now see Indian Gaur a very similar species which is also endangered now.
	<i>Sumatran Rhinoceros</i> used to be the smallest two horn rhinoceros. Now we can find the one horn rhinoceros in Kaziranga only.
	<i>Pink-Headed Duck</i> used to be one of the most beautiful bird found throughout India became victim of human hunting.
	<i>Sivatherium</i> : Tallest and fastest animal ever found in India.

- The cheetah, *Acinonyx jubatus*, is one of the oldest of the big cat species, with ancestors that can be traced back more than five million years to the Miocene era.

- The cheetah is also the world's fastest land mammal, an icon of nature. With great speed and dexterity, the cheetah is

known for being an excellent hunter, its kills feeding many other animals in its ecosystem—ensuring that multiple species survive.

- The country's last spotted feline died in Chhattisgarh in 1947. Later, the cheetah — which is the fastest land animal — was declared extinct in India in 1952.

Cheetah reintroduction programme in India:

- The Wildlife Institute of India at Dehradun had prepared a ₹ 260-crore cheetah re-introduction project six years ago. It was estimated that an amount of ₹ 25 crore to ₹ 30 crore would be needed to build an enclosure in an area of 150 sq km for the cheetahs in Nauradehi. The proposal was to put the felines in the enclosure with huge boundary walls before being released in the wild, he said.
- Nauradehi was found to be the most suitable area for the cheetahs as its forests are not very dense to restrict the fast movement of the spotted cat. Besides, the prey base for cheetahs is also in abundance at the sanctuary.
- According to the earlier action plan, around 20 cheetahs were to be translocated to Nauradehi from Namibia in Africa. The Namibia Cheetah Conservation Fund had then showed its willingness to donate the felines to India. However, the State was not ready to finance the plan contending that it was the Centre's project.

Background:

- The reasons for extinction can all be traced to man's interference. Problems like human-wildlife conflict, loss of habitat and loss of prey, and illegal trafficking, have decimated their numbers.
- The advent of climate change and growing human populations have only made these problems worse. With less available land for wildlife, species that require vast home range like the cheetah are placed in competition with other animals and humans, all fighting over less space.

Significance of reintroduction:

- The reintroduction of cheetahs will help restore India's open forests and grassland ecosystems, which have been suffering. Having cheetahs will result in greater biodiversity, and biodiversity is the hallmark of healthy ecosystems.
- India is also home to the world's largest free-roaming populations of livestock. Bringing back the cheetah will focus attention on pastoralism, and in doing so, help restore India's natural heritage.

About NTCA:

- The National Tiger Conservation Authority is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change constituted under enabling provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2006, for strengthening tiger conservation, as per powers and functions assigned to it under the said Act.
- The National Tiger Conservation Authority has been fulfilling its mandate within the ambit of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 for strengthening tiger conservation in the country by retaining an oversight through advisories/normative guidelines, based on appraisal of tiger status, ongoing conservation initiatives and recommendations of specially constituted Committees.

27. Heritage Circuit and North East Circuit

Context:

The Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned two new projects under Heritage and North East Circuits of Swadesh Dashan Scheme for Rs. 164.95 Crores in Punjab and Tripura.

Heritage Circuit:

- Under Heritage Circuit in the state of Punjab, the project covers sites of Anandpur Sahib – Fatehgarh Sahib – Chamkaur Sahib – Ferozpur – Amritsar – Khatkar Kalan – Kalanour – Patiala at the cost of Rs. 99.95 crores.
- The project includes development of Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar for Rs. 8 Crores, development of Tourist Infrastructure and Heritage Path

at Anandpur Sahib for Rs. 28.99 crores, development of Tourist Infrastructure at Fatehgarh Sahib among others.

- The facilities being developed include Virtual Reality Shows (Jallianwala and Hussainiwala Border), beautification and landscaping, interpretation centres, façade development, wayside amenities, parking, CCTV and Wi-Fi facilities, Cafeterias, Open Air Theatre, drinking water facility etc.

North East Circuit:

- Under North East Circuit in Tripura, the sites of Surma Cherra- Unakoti- Jampui Hills- Gunabati-Bhunaneshwari- Matabari- Neermahal- Boxanagar- Chotta khola- Pilak- Avangchaarra are covered with total project cost of Rs. 65 Crores.
- The project envisaged infrastructural development of the sites with special emphasis on developing an Interpretation Centre, Tourist Visitor Centres, Cafeteria, Last Mile Connectivity, Illumination of sites and monuments, Wayside Amenities, Floating Jetties, Camping Grounds, Parking Facilities, Adventure Activities, Ghat Development at above sites.

About Swadesh Darshan Scheme:

- The Tourism Ministry had launched ‘Swadesh Darshan’ scheme with an objective to develop theme-based tourist circuits in the country. These tourist circuits will be developed on the principles of high tourist value, competitiveness and sustainability in an integrated manner.

Features of Swadesh Darshan Scheme:

- The scheme is 100% centrally funded for the project components undertaken for public funding.
- To leverage the voluntary funding available for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Central Public Sector Undertakings and corporate sector.
- Funding of individual project will vary from state to state and will be finalised on the basis of detailed project reports prepared by PMC (Programme Management Consultant).
- A National Steering Committee (NSC) will be constituted with Minister in charge of M/O Tourism as Chairman, to steer the mission objectives and vision of the scheme.
- A Mission Directorate headed by the Member Secretary, NSC as a nodal officer will help in identification of projects in consultation with the States/ UTs governments and other stake holders.
- PMC will be a national level consultant to be appointed by the Mission Directorate.

28. India's National Redd+ Strategy

Context:

Complying with the UNFCCC decisions on REDD+, India has prepared its National REDD+ Strategy. The Strategy builds upon existing national circumstances which have been updated in line with India's National Action Plan on Climate Change, Green India Mission and India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to UNFCCC.

- The strategy report has been prepared by Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education (ICFRE), Dehradun.
- Paris agreement on climate change recognizes role of forests in climate change mitigation and calls upon participating nations to take action to implement and support REDD+. Complying with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) decisions on REDD+, India has prepared its national REDD+ strategy and soon it will be communicated to UNFCCC.”

About REDD+:

- In simple terms, REDD+ means “Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation”, conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries.
- REDD+ is a mechanism developed by Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- It creates a financial value for the carbon stored in forests by offering incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands and invest in low-carbon paths to sustainable development.
- Developing countries would receive results-based payments for results-based actions. REDD+ goes beyond simply deforestation and forest degradation and includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

29. Close watch on climate change

Context:

The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) is considering a Rs. 79-crore proposal to study the impact of climate change on Kerala.

- The project has been proposed by the National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (NISCAIR) under the Council of Scientific Industrial Research (CSIR).

Highlights of the project:

- **Objectives:** The Kerala project will analyze the trends in climatic elements, their spatial pattern and its relationship with extreme events such as El Nino, cyclones etc. The objective of the project is to develop

a framework and decision support tool to assess the climate change impact on livelihood and developmental processes.

- **Focus areas:** The ambitious project, spread over a period of three years, will assess the impact of climate change on agriculture (including plantation crops and spices); fisheries (marine and inland); industries; health; transport — vehicular and inland water transports; tourism; biodiversity; forestry; and landslips.
- The project involves experts from various scientific institutions across the country. It consists of 25 work packages and covers all the aspects of climate change adaptations for Kerala.
- The experts will study the spatial and temporal changes in water resources (surface and groundwater — quantity and quality). Researchers will also assess the monsoonal variations and its impact, besides looking at the climate change scenario on the islets of Kerala.

Significance:

- It assumes significance in the wake of devastating floods that ravaged many parts of the State as the research initiative will specifically assess the dynamics of riverine discharge and saline water incursion under the climate change scenario.

30. Satya S Tripathi appointed assistant secretary general of the UNEP

Context:

Satya S Tripathi, an Indian development economist and lawyer, has been appointed assistant secretary general of the United Nations and will head the New York office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

About UNEP:

- The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is an agency of United Nations and coordinates its environmental activities, assisting developing countries in implementing environmentally sound policies and practices.
- It was founded by Maurice Strong, its first director, as a result of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference) in June 1972 and has its headquarters in the Gigiri neighborhood of Nairobi, Kenya.
- UNEP has overall responsibility for environmental problems among United Nations agencies but talks on addressing global warming are overseen by the Bonn-based Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Its activities cover a wide range of issues regarding the atmosphere, marine and terrestrial ecosystems, environmental governance and green economy.
- UNEP has also been active in funding and implementing environment related development projects.

IPCC:

- The World Meteorological Organization and UNEP established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988. UNEP is also one of several Implementing Agencies for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, and it is also a member of the United Nations Development Group.
- The International Cyanide Management Code, a program of best practice for the chemical's use at gold mining operations, was developed under UNEP's aegis.

31. NTCA to take over Corbett Tiger Reserve

Context:

Pointing to an “alarming trend” of tiger deaths, the Uttarakhand High Court has asked if the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) could take over the management of the Corbett Tiger Reserve “as an interim measure”. The court also asked the NTCA if the tigers could be relocated “to save them from poaching”.

- The court expressed dissatisfaction with the state government’s inaction in dealing with tiger poaching incidents. It said the state government had failed to constitute a Special Tiger Protection Force despite the court’s order.
- As a last/ extreme measure, the court has sought the response of the NTCA, being the expert body, to take over the management of Corbett Tiger Reserve, as an interim measure, till the state government becomes alive to its duties and starts taking concrete decisions.
- The court has also asked NTCA to suggest “whether few tigers can be relocated/ shifted to save them from poaching/ killing to other well-managed national parks/sanctuaries”.

About Corbett tiger reserve:

- Corbett National Park is situated in the foothills of the Sub- Himalayan belt in Nainital districts of Uttarakhand state in India.
- Established in the year 1936 as Hailey National Park, Corbett has the glory of being India’s oldest and most prestigious National Park. It is also being honored as the place where Project Tiger was first launched in 1973. This unique tiger territory is best known as the father who gave birth of the Project Tiger in India to protect the most endangered species and the Royal of India called Tigers.
- Corbett National Park covers an area of 521 sq. km and together with the neighboring Sonanadi Wildlife Sanctuary and Reserve Forest areas, forms the Corbett Tiger Reserve.
- Corbett is one of the richest bird regions of the Country and has been declared as an ‘Important Bird Area’ (IBA) by Birdlife International.

About NTCA:

- The National Tiger Conservation Authority is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change constituted under enabling provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2006, for strengthening tiger conservation, as per powers and functions assigned to it under the said Act.
- The National Tiger Conservation Authority has been fulfilling its mandate within the ambit of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 for strengthening tiger conservation in the country by retaining an oversight through advisories/normative guidelines, based on appraisal of tiger status, ongoing conservation initiatives and recommendations of specially constituted Committees.

32. Nilgiri tahr

Context:

In a heartening development for conservationists, a recent census has revealed that the population of the Nilgiri tahr (an endangered mountain goat) at the Mukurthi National Park has grown by an impressive 18% in the last two years, from 480 to 568.

Threats: The population also faces several threats. Researchers point to

the continuing spread of invasive species of flora, such as wattle and pine, and exotic weeds like scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) and gorse, which end up diminishing grazing land.



Facts:

- IUCN status- Endangered.
- It is listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972.
- Endemic to the Nilgiri Hills and the southern portion of the Western Ghats in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala in Southern India.
- It is the State animal of Tamil Nadu.

Science & Technology

33. India's first biofuel-powered plane

Context:

India has now joined the small league of nations with the US and Australia to have flown a biofuel-powered aircraft.



- SpiceJet flew the Bombardier Q400 (VT-SUI) on biofuel from Dehradun to Delhi.
- Biofuel flights could make air travel cleaner and more efficient, thus drastically reducing the cost of airline operations by reducing the dependency on aviation turbine fuel.
- The biofuel is made partially from renewable resources such as agricultural residues, non-edible oils and bio-degradable fractions of industrial and municipal wastes.

34. Aeolus Satellite

Context:

The European Space Agency (ESA) has successfully launched Aeolus satellite that will measure winds around the globe and help improve weather forecasting. The Earth Explorer Aeolus satellite was launched into polar orbit on a Vega rocket from Europe's Spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana.

Aeolus satellite:

- Aeolus is the first satellite mission to acquire profiles of Earth's wind on a global scale. These near-realtime observations will improve the accuracy of numerical weather and climate prediction and advance our understanding of tropical dynamics and processes relevant to climate variability.
- Aeolus is the fifth in the family of ESA's Earth Explorer missions, which address key scientific challenges identified by the science

community and demonstrate breakthrough technology in observing techniques.

- Named after Aeolus, who in Greek mythology was appointed 'keeper of the winds' by the Gods, this novel mission will not only provide much-needed data to improve the quality of weather forecasts, but also contribute to long-term climate research.
- The Aeolus satellite carries just one large instrument – a Doppler wind lidar called Aladin that will probe the lowermost 30 km of the atmosphere to measure the winds sweeping around our planet.

Significance and need for information on wind:

- Many aspects of our lives are influenced by the weather. It goes without saying that accurate forecasts are important for commercial undertakings such as farming, fishing, construction and transport – and in general make it easier to plan the days ahead.
- In extreme circumstances, knowing what the weather will bring can also help save lives and protect property. Although weather forecasts have advanced considerably in recent years, meteorologists urgently need reliable wind-profile data to improve accuracy further.
- Aeolus wind mission will demonstrate that measuring global wind-profiles from space, using laser technology, can meet this requirement.

35. Government announces Regulations for Drones

Context:

The government has announced the Drone Regulations 1.0. These regulations will enable the safe, commercial usage of drones starting December 1, 2018. They are intended to enable visual line-of-sight daytime-only and a maximum of 400 ft altitude operations.

Categories:

- As per the regulation, there are 5 categories of RPAS categorized by weight, namely nano, micro, small, medium and large.

Operational/ Procedural Requirements:

- All RPAS except nano and those owned by NTRO, ARC and Central Intelligence Agencies are to be registered and issued with Unique Identification Number (UIN).
- Unmanned Aircraft Operator Permit (UAOP) shall be required for RPA operators except for nano RPAS operating below 50 ft., micro RPAS operating below 200 ft., and those owned by NTRO, ARC and Central Intelligence Agencies.
- The mandatory equipment required for operation of RPAS except nano category are (a) GNSS (GPS), (b) Return-To-Home (RTH), (c) Anti-collision light, (d) ID-Plate, (e) Flight controller with flight data logging capability, and (f) RF ID and SIM/ No-Permission No Take off (NPNT).

- For flying in controlled Airspace, filing of flight plan and obtaining Air Defence Clearance (ADC) /Flight Information Centre (FIC) number shall be necessary. Minimum manufacturing standards and training requirements of Remote Pilots of small and above categories of RPAS have been specified in the regulation.

Highlights:

- No Drone Zones: The regulation defines “No Drone Zones” around airports; near international border, Vijay Chowk in Delhi; State Secretariat Complex in State Capitals, strategic locations/vital and military installations; etc.
- Operations through Digital Platform: Operations of Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) to be enabled through Digital Sky Platform. The RPAS operations will be based on NPNT (No Permission, No Take-off).
- There will be different colour zones visible to the applicant while applying in the digital sky platform, viz, Red Zone: flying not permitted, Yellow Zone (controlled airspace): permission required before flying, and Green Zone (uncontrolled airspace): automatic permission.

Enforcement Actions:

- The enforcement actions are, (a) suspension/ cancellation of UIN/ UAOP in case of violation of regulatory provisions, (b) actions as per relevant Sections of the Aircraft Act 1934, or Aircraft Rules, or any statutory provisions, and (c) penalties as per applicable IPCs (such as 287, 336, 337, 338, or any relevant section of IPC).

What next?

Going forward, the Drone Task Force will provide draft recommendations for Drone Regulations 2.0. These regulations will examine, inter alia, the following issues:

- Certification of safe and controlled operation of drone hardware and software.
- Air space management through automated operations linked into overall airspace management framework.
- Beyond visual-line-of-sight operations.
- Contribution to establishing global standards.
- Suggestions for modifications of existing CARs and/or new CARs.

Way ahead:

- Flying drones safely in India will require research and development to understand how they can be best used in India’s unique landscape. Such R&D occurs best in a market-oriented environment, which will not happen unless civilian drone use is permitted. Building profitable companies around drone use can be complicated when the core business model is illegal.

36. 'Horizon 2020'

Context:

The European Union and India will collaborate in research and innovation for developing a next generation influenza vaccine to protect people worldwide. The EU's funding is under its programme for research and innovation 'Horizon 2020'.

- The EU and the Indian government's Department of Biotechnology have committed 15 million Euros each to fund this joint project.
- The aim is to advance the efficacy, safety, duration of immunity, and reactivity against an increased breadth of influenza strains. The joint effort also aims to develop cost-effective and affordable influenza vaccine rapidly without compromising quality.
- There will be multi-disciplinary approach involving stakeholders who can represent any part of the chain from lab to market.

Eligibility:

- The projects require minimum three applicants from Europe (three different EU member states) or countries associated to the EU programme Horizon 2020 and minimum three applicants from India.
- The projects are also 'Open to the World' and thus applicants from other countries can join the EU-India consortia.

Significance:

- Improved influenza vaccines would help the international community to better prepare in the event of an influenza pandemic.
- The outcome of the project is expected to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 3 to ensure health and well-being for all and boost the Indian National Health Mission.
- This joint call is another demonstration of the increased cooperation between the EU and India as committed by the leaders during the Summit in October 2017. In engaging jointly on this topic, India and the EU are contributing to an important global public health challenge.

What is Horizon 2020?

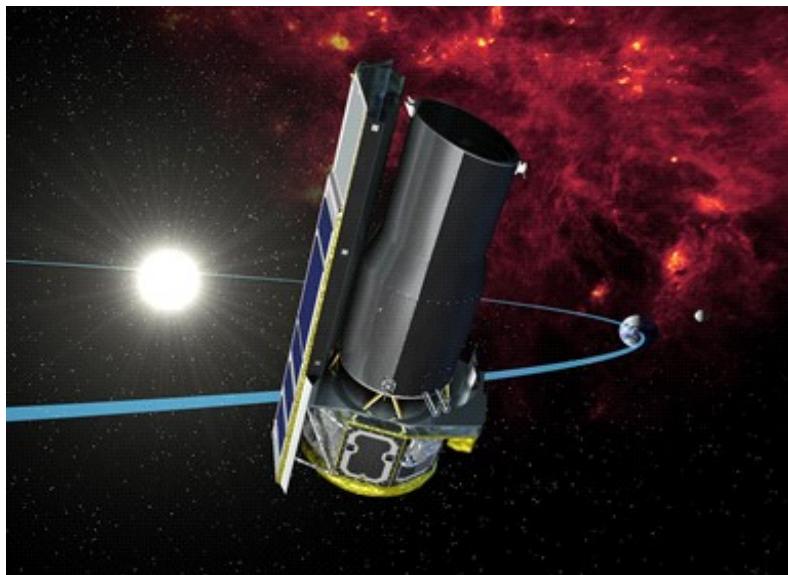
- Horizon 2020 is the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme ever with nearly €80 billion of funding available over 7 years (2014 to 2020) – in addition to the private investment that this money will attract. It promises more breakthroughs, discoveries and world-firsts by taking great ideas from the lab to the market.
- The goal is to ensure Europe produces world-class science, removes barriers to innovation and makes it easier for the public and private sectors to work together in delivering innovation.
- Horizon 2020 is open to everyone, with a simple structure that reduces red tape and time so participants can focus on what is really important.

37. Spitzer telescope

Context:

NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope, the youngest member of the "Great Observatory" programme, has completed 15 years in space.

- Launched into solar orbit on August 25, 2003, Spitzer was initially scheduled for a minimum 2.5-year primary mission. But the space telescope has lasted far beyond its expected lifetime.



- Spitzer's discoveries extend from our own planetary backyard, to planets around other stars, to the far reaches of the universe. And by working in collaboration with NASA's other Great Observatories, Spitzer has helped scientists gain a more complete picture of many cosmic phenomena.

- Spitzer has logged over 106,000 hours of observation time in the past 15 years. It has illuminated some of the oldest galaxies in the universe, revealed a new ring around Saturn, and peered through shrouds of dust to study newborn stars and black holes.
- The space telescope also assisted in the discovery of planets beyond our solar system, including the detection of seven Earth-size planets orbiting the star TRAPPIST-1, among other accomplishments.

About Spitzer:

- NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope was launched in 2003 to study the universe in the infrared. It is the last mission of the NASA Great Observatories program, which saw four specialized telescopes (including the Hubble Space Telescope) launched between 1990 and 2003.
- The goal of the Great Observatories is to observe the universe in distinct wavelengths of light. Spitzer focuses on the infrared band, which normally represents heat radiation from objects. The other observatories looked at visible light (Hubble, still operational), gamma-rays (Compton Gamma-Ray Observatory, no longer operational) and X-rays (the Chandra X-Ray Observatory, still operational.)
- Spitzer's highly sensitive instruments allow scientists to peer into cosmic regions that are hidden from optical telescopes, including dusty stellar nurseries, the centers of galaxies, and newly forming planetary systems.

- Spitzer's infrared eyes also allows astronomers see cooler objects in space, like failed stars (brown dwarfs), extrasolar planets, giant molecular clouds, and organic molecules that may hold the secret to life on other planets.

38. PM-STIAC

Context:

Union Government has constituted a new 21-member advisory panel on science, technology and innovation called Prime Minister's Science, Technology and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC). It will replace earlier Scientific Advisory Committee to Prime Minister and to Cabinet.

Composition: It will be headed by Principal Scientific Advisor to the government of India. It has nine members, including Chairperson. Apart from nine members, it will also have twelve special invitees — eleven ex officio secretaries 10 central ministries, related to science, technology, energy and education, are special invitees to the panel.

Roles and functions:

- Advise PM on science, technology, as well as innovation.
- Coordinate implementation of PMs scientific vision.
- Aid in formulation and timely implementation of major science and technology missions and evolve interdisciplinary technology development programmes.
- Advise government on developing 'Clusters of Excellence' in science including city-based R&D clusters.
- Bring together all science and technology partners from academia and institutes to industries near such centres or cities.

ASHOK NAGAR +91 991 244 1138	MADHAPUR +91 990 856 4438 <i>WEEKEND BATCH</i>	NEW DELHI +91 880 028 3132	VISAKHAPATNAM +91 998 513 6789	GUNTUR +91 996 335 6789
ADMISSIONS OPEN FOR NEW BATCHES				
JULY 09 MONDAY	JUNE 09 SATURDAY	JULY 02 MONDAY	JUNE 25 MONDAY	JULY 02 MONDAY

Miscellaneous

39. Lakhwar Multipurpose Project

The Centre has signed MOU with Uttarakhand, UP, HP, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi for Construction of Lakhwar Multipurpose Project on Yamuna Near Dehradun.

- Project Will Generate 300 MW of Power Create 33,780 Hectare Irrigation Potential and 78.83 MCM Water Availability.
- Uttarakhand Will Bear the Cost of Power Component, Get the Total Benefit of Power Generation.
- Centre will Fund 90% of Irrigation Component, the Six States to the Fund Remaining 10% and Share Water Proportionately.

40. Vostok-2018 (East-2018)

It is a military exercise that will be held in the month of September by Russia.

- It will be Russia's biggest war games since at least the 1980s. Vostok demonstrates Russia's focus on exercising large-scale conflict.
- It fits into a pattern we have seen over some time: a more assertive Russia, significantly increasing its defence budget and its military presence.

41. Innovation Cell

Context:

Innovation Cell has been launched by the Ministry of HRD.

- Innovation cell is MHRD's initiative established at AICTE with a purpose to systematically foster the culture of Innovation in all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the country.
- The primary mandate of Innovation Cell is to encourage, inspire and nurture young students by exposing them to new ideas and processes resulting in innovative activities in their formative years fostered through Network of Innovation clubs in Higher Educational Institutions.

Significance and the need for innovation:

- Without innovation no country can achieve sustainable development and prosperity. 21st century is century of Innovation, and the Prime Minister of India has called the decade 2010-20 as the 'Decade of Innovation', to unleash the creative potential of every Indian. India has already been improving on global stage in terms of Innovation ranking from 86th place, 5 years ago, to 57th place this year.

42. Call for Code initiative

Context:

It is an initiative launched by Global IT giant IBM in partnership with Indian IT companies.

Aim: The aim is to build global solutions for disaster management. It also aims to bring startup, academic and enterprise developers together to respond to and recover from natural disasters.

The advertisement features five colored boxes representing different locations:

- ASHOK NAGAR**: Contact number +91 991 244 1138. Date: JULY 09 (Monday).
- MADHAPUR**: Contact number +91 990 856 4438. **WEEKEND BATCH**. Date: JUNE 09 (Saturday).
- NEW DELHI**: Contact number +91 880 028 3132. Date: JULY 02 (Monday).
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Hyderabad : Madhapur

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Hyderabad : Ashok Nagar

Above OBC Bank
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New Delhi : Old Rajinder Nagar

57/12, Third Floor,
Ph : 011- 49785868, +91 880 028 3132
Email : ias.analog.delhi@gmail.com

Guntur : Arundalpet

2nd Floor, Eluri Mansion 2/1,
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Mishra
HT No : 262146

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149



187



295



296



360



412



417



474



480



548



614



673



713



726



758



761



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769



828



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872



886

