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JOHNSON & JOHNSON buried key facts of hip implant surgeries, kept regulator in the dark

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SCATHING INDICTMENT BY GOVT PANEL: FOUR PATIENT DEATHS, HUNDREDS UNTRACED
Johnson & Johnson buried key facts of hip implant surgeries, kept regulator in the dark

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THE INDIAN arm of Johnson & Johnson, one of the leading global pharma majors, "suppressed" key facts on the harmful aftermath of surgeries conducted hundreds of patients in the country using "faulty" hip replacement implants and failed to provide compensation, the national regulator has found. In a decision that exacts a heavy fine, the national regulator has ordered J&J to pay at least Rs 85 crore to affected patients.



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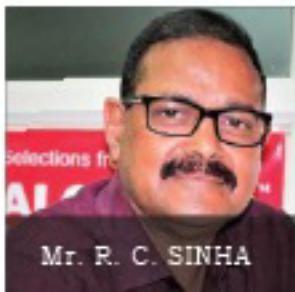


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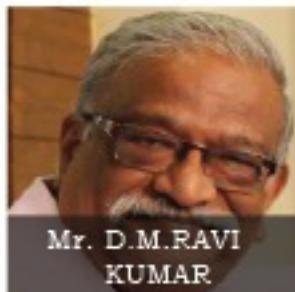
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OUR TEAM

GENERAL STUDIES



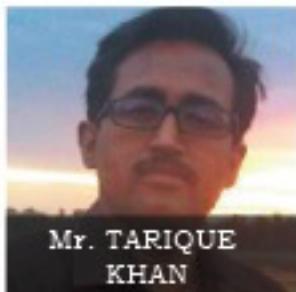
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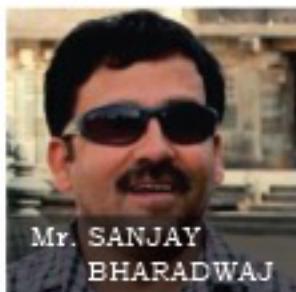
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OTHER OPTIONALS

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POLITICAL SCIENCE

TELUGU LITERATURE

HISTORY

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Polity and Governance

1. Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat

Why in news?

The Government of India has launched an initiative Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat (EBSB) to foster national integration by a co-ordinated mutual engagement process between States, Union Territories, Central Ministries, Educational Institutions and general public through linguistic, literary, cultural, sports, tourism and other forms of people-to-people exchanges. The States/Union Territories have been grouped in 16 pairs.

Background:

- “Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat” was announced by Hon’ble Prime Minister on 31st October, 2015 on the occasion of the 140th birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.
- Subsequently, the Finance Minister announced the initiative in his Budget Speech for 2016-17.
- Through this innovative measure, the knowledge of the culture, traditions and practices of different States & UTs will lead to an enhanced understanding and bonding between the States, thereby strengthening the unity and integrity of India.
- All States and UTs will be covered under the programme. There will be pairing of States/UTs at national level and these pairings will be in effect for one year, or till the next round of pairings.
- The State/UT level pairings would be utilized for state level activities. District level pairings would be independent of the State level pairings.
- The activity will be very useful to link various States and Districts in annual programmes that will connect people through exchanges in areas of culture, tourism, language, education trade etc. and citizens will be able to experience the cultural diversity of a much larger number of States/UTs while realising that India is one.

Objectives of EBSB:

The broad objectives of the initiative are as follows:-

- To CELEBRATE the Unity in Diversity of our Nation and to maintain and strengthen the fabric of traditionally existing emotional bonds between the people of our Country;
- PROMOTE the spirit of national integration through a deep and structured engagement between all Indian States and Union Territories through a year-long planned engagement between States;
- To SHOWCASE the rich heritage and culture, customs and traditions of either State for enabling people to understand and appreciate the diversity that is India, thus fostering a sense of common identity;

- TO ESTABLISH long-term engagements and
- TO CREATE an environment which promotes learning between States by sharing best practices and experiences

Themes:

- To celebrate the idea of India as a nation wherein different cultural units across varied geographies coalesce and interact with each other, this glorious manifestation of diverse cuisine, music, dance, theatre, movies & films, handicrafts, sports, literature, festivals, painting, sculpture etc. will enable people to imbibe the innate chord of binding and brotherhood.
- To make our people aware about the seamless integral hull of the Modern Indian State spread across a landmass of 32 lakh sq. km, on whose firm foundations, the geo-political strength of the country is ensured benefitting one and all.
- To impress upon people at large about the increasing interconnectedness between the constituents of various cultural & economic zones which is so vital for the spirit of nation building.
- To induce a sense of responsibility & ownership for the nation as a whole through these close cross-cultural interactions as it intends to build up the inter-dependence matrix unequivocally.
- To further promote inter-state travel for boosting business activities of various hues.
- To create learning ecosystem between the various stakeholders of the partnering states so that they benefit from the best practices of one another by establishing a State to State Connect.

A Group of Ministers headed by Minister of Human Resource Development periodically reviews the steps taken by the States/UTs and concerned Ministries/Departments to bridge the cultural gap in the country and enhance interaction between people living in different States.

2. AFSPA to continue in Nagaland

Context: Nagaland has been declared as a “disturbed area” for six more months till June-end under the AFSPA. The Ministry said the central government is of the opinion that the area comprising the whole of State of Nagaland is in such a disturbed and dangerous condition that the use of armed forces in aid of civilian power is necessary.

What does the AFSPA mean?

In simple terms, AFSPA gives armed forces the power to maintain public order in “disturbed areas”. They have the authority to prohibit a gathering of five or more persons in an area, can use force or even open fire after giving due warning if they feel a person is in contravention of the law. If reasonable suspicion exists, the army can also arrest a person without a warrant; enter or search premises without a warrant; and ban the possession of firearms.

WHAT IS ARMED FORCES SPECIAL POWERS ACT?

► **Introduced in 1958**, AFSPA confers on members of the armed forces special powers to rein in suspects in areas declared "disturbed" on account of insurgent activities or similar threats. It has been in **force in Manipur since 1980**, and the alleged **excesses committed under it are the reasons** why activist Irom Sharmila has been on a **hunger strike since 2000**.

WHAT ARE SPECIAL POWERS?

AFSPA allows any commissioned officer, warrant officer and non-commissioned officer – or any other



person of equivalent rank – to:

► Fire upon or use force against any person acting 'in contravention of any law for the time being in force in the disturbed area'

► Arrest suspicious people without warrant

► Destroy any structure suspected to house an arms dump, shelter from which armed attacks are made or are likely to be made

► Conduct searches without warrants for evidence, to recover a wrongfully confined person or property or arms or explosives

► **AFSPA bars prosecution or proceedings – except with Centre's nod – against personnel for action committed while exercising powers under the Act**

Any person arrested or taken into custody may be handed over to the officer in charge of the nearest police station along with a report detailing the circumstances that led to the arrest.

What's the origin of AFSPA?

The Act came into force in the context of increasing violence in the Northeastern States decades ago, which the State governments found difficult to control. The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Bill was passed by both the Houses of Parliament and it was approved by the President on September 11, 1958. It became known as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958.

What is a "disturbed area"?

A disturbed area is one which is declared by notification under Section 3 of the AFSPA. An area can be disturbed due to differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.

Who has the power to declare it?

The Central Government or the Governor of the State or administrator of the Union Territory can declare the whole or part of the State or Union Territory as a disturbed area. A suitable notification would have to be made in the Official Gazette. As per Section 3, it can be invoked in places where "the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary".

The Ministry of Home Affairs would usually enforce this Act where necessary, but there have been exceptions where the Centre decided to forego its power and leave the decision to the State governments.

Is the Act uniform in nature?

No. Originally, it came into being as an ordinance in 1958 and within months was repealed and passed as an Act. But, this was meant only for Assam and Manipur, where there was insurgency by Naga militants. But after the northeastern states were reorganized in 1971, the creation of new

states (some of them union territories originally) like Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh paved the way for the AFSPA Act to be amended, so that it could be applied to each of them. They may contain different sections as applicable to the situation in each state.

What is the need of AFSPA?

- The army is opposed to the withdrawal of AFSPA. Many argue that removal of the act will lead to demoralizing the armed forces and see militants motivating locals to file lawsuits against the army.
- Also, the forces are aware that they cannot afford to fail when called upon to safeguard the country's integrity. Hence, they require the minimum legislation that is essential to ensure efficient utilization of combat capability. This includes safeguards from legal harassment and empowerment of its officers to decide on employment of the minimum force that they consider essential.
- The absence of such a legal statute would adversely affect organizational flexibility and the utilization of the security capacity of the state. This would render the security forces incapable of fulfilling their assigned role.
- AFSPA is necessary to maintain law and order in disturbed areas, otherwise things will go haywire. The law also dissuades advancement of terrorist activities in these areas.

Criticism

AFSPA has come under criticism because of the human rights abuses that have come to be associated with its operation. A civilized society expects that the use of deadly force by the army must be at all times be lawful, necessary and proportionate.

- Here the act suffers from two infirmities: the requirement for prior prosecution comes in the way when question arises about the lawfulness of particular actions. Second, AFSPA doesn't distinguish between a peaceful gathering and a violent mob. Firing upon the latter may prove to be justified, shooting into the latter would fail the test of reasonableness.

Conclusion:

As rightly observed by the Supreme Court, if left unchecked and unfettered AFSPA can pose clear and present danger to India's constitutional mandates of freedom, liberty and rule of law. Even worse, giving AFSPA a free run as demanded by a set of army officers who have petitioned the Supreme Court and some other hawks would be suicidal for the democratic republic of India. This cannot be countenanced. The genie of AFSPA must be put back into the bottle either by Parliament by repealing the law as recommended by Justice Jeevan Reddy Committee or by the Supreme Court by pronouncing it unconstitutional.

3. How Train 18 can change future of rail travel in India

Context:

Train 18 is Indian Railways' latest service that will replace India's fastest **Shatabdi Express** train on the Delhi-Bhopal route from **January 2019**.

Facts about Train 18:

- **Train 18** is codenamed after the year it is being manufactured. Its development took a record time of 18 months.
- It is India's first indigenously-built semi-high speed train.
- Driven by a self-propulsion module sans a separate locomotive, it is capable of running at a speed of up to **160 kmph**(26% higher than Shatabdi Express).
- It will cut travel time by **15 per cent** compared to the **Shatabdi Express**.
- It is a **self-propelled train** and fitted with CCTV cameras.
- It would have two executive compartments in the middle with 52 seats each whereas trailer coaches would have 78 seats each.
- The footstep in a coach's doorway slides outward when the train stops at a station enabling passengers to alight safely with comfort.
- The footstep would adjust to the variation in height between a train's floor and the platform.

Who developed Train 18?

- Train 18 has been developed by a team of engineers and experts working at the Indian Railways Integral Coach Factory in Chennai.
- The team took around 1.5 years to build the train and its design has been inspired by the new-age high-speed trains and bullet trains.
- Train 18 is aimed at replacing Linke Hofmann Busch coaches and Shatabdis.
- According to the team, costs are likely to drop 30-40% if the train sets are produced on a quantity basis. The Railways is yet to allocate a fund or demand for mass production of Train 18.

What will be its route?

- **Train 18** is an intercity train for journeys of short and medium duration. The Railways plans to initially run it between **New Delhi and Varanasi**, the parliamentary constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- It was supposed to start operations in December 2018, but later it was decided the train would be a prime attraction during the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas on 9 January and the Kumbh Mela beginning this month

How Train 18 is going to change railways in India?

- **First of all** the concept of distributed power train set for Mainline

Express services is a completely new one for **Indian Railway**. Even though such trains are used in EMUs for local trains – using it on Mainline Express is altogether a different ball game.

- For adoption of such a new concept, the traction system (which is part of locomotive or engine in a conventional train) and power required for the train lighting and air conditioning (which is supplied by separate generator power cars in LHB trains) are to be modularized. Then they have to be distributed across the trainset as underslung (below the chassis of the coaches) which requires the development of an altogether new design of the coach, bogies and electric equipment.
- The new design is being carried out by **ICF** with the help of consultants **without any technology transfer**, which was carried out in earlier cases of LHB coaches, EMD locomotives etc.
- **Secondly**, the vendor base who is supplying various items for the **Train-18** has developed design capabilities, whereas earlier they were dependent on already developed designs. This will help in making best-in-class products in **India** rather than solely importing.
- **Thirdly**, passenger experience and safety have been given more emphasis and the feedback of the first prototype can help **Indian Railways** to decide on a further adaption of train set concept.
- **Fourthly**, the aero-dynamic front-end, automatic sliding footsteps, fully sealed gangways with exterior fairings between the coaches, improved air conditioning, electronic brake control system, new bogie design with fully suspended traction motors etc. are all new technologies being introduced for the first time.
- Building such train sets with a major chunk of **indigenous efforts (almost 80%)** will build the confidence levels so that such new technological advancements can be carried out in future. It is like the development of in-house domain knowledge.

Where Train 18 stands in front of its international counterparts?

It would be comparable to semi-high speed trains that run internationally. There will be 2-3 features which Train 18 doesn't have, but they have been included in **Train 20** project. Worldwide, there are trains that run at higher speeds. In Europe and the US, trains are considered high-speed only when they break the 200km per hour barrier for general operations.

4. Lok Sabha passes Medical Council Bill

Context: The Lok Sabha passed the Indian Medical Council (Amendment) Bill to allow a panel of eminent professionals to run the scam-tainted Medical Council of India (MCI) so that medical education can be regulated in the best manner.

Why was the bill drafted?

MCI has been surrounded by controversy since 2010, when the president of the body was accused of corruption and bribery while granting permits

for Medical colleges. The bill proposes MCI to replace as top medical education regulator of the country with another body called National Medical Commission.

Highlights of the Bill

The Bill sets up the National Medical Commission (NMC). The NMC will regulate medical education and practice. It will determine fees for up to 40% seats in private medical institutions and deemed universities.

MCI ACT VS NMC BILL

MCI No power to prescribe fees	courses. No annual renewal needed. Automatic increase in seats allowed
NMC To determine fees for up to 40% of seats in private colleges/deemed universities	MCI Separate permission for PG courses after UG recognition
MCI Colleges needed nod for establishment/renewal/recognition/increase of intake for UG courses	NMC Colleges can start PG courses on their own
NMC Permission required only for establishment and recognition in case of UG	MCI Penalty for not meeting requirements includes no renewal nod and no admission
	NMC Monetary penalty – up to 10 times the annual tuition fee



- The NMC will consist of 25 members. A Search Committee will recommend names to the central government for the post of Chairperson, and the part time members.

- Four autonomous Boards have been set up under the supervision of the NMC. These Boards will focus on undergraduate and postgraduate medical education, assessment and rating, and ethical conduct.

- There will be a National

Licentiate Examination for doctors to obtain a licence to practice after graduation. This examination will also be the basis for admission to post-graduate medical courses.

- State Medical Councils will receive complaints relating to professional or ethical misconduct against a doctor. If the doctor is aggrieved of a decision of the State Medical Council, he may appeal to successively higher levels of authority.

Key Issues

National Licentiate Examination: The Bill states that after completion of MBBS the students will have to appear for an exit test to get the license in order to practice medicine. This is seen as an unnecessary, insensitive burden against the plight of doctors and medical students who have already been through a rigorous academic year.

Concessions to Private Medical Colleges: The draft bill, in its current form, allows private medical colleges to charge at will, nullifying whatever solace the NEET brought.

Bridge Courses for AYUSH Practitioners: Another issue which sparked the protest against this Bill was Section 49 which allowed AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy) practitioners to take up a bridge course, post which they can prescribe modern medicine.

According to WHO, a healthy doctor patient ratio is 1:1000. In India, this ratio is 1:1,674 . So, Government's intention behind introducing this bridge

course was to fill up the demand supply imbalance in Indian health care system.

However, Indian Medical Association was concerned that this will promote quackery and have grave medico legal consequences. They proposed that instead of this bridge course, government should give incentives to the already qualified healthcare providers to work in semi-urban and rural areas. Others were of the opinion that we can take inspiration from China's barefoot doctors to bring paramedics to remote rural areas.

Way Forward:

Medical professionals need to give a commitment to abide by regulation and assure a sense of duty and responsibility. Healthcare should not be treated as any other industry but as a unique compassionate and duty-sensitive service provider. NMC Bill is a big reform in medical education, but it can't survive unless conflicts of interest are resolved.

5. India's Sustainable Development Goals

Introduction:

India along with other countries signed the declaration on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, comprising of seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the Sustainable Development Summit of the United Nations in September 2015.

What is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

At the Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015, UN Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030.

The new SDGs, and the broader sustainability agenda, go much further than the MDGs, addressing the root causes of poverty and the universal need for development that works for all people.

What are SDG's?

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

WHAT DOCS WANT?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Doctors against replacing the Medical Council of India (MCI) with a National Medical Commission (NMC) ► NMC members are to be nominated by the govt, while IMA claims 2/3rd of MCI members are elected ► Nominees of the govt will make the NMC autocratic, says IMA ► IMA opposes proposal to allow non-MBBS or non-BDS doctors to prescribe X and H scheduled drug 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Docs oppose NMC proposal for compensation of patient on par with his economic status ► IMA demands no penalisation for clerical errors under PCPNDT Act ► Docs want change in IPC to protect medical establishments and doctors ► IMA also wants changes in Clinical Establishment Act
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4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss



16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.

SDG Index of India

NITI Aayog undertook the extensive exercise of measuring India and its States' progress towards the SDGs for 2030, culminating in the development of the first SDG India Index.

The SDG India Index is intended to provide a holistic view on the social, economic and environmental status of the country and its States and UTs. It has been designed to provide an aggregate assessment of the performance of all Indian States and UTs, and to help leaders and change makers evaluate their performance on social, economic and environmental parameters.

The Index has been constructed spanning across 13 out of 17 SDGs (leaving out Goals 12, 13, 14 and 17). It tracks the progress of all the States and Union Territories (UTs) on a set of 62 National Indicators, measuring their progress on the outcomes of interventions and schemes of the Government of India.

The Index can be useful to States/UTs in assessing their starting point on the SDGs in the following ways:

- Support States/UTs to benchmark their progress against national targets and performance of their peers to understand reasons for differential performance and devise better strategies to achieve the SDGs by 2030.
- Support States/UTs to identify priority areas in which they need to invest and improve by enabling them to measure incremental progress.
- Highlight data gaps related across SDGs for India to develop its statistical systems at the national and State levels.

Progress by the states

- India has become the first country in the goal to measure the goals at a sub-national level.
- Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have emerged as the top performing states in the country with score of 69 on the SDG India Index. Chandigarh has topped the list among the UTs.
- Assam, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are at the bottom of the SDG Index. Such states need to focus a lot on the goals to improve.
- To achieve the SDG Index Government of India has launched many programmes focussed on Gender Equality, climate change and resource mobilisation. But still there are several issues like unequal distribution of resources in several regions, high air pollution in several cities, gender inequality, etc.

- Efforts are being done to get cleaner fuel, eliminate all single-use plastic by 2022, explore solar energy under International Solar Alliance, improving health and sanitation, ending open defecation by 2019 through the Swachh Bharat programme in India. All such efforts will help in making progress towards achieving the SDGs.

Way forward

At the core of this global agenda for 2030 is the principle of universality: 'Leave No One Behind'. It is critical to the implementation of these targets that they should be relevant to all governments and actors. Development in all its dimensions must be inclusive of all people, everywhere, and should be built through the participation of everyone, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized.

6. Rajasthan's government abolished minimum education criteria

Context:

The Rajasthan government recently abolished the condition of a minimum educational qualification to contest local body elections.

Minimum educational qualification to contest local body elections:

- In March 2015, the Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Amendment Act stipulated minimum educational qualifications for citizens who wanted to contest elections at the local level.
- It required candidates contesting for zila parishads and panchayat samitis to have passed Class X. Those contesting sarpanch elections have to be Class VIII pass. In the scheduled areas, the eligibility has been fixed at Class V pass.
- Similarly, in Haryana, a new law makes it mandatory for a general male candidate to pass Class X and a general woman candidate to pass Class VIII.
- For a Dalit male candidate passing Class VIII is mandatory and for a Dalit woman passing Class V is required.
- While the Constitution states the eligibility criteria for becoming MLAs and MPs in India in terms of, say, the age of a person, there are no required minimum educational qualifications for them or even the ministers.
- Additionally, in both states, candidates can contest only if they have functional toilets at home. In Haryana, these criteria deprive 68 per cent of the Dalit women and 41 per cent of the Dalit men from the right to contest panchayat elections.

Benefits attached with setting up of criteria:

- It ensures that candidates with basic education enables to more effectively discharge various duties which befall the elected representatives.

- Better decision making and administrative efficiency.
- Will inspire others and motivate others to get education
- It will help to deal with social evils in the rural areas like getting above caste system and untouchability etc.
- Educated representatives can understand the things in better way and can implement them in much efficient way

Downside of setting up criteria:

- In India, which still has 35% of the world's illiterate population, it is unfair to propose a move that can potentially disenfranchise a substantial population of the country, solely based on its education levels.
- Exclusion of most of the people hence denying Equality of opportunity under Art 14
- The new government's move should be welcomed because decisions such as these will loop in more from the underprivileged sections, particularly Dalits and women, whose educational levels are in no way a reflection of their desire to be educated or their efficiency, and rather speak more about the disadvantages of the social locations they come from.
- Wisdom is more important than education Indian education system does not guarantee wisdom.

Way forward:

It can be concluded that the present scenario of India doesn't allow it to take such step. Better implementation of RTE improving literacy rate, improving quality of education are the area where government should focus. Once the country achieve 100% literacy rate, this move will be beneficial for country.

7. Ross Island is now Netaji Dweep

Context:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday announced renaming of three islands of the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago as a tribute to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

Key Facts:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 30, 2018 announced the renaming of three islands of Andaman and Nicobar on the occasion of 75th anniversary of Tricolour hoisting by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in Port Blair.
- The Prime Minister announced that, the Ross Island has been renamed as Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Dweep, the Neil Island would now be known as Shaheed Dweep and the Havelock Island as Swaraj Dweep.

- On this occasion, Mr Modi also released a commemorative stamp, its first-day cover and a 75 rupees coin on this special day. He also announced setting up of a deemed university after Netaji Bose.

Ross Islands prominence:

- Netaji Subhash Chand Bose Island, Port Blair is in the Andaman Islands of India.
- This Island the erstwhile capital for the most of Andaman Islands from 1858 until an earthquake in 1941.
- Netaji Subhash Chand Bose Island was also the base for the British Administrator of the penal colony in Port Blair.
- In 1941, the Japanese converted the site into POW camp, and built war installations, remnants of which can still be seen. It now lies deserted, and the few signs of its colonial glory, such as the Chief Commissioner's house and the Presbyterian church, are dilapidated and overgrown. The area is now under the control of Indian Navy.

8. ASI declared 6 monuments of national importance in 2018

Context:

The 125-year-old Old High Court Building in Nagpur, Maharashtra, and two Mughal-era monuments in Agra, Haveli of Agha Khan and Hathi Khana — are among the six monuments declared protected and of national importance by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in 2018.

Heritage Sites:

- Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) takes up a survey for documenting/reporting ancient monuments/sites through exploration, and that a village-to-village survey and conservation of monuments is a continuous process.
- The ancient Neemrana Baori in Rajasthan's Alwar district; the Group of Temples at Ranipur Jharail in Odisha's Bolangir; and the Vishnu Temple in Kotali, Pithoragarh district, Uttarkhand, are the three other monuments that have been listed.
- In 2016 and 2017, no new monument was included in the list of sites of national importance. The last monument to be included in the list, in 2015, was the Vishnu Temple in Nadavayal in Kerala's Wayanad district.

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958:

- According to the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958, an "Ancient Monument means any structure, erection or monument, or any tumulus or place of interment, or any cave, rock-sculpture, inscription or monolith which is of historical, archaeological or artistic interest and which has been in existence for not less than 100 years."

- There were 3,686 centrally protected monuments/sites under the ASI in the country; the number has now increased to 3,693. Uttar Pradesh (745 monuments/sites), Karnataka (506) and Tamil Nadu (413) have the highest number of ASI-maintained sites.
- According to information available with the Ministry of Culture, about 321 of these centrally protected monuments/sites have been encroached upon.

9. FAKE NEWS

Context : The government has sought public comments on the proposed amendments to the Information Technology (IT) Act that seek to make it mandatory for platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter to trace “originator” of “unlawful” information, while also removing such content within 24 hours after being notified to curb crimes like mob lynching.

What is Fake News?

Fake news refers to the deliberate creation of misinformation or hoaxes spread via traditional print and broadcast news media or online social media shaping the belief of people around the nation and world.

Nature of fake news

- **Social media in campaign:** It is used to promote electoral programme and encourage anti-liberal sentiments as seen in Trump campaign. They offer a quick way to convey one-sided information or opinion, without the option or capability to verify the authenticity of this information or to present the opposite opinion for the sake of balance.
- **Fake news creating Bubble phenomenon:** The users with matching political views exchange one-sided information and opinions that suit their own convictions, reinforcing them even further, even if those were based on false information.
- **Social media distancing people:** It deprives people of human contact and the accompanying intimacy and exchange of opinions, which could lead to changing a wrong impression or correcting an inaccurate belief.
- **Ever greening of fake news websites:** There are thousands of “fake news” websites have emerged, offering false information to an audience that is used to traditional media doing the fact-checking for it and that believes anything that appears on a presentable webpage.
- **Igniting extremist sentiments:** The ‘fake news’ perpetuates, previously locally found, extremist ideas and groups together dangerously minded people eg- Neo-Nazis in Germany, Separatists in Kashmir.

Is it a recent issue?

No, In 1964, three North Vietnamese torpedo boats confronted a United States destroyer which was on an espionage mission in the Gulf of Tonkin.

The destroyer fired first, and one North Vietnamese vessel was destroyed; the U.S. ship sustained one bullet hole. The next day, the U.S. said, two of their destroyers were attacked in a second encounter. There was no second attack. Intelligence officials removed that fact from their reports to the political executive, and the media did the rest. The Vietnam War was the result.

Other Examples:

- US election results was a quite a shocker that Donald Trump would emerge victorious, was not an expected outcome. It has also been acknowledged that for most Americans this was a bitterly divided election.
- While, In India an online hoax emerged more than a year ago in eastern India claiming strangers were sedating and abducting children. Six men falsely accused of snatching kids off the streets were killed by mobs in Jharkhand state.
- Ethnic Violence: led by deception internet content in Myanmar and beating of Assamese students in Bangalore in 2012 and Antagonism which led by malicious rumors and fake news during Kaveri water dispute seen in Karnataka especially Bangalore.

Who is to be blamed for Fake news?

Social media companies present themselves as convenient scapegoats in such issues. Most of this content falls under the definition of what is known as **UGC (User Generated Content)**. Further, at least 60-70% of the content that is generated on social media websites and even on platforms such as WhatsApp, is all user generated. Thus, it makes very little sense to hold these people responsible because at the end of the day, they are only providing a channel, a conduit, a medium or a platform for dissemination and nothing beyond that.

Some key suggestions of the IT [Intermediaries Guidelines (Amendment) Rules] 2018

- Provide info sought by any govt. agency within 72 hours.
- Enable tracing the originator of information on the platform.
- Disable access to unlawful acts within 24 hours of being notified.
- Deploy automated tools to identify and disable access to unlawful content.
- Report cyber security incidents with the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team.

Measures that can be taken:

- Heavy punitive measures should be taken for whosoever commits the crime of spreading the fake news
- There should be grievance redressal mechanisms and arbitration spaces to resolve issues.

- Digital media literacy among people to increase scrutiny and feedbacks of the content.
- Technical solutions that assess the credibility of information circulating online are also needed.

Way Forward

There is nothing called absolute freedom. There is only responsible liberty and constitutionally guaranteed liberty. We all know the reality that there is fake news on the ground. Yes, there are many grey areas which need to be clarified. But, we should be guarded against the evil that fake news can have an effect where people are lynched and killed on the street. We don't live in an absolutely nihilistic society. There are some mutually agreeable guidelines that we have to find. There are some guidelines that we must follow and the Government has to take up the right step.

International Relations

10. Back to power

Context:

Recently, the general elections held in Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina's party leads the Grand Alliance, has romped back to power for an unprecedented fourth term in office.

The significance of this election

The political reality for Bangladesh revolves a couple of factors:

- For the first time in a decade, all the political parties took part in the election (the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, or the BNP, boycotted the 2014 election). In other words, this time voting was based on an inclusive election.
- This was the first time a general election was held under a political government since the fall of the Hussain Muhammad Ershad military regime in 1990.

Inclusive elections:

Inclusive elections provide equal opportunities for all eligible citizens to participate as voters in selecting their representatives and as candidates for election to government. This right to participate is a broad concept and can only be subject to reasonable restrictions that are provided by law.

The earlier elections:

The earlier stipulation of elections being supervised by a caretaker administration, introduced in the final stages of General Ershad's regime and carried on till the period of the Fakhruddin Ahmed-led military-backed caretaker government (between January 2007 and early 2009), was scrapped in 2011 through a constitutional amendment by the Awami League government which assumed office in January 2009. Despite protests from the Opposition against the move, the Hasina government remained unmoved. It stuck to the justified position that a government elected for five years cannot morally and logically hand over power to an unelected administration for three months before a new elected government comes into office.

From trauma to victory:

- For Ms. Hasina, politics has been a long journey from personal trauma following the assassination of nearly her entire family in a violent coup in August 1975 to her rise to political prominence in the years since she took charge of the Awami League.
- She has been chief of the Awami League since 1981, when she was persuaded to return home from exile in India by senior party leaders, including Mr. Hossain.

- Her return galvanised a faction-ridden party into coming together as a strong political force, a feat which resulted in her leading it to electoral victory for the first time in 21 years in June 1996.
- Ms. Hasina's assumption of office as Prime Minister was certainly significant from the perspective of Bangladesh's history.
- One of the earliest priorities for her government was a repeal of the infamous Indemnity Ordinance, promulgated in the post-coup circumstances and subsequently accorded legal sanction by a Parliament dominated by supporters of General Ziaur Rahman, Bangladesh's first military ruler.
- The ordinance had blocked any questioning of the coup as well as a trial of the assassins of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family in any court of law.
- Five of the assassins were tried and executed in January 2010.
- The Hasina government took steps to bring some prominent Bengali collaborators of the occupation Pakistan army in 1971 to trial. These collaborators were tried by specially constituted war crimes tribunals and hanged.
- In effect, on Ms. Hasina's watch, the impunity which the 1975 assassins and 1971 collaborators had enjoyed was brought to an end.

Steering the economy

- Remittances from Bangladeshi working abroad have registered a significant rise, the ready-made garments industry has been performing well, growth has gone up, and massive infrastructure projects have been undertaken.
- In the field of foreign affairs, the government has based its approach to the outside world on pragmatism, thus successfully preserving a balance in Bangladesh's relations with India, China and Russia.
- The government has also found appreciation from the international community in its treatment of the Rohingya refugees — nearly 1 million refugees have found shelter in Bangladesh following their expulsion from Myanmar.
- It has gone out of its way to ensure the safety of the refugees even as it tries, rather fitfully, to strike a deal with Myanmar on the return of the Rohingya.

Conclusion:

In a country where politics has often been vulnerable to extra-constitutional interference, as in the coups and counter-coups of the mid-1970s followed by the emergence of two military regimes in quick succession, and where national history has been massively distorted by those who exercised power between 1975 and 1996, Ms. Hasina has turned out to be the most powerful political leader in the country's history, after her father Sheikh Mujibur

Rahman. Her three terms in office, and now a promised fourth, make her the longest-serving head of government in Bangladesh.

In the next five years, it will be the government's responsibility to go beyond an emphasis on economic progress to ensure rule of law and democracy, in the form of a properly functional Parliament, a free judiciary, and an efficient executive.

11. Boost to plain packaging

Context:

This year Thailand and Saudi Arabia will join a growing club of nations introducing plain packaging of **tobacco** products.

Tobacco regulation by plain packaging:

- Plain packaging standardizes the appearance of tobacco products. Other than brand and product names displayed in a standard colour and font style, it prohibits the use of logos, colours, brand images or promotional information.
- Besides increasing the effectiveness of health warnings, the idea is to reduce the attractiveness of tobacco products, with no scope for using packaging to advertise and promote consumption.
- Thailand and Saudi Arabia are the first in the Asian and Arab regions, respectively, to adopt the tough measure in order to curb tobacco consumption
- Australia became the first country to introduce plain packaging following the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) guidelines.
- It has also been implemented in France and the United Kingdom (both 2016), Norway and Ireland (both 2017) and New Zealand and Hungary (both 2018).
- It will be implemented in Uruguay (2019) and Slovenia (2020). The move is under process or being considered in 14 more countries.



WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) guidelines:

- The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) is the first global evidence-based public health treaty that recognises the right of all people to the highest standard of health.
- The Treaty was developed by countries in response to the globalization of the tobacco epidemic.

- There are currently 180 Parties to the Convention.
- India has been the forerunner in ratification of this public health treaty and was the 7th Country to ratify the Convention in 2004.
- India provided a leadership role in the negotiations of FCTC and was also the Regional Coordinator for the South-East Asia Region.
- India ratified the treaty on 5th February 2004 and is therefore obligated to comply with the treaty provisions and its guidelines to reduce tobacco consumption globally.

Indian government stands on controlling Tobacco:

- A study on the economic burden of tobacco-related diseases in India said that the estimated total cost attributable to tobacco use was around Rs 1 lack crore in 2011.
- This is 12% more than the combined state and central government expenditure on healthcare in that year, and 1.16% of India's GDP
- In April 2016, India increased the size of graphic pictorial warnings, by 85%, on the packaging of tobacco products (both front and back).
- Health advocates have long argued for prominently displayed pictures of the impacts of tobacco consumption. These, sometimes grotesque depictions of tumours, are more effective than smaller pictures or written warnings.
- The Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) 2016-17, released by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare adds validity to this. The study has found that the warnings play a role in motivating more than half the number of smokers who quit.
- It highlighted that around 60% of cigarette smokers and around 50% of bidi smokers had thought of quitting.
- The new rules have effectively controlled tobacco and saved around 80 lakh lives in India

Way forward:

Along with higher taxes and large pictorial warnings, plain packaging can serve as a tool to deter new users and prompt existing users to quit. plain packaging along with other measures led to 0.55 percentage point reduction in smoking prevalence in Australia, translating into at least 1,18,000 fewer smokers.

12. GAFA tax

Context:

French finance minister Bruno Le Maire announced the introduction of a GAFA tax—named after Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon—on large technology and internet companies in France from 1 January 2019. Similar proposals had surfaced in both the UK and the European Union (EU) earlier.

The French proposal is set to target only those profitable companies that have heavy annual global revenue.

Rationale behind devising a separate framework to tax online service providers:

- Existing tax norms that are framed envisaging brick and mortar business models are not suitable to regulate online services.
- This is because the digital economy is characterized by a unique system of value creation resulting from a combination of factors such as sales functions, algorithms and personal information of users.
- What distinguishes technology companies from traditional businesses is user participation in creating value, which, in turn, translates into revenue.
- Although using consumer data to improve businesses is not exclusive to the digital economy, the unique ability of digital businesses lies in their power to analyze big data collected via constant user interaction and data mining.

Why India need Accurate Digital Service Tax Framework:

- The need for India to consider the adoption of an accurate methodology to assess value created in India through user contributions so that digital service providers in India can be taxed more effectively.
- To develop a simple, approximate tax rule, the Finance Act, 2016, accommodated a 6% equalisation levy (EL) in lieu of specified digital services provided to residents in India.
- However, EL can only be imposed on advertising services. Thereafter, through the Finance Act, 2018, the Income Tax Act was amended to expand the meaning of business connection to “significant economic presence”, which includes digital services.
- As a result, any income attributable to significant economic presence is taxable in India.
- An entity can have significant economic presence in India if it
 - a) Provides data or software in India exceeding a payment threshold (yet to be notified) or
 - b) Engages in systematic and continuous solicitation of business activities to a prescribed number of users digitally.
- As the basis of attributability to Indian services/activities is not clear, this can raise a serious problem at the time of assessing income tax.
- In most jurisdictions at this point, entities are not taxed in the source country for the revenue generated with the help of this created value

Challenges and their Implications:

- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) acknowledges the need to tax value at its source and has identified

different ways in which companies operating in the digital economy create this value.

- It has been unable to devise a definite method of assessing the value that users generate in a source country. Due to this anomaly, the GAFA tax and other proposals floated in the EU, UK and France impose an approximate digital tax of 3% on the revenue generated by entities that operate in the digital economy above a certain threshold.
- This resulted mostly from the slow ongoing process of quantifying user contribution and political pressure to resist further delay of taxing these entities.
- The lack of consensus is exacerbated due to a difference in the interests of developed (residence) countries and developing (source) countries.
- The imposition of an EL instead of a more precise assessment of user contribution poses several questions regarding its enforceability.
- For example, countries like France have suggested imposing such an interim tax only on high profit big-tech businesses like Google and Amazon, making net valuation the metric for determining threshold.
- Moreover, these unilateral measures are all interim policies attempting to get some taxes while trying to reach a consensus. People have argued such steps are disruptive of the international taxation framework.
- An even bigger challenge that the OECD highlights, however, is that the assessment of value of user contribution in the source country is subjective. So the government of the source country would always try to argue that the value of user contribution that has translated into the entity's revenue is far more than what the state where the entity is established would claim it to be. This could, in turn, create greater friction and undermine the efficacy of double taxation agreements.

Way Forward:

It is imperative, therefore, that policymakers deliberate upon the possibility and feasibility of adopting a methodology to assess value creation objectively to tax digital players more effectively in the source country.

Economy

13. SHAKTI Scheme

Union Cabinet approved a Coal linkage policy named SHAKTI or the Scheme to Harness and Allocate Koyla (Coal) Transparently in India.

Objective: To auction long-term coal linkages to power companies.

Salient Features of the policy

- a) This policy will award fuel supply agreements to coal plants already holding letters of assurance (LoAs). It is issued to new consumers on being approved by the appropriate authority, based on recommendation of a committee constituted Specific terms & conditions of the LOA to be complied with within a stipulated time period for being eligible to enter into FSA for commencing coal supply.
- b) Thermal plants holding LoAs will be eligible to sign fuel supply pacts under the new policy after ensuring that all the conditions are met.
- c) Coal linkages would be awarded to state-owned power distribution companies (discoms). These, in turn, would assign linkages to state or central power generation companies via allocation, and Private units through auction.
- d) The independent power producers (IPPs) participating in the auction will bid for discounts on the existing tariff and this would be adjusted from the gross coal bills.
- e) Power plants will have to give discount on their tariffs to get linkages. This could lead to under-recovery by the units, but it is still better than no fuel supply.

Benefits of the policy

- It will ensure adequate supply of fuel to power plants, which are awaiting fuel supply.
- It will help power producers ensure fuel supplies in a coordinated manner.
- It is expected to reduce power costs to consumers.
- It will cut down on the use of imported coal.
- Fuel supply pact will help banks exposed to the power sector to cut down on NPAs.

14. Farm Loan Waivers and Their Impact

Context:

The farmer's agitations to resolve and look into their distress for the past two years, through various agitations and protests have caught national attention, which demands to pledge support from political leaders. And a farm loan waiver was among the first steps taken by the three new governments in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Chattisgarh.

Farm loan waivers eventually hurt farmers								
Such loan waivers today account for 0.45% of FY19BE of states								
							figures in billion rupees	
	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18BE	FY18RE	Total	FY19BE GSDP	% of GSDP
Uttar Pradesh	-	-	-	360	250	366	14,889	0.78
Maharashtra	-	-	-	-	167	268	27,961	0.36
Karnataka	-	-	-	-	39	79	14,087	0.28
Punjab	-	-	-	15	4	46	5,182	0.82
Rajasthan	-	-	-	-	-	20	9,398	0.21
Andhra Pradesh	50	7	35	36	36	41	8,707	0.42
Telangana	42	40	40	36	32	-	-	-
Total	92	48	75	447	527	361	80,223	0.45

Notes: FY=financial year; GSDP state GDP; BE=budget estimate; RE=revised estimate; Andhra Pradesh and Telangana had staggered their farm loan in 2014

Sources: State budgets, JM Financial

In the past

Since Independence, one of the primary objectives of India's agricultural policy has been to improve farmers' access to institutional credit and reduce their dependence on informal credit. As informal sources of credit are mostly usurious, the government has improved the flow of adequate credit through the nationalization of commercial banks, and the establishment of Regional Rural Banks and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development.

Why is it important?

Even though agriculture contributes about 15% to India's gross domestic product, a majority of the population directly or indirectly depends on the sector for livelihood. After the post-reforms policy regime in 1991, agriculture has been facing multiple crises. The rising pressure of population on land and agriculture, besides sluggishness in the shifting of workforce away from agriculture, has adversely affected small and marginal farmers. Rising costs, drop in income and increasing incidence of indebtedness among small and marginal farmers manifested in a spate of suicides over the years.

Is it a Myth that it helps farmers or just a populist measure?

- Debt relief packages destroy the credit culture. A World Bank research paper shows that for a standard deviation of one in bailout exposure, there is a 4-6 per cent decline in the number of loans. Reserve Bank of India data shows that non-performing assets in agriculture for commercial banks rose after the 2008 debt waiver programme. Between 2009-10 and 2012-13, NPAs of SCBs (in agriculture) rose from ¹ 10,353 crore to ¹ 30,200 crore .The World bank report says that, the claim of the supporters of the bailout programmes that it has a positive impact on rural economy is also wrong.
- Clearly, a major proportion of farmers remain outside the ambit of a policy of a subsidized rate of interest, and, for that matter, of loan waiver schemes announced by respective State governments. In other words, this sop provides relief to the relatively better off and lesser-in-

number medium and large farmers without having much impact on their income and consumption. This anomaly can be rectified only if the credit market is expanded to include agricultural labourers, marginal and small land holders. It is, therefore, important to revisit the credit policy with a focus on the outreach of banks and financial inclusion.

What can be done?

The government along with the farmers' lobby should desist from clamouring for loan waivers as it provides instant temporary relief from debt but largely fails to contribute to farmers' welfare in the long run. It should be understood that writing off loans would not only put pressure on already constrained fiscal resources but also bring in the challenge of identifying eligible beneficiaries and distributing the amount.

Way Ahead

The agriculture sector needs government support but loan waivers are not the solution. On the contrary, expenditure on loan waivers will eventually leave less fiscal space for public expenditure in agriculture. India needs massive investment in areas such as irrigation, water conservation, better storage facilities, market connectivity and agricultural research. The problems in Indian agriculture are structural. They need long-term solutions. Loan waivers will only end up complicating the problem. The Indian economy has suffered a lot due to competitive populism in the past. It's time parties and governments addressed the real issues.

15. FATF Puts Pakistan, Lanka, nine other in deficiencies list

Context:

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has identified 11 jurisdictions, including Pakistan and Sri Lanka, as having strategic deficiencies in anti-money laundering (AML) measures and combating of financing of terrorism (CFT).

Countries under FATF Watch list:

- According to a statement from the Reserve Bank of India, the other nine jurisdictions are: The Bahamas, Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Serbia, Syria, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia and Yemen
- Pakistan made a high-level political commitment to work with the FATF and APG to strengthen its AML/CFT regime and to address its strategic counter-terrorist financing-related deficiencies. Pakistan will work to implement its action plan to accomplish various objectives
- Sri Lanka should continue to work on implementing its action plan to address its strategic deficiencies, including by enhancing risk-based supervision high-risk DNFBPs (Designated Non-Financial Businesses or Profession), and demonstrating effective implementation of its targeted financial sanctions obligations related to proliferation financing.

Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

- FATF is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 by the Ministers of its member jurisdictions.
- Its objectives are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
- FATF monitors the progress of its members in implementing necessary measures, reviews money laundering and terrorist financing techniques and counter-measures, and promotes the adoption and implementation of appropriate measures globally.
- The FATF's decision making body, the FATF Plenary, meets three times a year and updates these statements

16. Leveling the platform for online vendors

Context:

The government announced new e-commerce rules:

- Restricting players from selling the products of companies in which they have a stake.
- Capping the percentage of inventory that a vendor can sell through a marketplace entity (IT platform of an e-commerce entity) or its group companies.
- To curb the practice of deep discounts, the government said they cannot directly or indirectly influence the price of goods and services, and also brought in a new set of rules that bar the sale of products exclusively in one marketplace.

New rules:

- From February 1, 2019, e-commerce companies running marketplace platforms such as Amazon and Flip kart cannot sell products through companies, and of companies, in which they hold equity stake.
- While foreign direct investment is not permitted in the inventory-based model of e-commerce, the clarification put a cap of 25% on the inventory that a marketplace entity or its group companies can buy from a vendor.
- Inventory of a vendor will be deemed to be controlled by e-commerce marketplace entity if more than 25% of purchases of such vendor are from the marketplace entity or its group companies.

Difference between marketplace model and inventory model in e-commerce:

The new FDI policy regulation in the ecommerce sector has allowed 100% FDI in marketplace model of e-commerce under automatic route. Correspondingly, no FDI is allowed in the inventory model.

Marketplace model:

- According to the FDI policy guideline, “Marketplace model of e-commerce means providing of an information technology platform by an e-commerce entity on a digital and electronic network to act as a facilitator between buyer and seller.”
- Marketplaces are platforms that enable a large, fragmented base of buyers and sellers to discover price and transact with one another in an environment that is efficient, transparent and trusted.

The main feature of the market place model:

- The e-commerce firm like flipkart, snapdeal, amazon etc. will be providing a platform for customers to interact with a selected number of sellers.
- When an individual is purchasing a product from flipkart, he/she will be actually buying it from a registered seller in flipkart.
- The product is not directly sold by flipkart. Here, flipkart is just a website platform where a consumer meets a seller.
- Inventory, stock management, logistics etc are not supposed to be actively done by the ecommerce firm.

Inventory model:

According to the FDI policy, “Inventory model of ecommerce means an ecommerce activity where inventory of goods and services is owned by e-commerce entity and is sold to the consumers directly.”

The main feature of inventory model:

- The customer buys the product from the ecommerce firm.

Marketplace	Inventory-led
Pros	
Highly scalable	Speedier delivery
Wide product portfolio & large number of sellers	Better quality control – seller & product, both
Investor friendly model	Best customer experience and trust
Cons	
Difficult to conduct quality check	Difficult to scale
Shipping costs are higher	High fixed costs
Difficult to build customer's trust and loyalty	Restricted cash flow

- He/she manages an inventory (stock of products), interfaces with customers, runs logistics and involves in every aspects of the business.
- Alibaba of China is following the inventory model.
- Impacts of consumers and small retailers:
- Consumers may no longer enjoy the deep discounts offered by retailers that have a close association with marketplace entities.
- The absence of large retailers will, however, bring relief to small retailers selling on these platforms.
- Traders running traditional brick-and-mortar stores, who now find it difficult to compete with the large e-commerce retailers with deep pockets, could gain. Small vendors should get enough chances to participate in the online business.
- Many small and medium enterprises have been of late selling through e-commerce portals fatalistically in the realization that if you cannot beat them, join them.
- But they lose out to competitors supported by the e-commerce portal both by way of equity stakes and otherwise.

Way Forward:

- In order to keep a track of such compliance, a new compliance has now been introduced wherein an e-commerce portal is now required to furnish a certificate along with a report of statutory auditor to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), confirming compliance of above guidelines, by 30 September of every year for the preceding financial year.
- This will ensure that the RBI is completely aware of the extent of compliance by the major e-commerce players swearing by the marketplace model.
- The e-commerce reforms comes hot on the heels of better and improved consumer protection ushered through a fresh Consumer Protection Bill 2018 passed by the Lok Sabha that also seeks to discipline online sales.
- The presented e-commerce reforms is to provide a level-playing field for bricks and mortar stores by and large owned by the desis.

Conclusion:

The government has said that e-commerce entities will have to maintain a level playing field, and ensure that they do not directly or indirectly influence the sale price of goods and services.

The policy mandates that no seller can sell its products exclusively on any marketplace platform, and that all vendors on the e-commerce platform should be provided services in a “fair and non-discriminatory manner”.

Services include fulfilment, logistics, warehousing, advertisement, payments, and financing among others.

Marketplaces are meant for genuine, independent sellers, many of whom are MSMEs (Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises). These changes will enable a level playing field for all sellers, helping them leverage the reach of e-commerce.

17. Reserves Ratio of RBI is the highest

Context:

Analysis of the balance sheets of the central banks says Ratios of central banks of only South Africa and Russia are higher.

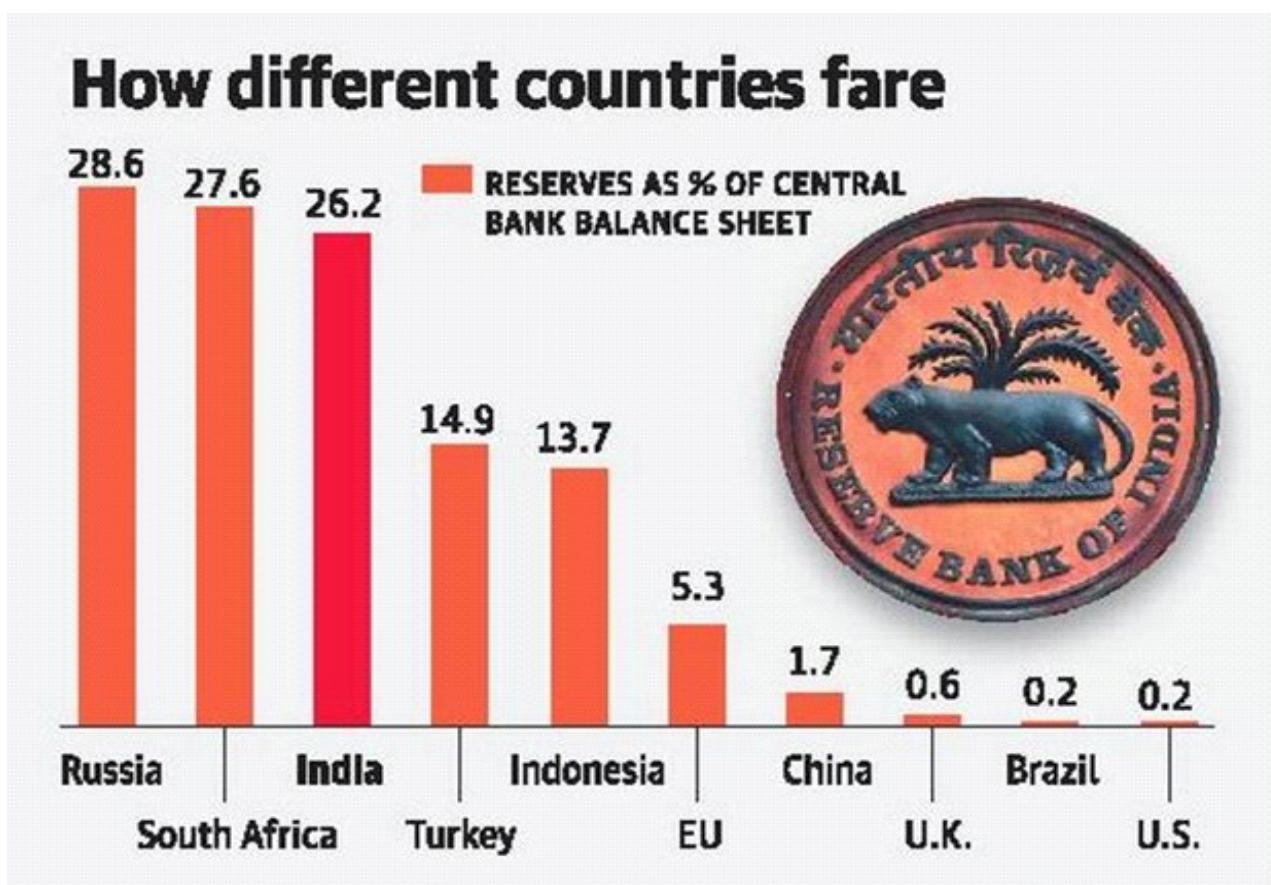
What's in news?

Analysis of the balance sheets of the central banks of 10 comparable economies shows that the RBI's reserves as a percentage of its balance sheet are among the highest, a report by consultancy firm Quantum Advisors found.

The bulk of these reserves are notional and thus their value can only be unlocked when the underlying assets are sold. This makes transferring the excess reserves to the government more difficult.

BRICS countries:

- According to the report the central banks of the BRICS countries, Fragile Five nations and three developed economies, found that the RBI's reserves — which a separate analysis shows was about Rs. 10.5 lakh crore — form 26.2% its balance sheet.



Source: Quantum Advisors' analysis of annual reports of respective central banks

- Only two central banks — those of South Africa and Russia — have a reserve ratio higher than this.
- The other two BRICS nations, China and Brazil, have reserve ratios of 1.7% and 0.2%
- On comparing their balance sheets, you do notice that the RBI indeed has higher reserves.

Reserve Bank of India (RBI):

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is India's central banking institution, which controls the issuance and supply of the Indian rupee. Until the Monetary Policy Committee was established in 2016, it also controlled monetary policy in India.

Conclusion:

The bulk of those reserves are arising out of the revaluation of its assets, i.e. over the years as the rupee depreciated against the U.S. dollar, Great Britain Pound, euro etc, gold and foreign assets held by the RBI when translated into the current rupee value, leads to an increase in its asset value.

18. Worst of the NPA crisis is over, says RBI report

Context:

Financial Stability Report has been released by RBI observed that Gross NPAs ratio declined to 10.8% in September 2018 from 11.5 % in March 2018.

Financial Stability Report (FSR):

- The Reserve Bank of India today released the Financial Stability Report (FSR) June 2015, the eleventh issue of its half yearly publication.
- The FSR reflects the collective assessment of the Sub-Committee of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) on risks to financial stability, as also the resilience of the financial system.
- Besides, the Report discusses issues relating to development and regulation of the financial sector.

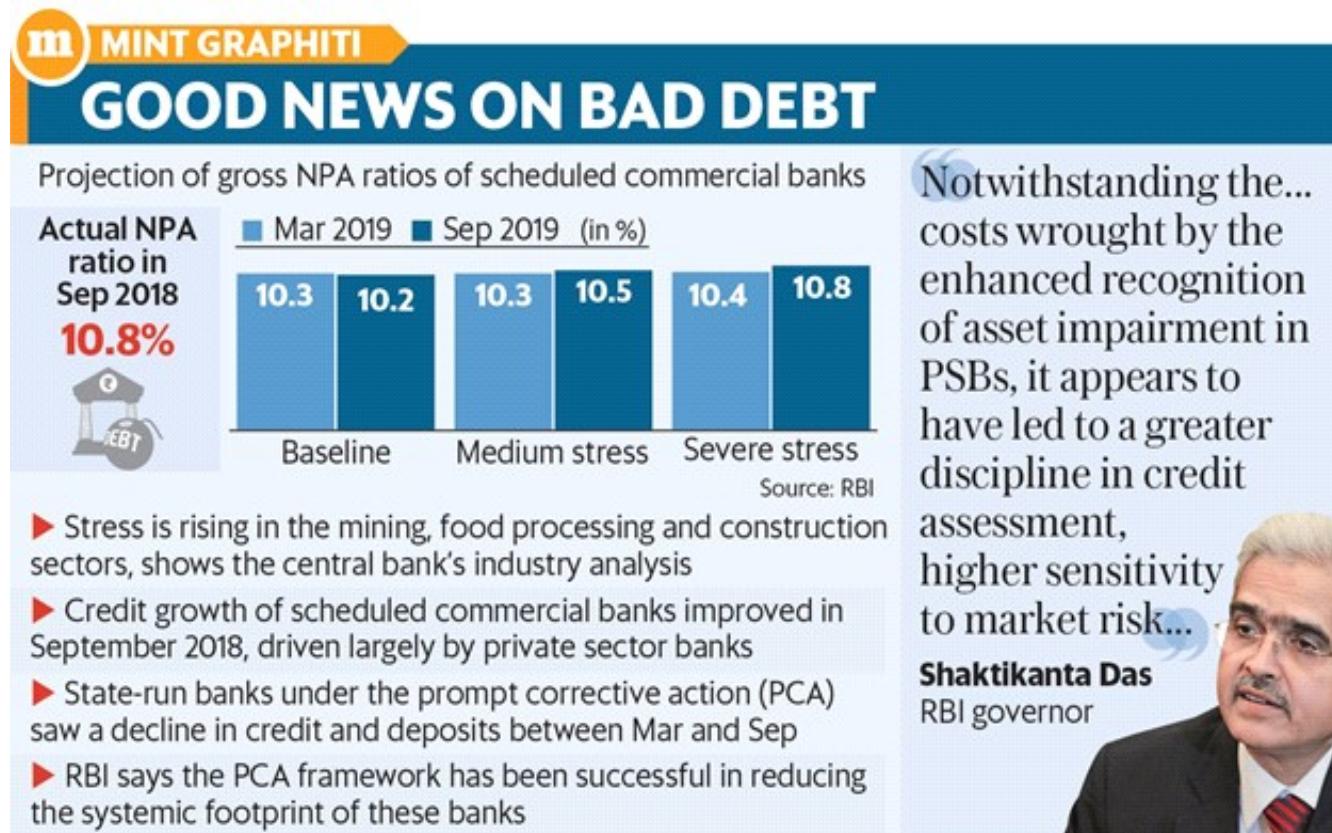
Decline in the gross NPA ratio:

- The gross non-performing asset (NPA) ratio may decline from 10.8% in September 2018 to 10.3% in March 2019 and 10.2% in September 2019, RBI said in its biannual Financial Stability Report (FSR).
- The asset quality of banks showed an improvement, with the **gross non-performing assets** (GNPA) ratio of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) declining from 11.5% in March 2018 to 10.8% in September 2018. But an industry analysis by RBI shows that stress is raising in the mining, food processing and construction sectors.
- The report pointed out that credit growth of banks improved in September 2018, driven largely by private sector banks. However, the

performance of banks witnessed an overall improvement, with credit growth increasing from 5.9% in March 2018 to 9.1% in September 2018 and deposit growth increasing from 3.2% to 5% during the same period.

Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) Framework:

- PCA is a process or mechanism to ensure that banks don't go bust.
- Under it, RBI has put in place some trigger points to assess, monitor, control and take corrective actions on banks which are weak and troubled.



- According to latest PCA framework, banks to be placed under it are assessed on three parameters viz. Capital ratios, Asset Quality and Profitability.
- If banks breach of any risk threshold mentioned above, it results in invocation of PCA against them.
- Depending on the risk thresholds set in PCA rules, banks placed under it are restricted from expanding number of branches, staff recruitment and increasing size of their loan book.
- Other restrictions include higher provisions for bad loans and disbursal only to those companies whose borrowing is above investment grades.
- The 11 banks already under PCA framework are IDBI Bank, UCO Bank, Bank of India (BoI), Central Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank, Dena Bank, Oriental Bank of Commerce (OBC), Bank of Maharashtra (BoM), United Bank of India, Corporation Bank and Allahabad Bank.

- Since PCA framework restricts amount of loans banks can extend, placing 11 PSBs under it will put pressure on credit being made available to companies especially MSMEs.
- Large companies have access to corporate bond market so they may not be impacted immediately.
- These banks may take at least another 6-9 months before they report any noticeable improvement in key regulatory indicators, which will help them come out of PCA.

Impact of PCA:

- Operational performance of PSBs has improved in April-June 2018 quarter, with steep reduction in net losses, increase in recoveries and significant improvement in provision coverage ratio.
- Besides, government is also providing PSUs adequate capital when required.
- Some of capital already has been given, as a recovery is taking place and there is possibility that some banks will not need it.

Geography and Environment

19. Invasive mussel in Kochi backwaters

Context:

Recently Scientists have confirmed the presence of the invasive black-striped mussel *Mytilopsis sallei* in Kochi's backwaters.

Black-striped mussel:

- The black-striped mussel, native to the South and Central Americas, is an invasive species in most parts of the world. In India, it has been recorded from the ports of Mumbai and Vishakapatnam.
- It spreads primarily through the discharge of ballast waters of ships.
- The fast-growing species which dwells in shallow water can tolerate a wide variety of environmental conditions (salinity, water temperatures and oxygen levels), which helps them thrive in the new areas they colonise.



- Though tiny, these invasive mussels are 'biofoulers': organisms that accumulate on wet surfaces, causing huge ecological and economic losses.
- They can cause the deterioration of coastal infrastructure. The

mussels can displace native species of clams from their coastal habitats and cause a reduction in native biodiversity.

20. National Policy on Biofuels - 2018

Salient Features:

1. The Policy categorises biofuels as "Basic Biofuels" viz. First Generation (1G) bioethanol & biodiesel and "Advanced Biofuels" - Second Generation (2G) ethanol, Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) to drop-in fuels, Third Generation (3G) biofuels, bio-CNG etc. to enable extension of appropriate financial and fiscal incentives under each category.
2. The Policy expands the scope of raw material for ethanol production by allowing use of Sugarcane Juice, Sugar containing materials like Sugar Beet, Sweet Sorghum, Starch containing materials like Corn, Cassava, Damaged food grains like wheat, broken rice, Rotten Potatoes, unfit for human consumption for ethanol production.
3. Farmers are at a risk of not getting appropriate price for their produce

during the surplus production phase. Taking this into account, the Policy allows use of surplus food grains for production of ethanol for blending with petrol with the approval of National Biofuel Coordination Committee.

4. With a thrust on Advanced Biofuels, the Policy indicates a viability gap funding scheme for 2G ethanol Bio refineries of Rs.5000 crore in 6 years in addition to additional tax incentives, higher purchase price as compared to 1G biofuels.
5. The Policy encourages setting up of supply chain mechanisms for biodiesel production from non-edible oilseeds, Used Cooking Oil, short gestation crops.
6. Roles and responsibilities of all the concerned Ministries/Departments with respect to biofuels have been captured in the Policy document to synergise efforts.

Expected Benefits:

- **Reduce Import Dependency:** One crore lit of E10 saves Rs.28 crore of forex at current rates. The ethanol supply year 2017-18 is likely to see a supply of around 150 crore litres of ethanol which will result in savings of over Rs.4000 crore of forex.
- **Cleaner Environment:** One crore lit of E-10 saves around 20,000 ton of CO₂ emissions. For the ethanol supply year 2017-18, there will be lesser emissions of CO₂ to the tune of 30 lakh ton. By reducing crop burning & conversion of agricultural residues/wastes to biofuels there will be further reduction in Green House Gas emissions.
- **Health benefits:** Prolonged reuse of Cooking Oil for preparing food, particularly in deep-frying is a potential health hazard and can lead to many diseases. Used Cooking Oil is a potential feedstock for biodiesel and its use for making biodiesel will prevent diversion of used cooking oil in the food industry.
- **MSW Management:** It is estimated that, annually 62 MMT of Municipal Solid Waste gets generated in India. There are technologies available which can convert waste/plastic, MSW to drop in fuels. One ton of such waste has the potential to provide around 20% of drop in fuels.
- **Infrastructural Investment in Rural Areas:** It is estimated that, one 100klpd bio refinery will require around Rs.800 crore capital investment. At present Oil Marketing Companies are in the process of setting up twelve 2G bio refineries with an investment of around Rs.10,000 crore. Further addition of 2G bio refineries across the Country will spur infrastructural investment in the rural areas.
- **Employment Generation:** One 100klpd 2G bio refinery can contribute 1200 jobs in Plant Operations, Village Level Entrepreneurs and Supply Chain Management.
- **Additional Income to Farmers:** By adopting 2G technologies, agricultural residues/waste which otherwise are burnt by the farmers

can be converted to ethanol and can fetch a price for these waste if a market is developed for the same. Also, farmers are at a risk of not getting appropriate price for their produce during the surplus production phase. Thus conversion of surplus grains and agricultural biomass can help in price stabilization.

Background:

In order to promote biofuels in the country, a National Policy on Biofuels was made by Ministry of New and Renewable Energy during the year 2009. Globally, biofuels have caught the attention in last decade and it is imperative to keep up with the pace of developments in the field of biofuels. Biofuels in India are of strategic importance as it augers well with the ongoing initiatives of the Government such as Make in India, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Skill Development and offers great opportunity to integrate with the ambitious targets of doubling of Farmers Income, Import Reduction, Employment Generation, Waste to Wealth Creation. Biofuels programme in India has been largely impacted due to the sustained and quantum non-availability of domestic feedstock for biofuel production which needs to be addressed.

Promoting Use of Compressed Bio Gas as Alternative Green Transport Fuel:

- Government is promoting the use of Compressed Bio Gas (CBG) as an alternative green transport fuel, which is purified and compressed biogas, produced through a process of anaerobic decomposition from various waste/ biomass sources including Municipal solid waste.
- In this direction, Oil PSUs have launched ‘Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation’ i.e. ‘SATAT’ initiative.
- Under this initiative, Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) and GAIL have invited Expression of interest (EOI) to procure CBG from potential entrepreneurs for establishment of 5000 CBG plants across the country with an estimated production of 15 MMT CBG per annum by 2023.
- To increase indigenous production of ethanol, the Government has taken many steps including re-introduction of administered price mechanism, opening of alternate route for ethanol production, Regular Interaction with States, IDR Act Amendment, Interest Subvention scheme namely – “Scheme for augmenting and enhancing ethanol production capacity”, National Policy on Biofuels – 2018, Fixation of differential price of ethanol from C heavy molasses, B heavy molasses/ partial sugarcane juice and 100% sugarcane juice.

21. The Vulture Diaries

Context:

The Cinereous vulture, a blacked-tipped pink beak that migrates from the mountainous regions of Europe and Asia to warmer places, including India was recently seen by birdwatchers in Jharkhand.

Birdwatchers call it a rare sighting

The Cinereous vulture (*Aegypius monachus*) draws its name from “monachus”, which means hooded (like a monk) in Latin. Earlier records of this migratory bird have revealed that it comes to northern parts of India up to Rajasthan, bird watchers and researchers were baffled to find it in Hazaribagh in Jharkhand. There are only 4,500 to 5,000 cinereous vultures left and the bird is classified as a near-threatened species in the IUCN Red list.

Vultures in Trouble

Vultures are vanishing around the world at an alarming rate. Of the 23 species of vultures in the world, 11 are currently threatened. These birds are declining due to poisoning from feeding on medicated cattle carcasses, power line collisions and loss of food and habitat. Vultures play a vital role in the environment by cleaning up carcasses and preventing the spread of disease. Conservationists around the world are monitoring populations and implementing measures to conserve vultures and their habitats.

In India

India has nine species of vultures in the wild. Three of these species, the white-backed, Long-billed and slender-billed vultures, underwent catastrophic population declines of greater than 90 percent in the mid-1990s. The birds are now listed as critically endangered.

Use of Diclofenac, Is it fatal?

The reason for bringing the vultures to the brink of extinction in South Asia mainly to the extensive use of diclofenac in treating cattle. Vultures that consumed the carcass of animals treated with diclofenac died with symptoms of kidney failure. ‘The presence of ‘Diclofenac,’ a veterinary non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), caused the massive death of vulture population in south Asia, has come down in many parts of south India. But several other drugs such as Aceclofenac, Carprofen, Flunixin, Ketoprofen, Nimesulide and Phenylbutazone that have been proven toxic to the vultures are still in use close to vulture habitats in many parts of south India.

- Diclofenac leads to renal failure in vultures damaging their excretory system [direct inhibition of uric acid secretion in vultures].
- Gyps species were the most affected by diclofenac.

Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)

It is an environmental treaty under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme, CMS brings together the States through which migratory animals pass, the Range States, and lays the legal foundation for internationally coordinated conservation measures throughout a migratory range.

As the only global convention specializing in the conservation of migratory species, their habitats and migration routes, CMS complements and co-

Saving vultures from extinction



operates with a number of other international organizations, NGOs and partners in the media as well as in the corporate sector.

Several species of vultures including **four from India on their migratory routes were awarded highest protection by the Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)**.

Conservation Efforts in India by Bombay Natural History Society

Way Forward:

In order to make the vulture conservation programme sustainable, BNHS has identified a set of action points as part of its India blueprint. This includes the following:

- Intensifying policy and public advocacy for drug ban enforcement
- Continued research for safer alternatives to the banned drugs
- Ensuring survival and scaling up of conservation breeding initiative
- Exploring a sustainable livestock sourcing project for feeding captive vultures through a community-based livelihood initiative
- Viable expansion of vulture safe zones
- Releasing captive-bred birds in safe zones
- Strengthening sensitization and monitoring activities.

22. Rat hole mining in Meghalaya

Context:

A coal mine in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills collapsed recently, trapping at least 15 workers who are feared dead. It has thrown light on a dangerous procedure known as "rat-hole mining".

Rat- hole Mining:

- Mining activity in Jaintia hills is a small scale venture controlled by individuals who own the land; it is a primitive mining method and has been in practice in Jaintia hills and the state for years now.
- The method of rat-hole mining involves digging pits ranging from five to 100 m² into the ground to reach the coal seam. Thereafter, tunnels are made into the seam sideways to extract he coal.
- Coal seams are reached by excavating the side edge of the hill slopes and then coal is extracted through a horizontal tunnel.
- The coal from the tunnel or pit is taken out and dumped on nearby un-mined area, from where it is carried to the larger dumping places near highways for its trade and transportation.
- The rat-hole mining is broadly of two types - side-cutting and box-cutting.
- In side-cutting procedure, narrow tunnels are dug on the hill slopes and workers go inside until they find the coal seam. The coal seam in hills of Meghalaya is very thin, less than 2 m in most cases.
- In the box-cutting type, a rectangular opening is made, varying from 10 to 100 sq m. Through this, a vertical pit, 100 to 400 feet deep, is dug. Once the coal seam is found, rat-hole-sized tunnels are dug horizontally through which workers can extract the coal.



Impacts of Rat hole mining in Meghalaya:

- Impact of such mining activities will affect the water quality of the region. It specifies that the water is severely affected by acid mine drainage originating from mines and spoils, leaching of heavy metals, organic enrichment and silting by coal and sand particles.
- The colour of water which in most of the rivers and streams in the mining area varies from brownish to reddish orange.
- The water also has high concentration of sulphates, iron and toxic heavy metals, low dissolved oxygen (DO) and high BOD, showing its degraded quality. This is getting to be a major source of air, water and soil pollution.
- Off road movement of trucks and other vehicles in the area causes f

further damage to the ecology of the area.

- **Risk to lives** - Due to rat-hole mining, during the rainy season, water flood into the mining areas resulting in death of many.
- If water has seeped into the cave, the worker can enter only after the water is pumped out.

National Green Tribunal (NGT) orders on mining:

- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has banned rat-hole mining in 2014, and retained the ban in 2015.
- The ban was on grounds of the practice being unscientific and unsafe for workers.
- The NGT order bans not only rat-hole mining but all “unscientific and illegal mining”. But orders of the Tribunal have been violated without exception.

Meghalaya Mines and Mineral Policy, 2012;

- Meghalaya Mines and Minerals Policy approved by the state cabinet to facilitate systematic and scientific utilization of mineral resources keeping in view the protection of environment, land, health and safety of people in and around the mining areas.
- The Meghalaya Mines and Minerals Policy, 2012 has been formulated with an aim to facilitate systematic, scientific and planned utilization of mineral resources and to streamline mineral based development of the State, keeping in view, protection of environment, land, health and safety of the people in and around the mining areas.
- The Policy will also dwell on ensuring optimal utilization of available mineral resources, realization of vast mineral potential, generate revenue for socio-economic development, uplift the economy of the State and enhance employment opportunities.

Drawbacks of Government:

- The State Government has failed to check illegal mining effectively. It has also not framed the mining policy, mining plan and the guidelines as directed under the orders of the Tribunal.
- **Protection:** Constitution's 6th Schedule intends to protect the community's ownership over its land and autonomy and consent over its nature of use.
- Coal mining currently underway in Meghalaya was a corruption of this Constitutional Provision.
- Private individuals with interests in earning monetary benefits from minerals vested under the land are engaging in coal mining.
- They are attempting to legitimize this act by claiming immunity through tribal autonomy over land ownership.

Way forward:

- GIS mapping of region for surveillance operations.
- Strict implementation of mines and minerals regulation act, 2016.
- Equipping of miners with state-of-art tools rather than outdated ones.
- We need to upgrade these ‘mineral hearts’ of India so that they turn out to be ecological reserves.

23. Biennial Update Report (BUR)

Context:

Union Cabinet has approved Submission of India’s second Biennial Update Report (BUR) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Background:

The submission of India’s second BUR would fulfil the obligation of India to furnish information regarding implementation of the convention, being a party. The scope of the BUR is to provide an update to India’s first BUR to the UNFCCC.

The second biennial update report aims to provide an update to India’s first biennial report to the United Nation’s body on climate change. The report contains five major components including national circumstances, national greenhouse gas inventory, mitigation actions, finance, technology and capacity building needs and support received and domestic monitoring, reporting and verification arrangements.

About the Report:

The submission of India’s second BUR would fulfil the obligation of India to furnish information regarding implementation of the convention, being a party.

The BUR contains five major components:

- National Circumstances
- National Greenhouse Gas Inventory
- Mitigation Actions, Finance, Technology
- Capacity Building Needs and Support Received and Domestic Monitoring
- Reporting and Verification (MRV)

The BUR has been prepared based on a range of studies conducted at the national level.

About UNFCCC:

- The UNFCCC was adopted in 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit, which marked the beginning of the international community’s first concerted effort to confront the problem of climate change.

- UNFCCC also known as the Rio Convention, the UNFCCC established a framework for action to stabilise concentrations of greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere.
- The UNFCCC entered into force in 1994, and nearly all of the world's nations—a total of 195—have now signed on.

2nd Biennial Update Report (BUR):

- This year, India emitted around 2.607 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent of GHGs in 2014, with the energy sector contributing over 70 per cent of the total.
- In 2014, a total of 26,07,488 Gigagram (Gg) CC-2 equivalent (around 2.607 billion tonnes of CC-2 equivalent) of GHGs were emitted from all activities (excluding LULUCF) in India.
- The net national GHG emissions after including LULUCF were 23,06,295 Gg CO_a equivalent at around 2.306 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent.

*(LULUCF stands for Land use, land-use change, and forestry)

Major impact

Submission of India's Second BUR will fulfill the obligation of India to furnish information regarding implementation of the Convention, being a Party.

India's obligations to UNFCCC

India is a Party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The Convention, in accordance with its Article 4.1 and 12.1, enjoins upon all Parties, both developed country Parties and developing country Parties to furnish information, in the form of a National Communication regarding implementation of the Convention.

The UNFCCC in COP-16 Cancun decided vide paragraph 60 (c) of decision 1 that developing countries, consistent with their capabilities and the level of support provided for reporting, should also submit biennial update reports Decision 2 of COP17, states that Biennial Update Reports shall be submitted every two years.

Science and Technology

24. LCA TEJAS

Context: Improved Light Combat Aircraft gets green light for its production.

What is TEJAS?

India's Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) together with its variants, is the smallest and lightest Multi-Role Supersonic Fighter Aircraft of its class. This single engine, Compound-Delta-Wing, Tailless Aircraft is designed and developed by ADA with HAL as the principal partner along with DRDO, CSIR, BEL, DGAQA, IAF & IN to meet diverse needs of the Indian Air Force (IAF) and Indian Navy (IN).

Purpose:

The Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) programme was launched in the 1980s. It had two primary purposes: one was the replacement of the MiG-21s, and the other was to boost the advancement of India's domestic aviation capabilities.

India's combat aircraft—first ever mid-air refuelling trial.

In a first, Tejas, the advanced version of India's indigenously produced Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) was successfully refuelled mid-air by a Russian-origin Ilyushin-78 tanker on September 10, 2018. The mid-air refuelling was a part of a 'wet contact' trial for LCA Tejas MK-1.

Significance

- The successful test is being seen as a significant achievement and a major step towards the final operational clearance of the Light Combat Aircraft.
- The air-to-air refuelling capability for LCA is a 'force multiplier' for the IAF, giving the aircraft the potential to stay airborne for a much longer period of time.
- The enhanced range and endurance in air is expected to provide IAF a host of options in exploiting the operational potential of the LCA as well as to participate in international exercises without having to stage through several locations en route.

Tejas shines

The limited clearance of the LCA Tejas will see scaling in its production



A pair of Tejas aircraft in Bengaluru in 2017.

• SAMPATH KUMAR G.P.

- An improved LCA version has been cleared for production but has not yet achieved the Final Operation Clearance (FOC) upgrade
- Manufacturer Hindustan Aeronautics Limited aims at delivering the first of this set in late 2019

- Clearance will hasten supply to the Indian Air Force in or around 2020
- An LCA prototype first flew 18 years ago on January 4, 2001
- IAF formed the first Tejas unit, No. 45 Squadron Flying Daggers, on July 1, 2016

Way Forward:

“Make in India initiative has motivated to devise innovative solutions for our defence needs and also to collaborate with the private sector. Along with the standing armed force The Tejas is a proud reflection of national technological prowess and must indeed be celebrated as such.

25. Mosquito control with Nano Particles

What's in news?

Scientists from IEST, Shillong, West Bengal have developed Water Soluble Nano Carbon Particles (WSNCP)

Context

- Mosquitos breed in stagnant water
- Traditional method of flogging is age old and mosquitos have become immune
- Mosquito repellants such as mats, coils etc are poisonous and damage our nerve tissues
- Diseases such as Zika fever, Chikungunya, dengue etc spread through mosquitos.

How it works?

- The WSNCP is spread over stagnant water.
- It gets deposited over air tube of mosquito larvae and chokes the respiration and ultimately causing death.

How it's made?

- Crop residue undergoes controlled burning in ceramic kiln at temperature between 200°C and 350°C under very low air drift.
- A wire mesh is kept covering the kiln.
- It prevents the small particulate matter from escaping to air, thus resulting in deposition of activated nano carbon on mesh.
- It allows only carbon dioxide and moisture to escape.

Characteristics

- WSNCP is odourless nano carbon.
- It is environment friendly and non-toxic to humans. It is also harmless to aquatic living organisms.
- It can be preserved for a long time in solid form and can be produced economically.

26. Chang'e-4

What's in news?

China has launched Chang'e-4, a first probe ever to explore the dark side of the Moon

About the mission

- A Long March-3B rocket carried the probe including a lander and a rover
- The exploration will gain information about the terrain and lunar soil components and other scientific data which can help improve the understanding of the moon and the universe.

Dark Side

- Since the moon's revolution cycle is the same as its rotation cycle, the same side always faces the earth.
- The other face, most of which cannot be seen from earth, is called the far side or dark side, not because it's dark, but because most of it remains unknown.
- Luna 3 probe in 1959, which was the firstever mission to photograph the far side
- Remote-sensing images show the far side is thickly dotted with impact craters and has much fewer lunar mares than the near side.
- The far side is such a place, as the body of the moon shields against radio interference from the earth.
- From there, astronomers can study the origins and evolution of stars and galaxies, peering into the dawn of the universe

27. IMPRESS Scheme

About the scheme

- The scheme was launched in 2018 by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development
- 1500 research projects will be awarded for 2 years to support the social science research in the higher educational institutions and to enable research to guide policy making.
- Implementing agency-Indian Council of Social Science and Research (ICSSR)

Objectives

- To identify and fund research proposals in social sciences with maximum impact on the governance and society
- To ensure selection of projects through a transparent, competitive process on online mode
- To provide opportunity for social science researchers in any institution in the country, including all Universities (Central and State), private institutions with 12(B) status conferred by UGC.

Why in news?

IMPRESS scheme has been launched to promote Social Science Research in the country.

Miscellaneous

28. Vijay Diwas

Why in news?

- The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Mod has remembered brave soldiers who fought in 1971, on the occasion of Vijay Diwas.
- Victory Day is commemorated every 16 December in India, as it marks its military victory over Pakistan in 1971 during the war for the independence of Bangladesh from Pakistan.
- At the end of the 1971 war, the Pakistani Army unilaterally and unconditionally surrendered resulting in the independence of East Pakistan, which was called as Bangladesh.

29. Ramayana Circuit

Why in news?

Fifteen destinations identified for development under the Ramayana Circuit. Ramayana Circuit is one of the fifteen thematic circuits identified for development under the Swadesh Darshan scheme of Ministry of Tourism.

The Ministry has initially identified fifteen destinations for development under the Ramayana Circuit theme namely Ayodhya, Nandigram, Shringverpur & Chitrakoot (Uttar Pradesh), Sitamarhi, Buxar & Darbhanga (Bihar), Chitrakoot (Madhya Pradesh), Mahendragiri (Odisha), Jagdalpur (Chattisgarh), Nashik & Nagpur (Maharashtra), Bhadrachalam (Telangana), Hampi (Karnataka) and Rameshwaram (Tamil Nadu).

The destinations are chosen according to the places where Lord Ram is believed to have travelled across India.

Swadesh Darshan scheme: Ministry of Tourism

1. Objective : To develop theme based tourist circuits in the country.
2. Tourist circuits will be developed on the principles of high tourist value, competitiveness and sustainability in an integrated manner
3. They will be developed by synergizing efforts to focus on concerns and needs of all stakeholders to enrich tourist experience and enhance employment opportunities
4. The scheme is 100% centrally funded for the project components undertaken for public funding.
5. It also leverages Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Central Public Sector Undertakings and corporate sector.

30. Shram Awards

Why in news?

- The Union Government has announced to confer the Prime Minister's Shram Awards 2017 to 40 workers across country.

- These awardees have been selected among the workers of Departmental Undertakings & Central and State Government PSUs and Private Sector companies having 500 or more workers in recognition of their distinguished performances, innovative abilities, outstanding contribution in the field of productivity and exhibition of exceptional courage and presence of mind.
- In the year 2018 , no nomination was found suitable for the prestigious Shram Ratna Award.
- They are four types of awards:
- **Shram Ratna:** Rs. Two lakhs and recognition of their contribution to their field (a Sanad).
- **Shram Bhushan:** RS. 100000 and a Sanad.
- **Shram Vir / Shram Veerangana:** RS. 60000 and a Sanad.
- **Shram Devi / Shram Shree:** RS. 40000 and a Sanad.
- **Sanad:** an Indian government charter,warrant, diploma, patent or deed or a letter having the force of an edict or ordinance in India.

31. Information Fusion Centre

Why in news?

The Navy will formally inaugurate the Information Fusion Centre (IFC) for the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

About Information Fusion Centre (IFC):

- The IFC-IOR is established with the vision of strengthening maritime security in the region by building a common coherent maritime situation picture and acting as a maritime information hub for the region.
- The IFC has been established at the Navy's Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) in Gurugram.
- IMAC is the single point centre linking all the coastal radar chains to generate a seamless real-time picture of the nearly 7,500-km coastline.
- All countries that have already signed white shipping information exchange agreements with us, about 21 of them, are IFC partners.

Benefits of IFC:

- With the launch of the IFC, countries now have the option of positioning liaison officers at the IFC.
- Through this Centre, information on “white shipping”, or commercial shipping, will be exchanged with countries in the region to improve maritime domain awareness in the Indian Ocean.
- Establishment of the IFR-IRO would ensure that the entire region is benefited by mutual collaboration and exchange of information and understanding the concerns and threats which are prevalent in the region.

Maritime network:

- In a related development, India has signed the ascension agreement to the Trans Regional Maritime Network (T-RMN) which facilitates information exchange on the movement of commercial traffic on the high seas.
- Such multilateral agreements are necessitated due to the large traffic in the Indian Ocean which cannot be entirely monitored by any one nation.
- The multilateral construct comprises of 30 countries and is steered by Italy. To contain growing influence of China in Indian Ocean

AIS systems on ships:

- The information is available primarily through the Automatic Identification System (AIS) fitted on merchant ships with more than 300 gross registered tonnage as mandated by the International Maritime Organisation.
- The AIS information comprises name, MMSI number, position, course, speed, last port visited, destination and so on.
- This information can be picked up through various AIS sensors including coastal AIS chains and satellite based receivers.

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OUR RESULTS - 2017

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412



417



474



480



548



614



673



713



726



758



761



765



768



769



828



832



872



886

