

## **European Commission**

- European commission will publish a paper setting out the prospects of giving membership to six countries by 2025
- The countries are Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia.
- The European Commission (EC) is an institution of the European Union, responsible for proposing legislation, implementing decisions, upholding the EU treaties and managing the day-to-day business of the EU
- The Commission was to act as an independent supranational authority separate from governments.
- The commission is based in Brussels.
- The commission consists of a President and commissioners from the 28-member nations.

## **National Adaptation fund for climate change**

- The National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC) is a Central Sector Scheme.
- The overall aim of NAFCC is to support concrete adaptation activities which mitigate the adverse effects of climate change.
- National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) is the National Implementing Entity (NIE).
- The Scheme has been designed to fulfill objectives of National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) and operationalize State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCC).

## **Digital Gender Atlas**

- Digital Gender Atlas has been developed to identify the low performing geographic pockets for girls, on specific gender related education indicators.
- The Pockets are particularly from marginalized groups such as scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and Muslim minorities.
- The Atlas is placed on the MHRD website and available and ready to use by States/Districts/Blocks education administrators.
- The Atlas is designed around the two broad areas of performance of girls' education and vulnerabilities visualized in the following five sections,
  1. Composite gender ranking
  2. Special Focus Districts
  3. Trend Analysis of Gender Indicators
  4. Children with Disabilities
  5. Vulnerabilities based on educational indicators

## World Government Summit

- PM Modi will address World Government Summit in his coming UAE Tour.
- The World Government Summit is an annual event held in Dubai, UAE.
- It brings together leaders in government for a global dialogue about governmental process and policies with a focus on the issues of futurism, technology and innovation.
- The first World Government Summit was held in Dubai in 2013, and has been held annually since then.
- In 2017, the World Government Summit held the first **Global Dialogue for Happiness**, a one-day event prior to the summit.

## Laghu Udyog Bharati

Topic: Development processes and the development industry the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.



## Laghu Udyog Bharati

A national level meeting was recently convened by the Government of India with the members of Laghu Udyog Bharati.

### About Laghu Udyog Bharati:

Laghu Udyog Bharati is a registered all India organization of **Micro and Small Industries** in India since 1994. Today, **Laghu udyog Bharati** has its membership spread over the length and breadth of the country.

It has membership in more than **400 Districts with 250 Branches** all over the Country. In a genuine effort to organise **MSE sector** **Laghu Udyog Bharati** is fighting the various ills plaguing the sector and to remove impediments coming in the way to MSEs.

### Laghu Udyog Bharati render assistance to small scale industries as follows:

- ❖ Removal of inspector raj & simplification procedures.
- ❖ Availability & distribution of power.
- ❖ Guidance for improving productivity.
- ❖ Quality & technological up gradation & modernisation.
- ❖ Sales promotion & marketing assistance.
- ❖ Encouraging women entrepreneurs.
- ❖ Creating congenial environment for better entrepreneur, worker and customer relations.
- ❖ Making various panels for better representation.

- ❖ Participation in Trade-Fairs and Exhibitions for better product exposure.

### Significance of MSE sector:

Worldwide, micro and small enterprises (MSEs) have been accepted as the engine of economic growth and for promoting equitable development.

MSEs constitute over 95% of total enterprises in most of the economies and are credited with generating the highest rates of employment growth and account for a major share of industrial production and exports.

It contributes more than 45% of total manufacturing production and 40% of exports, while employing 10cr people, it suits the Indian conditions in the following manner:

- It is only source which has the potential to absorb about 10 million new youths which enter the workforce every year, as there are hardly any job opportunities in Government sector; the agriculture sector is already super saturated; and the large / corporate sector has had less employment growth in last 2 decades.
- For country like India which has very scarce capital, promoting MSE is essential as only one tenth of capital investment is required to generate one employment in MSE sector as compared to investment required per capita employment in large sector. It mitigates the problem of migration to cities and slum dwellings in urban areas. It also ensure inclusive growth.

### Atal doctrine

#### Topic: India and its neighbourhood- relations.

The J&K government has asked the Centre to **revisit former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's doctrine to defuse tension with Pakistan**. The state government believes that dialogue and reconciliation is the only way to restore peace along the borders and on the mainland.

#### Atal Doctrine:

- The Atal doctrine on Kashmir called for peace, progress and prosperity in the Valley by imbibing the spirit of Insaniyat (Humanity), Jamhuriyat (Democracy) and Kashmiriyat (Identity of the people of Kashmir). The doctrine was universally acclaimed by all segments across of political spectrum in the state, including the extremist elements in the Valley.
- Vajpayee's mantra included resolving all outstanding issues with Pakistan, including that of Jammu and Kashmir issue in a peaceful manner through bilateral dialogue without any third party intervention. Vajpayee extended a hand of friendship on the basis of reciprocity and mutual trust and called for collective fight against poverty in the Indian subcontinent devoid of terrorism and drug-trafficking.
- Vajpayee also signed a Lahore Declaration with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on February 21, 1999. As part of the declaration, Pakistan agreed to resolve all bilateral issues between the two countries, including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir in a peaceful manner and through dialogue and to promote people to people contact.

## UN World Food Programme

*Topic: Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate.*

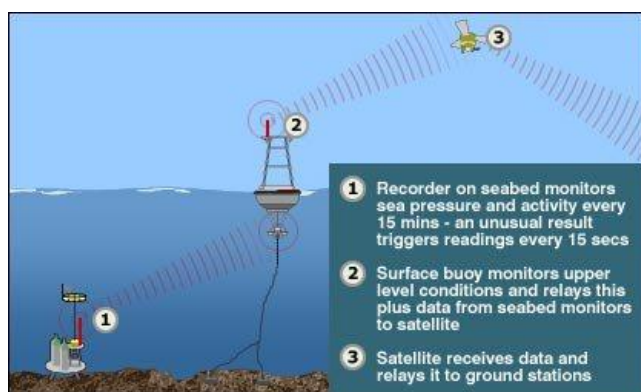
Sweden and the United Nations World Food Programme have signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement committing an unprecedented \$370 million dollars to WFP over the next four years. The contribution for the period 2018-2021 is the biggest ever made by a donor within a WFP Strategic Partnership Agreement.

### About WFP:

- The **World Food Programme (WFP)** is the food assistance branch of the United Nations and the world's largest humanitarian organization addressing hunger and promoting food security.
- The WFP strives to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, with the ultimate goal in mind of eliminating the need for food aid itself. It is a member of the United Nations Development Group and part of its Executive Committee.
- Born in 1961, WFP pursues a vision of the world in which every man, woman and child has access at all times to the food needed for an active and healthy life.
- The WFP is governed by an Executive Board which consists of representatives from member states.
- The WFP operations are funded by voluntary donations from world governments, corporations and private donors. WFP food aid is also directed to fight micronutrient deficiencies, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, and combat disease, including HIV and AIDS.

## India Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC)

**Topic: Disaster and disaster management.**



In a written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences Shri Y. S. Chowdary stated that latest scientific techniques have been added to ITEWC to provide early warnings for an impending tsunami to all countries in the Indian Ocean region.

### About ITEWC:

- The Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC) established at Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Sciences, (INCOIS – ESSO) Hyderabad, is an autonomous body under Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- Indian Tsunami Early Warning System comprises a real-time seismic monitoring network of broadband seismic stations. ITEWC receives data in real time from 350 seismic stations, 50 tsunami buoys and 300 tide gauges established in the Indian as well as the other oceans by other countries and international agencies.
- Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO has designated ITEWC as the Tsunami Service Provider (TSP) for the entire Indian Ocean Region. Since 2012, ITEWC is providing tsunami advisories and related services to about 25 countries”.

On December 26, 2004, one of the deadliest earthquakes (9.3 magnitude), epicentred off the West coast of Sumatra, Indonesia, triggered a tsunami that killed over 2.3 lakh people across 14 countries, including 11,000 in India. Since then, India has made rapid strides in establishing an early warning system with the help of various organisations, and partnered with international agencies involved in the study of earthquakes, tsunami and other ocean-related natural disasters.

### Generation of Tsunami:

- Even though tsunamis can be generated by various phenomenon, the most destructive tsunamis are generated from large, shallow earthquakes at subduction zones.
- Major tsunamis are produced by large earthquakes of magnitude greater than 7.0 associated with the movement of oceanic and continental plates.
- The waves can travel great distances from the source region, spreading destruction along their path. More than 80% of the world's tsunamis occur in the Pacific along its Ring of Fire subduction zones. Tsunamis are not as common in the Indian Ocean as in the Pacific. As compared to average eight tsunamis per year in the Pacific, Indian Ocean has one in three years or so.

### SEBI gets more power

**Topic:** Mains GS Paper III- Indian Economy, Regulatory Bodies

Key pointers:

- As part of the proposed amendments in the Finance Bill 2018, the government has given more power to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to impose monetary penalties on important market intermediaries such as stock exchanges and clearing corporations.
- SEBI can also against newer categories of participants likes investment advisers, research analysts, real estate investment trusts (REITs) and infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs).
- The proposed amendments to the SEBI Act and the Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act now allow the capital markets regulator to impose a monetary penalty of at least ₹5 crore on stock exchanges, clearing corporations and depositories for non-compliance with regulatory norms.
- The amendments also allow SEBI to act against entities that furnish false or incomplete information to the regulator. Earlier, it could act only if the entity did not furnish any information.



- The whole-time members of SEBI have also been given additional powers to act against wrongdoers.

## India's poor performance in enforcing contracts

**TOPIC :** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

- ❖ India has shown dismal performance in one key component in the Ease of doing business indices- “enforcing contracts”.
- ❖ In the World Bank report which covers 190 economies, evaluating them on 10 specific parameters required for doing business, India's ranking in the ‘enforcement of contract’ component is 164.
- ❖ The report says that it takes an average of 1,445 days (or nearly four years) to enforce a contract in India.
- ❖ The cost to a litigant to recover amounts legitimately due to him is 31% of the value of the claim. This is a shocking state of affairs.

### Distance-To-Frontier score:

- ❖ It measures the distance of a particular country's economy from the “frontier” which represents the best performance.
  - ❖ Simply put, the “frontier”, measuring 100, is the ideal situation and a DTF ranking indicates how far a country is from that ideal.
  - ❖ Though India's DTF score was 56.05 in 2017 and is projected to improve to 60.76 in 2018 in the overall ease of business rankings, unfortunately, in ‘enforcing contracts’ our score was a dismal 38.90 in 2017, projected to improve feebly to 40.76 in 2018.
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- A nation's ranking in the “ease of doing business” index is based on the average of 10 sub-indices which are: starting a business; dealing with construction permits; getting electricity connections; registering property; getting credit; protecting minority investors; paying taxes; trading across borders; enforcing contracts; and resolving insolvency.
  - The sub-indices about “enforcing contracts” is directly dependent on a country's ability to provide an effective dispute resolution system.

### Legislation:

Parliament has passed the Commercial Courts, Commercial Division and Commercial Appellate Division of High Courts Act.

The purpose behind the Act is to provide a forum with upgraded infrastructure to resolve a certain class of disputes, classified as “commercial disputes” in the Act, in a time-bound and effective manner.

**Provisions under the Act:**

- The legislation also requires establishment of appropriate infrastructure and manpower training on a constant basis.
- In identifying disputes above a specified value to qualify as commercial disputes, it has ensured that these courts are not cluttered up with small claims.
- The Act essentially paves the way for the setting up of commercial courts at the district level and a commercial division in High Courts that have original jurisdiction along with a commercial appellate division in the High Courts to hear appeals arising under the Act.
- By mandating that High Courts must show levels of disposal of such claims on their website, the Act also ensures transparency.

However, for this statutory scheme to work, many players must play their respective parts.

**Poor enforcement of the legislation:**

- The Act contemplates the “appointment” of commercial court judges in districts.
- Issue- In most States the government has merely vested the presiding district judge with powers to act as a commercial court.
- Given that the workload of principal district judges is already quite staggering, vesting them with the powers of commercial courts in districts goes against the intent and purpose of the Act.
- Whenever presiding officers are appointed to commercial courts, it must be ensured that they have experience in dealing with commercial disputes, as Section 3 of the Act ordains.
- Issue: In most cases the incumbent is a district judge without any experience.
- In terms of Section 19 of the Act, the respective State governments must, in consultation with the High Courts, establish necessary infrastructural facilities to run these courts.
- In terms of Section 20, the State government is to establish facilities providing for the training of judges who may be appointed to these courts.
- In terms of Section 17, statistical data regarding the functioning of these courts are to be displayed on the website of the respective High Courts.

**Conclusion:**

Without institutionalising above mentioned improvements, it will be difficult commercial courts businesslike and our ranking in “enforcing contracts” any better.

### **When 2 adults marry, none should interfere**

Two adults are free to marry and “no third party” has a right to harass or cause harm to them, the Supreme Court said, speaking against honour killings.

- Neither parents, society, khap or panchayat... no one at all,” said Chief Justice Misra, leading a three-judge Bench that upheld the fundamental right of two people who wish to marry and live peacefully.

The court is hearing a petition filed by Shakti Vahini, an NGO, to make honour killing a specific crime.

### **Services growth in Jan. fastest in three months**

The Indian services sector remained in expansion mode in January, registering the fastest rise in activity in three months driven by a renewed increase in new business orders, says a survey.

- Even though growth rates for activity and employment accelerated since December, it remained weaker than their respective long-run survey averages.

The seasonally-adjusted Nikkei Services Business Activity Index improved to 51.7 in January, up from 50.9 in December, signalling a faster expansion.

- The index remained above the neutral mark of 50 in January, that separates growth from contraction for the second consecutive month. In November, the index stood at 48.5.

### **Risks tilted towards higher FY19 deficit'**

The budgeted fiscal deficit for India is in line with expectations but there are some risks of slippage in financial year 2018-19, unless economic activities formalise at a rapid pace, said a Goldman Sachs report.

- According to the global financial services major, while the budgeted deficit is in line with expectations, the revenue targets are on the optimistic side, particularly on recently-introduced GST tax revenue growth.
- The report estimates a 20 basis point upside risk to the fiscal deficit in 2018-19, unless economic activities formalise at a rapid pace over the coming year to generate the necessary buoyancy in revenues.
- The report says cut in spending is unlikely, even if the revenue collections did not meet budget estimates as this budget being the last full budget before an election year, this could take the fiscal deficit to 3.5% of GDP versus the 3.3% budgeted.
- Moreover, higher oil prices could exert additional pressure on the fiscal deficit.



- Based on the overall oil subsidy estimate in the Budget, the government appears to have assumed oil prices to average between \$60-65/bbl, about \$10-15/bbl lower than the Goldman Sachs' oil price forecast.
- The report estimates that every \$10/bbl increase in oil prices could increase the fiscal deficit by 0.3 [percentage point] of GDP if the government absorbs the entire shock.

The government outlined a fiscal deficit target of 3.3% of GDP in 2018-19 as against a revised estimate of 3.5% in 2017-18, indicating some fiscal consolidation, albeit at a slower pace than that recommended under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) framework.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **Maldives government declares emergency**

The Maldives government declared a state of emergency for 15 days, amid a spiralling political crisis that followed a surprise Supreme Court ruling.

- The Supreme Court ordered the immediate release of nine Opposition leaders, including exiled former President Mohamed Nasheed.
- The court also ordered that 12 MPs, expelled earlier, be reinstated.

Emergency rule gives security officials extra powers to arrest dissidents, the government has come under criticism worldwide for its refusal to obey the court order.