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## **GENERAL STUDIES-1**

### **INDIAN CULTURE**

#### **HORNBILL FESTIVAL**

**Where?** Nagaland

The Hornbill Festival is the perfect showcase of rich Naga culture and traditions, preserved over the years in the form of music, dance and food.

#### **Details**

Hornbill Festival is the most anticipated festivals of Nagaland held between December 1st to December 10th every year.

The aim of the festival is to revive and protect the rich culture of Nagaland and display its traditional extravaganza. All the tribes of Nagaland, around 16, take part in this week long festival, with utmost zeal.

The Hornbill festival is named after the hornbill bird. The bird is highly respected and its importance is reflected in tribal folklore, songs and dances.

### **SOCIAL ISSUES AND INDIAN SOCIETY**

#### **ENDING CHILD LABOUR**

Two years after governments set a 2025 target to end child labour, delegates from 100 nations at a recent conference in Buenos Aires were told that they will miss the deadline. The implication is also that realising the objective could take well over 20 years after the expiry of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

#### **Child labour**

Child labor is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.

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### **Adverse effects of child labour**

Child labour hinders the education and consequently causes unemployment, and thus the result is poverty. It affects the child's health and growth process.

- The children are prone to accidents and other injuries at work.
- Sexual assault, especially on girls, prostitution, rape which leads to abortions, unwanted pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted disease (STDs), alcoholism and drugs.
- They might as well be subjected to physical abuse, emotional abuse which results in hopelessness and loneliness

### **Constitutional provision in India**

As per Article 21(A) and Article 45 – The child has the right to Education i.e. the state shall provide compulsory and free education to the children of the age six to 14 years.

As per Article 24 – There is a provision under which a child below the age of 14 years cannot be employed in any mine, factory or hazardous workplace.

As per Article 39(f) – The child's youth and childhood are to be protected against moral and material abandonment and exploitation.

### **Initiatives undertaken so far**

1. The Child Labour(Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986: Prohibits children from working in any occupation which includes dhabas, domestic labour, hotels, catering or construction work.
2. A National Policy on Child Labour, 1987: To focus on rehabilitating children working in hazardous occupations.
3. Many NGOs like Bachpan Bachao Andolan, CARE India, Child Rights and You etc. have been working to eradicate child labour in India.
4. Child labour has also been a subject of public interest litigations in Indian courts

However, these efforts have been inadequate to eradicate Child labour.

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### **What is Alliance 8.7?**

Under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the 2030 Agenda, UN Member States, employers', workers' organizations and civil society organizations, are urged to eliminate child labour by 2025, and forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking by 2030.

In order to contribute to this goal (goal 8), the ILO launched Alliance 8.7, a global partnership designed to align the efforts of those working towards the achievement of SDG Target 8.7.

Goal 8 aims to Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

### **Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour**

The 4<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour was organized by the Government of Argentina in Buenos Aires.

While significant progress has been made globally in the fight against all forms of child labour between 2000 and 2012, with ILO constituents having increasingly adopted and implemented integrated strategies and coordinated policies to combat child labour the goal that was set to eliminate it in its worst forms by 2016 was not achieved.

### **Four systemic failures according to ILO**

1. The absence of national legislation to give effect to global conventions on the employment of children in hazardous industries, as well as on the minimum age of work.
2. The lack of harmony between global commitments and domestic priorities.
3. Incoherency between laws that prescribe a minimum age for employment and those for completion of compulsory school education.
4. Lack of effective labour inspections in the informal economy.

### **How to tackle this, going forward?**

The new ILO report says improving legal protections, labour market governance, social protections, access to quality education and social

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dialogue between governments, the social partners and other stakeholders are critical aspects in battling child labour.

1. Legislation alone cannot eradicate child labour. There is also a need for stronger labour inspection systems in the informal economy.
2. Well-designed labour market policies focused on where most child labour persists can help curb the demand for child labour. At the same time, establishing regulatory frameworks is critical to addressing child labour in supply chains.
3. Continued progress against child labour requires policies that help mitigate the economic vulnerability of households. Accelerating progress towards universal social protection is key, as social protection helps prevent poor households from having to rely on child labour as a coping mechanism.
4. The single most effective way to stem the flow of school-aged children into child labour is to improve access to and quality of schooling.

### **In Conclusion**

Child Labour affects the strength and growth of Child as an individual and as a citizen and future of the country. It has to be eradicated from roots.

## **TRANSGENDER PERSONS BILL, 2016**

### **Why in news?**

The contentious Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016 is set to be re-introduced in the winter session of Parliament without any change in the draft provisions.

### **Opposition**

India's transgender community — which numbers 4.8 million according to data from the latest round of the census — is opposing this move, since they believe the legislation meant to safeguard their interests only serves to undermine their right to life and livelihood.

- The final piece of the legislation identifies transgenders as being “partly female or male; or a combination of female and male; or

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neither female nor male”. This definition which draws a clinical caricature is a departure from the intention of the original Bill to cleanse society of the stigma it placed on transgenders.

- To be recognised as transgenders, individuals have to submit themselves to a medical examination by a District Screening Committee comprising of a Chief Medical Officer, a psychiatrist, a social worker, and a member of the transgender community. This is in stark contrast to the 2014 Bill which gives individuals the right to self-identify their sex.
- The anti-discriminatory clauses of the Bill are extended to education, health care and social security. The provision of earmarking jobs for transgenders, a central plank of the 2014 Bill, has been lost in translation, with the diluted new draft ditching reservations and espousing equal opportunity in all spheres of life, as a panacea to create equity among the sexes.
- Grievance redressal has been internalised, with establishments consisting of hundred or more persons mandated to designate a complaint officer to deal with any violation of the Act. This is in lieu of the setting up of central and State transgender rights courts.

### **Backgrounder:**

In 2014, the Supreme Court passed a landmark judgement, paving the way for enshrining the rights of transgenders in law. The apex court deemed that individuals had the right to self-identification of their sexual orientation.

It ruled that the fundamental rights granted by the Constitution are equally applicable to transgenders who constitute the ‘third gender’. The judgement also called for affirmative action in education, primary health care, and that transgenders be identified as beneficiaries of social welfare schemes

### **Standing committee recommendation**

The bill was referred to a standing committee which draws attention to the inadequate definition of the third gender, which is founded on a heterosexual worldview. It also advocates extending civil rights enjoyed by the citizenry, such as marriage, divorce, and adoption, to encompass the third gender.

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Other recommendations include the rescue, protection, and rehabilitation of transgenders. Educational institutions have been directed to adopt an inclusive approach that is gender-neutral.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

### **MOUNT AGUNG**

#### **Why in news?**

Indonesian and regional authorities heightened flight warnings around Bali's Mount Agung as the volcano's eruptions sent ash and steam more than 6,000 metres into the skies above the island.

#### **Location**



Mount Agung or Gunung Agung is a volcano in Bali, Indonesia, southeast of Mt Batur volcano, also in Bali. Gunung Agung stratovolcano is the highest point on Bali.

### **CYCLONE OCKHI**

#### **Where?**

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The deep depression which had formed in the Bay of Bengal near Kanyakumari district in Tamil Nadu, bordering Kerala, has now intensified into a cyclonic storm named Ockhi.

### **Naming**

The name Ockhi was given by Bangladesh which in Bengali means 'eye'.

The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) started the tropical cyclone naming system in 2000.

Tropical cyclones are named to provide ease of communication between forecasters and the general public regarding forecasts, watches, and warnings.

Cyclones in the North Indian Ocean basin are named by the Indian Meteorological Department and the first tropical cyclone was named in 2004 as Onil (given by Bangladesh).

- ✓ Eight north Indian Ocean countries — Bangladesh, India, the Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand, gave eight names each which was combined into a list of 64 names. One name from each country is picked in an order to name the cyclones.
- ✓ The previous storm Mora that caused severe flooding across Northeast India in May was named by Thailand. Mora is the name of one of the healing stones and also means star of the sea.
- ✓ The next cyclone will be named Sagar — a name given by India.

## **GENERAL STUDIES-2**

### **POLITY**



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## **SHAH BANO LAW**

### **Why in news?**

The government is mulling over changes in existing laws, amendments to The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986 to make instant triple talaq or talaq-e-biddat a criminal offence

### **About the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986 aka the Shah Bano Act**

- ✓ The 1986 law was enacted by the Rajiv Gandhi government under pressure from the Muslim clergy to overturn the Supreme Court ruling in the Shah Bano case.
- ✓ This law allowed, in line with Muslim personal law, maintenance to a divorced woman only during the period of iddat, or three menstrual cycles/three lunar months after divorce.

### **What has necessitated the changes?**

The Supreme Court, in a landmark 3-2 verdict, called the practice un-Islamic and “arbitrary” and disagreed with the view that triple talaq was an integral part of religious practice.

But the minority ruling of then Chief Justice J S Khehar and Justice S Abdul Nazeer underlined the primacy of Muslim personal law and said the practice enjoyed constitutional protection and was beyond the scope of judicial scrutiny. They were of the view that Parliament should consider an “appropriate” law to deal with the issue of talaq-e-biddat.

### **Implications**

Once the law outlawing triple talaq is enacted, the Muslim clergy will have no role in cases of talaq-e-biddat and women can directly approach police for redressal.

Other than changes to the Shah Bano Act, the government is considering amendments to provisions of Code of Criminal Procedure (sec.125→order for maintenance of wives, children and parents) to provide further safeguards to Muslim women and their wards if they are abandoned via instant triple talaq.



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## **CONTROLLER GENERAL OF ACCOUNTS**

### **Why in news?**

The Controller General of Accounts, Department of Expenditure has launched the upgraded version of Central Pension Accounting Office (CPAO) primarily to cater to the needs of central civil pensioners and other stakeholders in the Ministries/Departments and Banks.

### **Details about Controller General of Accounts:**

The Controller General of Accounts is the apex Accounting Authority of the Central Government and exercises the powers of the President under Article 150 of the constitution for prescribing the forms of Accounts of the Union and State Governments on the advice of the Comptroller & Auditor General of India.

### **Functions:**

It is the Principal Accounting Adviser to Government of India and is responsible for establishing and maintaining a technically sound Management Accounting System.

The Office of CGA prepares monthly and annual analysis of expenditure, revenues, borrowings and various fiscal indicators for the Union Government.

### **Constitutional provision**

Under Article 150 of the Constitution, the Annual Appropriation Accounts (Civil) and Union Finance Accounts are submitted to Parliament on the advice of Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

## **GOVERNANCE ISSUES AND POLICIES**

### **THE BURDEN OF DISEASES**

### **Why in news?**

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The 'India State Level Disease Burden' report, prepared as part of the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study 2016, and published in Lancet, has found that every State in India has a higher burden from non-communicable diseases and injuries than from infectious diseases. The study used multiple data sources for each State from 1990 to 2016.

### **Significance of the report**

The report provides the first comprehensive set of state-level disease burden data, risk factors estimates, and trends for each state in India.

It is expected to inform health planning with a view toward reducing health inequalities among States.

Over the past 25 years, India has seen a major epidemiological transition.

- The burden of premature death and health loss from non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, chronic pulmonary disease, and road traffic injuries has increased substantially
- The burden due to lower respiratory infections, tuberculosis, diarrhea, and neonatal disorders remains high.

India's disease burden due to these major conditions is expected to vary significantly by geography and across different population groups. Because national estimates do not provide enough detail for targeted action, reliable subnational estimation of disease burden in India will allow policymakers to make more informed decisions to improve population health.

### **What is GBD?**

The Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD) is the single largest and most detailed scientific effort ever conducted to quantify levels and trends in health. Led by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington, it is truly a global effort, with over 1,000 researchers from more than 100 countries participating in the most recent update.

### **Partnering with ICMR and PHFI**

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In order to improve health programs and planning in India, The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) is partnering with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) – in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India – to generate subnational disease burden and risk factor estimates.

### **Inequalities among States**

The per person disease burden has dropped in India by 36% from 1990 to 2016, but there are major inequalities among States with the per-person DALY rate varying almost twofold between them.

- ✓ There is a high burden of infectious and childhood diseases in poorer States along with the rising tide of non-communicable diseases and injuries.

Major differences are also observed for individual diseases between neighbouring States that are at similar levels of development. This points to the need for State-specific health planning instead of generic planning.

Substantial increases in health spending by the government and expansion of suitable preventive and curative health services are necessary to prevent this potentially explosive situation.

### **The leading risk factors**

The findings of the study reveal that three types of risks are akin to national emergencies as these have the potential to significantly blunt the rapid social and economic progress which India aspires.

1. **Under Nutrition:** It is remarkable that even though there is a declining trend in child and maternal under nutrition, this is still the single largest risk factor in India, responsible for 15% of the total disease burden in 2016.
2. **Air Pollution:** Air Pollution levels in India are among the highest in the world, making it the second leading risk factor in 2016, responsible for 10% of the total disease burden in the country.
3. **Non Communicable Diseases:** A group of risks that include unhealthy diet, high blood pressure, high blood sugar, high cholesterol and overweight, which increase the risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes, contributed a tenth of the

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total disease burden in India in 1990, but increased to a quarter of the total burden in 2016.

While these risks are currently higher in the relatively more developed States, their phenomenal increase in every State over the past quarter of a century poses a grave threat.

### **What needs to be done?**

Unless serious attempts are made soon to address this surge through massive up scaling of interventions in the health, food, agriculture, housing and urban development sectors, these risks can result in major deterioration in the health status.

An important point to note related to undernutrition, air pollution, and the risks causing cardiovascular disease and diabetes is that the interventions needed to address them have to involve extensive collaborations between the health sector and other relevant sectors.

### **In conclusion**

The chances of achieving the overall health targets for India and of reducing health inequalities among States would be higher now if the biggest health problems and risks identified for each State are tackled on priority basis rather than with a more generic approach.

This new knowledge base and the annual updates planned by the India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative will provide important inputs for the data-driven and decentralised health planning and monitoring recommended by the National Health Policy 2017 and the NITI Aayog Action Agenda 2017-2020.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING AGENCY (HEFA)**

### **Why in news?**

For providing additional funds for research and related infrastructure, Higher Education Funding Agency (HEFA), has started its operations. The HEFA Board recently approved projects for six institutions including IITs and NIT Suratkal.

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### **Details about HEFA**

- ✓ It is a Special Purpose Vehicle with a public sector bank (Canara Bank).
- ✓ It would be jointly funded by the promoter/bank and the MHRD

### **Functions:**

HEFA will leverage the equity to raise up to ₹ 20,000 crore for the funding of world-class infrastructure at the IITs, IIMs, the National Institutes of Technology (NITs) and such other institutions.

The agency is also expected to mobilise Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds from public sector units (PSUs) and corporates. These would be released as grants to eligible institutions for promoting research and innovation.

### **Significance**

Funding from HEFA is expected to boost infrastructure, especially state-of-the-art laboratories, in key institutions to further improve their standing at the global level.

## **NET NEUTRALITY**

### **Why in news?**

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has finally come out with clear guidelines in favour of Net neutrality that are consistent with its earlier stand on Facebook's Free Basics proposal.

The regulator has reiterated that there cannot be discriminatory treatment of websites on the Internet by service providers.

### **Internet as a resource**

Over a few decades, the Internet has transformed innovation and fostered economic growth and has grown an unrivalled network to support information exchange within and across borders. The Internet has come to be created by the cooperative efforts of several stakeholders, but is

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controlled in its entirety by none. The future growth of telecom sector and of other access networks is contingent upon innovation in and growth of the Internet infrastructure.

However, increasingly, concerns have been raised globally as well as in India relating to the potential for discriminatory treatment of Internet traffic by the entities that control access to the Internet, which questions net neutrality

### **What is “net neutrality”?**

It represents the idea that a maximally useful public information network aspires to treat all content, sites and platforms equally.

### **Details of TRAI decision**

TRAI’s decision comes in the wake of international focus on the U.S. Federal Communications Commission’s decision to scrap regulations on service providers imposed during the Obama administration.

While batting for the right to an open Internet, however, TRAI has been careful to allow some exceptions that allow companies to discriminate between content if it helps them regulate the flow of traffic or offer “specialised services”.

1. Discriminatory treatment of content is prohibited. TRAI warned providers against the practice of blocking certain websites and tinkering with content speeds.
2. TRAI has kept content delivery networks (CDN) out of the regulation. CDNs enable telecom deliver content within their network without going through the public internet in order to create a content ecosystem to drive user traction.
3. Internet of Things(IoT), as a class of services, is not excluded from the scope of the restriction on non-discriminatory treatment. However, critical IoT services, which may be identified by department of telecom as specialised services which could include telemedicine, B2B services will be automatically excluded.
4. Watchdog: TRAI has also recommended a watchdog along the lines of BARC India for enforcing Net Neutrality and proposed reasonable measures of traffic management, in line with TRAI guidelines.

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5. International treaties, court orders, government order on blocking certain sites are exempt from these guidelines.

### **Concerns of service providers**

While TRAI's new guidelines will help the cause of building the Internet as a public platform with open access to all, the concerns of service providers should not be dismissed altogether.

The Internet has spread all over the world, so widely that many believe it is now an essential good. But the infrastructure that serves as the backbone of the Internet has not come without huge investments by private service providers. So any regulation that severely restricts the ability of companies to earn sufficient returns on investment will only come at the cost of the welfare of the public.

In this connection, TRAI has been open to adopting a nuanced view that differentiates between various forms of content instead of imposing a blanket ban on all forms of price differentiation.

## **WELFARE SCHEMES AND DEVELOPMENTAL GROUPS**

### **ATAL PENSION YOJANA**

#### **Why in news?**

The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) has set its eyes on achieving the target of one crore accounts under the Atal Pension Yojana (APY) by the fiscal-end.

Focused on the workers in the unorganised sector, PFRDA has already been able to open 73 lakh such accounts and is going all out to promote pension scheme in the rural areas with the help of regional rural banks.

#### **Provisions under the yojana**

The Atal Pension Yojana became operational in 2015 and is available to all the citizens of India in the age group of 18-40 years.



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- Under the scheme, a subscriber would receive a minimum guaranteed pension of Rs 1,000 to Rs 5,000 per month, depending upon his contribution, from the age of 60 years.
- The same pension would be paid to the spouse of the subscriber upon demise
- On the demise of both the subscriber and the spouse, the accumulated pension wealth is returned to the nominee.
- The Central Government would also co-contribute 50% of the total contribution or Rs. 1000 per annum, whichever is lower, to each eligible subscriber account, for a period of 5 years, that is, from 2015-16 to 2019-20, to those who join the NPS before 31st December, 2015 and who are not members of any statutory social

**PFRDA:**

The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) is a pension regulatory authority which was established in 2003. It is authorized by Ministry of Finance, Department of Financial Services.

- It promotes old age income security by establishing, developing and regulating pension funds and protects the interests of subscribers to schemes of pension funds and related matters.
- It is also responsible for appointment of various intermediate agencies such as Central Record Keeping Agency (CRA), Pension Fund Managers, Custodian, NPS Trustee Bank, etc.

security scheme and who are not Income Tax payers.

**SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR TRANSFORMING HUMAN CAPITAL**

**Implementing agency:** NITI aayog along with McKinsey & Company and IPE Global consortium, who were selected through a competitive bidding process.

**Vision:** To initiate transformation in the education and health sectors. The program addresses the need expressed by many states for technical support from NITI.

**Objective:** To bring private sector players in a big way into the functioning of public hospitals in districts. The SATH program embodies the philosophy of co-operative federalism

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### **Why in news?**

The program has been met with strong opposition in Karnataka. Karnataka, which has been selected for the SATH (Sustainable Action for Transforming Human capital) programme in the health sector, has opposed the aayog's proposal to privatise well-functioning district hospitals in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities for treatment of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

The state has sternly opposed any terms and conditions for entering into an agreement with McKinsey & Company, consultants for implementation of the model. It is of the view that the proposal will have adverse implications for the public healthcare system of the State.

### **Backgrounder:**

NITI Aayog selected the three states Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka based on objective assessment criteria affecting the potential for impact and likelihood of success.

SATH aims to identify and build three future 'role model' states for health systems.

- ✓ NITI will work in close collaboration with their state machinery to design a robust roadmap of intervention, develop a program governance structure, set up monitoring and tracking mechanisms, hand-hold state institutions through the execution stage and provide support on a range of institutional measures to achieve the end objectives.

## **NATIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (NSDC)**

### **Why in news?**

A tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was recently signed between National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and Tourism and Hospitality Sector Skill Council (THSC) with Airbnb, the world's

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leading community-driven hospitality company. The MoU will provide hospitality skills training to hospitality micro-entrepreneurs in India.

### **About NSDC:**

It is a Public Private Partnership (PPP) model in India, under the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE).

- A not-for-profit company set up by the Ministry of Finance, under the Companies Act,
- It has an equity base of Rs.10 crore, of which the Government of India holds for 49%, while the private sector has the balance 51%.

**Aim:** To promote skill development by catalyzing creation of large, quality and for-profit vocational institutions.

### **Functions:**

1. NSDC provides funding to build scalable and profitable vocational training initiatives. NSDC acts as a catalyst in skill development by providing funding to enterprises, companies and organisations that provide skill training.
2. Its mandate is also to enable support system which focuses on quality assurance, information systems and train the trainer academies either directly or through partnerships.
3. It will also develop appropriate models to enhance, support and coordinate private sector initiatives.

## **NATIONAL NUTRITION MISSION**

### **Why in news?**

The cabinet has approved the setting up of a National Nutrition Mission (NNM) to rein in malnourishment and stunted growth.

### **Aspects which it focuses on**

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1. The food that should be given to rein in stunting, undernourishment, low birthweight and anaemia
2. The delivery system required for it
3. Monitoring of the entire process.

### **Target**

The government is targeting a reduction of 2% a year in stunting, undernutrition and low birthweight among 100 million people. Also, it aims to reduce anaemia among young children, women and adolescent girls by 3% a year.

### **Components**

- ✓ An ICT (information and communications technology)-based real-time monitoring system
- ✓ Incentivizing of states and Union territories to meet their targets
- ✓ Social audits
- ✓ Setting up of nutrition resource centres.

**Implementation:** Ministries of women and child development, health and family welfare, and water and sanitation will work together. The mission will form an apex body that would fix targets and monitor, supervise and guide nutrition-related interventions across the ministries.

- The implementation strategy for NNM would be based on intense monitoring and a convergence action plan up to the grass-roots level.
- The programme would be undertaken in a phased manner, yearly district-wise, by 2019-20.
- NNM would be implemented using information technology as the basic tool; workers at anganwadis (women and child development centres) would be given smartphones and their supervisors smart tablets to monitor daily activities and compile reports.
- The move will be a deviation from the old practice of maintaining registers and will also help to reduce pilferage.

### **In conclusion**

It is very important to invest in nutrition in India because balanced diet and healthy nutrition plays a pivotal role in overall development of women and children. Healthy women deliver healthy children and nurture a good society, and healthy and nourished children are the country's future.

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Therefore, to tackle undernutrition problem in the country, various ministries need to work in convergence and not silos and NNM will be a platform to do so. NNM will ensure convergence, and lead to better results.

## **INDIA AND ITS INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

### **ACCESS TO CHANGI NAVAL BASE**

**Where is it?** Singapore



**Why in news?**

In a strategic move that is likely to irk China, India and Singapore have signed a bilateral agreement that will allow Indian Navy ships logistical support, including refuelling, at Singapore's Changi naval base located near the disputed South China Sea.

**Significance**

The naval logistics agreement is the first for India with a country located east of Malacca, thus enhancing the navy's operational reach.

Indian Navy ships sailing through the disputed South China Sea or in the eastern waters of the Andaman Sea will be able to refuel, restock and, if needed, rearm at Singapore's latest naval base before continuing their mission.

The Indian Navy will be able to directly engage Singaporean authorities when they need to use their facilities unlike the present structure where a

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request has to be sourced from the Indian Navy to the government of Singapore through the Defence Ministry and then the External Affairs Ministry, a process that can take weeks.

**Strategic significance of Singapore:**

Singapore is strategically situated on the major international sea routes – the Straits of Singapore and Malacca – and connects the Pacific and Indian Oceans making it economically important. The country acts as the centre for international communications, transportations and trade to southeast Asia. It works with neighbouring littoral states for safety, stability, regional peace and navigational freedom.

**INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

**WHO GUIDELINES ON RESPONDING TO CHILD SEX ABUSE**

**Why in news?**

This is the first time, WHO has published guidelines to aid healthcare providers give high-quality care to children and adolescents (up to age 18) who have experienced sexual abuse/assault/rape.

**The Need for comprehensive guidelines**

1. The victims face a number of negative consequences mentally, physically, sexually thus adversely impacting their reproductive health and well-being.
2. Boys and girls who are sexually abused face higher risks of lifetime diagnoses of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, externalizing symptoms, sleep disorders, and having thoughts of suicide and self-harm.
3. They are more likely to engage in unsafe-sex, abuse of drugs and misuse of alcohol, placing them at higher risk for STDs and HIV.
4. For girls there is also increased risk of pregnancy and gynaecological disorders.

**What the guidelines say?**

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The new guidelines address an important gap in providing trauma-informed care to survivors by placing emphasis on the safety, wishes, autonomy of children and adolescents.

It expressly asks the health care providers to:

- Provide first line support that is child or adolescent-centred and gender sensitive
- Minimize additional trauma and distress while taking medical history, conducting the examination and documenting the findings.
- Offer emergency contraception to girls who have been raped
- Offer Hepatitis B and HPV vaccination as per national guidance.
- Consider cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) with a trauma focus for those have PTSD symptoms.
- Where required to report child sexual abuse to designated authorities, health care providers should inform the child or adolescent and their non-offending caregivers about the obligation to report the abuse and the limits of confidentiality before interviewing them.

### **What else is needed?**

While the presence of guidelines and following them is extremely essential, there should be ground training of all first line respondents. It is not adequate to pass on the burden on the healthcare sector. The government needs to adopt a policy that will streamline all the other aspects as well.

## **WALKING WITH THE NEIGHBOURS**

### **Why in news?**

ASEAN celebrated 50 years of founding.

### **About ASEAN**

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is among the world's largest regional intergovernmental organisations and over the years, has enhanced intraregional trade and connectivity.



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**Members:** ASEAN started with founding members Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand; then added Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam in later years.

### **Comparing and contrasting ASEAN and SAARC**

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), geographically proximate to ASEAN, started its journey in 1985 with similar aspirations but over time has failed to deliver. It has been unable to integrate the region through trade and connectivity and continues to be stuck in the quagmire of regional politics and rivalry and stagnates from historical distrust and old animosity. More often, Indo-Pak relations overshadow SAARC meetings.

**Members:** Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Afghanistan joined in 2007.

Both ASEAN and SAARC were set up because the members were embroiled in serious disputes. ASEAN was also more troubled because of its conglomeration of islands and unclear laws dealing with maritime frontiers. Yet, while ASEAN was able to avoid conflict, SAARC was not.

### **Achievements of SAARC**

- SAFTA: A Free Trade Agreement confined to goods, but excluding all services like information technology. Agreement was signed to reduce customs duties of all traded goods to zero by the year 2016.
- SAARC visa exemption decided that certain categories of dignitaries should be entitled to a Special Travel document, which would exempt them from visas within the region.
- Greater cultural co-operation

### **Main differences between ASEAN and SAARC**

In its first two decades, ASEAN focussed on a limited range of issues, but over time its mandate expanded and now includes climate change, disaster management, counterterrorism, drugs and human trafficking.

#### **1. On Resolution of disputes:**

ASEAN's greatest success has been its ability to deftly resolve disputes.

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In the early years, for instance, its unity was challenged by the Philippines-Malaysia dispute over Sabah, but the founding members found a peaceful mechanism to mitigate opposing claims.

In the case of SAARC, political squabbles, deep mistrust and military conflict between India and Pakistan have frustrated regional cooperation. The whole region is suffering from lost potential due to India-Pakistan hostility which hit a new low when India boycotted the 19th SAARC summit as a result of the Uri terrorist attack, with Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Bhutan following suit, eventually resulting in cancellation of the summit.

## **2. Trade and Economic Growth**

Trade in ASEAN has grown rapidly and it has focussed on promoting rapid economic growth and modernisation.

It has created the Comprehensive Investment Agreement (ACIA), which ensures liberalisation and protection of cross-border investments operations, together with best practices for the treatment of foreign investors and investments.

On the other hand, trade amongst the SAARC members stands at 3.5% of their total volume of trade. Initiatives under the South Asian Free Trade Association have failed to make much headway. Sub regional initiatives like the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal Motor Vehicle Agreement also have stalled.

## **3. Regional Connectivity**

The Federation of ASEAN Travel Associations (FATA) has called on the ASEAN nations to waive entry requirements amongst the member states.

A feasibility study has been conducted on the development of a rail link from Singapore to Kunming in southern China to enhance seamless connectivity among the ASEAN nations to boost intraregional trade and people-to-people connectivity. Projects aimed at promoting the region as a tourist destination have also been undertaken.

On the other hand, the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme only allows certain categories of dignitaries to be exempt from visas, excluding ordinary citizens from accessing unimpeded travel in the region.

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- It is difficult for Indians to enter Pakistan and vice versa.
- Even citizens of other SAARC countries who have visited either India or Pakistan before, and now wish to travel to the other, face hassles during visa issuance by either country.
- SAARC infrastructural problems plague connectivity.

#### **4. Existence of Practical diplomatic tools**

The main difference between ASEAN and SAARC lies in the existence of practical diplomatic tools to address these issues.

ASEAN member States and other regional and international stakeholders created in 1994 the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) to promote confidence-building and develop preventive diplomacy in the region. Often criticized for its lack of efficiency in tackling long-standing issues like Myanmar's democratization, the ARF has nevertheless established a diplomatic forum to address these specific concerns.

On the other hand, A SAARC Regional Forum to discuss disputes would be a proper way to take political pressure away from SAARC Summits but the creation of such a mechanism seems unlikely as long as SAARC lacks a common vision of regionalism.

#### **5. Sub-regional short-cuts**

As the biggest country of SAARC, India is trying to exert leadership by forming subregional initiatives like the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). Another objective is to isolate Pakistan.

Such attempts to forge sub-regional ties at the cost of jeopardising the regional vision for unity have not been witnessed in ASEAN.

When ASEAN was criticised for taking in Myanmar in spite of its military rule, the grouping emphasised the importance of keeping open the channels of communication and engagement as a better means to influence the regime. Bilateral bickering never got in the way of trade and travel.

#### **6. On the political and economic continuum**

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On the political and economic continuum, ASEAN has behaved pragmatically and sensibly whereas South Asia has been bogged down by bilateral animosity and the bitter legacy of partition.

- ASEAN members have avoided showing outward hostility against each other and have tried to resolve differences through dialogue, engagement and cooperation.
- Politicians in SAARC have mostly catered to their domestic constituents without having any broad regional vision, so that it takes years to sign agreements and even more time to implement them.

### **UN CONVENTION AGAINST TORTURE**

#### **Why in news?**

The Supreme Court recently disposed of a PIL seeking to put in place a statutory framework to curb torture and custodial violence as it said that it can't direct the government to make an anti-torture law or ratify the UN convention against Torture.

#### **Ground work in progress**

The government is considering an anti-torture law. The Law Commission has recommended that the Centre ratify the United Nations Convention against Torture and frame a standalone anti-torture law, making the state responsible for any injury inflicted by its agents on citizens.

#### **India's position on the convention**

Though India signed the convention in 1997, it is yet to ratify it. Efforts to bring in a standalone law have failed. The National Human Rights Commission has been urging the government to recognise torture as a separate crime and codify the punishment in a separate penal law.

#### **Efforts and failures**

A bill was also proposed in this regard. But, no action has been taken on the Prevention of Torture Bill 2010 even six years after it was passed by the Lok Sabha on May 6, 2010 and recommended by a Select Committee of

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the Rajya Sabha of which he had been Chairman. The centre contends some States were not in favour of such a law and the Indian Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code were more than sufficient.

### **UN convention against torture:**

The Convention defines torture as a criminal offence. The Convention requires states to take effective measures to prevent torture in any territory under their jurisdiction, and forbids states to transport people to any country where there is reason to believe they will be tortured.

### **In conclusion**

Considering it a matter of both Article 21 (fundamental right to life and dignity) and of international reputation, the government should consider promulgating a standalone, comprehensive law to define and punish torture as an instrument of “human degradation” by state authorities. Such a law is in the national interest.

## **INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION**

India has been one of the earliest members of the IMO, having ratified its Convention and joined it as a member-state in the year 1959.

### **Why in news?**

Georgia’s Permanent Representative to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has been elected as the Vice President of the IMO Assembly.

### **What is IMO?**

27<sup>th</sup> Nov to 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec

The International Maritime Organization – is the United Nations specialized agency with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine pollution by ships.

**Membership:** 171 Member States and three Associate Members.

**Purpose:** To develop and maintain a comprehensive regulatory framework for shipping and its remit today includes safety, environmental concerns, legal matters, technical co-operation, maritime security and the efficiency of shipping.

**Governance:**

IMO is governed by an assembly of members and is financially administered by a council of members elected from the assembly.

The IMO Council acts as the IMO's Governing Body. It has a crucial role to play in deciding various matters in relation to the global shipping industry, including its work programme strategy and budget.

## **GENERAL STUDIES-3**

### **INDIAN ECONOMY**

#### **COMPETITION COMMISSION OF INDIA (CCI)**

**Why in news?**

The BCCI had assured the broadcasters of Indian Premier League (IPL) that BCCI shall 'not organise, sanction, recognise or support another professional domestic Indian T20 competition that is competitive to IPL, for a sustained period of 10 years. But, it has breached this contract.

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Citing it as abuse of dominant position, for imposing restriction that denies access to the market for organisation of professional domestic cricket league / events, CCI has imposed a penalty of Rs 52.24 crore on BCCI for “anti-competitive conduct”.

### **CCI:**

It is a body responsible for enforcing The Competition Act, 2002 throughout India and to prevent activities that have an adverse effect on competition in India.

**Established:** 2003 and became fully functional in 2009.

**Composition:** CCI consists of a Chairperson and 6 Members appointed by the Central Government.

### **Functions:**

- To eliminate practices having adverse effect on competition, promote and sustain competition, protect the interests of consumers and ensure freedom of trade in the markets of India.
- It is also required to give opinion on competition issues on a reference received from a statutory authority established under any law and to undertake competition advocacy, create public awareness and impart training on competition issues.

### **Anti-competitive agreements it prohibits**

- ✓ Abuse of dominant position by enterprises
- ✓ Regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and Merger and acquisition)

## **NATIONAL ANTI-PROFITEERING AUTHORITY**

### **Why in news?**

Senior bureaucrat Badri Narain Sharma has been appointed as the chairman of the national anti-profiteering authority under the GST regime.



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**What is this authority all about?**

It is tasked with ensuring the full benefits of a reduction in tax on supply of goods or services flow to the consumers.

The National Anti-profiteering Authority shall be responsible for applying anti-profiteering measures in the event of a reduction in rate of GST on supply of goods or services or, if the benefit of input tax credit is not passed on to the recipients by way of commensurate reduction in prices.

**Composition:**

The National Anti-profiteering Authority shall be headed by a senior officer of the level of a Secretary to the Government of India and shall have four technical members from the Centre and/or the States.

**Powers and functions of the authority:**

In the event the National Anti-profiteering Authority confirms the necessity of applying anti-profiteering measures, it has the power to order the business concerned to reduce its prices or return the undue benefit availed along with interest to the recipient of the goods or services.

- ✓ If the undue benefit cannot be passed on to the recipient, it can be ordered to be deposited in the Consumer Welfare Fund.
- ✓ In extreme cases the National Anti-profiteering Authority can impose a penalty on the defaulting business entity and even order the cancellation of its registration under GST.

**A PHENOMENON CALLED CRYPTO CURRENCY**

While crypto currencies are not understood by most people, banks, governments and many companies are aware of its importance.

Bitcoin, a crypto currency, was in news recently after a massive global ransom ware attack 'WannaCry' hit systems in over 100 countries and the cyber criminals demanding a fee in crypto-currencies like bitcoin for unlocking affected devices.

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Billionaire Warren Buffet has described Bitcoin as a “real bubble”, and said that one couldn’t value it considering it was not a value-producing asset.

### **Why are people falling for bitcoins?**

Bitcoin saw its value trading at above \$10,000 (about ₹ 6.43 lakh) per bitcoin, up by about 900% from its value on January 1, 2017. At a time when the Indian government is in the process of determining the legality of crypto currencies, it is important to understand what exactly a virtual currency means for the layman.

### **Origins**

The origin of Bitcoin is unclear, as is who founded it. A person or a group of people, that went by the identity of Satoshi Nakamoto are said to be the one/s who conceptualised an accounting system in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis.

Nakamoto published a white paper about a peer-to-peer electronic cash system, which would “allow online payments to be sent directly from one party to another without going through a financial institution”.

### **Blockchain technology**

The transactions and the value of money would be recorded digitally on a publicly available and open ledger that contains all the transactions ever made, albeit in an anonymous and an encrypted form. This ledger is called blockchain.

Considering the public and open nature of the ledger, proponents of this currency system believe, it could help weed out corruption and inefficiencies in the system.

However, the Reserve Bank of India has already issued a warning that

#### **Cryptocurrency**

A cryptocurrency is a basically a digital asset that has been created to function as a medium of exchange, like cash.

- It uses cryptography to ensure the security of transactions — authentication and prevention of duplicate transactions — and to control the creation of new units of currency.
- This is different from cash in that cryptocurrencies have no physical form. These blur the boundaries between fiat and non-fiat currencies.
- They are simply numbers on a screen and there is no central bank that issues new currency.

However, bitcoin has emerged as the popular face of cryptocurrencies.

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cautioned the users about the potential risks of virtual currencies, including Bitcoin.

### **Regulation**

While some of the countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan have declared Bitcoins as a means of payment illegal and in violation of the state law, a majority are yet to take a stand on it.

In India, The RBI in 2013 issued a warning to users, holders and traders of virtual currencies, including Bitcoins, about the potential financial,

#### **Fiat and Non-fiat currency**

A fiat currency is any currency that has no intrinsic physical value, but whose value is established by government decree. For example, most national currencies around the world, including the Rupee and the Dollar, are fiat currencies as their values are dictated by the government.

Non-fiat currencies such as the Gold Standard have more or less been effectively phased out, as they require adequate physical stockpiles to maintain their value.

However, the new breed of digital cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin blurs the boundaries between fiat and non-fiat – they don't have any physical value as such, but are also not government-controlled. This has created uncertainties about their role in the modern financial system.

operational, and legal, customer protection and security related risks that they are exposing themselves to.

Bitcoins are currently unregulated in India. There are no specific legal frameworks for Bitcoins and cryptocurrencies in India yet.

### **Usage of cryptocurrency**

The Reserve Bank of India has banned transactions in India using cryptocurrencies. It means one can buy cryptocurrencies, but can't use them to pay for goods and services within the country.

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### **A panel to look into legality**

In April 2017, the government had constituted an inter-disciplinary panel to look into the legality of cryptocurrencies and suggest a way forward, which included a having a regulator if they are legalised. The panel submitted its report in August and it is being examined.

### **Pros and cons**

It is possible to send and receive bitcoins from any part of the world irrespective of traditional hurdles like national borders and banking regulations.

- Bitcoin does away with the need for a regulator.
- By making everything public, bitcoin negates the need for a middleman.
- No individual or organisation can manipulate Bitcoins because it is cryptographically secure and do not contain customers' personal information.

However, not being backed by any government entity is Bitcoin's biggest disadvantage and affects its adoption by people.

- With less Bitcoins in circulation and the number of businesses using Bitcoin still very small, relatively small events, can significantly affect the price.
- One of the biggest problems that cryptocurrencies face is acceptance.

However, many businesses have started accepting Bitcoins. One of the largest PC companies in the US, Dell, started accepting Bitcoin in 2014. Bengaluru-based exchange Unocoin has a growing list of merchants on its website that includes e-commerce firms, web-hosting companies and even schools.

### **What do the experts say?**

Experts and central banks across the world are slowly arriving at the conclusion that cryptocurrencies are here to stay.

The only way to regulate their value and quantity is for central banks to issue their own digital currencies. While the value of digital currencies

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such as bitcoin are market-determined, depending on what somebody is willing to pay, a central bank-backed digital currency will have its value controlled to an extent by the central bank itself, much like any other major currency in the world.

## **INDUSTRY, INFRASTRUCTURE AND INVESTMENT**

### **INSPIRE 2017**

#### **What is it?**

The first edition of the International Symposium to Promote Innovation & Research in Energy Efficiency (INSPIRE 2017) was kicked off in Jaipur recently.

**Organised by:** Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) in partnership with The World Bank, and Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy (AEEE).

#### **Details**

It is an International Conference that brings together various stakeholders such as policy makers, innovators, financiers, influencers to showcase best practices in the sector.

It provides a platform for energy efficiency community to discuss energy efficiency policies, market transformation strategies, emerging technologies, delivery and business-model driven transformations.

The event is further designed to provide global and national thought-leaders and implementers to expand perspectives on energy efficiency and spur ideas and solutions that will help leverage the full potential of energy efficiency and bring its multiple co-benefits to the fore.

### **8<sup>TH</sup> EDITION OF THE GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUMMIT (GES)**

**Venue:** Hyderabad

27<sup>th</sup> Nov to 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec

**Hosted by:** NITI Aayog in partnership with US government.

**Theme:** “Women First, Prosperity for All”.

**Details**

- ✓ Organised annually since 2010
- ✓ It is the preeminent annual entrepreneurship gathering that convenes over one thousand emerging entrepreneurs, investors, and supporters from around the world.
- ✓ This year marks the first GES held in South Asia, and the event underscores the broad and enduring partnership with India.
- ✓ Focus on four key industry sectors: Energy and Infrastructure, Healthcare and Life Sciences, Financial Technology and Digital Economy, and Media and Entertainment.

**SAUBHAGYA SCHEME**

**Why in news?**

The Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (SAUBHAGYA) was recently launched in Manipur.

**Details of the scheme**

**Launched in:** September 2017

**Nodal agency for operationalisation:** Rural Electrification Corporation Limited (REC)

**Objective:** To ensure electrification of all willing households in the country in rural as well as urban areas.

**Provisions**

The States and Union Territories are required to complete the works of household electrification by the 31st of December 2018.

- The beneficiaries for free electricity connections would be identified using Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 data.

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- However, un-electrified households not covered under the SECC data would also be provided electricity connections under the scheme on payment of Rs. 500 which shall be recovered by DISCOMs in 10 instalments through electricity bill.

## **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

### **E.COLI RECORDER**

#### **Who has created it?**

The researchers at the Columbia University Medical Center (CUMC) in the U.S.

#### **What is the recorder made up of?**

An ordinary laboratory strain of the ubiquitous human gut microbe Escherichia coli

#### **How?**

Researchers created the microscopic data recorder by taking advantage of CRISPR-Cas, an immune system in many species of bacteria.

1. CRISPR-Cas copies snippets of DNA from invading viruses so that subsequent generations of bacteria can repel these pathogens more effectively.
2. As a result, the CRISPR of the bacterial genome accumulates a chronological record of the bacterial viruses that it and its ancestors have survived. When those same viruses try to infect again, the CRISPR-Cas system can recognise and eliminate them.

#### **Potential applications:**

Such bacteria, swallowed by a patient, might be able to record the changes they experience through the whole digestive tract, yielding an unprecedented view of previously inaccessible phenomena.



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Other applications could include environmental sensing and basic studies in ecology and microbiology, where bacteria could monitor otherwise

#### **What is CRISPR?**

CRISPR technology is a simple yet powerful tool for editing genomes. It allows researchers to easily alter DNA sequences and modify gene function. Its many potential applications include correcting genetic defects, treating and preventing the spread of diseases and improving crops. However, its promise also raises ethical concerns.

CRISPR technology was adapted from the natural defense mechanisms of bacteria and archaea (the domain of single-celled microorganisms). These organisms use CRISPR-derived RNA and various Cas proteins, including Cas9, to foil attacks by viruses and other foreign bodies. They do so primarily by chopping up and destroying the DNA of a foreign invader. When these components are transferred into other, more complex, organisms, it allows for the manipulation of genes, or “editing.”

invisible changes without disrupting their surroundings.

### **HWASONG-15**

**Developed by:** North Korea

#### **What is it?**

It is the ICBM that could be armed with a ‘super-large heavy nuclear warhead’ capable of striking the ‘whole mainland’ of the United States of America.

Pyongyang claimed the missile reached a height of 4,475 km and traveled 950 km (590 miles) before it accurately hit a sea target.

### **CHINA’S PEEK INTO DARK MATTER**

**Probe name:** The satellite, Dark Matter Particle Explorer (DAMPE), also called Wukong or “Monkey King”

#### **Dark Matter**

While normal matter – making up the stars and planets and so on – is understood to account for just four percent of the mass-energy density of the universe, dark matter is believed to make up a quarter, yet its nature is unknown

and yet to be detected. Its existence has been postulated through observations of the cosmos and, though elusive, it is key to the formation of the galaxies and structure of the universe.

27<sup>th</sup> Nov to 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec

### **What the satellite has found?**

The Chinese satellite which is looking for evidence of the annihilation or decay of dark matter particles in space has detected unexpected and mysterious signals in its measurement of high-energy cosmic rays, bringing scientists closer to proving the existence of the invisible matter. The mysterious dark matter is believed to comprise a quarter of universe.

### **Significance**

Precise measurement of cosmic rays, especially at the very high energy range, are important for scientists to look for traces of dark matter annihilation or decay, as well as to understand the universe's most energetic astrophysical phenomena, such as pulsars, active galaxy nuclei and supernova explosions.

### **ADITYA-L1**

It is India's first solar mission.

**Developed by:** ISRO

**Status:** To be launched in 2019.

### **What is it for?**

It will study the sun's outer most layers, the corona and the chromospheres and collect data about coronal mass ejection, which will also yield information for space weather prediction.

### **Significance**

The data from Aditya mission will be immensely helpful in discriminating between different models for the origin of solar storms and also for enhancing the understanding of how the storms evolve and what path they take through the interplanetary space from the Sun to the Earth.

### **Where will it be placed?**

27<sup>th</sup> Nov to 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec

To get the best science from the sun, continuous viewing of the sun is preferred without any occultation/ eclipses and hence, Aditya- L1 satellite will be placed in the halo orbit around the Lagrangian point 1 (L1) of the sun-earth system.

**What are Lagrangian points and halo orbit?**

Lagrangian points are the locations in space where the combined gravitational pull of two large masses roughly balance each other. Any small mass placed at that location will remain at constant distances relative to the large masses. There are five such points in Sun-Earth system and they are denoted as L1, L2, L3, L4 and L5.

A halo orbit is a periodic three-dimensional orbit near the L1, L2 or L3.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **CLEAN GANGA MISSION**

#### **Why in news?**

Four UK-based Indian-origin businessmen have committed to projects worth nearly Rs 500 crore associated with the Clean Ganga mission. They will take on the projects as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) agenda.

#### **Namami Gange Programme:**

Started in: 2015.

Implemented by: National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), and its state counterpart organizations i.e., State Program Management Groups (SPMGs).

#### **What the program does?**

It integrates the efforts to clean and protect the Ganga River in a comprehensive manner.

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Among other things, the programme will focus on pollution abatement interventions namely Interception, diversion & treatment of wastewater flowing through the open drains through bio-remediation / appropriate in-situ treatment / use of innovative technologies.

### **Implementation structure**

In order to improve implementation, a three-tier mechanism has been proposed for project monitoring comprising of

- ✓ High level task force chaired by Cabinet Secretary assisted by NMCG at national level
- ✓ State level committee chaired by Chief Secretary assisted by SPMG at state level
- ✓ District level committee chaired by the District Magistrate.

The program emphasizes on improved coordination mechanisms between various Ministries/Agencies of Central and State governments.

### **SIANG WATER UNFIT FOR CONSUMPTION**

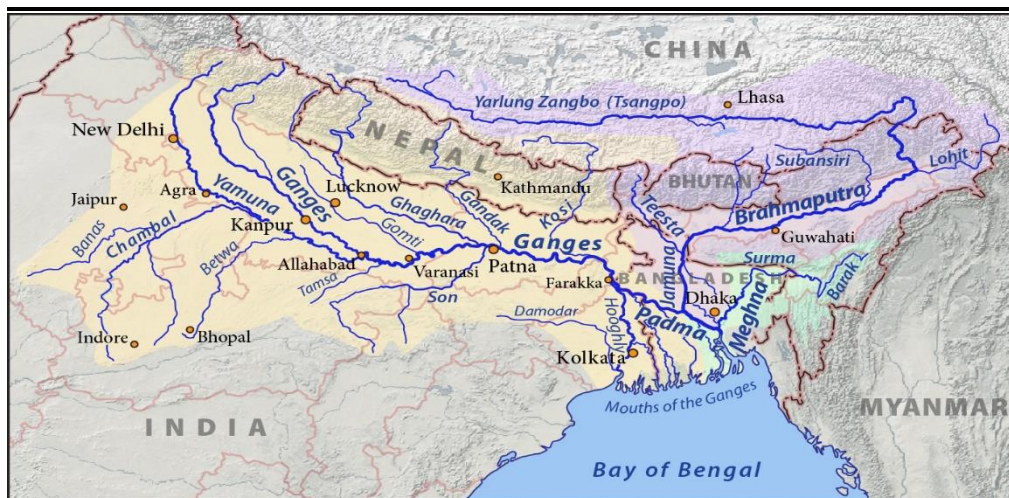
The waters of the Siang river, considered the lifeline of northern Arunachal Pradesh for centuries, has suddenly turned dark black triggering panic in the frontier state. The water from the river is no longer considered fit for consumption.

### **What caused it?**

China is being blamed for these changes. China has been planning to dig the world's longest tunnel to change the course of Yarlung Tsangpo from Tibet towards Taklimakan desert in Xinjiang but has been denying the same at public platforms.

### **Siang river location:**

27<sup>th</sup> Nov to 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec



Siang originates in China and then enters India through Arunachal Pradesh, it is then joined by two other rivers–Dibang and Lohit–as it enters Assam where it is called the Brahmaputra.

### **CLEAN SEA-2017**

#### **What is it?**

It is the Regional Level Marine Oil Pollution Response Exercise

**Where?** Conducted at the sea off Port Blair.

**Objective:** To ascertain preparedness of the Indian Coast Guard, resource agencies and other stakeholders in responding to a major oil spill in line with the provisions of NOS-DCP (National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan).

**Backgrounder:**

27<sup>th</sup> Nov to 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec

Indian Coast Guard is responsible for marine environment protection in the maritime zones of India and is the coordinating authority for response to oil spills in Indian waters. The Force has drawn up a National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan (NOSDCP) and has established three pollution

#### **National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan**

India promulgated National oil spill Disaster contingency plan (NOS-DCP) in the year 1996. Coast guard was designated as central coordination authority.

The objectives of the plan are:

- To develop appropriate and effective systems for the detection and reporting of spillage of oil.
- To ensure prompt response to prevent, control, and combat oil pollution.
- To ensure that adequate protection is provided to the public health and welfare, and the marine environment.
- To ensure that appropriate response techniques are employed to prevent, control, and combat oil pollution, and dispose off recovered material in an environmentally accepted manner.

To ensure that complete and accurate records are maintained of all expenditure to facilitate cost of recovery.

response centres at Mumbai, Chennai and Port Blair.

### **COMMENDATION FOR COMBATING ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE**

**Who has been commended?** Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), India

**By who?** 69th Standing Committee meeting of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) at Geneva

**What for?**

WCCB has been awarded with the Certificate of Commendation for its exemplary enforcement action in its regional and global effort to combat illegal wildlife trade. The award has been given to by the Secretary General of.

27<sup>th</sup> Nov to 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec

India was the only recipient of the Certificate of Commendation at the recently held meet.

### **Operation Save Kurma:**

The award has been presented to WCCB for its efforts in conducting and coordinating a species specific wildlife enforcement Operation,

#### **WCCB:**

- ✓ A statutory body constituted by GoI in 2007, after amending the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
- ✓ It was established to combat organized wildlife crime in the country.

The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, mandates WCCB to collect and collate intelligence related to organized wildlife crime activities and to disseminate the same to State and other enforcement agencies for immediate action so as to apprehend the criminals

- ✓ To establish a centralized wildlife crime data bank
- ✓ Co-ordinate actions by various agencies in connection with the enforcement of the provisions of the Act.
- ✓ It will also assist State Governments to ensure success in prosecutions related to wildlife crimes and advise the Government of India on issues relating to wildlife crimes having national and international ramifications, relevant policy and laws.

It also assists and advises the Customs authorities in inspection of the consignments of flora & fauna as per the provisions of Wild Life Protection Act, CITES and EXIM Policy governing such an item.

codenamed “Operation Save Kurma”.

- ✓ The operation is to combat the proliferating illegal trade in live turtles and its parts from the country to destinations abroad.
- ✓ The operation was also aimed to invite attention of the enforcement agencies towards such illegal trade.

## **SECURITY CHALLENGES**

### **IMMSAREX**

**Venue:** Bangladesh

**What is it?**

#### **IONS**

The IONS is a regional forum of Indian Ocean littoral states, represented by their Navy chiefs, launched by India in February 2008. It presently has 23 members and nine observers.

#### **Details**

- ✓ It is a voluntary initiative that seeks to increase maritime co-operation among navies
- ✓ It aids the littoral states by providing an open and inclusive forum for discussion of regionally relevant maritime issues
- ✓ In the process, it endeavors to generate a flow of information between naval professionals that would lead to common understanding and possibly agreements on the way ahead.
- ✓ The grouping has working groups on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Information Security and Interoperability (IS&I) and anti-piracy now renamed as maritime security.



27<sup>th</sup> Nov to 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec

The 2017 edition of International Multilateral Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise (IMMSAREX) is the first ever operational exercise held under the aegis of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) in Bangladesh.

The Exercise comprised drills related to fire-fighting, sea accidents and rescue, as well as deep sea searches for missing ships, searches for missing aircraft, and other emergency rescue operations.

### **AJEYA WARRIOR-2017**

It is a fourteen days training exercise between the Indian Army and the British Army.

**Where was it held?** Rajasthan.

### **Details**

It is the third joint military exercise between the two countries.

The aim of the exercise is to build and promote bilateral relations and enhance interoperability while sharing experiences between the Royal British Army and the Indian Army.