



C.A From 11th Apr to 17th Apr
General Studies-1

Important figures in Indian History

PM pays tributes to Mahatma Phule on his birth anniversary

Jyotirao Govindrao Phule (11 April 1827 – 28 November 1890) was an Indian social activist, a thinker, anti-caste social reformer and a writer from Maharashtra.

His work extended to many fields including eradication of untouchability and the caste system, women's emancipation and the reform of Hindu family life.

On 24 September 1873, Phule, along with his followers, formed the Satyashodhak Samaj (Society of Seekers of Truth) to attain equal rights for people from lower castes.

Phule is regarded as an important figure of the social reform movement in Maharashtra. He and his wife, Savitribai Phule, were pioneers of women's education in India.

He is most known for his efforts to educate women and lower caste people. The couple were among the first native Indians to open a school for girls in India in 1st January 1848.

Phule was bestowed with the title of Mahatma on 11 May 1888 by another social reformer from Bombay, Vithalrao Krishnaji Vandeekar.

Mahatma Phule inspired B. R. Ambedkar, the first minister of law of Republic India and the architect of Indian Constitution.

Chola period Dance Panel Found

A rare dance panel of Nayak period and an inscribed pillar of Chola period have been found on an abandoned brick mound at Pathalapettai near Kiliyur in Tiruchi.

About Dance Panel:

- The dance panel is depicted on a stone slab that measures 1.21 metres in length and 33 centimetres in height.
- Four pairs of well dressed male and female dancers, holding some object in one of their hands, are seen engaged in a ritualistic dance in the panel.



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- Three pairs are shown hugging each other while the last pair is dancing keeping a distance between. All of them are decked with ornaments and different head gears.
- The female deity with a flower in the right hand seen between the first two pairs and the pot depicted between the last two pairs denote the ritualistic nature of the dance.

About The Pillar:

- A round pillar found at the spot has an inscribed base. The base has a Tamil inscription of Chola paleography with a few Grantha letters used in between.
- Though seven lines are visible, the last two are not readable. The inscription records that a certain Rejaladeviyar Sativinjei, queen of Iladevayan, had gifted that pillar.
- A sketchy figure of a Mugalinga is seen sculpted on the first half of the pillar, suggesting its conversion into a Linga.

About Silappatikaram:

- It is one of the Five Great Epics of Tamil Literature according to later Tamil literary tradition. A poet-prince from Kodungallur near Kochi, referred to by the pseudonym Ilango Adigal, is credited with this work.
- The epic revolves around Kannagi, who having lost her husband to a miscarriage of justice at the court of the Pandyan Dynasty, wreaks her revenge on his kingdom.

First offshore wind energy project in Gujarat



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The National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE) has called for 'Expression of Interest' (EoI) for the first offshore wind energy project of India.

About Project:

- **There is a proposal to set 1000 MW offshore wind energy project in Gulf of Khambhat, off the coast of Gujarat.**
- The proposed area is located 23-40 km seaward side from Pipavav port. MNRE plans to install at least 5 GW of offshore wind capacity by 2022.
- The first offshore LiDAR was installed in Gulf of Khambhat in Gujarat for measurement of wind resource and NIWE is collecting wind speed data from November, 2017 onwards.
- **Areas off the coasts of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu are two identified areas for development of offshore wind power. The second LiDAR would be installed off Tamil Nadu coast by September, 2018.** In addition NIWE is planning to set up few more LiDARs for assessment of offshore wind resources.

Benefits:

- **At global level, it has been observed that, offshore wind energy while being better than onshore wind in terms of efficiency is also becoming competitive and comparable in terms of tariffs.**
- With the announcement of this first offshore wind energy project, the Government is attempting to develop this sector in India and envisages to replicate similar success as on-shore wind power sector.
- This would help the country towards attaining energy security and achievement of National Action Plan for Climate Change (NAPCC) targets.
- It would also help in India's target of installing 40Gw Wind energy system by 2030 as per Commitment to Paris Agreement.

About National institute of wind energy:

National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE) has been established in Chennai in the year 1998, as an autonomous R&D institution by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Government of India.



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It is a knowledge-based institution of high quality and dedication, offers services and seeks to find complete solutions for the kinds of difficulties and improvements in the entire spectrum of the wind energy sector by carrying out further research..

PM pays tributes to the martyrs of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre

About Jallianwala massacre:

The **Jallianwala Bagh massacre**, also known as the **Amritsar massacre**, took place on 13 April 1919 when troops of the British Indian Army under the command of Colonel Reginald Dyer fired rifles into a crowd of Baishakhi pilgrims, who had gathered in Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar, Punjab.

The civilians, in the majority Sikhs, had assembled to participate in the annual Baisakhi celebrations, a religious and cultural festival for Punjabi people and also to condemn the arrest and deportation of two national leaders, Satya Pal and Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew.

Coming from outside the city, many may have been unaware of the imposition of martial law some time earlier.

Hunter Committee:

On 14 October 1919, after orders issued by the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, the Government of India announced the formation of a committee of inquiry into the events in Punjab. Referred to as the Disorders Inquiry Committee, it was later more widely known as the Hunter Commission.

The Hunter Commission did not impose any penal or disciplinary action because Dyer's actions were condoned by various superiors (later upheld by the Army Council)

In February 2013 David Cameron became the first serving British Prime Minister to visit the site, laid a wreath at the memorial, and described the Amritsar massacre as "a deeply shameful event in British history"

World Hindi Conference (WHC)



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The 11th World Hindi Conference (WHC) is being organized in August 2018 in Mauritius by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India in association with the Government of Mauritius.

First World Hindi Conference (विश्व हिंदी सम्मेलन) was inaugurated on 10 January 1975 by then Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi. The first conference held from 10 to 12 January 1975 in Nagpur. Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, then Prime Minister of Mauritius attended conference as the Chief guest

About the conference:

The event, held once in three years, is dedicated to Hindi language. It sees participation from Hindi scholars, writers and laureates from different parts of the world who contribute to the language.

Theme: "Vaishvik Hindi Aur Bharatiy Sanskriti".

The MEA has also set up the World Hindi Secretariat in Mauritius. The main objective of the WHS is to promote Hindi as an international language and further its cause for recognition at the United Nations as an Official Language

Various Festivals Of India

The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind in his message on the eve of Vaisakhi, Vishu, Rongali Bihu, Naba Barsha, Vaisakhadi, Puthandu Pirappu which are being celebrated on 14th and 15th April, 2018

Vaisakhi also known as **Vaishakhi**, or **Vasakhi** is a historical and religious festival in [Sikhism](#). It is celebrated on 13 or 14 April every year as per the [Nanakshahi calendar](#) and the Mool Nanakshahi Calendar.

Vaisakhi marks the foundation of the [Khalsa](#) community of Sikhs, on 13 April 1699 by [Guru Gobind Singh](#), when he created the sword baptism, the pahul or [Amrit Sanchar](#), and transformed the Sikhs "from sparrows into hawks", and they became a warrior caste. It is additionally a spring harvest festival for the Sikhs.



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Vaisakhi is also an ancient festival of Punjabis, marking the Solar New Year and also celebrating the spring harvest. It is regionally known by many names, but celebrated in broadly similar ways by some Hindus and Punjabis

Vishu is the astronomical new year Hindu festival celebrated in the Indian state of [Kerala](#), Tulu Nadu region and Kodagu in Karnataka and their diaspora communities.

Bihu is the chief festival in the Assam state of India. It refers to a set of three different festivals: Rongali or Bohag Bihu observed in April, Kongali or Kati Bihu observed in October, and Bhogali or Magh Bihu observed in January.

Tamil *Puthandu* also known as **Puthuvarudam** or Tamil New Year, is the first day of year on the Tamil calendar.

Naba Barsha is the celebration of Bengali New Year .

Tribal festival

During the Maasi Magham festival of the tribe on the shore at Mahabalipuram during February-March, Irulas from hamlets across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala join in the celebrations and worship Goddess Kanniyamman.

About Irulas Tribe:

Irula is an aboriginal ethnic group of [India](#). They inhabit the area of the [Nilgiri mountains](#), in the states of [Tamil Nadu](#) and [Kerala](#), [India](#). A [scheduled tribe](#), their population in this region is estimated at 25,000 people. People of Irula ethnicity are called *Irular*, and speak [Irula](#), which belongs to the [Dravidian](#) family.

Traditionally, the main occupation of the Irulas has been [snake](#) and [rat](#) catching. They also work as labourers ([coolies](#)) in the fields of the [landlords](#) during the sowing and harvesting seasons or in the rice mills. Fishing is also a major occupation.

Many senior tribespeople feel the community is losing its fables and traditional songs and practices. Even their language is under threat with youngsters mostly speaking Tamil, Kannada or Malayalam

Ayushman Bharat scheme



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Why in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the first health centre under the Ayushman Bharat scheme here today.

Under Ayushman Bharat, the government will open 1.5 lakh health and wellness centres by 2022, which will be equipped to treat a host of diseases, including blood pressure, diabetes, cancer and old-age illness.

It will subsume the on-going centrally sponsored schemes -Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) and the Senior Citizen Health Insurance Scheme (SCHIS).

Highlights of the scheme:

Coverage: The scheme has the benefit cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family per year. To ensure that nobody is left out (especially women, children and elderly) there will be no cap on family size and age in the scheme. The benefit cover will also include pre and post-hospitalisation expenses.

Target: The target beneficiaries of the proposed scheme will be more than 10 crore families belonging to poor and vulnerable population based on SECC database. Benefits of the scheme are portable across the country and a beneficiary covered under the scheme will be allowed to take cashless benefits from any public/private empanelled hospitals across the country.

Role of state governments: State Governments will be allowed to expand AB-NHPM both horizontally and vertically. States will be free to choose the modalities for implementation. They can implement through insurance company or directly through Trust/ Society or a mixed model.



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Council: For giving policy directions and fostering coordination between Centre and States, it is proposed to set up Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission Council (AB-NHPMC) at apex level Chaired by Union Health and Family Welfare Minister.

Who is eligible?

It will be an entitlement based scheme with entitlement decided on the basis of deprivation criteria in the SECC database.

- The different categories in rural area include families having only one room with kucha walls and kucharoof; families having no adult member between age 16 to 59; female headed households with no adult male member between age 16 to 59; disabled member and no able bodied adult member in the family; SC/ST households; and landless households deriving major part of their income from manual casual labour.
- Also, automatically included families in rural areas having any one of the following: households without shelter, destitute, living on alms, manual scavenger families, primitive tribal groups, legally released bonded labour. For urban areas, 11 defined occupational categories are entitled under the scheme.
- **Indus Valley Civilization**
- The [Indus Valley](#) civilisation was wiped out 4,350 years ago by a 900-year-long drought, scientists at the [Indian Institute of Technology](#) in Kharagpur (IIT-Kgp) have found.
- Evidence gathered during their study also put to rest the widely accepted theory that the said drought lasted for only about 200 years.
- **About The Study:**
- Researchers from the geology and geophysics department have been studying the monsoon's variability for the past 5,000 years and have found that the rains played truant in the northwest Himalayas for 900 long years, drying up the source of water that fed the rivers along which the civilisation thrived.
- This eventually drove the otherwise hardy inhabitants towards the east and south, where rain conditions were better.



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- The IIT-Kgp team mapped a 5,000-year monsoon variability in the **Tso Moriri Lake** in Leh-Ladakh — which too was fed by the same glacial source — and identified periods that had continuous spells of good monsoon as well as phases when it was weak or nil.
- "The study revealed that from 2,350 BC (4,350 years ago) till 1,450 BC, the monsoon had a major weakening effect over the zone where the civilisation flourished.
- A drought-like situation developed, forcing residents to abandon their settlements in search of greener pastures.
- **About Tso Moriri Lake**
- **Tso Moriri** or **Lake Moriri** or "Mountain Lake", is a brackish water lake in the Ladakhi part of the [Changthang](#) Plateau (literally: northern plains) in [Jammu and Kashmir](#) in Northern [India](#). The lake and surrounding area are protected as the Tso Moriri Wetland Conservation Reserve.
- The lake is at an altitude of 4,522 m (14,836 ft). It is the largest of the high altitude lakes entirely within India and entirely within [Ladakh](#) in this Trans-Himalayan biogeographic region.
- The [Korzok Monastery](#), on the western bank of the lake is 400 years old and attracts tourists and [Buddhist](#) pilgrims.
- Largely based on the ecological diversity of the Lake (explained in the previous section) and its surroundings, the Tsomiriri was notified in November 2002 under the List of Ramsar Wetland sites under the [Ramsar Convention](#).

Geography

Monsoon to be Normal according to IMD:

- a. Quantitatively, the monsoon seasonal rainfall is likely to be 97% of the Long Period Average (LPA) with a model error of $\pm 5\%$. The LPA of the season rainfall over the country as a whole for the period 1951-2000 is 89 cm.
- b. Forecast also suggests maximum probability for normal monsoon rainfall (96-104% of LPA) and low probability for deficient rainfall during the season.

How does IMD forecast Monsoon?



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India Meteorological Department (IMD) issues operational forecast for the southwest monsoon seasonal (June to September) rainfall for the country as a whole in two stages.

The first stage forecast is issued in April and the second stage forecast is issued in June. These forecasts are prepared using state-of-the-art Statistical Ensemble Forecasting system (SEFS) that is critically reviewed and improved regularly through in-house research activities.

Since 2012, IMD is also using the dynamical global climate forecasting system (CFS) model developed under the Monsoon Mission to generate forecasts.

Factors Considered for Monsoon Forecast:

- Sea Surface Temperature (SST) Gradient between North Atlantic and North Pacific
- Equatorial South Indian Ocean SST
- East Asia Mean Sea Level Pressure
- Northwest Europe Land Surface Air Temperature
- Equatorial Pacific Warm Water Volume

New Methodology To Define Rainfall and Drought:

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) will now stop use of the term '**drought**' to describe poor rainfall recorded across parts of the country and replace it with the terms '**deficient year**' and '**large deficient year**'.

Following are the key terms that have now been standardized by the IMD:

Heat wave: Temperatures greater than 4.5 degree Celsius above what's usual for the region.

Cold wave: Temperatures less than 4.5 degree Celsius above what's usual for the region.

Severe heat wave: greater than or equal to 47 degree Celsius.



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Severe cold wave: Minimum temperature is 2 degree Celsius or lower.

The new criteria classify all-India rainfall into five categories: **normal** (plus or minus 10% of the long period average) **below normal** (rainfall lower than 10% below average), **above normal** (rainfall greater than 10% above average), **deficient year** (rainfall deficit between 10 and 20% up to 40% of India's spatial area) and **large deficient year** (rainfall deficit of over 10% across more than 40% of India's area).

The rules also change criteria to classify seasonal rainfall.

Instead of the old four rainfall categories (excess, normal, deficient, and scanty), the **IMD has introduced six categories** – **large excess:** 60% and above; **excess:** between 20% and 59%; **normal:** minus 19% to plus 19%; **deficient:** minus 20% to minus 59%; **large deficient:** below 60%; and no rain: (0).



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Swacchh Bharat Mission:

Why in News?

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has said that sanitation coverage has expanded from about 40 percent in 2014, to about 80 percent today. He said toilet construction is ending social imbalances and is becoming a means of socio-economic empowerment and women empowerment. He described the mass movement of Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan as a phenomenon unparalleled anywhere in the world, in the 21st century.

About Swachh Bharat Mission:

It was officially launched on 2 October 2014 and is India's biggest ever cleanliness drive.

The mission seeks to achieve clean India and aims to provide access to toilets to all households in the country.

Objectives of the mission:

- Eliminate open defecation.
- Conversion of insanitary toilets to pour flush toilets.
- Eradication of manual scavenging.
- 100% collection and scientific processing/disposal reuse/recycle of Municipal Solid Waste.
- To bring about a behavioral change in people regarding healthy sanitation practices.
- Generate awareness among the citizens about sanitation and its linkages with public health.
- Strengthening of urban local bodies to design, execute and operate systems.
- To create enabling environment for private sector participation in Capital Expenditure and Operation & Maintenance (O&M) costs.



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Key findings of National Annual Rural Sanitation survey:

- 77% household have access to toilet
- 94% of them are using it regularly
- 96% ODF villages confirmed to remain ODF.
- Five states, 149 districts and 2.08 lakh villages have already been declared Open Defecation Free (ODF).
- Nearly 22% of the cities and towns have been declared ODF; 50% of the urban wards have achieved 100% door-to-door solid waste collection; and over 20,000 Swachhagrahi volunteers are working across urban local bodies, and over a lakh are working in rural India.
- The number of schools with separate toilet facilities for girls has increased from 0.4 million (37%) to almost one million (91%).

'NITI Forum for North East'

The first meeting of the newly constituted 'NITI Forum for North East' was held in Agartala, Tripura today.

The meeting, organized by the NITI Aayog, Ministry of DoNER and the North Eastern Council (NEC), was co-chaired by the Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog, Shri Rajeev Kumar and the Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), Dr. Jitendra Singh.

Outcome:

The focus of development projects in the NER will be based on the concept of "HIRA" (Highways, Inland Waterways, Railways and Airways) as spelled out by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.

The emphasis will also be made on Education, Health and Skill Development in the region.

Horticulture, Tourism, Food Processing, use of Bamboo and Made in North-East will be developed through five Mission Mode projects in a time-bound manner.

About NITI Forum:



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- 'NITI Forum for North East' was constituted in February 2018 with an aim to ensure sustainable economic growth of the North Eastern Region (NER) of the country and periodically review the development status in NER.
- The forum will have its Secretariat in the Ministry of DoNER.
- The NITI Forum for Northeast is tasked to identify various constraints on the way of accelerated, inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the North East Region of the country and to recommend suitable interventions for addressing identified constraints. It will also review the development status in the NER.
- The Forum includes representation from all NE States, their Chief Secretaries and Secretaries of relevant Central Ministries/Departments, Directors of reputed institutions (IIT, IIM etc), experts and journalists have been included as members.

International relations:

President of India becomes first visiting Head of State to address Parliament of Swaziland

Following the conclusion of his visit to Swaziland, the President today (April 10, 2018) will leave for Zambia. This will be the final leg of his journey to three African nations – Equatorial Guinea, Swaziland and Zambia. In the evening, he will meet and address the Indian community in Lusaka.

India commits to cooperation in Health and Agriculture, to build new Parliament building.

About Swaziland:

Swaziland, officially the **Kingdom of Swaziland** (*/ˈswɑːzɪlənd/* or */-lənd/*; Swazi: *Umbuso weSwatini*; sometimes called **kaNgwane** or **Eswatini**),^[5] is a sovereign state in Southern Africa. It is neighboured by Mozambique to its northeast and by South Africa to its north, west and south; it is a landlocked country.

Swaziland lies across a fault which runs from the Drakensberg Mountains of Lesotho, north through the Eastern highlands of Zimbabwe, and forms the Great Rift Valley of Kenya

Project Dhoop



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The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) launched a nationwide campaign today (April 9) at National Bal Bhawan in Delhi to spread awareness about availing Vitamin D through natural sunlight and consuming fortified food among school-going children.

About Project:

- Project Dhoop's Noon Assembly is an innovative and effective concept to ensure that school students get adequate Vitamin D through sunlight.
- Project Dhoop urges schools to shift their morning assembly to noon time, mainly between 11am and 1pm to ensure maximum absorption of Vitamin D in students through natural sunlight.
- School uniforms needs to be designed in a way that at least face and arms are exposed to sunlight, which would be equivalent to 18 per cent of body surface, and the exposure has to be at least for 30-40 minutes.
- There is a popular belief that morning sunshine is the best for our bones, however, it is actually the sunshine from 11am to 1pm that is most beneficial in increasing Vitamin D levels in human body because of the best ultraviolet B (UVB) radiation

Other Sources Of Vit-D

Opting for fortified foods (with +F symbol) is a simple and inexpensive way to address micronutrient deficiencies.

Both fortified milk and fortified edible oil are now readily available across the country.

Causes Of Vit-D Deficiency:

Vitamin D deficiency occurs due to overuse of sunscreen, wearing clothes that cover most of the skin, working all day in an air-conditioned atmosphere, and other factors.

About FSSAI:



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Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has been established under Food Safety and Standards , 2006 which consolidates various acts & orders that have hitherto handled food related issues in various Ministries and Departments.

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the Administrative Ministry for the implementation of FSSAI. The Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) have already been appointed by Government of India. The Chairperson is in the rank of Secretary to Government of India.

Functions:

- Framing of Regulations to lay down the Standards and guidelines in relation to articles of food and specifying appropriate system of enforcing various standards thus notified.
- Laying down mechanisms and guidelines for accreditation of certification bodies engaged in certification of food safety management system for food businesses.
- Laying down procedure and guidelines for accreditation of laboratories and notification of the accredited laboratories.
- Collect and collate data regarding food consumption, incidence and prevalence of biological risk, contaminants in food, residues of various, contaminants in foods products, identification of emerging risks and introduction of rapid alert system.
- Provide training programmes for persons who are involved or intend to get involved in food businesses.
- Contribute to the development of international technical standards for food, sanitary and phyto-sanitary standards.
- Promote general awareness about food safety and food standards.

Online dashboard to monitor public grievances on real time basis

The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh launched an online dashboard developed by Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) here today.



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- The dashboard will monitor public grievances on real time basis and periodically review progress of systemic reforms.
- The systemic reforms and their monitoring metrics, catering to grievance issues are highlighted on the dashboard.
- This will enable concerned Ministries/Departments to monitor implementation of these reforms.
- Emphasis was also laid on gaining experience from Anubhav portal launched by Govt. last year.

About Anubhav Portal:

A platform for retirees to share **experience** of working with the Government. This facility provides a sense of fulfilment and **satisfaction** to the retirees and also create a data base of useful **suggestion** and information.

An annual **award** scheme has been instituted to encourage the retiree to submit his valuable experience/ suggestions through write-ups.

Partner's Forum:

A Delegation of The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH) including Shri J. P. Nadda, Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare, Dr. Michelle Bachelet, former President of Chile and incoming Board Chair of PMNCH and renowned actor and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Ms. Priyanka Chopra called on the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi today, to invite him about the upcoming Partners Forum 2018 which will be hosted during 12-13 December, 2018 at New Delhi.

About Partner's Forum:



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- The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health is an alliance of organisations in 77 countries from the sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health communities, as well as health influencing sectors.
- The PMNCH Partners' Forum serves as a regular global platform for the renewal of commitment to the mission and purpose of the Partnership, for global high level advocacy and for achieving broad consensus on the strategy and priorities of the Partnership. Participation at the Forum comes from all constituencies and members of the Partnership.
- *A Partners' Forum has earlier been hosted by India in 2010.*

Green Trains for Green India

Beginning with the introduction of 57 bio-toilets in one train i.e. Gwalior-Varanasi Bundelkhand Express in January 2011, Indian Railways has provided about 1,25,000 bio-toilets in its coaches till March 2018. This covers about 60% of coaching fleet of Indian Railways.

Presently, Indian Railways have commissioned and operating 27 sections as Green Corridors. All the trains plying on these sections are running with all the coaches equipped with bio-toilets. Thus, there is no direct discharge of human waste from the trains running on these Green Corridors.

About "Bio-Toilet project"

- This technology is first of its kind being used by any railroad in the world for On-board accelerated digestion of human waste.
 - These bio-toilets are fitted underneath the lavatories and the human waste discharged into them is acted upon by a colony of anaerobic bacteria that convert human waste mainly into water and small amount of bio-gases.
 - The gases escape into atmosphere and waste water is discharged after chlorination onto the track. Human waste, thus, does not fall on the railway tracks thus improving cleanliness and hygiene at platforms, and facilitate track and coaches maintenance staff to perform their work more efficiently.
 - The Bio-toilet project is very much aligned with 'Swachh Bharat Mission', launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.
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- The technology for Bio-toilets has been innovated, designed and is 'Made in India'.



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- It has been developed jointly by Indian Railways' Engineers & DRDO's scientists.
- It is one example where the technology developed for defence applications has been utilised for civilian purpose.

- **Indian polity**

- **Office of profit**

- Following the Delhi High Court order setting aside the disqualification of 20 Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLAs last month, the Election Commission (EC) will on May 17 resume an "oral hearing" on the office-of-profit allegations against them.
- On March 23, the High Court quashed the notification issued by President Ram Nath Kovind, on a recommendation from the EC to disqualify the MLAs.

- ***Background:***

- In June 2016, the Congress had approached the Election Commission, alleging that 21 MLAs of the AAP had been appointed parliamentary secretaries in March 2015. In September 2016, the Delhi High Court set aside their appointments as parliamentary secretaries.

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- ***What is an 'office of profit'?***

- If an MLA or an MP holds a government office and receives benefits from it, then that office is termed as an "office of profit". A person will be disqualified if he holds an office of profit under the central or state government, other than an office declared not to disqualify its holder by a law passed by Parliament or state legislature.

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- ***What are the basic criteria to disqualify an MP or MLA?***

- Basic disqualification criteria for an MP are laid down in Article 102 of the Constitution, and for an MLA in Article 191. They can be disqualified for:
 - a) Holding an office of profit under government of India or state government;
 - b) Being of unsound mind;
 - c) Being an undischarged insolvent;
 - d) Not being an Indian citizen or for acquiring citizenship of another country.

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- ***What is the underlying principle for including 'office of profit' as criterion for disqualification?***

- Makers of the Constitution wanted that legislators should not feel obligated to the Executive in any way, which could influence them while discharging legislative functions. In other words, an MP or MLA should be free to carry out her duties without any kind of governmental pressure.

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- **International relations**

- **India-UK**

- India and the United Kingdom (U.K.) were holding talks to seal an agreement on mutual recognition of educational qualifications, London's envoy said here on Friday.
- "We have 14,000 masters students from India in the U.K. Students form an important part of bilateral ties. But the one-year masters degrees given by the UK universities are not recognised in India. So discussion is under way for an agreement to mutually recognise these degrees. This will open up more opportunities for the students and this also seems to be fair to the students.
- One of the factors that had prevented India from recognising the one-year master courses was the fact that several less-reputed educational institutions were also found to be offering such courses, often jeopardising academic prospects of students.
- India last month signed an agreement on mutual recognition of educational degrees with France, during the visit of President Emmanuel Macron to Delhi.
- Educational cooperation would be one of the major issues on the table during Prime Minister Modi's visit to London next week when he is scheduled to participate in the **Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting (CHOGM)** and hold bilateral talks with Prime Minister May's team.

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- **About CHOGM:**

- The **Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting** is a [biennial summit meeting](#) of the [heads of government](#) from all [Commonwealth](#) nations.
- Every two years the meeting is held in a different member state and is chaired by that nation's respective Prime Minister or President who becomes the [Commonwealth Chair-in-Office](#) until the next meeting.
- Queen [Elizabeth II](#), is the [Head of the Commonwealth](#).
- Latest CHOGM was held in Malta in 2015.
- India hosted only one meeting of CHOGM in 1983 in New Delhi.

- **About Commonwealth**

- The **Commonwealth of Nations** (formerly the **British Commonwealth**), also known as simply **the Commonwealth**, is an [intergovernmental organisation](#) of [53 member states](#) that are mostly former [territories](#) of the [British Empire](#).



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- The Commonwealth operates by [intergovernmental consensus](#) of the member states, organised through the [Commonwealth Secretariat](#) and [non-governmental organisations](#), organised through the [Commonwealth Foundation](#).
- The Commonwealth covers more than 29,958,050 km² (11,566,870 sq mi), equivalent to 20% of the world's land area and spans all six inhabited [continents](#).
- With an estimated population of 2.419 billion people, nearly a third of the [world population](#), the Commonwealth in 2014 produced a nominal [gross domestic product](#) (GDP) of \$10.45 trillion, representing 14% of the [gross world product](#).

International Relation

Attack On Syria

U.S., British and French forces struck Syria with more than 100 missiles on Saturday in the first coordinated Western strikes against the Damascus government, targeting what they called chemical weapons sites in retaliation for a suspected poison gas attack.

The targets included a scientific research facility near Damascus, a chemical weapons storage facility west of the city of Homs, and a third location near Homs that contained both a command post and a chemical weapons equipment storage facility, the U.S. military said.

What is a chemical weapon? Which chemicals are most commonly used?

Chemical weapons are specialised munitions that deliver chemicals that inflict death or injury on humans through chemical actions. Because they are relatively cheap and easy to produce, chemical weapons are referred to as the "poor man's bomb". Even though modern munitions, through precision of application and specialised use, can cause catastrophic damage, chemical weapons trigger unmatched horror and leave deep psychological scars.



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Among the most commonly used chemical weapons are mustard gas, phosgene, chlorine, and the nerve agents Sarin and VX.

- **Sarin:** Doctors and first-responders at the recent attack site said symptoms shown by victims suggested use of Sarin. This odourless, colourless agent is extremely potent — even trace amounts can kill humans — but its threat after being released in the atmosphere is short-lived. The UN had confirmed the use of Sarin in the deaths of hundreds in a rebel-held Damascus suburb in 2013.
- **Mustard gas:** Possibly the world's most commonly used chemical weapon, it was widely used in World War I, and gets its name from its distinctive odour of rotten mustard. It is slow acting, and only about 5% to 10% of people exposed to it usually die.
- **VX:** This is the nerve agent that was reportedly used in the assassination of Kim Jong-nam, half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un this February. In its original form, it is odourless, and appears as a brownish oily substance. It is very persistent — once in the atmosphere, it is slow to evaporate, and thus tends to cause prolonged exposure.

What are the international conventions against the use of chemical weapons?

Geneva Protocol: The horrors of chemical weapons during World War I prompted countries to sign the Geneva Protocol in 1925 to stop the use of “asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases, and of all analogous liquids, materials or devices” and “bacteriological methods of warfare”. The core elements of the Geneva Convention, which went on to have 35 signatories and 140 parties, are now generally considered part of customary international law. The Convention was, however, silent on the production, storage and transfer of these chemicals.

CWC: The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) of 1993, plugged the previous loopholes. The CWC outlawed the production as well as stockpiling of chemical weapons. 192 countries have so far agreed to be bound by the CWC — 4 UN states are not party: **Israel, Egypt, North Korea and South Sudan**. The CWC's main objective is to get signatories to destroy their stockpiles of chemical weapons, and as of December 2016, an estimated 93% of the world's declared stockpiles had been destroyed. The CWC is administered by the



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Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013 for its efforts to curb use of chemical weapons internationally.

Indian Polity-Judicial reforms

According to the Union Law Ministry, 14,249 courts are being made ready under its E-courts Mission Mode Project — all of them will get computer hardware, local area networks and standard application software.

These courts have been connected to the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG).

How will it Benefit Court Functioning?

Apart from the obvious benefits of transparency and real-time tracking, the e-move has sharply reduced the time taken to process a case, especially transcription of evidence.

The NJDG now finds a mention in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business 2018 report. The grid has "made it possible to generate case management reports on local courts, thereby making it easier to enforce contracts", states the report.

But more importantly, say researchers, it has thrown up real-time data that shows the patterns in which justice is delivered at the lowest level.

The preparation of summons only took 10 minutes and an hour was sufficient for their delivery, while other processes too consumed only a fifth of their original time," the study by the National Council of Applied Economic Research found.

The story of change is not just confined to computerisation, though. Judges in Delhi point out that it has made the system of disposal "transparent".

The pendency of cases and the orders passed are uploaded real-time. This is of much help in criminal cases, where litigants don't have to wait for signed copies from the court.

But the actual impact will be seen when the filing of cases are done digitally. It is being followed in the Delhi High Court. The same has to be adopted at all trial courts."

About E-Courts Project



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What is it?

The e Courts Mission Mode Project (Phase I 2010-15; Phase II 2015-19) is a national eGovernance project for ICT enablement of district and subordinate courts of the country.

Implementation: It is being implemented by the Government of India with a total outlay of 1670 crores (Phase II).

The major objectives of the Project are to make whole judicial system ICT enabled by putting in place adequate and modern hardware and connectivity; automation of workflow management in all courts; electronic movement of records from taluka/trial to appeal courts; installation of video conferencing (VC) facility and recording of witness through Video Conferencing.

Specific targets set under the Project include: computerization of all the courts (around 20400) and DLSA and TLSC; WAN and cloud connectivity in 3500 court complexes; full Installation and use of Video Conferencing facility at 3000 Court Complexes and 1150 prisons; charting out key identified citizen services like electronic filing, daily orders, delivery of decrees, online case status in all the district courts etc.

International Relations:

India-OPEC

Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has said India would coordinate with China and other Asian countries to raise voice against the "Asian premium" being charged by the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

What is Asian premium?

Asian Premium is the extra charge being collected by OPEC countries from Asian countries when selling oil. The premium is determined in large part by the official selling prices (OSPs) set by Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, and Kuwait, which supply about 15 percent of the world's crude among them. They set differential prices against benchmarks on a monthly basis, adjusting them to account for regional variations.

About OPEC:



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Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries is an [intergovernmental organization](#) of 14 nations as of February 2018, founded in 1960 in [Baghdad](#) by the first five members ([Iran](#), [Iraq](#), [Kuwait](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), and [Venezuela](#)), and headquartered since 1965 in [Vienna, Austria](#).

As of 2016, the 14 countries accounted for an estimated 44 percent of [global oil production](#) and 73 percent of [the world's "proven" oil reserves](#), giving OPEC a major influence on [global oil prices](#) that were previously determined by American-dominated [multinational oil companies](#).

OPEC's stated mission is "to coordinate and unify the petroleum policies of its member countries and ensure the stabilization of oil markets, in order to secure an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consumers, a steady income to producers, and a fair return on capital for those investing in the petroleum industry.

World Bank Provides Loan for development in North-east

A Loan Agreement with IBRD for loan of USD 48 million for the "Meghalaya Community - Led Landscapes Management Project (MCLLMP)" was signed here today with the World Bank.

The Objective of the Project is to strengthen community-led landscapes management in selected landscapes in the State of Meghalaya.

The Project consists of three components:

- (i) Strengthening Knowledge and Capacity for Natural Resource Management;
- (ii) Community-led landscape planning and implementation and
- (iii) Project Management and Governance.

How will it Help?

- Meghalaya's natural resource such as land, water sources and forests is a source of livelihood for a majority of the population in the State.



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- The Project will help manage these depleting resources, by strengthening the communities and traditional institutions.
- Restoration of degraded and highly degraded landscapes under the Project will increase water for local communities and improve the soil productivity which will in turn increase incomes and reduce poverty.

General Studies-3

Space related Issues

Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will launch the IRNSS-1I satellite on April 12 at 04:04 a.m. from the first launch pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, through its PSLV-C41.

The launch of IRNSS-1I is important for ISRO and users. The satellites were built to last for 10 years each; but all three rubidium atomic clocks on the first satellite IRNSS-1A reportedly failed almost two years back; and the first spare or back-up, IRNSS-1H, flopped at launch on August 31, 2017.

What is IRNSS?



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IRNSS stands for Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System. It is a set of satellites which together can provide India a regional positioning system similar to the GPS. According to the ISRO website, the system is designed to give position accuracy better than 20 metres to users in its primary coverage area. It can also service regions extending up to 1500 km around India's boundary.

How many IRNSS satellites are up there now?

There are currently seven IRNSS satellites (1A to 1G) in orbit. A, B, F, G are placed in a geosynchronous orbit, which means they seem to be at a fixed location above the Earth and they orbit along with the Earth. The remaining three, C, D, E, are located in geostationary orbit-they seem to be at a fixed location above the Earth along the equator and orbit along with the Earth.

The last IRNSS, 1H, which was launched on August 31, 2017 was unsuccessful as the satellite did not come out of its heat shield.

What are the applications of IRNSS?

These satellites help not just in land navigation but also in marine and aerial navigation. The data from these satellites can be used to give vehicle drivers visual and voice navigation assistance. They also help in disaster management and in proper time-keeping.

List of Global Navigation Satellite Systems:

- GPS of the United States of America.
- GLONASS or Global Navigation Sputnik System of Russia.
- Galileo of the European Union.
- IRNSS or NAVIC of India.
- Quasi-Zenith Satellite System (QZSS) of Japan.

Economy

Goods and Services Tax Network

Why in News?



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The government is considering raising its stake in the Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN), even up to 100 per cent, with equal ownership division between states and Centre.

The reasoning behind the proposal is that the majority private shareholding was considered necessary prior to introduction of GST to ensure adequate freedom and timely. Now, that the tax structure is believed to have stabilised, the government is mulling this proposal.

About GSTN:

- GSTN is currently a not for profit, non-government company with 24.5 per cent stake of Centre, 24.5 per cent by all states and empowered committee of state finance ministers, totalling to 49 per cent. Rest, 51 per cent stake is with private financial institutions.
- GSTN was incorporated as a private limited company on March 28, 2013.
- Non-government financial institutions such as HDFC, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, NSE Strategic Investment Co hold stake of 10 per cent each, LIC Housing
-
- Finance Ltd holds 11 per cent stake, taking the total to 51 per cent stake in GSTN. Central and state governments hold 49 per cent stake.

Environment related matters:

Compensatory Afforestation Funds Management and Planning Authority

Why in News?

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said a staggering Rs 90,000 crore of environment restoration funds was lying with the Centre and states, and expressed concern that this was being misused.

The court asked the Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change to file an affidavit giving details of the total funds lying with Centre and states under the head Compensatory Afforestation Funds Management and Planning Authority as on March 31, 2018.



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About CAMPA:

- **CAMPA Act** or **Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority bill** is an Indian legislation that seeks to provide an appropriate institutional mechanism, both at the Centre and in each State and Union Territory, to ensure expeditious utilization in efficient and transparent manner of amounts realised in lieu of forest land diverted for non-forest purpose which would mitigate impact of diversion of such forest land.
- The payments into the funds include compensatory afforestation, NPV, reforestation and any project specific payments. The National Fund will get 10% of funds collected and the remaining 90% will go to respective State Fund.

The collected funds will be utilised for afforestation, regeneration of forest ecosystem, wild life protection and infrastructure development.

3R Forum

Smt.Sumitra Mahajan, Speaker, Lok Sabha said that the principles of 3R - Reduce ,Reuse and Recycle - have been an integral part of Indian culture.

Preserving biodiversity, sustainable living and peaceful coexistence with nature have been the guiding philosophy of the Indian way of life and have always been part of the teachings of ancient scriptures.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the Eighth Regional 3R Forum here today Smt. Sumitra Mahajan reminded the participating Mayors and the Municipal Commissioners that they have special responsibility of maintaining the cleanliness of their cities to promote the concept of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle of waste.

About Eighth Regional 3R Forum:



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- The Eighth Regional 3R Forum in Asia and the Pacific is being held in Indore from 9-12 April in Indore.

Theme :

- "Achieving Clean Water, Clean Land and Clean Air through 3R and Resource Efficiency – A 21st Century Vision for Asia-Pacific Communities".
- It is being hosted by *the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs*, Government of India, and co-organized by the Ministry of the Environment, Government of Japan, and the UNCRD.
- The 3R (reduce, reuse, recycle) Initiative was launched at the Ministerial Conference on the 3R Initiative in Tokyo, Japan, in 2005, with an aim to shift the global consumption and production patterns towards building a sound-material-cycle society.
- In 2009, the Regional 3R Forum in Asia was established at Japan's proposal as a platform for broad cooperation on promotion of the 3Rs – reduce, reuse and recycle – in Asia.
- First Regional forum meeting took place in Tokyo in 2009.

General Studies- 3

New fund for small and medium defence enterprises

The Indian government is planning to set up a new fund for small and medium defence enterprises. It will be a dedicated Defence and Aerospace SME fund,

The fund will be registered with SEBI and minority stake can be taken up by investors.

The fund will help channelise investments to the two defence corridors, in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

About SEBI:

The Securities and Exchange Board of India was established on April 12, 1992 in accordance with the provisions of the Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992.



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The Preamble of the Securities and Exchange Board of India describes the basic functions of the Securities and Exchange Board of India as "...to protect the interests of investors in securities and to promote the development of, and to regulate the securities market and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto"

Asian Development Bank

Why In News?

India's economic growth is expected to rise to 7.3 per cent in 2018-19 and further to 7.6 per cent in the next financial year, the highest among Asian economies, on the back of goods and services tax (GST) and banking reforms, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

It, however, highlighted the need for coordinated action on skill development, labour regulation, social protection, and income redistribution as new technologies alter the skills required of the workforce and might cause unemployment as some firms downsize or close.

About ADB:

What is it?

It is a regional development bank established on 22 August 1966 and is headquartered in Philippines. It aims to facilitate economic development of countries in Asia. It also aims for an Asia and Pacific free from poverty.

The bank admits the members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP, formerly known as the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East) and non-regional developed countries.

Voting:



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ADB was modeled closely on the World Bank, and has a similar weighted voting system where votes are distributed in proportion with member's capital subscriptions.

Board of Governors:

- It is the highest policy-making body of the bank.
- It is composed of one representative from each member state.
- The Board of Governors also elect the bank's President who is the chairperson of the Board of Directors and manages ADB.
- The Alternate Board of Governors are nominated by Board of Governors of ADB's 67 to represent them at the Annual Meeting that meets formally once year to be held in a member country.

Loans:

It offers both Hard Loans and Soft loans. The ADB offers "hard" loans from ordinary capital resources (OCR) on commercial terms, and the Asian Development Fund (ADF) affiliated with the ADB extends "soft" loans from special fund resources with concessional conditions.

Banks Board Bureau (BBB)

Why in News?

The government Thursday appointed Bhanu Pratap Sharma, former secretary of the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), as the new chairman of the Banks Board Bureau (BBB) along with three other members.

Former Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) Vinod Rai was the first Chairman of Banks Board Bureau (BBB).

About BBB:

Banks Board Bureau (BBB) is an autonomous body of the Government of India tasked to improve the governance of Public Sector Banks, recommend selection of chiefs of government owned banks and financial institutions and to help banks in developing strategies and capital raising plans.

The bureau was announced by the Union Government in August 2015 as part of seven point Indradhanush Mission to revamp the PSBs.



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In February 2016, the Modi government approved the proposal for setting up BBB and it started functioning from April 2016.

The BBB works as step towards governance reforms in Public Sector Banks (PSBs) as recommended by P.J. Nayak Committee.

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)

Why in News?

Approximately 1.5 Million rural residents in State of Madhya Pradesh are going to directly benefit from improved livelihoods, education and mobility with the USD \$ 140-Million loan approved by the Board of Directors of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in a Meeting held recently in Beijing.

The Project, co-financed with the World Bank, aims to improve the rural road connectivity and management for residents of about 5,640 villages who use the rural roads for daily activities.

About AIIB:

- The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is an international financial institution proposed by China.
- The purpose of the multilateral development bank is to provide finance to infrastructure projects in the Asia-Pacific region.
- AIIB is regarded by some as a rival for the IMF, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which the AIIB says are dominated by developed countries like the United States and Japan.
- The authorised capital of AIIB will be \$100 billion.
- AIIB's headquarters is to be located in Beijing.
- India is the second largest shareholder in the Bank after China.
- In October, 21 countries signed the memorandum of understanding establishing the bank.
- It now has more than 40 members, including South Korea, Austria and Spain.



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- It is being called as a very positive development in the sense that it opens up more borrowing opportunities.

Tax Treaty

CBDT notifies the Protocol amending the Double Taxation Avoidance Convention (DTAC) between India and Kazakhstan.

Salient features of the Protocol are as under:

- (i) The Protocol provides internationally accepted standards for effective exchange of information on tax matters. Further, the information received from Kazakhstan for tax purposes can be shared with other law enforcement agencies with the authorisation of the competent authority of Kazakhstan and vice versa.
- (ii) The Protocol inserts a Limitation of Benefits Article, to provide a main purpose test to prevent misuse of the DTAC and to allow application of domestic law and measures against tax avoidance or evasion.
- (iii) The Protocol inserts specific provisions to facilitate relieving of economic double taxation in transfer pricing cases. This is a taxpayer friendly measure and is in line with India's commitment under Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) Action Plan to meet the minimum standard of providing Mutual Agreement Procedure (MAP) access in transfer pricing cases.

What is Double Taxation?

Double taxation is the levying of tax by two or more jurisdictions on the same declared income (in the case of income taxes), asset (in the case of capital taxes), or financial transaction (in the case of sales taxes). This double liability is often mitigated by tax treaties between countries.

What is Double Tax Avoidance Agreement (DTAA)?

DTAA also referred as Tax Treaty is a bilateral economic agreement between two nations that aims to avoid or eliminate double taxation of the same income in two countries.

DTAA provides that business profits will be taxable in the source country if the activities of an enterprise constitute a permanent establishment (PE).



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Benefits of such agreements:

- Deals with the black money menace.
- Provides solutions to avoid double taxation of same income.
- The agreements generally provide for other matters of common interest of the two countries such as exchange of information, mutual assistance procedure for resolution of disputes and for mutual assistance in effecting recovery of taxes.
- It will provide tax stability to the residents of both the countries and will facilitate mutual economic.

About CBDT:

The Central Board of Direct Taxes is a statutory authority functioning under the Central Board of Revenue Act, 1963. The officials of the Board in their ex-officio capacity also function as a Division of the Ministry dealing with matters relating to levy and collection of direct taxes.

Aspirational district Programme:

Why in News?

Small Industries Development Bank of India (Sidbi) has charted a plan to promote micro enterprises in 115 aspirational districts across the country to contribute in their development. The bank has tied up with Common Service Centre (CSC) to meet this objective.

About The Programme:

Launched by the Hon'ble PM in January, the 'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' programme aims to quickly and effectively transform these districts.

- The broad contours of the programme are Convergence (of Central & State Schemes), Collaboration (of Central, State level 'Prabhari' Officers & District Collectors), and Competition among districts driven by a mass Movement.
- With States as the main drivers, this program will focus on the strength of each district, identify low-hanging fruits for immediate improvement, measure progress, and rank districts.
- Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure are this programme's core areas of focus



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NITI Aayog in partnership with the Government of Andhra Pradesh has created a dashboard for monitoring the real-time progress of the districts

Environment And Biodiversity

MARY river turtle

Boasting a green, punk hairdo and the unusual ability to breathe through its backside, an Australian turtle has become famous overnight — but not only for its eccentricity.

Unfortunately, just as many people are discovering the Mary River Turtle's tantalising traits, it has become the latest creature to join the "EDGE of Existence" list of endangered species compiled by the Zoological Society of London (ZSL).

About "EDGE of Existence"

The *EDGE of Existence programme* is a research and conservation initiative that focuses on species deemed to be the world's most *Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered* (EDGE). Developed by the [Zoological Society of London](#) (ZSL), the programme aims to raise awareness of the world's [EDGE species](#), implement targeted research and conservation actions to halt their decline, and to train in-country scientists (called EDGE Fellows) to protect them now and in the future.

The programme is initially focusing on mammals and has recently incorporated amphibians but will expand to cover other groups, including [birds](#), [reptiles](#), [fish](#) and [plants](#) as the infrastructure and methods develop.

About the Turtle:

It lives only in the Mary River from which it takes its name. The inventory has no shortage of weird and wonderful creatures — a limbless lizard, the world's largest sea turtle, a blind snake, and a chameleon named after Tarzan. But the Mary River Turtle might just be the strangest of them all.

The computer screen-sized turtle's most distinguishing feature is the bright green, spiky mohawks sprouting on the heads of some.



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The Mary River Turtle spends so much time submerged underwater that some individuals become covered in algae — and can end up with some pretty impressive bright green hairstyles!

Loan recovery

What is it?

The Centre earlier this month told Parliament that non-performing assets (NPAs) worth Rs. 2.41 lakh crore have been written off from the books of public sector banks between April 2014 and September 2017. Since the banks were able to recover only 11% of the distressed loans worth Rs. 2.7 lakh crore within the stipulated time, the rest had to be written off as per regulations.

How did it come about?

For long, India has lacked a proper legal framework to help creditors recover their money from borrowers.

According to the World Bank, the country ranks 103rd in the world in bankruptcy resolution, with the average time taken to resolve a case of bankruptcy extending well over four years. Banks in India, in fact, are able to recover on an average only about 25% of their money from defaulters as against 80% in the U.S.

Since 2014, however, the Reserve Bank of India has been stepping up efforts to force both private and public sector banks to truthfully recognise the size of bad loans on their books. This caused the reported size of stressed assets to increase manifold in the last few years.

Why does it matter?

The news about the huge loan write-off comes amid the Union government's efforts over the last few years to expedite the process of bankruptcy and improve recoveries.

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), which came into force last year, was the most notable among them. Many large corporations, as well as smaller enterprises, have been admitted to undergo liquidation under the IBC so that the proceeds can be used to pay back banks.



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The poor loan recovery reported by the government reflects poorly on the ability of the new bankruptcy law to help banks recover loans and mounts more pressure on bank balance sheets.

What lies ahead?

Its critics say the IBC is focussed more on the time-bound resolution of proceedings than on maximising the amount of money banks can recover from stressed loans.

In particular, since there are strict time-limits imposed on the resolution process, there is the imminent danger that it may lead to the fire-sale of valuable assets at cheap prices.

This can affect investment incentives. But, for now, the quick resolution of bad loans will free resources from struggling firms and hand them to the more efficient ones.

Science & Technology

A smart bandage material that can heal wounds better and faster and has antimicrobial properties has been fabricated by a team of researchers from the Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST), Guwahati.

Benefits

- Cotton tends to stick to wounds and being fibrous it is difficult to remove it. By coating the cotton with chitosan and compressing the bandage we get a material with similar properties (porosity and ability to absorb water) as cotton but one that does not stick to the wound.
 - More importantly, the absorption capacity of the cotton patch can be utilised for loading nanomaterials and antimicrobials to impart wound-healing properties.
 - The researchers used graphene oxide nanomaterial, since its antimicrobial properties and biocompatibility are already well documented.



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- The nanosize of graphene oxide allows large amount of drug to be loaded on to the patch. Graphene oxide also increases the strength of the patch especially when it gets wet.

Left wing Extremism

Government's new policy paying dividends in containing Left Wing Extremism

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has been implementing the 'National Policy and Action Plan' since 2015 to combat Left Wing Extremism (LWE).

This envisages a multi-pronged strategy involving security and development related measures.

The significant features of the new policy were zero tolerance towards violence coupled with a big push to developmental activities so that benefits of development reached the poor and vulnerable in the affected areas.

Categorization of LWE Areas:

MHA had categorized 106 districts in 10 states as Left Wing Extremism affected.

These districts are covered under the Security Related Expenditure Scheme (SRE) of the MHA for the purpose of reimbursement of security related expenditure like transportation, communication, hiring of vehicles, stipend for surrendered Maoists, temporary infrastructure for forces etc to the states.

Out of 106 districts, 35 districts which accounted for 80-90 % of country-wide LWE violence were categorized as 'Most Affected Districts'.

Impact Of programme:

Over the last four years, there has been a substantial improvement in the LWE scenario.

Incidents of violence have seen a 20% decline with a 34% reduction in related deaths in 2017 as compared to 2013.



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The geographical spread of LWE violence also shrunk from 76 districts in 2013 to just 58 districts in 2017.

Besides, just 30 of these districts account for 90% of the LWE violence in the country. At the same time certain new districts have emerged as the focus of expansion by the Left Wing Extremists.

What Now?

As a result of the exercise, 90 districts in 11 States will now be covered by the Scheme, down from 126. The list of 'Most Affected Districts' has been pruned to 30, down from 36. The revised categorization is a more realistic representation of the actual LWE scenario.

Role of Technology in Women Safety:

The Ministry of Electronics and IT in partnership with IIT-Delhi is working on a switch-based device in cars and buses to aid safety of women.

The proposed panic switch system when invoked will generate a loud alarm in the vehicle which will attract public attention, and send the coordinates of the person to a server [police control room] to provide necessary help.

The project, being developed by IIT-Delhi, is being funded by the Nirbhaya Fund, set up in 2013 for implementation of initiatives aimed at enhancing the safety and security of women in the country.

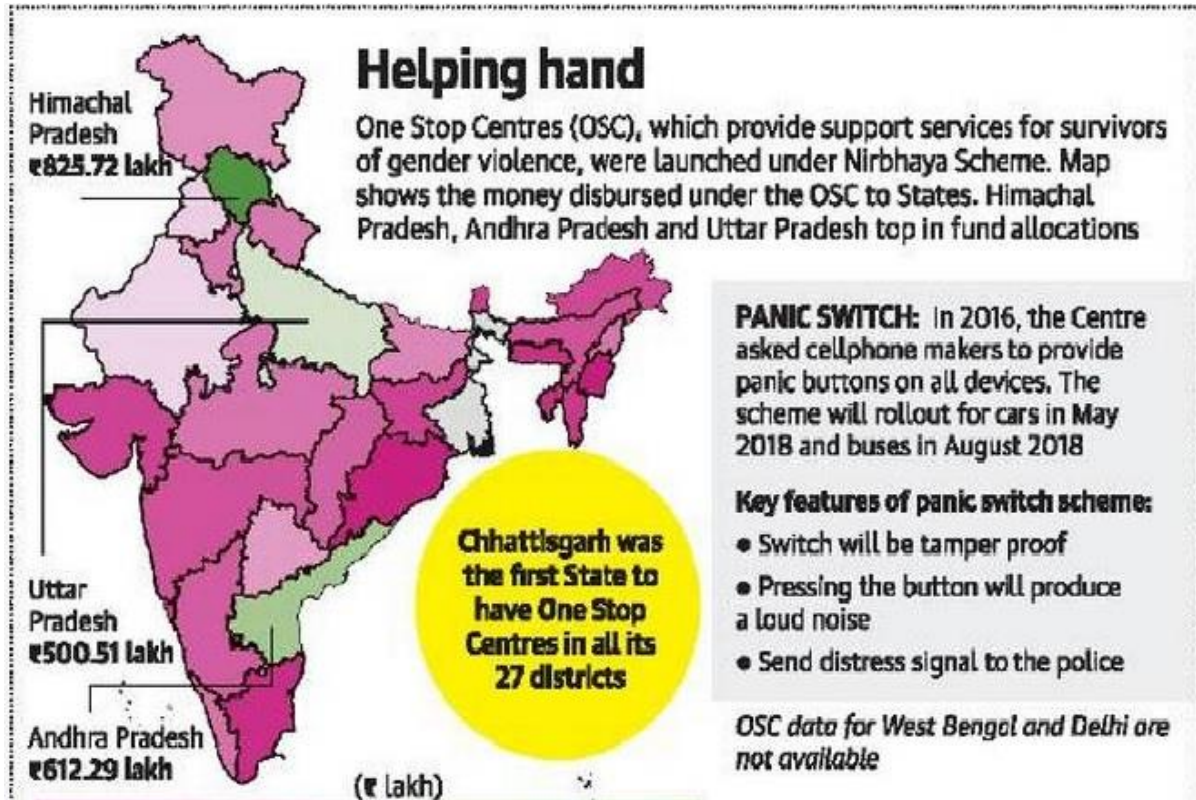
However, the government has been facing criticism for under-utilisation of the fund.

In 2016, the government had announced plans to make it mandatory for mobile phone makers to provide a panic button on the device, starting January 2017. However, the plans were delayed by almost a year.

The trial for the system finally started in U.P. earlier this year.



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National Anti Profiteering Authority:

Why In News?

The National Anti-Profiteering Authority in GST will soon reach out to e-commerce companies seeking responses on whether they profited from sale of good after reduction in the Goods and Services Tax rates.

Majority of complaints are against firms in real estate and the FMCG sector. The complaints include selling goods at an MRP that did not reflect the revised GST rates or the benefits of input tax credit received by a business not being passed on to the end consumer.

NAA has now partnered with community social network Local



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Circles to reach out to the people as part of their awareness campaign on the issue.

About the National Anti-profiteering Authority: What is it?

The National Anti-profiteering Authority 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.

Till now, FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) major HUL had deposited about ₹120 crore in the fund while last week almost ₹13 crore was deposited by Nestle.

Money Laundering and FATF

Why In News?



C.A From 11th Apr to 17th Apr

India will have to make money laundering an explicitly standalone offence to upgrade its compliance ahead of the on-site mutual evaluation by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which is due in November-December 2020.

The first FATF mutual evaluation of India was done in 2010 when the body expressed satisfaction with the measures taken by the country.

However, in the same breath, the FATF highlighted, in its 256-page report, a number of lacunae in the then extant legislation, for which it suggested changes. Since then, a range of laws have been amended.

Current Scenario:

Despite several amendments, the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) remains a predicate-offence-oriented law.

This means a case under the Act depends on the fate of cases pursued by primary agencies such as the CBI, the Income Tax Department or the police. The latest instances are the verdicts in the 2G spectrum and Aircel-Maxis cases by the CBI courts, in which the money laundering angle probed by the Enforcement Directorate fell apart.

Why Money Laundering as Standalone Offence?

"The predicate offence conviction condition creates fundamental difficulties when trying to confiscate the proceeds of crime in the absence of a conviction of a predicate offence, particularly in a standalone ML case, where the laundered assets become *corpus delicti* [concrete evidence of a crime] and should be forfeitable as such."

About FATF:

What is it?

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 on the initiative of the G7. It is a "policy-making body" which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in various areas.

Objectives:



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The objectives of the FATF 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.

What it does?

The 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.

In collaboration with other international stakeholders, the FATF works to identify national-level vulnerabilities with the aim of protecting the international financial system from misuse.

Environment Related Issues:

New Plastic Waste Management(Amendment)Rules

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has notified the Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules 2018.

The amended Rules lay down that the phasing out of Multilayered Plastic (MLP) is now applicable to MLP, which are “non-recyclable, or non-energy recoverable, or with no alternate use.”

The amended Rules also prescribe a central registration system for the registration of the producer/importer/brand owner.

The Rules also lay down that any mechanism for the registration should be automated and should take into account ease of doing business for producers, recyclers and manufacturers.

The centralised registration system will be evolved by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) for the registration of the producer/importer/brand owner.

While a national registry has been prescribed for producers with presence in more than two states, a state-level registration has been prescribed for smaller producers/brand owners operating within one or two states.



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Objectives of The Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 :

- Increase minimum thickness of plastic carry bags from 40 to 50 microns and stipulate minimum thickness of 50 micron for plastic sheets also to facilitate collection and recycle of plastic waste,
- Expand the jurisdiction of applicability from the municipal area to rural areas, because plastic has reached rural areas also;
- To bring in the responsibilities of producers and generators, both in plastic waste management system and to introduce collect back system of plastic waste by the producers/brand owners, as per extended producers responsibility;
- To introduce collection of plastic waste management fee through pre-registration of the producers, importers of plastic carry bags/multilayered packaging and vendors selling the same for establishing the waste management system;
- To promote use of plastic waste for road construction as per Indian Road Congress guidelines or energy recovery, or waste to oil etc. for gainful utilization of waste and also address the waste disposal issue; to entrust more responsibility on waste generators, namely payment of user charge as prescribed by local authority, collection and handing over of waste by the institutional generator, event organizers.

FIEO-GlobalLinker for MSME

The Minister of Commerce & Industry Shri Suresh Prabhu launched the FIEO GlobalLinker- a digital platform for MSME exporters to digitise their businesses and join a global community of growing businesses today in New Delhi.

This initiative will help in expanding India's multi-focused export strategy and also aid in connecting art and artisans to the market.



C.A From 11th Apr to 17th Apr

Minister also informed that at least 300 Geographical Indications will be registered very soon, which will give a major boost to exports.

FIEO GlobalLinker is setup with a view to make the business growth of SMEs simpler, more profitable and enjoyable.

It is a growing global network currently comprising over 140,000 SME firms, who are seeking business collaboration and growth opportunities through the use of their electronic business card and digital profiles created on the platform.

FIEO is available free of cost and it offers exporters a range of features and benefits like:

- **Business Opportunities:** Exporters will be able to find clients, suppliers and advisors using the search and review facilities. Creating a free e-commerce store for direct sales and improved chain management.
- **Up-to-date Business Knowledge** through business articles, industry news and common interest groups.
- **Improved Efficiencies:** Platform provides services like company intranet, integrating email, a business calendar.
- **FIEO's Services:** Application for new RCMC/endorsement/renewal/participation in FIEO's promotional programme and alerts.

FAME scheme

Why In News?



C.A From 11th Apr to 17th Apr

The government has decided to extend the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid) and Electric Vehicles (FAME) scheme by six months until 30 September 2018, or till the time the second phase of the scheme is approved by it.

About FAME Scheme:

- The FAME India Scheme is aimed at incentivising all vehicle segments i.e. 2 Wheeler, 3 Wheeler Auto, Passenger 4 Wheeler Vehicle, Light Commercial Vehicles and Buses.
- The scheme covers Hybrid & Electric technologies like Mild Hybrid, Strong Hybrid, Plug in Hybrid & Battery Electric Vehicles.
- FAME India – Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric vehicles in India – is a part of the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan. The scheme envisages Rs 795 crore support in the first two fiscals. It is being administered by the Heavy Industries Ministry.
- The scheme has 4 focus areas i.e. Technology development, Demand Creation, Pilot Projects and Charging Infrastructure