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Category: POLITY

1. Probe assets of politicians: SC

NGO, Lok Prahari petition:

- Filed a petition before Supreme Court
- In the petition the NGO has urged for the inclusion of a column in the nomination form seeking details of the sources of income.
- The plea has claimed that the candidates do not reveal the sources of their income.

Supreme Court observations:

- The Supreme Court has criticised the government for not investigating the huge increase in assets, by up to 500%, of politicians from what they show at the time of nomination.
- The government had been saying it was in favour of electoral reforms, but it was not forthcoming when it came to revealing details about such massive rise in assets.

2. Attacks by cow vigilantes must stop, SC tells States

Context:

- Gau Rakshaks: taking the law into their own hands.
- Attacks on innocents by cow vigilantes.
- Dalits and Muslims have reportedly been at the receiving end of violence unleashed by lynch mobs, especially in the four northern States- Haryana, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Supreme Court observations:

- Attacks on innocents by cow vigilantes must stop.
- **Nodal police officers at district level:** It ordered the **States** and the **Union Territories** to appoint **nodal police officers** in every district to crack down on such groups.

Keeping anti-socials in check

What the Supreme Court direction means:

- All State governments will have to appoint a senior police officer as the nodal officer in each district to ensure that incidents of cow vigilantism are prevented

- All Chief Secretaries to file a status report on actions taken by their States

- The Centre will respond to a submission in the SC that it could issue directions under Article 256 to all States

The Centre cannot remain silent, leaving everything to the States. You have to stop it [the violence] — DIPAK MISRA, CJI

Article 256 (Obligation of States and the Union)

- The executive power of every State shall be so exercised as to ensure compliance with the laws made by Parliament and any existing laws which apply in that State

- The executive power of the Union shall extend to the giving of such directions to a State as may appear to the Government of India to be necessary for that purpose

- **Centre's responsibility:**
  - The court urged the Centre to uphold its constitutional mandate under **Article 256** and direct the States to act against the groups.
  - It cautioned the Centre not to remain silent, leaving everything to the States.
  - **Centre's response:** Violence by 'gau rakshaks' was a 'State subject' and it had no role to play, though it condemned all forms of violence.
- **Northern States accepted the directives given by Supreme Court:**
  - Haryana, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Gujarat accepted the apex court's suggestion to appoint dedicated officers in the rank of **Deputy Superintendent of Police** to prevent 'gau rakshaks,' as they call themselves, from taking the law into their own hands or becoming a law unto themselves.

Basic Information

Article 256. Obligation of States and the Union :

The executive power of every State shall be so exercised as to ensure compliance with the laws made by Parliament and any existing laws which apply in that State, and the executive power of the Union shall extend to the giving of such directions to a State as may appear to the Government of India to be necessary for that purpose.

3. [Supreme Court Bench questions exception in penal law](#)

Context:

Sections 375 and marital rape.

Supreme Court questions Parliament:

- The Supreme Court questioned the reason for Parliament to create an exception in the penal law declaring that sexual intercourse by a man with his minor wife is not rape.
- The apex court asked the reason behind such an exception in the Indian Penal Code when the **age of consent was 18 years** for "all purposes."

Section 375 and the exception:

- Section 375 of the IPC, which defines the offence of rape, has an exception clause that says intercourse or sexual act by a man with his wife aged below 18 is not rape.

Conflict between POCSO and Section 375:

- The court said there was a conflict between this exception under the IPC Section 375 and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012, which declares children below the age of 18 as minors.

4. [How much do you share with third parties, SC asks WhatsApp, FB](#)

Context:

Contention raised by two law students via petition:

- Contract entered into between **Facebook** and **WhatsApp** in 2016 **on data sharing** was a violation of a **citizen's right to privacy.**
- The data, according to them, included photographs, messages, pictures and other personal documents shared by users on WhatsApp.

In news:

Five-judge Constitution Bench directives:

- A five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court directed instant messaging platform **WhatsApp** and **social media** giant **Facebook** to file affidavits stating what user data they shared with "third parties."

Response by the advocate representing WhatsApp:

- Instant messaging platform does not share any personal data of its users with third parties.
- Only four details, 'telephone number, type of device, last access of the user and registration date' are shared.
- The court may not have the technical expertise to decide on this "complex issue".

European restrictions

- European privacy watchdogs have warned WhatsApp against sharing user information with parent company, Facebook.
- WhatsApp was acquired by Facebook in 2014.
- The petitioners argued that the same restriction should be imposed in India.

B.N. Srikrishna committee:

- The Centre has setup an expert committee under former Supreme Court judge, Justice (retired) B.N. Srikrishna, on July 31, 2017 to identify "key data protection issues" and suggest a draft Data Protection Bill.
- The Office Memorandum of the Justice Srikrishna Committee notes that the "government is cognisant of the growing importance of data protection in India. The need to ensure growth of the digital economy while keeping personal data of citizens secure and protected is of utmost importance".

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [Modi gives call to respect Myanmar's integrity](#)

Context:

- **Ongoing, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's bilateral visit to Myanmar.**

In news:

- **India's moral support:** India shares Myanmar's concerns over **"extremist violence"** in the **Rakhine State** , from where 1,25,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged all the stakeholders to find a solution that respects the country's unity.
- Narendra Modi, held wide-ranging talks with State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi . Highlighted the need to maintain the security and stability of the land and maritime boundaries of the two countries.
- **11 agreements were signed** between the two sides in areas like maritime security, strengthening democratic institutions in Myanmar, health and information technology.

2. [India, Japan to diversify defence ties](#)

Context:

- Annual defence ministerial meeting in Tokyo.

In news:

- India and Japan agreed on a range of initiatives to **diversify and deepen** their defence cooperation.
- **Focus Areas:** anti-submarine warfare, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and technological cooperation.
- The defence Ministers of both the country exchanged views and ideas with the aim of further strengthening defence and security cooperation under the framework of the **Japan-India Special Strategic and Global Partnership** .

3. [Back on track: on India and China's united front at BRICS](#)

Context:

- India and China putting up a united front at the **BRICS summit** , and proposed a **revival of the Panchsheel principles** of peaceful cooperation

BRICS Summit- Key points

- India-China, agreement that Doklam-like situations must not recur is an indication that India and China are looking for new mechanisms to strengthen the border defence agreements that have held in the past.
- China gave nod to the inclusion of the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammed among the terrorist groups threatening regional stability.
- China choosing not to speak of the contentious Belt and Road Initiative at the summit suggested it was heeding India's concerns.
- Both countries expressed similar views about resisting economic protectionism of the kind that the Trump administration in the U.S. has been espousing
- All five countries condemned North Korean nuclear tests, while advocating dialogue and not the use of force.

Way forward

- Indian and Chinese officials must re-engage in a sustained manner to address all areas of discord which led to the charged situation at Doklam.
- They must review where the border defence standard operating procedures failed
- Two countries must convene the delayed meeting of the Special Representatives, and add the latest claims and counter-claims over the Sikkim boundary and the India **-China-Bhutan tri-junction** to the agenda for discussions.
- It is necessary to see that the much-acclaimed BRICS language on terrorist groups like the LeT and JeM is translated

into actionable points
- Beijing will have an early opportunity to do so in October when the issue of designating JeM chief **Masood Azhar** as a global terrorist comes up at the UN Security Council and when the UN's Financial Action Task Force takes stock of Pakistan's actions against the LeT.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. [Focus on 'impactful' Smart City projects: Centre](#)

Context:

In news:

- Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has asked the State governments to push up implementation of " **impactful** projects .
- " **Impactful** projects:
- The Centre and the State governments together have identified **261 projects** worth ₹ **32,600 crore** under this category.
- Majority of these projects are in the first lot of 20 smart cities announced in January 2016.
- **Drawback:** Projects have been shortlisted without any clear definition of what "impactful" means. These projects are expected to have visible and transformative impact on the various aspects of the lives of the citizens.
- The list of "impactful" projects varies from Museum of Urban History in Bhubaneswar, to Adventure Park in Udaipur, to rejuvenation of water bodies in Coimbatore, to 5 km-long heritage walk in Warangal, to conservation of built heritage in Thanjavur, to redevelopment of world-famous Manikarnika Ghat in Varanasi.
- **Reality of Smart City projects:**
  - Prime Minister has directed the Chief Secretaries to review the progress of projects on weekly basis.
  - Since the list of first 20 smart cities came out on January 1, 2016, questions have been raised on the mission.
  - For one, the Smart City is a misnomer, because only small pockets of the city are to be developed.
  - The latest review of Smart City projects reveals that only **79 projects** with total budget of ₹ **8 41 crore** have been completed. Another **204 projects** , with a budget of ₹ 7963 crore are under implementation.
  - Projects worth ₹1.14 lakh crore are still on the drawing board stage.

2. [Centre sets up panel to suggest on new jobs](#)

In news:

- The Central government has constituted a new task force led by **NITI Aayog vice-chairman Rajiv Kumar** to recommend measures to increase employment by promoting labour-intensive exports.

Terms of reference for the task force :

- To help create 'well-paid, formal sector jobs' include sector-specific policy interventions
- Measures to enhance services trade where there is high employment potential and identifying macro-economic factors holding back exports.
- Shall propose a comprehensive action plan to generate jobs as well as fix 'under-employment'.
- Ascertain the effectiveness of existing export promotion schemes and logistical or trade facilitation issues.
- Also examine how trade data can be improved so that 'it is reliable, globally comparable and timely, particularly with respect to trade in services.'

NITI Aayog statement on employment status in India : "While the Indian workforce has high aspirations, a majority of the workers are still employed in low-productivity, low-wage jobs in small, micro and own-account enterprises. An urgent and sustained expansion of the organized sector is essential to address India's unemployment and under-employment issue,"

Category: MISCELLANEOUS

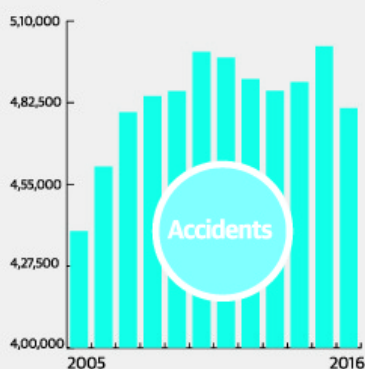### 1. [Fatalities on Indian roads hit all time high](#)

In news:

' **Road Accidents in India 2016'** **reports:**
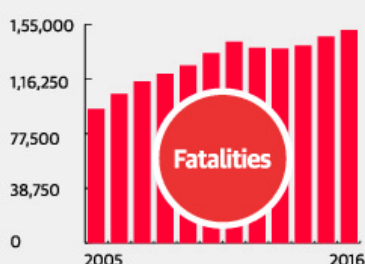
When roads turn death traps

Compared to 2015, the number of road accidents have decreased while the number of fatalities have gone up last year. Most of those who died belonged to the 18-35 age group and more than 35% of them took place at traffic junctions

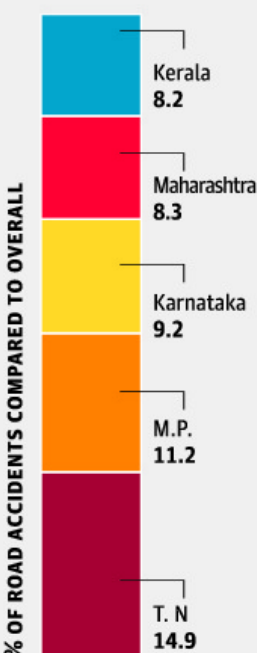**The total number of road accidents came down last year when compared to 2015 by 4.14%**

Accidents

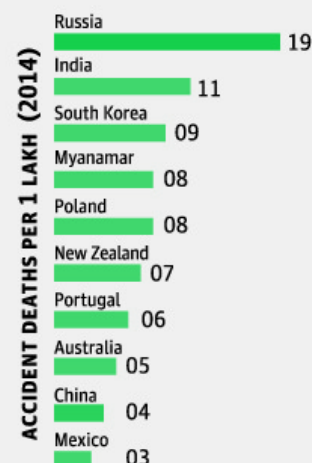**The total number of road accident related deaths rose by over 3% last year as compared to 2015**

Fatalities

T.N. tops list

Tamil Nadu topped the number of road accidents, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka

% OF ROAD ACCIDENTS COMPARED TO OVERALL

Kerala 8.2
Maharashtra 8.3
Karnataka 9.2
M.P. 11.2
T. N 14.9

Cross country comparison

India lost 11 persons per 1 lakh population to road accidents in 2014 - ranking in the top among comparable economies

ACCIDENT DEATHS PER 1 LAKH (2014)

Russia 19
India 11
South Korea 09
Myanamar 08
Poland 08
New Zealand 07
Portugal 06
Australia 05
China 04
Mexico 03

Most of the accidents in 2016 in India happened between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. - 17.9% of the overall

SOURCE: ROAD ACCIDENTS IN INDIA – 2016

- Indian roads became deadlier than ever in 2016, with a total of 1.51 lakh people dying in 4.81 lakh accidents.
- 3% increase in fatalities over the previous year, even as the number of accidents declined by 4.1%, indicating a rise in the severity of accidents.
- The accident severity, a crucial indicator defined in terms of the number of persons killed by 100 accidents, stood at an all-time high of 31.4 in 2016, compared with 29.1 in 2015, and 28.5 in 2014.
- The number of persons injured in road accidents declined by 1.1% and totalled 4.95 lakh in 2016.
- 8% of the people killed were using their mobile phones while driving, and held this behaviour responsible for causing the accident.
- Two-wheeler riders were the most vulnerable road users, with their percentage share in fatalities at 34.8%, followed by car, taxi and van users at 17.9%. Out of the 52,500 two-wheeler riders killed in 2016, 19.3% were not wearing helmets.

State wise data:

- Tamil Nadu has the highest number of road accidents, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka
- **City wise data:** Chennai had the highest number of road accidents (7,486) while Delhi had the highest fatalities (1,591) in 2016. The accident severity in 50 cities with over a million population rose sharply to 19.8 in 2016, as compared with 14.9% in 2015.

- The official figures revealed for the first time that drivers who were minors (younger than 18 years of age) were involved in 4% of the total accidents and 3.5% of the fatal accidents. Drivers aged 25-35 years were involved in the most number of accidents during 2016. Around 83% of the people killed in accidents belonged to the working age group of 18-60 years.

District-level road safety committee will be formed to monitor the road safety record in the area. This committee would be headed by the Member of Parliament of the constituency.

3. World University Rankings 2018: IISc ranked highest from India, overall ranking falls

World University Rankings 2018

- Indian institutes performed well in the World University Rankings 2018.
- The Indian Institute of Science (IISc) was the highest ranked institute from the country, but it slipped from the 201-250 band to the 251-300 one.
- **Possible reason behind this fall(of IISc):** The fall was attributed to a drop in its research influence score and research income.

Disappointing trends:

- Leading universities in other Asian territories such as China, Hong Kong and Singapore are consistently rising up the rankings.
- But it is **disappointing that India** has declined in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings amid increasing global competition

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Regulation of user data sharing is a complex issue and it should balance both private and public interestsâ€. Evaluate?
2. â€œIndia and China must address bilateral issues in a sustainable way, pursuing the BRICS spiritâ€ Discuss.

GS Paper III

1. Define Smart City?Â Do you think Indiaâ€™s Smart City mission initiative will be successful? Critically comment.