

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – May 31

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Category: POLITY

1. Madras HC stays new curbs on cattle trade

In news:

- The Madras High Court Bench stayed the operation of Rules 22(b)(iii) and 22(e) of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Regulation of Livestock Market) Rules 2017 notified by the Centre .

Legality of rules under challenge



BENCH OBSERVATIONS

- This court is not in full agreement as to whether the presumption is in favour of the Central government when a particular rule is introduced not by Parliament, but by the executive
- The subject of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act is in the Concurrent List. At the same time, slaughtering of animals is exclusively in the State List
- In the above background, it should be tested if the impugned rule is within the constitutional or legal framework

RULE 22(b) (III) requires that a written declaration should be given saying the cattle has not been brought to the market for sale for slaughter

RULE 22(e) requires that the purchaser shall not sell the animal for slaughter, nor sacrifice the animal for religious purposes

- The new rules ban the sale of bulls, bullocks, cows, buffaloes, steers, heifers, calves and camels for slaughter in ‘animal markets.’

Public interest litigation:

- Interim stay granted for a period of four weeks on a public interest litigation petition filed by S. Selvagomathy, an activist-cum-lawyer.

Challenges posed in the PIL:

- Constitutional validity of the 2017 Rules.
- Legislative competence of the Centre to frame rules
- Matter related to slaughter of animals is concerned, it is exclusively in the State list.

2. Odisha extends free cancer treatment to all districts

In news:

- The Odisha government extended free treatment for cancer patients in the whole State.
- Under the programme, all cancer patients can avail chemotherapy and consultations from oncologists **free of cost** at all district headquarters hospitals.
- **Key fact:** In the first phase of the free cancer treatment programme, about 5,000 patients have been benefited.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. UAE ready for air traffic pact

In news:

- **Unified bilateral air traffic pact :** The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is in favour of India’s proposal for a unified bilateral air traffic pact provided the Gulf nation gets access to more Indian airports.
- India has signed separate agreements with emirates of the UAE which is a unique arrangement as bilateral air traffic rights are generally signed between two countries.
- India has an agreement each with Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Ras al-Khaimah and Sharjah.

Global Practice:

- Countries sign air service agreement bilaterally which decides the equal number of flights or seats per week that

can fly into each other's country depending upon their own requirements. Then, the government distributes the allocated seats to the respective airlines.

Present Scenario:

- Airlines from India and UAE are entitled to fly around 1.34 lakh seats a week from both sides at present.
- Airlines from India and Dubai have exhausted their bilateral entitlement.
- Dubai has been constantly demanding more entitlements, whereas India has refrained from renewing its present bilateral agreement due to lack of viable slots available for Indian carriers in Dubai.

2. Farzan B gas field row: Iran threatens to replace India's OVL with Russian firms

Context:

In news:

- Iran has threatened to rope in Russian oil companies for developing the Farzad B gas field, replacing the consortium of Indian state-run entities (ONGC Videsh Ltd) that discovered it.
- The threat comes in retaliation to New Delhi's move to cut purchase of Iranian oil over Tehran's delay in awarding the block.
- Reports from Vienna quoted Iran's oil minister Bijan Zanganeh as saying that he expected Russian firms to enter the field if the Indian consortium failed to come up with a satisfactory offer.

3. Modi, Merkel nudge FTA, sign a dozen agreements

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Germany

In news:

- India and Germany signed a dozen wide-ranging but low-profile MoUs on the subjects of education, health, skill development and sustainability.

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Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Minesweeper deal to be inked soon

In News:

- India and South Korea ready to finalise pact for 12 minesweepers or Mine Counter Measure Vessels for the Navy.
- Mine Counter Measure Vessels ships would be manufactured in India under Transfer of Technol
- Minesweepers are crucial to detect mines and explosives planted by the enemy targeting our ships as they enter or leave harbours
- Discussions are underway between Goa Shipyard Limited, which has been nominated as the yard for construction by the government, and Kangnam Corporation of South Korea. The GSL has already created necessary infrastructure and facilities to build the vessels.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Scientists find what causes spread of cancer & new way to stop it

In news:

- An international team led by scientists from Johns Hopkins University has, for the first time, found what causes the spread of cancer and what could slow it down.
- **Important findings:**
- 90% of cancer deaths are caused when cancer cells break off from the origin and start spreading elsewhere in the body.
- There are no existing drugs for stopping this spread, known as metastasis, of cancer.
- No commercial drugs are now being produced specifically to inhibit metastasis because drug companies believe the best way to stop cancer from spreading is to destroy the primary tumor from which it originates.

- **Findings:**
- When cancer cells get densely packed they secrete two proteins that deliver a stark message to other cells: go away. This causes the cancer cells to break off from the pack and float through the blood stream or lymphatic system to other sites and start growing afresh.
- The team found that two existing drugs — Tocilizumab and Reparixin — prevented cancer cells from getting their marching orders.
- Tocilizumab is an approved medication for rheumatoid arthritis and is in trials for use in ovarian cancer cases. Reparixin is being evaluated as a possible treatment for breast cancer.

2. Ministry of Earth Sciences to launch ‘Deep Ocean Mission’ by January 2018

In news:

- Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India is all set to launch ‘Deep Ocean Mission’ by January 2018.
- The program on Poly metallic nodules was initiated at CSIR-NIO with the collection of the first nodule sample from Arabian Sea on board the first Research Vessel Gaveshani on 26 January 1981.
- India was the first country in the world to have been given the Pioneer Area for exploration of deep-sea mineral viz. Polymetallic nodules in the Central Indian Ocean Basin in 1987.
- This was based on the extensive surveys carried out by the scientists of CSIR-NIO, on several research ships leading to the allocation of an area of 150,000 sq km to the country with exclusive rights under the UN Law of the sea.
- India has now retained an area of 75,000 sq km with an estimated resource of about 100 million tons of strategic metals such Copper, Nickel, Cobalt besides Manganese and Iron.
- A First Generation Mine-site (FGM) with an area of 18,000 sq km has been identified. Latest technologies for extraction of metals from the minerals have also been developed under the programme. Detailed environmental data has been collected for compliance with International Seabed Authorities requirements. Besides identifying the mineral resource and developing technologies for mining and extraction, the programme has also resulted in high impact research as well as manpower development.

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Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) is a specified minimum fraction of the total deposits of customers, which commercial banks have to hold as reserves either in cash or as deposits with the central bank.

Statutory liquidity ratio (SLR) is the Indian government term for reserve requirement that the commercial banks in India require to maintain in the form of gold, government approved securities before providing credit to the customers.

Statutory Liquidity Ratio is determined by Reserve Bank of India maintained by banks in order to control the expansion of bank credit.

The SLR is determined by a percentage of total demand and time liabilities. Time Liabilities refer to the liabilities which the commercial banks are liable to pay to the customers after a certain period mutually agreed upon, and demand liabilities are such deposits of the customers which are payable on demand. An example of time liability is a six month fixed deposit which is not payable on demand but only after six months. An example of demand liability is a deposit maintained in saving account or current account that is payable on demand through a withdrawal form such as a cheque.

Repo rate is the rate at which the central bank of a country (Reserve Bank of India in case of India) lends money to commercial banks in the event of any shortfall of funds.

In the event of inflation, central banks increase repo rate as this acts as a disincentive for banks to borrow from the central bank. This ultimately reduces the money supply in the economy and thus helps in arresting inflation.

The central bank takes the contrary position in the event of a fall in inflationary pressures.

Reverse repo rate is the rate at which the central bank of a country (Reserve Bank of India in case of India) borrows money from commercial banks within the country.

It is a monetary policy instrument which can be used to control the money supply in the country.

Repo and reverse repo rates form a part of the **liquidity adjustment facility**.

Marginal standing facility (MSF) is a window for banks to borrow from the Reserve Bank of India in an emergency situation when inter-bank liquidity dries up completely.

Banks borrow from the central bank by pledging government securities at a rate higher than the repo rate under liquidity adjustment facility or LAF in short. The MSF rate is pegged 100 basis points or a percentage point above the repo rate. Under MSF, banks can borrow funds up to one percentage of their net demand and time liabilities (NDTL).

Bank rate is the rate charged by the central bank for lending funds to commercial banks.

Bank rates influence lending rates of commercial banks. Higher bank rate will translate to higher lending rates by the banks. In order to curb liquidity, the central bank can resort to raising the bank rate and vice versa.

Market Stabilization scheme (MSS) is a monetary policy intervention by the RBI to withdraw excess liquidity (or money supply) by selling government securities in the economy. The MSS was introduced in April 2004. Main thing about MSS is that it is used to withdraw excess liquidity or money from the system by selling government bonds.

Open market operations (OMO) refers to the buying and selling of government securities in the open market in order to expand or contract the amount of money in the banking system, facilitated by the RBI.

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Category: POLITY

1. 'Preventive detention no quick fix'

In news:

- Supreme Court ruling: Preventive detention of a person by a State after branding him a ‘goonda’ merely because the normal legal process is ineffective and time-consuming in ‘curbing the evil he spreads’ is illegal.
- The detention of a person was a serious matter affecting the liberty of the citizen.
- Preventive detention cannot be resorted to when sufficient remedies are available under the general laws of the land for any omission or commission under such laws.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India, Spain call for ‘zero tolerance’ to terrorism

In news:

- India and Spain stressed that there should be “zero tolerance” to terrorism and called on the international community to end “selective or partial” approaches in combating the menace which posed the gravest threat to international peace and stability.
- Agreements signed: transfer of sentenced persons and visa waiver for holders of diplomatic passports.
- Five MoUs were signed between the two countries on cooperation in organ transplantation, cybersecurity, renewable energy, civil aviation and one between India’s Foreign Service Institute and Diplomatic Academy of Spain.

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Category: ECONOMICS

1. India is no longer the fastest-growing economy

In News:

- India lost its **fastest-growing major economy** tag in the fourth quarter of 2016-17, with GDP growth coming in at 6.1% compared with China's 6.9% in the same period.

Key data:

- GDP grew 7.1% in the financial year 2016-17, slower than the 8% registered in 2015-16.
- The GDP numbers were based on the new 2011-12 base year recently adopted.
- Gross value added (GVA) growth was 6.6% for 2016-17 and 5.6% in the fourth quarter, compared with 7.9% in 2015-16 and 8.7% in Q4 of that year.

Reason:

2. Plan for Indian SEZs in Bangladesh hits bump

In news:

- India's plan to step up investments in Bangladesh by setting up three mega Special Economic Zones (SEZ) at Mongla, Bheramara and Mirsarai – the sites in Bangladesh , exclusively meant for Indian companies in the latter's territory has hit a major hurdle.
- Constraints:
 - Inadequate infrastructure and lack of uninterrupted power supply
 - Ambiguity and uncertainty regarding incentives offered by the Bangladesh Government to develop the SEZs

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- India and Bangladesh had inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in June 2015 — during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh — for cooperation on establishing Indian SEZs in Bangladesh.
- The plan was to develop Indian SEZs at Mirsarai (1,005 acres), Bheramara (about 480 acres) and Mongla (200 acres).
- The construction of these SEZs and Indian investment in the zones were to be facilitated through concessional Line of Credit extended by India to Bangladesh.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Strategic Partnership model takes effect

In news:

- Strategic Partnership (SP) policy which intends to promote Indian private sector participation in defence manufacturing, formally came into effect.

Strategic Partnership (SP) policy:

- The SP model is being implemented to enable participation of private Indian firms in ‘Make in India’ in defence.
- The SP is expected to play the role of a system integrator by building an extensive ecosystem comprising development partners, specialised vendors and suppliers.
- Various selection and evaluation criteria have been stipulated for short-listing the SP.
- SPs will be identified primarily based on their experience and competence in integration of multi-disciplinary functional system of systems, engineering and manufacturing
- Of the four segments under SP, two are for the Navy: submarines and utility helicopters. The others are single-engine fighter aircraft for the Indian Air Force and armoured vehicles for the Army.

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Prelims worthy factual information

- Punjab to join hand with UN Agency against Drugs. Punjab will soon sign an agreement with United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for its war against drug addiction.

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Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. [Rajasthan leads in child marriages](#)

In News:

- Research conducted by Young Lives in coordination with the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has revealed that Rajasthan has reported the highest incidence of child marriages.

Key data:

- Based on 2011 census, 2.5% of marriages of minor girls were reported in Rajasthan.
- Rajasthan also topped in the percentage (4.69%) of boys marrying below the legal age of 21 years.
- According to the Census study, 12.9% of girls got married in the age of 10-17 years and 43.6% between 18-20 years. However, only 4.9% of boys got married in the 10-17 years age group and 11.2 % in the 18-below 21 age group.

• Urban –Rural Divide:

- The decline in rural India, between 2001 and 2011 Census, was marginally higher than in the whole of the country.
- Incidence of child marriage among girls increased substantially in urban India from 1.78% in 2001 to 2.45% in 2011.

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Category: POLITY

1. [**Cattle slaughter: Not infringing on State laws, says Arun Jaitley**](#)

Context: Recent notice issued by the center regarding regulating sales of Cattles in the markets.

In news:

- **Finance Minister Arun Jaitley response:** State laws on cattle slaughter “had nothing to do” with a recent notification by the Union Environment Ministry prohibiting the sale of bovines for slaughter at animal market places.
- The new notification says that buyers of cattle at animal markets will have to verify they are agriculturalists and declare that they will not sell the animal/s for a period of six months from the date of purchase.

2. [**EC wants govt to review changes in poll funding laws**](#)

In news:

- The Election Commission has conveyed its reservations to the government regarding the recent amendments to the Representation of the People Act and Companies Act, affected through the Finance Bill, with respect to political funding.

Amendments :

- RP Act amendment exempts political parties from declaring donations received through the electoral bonds route
- Companies Act has been updated to remove the ceiling on corporate donations to political parties.

Contention by Election Commission: undermine transparency in funding of political parties.

What does RP Act says regarding donations?

- Section 29 (c) of the RP Act, political parties must declare donations above Rs 20,000
- This is proposed to be further cut to Rs 2,000.

3. [**Revenge porn surge makes government sit up**](#)

In news:

- The government is considering changes in the law to ensure stringent action against cyber crimes targeting women such as ‘revenge porn videos’ in the light of an increasing number of such incidents surfacing on social media
- Ministry of women and child development (WCD) seeking a greater focus on cyber crime to crack down on online sexual abuse.
- The ministry of women and child development is exploring ways to bridge the gap between existing provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Information Technology Act to deal with ‘revenge porn’.

What is revenge porn?

- Sharing of images or videos with sexual content without the consent of the person whose images or videos are put out on the internet has come to be referred to as ‘revenge porn’.

- This is often the act of a vengeful partner after a relationship has gone sour, the victim ends up being a target twice.

Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) consultations:

- Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) consultations led to interim measures to curb the menace of online child sexual abuse.
- Under this order, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are required to adopt and implement the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) Resources. This foundation maintains a dynamic global list of websites and URLs which contain child sexual abuse material.
- Implementation of IWF Resources will result in relevant content being blocked or removed on an ongoing basis.
- This is an interim measure till the IMC puts in place a centralised mechanism to monitor online child sexual abuse material.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India, Russia ink nuclear plant pact

In News:

India and Russia's new agreement :

- Setting up of two more units of a nuclear power plant in Tamil Nadu: Kudankulam 5 and 6 reactor units.
- Defence cooperation agreement.
- 'Indra-2017': first tri-Services exercises
- Start joint manufacture of frigates, adding to the co-production of Kamov-226 military helicopters.

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Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. LIGO makes third gravitational wave detection

In news:

- The Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) detectors in the U.S. have detected yet another merger of two black holes.
- This signal marks the third confirmed **detection of gravitational waves coming from a binary black hole merger**.
- It is of great interest to the scientific community that the black holes, having masses nearly 31 times and 19 times the sun's. Until the first detection of gravitational waves by LIGO in 2015 (GW150914) it was not known that such massive black holes could exist.

New findings: How black holes might have been formed?

- The detection has revealed not merely a black hole merger, but also the alignment of the spins of the black holes.
- The spins of the individual black holes making up the merger are probably not aligned along the same direction. This supports the theory which says that black holes form independently in a star cluster, then sink to the centre of the cluster and eventually merge
- The new observations yields support to Einstein's General Theory of Relativity. According to this theory, gravitational waves, unlike light waves, will not disperse as they travel through space. This too has been confirmed by the analysis of the presently detected signal.

Drawbacks:

- One drawback of having just the two detectors at Hanford, Washington and Livingston, Louisiana tuned to detect gravitational waves is that they cannot accurately figure out where in the sky the signal is coming from.

Contribution by Indians:

- The study had a major Indian contribution and the LIGO-India facility, which is making immense progress will join the club in 2024.

- India's ASTROSAT mission did a related sensitive search for short duration x-ray flashes associated with the event and did not detect any.

2. India's polar ship still a long way off



In news:

- India's plans to acquire a rs. 1,000-crore **polar research vehicle (PRV)** — a ship that can cut through ice sheets and glaciers — may see fresh delays.
- **Earlier attempts:** Early 2015, Spanish ship-building company was roped in, the contract fell through, primarily due to escalated costs.
- **Indian ship companies are not experienced in building PRVs.**
- There are very few companies in the world with such expertise.

Why do we need a PRV?

- The ship is expected to be central to India's ambitions in the Arctic and Antarctica.
- India has announced plans to rebuild Maitri, its research station in Antarctica, and make it impervious to its harsh environment for at least 25 years.

Basic Information:

- PRV's are also known as 'ice-breaker,' it can cut through a 1.5-metre thick wall of ice.
- It has a lifespan of 30 years.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. China vows to stick to Paris pact

Context: Washington planning to pull out of the Paris climate agreement.

In news:

- China reiterated its position to continue to implement promises made to the Paris Agreement, to move towards the 2030 goal step by step steadfastly.
- **Russia's reaction:** The withdrawal of key players from the Paris climate deal would "complicate" implementation of the pact.

2. Donald Trump goes rogue, pulls US out of 'partial to India, China' climate deal

In news:

- The country's 45th President, businessman entrepreneur Donald Trump, announced: "Washington is pulling out of the widely-acclaimed climate change accord".

Reasons given:

- Solemn duty to protect America and its people
- Accord favored China and India.
- Complaints against India, falsely saying New Delhi was demanding "billions and billions and billions" of foreign aid to conform to the deal, and claiming that the accord will allow India to double coal production by 2020.

- Trump said the US will seek to negotiate its way back or negotiate a new climate deal that is “fair” to America
- The US, under President Obama, had stitched together the deal with great difficulty after convincing a majority of the 198 nations, including long-term holdouts such as China and India.

Key Fact:

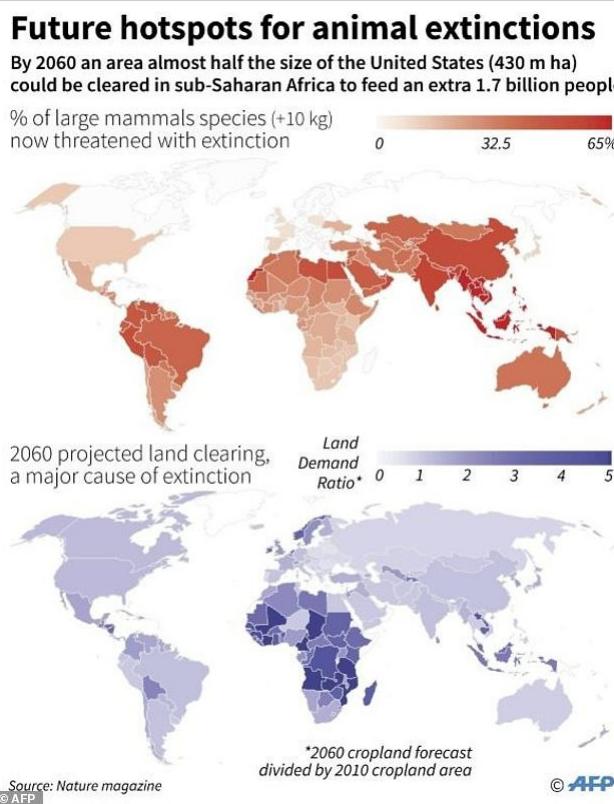
- China is currently the world’s largest CO₂ emitter, having overtaken America in the past decade
- The US historically is the world’s biggest polluter, riding on a century of mass consumption and servicing of everything from large homes to large vehicles.
- In 2015, the US released 5.1 million kilotons of CO₂, accounting for a sixth of global emissions and more than that of 28 EU countries combined.
- In comparison, India, with four times the US population, accounted for 2 million tons of CO₂.

Paris Agreement on Climate Change: The Paris Agreement on Climate Change is aimed at cutting emissions and keeping global temperatures from rising more than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

[3. Earth is on the brink of a sixth mass extinction putting animals at ‘unprecedented’ extinction risk in the next 50 years, experts warn](#)

Context:

Experts predictions: Earth is now on the brink of its **sixth mass extinction** and human activity is to blame.



In news:

Researchers around the world examined the current and future threats to biodiversity, and found that

- Nearly a quarter of mammal species are at risk of extinction, along with 13 percent of birds.
- Human activities are driving the sixth mass extinction in the history of life on Earth
- Ever-expanding human population and exploding demand for food, water and living space, will place animals at ‘unprecedented’ extinction risk in the next 50 years.
- The highest level of threat are more than 360 species of large mammals in Africa, Asia and South America — the most biodiverse regions of the world

What needs to be done?

FIVE GREAT EXTINCTION EVENTS

Five times, a vast majority of the world's life has been snuffed out in what have been called mass extinctions.

End-Ordovician mass extinction

The first of the traditional big five extinction events, around 540 million years ago, was probably the second most severe. Virtually all life was in the sea at the time and around 85% of these species vanished.

Late Devonian mass extinction

About 375-359 million years ago, major environmental changes caused a drawn-out extinction event that wiped out major fish groups and stopped new coral reefs forming for 100 million years.

End-Permian mass extinction (the Great Dying)

The largest extinction event and the one that affected the Earth's ecology most profoundly took place 252 million years ago. As much as 97% of species that leave a fossil record disappeared forever.

End-Triassic mass extinction

Dinosaurs first appeared in the Early Triassic, but large amphibians and mammal-like reptiles were the dominant land animals. The rapid mass extinction that occurred 201 million years ago changed that.

End-Cretaceous mass extinction

An asteroid slammed down on Earth 66 million years ago, and is often blamed for ending the reign of the dinosaurs.

- Safeguarding Earth's precious creatures amid such pressures will require the expansion and better management of conservation areas, the authors argued.
- The ultimate drivers of hunting and poaching must be addressed, for example, by providing people with alternative livelihoods or sources of protein.
- Agricultural yields — the crop produced per available hectare of land — must be increased through measures that include protecting soil fertility, and using more pest- and drought-resistant seeds.
- Drastic change to human diets and farming methods could provide 'healthy diets' for 10 billion people by 2060, while also preserving liveable habitats for most remaining species.

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1. The Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism :

- **The Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism** is a proposed treaty which intends to criminalize all forms of international terrorism and deny terrorists, their financiers and supporters access to funds, arms, and safe havens. Currently, the negotiations are deadlocked mainly because of differences over the definition of terrorism.
- **Key Issues**
- The negotiations of the Comprehensive Terrorism Convention are deadlocked because of differences over several controversial yet basic issues, including the definition of 'terrorism'.

For example:

What distinguishes a “terrorist organisation” from a ‘liberation movement’?

Are the activities of national armed forces excluded, even if they are perceived to commit acts of terrorism?

If not, how much of this constitutes ‘state terrorism’?”

The definition of terrorism, which was on the negotiating table of the Comprehensive Convention since 2002 is as follows:

- Any person commits an offence within the meaning of this Convention if that person, by any means, unlawfully and intentionally, causes:
 - Death or serious bodily injury to any person; or
 - Serious damage to public or private property, including a place of public use, a State or government facility, a public transportation system, an infrastructure facility or the environment; or
 - Damage to property, places, facilities, or systems referred to result in major economic loss,
 - When the purpose of the conduct is to intimidate threat a population, or to compel a Government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act.

Proposed Exceptions to resolve the deadlock: In order to resolve deadlock the coordinator of the negotiations, supported by most western delegations, proposed the following exceptions to address those issues:

- This convention will not affect other rights, obligations and responsibilities of States, peoples and individuals under international law especially for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and international humanitarian law.
- This Convention will not govern the activities of armed forces during an armed conflict, as those terms are understood under international humanitarian law, which are governed by that law.
- Even the activities undertaken by the military forces of a State in the exercise of their official duties, inasmuch as they are governed by other rules of international law, will be not governed by this Convention.
- The state members of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference proposed the following exceptions instead of western delegation:
- This convention will not govern the activities of the parties during an armed conflict, including in situations of foreign occupation, as those terms are understood under international humanitarian law, which are governed by that law.
- The activities undertaken by the military forces of a State in the exercise of their official duties, inasmuch as they are in conformity with international law, will be not governed by this Convention.

India's stand: India has been advocating for early adoption of the CCIT and has called the global community India had called upon the worldwide community to promote the anti-terror legal framework and execute the Global Counter Terrorism Strategy in an integrated manner. India is of the view that comprehensiveness of the Global Counter Terrorism Strategy will not be concluded devoid of the conclusion of the CCIT which is at an important phase of discussion before the UN.

2. Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD)

- The IISS Asia Security Summit: The Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD) is a “Track One” inter-governmental security forum held annually by an

independent think tank, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) which is attended by defense ministers, permanent heads of ministries and military chiefs of 28 Asia-Pacific states.

- The forum gets its name from the Shangri-La Hotel in Singapore where it has been held since 2002.
- The summit serves to cultivate a sense of community among the most important policymakers in the defence and security community in the region. While primarily an inter-governmental meeting, the summit is also attended by legislators, academic experts, distinguished journalists and business delegates.
- The participants have included Australia, Brunei, Burma(Myanmar), Cambodia, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, People's Republic of China, Philippines, Russia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Sweden, Thailand, East Timor, United Kingdom, United States and Vietnam.

3. The Paris Agreement

- The Paris Agreement or Paris climate accord and Paris climate agreement, is an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) dealing with greenhouse gas emissions mitigation, adaptation and finance starting in the year 2020.
- Main intention:
- Agreement to slow the process of global warming by making efforts to “hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels”.
- Decision to limit the amount of greenhouse gases emitted by human activity to a level that can be naturally absorbed by trees, soils and oceans.
- Developed countries were also told to provide financial resources to help developing countries in dealing with climate change and for adaptation measures. As part of a review mechanism, developed countries were also asked to communicate every two years the “indicative” amount of money they would be able to raise over the

next two years, and information on how much of it would come from public financial sources. In contrast, developing countries have only been “encouraged” to provide such information every two years on a voluntary basis.

- The language of the agreement was negotiated by representatives of 195 countries at the **21st Conference of the Parties** of the UNFCCC in Paris and adopted by consensus on 12 December 2015.
- As of June 2017, 195 UNFCCC members have signed the agreement, 148 of which have ratified it.
- In the Paris Agreement, each country determines its **own contribution** it should make in order to mitigate global warming.
- **There is no mechanism to force a country to set a specific target by a specific date.**

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1. NCR becoming a death trap for birds: report Pollution, degradation of water : from mobile towers are threatening survival of birds

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Category: POLITY

1. Draft Social Security Code raises doubts about efficacy 'It is evasive about the benefits accruing to workers in the unorganised sector'

Why in news?

- The Center's draft Social Security Code, combining upwards of 44 work laws, has made questions about its viability.
- It has held the downsides of before enactments and is equivocal about the advantages gathering to laborers in the chaotic division.
- At a meeting activist said the code was a "confused arrangement of standards" and it didn't address the worry of

workers in the areas of wages, welfare, mechanical relations and wellbeing and work conditions.

Privatisation

- There appeared to be a move to privatize the administration of assets gathered for specialists' standardized savings.

Criticism

- The counsel to the Supreme Court's Commissioner morally justified to sustenance case, said the code was "hostile to workers" and was even more a political trick than a welfare measure.
- This code was hazy about the government managed savings benefits for sloppy workers.
- Code additionally would oblige them to make financial commitment to guarantee the advantages.
- In the event that the new laws came into compel, the advance made in a few States for cutting edge assurance of laborers would be vanquished.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India, France to join hands on Paris pact Leaders of the two countries also vow to unite to boost maritime security and fight against terrorism

Why in news?

- India and France to cooperate for the usage of the milestone Paris atmosphere assent and battle the test postured by psychological warfare.
- India was resolved to "go well beyond" the Paris arrangement to ensure atmosphere for who and what is to come.
- Indian Prime Minister said Paris atmosphere bargain mirrors "our obligation towards securing the mother Earth and our normal assets. For us, this (security of condition) is an article of confidence."

Shared legacy

- Paris atmosphere understanding is a mutual heritage of the world.
- Fear based oppression is one of the greatest difficulties the world is confronting today. We can't see the risk of environmental change however we can see the awful impacts of fear based oppression
- India and France to cooperate in barrier participation, oceanic security and battling fear based oppression on the Internet.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. New GST rate of 3% for gold, diamonds Rates finalised for all

Why in news?

- India and France to cooperate for the execution of the point of interest Paris atmosphere assent and battle the test postured by psychological warfare.
- The Goods and Services Tax Council concluded the rates on all the rest of the items, including gold, footwear, materials, rural executes, scones, and beedis.
- The Council additionally cleared the standards with respect to return documenting, and transitional arrangements.
- Gold, silver, and precious stones would be put in another rate class of 3% while harsh jewels would pull in an ostensible rate of 0.25%.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. NCR becoming a death trap for birds: report Pollution, degradation of water sources, radiation from mobile towers are threatening survival of birds

Why in news?

- Fast urbanization over the most recent three decades is in charge of the vanishing of more than 70% types of transitory and endemic flying creatures in south Haryana's Aravalli go.

- Feathered creatures were enduring a direct result of air contamination, debasement of water sources, radiation from versatile towers, outsider urban arranging that incorporates tall structures and plentiful utilization of glass, and the commotion levels close urban territories of Manesar and different areas.
- Aside from these obstacles, edit deposit consuming around Delhi in the mid year and start of winter is a potential risk to avian work.
- It has not just bothered disintegration of air quality and stifling of flying creatures, but at the same time is a danger to their natural surroundings amid the rearing time frame.
- Winged creatures are likewise inclined to respiratory contaminations because of the poor air quality in NCR, with survival rate as low as 5%. Not all is lost.

Cultural impact

- Social associate amongst flying creatures and people in the territory was clear in the social and religious practices.
- There is a custom of offering water and grains to creatures and flying creatures. Healing facilities committed to feathered creatures and wild creatures are a one of a kind element in the NCR and its encompassing ranges, which mean territorial affectability toward winged animals

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1. [The Three Year Agenda](#)
2. [Rajasthan: 600 more health centres to be converted into model units](#)
3. [NGO evolves blueprint to end female genital mutilation](#)

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [Australian scientists create world's thinnest hologram](#)

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2. [Ecological concerns over combustible ice](#)

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Category: **POLITY**

1. [The Three Year Agenda](#)

Context:

- The draft “Three Year Action Agenda” of the NITI Aayog has been circulated recently to its governing council
- This draft will be finalised after considering suggestions from the State Governments

Five-Year Plan

- After(Union Government) allowing for the 12th five-year plan to phase itself out, the transition is now complete
- Five-year plans are reminiscent of centrally planned economies; most such countries, like the Soviet Union, China and Romania, had similar planning horizons

Other documents:

- The seven-year policy strategy
- The 15-year long-term vision

Objective of Three Year Action Agenda:

- It seeks to embark on “a path to achieve all-round development of India and its people” through concerted action.

What are the advantages of a three-year timeline?

- Electoral cycles do not synchronise with (earlier) five-year plans; quite often, this entailed outcome accountability to rest with a successor government.
- But a “Three Year Action Agenda” makes the government in office more directly accountable for the implementation of its plans
- Augmenting the “Three Year Action Agenda” with a seven-year implementable policy strategy and a 15-year vision enables us to look into the future, particularly at evolving technology, demography and ecology, and accordingly align our policies
- The 15-year vision is also somewhat coterminous with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN). The new format thus combines domestic aspiration with global aims.

2. [Rajasthan: 600 more health centres to be converted into model units](#)

In news:

- Six hundred more Primary Health Centres (PHCs) in Rajasthan will shortly be converted into model units
- **Model units:**
 - Doctors and para-medical staff at the PHCs will take special care to maintain health and nutritional status of women, children and old age patients.
 - Additional services provided: allopathy and Ayurveda physicians available to patients.
 - They are functioning as “**wellness centres** ” with a significant increase in patient registration and **institutional deliveries** .
 - Model PHCs would provide free medicines and conduct as many as 15 diagnostic tests free of cost.

3. [NGO evolves blueprint to end female genital mutilation](#)



- **Practice of female genital mutilation (FGM)** report compiled by Speak Out on FGM, a group of Dawoodi Bohra woman (victims of FGM) along with a human rights NGO, Lawyers Collective.
- Report speaks about psychological trauma and physical scars faced by the victims, and the legal aspects that could be weaved in to stop the practice completely.
- **Practice:** Khatna, as practised among Dawoodi Bohras, involves cutting the part of the **clitoral hood** or the prepuce, of girls as young as seven years.
- While a large number of countries have banned the practice, **India does not have a law on the same.**

C. GS3 Related

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Australian scientists create world's thinnest hologram

In News:

- Scientists have created the world's thinnest hologram that can be seen without 3D goggles and may be integrated into everyday electronics such as smartphones, computers and TVs
- It is simple to make and is 1,000 times thinner than a human hair
- Integrating holography into everyday electronics would make screen size irrelevant
- A pop-up 3D hologram can display a wealth of data that does not neatly fit on a phone or watch

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Ecological concerns over combustible ice

Context:

- Japan and China successfully extracted the material from the sea floor off their coastlines
- Commercial development of the globe's huge reserves of a frozen fossil fuel known as "combustible ice" has moved closer to reality
- The fuel was successfully mined by a drilling rig operating in the South China Sea

What is combustible ice?

- Combustible ice is a frozen mixture of water and concentrated natural gas
- Technically known as methane hydrate, it can be lit on fire in its frozen state
- It is believed to comprise one of the world's most abundant fossil fuels

Issues:

- Experts suggest large-scale production remains many years away
- If extraction is not done properly, it could flood the atmosphere with climate-changing greenhouse gases

Advantages of methane hydrate:

- For Japan, methane hydrate offers the chance to reduce its heavy reliance of imported fuels if it can tap into reserves off its coastline
- In China, it could serve as a cleaner substitute for coal-burning power plants and steel factories
- These factories have polluted much of the country with lung-damaging smog

Location of methane hydrate:

- Methane hydrate has been found beneath seafloors and buried inside Arctic permafrost and beneath Antarctic ice
- It is present in abundance in the world
- This means methane hydrate reserves could meet global gas demands for 80 to 800 years at current consumption rates

Environmental concerns:

- If methane hydrate leaks during the extraction process, it can increase greenhouse gas emissions
- The fuel also could displace renewables such as solar and wind power.

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<i>Scheme in News</i>	<i>About the Scheme</i>
<i>VAJRA (Visiting Advanced Joint Research) Faculty scheme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implementing agency: The Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB), a Statutory body Department of Science and Technology.• Enables NRIs and overseas scientific community to participate and contribute to research and development in India.• VAJRA faculty will undertake research in S&T priority areas of nation wherein the capability and capacity are needed to be developed. The VAJRA faculty will engage in collaborative research in public funded institutions.• The residency period of the VAJRA Faculty in India would be for a minimum of 1 month and a maximum of 3 months a year.• The VAJRA Faculty is provided a lump-sum amount of US\$ 15000 in the first month of residency in a year and US\$ 10000 p.m. in the other two months to cover their travel and honorarium. While no separate support is provided for e.g. accommodation, medical / personal insurance etc. the host institute may consider providing additional support.• Public funded academic institutions and national laboratories are eligible to host the VAJRA Faculty. These institutions should appoint them as Adjunct / Visiting Faculty and involve them in co-guiding and mentoring of students and developing collaborative programs. The Faculty can also be allowed to participate in other academic activities as agreed to by the host institution and the Faculty.

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2. [Survey puts Nilgiri tahr population at 1,420](#)
3. [India's biodiversity riches grow by 499 species](#)

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Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India to weather Qatar storm now

Context: Isolation of Qatar by the Gulf countries.

In News:

Political ties in the region

Background information:

- Qatar is a part of the Islamic Military Alliance, as well as part of the Saudi coalition taking part in the Yemen intervention.
- Qatar challenges the Saudi monarchy as well as the regimes in many countries in the Gulf.
- Qatari Emir Al-Thani's tie with Iran is the major trigger.
- There has been an increased call from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), as well as UAE, Bahrain and other countries for Qatar to proclaim which side it is on.
- India has traditionally stayed out of the “Shi'a-Sunni”, “Arab-Persian” or “Wahabbi-Salafi” divides, and maintained good ties with all.

Present scenario: fragmenting West Asia will require even more deft diplomacy from India's side to keep these ties untouched by the tensions.

Trade and manpower

- India sources more than half of its energy import needs from countries in the Persian Gulf.
- Six million Indians live and work in West Asia and they sent home about \$63 billion last year.
- Energy imports may not be affected immediately, unless the Gulf countries follow through with sanctions. However, as in the case of Yemen, Libya, Lebanon and other countries, any tensions in the region have an immediate

impact on thousands of Indian workers.

Cooperation in fighting terror: The KSA and the UAE are important partners for India on counter-terrorism cooperation and intelligence sharing.

Air travel : the Saudi coalition has decided to cancel Qatar Airways flights to their countries. This will affect Indian passengers who hoped to use Doha as a hub to get to other destinations in the Gulf.

2. Nepal, China ink mega hydropower agreement

In news:

- Nepal has signed an agreement with a Chinese company to build 1,200 megawatt Budhi-Gandaki hydroelectric project (the largest hydroelectric plant).
- Nepal suffers from a chronic energy shortage. Water-rich Nepal has a mountain river system that could make it an energy-producing powerhouse, but instead it imports much of its electricity from neighbouring India.
- Demand for electricity has long outstripped supply in Nepal due to chronic under-investment and inefficiencies in the power network. The result has been crippling for domestic industry and deterred foreign investment.

3. 'Saudi, UAE seek to isolate Qatar'

In news:



- The Arab world's strongest powers cut ties with Qatar. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain cut relations with Qatar in a coordinated move. Yemen, Libya's eastern-based government and the Maldives joined in later.

Reasons: Alleged support for Islamists- the Muslim Brotherhood, ISIS (Islamic State) and al-Qaeda and Iran.

Aircraft banned: Saudi Arabia and Bahrain's civil aviation bodies banned Qatari planes from landing in the kingdom's airports and banned them from crossing their airspace.

Key Fact:

- Qatar meets almost a third of global LNG demand. The fuel is used largely for power generation.
- India is the second biggest buyer of Qatari LNG, according to energy consultancy Wood Mackenzie, after Japan.
- Qatar is also a major exporter of condensate, an ultra-light form of crude

oil, as well as liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), with most supplies of the two fuels going to Japan and South Korea under long term supply contracts.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. India rejects Trump's allegations on Paris pact

Context:

- **S. President Donald Trump's allegation:** India joined the Paris climate agreement for a large financial incentive.

In news:

- India rejected the allegations as unreal and did not join the agreement for any kind of financial greed.
- India signed the agreement for protection of climate. Worship of forests, worship of rivers, worship of mountains continue even now in India. These actions are part of India's ethos that are five thousand years old. These are all heritage of India.
- India will continue to remain in the Paris agreement framework, whether the U.S. continues in it or not

2. Survey puts Nilgiri tahr population at 1,420

In news:



- The first ever State wide population estimation of **Nilgiri tahrs** conducted by the Kerala Forests and Wildlife Department, using the bounded count method, has put the total population of the endangered species at 1,420,

which include 664 at the Eravikulam National Park in Munnar.

- **Endangered:** The Nilgiri tahr being confined to a narrow belt of higher elevation areas in a restricted geographical region and with specialised habitat requirement is all more threatened.

Facts Round up:

- **Nilgiri tahr:** The Nilgiri tahr known locally as the Nilgiri ibex or simply ibex, is endemic to the Nilgiri Hills and the southern portion of the Western Ghats in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala in southern India. **It is the state animal of Tamil Nadu.**

3. India's biodiversity riches grow by 499 species

In news:

- New species discovered last year: 313 species of animal and 186 of plants.
- Most of the new species of animals were from the four biological hotspots of the country — the Himalayas, the northeast, the Western Ghats and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- India is one of the 17 megadiversity countries and it has about 6.42 per cent of the global fauna.
- The geographical distribution of the new plant species reveals that most discoveries were made in the Western Ghats (17%), followed by the Eastern Himalayas (15%), the Western Himalayas (13%), the Eastern Ghats (12%) and the west coast (8%).

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. India successfully fires heaviest launch vehicle

'Fat boy' in space

The launch of GSLV Mk-III is significant as the PSLV, Indian space technology's workhorse, is unable to carry satellites beyond 2,000 kg. GSLV can carry heavier payloads

India's heaviest rocket weighs around 640 tonnes

Height
43.4 metres

Time taken to build it
15 yrs.

Orbit
Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit

Propulsion
Solid, liquid and cryogenic

Vehicle cost
₹ 300 crore

It can launch commercial rockets as heavy as 4 tonnes

Powered by a indigenously-developed cryogenic engine weighing 25 tonnes

- Cryogenic engines use liquid oxygen and hydrogen as propellants
- Apart from India, five countries have successfully developed and deployed cryogenic rocket engines

GSAT-19

The crucial communications satellite was put into orbit by GSLV Mk-III

- This will be India's first satellite to provide internet services using the ka/ku-band, faster than current satellites



Rising hope: The GSLV Mk-III being launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh, on Monday. • S. R. RAGHUNATHAN



In News:

- India joined a select group of nations having their own **indigenous cryogenic engine technology**, when the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched its **heaviest launch vehicle , GSLV MkIII-D1** , and placed the country's **heaviest satellite** till date, **GSAT-19** , into a precise orbit.

GSAT-19 :

- Communication satellite
- Orbit: Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO).
- The satellite weighs 3,136 kg.
- This successful launch will enable India to launch 4-tonne class satellites from India

2. IMD to give malaria, chikungunya alerts

In news:

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) is working on a forecasting system to give 15-day warnings on the likelihood of a malaria or chikungunya outbreak, over different regions.

D. GS4 Related

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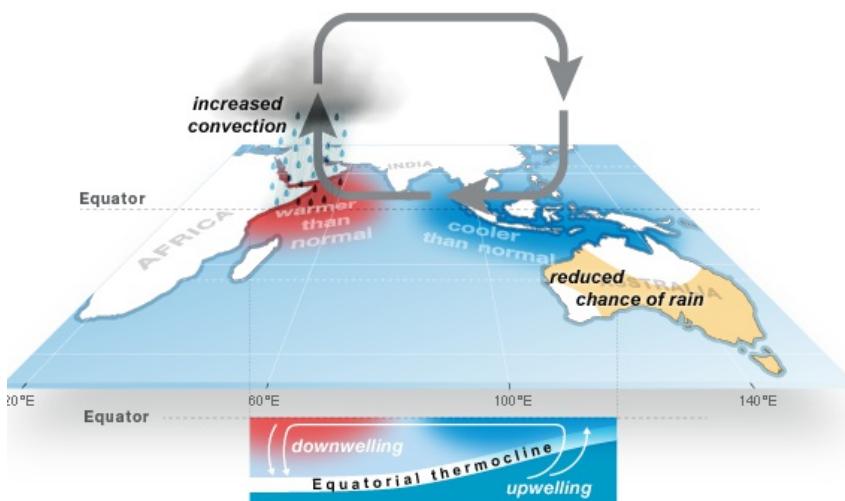
Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. IMD predicts more rain this monsoon

In News:

- Indian Meteorological Department prediction of rain this year: ‘normal’ and around 98% of the Long Period Average (LPA).
- Rains in July and August, the most important monsoon months for the kharif crops, would be 96% and 99% respectively.

El Nino is weaker than anticipated :



Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD): Positive phase

- The El Nino — characterised by surface waters of the **equatorial Pacific warming** up by more than half a degree — is known to dry up monsoon rain every six out of 10 years.
- A positive **Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)** is said to **buffer the impact of El Nino** and contribute to better rains. (**The IOD is a swing in surface temperatures that turns the western Indian Ocean alternately warmer and then colder than the eastern part of the ocean.**)

New model: dynamical model

- In April, the IMD shifted to using a new monsoon forecast system, called a dynamical model that works by supercomputers simulating the weather and extrapolating it.

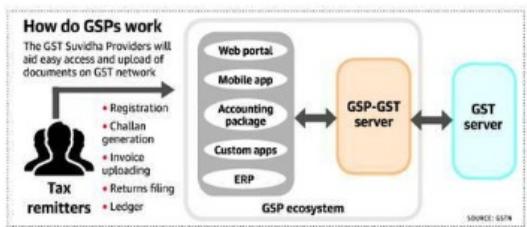
Private weather forecaster Skymet :

- Below normal forecast at 95% (with an error margin of +/- 5%) of the LPA.
- Rainfall for July stood at 94%, while for August it was 93% of the historical average.

B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. As July 1 nears, GST interface not ready



Context: Government bid to roll out the GST regime from July 1

In news:

- **GST Suvidha Providers (GSPs):** who are expected to help taxpayers cope with the transition to the new regime and its compliance paperwork.
- **GSPs** may only be operationally ready a few months down the line, so it is difficult to meet the target of July 1.
- **Convenient methods:** Under the GST regime, the GSPs are expected to provide convenient methods to taxpayers to access and upload their documents and returns onto the GST Network (GSTN), the information technology backbone of the new indirect tax regime.

2. Child-friendly HIV drug gets govt. nod

In news:

- The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has registered the child-friendly HIV drug in **oral pellet form** (lopinavir/ritonavir (LPV/r)).
- The pellets, which come in capsules and are **dosed by weight**, can be sprinkled (but not stirred or crushed) over a small amount of soft food. For infants — who must be able to swallow them — the pellets can be added to a spoonful of breast milk or put on the infant's tongue.

Paediatric HIV a ‘neglected disease’:

- Lack of child-friendly HIV formulations.
- Large treatment gap between adults and children.
- Oral pellet form is a boon to HIV community since National AIDS Control Programme (NACO), had been struggling to source quality assured paediatric formulations of the drug.

- India ran out of Lopinavir syrup, a child-friendly HIV drug, in March after Cipla — the sole manufacturer of the drug — stopped production consequent to non-payment by the Health Ministry. The drug's adult version has to be swallowed whole and thus cannot be administered to infants and young children.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Centre notifies rules on capital gains tax

In news:

- The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has come out with a **final notification** specifying the securities transactions that would attract **capital gains tax where the securities transaction tax (STT) hasn't been paid**.
- An amendment has been made in the Finance Act 2017 to curb the declaration of unaccounted income as exempt long-term capital gains under the previous provisions of the Income Tax Act by entering into fake transactions.
- According to the notification, the chargeability to STT provision will not apply to all transactions of acquisitions of equity shares entered into on or after October 1, 2004, except the acquisition of listed shares in a preferential issue of a company whose shares are not frequently traded in a recognised stock exchange, the acquisition of existing listed equity shares in a company not through a recognised stock exchange of India, and the acquisition of shares of a company while it is de-listed.

D. GS4 Related

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PIB Articles Editorials Roundup

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Prelims worthy factual information

- Arundhati Roy became the first Indian Woman to win the Booker Prize in

the year 1997 for her work: The God of small things.

- **Rutland Island** : The country's long-range missile test facility at South Andamans' Rutland Island has finally secured the clearance of the National Board of Wildlife, which has been held up since 2012.

F. Bills/Acts/Schemes/Orgs in News

Scheme in News	About the Scheme
Hunar Haat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ministry of Minority Affairs• It is being organized by the Minority Affairs Ministry to encourage, promote and provide national and international market to master artisans/craftsmen belonging to the Minority communities from across the country.• “Hunar Haat” is being organized through National Minorities Development & Finance Corporation (NMDFC) under USTTAD (Upgrading the Skills & Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development) scheme of Ministry of Minority Affairs.

Scheme in News	About the Scheme
	<p>A Sub-Mission under National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)</p> <p>Aim: The scheme aims at development of certified organic production in a value chain mode to link growers with consumers and to support the development of entire value chain starting from inputs, seeds, certification, to the creation of facilities for collection, aggregation, processing marketing and brand building initiative.</p>

Objective:

To develop crop commodity specific organic value chain and address gaps in organic crop production, wild crop harvesting, organic livestock management and processing handling and marketing of organic agricultural products

**Mission
Organic Value
Chain
Development
For North
Eastern Region**

through:

1. Developing crop specific organic production clusters with necessary infrastructural, technical and financial support
2. By facilitating partnerships between farmers and organic businesses: Local enterprises and / or Farmer Producer Companies based on back-to-back longterm trade relations with clients in domestic and export markets.
3. By providing enabling environment for project initiatives and development programs with necessary support for organic value chain development and create market access.

To empower producers with program ownership by organizing them into FIGs with the final aim to federate into farmer producer organizations/ companies

To replace conventional farming/subsistence farming system into local resource based, self sustainable, high value commercial organic enterprise

Developing commodity specific commercial organic value chain under integrated and concentrated approach with end-to-end facilities for production, processing, storage and marketing

Development of organic parks/zones with facilities for collection, aggregation, value addition, processing, storage and market-linkages for specific commodities requiring capital intensive technology

Develop NER products as brands/labels through brand building and facilitating stronger marketing access under the ownership of growers“ organizations/

Creating state specific lead agency (Organic Commodity Board or Organic Mission) for coordinating, monitoring, supporting and financing the development and operationalization of entire value chain.

Article 19. Protection of certain rights regarding freedom of speech etc

(1) All citizens shall have the right

1. *to freedom of speech and expression;*
2. *to assemble peaceably and without arms;*
3. *to form associations or unions;*
4. *to move freely throughout the territory of India;*
5. *to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India; and*
6. *omitted*
7. *to practise any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business*

(2) Nothing in sub clause (a) of clause (1) shall affect the operation of any existing law, or prevent the State from making any law, in so far as such law imposes reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub clause in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence

(3) Nothing in sub clause (b) of the said clause shall affect the operation of any existing law in so far as it imposes, or prevent the State from making any law imposing, in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India or public order, reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub clause

(4) Nothing in sub clause (c) of the said clause shall affect the operation of any existing law in so far as it imposes, or prevent the State from making any law imposing, in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India or public order or morality, reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub clause

(5) Nothing in sub clauses (d) and (e) of the said clause shall affect the operation of any existing law in so far as it imposes, or prevent the State from making any law imposing, reasonable restrictions on the exercise of any of the rights conferred by the said sub clauses either in the interests of the general public or for the protection of the interests of any

Scheduled Tribe

(6) Nothing in sub clause (g) of the said clause shall affect the operation of any existing law in so far as it imposes, or prevent the State from making any law imposing, in the interests of the general public, reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub clause, and, in particular, nothing in the said sub clause shall affect the operation of any existing law in so far as it relates to, or prevent the State from making any law relating to,

- 1. the professional or technical qualifications necessary for practising any profession or carrying on any occupation, trade or business, or*
- 2. the carrying on by the State, or by a corporation owned or controlled by the State, of any trade, business, industry or service, whether to the exclusion, complete or partial, of citizens or otherwise*

Article 25. Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion

Â

(1) Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion

(2) Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law

- 1. regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice;*
- 2. providing for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus*

Explanation I The wearing and carrying of kirpans shall be deemed to be included in the profession of the Sikh religion

Explanation II In sub clause (b) of clause reference to Hindus shall be

construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jaina or Buddhist religion, and the reference to Hindu religious institutions shall be construed accordingly

Article 29. Protection of interests of minorities

- (1) Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same
- (2) No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them

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Category: *POLITY*

1. Modi to meet Xi to repair bilateral ties

In news:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping in Astana, Kazakhstan on the sidelines of a major security summit.
- Meeting is crucial for India:
- India is keen on membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the plenary session of which is being held in Geneva on June 19.
- June 30 deadline for the U.N. Security Council committee to designate **Masood Azhar** a terrorist. **China has been blocking both.**

2. Only PSUs may be let to make Oxytocin

In news:

- The Drug Controller will soon restrict manufacturing of controversial hormone drug **Oxytocin** to public sector undertakings (PSUs).
- Oxytocin at present is banned in the retail markets after it was found that indiscriminate use of Oxytocin in milch animals and by farmers was causing irreversible hormone damage.
- **Controversial usage:** The drug is used by dairy owners and farmers to boost milk production and make vegetables look bigger and fresher.
- Oxytocin is a hormone known to trigger a wide variety of physical and psychological effects and is commonly used to facilitate childbirth.

Category: *INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS*

1. \$1 mn fund to bolster BRICS media

Context: Inaugural session of the BRICS Media Forum in the Chinese capital, Cai Mingzhao.

In news:

- The Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) grouping has

- signalled its intent to expand its footprint in the global media space.
- President of Xinhua News Agency and executive president of the BRICS Media Forum, announced that the news agency will invest \$1 million for boosting media cooperation in the five-nation grouping.
 - The BRICS media forum is the result of a joint initiative by Xinhua News Agency, Brazil's CMA Group, Russia's Sputnik News Agency and Radio, The Hindu group of publications from India, and South Africa's Independent Media.
 - The plan will promote six objectives, including “balanced reporting”.

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Category: ECONOMY

1. Come next weekend, fuel prices will change daily

In news:

- Retail prices for petrol and diesel would be revised on a daily basis starting from June 16, compared to the present system where oil marketing companies usually adjust prices on a **fortnightly basis**.
 - The public sector oil marketeers — Indian Oil Corporation, Hindustan Petroleum and Bharat Petroleum — launched a pilot project in May for daily dynamic pricing at petrol pumps in Udaipur, Puducherry, Visakhapatnam, Jamshedpur and Chandigarh.
 - Based on the ‘successful implementation’ of the pilot project, the firms have decided to start daily revision across the country.
- Advantages:**
- Daily revisions will make retail prices more reflective of the current market conditions.
 - Minimises the volatility in the retail sales price of petrol and diesel.
 - Increased transparency

2. Products used by common man to cost less: Centre

In news:

- Several consumer goods purchased on a daily basis by the common man would become cheaper once the GST is implemented
- Branded foodgrains and flours will attract a 5% GST.
- **No tax:** Cereals, pulses and atta, fresh milk, vegetables and fruits, puffed

rice, common salt, animal feed, organic manure, fire wood, raw silk, wool and jute will be tax-free.

- **Effectiveness of GST:**

- GST is the most important tax reform since independence and is going to substantially ease doing of business in India which will promote new investment and contribute to the overall GDP growth.
- It will also help in removing the cascading effect of taxation and will give relief to the common man by leading to reduction in prices especially of essential consumer goods.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. The neutrino opportunity

Context

- India's wait to join the elite club of countries undertaking neutrino research suffered a procedural delay
- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) suspended the environmental clearance (EC) granted to the India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO)
- It was ordered it to file a fresh application for clearance

INO project

- The proposed INO project primarily aims to study atmospheric neutrinos in a 1,300-m deep cavern in the Bodi West Hills in Theni district, Tamil Nadu
- If completed, the INO would house the largest magnet in the world
- It will be four times more massive than the European Organization for Nuclear Research, CERN's Compact Muon Solenoid (CMS) detector's magnet

Neutrinos

- Neutrinos are tiny particles
- They are almost massless
- They travel at near light speeds
- They are born from violent astrophysical events such as exploding stars and gamma ray bursts
- Therefore, they are abundant in the universe, and can move as easily through matter as we move through air

- They are notoriously difficult to track down
- If you hold your hand towards the sunlight for one second, about a billion neutrinos from the sun will pass through it
- This is because they are the by-products of nuclear fusion in the sun
- **Aim of the INO project:** It aims to understand some of the unsolved mysteries of the universe

Setback of delayed project

- The suspension of INO's environmental clearance is a setback
- The scientific community hopes these procedural lapses will be addressed in an earnest and time-bound manner
- The NGT's March 2017 order further delays the start of the project
- Now the earliest conceivable completion date is projected as 2022
- The INO will fall further behind other facilities including China's Jiangmen Underground Neutrino Observatory (JUNO), expected to open in 2019

Criticism of INO Project

- The explosives used in construction are a threat to the highly sensitive ecology of the Western Ghats
- The relevant radiation safety studies for carrying out the long baseline neutrino experiment in the second phase of INO have not been done
- There are further allegations that neutrinos are radioactive particles
- The INO will double up the storage of nuclear waste

The better side of the story

- The proposed excavation is planned to be carried out by a controlled blast, limiting the impact of vibrations with the help of computer simulations
- Additionally, building the INO involves constructing an underground lab accessed by a 2 km-long horizontal access tunnel, resembling a road tunnel
- Such tunnels have been built extensively in India and the relevant studies show that the environmental impact (mainly dust and noise in the initial phase) have been managed
- For those who argue that Rs. 1,500 crore is a waste of money, it might be instructive to look back at the enormous achievements 20th century has brought in on the pillars of relativity and quantum mechanics

Neutrino Factory

- In the second phase, the INO project initially had planned to be set up as a far detector for the Neutrino Factory
- It is a proposed particle accelerator
- The radiation from the neutrino beam alone on an average would be one in 100 millionth of the natural radiation, which is negligible

Long history of research

- In the 1960s and 1970s, a group of scientists led by the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research detected some unusual experimental observations
- They were the Kolar events in the Kolar Gold Fields (KGF) in Karnataka
- Half a century later these events remain as science fiction, yet to be explained and unraveled
- From the 1980s, neutrino enthusiasts discussed the possibility of a neutrino observatory located in India
- In 2002, a document was presented to the Department of Atomic Energy which laid out an ambitious plan to establish the INO
- On January 5, 2015, the Union cabinet gave its approval to establish the INO at an estimated cost of Rs. 1,500 crore, the most expensive basic science project in India

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Schemes in News About the Schemes

*'DigiYatra' -
A New
Digital
Experience
for Air
Travellers*

- Ministry of Civil Aviation.
- The ‘DigiYatra’ is an industry-led initiative co-ordinated by the Ministry in line with the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi’s Digital India’s vision to transform the nation into a digitally empowered society. This follows Air Sewa which brings together all the stakeholders on a common platform for handling customer grievances and disseminating real-time data.
- ‘DigiYatra’ initiative aims to bring together entire industry to develop a digital ecosystem that will deliver Indian customers a seamless, consistent and paperless service experience at every touch point of their journey.
- DigiYatra initiative envisages providing airline travellers in India, a pioneering ‘digitally unified flying experience’ across all stages of their journey. All aviation stakeholders – airlines, airport operators, security and immigration agencies, cab operators, retail establishment and others are working to devise digital standards which can enable seamless exchange of data and information.

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Category: POLITY

1. Linking of PAN to Aadhaar fine: SC

In news:

- The Supreme Court upheld the validity of an Income Tax law amendment linking PAN with Aadhaar for filing tax returns and made Aadhaar or Aadhaar enrolment slip compulsory to apply for a Permanent Account Number (PAN) card.

Court observation:

- **Issue of duplicate/fake PANs:**

Section 139AA (1) of the Income Tax Act requiring citizens to mention their Aadhaar number or at least their Aadhaar enrolment ID to the designated authority. This provision seeks to curb with the issue of duplicate/fake PANs.

- Section 139AA (1) was not violative of the right to trade and profession under Article 19(1)(g) of the Constitution.
- Parliament was fully competent to enact Section 139AA and its authority to make this law was not diluted by the orders of the Supreme Court that Aadhaar was voluntary.
- **Partial stay:** the court issued a “partial stay” on the proviso to Section 139AA (2), which mandates that those who do not link Aadhaar with PAN by July 1 would face the consequences of invalidation of their PAN ab initio — that is, the effect of non-compliance would be the automatic invalidation of their PAN as if it had never existed

2. New medical regulator may have elected members

In news:

- The government is likely to amend the **draft National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill-2016** to make way for elected members also in the new commission. **National Medical Commission** has been planned as the main regulator for medical sector.
- **National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill-2016** has proposed scrapping of **Medical Council of India (MCI)**.
- The draft bill 2016 also proposes to have separate boards for regulating

under- graduate courses, post-graduate, accreditation and assessment board and a board for registration of medical colleges as well as monitoring of ethics in the profession

Panagariya (Niti Aayog vice-chairman Arvind Panagariya) panel suggestion:

- **Elected members:** the electoral process of appointing regulators is inherently saddled with compromises and attracts professionals who may not be best suited for the task at hand. It creates an ab-initio conflict of interest and therefore this system must be discarded in favour of one based on search and selection.
- Panel has proposed a fully nominated commission in place of MCI to reform the medical education sector which has been under scrutiny for corruption and unethical practices.
- Panel proposes a Medical Advisory Council (MAC), with members from states who can be eminent professionals such as professors from a medical colleges and the like. There will be two members from Union Territories. NMC members will also be its members and its role will be advisory.

Why scrap MCI?

- The MCI has faced criticism from several quarters for alleged corruption in the top medical body.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [Swiss support India's NSG bid](#)

In news:

- Switzerland, the incoming chair of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), will support application for India's membership, but has left the door open for Pakistan to join as well.
- **'Grossi process':** The "Grossi process" mandates the former NSG chairperson and diplomat Rafael Grossi to build a **consensus among all 48 countries** of the NSG, many of which resisted India's membership bid at the Seoul plenary session in 2016, unless the country signs the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Basic Information:

- **The Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)** is a group of nuclear supplier countries that seeks to contribute to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons through the implementation of two sets of Guidelines for nuclear exports and nuclear-related exports.
- The NSG Guidelines also contain the so-called “Non-Proliferation Principle,” adopted in 1994, whereby a supplier, notwithstanding other provisions in the NSG Guidelines, authorises a transfer only when satisfied that the transfer would not contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The Non-Proliferation Principle seeks to cover the rare but important cases where adherence to the NPT or to a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty may not by itself be a guarantee that a State will consistently share the objectives of the Treaty or that it will remain in compliance with its Treaty obligations.
- The NSG Guidelines are consistent with, and complement, the various international, legally binding instruments in the field of nuclear non-proliferation. These include the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America (Treaty of Tlatelolco), the South Pacific Nuclear-Free-Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga), the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Pelindaba), the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (Treaty of Bangkok), and the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Semipalatinsk).
- The NSG Guidelines are implemented by each Participating Government (PG) in accordance with its national laws and practices. Decisions on export applications are taken at the national level in accordance with national export licensing requirements.

2. India, Pakistan become full members of SCO

In News:

- India became a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), ending an administrative process that began two years ago.
- India-SCO cooperation will give India a new direction and strength to the fight against terrorism .
- Background information: India and Pakistan were admitted as observers in 2005 and began the administrative process of joining the organization, which began in Shanghai, in 2015.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

- SCO is a Eurasian economic, political and military organisation.
- Its aim is jointly preserving and safeguarding regional peace, security and stability and also establishing a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order.
- Headquarters: Beijing, China.
- Established: 2001 in Shanghai by the leaders 6 countries viz. China, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
- It is an outcome of The Shanghai Five grouping established in 1996 by Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan.
- SCO's first enlargement was in 2001 with addition of Uzbekistan and second enlargement was in July 2015 with addition of 2 new members India and Pakistan.
- Presently, it has four observers Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia.

1. Nano Particles to treat eye infection

Context

Scientists at the Hyderabad-based CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CSIR-CCMB) have developed a novel way to treat fungal keratitis

What is Keratitis ?

- Keratitis is the inflammation of the eye
- It starts with redness and itching and might eventually lead to blindness
- Cause of infection
- Keratitis can be caused by both bacteria and fungi
- Fungi attach themselves to the cornea and release enzymes that break down the corneal proteins for their nutritional requirements
- In the process the cornea also gets inflamed

What are the effects of this disease?

- Corneal damage causes wound and scar formation leading to severe visual impairment
- It is estimated that about 30% of keratitis cases in India lead to blindness
- Treating keratitis infection is a challenge because it is difficult to maintain a therapeutic dose at the corneal surface for long periods as blinking and tear formation washes off the drug

How does nanoparticle technique work?

- Certain antibodies get attached to the outer surface of the nanoparticles
- It anchors the nanoparticles to the corneal surface
- The infected cornea expresses a set of receptors (TLR4) when infection sets in
- The team has used antibodies to these receptors to anchor the nanoparticles to the cornea
- In case of severe infection, more receptors are expressed on the cornea and more nanoparticles get bound to the receptors
- Since they are bound, the residence time in the eye is long
- Neither blinking nor tear formation washes off the nanoparticles

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Schemes in News

President of India launches mobile app ‘Selfie with Daughter’

About the Schemes

- Mobile Application ‘Selfie with Daughter’
- This campaign was initially launched in Haryana.
- Selfie-with-Daughter has become a world-wide movement against female foeticide and sex selection.
- Basic Information: The ‘Selfie with Daughter’ campaign was started by Shri Sunil Jaglan in June 2015 in village Bibipur, Jind, Haryana. The aim of the campaign is to motivate society to feel proud to be parents of a girl child which will result in improving the child sex ratio.

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Category: POLITY

1. [Data protection law mooted](#)

Context

- The government is mulling a new data protection law to protect personal data of citizens
- It will also create an enabling framework to allow public data to be mined effectively

Significance of the move

- It comes amid the debate over security of individuals' private data, including Aadhaar-linked biometrics
- Owing to the rising number of cyber-crimes in the country, the law becomes even more important
- The working agency: The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEIT) is working on the new data protection law

Aim of the law

- To ensure that personal data of individuals remain protected and is not misused
- To unlock the data economy

Beneficial data

- A lot of benefits can be derived from the data that is publicly available, by using technology and big data analytics
- The information can be used for the benefit of both individuals and companies

No regulatory body

- Currently, India does not have a separate law for data protection
- There is no body that specifically regulates data privacy
- Nominal data protection law in India in the form of the Reasonable Security Guidelines under Section 43A of the Information Technology Act
- However, it is a toothless law and is never used

What is Consumer Protection Act?

- It was enacted in 2015
- As per the Act, the disclosure of personal information given in confidence is an unfair trade practice

Privacy: A fundamental right

- Privacy is a fundamental human right
- It is recognised as such in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- India has ratified the UN's International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which contains an obligation to protect privacy

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. MoU moots ties with Mauritius Parliament

In news:

- India and Mauritius signed a pact to institutionalize cooperation between the parliaments of the two countries.
- **Key point:** the relations between the two countries are based on centuries of cultural, linguistic, social and spiritual links that transcend extraneous considerations.

2. Resolve Qatar crisis via constructive talks: India

Context: recent decision by Saudi Arabia and some other countries to break diplomatic relations with Qatar.

Background information: Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE and Bahrain announced that they were cutting diplomatic ties and closing all connectivity links with Qatar, accusing it of supporting terrorism.

In news:

- India asked countries in the Gulf region to resolve the Qatar crisis through constructive dialogue, well-established international principles of mutual respect, sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.
- **GCC countries and India:** over eight million Indian expatriates living and working in these countries, India is having vital stakes in the regional peace and stability.

1. Farm think tank's formula to redress agriculture distress

Context: Ongoing farmers' agitation in many States

In news:

- The Indian Council of Food and Agriculture (ICFA), an agriculture think tank, has suggested to the Centre to consider its **seven-point formula** to redress farmers' distress across the country.
- Some of the major recommendations includes:
 1. Assuring a **decent income** for the farmers was vital, and, therefore, the recommendations of the **National Commission on Farmers** (Swaminathan Commission) on **the minimum support prices** (MSP) for crops must be fixed at levels of **at least 50%** more than the **weighted average cost of production**.
 2. Establishing easily accessible **procurement centres** .
 3. Opening of domestic and international markets for free trade: which could help farmers in realising better profit prospects.
 4. **Operating futures markets across all farm produce** :another effective strategy to offset the uncertainties associated with price fluctuations of agricultural

- commodities. Futures contract route helped farmers decide on trade for a standing crop at a future date at a price agreed before the harvest.
5. Establishing a national network of Panchayat level rural growth centres that would create village-level agri-businesses and connect farmers with institutions, banks, technologies and markets.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Rhododendrons of eastern Himalayas under threat

In news:

- North-eastern States in India are home to 97% of the Rhododendron species and sub-species in the country.
- New Threat : **indiscriminate felling and loss of habitat** in the north-eastern States has left many of these beautiful flowering plants **vulnerable to extinction** .
- Epiphytic species, which grow on other trees or plants, of rhododendrons with limited population are most vulnerable due to loss of the host trees.
- In high altitude areas of Arunachal Pradesh, rhododendrons are routinely cut for firewood by local people, forest fires in the dry seasons in Manipur and Nagaland were threatening the survival of many species.
- The endemic R. wattii from Dzukou hills of Manipur and Nagaland is one of the **most critically endangered species** in India, with only a few adult trees remaining in their natural habitat.

Key fact:

- Rhododendron (rose tree in Greek) —18 species endemic to India.
- The publication, **Rhododendron of North East India: A Pictorial Handbook** by scientists Ashiho A. Mao, Sudhansu Sekhar Dash and Paramjit Singh (no need to remember the names) points out that studies and records suggest that there are 132 taxa (80 species, 25 sub species and 27 varieties) of Rhododendron found in India, of which **129 are found in the north-eastern India alone**.
- Only three taxa — Rhododendron arboreum nilagiricum found in south India and Rhododendron colletianum and Rhododendron rawatti from the western Himalayas are not found in the north-east.
- **Arunachal Pradesh** is home to the highest number with 119 taxa (74 species, 21 sub species and 24 varieties) of the Rhododendron. The small State of Sikkim is home to 42 taxa (25 species, 11 sub-species and six varieties) while 10 taxa are found in Manipur, four in Mizoram and 11 in Nagaland.
- **Geographical factors:** cold, moist slopes and deep valleys of the eastern Himalayas form a conducive habitat for the luxuriant growth of Rhododendron species. Nowhere in the world, are such unique geographical and ecological formations are found. This is the primary reason for such a diversity of Rhododendron available in the region
- The two famous Rhododendron sanctuaries in the Sikkim State are Barsey Rhododendron Sanctuary in the West district, covering an area of 104 sq.km and

Shingba Rhododendron Sanctuary in Yumthang valley of North district with an area of 43 sq.km.

- Rhododendrons are used in local medicines against colds, coughs and chronic bronchitis and diarrhoea.

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Prelims worthy factual information

The Shangri-La Dialogue, funded and hosted by the Singapore government, is a unique “track-one” conference that defence ministers, officials and military chiefs of 28 Asia-Pacific countries, including China and the United States, attend each year.

SIMBEX is an acronym for “Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercises”.

Phenology is the study of periodic plant and animal life cycle events and how these are influenced by seasonal and interannual variations in climate, as well as habitat factors.

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Category: POLITY

1. Maharashtra capitulates, to grant farm loan waiver

In news:

- Maharashtra government was forced to accept the demand for a complete farm loan waiver.
- The total outstanding crop loans amount to around Rs. 1.34 lakh crore.

Steering panel meeting:

- The decision came after a meeting between the steering committee of the agitating farmers and a high-powered ministerial group formed by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis under the leadership of Revenue Minister Chandrakant Patil.
- For smallholding farmers — those with land up to five acres, which is almost 78% of the 1.37 crore holdings in the State, as per the Maharashtra Economic Survey 2016-17 — their farm loans were waived.

S. Swaminathan Reports:

Prof. Swaminathan is a geneticist, known as “Indian Father of Green Revolution” for his key contributions in Green Revolution (1960s) where he introduced high yielding varieties of wheat. Under his leadership, the committee submitted its report in five instalments over the period from December, 2004 to October, 2006. These reports made several recommendations for improvement in the situation of farmers in India. While several criticized the Government for not implementing the recommendations of this committee properly, other few questioned the recommendations itself.

Key Findings & Recommendations of the Report

- The major causes of the agrarian crisis are: unfinished agenda in land reform, quantity and quality of water, technology fatigue, access, adequacy and timeliness of institutional credit, and opportunities for assured and remunerative marketing. Adverse meteorological factors add to these problems.

- Land Reforms were considered necessary and key suggestions in this regards were to distribute ceiling-surplus and waste lands; prevent diversion of agricultural land & forest to corporate sector for non-agricultural purposes; ensure grazing rights & seasonal access to forests to tribals and pastoralists; establish a National Land Use Advisory Service, etc.
- Timely and adequate supply of credit is a basic requirement of small farm families and to enhance the same key suggestions of the committee were: expand the outreach of Credit facilities System; issue Kisan Credit Cards to women farmers; establish an Agriculture Risk Fund to provide relief to farmers in the aftermath of successive natural calamities, etc.
- 28% of the families in India were found to be Below Poverty Line and therefore, food security needed attention. The committee recommended: ensure availability of quality seed and other inputs at affordable costs; Set up Village Knowledge Centres (VKCs) or Gyan Chaupals in the farmers' distress hotspots; need for focused Market Intervention Schemes (MIS) in the case of life-saving crops; have a Price Stabilisation Fund in place to protect the farmers from price fluctuations, etc.
- Improving the competitiveness of the small farmers was considered necessary. Suggestions in this area included: improvement in implementation of Minimum Support Price (MSP); MSP should be at least 50% more than the weighted average cost of production; availability of data about spot and future prices of commodities through the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCD) and the NCDEX, etc.
- The committee highlighted the need to create productive employment opportunities and to improve the quality of employment in several sectors such that real wages rise through improved productivity. For this purpose committee recommended emphasizing on relatively more labour intensive sectors and inducing a faster growth of these sectors and ensuring that the net take home income of farmers should be comparable to those of civil servants.
- The committee also recommended development of measures to reserve traditional rights of access to biodiversity and conservation, enhancement and improvement of crops, farm animals & fish stocks through breeding, etc.

2. NEET-like exam for judge posts?

In news:

- The government has proposed to the Supreme Court a NEET-like examination to recruit judges to the lower judiciary.
- The proposal comes close on the heels of several States, opposing the formation of an all-India judicial service, a 60-year-old idea.
- There were vacancies of 4,452 judges in subordinate courts as per the figures released on December 31, 2015.
- While the sanctioned strength is 20,502, the actual number of judges/judicial officers in subordinate courts is 16,050.
- The Ministry has suggested various models to the apex court so that vacancies in the subordinate courts are filled up fast. It also proposed that UPSC can hold an exam to recruit judicial officers.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India, Israel set to expand defence ties

In news:

- Israel has emerged as one of the largest and trusted suppliers of defence equipment to the Indian armed forces.
- Israel is well entrenched in the areas of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, air defence systems, special forces equipment and electronic warfare equipment.

Deal for Spike Anti-Tank Guided Missiles:

- Two countries are close to concluding a deal.
- The purchase of Spike missiles was approved by the **Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)** in October 2014, but negotiations on the contract ran into trouble over cost and technology transfer. The ₹3,200-crore deal includes 8,000-plus missiles, 300-plus launchers and technology transfer.
- The deal is likely to expand as the Army intends to equip its 382 infantry battalions and 44 mechanised regiments with new missiles.

1. GST Council decides to lower rates on 66 items

IN news: (Knowing the rate of interest for each item is not at all important for

exam)

- The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council decided to reduce tax rates on 66 items including cashew nuts, packaged foods such as sauces and pickles, agarbatti, insulin, school bags, children's colouring books, cutlery, and some tractor components.
- The Council has also reduced the tax rate on cinema tickets costing Rs. 100 or less.
- The Council will meet again on June 18 to discuss any pending issues, including the e-waybill rules and the rates on lotteries.
- **The Council also decided to increase the limit under the compensation scheme from Rs. 50 lakh to Rs. 75 lakh. The scheme was introduced for small businesses that would struggle to comply with the various requirements of GST. Those opting for the scheme will have to pay tax at the rate of 1% for the trading community, 2% for those engaged in manufacturing, and 5% for restaurants.**

Objective :

- To maintain revenue neutrality.
- Eases the burden on SMEs and small businesses in trading, manufacturing, and the restaurant business because they are mass job creators.

2. FinMin debating on bad bank, UBI concept: Jaitley

In news:

- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said that he had been discussing the two concepts introduced in this year's Economic Survey — **Universal Basic Income (UBI), and the creation of a bad bank** — with Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian, but added that political and economic considerations make UBI a tough task.
- The CEA had, in the Economic Survey, also introduced the **idea of the creation of a bad bank to take over the debt of the NPA** -laded banks so as to ease their stress and enable them to begin lending again.

Basic Information:

- **Universal Basic Income (UBI):** A basic income (also called basic income guarantee, Citizen's Income, unconditional basic income, universal basic income (UBI), or universal demogrant) is a form of social security in

which all citizens or residents of a country regularly receive a regular, unconditional sum of money, either from a government or some other public institution, in addition to any income received from elsewhere.

3. How does the monsoon affect the economy?

Context:

The India Meteorological Department (IMD): India's annual monsoon rainfall is expected to be 98% of the long-period average (LPA), up from 96% projected earlier, raising prospects of higher farm output and economic growth.

Why are monsoon rains important for India?

- The monsoon is the lifeblood for India's farm-dependent \$2 trillion economy, as at least half the farmlands are rain-fed.
- The country gets about 70% of annual rainfall in the June-September monsoon season, making it crucial for an estimated 263 million farmers.
- About 800 million people live in villages and depend on agriculture, which accounts for about 15% of India's gross domestic product (GDP) and a failed monsoon can have a rippling effect on the country's growth and economy.
- Whereas, a normal to above-normal and well-distributed monsoon boosts farm output and farmers' income, thereby increasing the demand for consumer and automotive products in rural markets.

What happens in case of a poor monsoon?

- The monsoon has a direct impact on the country's agricultural GDP. The planting of key kharif, or summer, crops like rice, sugar cane, pulses and oilseeds begins with the arrival of monsoon rains in June.
- Summer crops account for almost half of India's food output and a delayed or poor monsoon means supply issues and acceleration in food inflation, a key metric which influences Reserve Bank of India's decision on interest rates.
- A deficit monsoon could also lead to a drought-like situation, thereby affecting the rural household incomes, consumption and economic growth.
- A poor monsoon not only leads to weak demand for fast-moving consumer goods, two-wheelers, tractors and rural housing sectors but also increases the imports of essential food staples and forces the government to take

measures like farm loan waivers, thereby putting pressure on finances. Whereas a normal monsoon results in a good harvest, which in turn lifts rural incomes and boosts spending on consumer goods. It also has a positive impact on hydro power projects.

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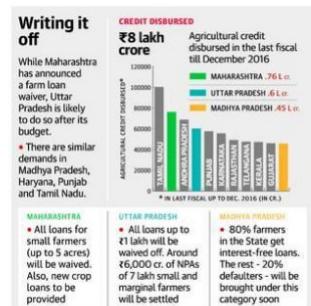
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Category: POLITY

1. Loan waivers are on you, FM tells States



Context:

- Agitations led by farmers demanding farm loan waiver.
- States like Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh announcing waivers.

In news:

- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley reiterated that the States going in for farm loan waivers will have to generate funds from their own resources.
- There are also demands for waivers in States such as Madhya Pradesh and Haryana, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu.

2. Give us contempt powers to act against those out to sully our image: EC to Govt

Context

- The EC has written to the Law Ministry, seeking powers to act against those questioning the poll panel's credibility through unfounded allegations

EC requirements:

- The Commission has sought amendments to the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971
- This is to empower it to punish anyone being disobedient or discourteous towards its authority

Examples abroad:

- In its letter, the EC has cited examples of its counterparts abroad. For instance, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), can initiate contempt proceedings against anyone sulling its image. This year, the ECP issued a contempt notice to cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan for accusing the election body of bias in a case of foreign funding.

Reasons for seeking such powers:

- The demand is made by the EC by virtue of being a constitutional authority
- It is significant against the backdrop of political parties, especially Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), accusing the panel of playing favourites
- The Commission has no specific powers to act in such cases

The recent case

- Matters came to light when Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal questioned election commissioners A K Joti and O P Rawat's impartiality in a media interview
- The decision was imperative to protect the credibility of the Commission
- Kejriwal, in an interview, had alleged that two of the three election commissioners were close to the ruling dispensation

Basic information:

Contempt power

- Contempt of Courts Act gives power to Court to punish anyone who does its contempt
- This concept / law was developed in Britain
- It spread through colonialism to protect the authority and legitimacy of Court power to punish for contempt provided to Judiciary

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Panel to study free movement along Myanmar border

In news:

- **India-Myanmar:** a friendly country, India shares unfenced borders and unhindered movement of people across the border.
- India and Myanmar share an unfenced border of 1,643 km

- The Union Home Ministry has constituted a committee headed by Rina Mitra, Special Secretary-Internal Security, to examine methods to curb the misuse of free movement along the Myanmar border.
- This is the second time a committee is being constituted to study the free movement across the Myanmar border

Free movement and threat to national security:

- Free movement regime is being misused by militants and trans-border criminals who smuggle weapons, contraband goods and fake Indian currency notes. Taking advantage of the free-movement regime, occasionally they enter India, commit crimes and escape to their relatively safer hideouts

R.N. Ravi committee report

- In 2015, a high-level committee report submitted by Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) chief R.N. Ravi suggested changing the “misnomer” related to “free border movement” and asked the government to replicate the model prevalent in villages and areas along the Bangladesh border.
- The report has suggested dedicated crossing points in border villages, where policemen would be made in charge of regulating the movement of people.

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Category: ECONOMICS

1. CPI inflation slows to lowest since 2012

In news:

- Retail inflation in May, at 2.18%, eased to its lowest level since the Centre began measuring it on a nationwide basis in 2012, driven in large part by cooling food prices, according to a latest government release.
- Inflation measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was even slower than the 2.99% seen in April, the previous record low. Within the index, food and beverages category witnessed a contraction of 0.2% in May, compared with a growth of 1.3% in April.
- Industrial output expanded by 3.1% in April.
- Growth in the **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** was spurred by the manufacturing sector within which the tobacco and the pharmaceuticals sectors grew the fastest.

Basic Information:

- **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)**
- The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is an index for India which details out the growth of various sectors in an economy such as mineral mining, electricity and manufacturing.
- The all India IIP is a composite indicator that measures the short-term changes in the volume of production of a basket of industrial products during a given period with respect to that in a chosen base period.
- It is compiled and published monthly by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) six weeks after the reference month ends.
- The level of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is an abstract number, the magnitude of which represents the status of production in the industrial sector for a given period of time as compared to a reference period of time. The base year was at one time fixed at 1993–94 so that year was assigned an index level of 100.
- The current base year is 2011-2012.
- The Eight Core Industries comprise nearly 40.27% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP). **These are Electricity , steel, refinery products, crude oil, coal, cement, natural gas and fertilisers.**

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Harnessing the solar spectrum

In news:

- **New study and new approach:** Using different parts of sunlight’s spectrum to produce crops, generate electricity, collect heat and purify water could provide food, energy and water resources for the world’s growing population.
- The concept works by separating and harvesting the three specific segments of the solar spectrum that are best

suited to facilitate the production of food, energy and clean water.

- In **current practices**, much of this spectrum is wasted because all of the sunlight falling on a given spot is used for one purpose: agriculture, energy production or water purification. A typical photovoltaic panel, when installed on farmland, casts a shadow and dramatically reduces plant growth and crop yield from the shadowed area.
- The **new approach** would instead use the same land mass for all three purposes simultaneously through innovative technologies that split the spectrum into three segments and efficiently harvest sunlight.
- The proposed photovoltaic designs transmit photons responsible for plant growth while reflecting remaining photons in the solar spectrum to specially designed solar cells that can help generate electricity and collect heat for energy recovery and water purification.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Three new sites recognised as biodiversity hotspots in Goa

In news:

- **BirdLife International**, a conservation organisation, has recognised three new sites in Goa as hotspots for protection.
- The sites- **Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary, Navelim Wetlands and Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary**, have been added to their list of “ **Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas**”.
- Goa at present has four recognised biodiversity areas: Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary and Mollem National Park, Carambolim Wetlands, Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary and Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Declaring a site as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area does not ensure that the site gets legal protection or becomes inaccessible to people. Instead BirdLife International encourages national and State governments to recognise the areas as sites of vital importance for conservation of wildlife and to empower local community-based conservation initiatives.

BirdLife International :

- BirdLife International (formerly the International Council for Bird Preservation) is a global partnership of conservation organisations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources. It is the world’s largest partnership of conservation organisations, with over 120 partner organisations.
- Headquarters: Cambridge, United Kingdom.
- BirdLife International is the official Red List authority for birds, for the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

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Category: POLITY

1. [50% quota for women now in Punjab's civic bodies](#)

Context: Bid to empower women and give them a greater role in governance.

In news:

- The Punjab Cabinet decided to increase women reservation in urban local bodies and panchayati raj institutions from the existing 33 per cent to 50 per cent.
- A Bill to amend the Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, the Punjab Municipal Act, 1911, and the Punjab Municipal Corporation Act, 1976, will be tabled in the Budget Session.

- The move will enhance reservation for women in direct elections for members of municipal corporations, municipal councils, nagar panchayats, gram panchayats, panchayat samitis and zila parishads.

2. India has second highest number of obese children in world: Study

In news:

- “**A disturbing global public health crisis**,” according to a study published in The New England Journal of Medicine:
- India has the **second highest (4 million kids) number of obese children** in the world after China.
- Diseases associated with obese: cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, and other life-threatening conditions

Trend around the world:

- Over two billion children and adults suffer from health problems related to being obese, and an increasing number die from these conditions.
- In 2015, excess weight affected 2.2 billion children and adults worldwide, or 30% of all people.
- Among the 20 most populous countries, the highest level of obesity among kids and young adults was in the US at nearly 13%; Egypt topped the list for adult obesity at about 35%. Lowest rates were in Bangladesh and Vietnam, respectively, at 1%. China with 15.3 million and India with 14.4 million had the highest numbers of obese children; the US with 79.4 million and China with 57.3 million had the highest numbers of obese adults in 2015.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

2. At Geneva, India agrees to total ban on child labour

In news:

- India ratified **two fundamental conventions** against child labour — **the Minimum Age Convention, 1973** and **the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999** — at the **International Labour Organisation (ILO) conference currently under way in Geneva**.
- The conventions provide a framework for the abolition of child labour so that each and every child has the opportunity to develop physically and mentally to their full potential and not getting engaged in work that jeopardises their education and development.
- The conventions allow a distinction to be made as to what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable forms of work for children at different ages as well as stages of development.

What needs to be done after ratification?

- India will now be responsible to develop and implement programmes to progressively eradicate child labour.

National rules and legislation:

- The amended **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Central Rules** completely prohibited employment of children aged below 14 years in any occupation or process, and of adolescents (aged 14 to 18 years) in hazardous occupations and processes.
- The amended rules provided a broad and specific framework for the prevention, prohibition, rescue and rehabilitation of child and adolescent workers.

International Labour Organization (ILO):

- International Labour Organization (ILO), specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) dedicated to improving labour conditions and living standards throughout the world.
- Established in 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles as an affiliated agency of the League of Nations, the ILO became the first affiliated specialized agency of the United Nations in 1946. In recognition of its activities, the ILO was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1969.
- The functions of the ILO include the development and promotion of standards for national legislation to protect and improve working conditions and standards of living. The ILO also provides technical assistance in social policy and administration and in workforce training; fosters cooperative organizations and rural industries; compiles labour statistics and conducts research on the social problems of international competition, unemployment and underemployment, labour and industrial relations, and technological change (including automation); and helps to protect the rights of international migrants and organized labour.

- Among intergovernmental organizations the ILO is unique in that its approximately 187 member states are represented not only by delegates of their governments but also by delegates of those states' employers and workers, especially trade unions. National representatives meet annually at the **International Labour Conference**. The ILO's executive authority is vested in a 56-member Governing Body, which is elected by the Conference. The International Labour Office in **Geneva, Switzerland**, composed of the permanent Secretariat and professional staff, handles day-to-day operations under the supervision of an appointed director general.
- Among the ILO's many publications are the International Labour Review and the Year Book of Labour Statistics.

1. New labour survey to generate quarterly and annual data

In News:

- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has started a Periodic Labour Force Survey
- It will provide quarterly labour and employment data for urban India and annual data for rural India
- It would supply data not only about the formal sector, but also about the informal sector
- This survey will supersede the earlier system where such data was available only every five years
- The first release of data will be in December 2018

Revision of base year:

- The Statistics Ministry is also preparing to revise the base year of national accounts to 2017-18 from 2011-12
- This will be done after the completion of the household consumer expenditure survey and the labour force survey at the end of 2018

CAPI method:

- The Periodic Labour Force Survey will also incorporate a Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) method
- In this method, field operators will be using tablets to enter the data in order to generate more accurate and timely information

Other measures in pipeline:

- The Ministry of Statistics is also developing a fact sheet on the Indian economy, incorporating inputs from all important ministries on 100 indicators
- It is also considering an Annual Survey of Services, along the lines of the Annual Survey of Industries already being carried out

2. The best of times, the worst of times

Context:

- The ongoing farmers' agitation has taken on a shockingly violent form
- Discussion has revolved around an apparent paradox: why are farmers rioting after a bumper crop?

Immediate and other factors leading to this crisis:

- Demonetisation: Demonetisation squeezed so much liquidity out of the system that traders did not have requisite cash to buy the farmers' produce
- Farmers also feel that persisting with imports, even after clear signs of a bumper harvest, further depressed prices
- FCI procurement focusses only on rice and wheat

Problems with Indian agriculture:

- We are still stuck with the so-called Green Revolution of the 1970s
- This was primarily a rice and wheat revolution
- It completely neglected two-thirds of Indian agriculture and crops grown and eaten by the poorest people of our country — pulses and millets
- Also, over the years, it has caused a deep crisis of sustainability, economic and ecological
- Large-scale use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides has had an extremely adverse impact on our soil and water
- Deep drilling by tubewells to grow these water-intensive crops has happened without keeping in mind India's unique hydrogeology, where nearly two-thirds of our land is underlain by hard rock formations which have very

low rates of natural recharge

Subsequent problems:

- There is now a serious water crisis, with both water tables and water quality falling rapidly
- Arsenic, fluoride, mercury, even uranium have entered in drinking water, creating serious health issues
- To get the same increase in production, farmers have to apply more and more fertilisers and pesticides over time which raises costs of cultivation, without a proportionate increase in production

Way forwards:

- First- We need transition to a more ecologically resilient agriculture (becomes more urgent in the context of climate change)
- Second- We must radically reform the management of both surface and groundwater
- Third- We require continued diversification to other forms of livelihood, such as livestock and fisheries, which are among the fastest-growing segments of the rural economy
- We must also shift focus away from water-intensive rice and wheat
- This means radical changes in the way we grow these crops (seed, water and input regimes) but also much greater encouragement to millets and pulses, which are nutritionally far superior alternatives in a country beset with the diabetes epidemic
- The best way would be to include millets and pulses in the massive anganwadi and mid-day meal programmes
- Fourth- Investments in agro-processing infrastructure are urgently required that would enable farmers to move up the value chain
- Fifth- we need to ensure access to credit and crop insurance, especially to our 85% small and marginal farmers
- Sixth- We need strong Farmer Producer Organisations, to overcome massive handicaps faced by isolated farmers and enable them to really benefit from market participation

Results:

- More production at less costs: As farmers reduce their dependence on synthetic fertilisers and pesticides, they slowly emerge from the ecological vicious cycle and are also able to dramatically reduce their costs of cultivation, without compromising on production
- Water availability: This will ensure that the water in our irrigation commands reaches the farmers for whom it is meant and groundwater is managed sustainably in a way that ensures that no one is deprived of their right to water for life

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. DRDO successfully test fires third generation anti-tank ‘Nag’ missile in Rajasthan

In news:

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully test fired the anti-tank missile “Nag”
- The Nag missile is a third generation “fire and forget” anti-tank missile
- It is equipped with highly advanced Imaging Infrared Radar (IRR) seeker and has integrated avionics technology in its arsenal
- This integrated avionics technology is possessed by very few countries

Basic Information:

- Nag is a third generation “fire-and-forget” anti-tank missile developed in India
- It is one of five missile systems developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP)

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. What ails the Navigation Indian Constellation

In news:

- The clocks on the first satellite, IRNSS-1A had failed in June 2016, affecting the accuracy of the “GPS”

- ISRO is trying to rectify this problem

What is NavIC?

- Navigation Indian Constellation (NavIC) is an independent Indian satellite-based positioning system for critical national applications
- NavIC consists of a constellation of seven satellites, three of which are in a geostationary orbit and four in a geosynchronous
- Its purpose is to provide ‘reliable position, navigation and timing services over India and neighbourhood’
- According to ISRO, the applications of IRNSS are: terrestrial, aerial and marine navigation, vehicle tracking and fleet management, terrestrial navigation for hikers and travellers, disaster management, integration with mobile phones, mapping and geodetic data capture and visual and voice navigation for drivers

What's the problem?

- NavIC relies on rubidium clocks as navigation requires the most accurate clocks
- This January, the ISRO confirmed that the clocks on the first satellite, IRNSS-1A had failed in June 2016
- Though six of the satellites are working fine, the one faulty one means the “GPS” isn’t working as accurately as it ought to be

Future prospects:

- Rubidium clocks were the previous standard in accurate clocks and most organisations, that need precise time estimates, need cesium clocks
- Future clocks on such satellites, each with a lifespan of 10 years, will host such clocks

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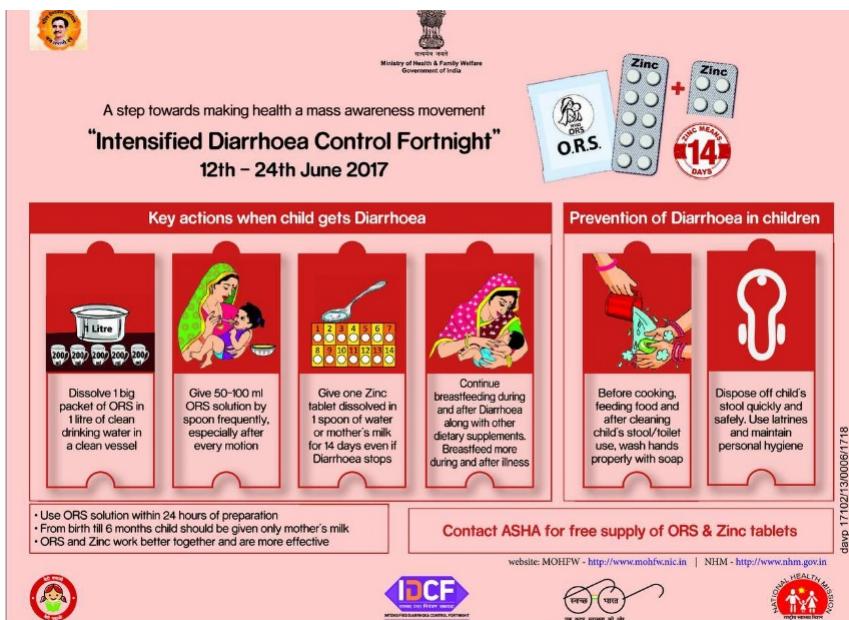
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Category: POLITY

1. It's either salary or pension for regulatory body chiefs

In news:

- **New Centre norms:** The chairpersons and members of regulatory bodies to either take salary or pensions.
- Existing norms provide that chairpersons and members shall be deemed to have retired from Central or State government service on the date of their appointment to any regulatory authority.

Recent Incidence:

- There have been complaints against chairpersons and members of a few regulatory bodies for receiving pension in addition to the salary.
- Effect of latest order: such persons will have to face a cut in their salary. The amount of pension will be deducted from their salary

1. Nod for Insolvency Bill for financial entities

In news:

- The Union Cabinet approved the introduction of a new Bill to resolve bankruptcy cases affecting financial sector entities, including banks and insurance companies.
- **The Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Bill 2017**, when enacted, will have a provision for the setting up of a **Resolution Corporation**.
- **Main aim:** It aims to limit the use of public money to bail out distressed firms during a financial crisis.
- The passage of the Act will also lead to the repealing of the **Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation Act, 1961** in order to transfer the deposit insurance powers and responsibilities to the Resolution Corporation.
- The Bill seeks to decrease the time and costs involved in resolving distressed financial entities and complements the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 for the insolvency resolution of non-financial entities

2. India Aims To Lift ‘Doing Business’ Ranking

Context:

- World Banks Ease of Doing Business Report: India ranked 130 out of 190 Countries last year.
 - Starting a business ranking : 155th position
 - Dealing with construction permits: 185th position

Focus:

- India focusing upon major reforms in the areas such as ‘Starting a business’ and dealing with construction permits to significantly improve its ranking.

Measures taken:

- SPICe (The simplified Performa for Incorporating a Company Electronically), is the only default application for incorporation of Companies.
- SPICe combines five procedures:
 - Incorporation of a company
 - Obtaining Director Identification Number
 - Reservation of Company name
 - Application for Permanent Account Number
 - Application for Tax deduction and Collection Account number
- Procedure associated with Employee State Insurance Corporation and Employee Fund organization has been made electronic.

3. India’s engineering exports to Doha hit by Qatar crisis

Context: Gulf Crisis.

In news:

- India’s engineering exports to Doha have been hit following sanctions imposed on Qatar by some nations including Saudi Arabia.
- The Engineering Export Promotion Council (EEPC) of India said shipments from India were being affected as the Middle East and West Asia trade has a lot of interoperability between different ports, observing that the banking channels particularly in Doha and some other parts of the region have also been disrupted.

Key Fact:

- The Middle East and West Asia are one of the key destinations for Indian engineering exports, accounting for 13 per cent of the country’s total engineering exports.
- India’s major trading partners include the UAE, Oman and Saudi Arabia.
- The engineering shipments to the region include products like iron and steel, non-ferrous metals, industrial and electrical machinery.

4. Cabinet clears 5% interest subvention for crop loans

Booster shot

The RBI and the NABARD will steer the interest subvention scheme. Highlights:

- Subvention of 2% for all crop loans up to ₹3 lakh
- Additional 3% subvention to farmers who repay on time
- Subvention of 2% for post-harvest storage of produce for loans up to 6 months



- 2% subvention for all farmers who are affected by natural calamities like drought, floods and depleted rainfall
- The Centre has set aside ₹20,339 crore for the scheme

In news:

- The Union Cabinet has approved the extension of the **interest subvention scheme** for farmers to 2017-18.
- Short-term crop loans up to ₹3 lakh will receive a subvention of 5% to all prompt payee farmers, effectively reducing the rate for farmers to 4%.
- **Implementing agency:** the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and the Reserve Bank of India.
- Farmers unable to repay the short-term crop loans on time will receive an interest subvention of 2%.
- Under the scheme, the government will also provide an interest subvention of 2% for small and marginal farmers who would have to borrow at 9% for the post-harvest storage of their produce for loans up to 6 months.
- A 2% subvention will also be provided to banks in the case of farmers affected by natural calamities for the first year on the restructured amount.

Background information: The scheme was started in 2006-07, under which farmers are eligible for interest subvention of 2% for crop loans of up to ₹3 lakh.

Scheme objective: The objective of the scheme is to make available at ground level, agricultural credit for short-term crop loans at an affordable rate to give a boost to agricultural productivity and production in the country.

Basic information

Meaning of Interest Subvention:

- “Interest subvention” simply means a subsidy offered on interest rates. The word “subvention” simply means subsidy.
- In the context of India, interest subvention is mostly in the matter of government lending schemes to promote a particular industry sector. The subsidy helps the loan borrower in not having to pay the total interest amount on a loan amount. Therefore, the government pays part of the interest amount for the borrower, thereby lessening

the borrower's overall repayment burden.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Ray of hope for Thar's endangered wildlife

In news:

- New “rescue wards” in the far-flung rural areas of Jodhpur, Rajasthan: These will provide quick treatment to animals injured in road accidents, dog bites and fights.
- This is an attempt to reduce mortality of endangered wildlife in Thar desert.
- **Key Fact:**
- With an average of nearly 1,000 injuries a year, the wildlife in Thar desert has witnessed 60% mortality because of lack of transport to the main rescue centre at the Jodhpur zoo. This has led to the depletion of wildlife, mainly chinkaras (Indian gazelles).
- Setting up of new rescue wards has given much-needed support to the **Bishnoi community** of western Rajasthan, which has been in the forefront of wildlife conservation. Bishnois risk their lives to save gazelles from poachers and transport injured animals to Jodhpur.

2. What's up with Bosphorus?

In news:

- There has been a sudden change in the colour- usually blue waters of the to a milky turquoise, of the **Bosphorus Strait that divides the continents of Europe and Asia in Turkey's largest city Istanbul.**

Reason:

- Scientists attribute the change in color to a surge in a species of plankton across the Black Sea.
- Surge in numbers of the micro-organism *Emiliania huxleyi*, also known as Ehux.



Emiliania huxleyi

- One of the most successful life-forms on the planet, *Emiliania huxleyi* is a single-celled organism visible only under a microscope.
- Its astonishing adaptability enables it to thrive in waters from the equator to the sub-

Arctic.

- *Emiliania huxleyi* is a species of coccolithophore (phytoplankton).
- This particular organism is plated with white calcium carbonate and, when present in large numbers, tend to turn the water a milky sheen

The Bosphorus

- The Bosphorus is a narrow, natural strait and an internationally significant waterway located in northwestern Turkey.
- It forms part of the continental boundary between Europe and Asia, and separates Asian Turkey from European Turkey.
- The world's narrowest strait used for international navigation, the Bosphorus connects the Black Sea with the Sea of Marmara, and, by extension via the Dardanelles, the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas.
- Together with the Dardanelles, the Bosphorus forms the Turkish Straits.

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Prelims worthy factual information

The National Physical Laboratory (NPL):

- NPL is part of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research
- NPL is the host of most accurate clock in India.
- NPL is the only agency in India authorized to maintain Indian Standard Time.

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Category: POLITY

1. Government targets 146 districts to accelerate India's population control drive

In news:

- To achieve the country's population control target faster, the government has decided to accelerate family planning measures by identifying 146 districts where the total fertility rate (TFR, the number of children born per woman) is more than three and which add up to 28% of the population.
- The health ministry is set to roll out “**Mission Parivar Vikas**” in these districts to improve access to family planning services, create awareness and make family planning choices available.
- The “high-focus” districts are in the seven states of **Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Assam**.
- Though India’s population growth rate has declined, the pace is uneven across states, leading to the policy intervention.

Key facts:

- According to government data, India’s **total fertility rate** has declined from **2.6 in 2008 to 2.3** at present.
- India is now just 0.2 points away from reaching the replacement level of 2.1.

- The greater the TFR, the more will be the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR). Hence, reducing TFR would lead to decrease in maternal mortality and morbidity and infant mortality and morbidity.

Mission Parivar Vikas

- Under the mission, the government will study each district to find why fertility rates are higher and will take measures to address them.
- As part of the programme, the health ministry will distribute a kit containing products of family planning and personal hygiene among newlyweds.
- The kits will be distributed by ASHA workers to encourage inter-spousal communication and consensual decision making with regards to their reproductive and sexual health as well as delay the birth of the first child and space the second.
- “Saas-Bahu Sammelans” will be held to facilitate improved communication between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law and bridge the gap in their attitudes and beliefs about reproductive and sexual health.
- Special buses called “Saarthi-Awareness on Wheels” will travel through these districts to generate awareness as well as sensitise the community and disseminate family planning messages.
- The government will also augment sterilisation services through enhanced HFD (high fertility district) compensation scheme, roll out injectable contraceptive at sub centre level and generate awareness about condoms and pills.

[**1. India top remittance-receiving country in 2016: UN report**](#)

In News:

- Indians working across the globe sent home USD 62.7 billion last year, making India the top remittance-receiving country surpassing China, according to a UN report
- The ‘**One Family at a Time**’ study by the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) said about 200 million migrants globally sent more than USD 445 million in 2016 as remittances to their families, helping to lift millions out of poverty

Recent trends in remittance flows:

- The study is the first-ever of a 10-year trend in migration and remittance flows over the period 2007-2016
- Remittance flows have grown over the last decade at a rate averaging 4.2 per cent annually
- It said 80 per cent of remittances are received by 23 countries, led by India, China, the Philippines, Mexico and Pakistan
- The top 10 sending countries account for almost half of annual flows, led by the US, Saudi Arabia and Russia
- Asia remains the main remittance-receiving region, with 55 per cent of the global flows and 41 per cent of total migrants
- Over the past decade, remittances to Asia and the Pacific increased by 87 per cent

Remittance and poverty reduction:

- The study added that the amount of money migrants send to their families in developing countries has risen by 51 per cent over the past decade
- This dramatic increase in the amount of money migrants sent home to their families in developing countries is helping to lift millions out of poverty and in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)
- About 40 per cent of remittances – USD 200 billion – are sent to rural areas where the majority of poor people live
- The money is spent on food, health care, better educational opportunities and improved housing and sanitation
- The small amounts of USD 200 or USD 300 that each migrant sends home make up about 60 per cent of the family’s household income, and this makes an enormous difference in their lives and the communities in which they live

Impacts on the global economy and political landscape:

- Currently, about 200 million migrant workers support some 800 million family members globally
- In 2017, an expected one-in-seven people globally will be involved in either sending or receiving more than USD 450 billion in remittances
- Total migrant earnings are estimated at USD 3 trillion annually, approximately 85 per cent of which remains in the host countries

- The money sent home averages less than one per cent of their host's GDP
- Taken together, these individual remittances account for more than three times the combined official development assistance (ODA) from all sources, and more than the total foreign direct investment to almost every low-and middle-income country

2. Government unveils tit-for-tat public procurement policy

In News:

- Government may restrict bids of foreign companies for Government Procurement in India if in their country there is any restriction on Indian suppliers for the same.
- **Reasons:** This provision of "reciprocity" has been included in the Indian government's new policy to encourage 'Make in India' by granting preference to local suppliers in public procurement
- **Committee for implementation:** A five-member committee chaired by the Secretary in the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion has been set up to oversee the implementation of the policy
- **Aim of the tit-for-tat policy :** This policy is aimed at boosting domestic manufacturing and services, thereby creating employment and enhancing income, as well as to stimulate the flow of capital and technology into domestic manufacturing and services

3. CAD widens to \$3.4 billion in Q4

In News:

- The current account deficit widened in the fourth quarter of 2016-17 to \$3.4 billion or 0.6% of the GDP
- It was \$ 0.3 billion or 0.1% of the GDP during the same period of the previous financial year

Reason behind this increase:

- The widening of the CAD on a year-on-year basis was primarily on account of a higher trade deficit (\$29.7 billion) brought about by a larger increase in merchandise imports relative to export.

Basic Information:

Countries trade with one another to buy goods not produced in domestic economy. advent of globalization, investment to and fro have also increased many fold. A trade and other economic exchanges with the world are recorded on its external : the form of balance of payment (BoP) transactions.

There are two components of BoP

1. Current Account
2. Capital Account

Current Account - It deals with current, ongoing, short term transactions like trade in goods, services (invisible) etc. It reflects the nation's net income.

For instance, if you buy a laptop from US, it will be a current account transaction and it will be debit on current account as you have to pay to US.

There are 4 components of Current Account-

1. Goods - trade in goods
2. Services (invisible) - trade in services eg. tourism
3. Income - investment income
4. Current unilateral transfers - donations, gifts, grants, remittances

Note that grants might appear as component of capital account but are included in current account as they are unilateral, create no liability. Recipient does not have to give anything back in return.

Capital Account - It deal with capital transactions i.e. those transactions which create assets or liabilities. It reflects the net changes in the ownership of national assets.

For instance, if you buy a stocks or property in US, it will be a capital account transaction and it will be debit on capital account as you have to pay to US to the asset.

Components of Capital Account

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI)

External Borrowings such as ECB

Reserve Account with the Central Bank

Note here that foreign investment is under capital account but dividends and income from investment comes under current account in the category income from abroad as dividend is transferred periodically, does not result in creation of asset or liability.

Balance of Payment (BoP) = Current Account + Capital Account = 0

Why?

Current Account and Capital Account always balance each other because a country always has to pay for its imports. It does so by exports or other two components of current account. If it cannot, it runs deficit on current account and has to pay off by drawing off on its assets i.e. running capital account surplus.

What is Current Account Deficit?

It's simply deficit on all 4 components of current account.

(Export - Import) + Net income from abroad + Net Transfers

(Export - Import) is trade deficit

CAD = Trade Deficit + Net Income From Abroad + Net transfers

Note that Trade Deficit and CAD are not one and the same. Trade deficit is only a component of CAD.

What does deficit on Current Account imply?

If we forget income and transfers for a moment, what it means is that we import more than what we export.

How do we pay for that extra import?

Either we get more foreign investment (FDI & FII) and pay via that or we borrow from foreign banks (ECB) or we will have to dip into our external reserves to pay for. Amount and in the process our forex reserves come down. When forex reserves come below a critical level, country appears on the brink of BoP crisis.

So, is CAD such a bad thing?

Depends on what you do with those extra imports and how you finance the deficit

CAD is bad because -

If a CAD is financed through borrowing, it is unsustainable because borrowing lead to high interest payments in the future

Attracting capital flows (hot money, FII) to finance the deficit is risky as when confidence falls, hot money flows dry up, leading to a rapid devaluation and crisis of confidence. Eg. East Asian Crisis

Run a CAD necessarily means running a surplus on the capital account. This means foreigners have an increasing claim on your assets, which they could redeem any time.

However a current account deficit is not necessarily harmful

CAD during a period of inward investment particularly stable long term FDI may not be a bad thing as investment can create jobs. Investments will lead to higher growth will be able to pay debts back.

Developing countries may use CAD to buy Capital goods and later export consumer goods and thus repay the debt

Moderate current account deficit (2% of GDP) financed mainly by stable foreign investments which creates jobs and infrastructure in the economy can be helpful in the long run as it improves productivity.

What is this twin deficit?

Current Account Deficit and Fiscal Deficit together are known as twin deficits and often both reinforce each other i.e. High fiscal deficit leads to higher CAD and vice versa.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. X-ray space telescope launched

In news:

- China launched its first **X-ray space telescope to study black holes, pulsars and gamma-ray bursts**.
- The Hard X-ray Modulation Telescope (HXMT) has been named Insight

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Category: POLITY

1. [Aadhaar mandatory for opening bank accounts, transactions over rs.50,000](#)

In news:

- The government, through a notification amending the **Prevention of Money-laundering (Maintenance of Records) Rules, 2005**, has made it mandatory to provide Aadhaar to open a bank account and to conduct a transaction of Rs 50,000 or more.

Notification:

- It says that individuals who are eligible to be enrolled for an Aadhaar number need to provide that

number and the Permanent Account Number (PAN) to open a bank account or conduct any transaction “of an amount equal to or exceeding rupees fifty thousand, whether conducted as a single transaction or several transactions that appear to be connected, or any international money transfer operations”.

Even small accounts under scanner:

- “The small account shall be opened only at core banking solution linked banking company branches or in a branch where it is possible to manually monitor and ensure that foreign remittances are not credited to a small account and that the stipulated limits on monthly and annual aggregate of transactions and balance in such accounts are not breached, before a transaction is allowed to take place.”

2. Puducherry government demands more powers

Context:

- Tussle between Lt. Governor and Government:** Governor of Puducherry Kiran Bedi has made it clear that she was the “real administrator” and all files have to be sent to her for approval.

In news:

- Governor view points:** Purpose of such a move is to observe financial prudence.
- Government view points:** it is an attempt to tarnish the government image by blocking files related to welfare schemes.

Resolution:

- Puducherry Legislative Assembly passed a resolution urging the Union Government to make necessary amendments in the Union Territories Act to bestow more powers on the elected government and curtail the role of the Lt. Governor.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Swiss ratify pact on information sharing

In news:

- Switzerland ratified **automatic exchange of financial account information (AEOI)** with India.
- AEOI is a global convention for automatic information exchange on tax matters. AEOI facilitates immediate sharing of details on suspected black.
- The first set of data should be exchanged in 2019.

AEOI :

- The new global standard on Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI) reduces the possibility for tax evasion. It provides for the exchange of non-resident financial account information with the tax authorities in the account holders’ country of residence. Participating jurisdictions that implement AEOI send and receive pre-agreed information each year, without having to send a specific request.
- AEOI will enable the discovery of formerly undetected tax evasion. It will enable governments to recover tax revenue lost to non-compliant taxpayers, and will further strengthen international efforts to increase transparency, cooperation, and accountability among financial institutions and tax administrations. Additionally, AEOI will generate secondary benefits by increasing voluntary disclosures of concealed assets and by encouraging taxpayers to report all relevant information.

2. All eyes on Modi-Trump meeting

In news:

- June 24 to 27: second round of visits to western countries by Prime Minister Narendra Modi
- Countries to be covered: Portugal, the United States and the Netherlands from June

U.S. Visit to focus on: Defence partnership, counter-terror cooperation and cooperation in the Indian Ocean region.

3. U.S. issues Zika advisory in India

Context:

- Last month, World Health Organisation (WHO) has categorized India as a site of active transmission of the Zika virus.
- WHO placed India under a ‘**Category-2**’ country for Zika risk. A Category-2, the second highest on a four-point scale and that also includes 2015 Zika-hotspot Brazil, indicates that the virus is being actively transmitted within the country. Until April, India was a Category-4 country.

In news:

- The United States sent out an advisory, informing its citizens in India about the number of confirmed Zika infections in India.

Zika virus :

- **Zika virus** is a mosquito-borne flavivirus that was first identified in Uganda in 1947 in monkeys through a network that monitored yellow fever.
- It was later identified in humans in 1952 in Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

Signs and Symptoms:

- The incubation period (the time from exposure to symptoms) of Zika virus disease is not clear, but is likely to be a few days. The symptoms are similar to other arbovirus infections such as dengue, and include fever, skin rashes, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, malaise, and headache. These symptoms are usually mild and last for 2-7 days.

Complications of Zika virus disease:

- Based on a systematic review of the literature up to 30 May 2016, WHO has concluded that Zika virus infection during pregnancy is a cause of congenital brain abnormalities, including microcephaly; and that Zika virus is a trigger of Guillain-Barré syndrome. Intense efforts are continuing to investigate the link between Zika virus and a range of neurological disorders, within a rigorous research framework.

Transmission:

- Zika virus is primarily transmitted to people through the bite of an infected mosquito from the Aedes genus, mainly Aedes aegypti in tropical regions. Aedes mosquitoes usually bite during the day, peaking during early morning and late afternoon/evening. This is the same mosquito that transmits dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever. Sexual transmission of Zika virus is also possible. Other modes of transmission such as blood transfusion are being investigated.

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Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. ‘Photosynthesis can save hearts’

In news:

- Stanford University scientists have found that using blue-green algae and light to trigger photosynthesis inside the heart could help treat cardiac disease, the top cause of death globally.
- Researchers injected a type of bacteria into the hearts of anaesthetised rats with cardiac disease. Using light to trigger photosynthesis, they were able to increase the flow of oxygen and improve heart function.
- In nature, humans exhale carbon dioxide and plants convert it back to oxygen. During a heart attack, the muscle is still trying to pump. There's carbon dioxide but no oxygen.

Cardiac ischemia:

- Myocardial ischemia occurs when blood flow to your heart is reduced, preventing it from receiving enough oxygen. The reduced blood flow is usually the result of a partial or complete blockage of your heart's arteries.
- The researchers plan to investigate how to apply this concept to humans and how to deliver a light source to the human heart. They are also examining the potential of using artificial chloroplasts to eliminate the need for bacteria.

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3. [Purveyor of plastic Study finds river Ganga is the world's second biggest carrier of plastic](#)

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Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. [Refugees take out cycle rally to highlight issues concerning them At UNHCR event, they thank T.N. government for support](#)

Topic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources, issues relating to poverty and hunger.

Context

- A fragment of refugees from diverse countries took out a demonstration in Chennai to emphasize concerns of the

community of refugees.

About the Issue

- The rally included diplomats, government officials, academicians, students and staff of the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which organised the rally in connection with the World Refugee Day (June 20).
- According to UNHCR data, the count of refugees approximates to 2.08 lakh in India.
- This figure includes Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, Rohingya refugees from Myanmar; Iraqi refugees; Sudanese; Somalian and from South Sudan.
- Refugees praised the role being played by the Union and Tamil Nadu governments for the welfare of refugees.

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

- The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is a United Nations System inter-governmental body responsible for promoting and protecting human rights around the world.
- The UNHRC is the successor to the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR, herein CHR), and is a subsidiary body of the UN General Assembly.
- The UNHRC addresses human rights-related situations in all UN member states.
- The UNHRC also addresses important thematic human rights issues such as freedom of association and assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of belief and religion, women's rights, LGBT rights, and the rights of racial and ethnic minorities.

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Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. [First chair on Guru Jambheshwar suggests tree plantation strategy On-field and practical strategies to involve rural folks as stakeholders](#)

Topic: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

Context

- The first-ever chair entitled after Guru Jambheshwar, who founded the Bishnoi sect in the 15th century, at Jai Narain Vyas University in Jodhpur has made proposals for a new tree plantation strategy in the rural areas of Rajasthan.

About the Issue

- This new strategy lays emphasis on enrichment of the desert State's ecology.
- The Chair for Environmental Conservation, has recommended on-field and practical strategies with the involvement of the rural folk as stakeholders.
- “Beneficial species” should be planted in the rural areas (Because trees like Ashoka, planted in the desert landscape, absorbed more water and gave lesser shade. Instead, the species such as Khejri, Neem, Peepal, Bar, Peelu, Kair, Jamun and Ber should be promoted).

Recommendations to the state government

- The chair has proposed punitive action in contradiction of private companies engaged in road construction and infrastructure projects, which do not take up plantation notwithstanding the decree to plant uprooted trees.

About the personality in news

- Guru Jambheshwar was a contemporary of Mughal Emperor Babur.
- Guruji was born at Pipasar village in Nagaur district and had established the Bishnoi sect in 1485.
- He taught to protect the flora and fauna in the medieval age, highlighting their importance for peaceful co-existence with nature.

2. [Tiger numbers swell in Karnataka Census shows Bandipur and Nagarhole have the most cats in south India](#)

Context

Karnataka is graceful to secure its position as the “**Tiger State of India**” with key reserves indicating intensification in the tiger population as per the annual census finalized recently.

About the Issue

- The latest population estimate strengthens Bandipur and Nagarhole sites as having the highest tiger statistics in south India and can be ranked among the top three or four national parks in the country along with Jim Corbett, Kanha and Kaziranga.
- The general rise in tiger population is credited to widespread fortification of national parks for decades, paired with high prey density.

Facts for prelims

The State has five tiger reserves.

1. Bandipur
2. Nagarhole
3. Bhadra
4. Anshi Dandeli
5. BRT Tiger Reserve

Identification methods employed: The unique stripes through the camera trap method adopted for intensive monitoring of the source population.

3. Purveyor of plastic Study finds river Ganga is the world's second biggest carrier of plastic waste

Context

- Every year 1.15 and 2.41 million tonnes of plastic waste make their way into the sea via riverine systems, massively impacting marine life.

Issue with respect to India

- Ganga is the world's second largest riverine donor to plastic pollution in the oceans, sacking 1,20,000 tonnes annually.
- Yangtze in China transports 3,30,000 tonnes.
- An average Indian breeds moderately little ‘mismanaged plastic’ (3.2 kg/year) compared with the rest of the world (17 kg/year per person), “with half a billion people living within the Ganges catchment, the overall burden on the river is very huge.
- Utmost top contaminating rivers round the world are detected in Asia, accounting for 86% of the global annual input of plastic debris.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. ISRO may use semi-cryogenic engine for heavy lift rockets It hopes to complete engine development by 2019

Context

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has grown to the challenging of subsystems in the enlargement of a semi-cryogenic engine for rockets with heftier payload capability.

About the system

- The testing facilities at the ISRO Propulsion Complex are being amplified for the engine being advanced by the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre here under a project designated SCE 200.
- The semi-cryogenic engine uses a blend of liquid oxygen (LOX) and refined kerosene (Isrosene) as propellants.
- Replacement of the liquid core (L110) engine (GSLV Mark 3) with the SCE-200 will boost the payload capacity of the rocket from four to six tonnes.

Objective: To power the future heavy lift launch vehicles and reusable launch vehicles as well as human spaceflight missions.

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2. ICJ rejected India's request to delay Jadhav's case, says Pakistan
3. India, China hold talks for strengthening strategic partnership

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Economics

1. Indians have 'rather few' deposits: Swiss banks
2. Secrecy must for automatic info exchange, Swiss banks tell India

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Category: POLITY

1. Dr. Mahesh Sharma launches implementation of 'National Mission on Cultural Mapping of India' from Goverdhan Block, Mathura

Features of the scheme:

- Scheme is set to cover all blocks of the country, involving a total of 6.40 lakh villages over the span of next 3 years
- This Mission is part of the 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat'

- Ministry of Culture launched it in the year of commemoration of the birth centenary of Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay, who hailed from Mathura.
- The Cultural Mapping of India portal will serve as a repository/consolidated database of information about cultural assets and resources i.e. a cultural inventory at one place for essential planning, sustainable economic development and for preserving the scattered and near extinct art forms.

Key Point:

- The mission aims at converting the vast and widespread cultural canvas of India into an objective cultural map, designing a mechanism to fulfil the aspirations of the whole artist community of the nation and preserving the rich cultural heritage of this country in the form of a cultural repository of artists and art forms.
- Mission encompasses data mapping, demography building formalising the processes and bringing all the cultural activities under one web based umbrella for better results.
- The Mission also seeks to open a direct channel of communication of artists with the Government and peer to peer communication among artists for talent honing and handholding of each other.

Main vision: no cultural talent or heritage should remain unattended and if it is talent, it should be nurtured and if it is a heritage, it should be conserved and used as an icon to learn from the past, and also to propagate our cultural talent across all boundaries.

2. [No-fly list norms likely in July next week, says Government](#)

In news:

- The norms for **no-fly list** to rein in unruly passengers are expected to be ready early next month, the government said.
- The civil aviation ministry has already come out with draft rules for a ‘national no-fly list’ of unruly passengers for all domestic carriers, under which the flying ban could extend from **at least three months to an indefinite period.**
- As per the draft norms, the national no-fly list will include names of passengers identified as unruly after an inquiry by a committee constituted by a particular airline.
- A person identified as a threat by security agencies would also be included in this list.
- While the list is characterised as ‘national’ and would have data on disruptive passengers from all airlines, the ban recommended by the committee is not mandatory for all airlines to follow.
- The government had recommended three levels of unruly behaviours, each with a corresponding duration of flying ban.
- The first level of misdemeanour includes disruptive behaviour such as physical gestures, verbal harassment and unruly behaviour because of inebriation. This level of offence would carry a flying ban of three months.
- The second level relates to physically abusive behaviour such as pushing, hitting, grabbing, inappropriate touching or sexual harassment. Such actions could attract a six-month ban.
- The third category pertains to life threatening behaviour such as damage to aircraft operating system, physical violence and attempted breach of flight crew compartment. In such instances, the ban could be for two years or an indefinite period.
- If a passenger repeats the same degree of offence, he or she would be banned for twice the period of the previous ban.

3. [No Aadhaar, no banking and threat to privacy: Do you have a choice?](#)

Context:

- The government has made Aadhaar mandatory for access to banking and filing I-T returns.
- But there are serious concerns about possible breach of privacy with private entities having access to Aadhaar data

Is Aadhaar mandatory?

- The Supreme Court has more than once told the government not to make Aadhaar mandatory for citizens.
- In 2015, on two occasions, the Supreme Court ruled that “it is not mandatory for a citizen to obtain an Aadhaar card” asking the government to advertise this prominently.
- The production of an Aadhaar card will not be condition for obtaining any benefits otherwise due to a citizen, the Supreme Court had said. **However, the apex court has allowed the government to link various schemes including MNREGS, LPG, PDS, EPFO, Old Age Pension etc with Aadhaar.**

- But, the Supreme Court ruling in 2015 clearly read, “... the Aadhaar card Scheme is purely voluntary and it cannot be made mandatory till the matter is finally decided by this Court one way or the other.”
- The apex court has set up a constitutional bench to hear Aadhaar case. The Aadhaar Act 2016 also does not make Aadhaar mandatory for citizens.

HOW GOVERNMENT MADE IT MANDATORY?

- Budget 2017 (passed by Parliament), which mandated seeding of Aadhaar number with Permanent Account Number (PAN).
- The amended Finance Act 2017. It made enrollment in Aadhaar compulsory for obtaining a PAN and filing Income Tax returns.

Implications:

- The Finance Act effectively meant that an earning member of Indian society is a potential criminal if s/he does not have an Aadhaar as the citizen would not be able to file I-T returns, which s/he is legally bound to do.

ARE AADHAAR DATA IN SAFE HANDS?

- Recently a report by the Centre for Internet Society said that more than 13 crore Aadhaar data were leaked, stolen or compromised.
- **Section 29 of the Aadhaar Act** prohibits sharing, publishing, displaying or posting publicly the core biometric information collected under the project except in “**the interest of national security**”. **However, the Act does not state what constitutes national security.**
- **Section 57 of the Aadhaar Act, 2016 allows private companies to use the Aadhaar data to establish “identity of an individual for any purpose”.**

Access to Aadhaar data:

- There are several reports confirming that the Aadhaar data of Indian citizens are with companies like **Accenture, Ernst and Young**, L-1 Identity Solutions – the American biometric technology provider .
- The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) and the government allow access to Aadhaar data of people by these companies through Authentication User Agencies, which are both governmental and non-governmental entities.

RIGHT TO PRIVACY IN INDIA

- There is no specific law passed by Parliament for protection against breach of privacy of individuals in India.
- A bill, Privacy Bill, 2011 was drafted by the UPA-II government but it is hanging fire since then.
- Only the Information Technology Act, 2000 has some express provision guarding individuals against breach of privacy by corporate entities. **Section 43A** was inserted into the IT Act in 2008 which makes the companies compromising sensitive personal data liable to pay compensation.
- The right to privacy is dealt with under Article 21 of the Constitution which guarantees right to life and personal liberty.

COURTS ON RIGHT TO PRIVACY

- In 1954, an eight-judge bench in **MP Sharma vs Satish Chandra case** and in 1962 a six-judge bench of the Supreme Court in **Kharak Singh vs State of Uttar Pradesh** case had equated the right to privacy with right to personal liberty but rejected it as fundamental or constitutional right.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Indo-Afghan air cargo plane to fly over Pak

In news:

- India and Afghanistan will operationalise a **dedicated air cargo link** over Pakistan in the next couple of days.
- Aim: help increase **bilateral trade** which was hampered by their troubled ties with Pakistan.
- Pakistan disallows Indian goods along the road route.
- The road link between the two countries passes through Pakistan, which allows only Afghanistan to send a limited amount of goods to India.

2. ICJ rejected India's request to delay Jadhav's case, says Pakistan

Context: Kulbhushan Jadhav's case- Jadhav, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court in April.

In news:

- Pakistan claimed that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) rejected India's request to delay proceedings of Kulbhushan Jadhav's case until December.
- Pakistan through its consulate in Netherlands came to know that the ICJ had ordered India to submit a response by September 13.

What ICJ is supposed to do?

- The ICJ is supposed to conclude whether or not Jadhav can receive consular access, for which a time period of two to three months is more than enough to file a response.

Previously:

- In a hearing of the case on May 18, a 10-member bench at the Hague-based ICJ restrained Pakistan from executing Jadhav.
- India moved the ICJ against the death penalty on May 8. The next day, the global court stayed the sentence as a provisional measure.

Pakistan stance: Its security forces arrested him from its restive Balochistan province on March 3 last year after he reportedly entered from Iran.

India's stance : India maintains that he was kidnapped from Iran where he had business interests after retiring from the Navy.

3. India, China hold talks for strengthening strategic partnership

In news:

- Minister of state for external affairs VK Singh met foreign minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the BRICS foreign ministers' meeting.
- India said it looks forward to strengthen its strategic partnership and mutual dialogue with China as the two sides held talks here amid differences over a host of issues including the \$50 billion CPEC and India's NSG membership bid.
- BRICS foreign ministers' meeting being held to finalise the agenda for this year's BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) summit to be held in September in China's Xiamen city.
- During the foreign ministers' meet, China is expected to outline the agenda for this year's BRICS summit which included efforts to seek common ground against terrorism.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Indians have 'rather few' deposits: Swiss banks

Context: Illegal black money funds parked in Swiss bank.

In news:

- Indians have “**few deposits**” in Swiss banks compared to other global financial hubs like Singapore and Hong Kong, says a grouping of private bankers in Switzerland.
- There are also few deposits of Indian residents in Switzerland, as opposed to Singapore or Hong Kong for instance
- **Official data:** Money held by Indians in Swiss banks declined to a record low of 1.2 billion franc (about Rs 8,392 crore) at the end of 2015.
- **Automatic exchange of tax information:**
- Last week Switzerland ratified the decision to implement this regime with India and 40 other jurisdictions.
- The framework for automatic exchange of information requires strict adherence to data confidentiality, but the Geneva-based Association of Swiss Private Banks said it has no particular concern over India, where the rule of

law seems to be properly upheld.

2. Secrecy must for automatic info exchange, Swiss banks tell India

Context: India recently signed automatic exchange window agreement with Switzerland.

In news:

- India will have to ensure **strict confidentiality of information** about its citizens' Swiss bank accounts received through the new automatic exchange window, failing which the Alpine nation will stop sharing the data.
- Switzerland and its banks will also keep a close watch on the data protection measures taken by India regarding the details received from other jurisdictions and want all other global financial centres to implement the global framework for automatic exchange of information (AEOI) on financial matters.
- The pact with India is planned for implementation in 2018, with the first set of data to be exchanged in 2019.

The exchange of information would be based on the Multilateral Competent Authority Agreement (MCAA) on AEOI, which is in turn based on the international standard for the exchange of information developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

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Prelims worthy factual information

- NASA's Orion spacecraft: designed to take astronauts to deep space destinations such as the Moon and Mars.

F. Bills/Acts/Schemes/Orgs in News

**Scheme in
News About the Scheme**

Features of the scheme:

- Scheme is set to cover all blocks of the country, involving a total of 6.40 lakh villages over the span of next 3 years
- This Mission is part of the '**Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat**'
- Ministry of Culture launched it in the year of commemoration of the birth centenary of Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay, who hailed from Mathura.
- The Cultural Mapping of India portal will serve as a repository/consolidated database of information about cultural assets and resources i.e. a cultural inventory at one place for essential planning, sustainable economic development and for preserving the scattered and near extinct art forms.

'National Mission on Cultural Mapping of India'

Key Point:

- The mission aims at converting the vast and widespread cultural canvas of India into an objective cultural map, designing a mechanism to fulfil the aspirations of the whole artist community of the nation and preserving the rich cultural heritage of this country in the form of a cultural repository of artists and art forms.
- Mission encompasses data mapping, demography building formalising the processes and bringing all the cultural activities under one web based umbrella for better results.
- The Mission also seeks to open a direct channel of communication of artists with the Government and peer to peer communication among artists for talent honing and handholding of each other.

Main vision:

- No cultural talent or heritage should remain unattended and if it is talent, it should be nurtured and if it is a heritage, it should be conserved and used as an icon to learn

Articles in News

Article 21

About the Article

Protection of life and personal liberty No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.

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1. India becomes 71st country to ratify United Nations TIR Convention

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1. Fuel price revisions: Burying the administered price mechanism ghost
2. Nitty-gritty of bankruptcy code

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1. Scorpene submarines to join Navy without AIP modules
2. Issue over poor man's food jowar: House panel questions need to develop GM So

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Category: POLITY

1. Bihar Governor Ram Nath Kovind is NDA's presidential candidate

Context: The NDA government at the Centre has named Dalit politician Ram Nath Kovind as its Presidential candidate

Who is Mr. Kovind?

- Presently the governor of Bihar
- He is a two-time Rajya Sabha member
- BJP's former national spokesperson

- He headed the BJP's Scheduled Caste Morcha between 1999 and 2002
- Hailing from the Koli community, which is classified as a Scheduled Caste in Uttar Pradesh
- Kovind was an advocate by profession before entering politics full-time

Basic Information:

President election

- The President of the Republic of India is the Head of State of India and the Commander-in-chief of the Indian Armed Forces
- The President is indirectly elected by the people through elected members of both the houses of the Parliament of India, the Legislative Assemblies of all the states of India and the Legislative Assembly of the Union Territory of Puducherry, as well as, the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi
- The election is held in accordance to the system of Proportional representation by means of the Single transferable vote method
- The voting takes place by secret ballot system
- The manner of election of President is provided **by Article 55** of the Constitution
- Each elector casts a different number of votes
- The general principle is that the total number of votes cast by Members of Parliament equals the total number of votes cast by State Legislators
- Legislators from larger states cast more votes than those from smaller states
- The actual calculation for votes cast by a particular state is calculated by dividing the state's population by 1000, which is divided again by the number of legislators from the State voting in the electoral college
- This number is the number of votes per legislator in a given state
- Every elected member of the parliament enjoys the same number of votes, which may be obtained by dividing the total number of votes assigned to the members of legislative assemblies by the total number of elected representatives of the parliament

2. GST: Anti-profiteering panel to levy penalty, to have sunset date of two years

In News:

- The National Anti-Profiteering Authority, to be set up under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, will have wide-ranging powers
- It will be able to issue notices to anybody that it feels warrants a "fair enquiry," as per the rules finalised by the GST Council

Powers given to authority:

- Order a reduction in prices
- Impose a penalty
- Cancel the registration of a company deemed to have not passed on a tax rate reduction to consumers

Structure of proposed authority:

- Authority is to be chaired by either a **retired High Court judge OR a member of the Indian Legal Service** who has at least three years of experience at the level of Additional Secretary or higher.

Process:

- **Step 1:** There will be a Standing Committee, which would receive complaints from anyone about profiteering practices
- **Step 2:** The Standing Committee, after reviewing the *prima facie* evidence, will refer the matter to the Director-General of Safeguards (DGS) for a detailed investigation
- **Step 3:** The DGS must complete its investigation within three months of receiving the reference from the Standing Committee OR furnish in writing reasons for a delay, which itself cannot exceed three months more

Total time to be taken: The Authority will have three months to issue its verdict following the investigation by the DGS, which means the entire procedure, from investigation to verdict, cannot exceed nine months

Basic Information:

Anti Profiteering:

- Since goods and services are taxed at multiple stages of supply chain, any changes in tax structure or tax rates create an opportunity for improved profit margin at each stage of supply chain.
- Clause 171 has been inserted in the GST bill which provides that it is mandatory to pass on the benefit due to reduction in rate of tax or from input tax credit to the consumer by way of commensurate reduction in prices.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India becomes 71st country to ratify United Nations TIR Convention

Context

- India has become the 71st country to ratify the United Nations TIR Convention
- This will boost trade and regional integration across South Asia and beyond
- The step will also fast-track the region's potential to become a strategic trade hub

What is TIR?

- TIR is the global standard for goods customs transit managed and developed by IRU
- IRU is the world road transport organization
- China was the last TIR contracting party who acceded to the Convention on July 6, 2016
- The TIR system has been facilitating trade and international road transport for over 60 years
- It allows customs-sealed vehicles and freight containers to transit countries, without border checks

Advantages of joining TIR

- Accession to the TIR Convention is part of India's multi-modal transport strategy
- It aims to integrate the economy with global and regional production networks through better connectivity
- TIR will help India to integrate with Myanmar and Thailand as well as Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal
- It will also enable India to move cargo along the International North-South Transport Corridor via Chabahar port in Iran
- This will make it easier to access land-locked Afghanistan and the energy-rich Eurasian region

Financial benefits

- According to a study in the UNESCAP region, it is estimated that implementing TIR could generate economic benefits ranging from 0.14 to 1.31% of national GDP
- Adopting TIR in selected UNESCAP (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) countries including India will save USD 35 billion in transit costs over five years

Basic Information

UN TIR Convention:

- The Convention on International Transport of Goods Under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention) is a multilateral treaty that was concluded at Geneva on 14 November 1975
- It was to simplify and harmonise the administrative formalities of international road transport
- TIR stands for 'Transports Internationaux Routiers' or 'International Road Transports'
- The conventions were adopted under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
- The TIR Convention establishes an international customs transit system with maximum facility to move goods:
- In sealed vehicles or containers;
- From a customs office of departure in one country to a customs office of destination in another country;
- Without requiring extensive and time-consuming border checks at intermediate borders;
- Providing customs authorities with the required security and guarantee
- The TIR system not only covers customs transit by road but a combination is possible with other modes of transport (e.g., rail, inland waterway, and even maritime transport), as long as at least one part of the total transport is made by road

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Fuel price revisions: Burying the administered price mechanism ghost

In News:

- India has formally dismantled the administered price mechanism or APM for petrol and diesel
- In India, like in the US and Australia, domestic diesel and petrol prices have now been globalized

Effects on Indian Economy Structure:

- India is now a step closer to become a competitive market economy defined by rules as opposed to the existing exception-based regime

Drawbacks of earlier system:

- Prior to this decision, petroleum prices were administered (read subsidized)
- It lead to inefficient allocation of a scarce resource
- It also became a fiscal problem, as the subsidies were buried in what was known as the oil pool account, details of which were all but opaque

Challenges:

- At present, crude oil prices are hovering around the \$50 mark.

But if price increases then it can create political problems for government

2. Nitty-gritty of bankruptcy code

In News:

- Reserve Bank of India said its internal advisory committee (IAC) had identified 12 accounts, which account for 25% of non-performing assets of the Indian banking system for immediate resolution under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)
- The gross bad debt in the banking system as on March was Rs. 7.11 lakh crore, which means the 12 accounts contribute to about Rs. 1.78 lakh crore

Meaning of bankruptcy

A company is bankrupt if it is unable to repay debts to its creditors (banks, suppliers etc).

Bankruptcy outcome:

- The inability to repay debts by some of the Indian firms has resulted in a huge pile of non-performing assets for the banking system
- RBI had earlier hinted that stress was coming from sectors such as power, telecom, steel, textiles and aviation

RBI and IBC role:

- The government had recently amended the RBI Act
- It gave powers to the central bank to direct banks to take punitive action against individual accounts under IBC

IBC Process:

A mechanism to free up the money stuck as bad loans is one of the key for the banking system. IBC is seen as one such

- **Step 1:** Any creditor including banks can start bankruptcy proceedings against defaulters by filing a petition with the National Company Law Tribunal
- **Step 2 :** After that, an insolvency professional with significant powers is appointed to take control of the defaulting company and assist the process
- **Step 3:** A creditors committee is formed to represent the interest of lenders and any other party that have been affected due to the default by the company

Committee task:

- The committee should come up with a resolution plan (which may include selling off defaulted loans or liquidate the company outright)
- The resolution would require a nod from 75% of the creditors on the committee

Timeline:

- The insolvency professional gets 180 days to come up with a feasible solution on the default issue. The timeline can be extended by another 90 days

After Deadline:

- If no solution is found within 270 days, a liquidator is appointed
- The company can also opt for voluntary liquidation by a special resolution in a general meeting

Basic Information:

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT):

- The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) is a quasi-judicial body in India that adjudicates issues relating to companies in India. The NCLT was established under the Companies Act 2013 and was constituted on 1 June 2016

1. The NCLT has the power under the Companies Act to adjudicate proceedings;
2. Initiated before the Company Law Board under the previous act (the Companies Act 1956);
3. Pending before the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR), including those pending under the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1985;
4. Pending before the Appellate Authority for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction; and
5. Pertaining to claims of oppression and mismanagement of a company, winding up of companies and all other powers prescribed under the Companies Act.
6. Decisions of the NCLT may be appealed to the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Scorpene submarines to join Navy without AIP modules

Context

- The last two Scorpene submarines to be rolled out of the manufacturing line without the **Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) system**
- **Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) system:** This system is meant to extend the reach of the conventional diesel-electric submarines

Manufacturers: Two of the six Scorpene submarines are being manufactured by Mazgaon Docks Limited (MDL) in Mumbai

What is AIP module?

- The AIP module is being developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)
- The module enables conventional submarines to stay remain underwater for a longer duration
- It greatly increases the submarines stealth characteristics

Option available:

- The only option of installing the AIP system is during the refit of the submarine. This is six years after induction

Basic Information:

Scorpene submarine

- The Scorpène-class submarines are a class of diesel-electric attack submarines
- They are jointly developed by the French Direction des Constructions Navales (DCN) and the Spanish company Navantia, and now by DCNS
- It features diesel propulsion and additional air-independent propulsion (AIP).

2. Issue over poor man's food jowar: House panel questions need to develop GM Sorghum

Context

- The controversy over GM Mustard rages on
- Another row is over GM crop version of jowar – or sorghum
- Sorghum is said to be the poor man's food in India

Parliamentary Committee to study GM:

- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment and Forests has decided to seek clarifications from Union Agriculture Ministry, and also ask the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) to do a comparative analysis of the nutritional values of GM and non-GM sorghum
- The panel is examining the issue of GM crops and its impact on environment
- It has called for samples of the crop developed by the Hyderabad-based Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR)

Questions of this committee

- To know the need to develop a genetically modified version of sorghum, which is the poor man's food
- Sorghum yield was already not fetching a good market price and was more than enough to meet the demand
- So why was GM Sorghum required?
- The committee wants to know whether there is a plan to introduce GM Sorghum in ration shops under the PDS

Finances for GM Sorghum

- The panel will look into issues such as expenditure incurred on research for GM Sorghum
- The money from the public exchequer was spent on GM Sorghum research even before any forward-backward linkage planning was done

Advantage of Bt Sorghum

- IIMR had begun research on transgenic jowar around four years ago
- It has now developed Bt Sorghum
- This is bigger in size
- It also has greater pest resistance

Activist opinion:

- Activists contend that the Central government should not allow consumption of genetically modified jowar by either humans or animals
- They argue that since jowar is largely consumed by the poor, any ill-effect of the GM variety will impact more people
- It will affect those without much access to preventive medicare

Basic Information:

- Clearance giving Committee: Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC)

History of Bt crops in India

- The only genetically modified crop that is under cultivation in India is Bt Cotton
- There was a proposal to allow cultivation of Bt Brinjal, a transgenic variety of brinjal, which did not receive approval

D . GS4 Related

Nothing here for Today!! !

PIB Articles Editorials Roundup

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Scheme in News	About the Scheme
Zero Defect Zero Effect Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is a new initiative launched by the Narendra Modi led NDA government• The scheme is for MSME (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) Sector to increase the quality of products matching global standards• The main objective of ZED scheme is to reduce the bad effect of products on environment• Under the scheme, MSME sector is urged to make products improving the brand image of the country
Article in News	Benefits of ZED: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Credible recognition of the industry for international customers seeking investment in India• Streamlined operations and lower costs• Superior quality, reduced rejection and higher revenues• Increased environmental & social benefits• Additional employment generation.
Article 55. Manner of election of President	<p>(1) As far as practicable, there shall be uniformity in the scale of representation of the different States at the election of the President</p> <p>(2) For the purpose of securing such uniformity among the States inter se as well as parity between the States as a whole and the Union, the number of votes which each elected member of Parliament and of the Legislative Assembly of each State is entitled to cast at such election shall be determined in the following manner:</p> <p>(a) every elected member of the Legislative Assembly of a State shall have as many votes as there are multiples of one thousand in the quotient obtained by dividing the population of the State by the total number of the elected members of the Assembly;</p> <p>(b) if, after taking the said multiples of one thousand, the remainder is not less than five hundred, then the vote of each member referred to in sub clause (a) shall be further increased by one;</p> <p>(c) each elected member of either House of Parliament shall have such number of votes as may be obtained by dividing the total number of votes assigned to the members of the Legislative Assemblies of the States under sub clause (a) and (b) by the total number of the elected members of both Houses of Parliament, fractions exceeding one half being counted as one and other fractions being disregarded</p> <p>(3) The election of the President shall be held in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote and the voting at such election shall be by secret ballot Explanation n this article, the expression population means the population ascertained at the last preceding census of which the relevant figures have been published: Provided that the reference in this Explanation to the last preceding census of which the relevant figures have been published shall, until the relevant figures for the first census taken after the year 2000 have been published, be construed as a reference to the 1971 census</p>

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1. [Text of the Speech of Defence Minister at TECHNOPROM- 2017 in Russia](#)

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Category: POLITY

1. SC notice to govt on abortion deadline

Context:

- A woman challenged a Section 3 of the Medical termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 which says that pregnancy cannot be terminated after 20 weeks.
- A 2014 pending bill proposes to extend the legally permissible period for termination to 24 weeks.
- Taking note of the distress plea, a vacation bench of SCsought response from the Bengal govt.

Key Fact: Out of the 26 million births that occur in India every year, approximately 2-3% had severe congenital or chromosomal abnormality

Basic Information:

What is MTP Act, 1971?

Abortion in India is legal only up to twenty weeks of pregnancy under specific conditions and situations.

One, the continuance of the pregnancy would involve a risk to the life of the pregnant woman or of grave injury of physical or mental health, or

Two, there is a substantial risk that if the child were born, it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.

What the draft MPT bill 2014 provides?

The draft MTP increased the legal limit for abortion from 20 weeks to 24 weeks.

It provides for abortion beyond 24 weeks under defined conditions.

The Bill amends Section 3 of the 1971 Act to provide that "the length of pregnancy does not apply" in a decision to abort a foetus diagnosed with "substantial foetal anomalies" or if it is "alleged by the pregnant woman to have been caused by rape".

Under the 1971 Act, even pregnant rape victims cannot abort after 20 weeks, compelling them to move court.

It allows a woman to take an independent decision in consultation with a registered health-care provider.

It also takes into account the reality of a massive shortage of both doctors and trained midwives, and seeks to allow Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha practitioners to carry out abortions.

Why is it essential to change the MTP law?

Foetal abnormalities show up only by 18 weeks, so just a two-week window after that is too small for the would-be parents to take the difficult call on whether to keep their baby.

Even for the medical practitioner, this window is too small to exhaust all possible options before advising the patient.

There is an urgent need to empower women with sexual rights, legal protection against sex crimes and sex choices both in their own interest and for the sake of reducing fertility rate as a whole.

The lack of legal approval moves abortion to underground and they are done in unhygienic conditions by untrained, thus, putting thousands of women at risk.

2. TB patients will need Aadhaar for cash benefits

In news:

New register norms:

- Tuberculosis patients, hospitals and healthcare workers availing cash assistance from the government will need to register with the Aadhaar database.

Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP):

- Under this scheme the government requires that patients diagnosed with TB and availing treatment be registered with **Nikshay**, a web-based application used by the authorities to track funds, treatment outcomes and health providers connected to the RNTCP.
- It is being implemented by State governments and Union Territory administrations via government health facilities and registered private health facilities across the country.

Who is eligible to receive payments now?

Tribals, and health care workers involved with the DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment, Short Course). But to meet TB elimination goals, the cash benefits are likely to be made available to all patients.

Key fact:

- The World Health Organization has said that **tuberculosis epidemic** in India was “larger” than what had been previously estimated and asserted that the country was **one of six nations** which accounted for **60% of the new cases** in 2015.
- According to reports, the prevalence of TB in India was at **217 per 1,00,000 population in 2015** as against the previously estimated 127.
- The government has pledged its commitment to eliminate tuberculosis by 2025, five years ahead of the global goal to reduce the number of such deaths by 90 per cent by 2030.

3. Bad for health

Context:

- A notice issued by a health ministry expert committee in the first week of June signals the government’s intention to usher major change in India’s pharmaceutical sector
- It invites comments from stakeholders about replacing widely-used animal parts-based **gelatin capsules** with those derived from **cellulose**
- In 2015, the scientific committee which advises the Drug Controller General of India (DGCI) gave an in-principle approval to the shift to cellulose-based capsules

Current situation: Currently, 98 per cent of the Indian pharmaceutical industry uses animal parts-based capsules

What government wants?

- Government has been pitching for “vegetarian capsules” for the past two years
- But there is little medical or commercial reasoning behind this proposal

What this could lead to?

A switch over to cellulose-based capsules could jeopardise the government’s recent initiatives to make medicines accessible to all.

Difference in opinions:

- In an e-mail last year to the joint secretary, health ministry, the DGCI pitched for “vegetable capsules for vegetarian society”
- The DGCI’s vegetarian fetish found support from the Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi
- She argued, “In a country where there are millions of people, this hurts religious sentiments and many people avoid medicines that are in a capsule form”
- The Drug Technical Advisory Board, health ministry’s premier advisory agency, had dismissed Gandhi’s representation on the grounds that: “Unlike food, drugs are not taken as choice but are prescribed by doctors to save lives and marking them as vegetarian or non-vegetarian is not desirable”
- The health ministry has overruled this reasoning

Concerns/opinions of industry:

- They have argued that the gelatin capsules have been in use all over the world for more than 180 years
- They also questioned viability of cellulose-based capsules
- Various industry associations cited the huge economic cost of the switch, which may also impact accessibility of medicines
- The cost of raw material required to make cellulose capsules is approximately four times that of gelatin and the manufacturing cost of cellulose-based capsules approximately three times the cost of gelatin capsules

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Text of the Speech of Defence Minister at TECHNOPROM- 2017 in Russia

Key point:

- Defence Minister Arun Jaitley has urged Russian defence companies to set up local joint ventures with Indian firms to produce spares and components for use by the Indian military as well as for exports.
- **TECHNOPROM :**
 - Technoprom is an international business platform devoted to the issues of forming the sixth technological mode based on the active development of science, technologies, and engineering, international and inter-regional integration.
 - The focus this year on breakthrough technologies in the scientific, technological and innovative fields has established this event as a key forum for insights and business opportunities into leading technological products and technologies.

Relationship with Russia a key priority:

- India and Russia are celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. For India, relations with Russia are a key foreign policy priority. Russia is been a trusted and time-tested partner.
 - India-Russia Strategic Partnership in 2000 covers areas like defence and security cooperation, trade and economic partnership, science and technology linkages and cultural exchanges.
 - Area of military technical cooperation: relationship escalated from just being buyer-seller relationship to one involving joint research, development and production of advanced defence systems.
- Example:** The Brahmos Missile System and the licensed production of advanced Sukhoi 30 aircraft in India are recent highlights of our bilateral cooperation

Government of India initiatives:

- Under Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) of 2016, a new category of acquisition called ‘Buy (IDDM)’, has been introduced. In this first preference would be given to the equipments, which are designed, developed and manufactured within the country. This will encourage Indian companies to invest in R&D and technology.
- **Liberalised license norms:**
 - For manufacturing of parts, components, sub-systems, production equipments and testing equipments, no license is required from the Government.
 - For the items for which license is required, the initial validity has been increased from 3 years to 15 years.

C. GS3 Related

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. NASA finds 10 Earth-sized exoplanets

COSMIC CENSUS
OF THE 219 NEW PLANET CANDIDATES,
10 ARE EARTH-LIKE

In the search for 'life' and habitable places beyond Earth, a four-year cosmic census of a tiny region of the Milky Way by NASA's Kepler spacecraft has yielded more than 4,000 objects that Nasa astronomers are 90% sure are planets orbiting other stars. Ten of these could be Earth-like

KEPLER'S MISSION

- In March 2009, Kepler was launched into an orbit around the sun to 'stare' at 160,000 stars in a patch of sky in the constellation Cygnus
- Data will also help NASA design a space telescope for the 2030s, big and powerful enough to discern images of planets around other stars

JUST SCRATCHING THE SURFACE

- When Kepler was launched, more than 300 exoplanets, planets outside our solar system, had been found
- The 10 new Earth-size planets bring the total to 50 that exist in habitable zones around the galaxy

THE CENSUS'S OBJECTS OF INTEREST

① Planets similar to Earth?

- For the first time, there's at least one planet, KOI 7711 (for Kepler Object of Interest), that almost matches the Earth, at only 30% wider and with an orbit of almost exactly one year
- Why 10 are 'Earth-like': These planets are the right distance from their parent stars for water to pool on the surface, the so-called Goldilocks realm, where the heat from their stars is neither too cold nor too hot for liquid water
- In all, there are 219 new planet candidates

② How are planets 'made'?

- Planets seem to be of two types: rocky, like Earth, and gaseous, like Neptune
- The new study, led by Caltech scientists, of 1,305 stars and 2,025 planets that orbit them found a curious gap in the planet population

MINI-NEPTUNES

- This seemed to mark a boundary between rocky planets, which can be up to one-and-a-half times the size of the Earth, (sometimes called super-Earths) and gaseous planets, so-called mini-Neptunes, more than about twice the size of Earth. Neptune itself is four times the diameter and 17 times the mass of Earth
- All planets start out with about the same amount of rock in their cores
- How much gas – mostly hydrogen and helium – adheres to them is what makes the difference

Source: Nasa

Context

- NASA revealed new rocky, Earth-sized planets
- These could potentially have liquid water and support life

The Kepler mission

- The Kepler mission team released a survey of 219 potential exoplanets
- These planets are outside of our solar system
- They had been detected by the space observatory launched in 2009 to scan the Milky Way galaxy

Location of these exoplanets:

- Ten of the new discoveries were orbiting their suns
- Their orbit is at a distance similar to the Earth's orbit around the sun
- This is the habitable zone that could potentially have liquid water and sustain life

Habitable zones

- Kepler has already discovered 4,034 potential exoplanets
- 2,335 of these have been confirmed by other telescopes as actual planets
- The 10 new Earth-size planets bring the total to 50 that exist in habitable zones around the galaxy
- The telescope detects the presence of planets by registering minuscule drops in a star's brightness

Basic Information:

Kepler Mission

Kepler is a space observatory launched by NASA to discover Earth-size planets orbiting other stars

Named after astronomer Johannes Kepler

It was launched into an Earth-trailing heliocentric orbit

Kepler is part of NASA's Discovery Program of relatively low-cost, focused primary science missions

The scientific objective of Kepler is to explore the structure and diversity of planetary systems

This spacecraft observes:

To determine how many Earth-size and larger planets there are in or near the habitable zone (**often called "Goldilocks planets"**)

To determine the range of size and shape of the orbits of these planets

To estimate how many planets there are in multiple-star systems

To determine the range of orbit size, brightness, size, mass and density of short-period giant planets

To identify additional members of each discovered planetary system using other telescopes

Determine the properties of those stars that harbor planetary systems

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for Today!! !

PIB Articles Editorials Roundup

E. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

Prelims worthy factual information

1. GST slabs for reference

GST @ 0%



- » Unpacked Foodgrains
- » Fresh Vegetables
- » Unbranded Atta
- » Unbranded Maida
- » Unbranded Besan
- » Gur
- » Milk
- » Eggs
- » Curd
- » Lassi
- » Unpacked Paneer
- » Unbranded Natural Honey
- » Prasad
- » Palmyra Jaggery
- » Salt
- » Kajal
- » Phool Bharji Jhadoo
- » Children's Drawing and Colouring Books
- » Education Services
- » Health Services

GST @ 5%



- » Sugar
- » Tea
- » Roasted Coffee Beans
- » Edible Oils
- » Skimmed Milk Powder
- » Milk Food for Babies
- » Packed Paneer
- » Cashew Nuts
- » Raisin
- » PDS Kerosene
- » Domestic LPG
- » Footwear (upto ₹ 500)
- » Apparels (upto ₹ 1,000)
- » Agarbatti
- » Coir Mats, Matting and Floor Covering

GST @ 12%



- » Butter
- » Ghee
- » Almonds
- » Fruit Juice
- » Packed Coconut Water
- » Preparations of Vegetables, Fruits, Nuts or other parts of Plants including Pickle Murabba, Chutney, Jam, Jelly
- » Umbrella
- » Mobiles

GST @ 18%



- » Hair Oil
- » Toothpaste
- » Soap
- » Pasta
- » Corn Flakes
- » Soups
- » Ice-cream
- » Toiletries
- » Computers
- » Printers

81% of items to fall below/in 18% GST slab.

Image 1500x2130px21715

2. Wassenaar Arrangement:

About:

- The Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies, commonly known as the Wassenaar Arrangement, is a multilateral export control regime (MECR) with 41 participating states
- The Wassenaar Arrangement was established to contribute to regional and international security and stability by promoting transparency and greater responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies, thus preventing destabilizing accumulations.
- Participating States seek, through their national policies, to ensure that transfers of these items do not contribute to the development or enhancement of military capabilities which undermine these goals, and are not diverted to support such capabilities.
- Every six months member countries exchange information on deliveries of conventional arms to non-Wassenaar members that fall under eight broad weapons categories:

Control List:

- The list of restricted technologies is broken into two parts, the “**List of Dual-Use Goods and Technologies**” (also known as the **Basic List**) and the “**Munitions List**”.

The Basic List is composed of ten categories based on increasing levels of sophistication:

- Category 1 – Special Materials and Related Equipment
- Category 2 – Materials Processing
- Category 3 – Electronics
- Category 4 – Computers
- Category 5 – Part 1 – Telecommunications
- Category 5 – Part 2 – “Information Security”

- Category 6 – Sensors and “Lasers”
- Category 7 – Navigation and Avionics
- Category 8 – Marine
- Category 9 – Aerospace and Propulsion

Basic List has two nested subsections—**Sensitive and Very Sensitive**. Items of the Very Sensitive List include materials for stealth technology—i.e., equipment that could be used for submarine detection, advanced radar, and jet engine technologies.

- The Munitions List has 22 categories, which are not labeled.

Admission requires states to:

- Be a producer or exporter of arms or sensitive industrial equipment
- Maintain non-proliferation policies and appropriate national policies, including adherence to:
 - Non-proliferation policies, such as (where applicable) the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime, and the Australia Group
 - Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and, where applicable, START I (including the Lisbon Protocol)
- Maintain fully effective export controls
- Admission of new members requires the consensus of all members.

The People’s Republic of China and Israel are not members, but they have aligned their export controls with Wassenaar lists, and are significant arms exporters.

New amendment : In December 2013, the list of export restricted technologies was amended to include **internet-based surveillance systems**. New technologies placed under the export control regime include “intrusion software”—software designed to defeat a computer or network’s protective measures so as to extract data or information—as well as IP network surveillance systems.

F. Bills/Acts/Schemes/Orgs in News

Schemes/Programs About the Scheme in News

About and objectives:

- Revised National Tuberculosis Control Program (RNTCP) is the **state-run tuberculosis (TB)** control initiative of the Government of India.
- As per the **National Strategic Plan 2012–17**, the program has a vision of achieving a “TB free India”, and aims to achieve **Universal Access** to TB control services.
- The program provides, various free of cost, quality tuberculosis diagnosis and treatment services across the country through the government health system.

Program strategy:

Revised National Tuberculosis Control Program

- The program initially adopted the **WHO-DOTS strategy** which consisted of the five components of strong political will and administrative commitment, diagnosis by quality assured sputum smear microscopy, uninterrupted supply of quality assured Short Course chemotherapy drugs, Directly Observed Treatment (DOT) and systematic monitoring and Accountability.
- The DOTS strategy achieved and sustained the target detection rate of 70% of all estimated cases and a cure rate of 85% in new cases and led to the decrease in incidence of TB in the country.
- With progress in achieving objectives outlined in the DOTS Strategy of the 11th Five year Plan, the program defined the new targets of Universal Access to TB care.
- Under the 12th Five Year Plan of Government of India as the National Strategic Plan for 2012–17. The plan hopes to achieve detection of at-least 90% the total estimated cases and a cure rate of 90% in new and 85% in re-treatment cases.

Topic: Polity

1. Punjab amends Excise Act to allow clubs, hotels near highways to serve liquor

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/punjab-to-amend-excise-act-to-allow-sale-of-liquor-near-highways/article19135010.ece>

Context: Last year, the SC scrapped licences for liquor sale along highways.

Reason: that drunken driving was the main culprit for the large number of road accidents in the country.

In news:

- Punjab has become the first State to take the amendment route to make way for liquor sale near highways as the Assembly passed a legislation enabling hotels, restaurants and clubs to serve alcohol within 500 metres of highways.
- The Bill stated that it aims to ensure that hotels, restaurants, clubs and other notified places are allowed to serve alcohol to customers only for consumption within their premises to secure the livelihood of a large segment of population.
- However, sale of liquor for takeaway purposes shall be permitted only through licensed vends which shall not be located within 500 metres from the outer range of the National or State Highway or a service lane of those roads

Measures taken by other states:

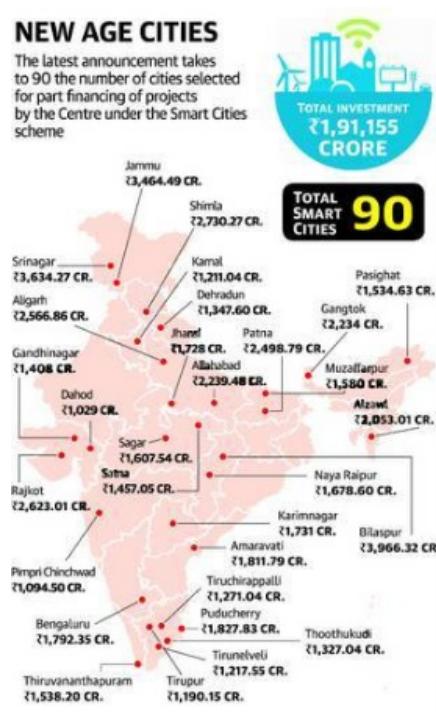
- States such as Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal and the Union Territory of Chandigarh denotified hundreds of kilometres of highways as local roads in order to bypass the Supreme Court ruling.

1. Centre announces 30 more Smart Cities

In news:

- Thirty more cities from across the country have been added to the Centre's Smart Cities Mission, with a proposed investment of Rs.57,393 crore in various projects under the scheme.
 - **Smart Cities Mission**
 - Second year anniversary.
 - total number of cities covered 90 (including the 30 newly recognized ones)
 - The cities were picked on the basis of the proposals they submitted for the Smart Cities Challenge. Among the cities selected, Kerala's capital, Thiruvananthapuram, topped the challenge.

Cities selected:



- Tamil Nadu emerged as the State with the highest number of cities selected in this round, with Tirupur, Tirunelveli, Thootukudi and Tiruchirappalli making it to the Mission.
 - Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat had three cities each selected for the Mission. While Jhansi, Allahabad and Aligarh made it from U.P.,

Rakjot, Gandhinagar and Dahod were the picks from Gujarat.



- Madhya Pradesh (Sagar and Satna), Bihar (Patna and Muzaffarpur), Chhattisgarh (Naya Raipur and Bilaspur) and Jammu and Kashmir (Srinagar and Jammu) had two cities each selected.
- Andhra Pradesh's new capital, Amaravati, was also selected, as was Karimnagar in neighbouring Telangana.
- Among the 11 State capitals selected were Bengaluru in Karnataka, Shimla in Himachal Pradesh, Aizawl in Mizoram and Gangtok in Sikkim. The other cities selected were Puducherry, Karnal in Haryana, Dehradun in Uttarakhand, Pimpri Chinchwad in Maharashtra, and Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh.

1. Modi government launches Liveability Index for 116 cities to measure quality of life

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/modi-government-launches-liveability-index-for-116-cities/articleshow/59290098.cms>

In news:

- The central government launched the “**City Liveability Index**” – a first of its kind initiative introduced by the Urban Development Ministry – to measure the quality of life in 116 major cities including capital cities and those with population over one million.
- Urban Development Minister M. Venkaiah Naidu launched the Index at

a National Workshop on Urban Transformation.

Parameters:

- The cities will be assessed on a comprehensive set of **79 parameters** to capture the extent and quality of infrastructure including availability of roads, education and health care, mobility, employment opportunities, emergency response, grievance redressal, pollution, availability of open, green spaces, and culture.

Reform incentive fund:

- Progress in respect of reforms like e-governance, audit of accounts, tax revision policies and extent of tax revenue collection, energy and water audit, establishing state level financial intermediaries for resource mobilisation and credit rating was taken into account.
- Marks scored by states were considered for deciding the quantum of incentive with high scorers getting more.
- The Urban Development Ministry also increased reform incentive fund for the next three financial years from Rs 900 crore to Rs 10,000 crore “to promote next generation reforms that would make a substantial difference to urban governance and service delivery and resource mobilization by urban local bodies,”
- The Ministry disbursed Rs 500 crore as incentive to 16 states that performed well in implementing urban reforms during 2016-17.

(Facts and figures not important)

Andhra Pradesh topped the list scoring 96.06 per cent marks. Others who received the incentive fund in order of merit were Odisha (95.38 per cent), Jharkhand (91.98 per cent), Chhattisgarh (91.37 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (90.20 per cent), Telangana (86.92 per cent) and Rajasthan (84.62 per cent).

Punjab also scored 77.02 per cent along with Kerala (75.73 per cent), Goa (75.38 per cent), Mizoram (75 per cent), Gujarat (73.80 per cent), Chandigarh (72.73 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (70.67 per cent) and Maharashtra (70.52 per cent).

1. Panel to oversee progress in UN's SDG

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/panel-to-oversee-progress-in-uns-sdg/article19136626.ece>

In news:

- The Centre will soon set up a high -level committee headed by **Chief Statistician of India** to oversee the country's progress towards UN's Sustainable Development Goals aimed at ending poverty, fighting inequalities and tackling climate change.
- A dashboard is also being developed with technical support from the UN Development Programme (UNDP) to “strengthen the mechanism” for monitoring progress on these global goals.

National indicators

- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has already developed a list of draft national indicators to measure progress of SDGs. These draft indicators have been put out in public domain. Based on the inputs received, national-level indicators will be finalised.
- India will hold bi-annual reviews with the State governments for identifying good practices and challenges.

G. S. Paper – 3

Topic: Economic

1. Software export growth set to slow: Nasscom

<http://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/software-export-growth-to-slow-nasscom-says/article19127166.ece>

In News:

- The country's software export growth is set to slow to 7-8% this fiscal year, down from 8.6% a year earlier, according to industry body Nasscom
- The domestic market was projected to grow faster than the export

market during this fiscal

Factors that affect software exports:

- Increased rhetoric on protectionism
- Elections, Brexit and visa issues
- Macroeconomic uncertainties
- Focus on cost optimisation
- Currency volatility

Inflection point in industry and way forward:

- Improvements in financial services and a high potential in digital businesses would be the key growth drivers
- An improvement in legacy business and increased automation-based projects would also be among the growth drivers
- The demand will be for technology-skilled professionals and it was imperative for new and existing people to reskill themselves.

Topic: Agriculture

1. Are farm loan waivers really so bad?

<http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/JGWTvQih0NMED3pXJoasiM/Are-farm-loan-waivers-really-so-bad.html>

Context:

- There has been a rising trend of farm loan waivers in country in recent times and after UP, Maharashtra and Punjab, Karnataka has also announced waivers for few categories of farmers.

What do farm loan waivers leads to?

- Farm loan waiver undermines an honest credit culture, it impacts credit discipline, it blunts incentives for future borrowers to repay
- Waivers engender moral hazard.
- It also entails at the end of the day, transfer from taxpayers to borrowers

- On account of this, overall government borrowing goes up and yields on government bonds also are impacted
- It can also lead to the crowding out of private borrowers as higher government borrowing can lead to an increase in cost of borrowing for others

Present demands and reasons behind them:

- The present demands are an outcome of the fact that the government is willing to provide for “acts of God”, not for “acts of state”
- The policy framework for farm loans has a provision that when the Centre declares a drought, farm loans in officially designated “affected districts” are rolled over, initially for a year, up to a maximum of three years
- Farmers’ problems in 2016-17 are almost entirely the outcome of demonetisation: there was no clear geographical demarcation, and there has been no rolling over of loans

What if farm loans are not waived?

- Agricultural loans by banks in India are compulsorily insured by the Agricultural Insurance Company of India (AIC)
- Its liabilities are back-stopped by the Centre through budgetary support
- Even if loans aren’t waived, there is no loss to banks
- In situations of widespread and acute farmer distress leading to substantial defaults, the Centre will have to step in and provide funds
- The difference is that waivers are borne by states, and defaults are borne by the Centre

How this all started?

- To improve farmer livelihoods and check food inflation, our agricultural strategy has been based upon persuading farmers to move away from traditional subsistence agriculture towards more commercial operations
- This entails farmers investing much more and taking higher risks

Economic consequences:

- Traditional farm finance sources like moneylenders can neither provide the requisite volume of funds nor do they allow enough margins to make risk-taking worthwhile
- Forcing farmers back to moneylenders will retard diversification, thereby increasing the risk of accelerating food inflation

The ‘sub-sovereign’ dilemma:

- At the heart of this problem are constitutional provisions
- Health of the banks is the Centre’s concern while the health of the farmers is that of the states (Center, state and concurrent lists)
- This division of responsibility is asymmetric in that if states protect the interest of farmers, they also protect banks; while the Centre can protect banks without concern for farmers

Possible solutions:

- The Centre and states need to work together to evolve a farm loan model which protects both farmers and banks without bringing politics into it
- This is the essence of “cooperative federalism”

Topic: Science and Technology

1. ISRO puts 31 satellites in space

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/isro-puts-31-satellites-in-space/article19137898.ece>

In news:

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched 31 satellites — 29 of them belonging to foreign countries — on board the PSLV-C38 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre.
- **Satellites carried:**
 - Cartosat-2 series satellite, the main payload, weighing 712 kg
 - NIUSAT, an Indian university/academic institute satellite from Noorul Islam University, Kanyakumari
 - The other 29 nano satellites belonged to 14 nations — Austria,

Belgium, Chile, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, the U.K., and the U.S.

Cartosat-2 series satellite:

- The Cartosat-2 is a remote sensing satellite, and is the sixth in the series
- It will be used for **cartographic applications , coastal land use and regulation , road network monitoring, water distribution, creation of land use maps, Land Information Systems (LIS) and Geographical Information System (GIS) applications.**

Milestone achievement:

- With the launch of the PSLV-C38, ISRO now had the confidence to put a number of satellites into different orbits- Geo Synchronous, Sun Synchronous orbit or low inclination orbit, carrying multiple satellites, in a single mission.

Practice questions

1. The city liveability Index which was in news recently is intended

1. To measure the quality of life in 116 major cities including capital cities and those with population over one million.
2. To measure the quality of life in 116 major cities including capital cities and those with population over five million.
3. To measure the quality of life in 116 major cities including capital cities and those with population over ten million.
4. None of the above

2. Consider the following statement with reference to Cartosat-2 series satellite, which was launched recently by ISRO

1. Cartosat-2 is a remote sensing satellite.
2. Cartosat-2 will be used for Land Information Systems (LIS) and Geographical Information System (GIS) applications.
3. Cartosat-2 is a weather forecasting satellite.

Identify the correct statement

1. 1 only
2. 2 only
3. 1 and 3
4. 1 and 2

3. Who among the following established the Bhil Seva Mandal in 1922?

1. Narain Malhar
2. Amritlal Vitthal das Thakkar
3. Jyotiba Phule
4. Baba Amte

4. Which among the following temples of India is known as Black Pagoda?

1. Sun Temple, Konark
2. Brihadeeswara Temple, Tanjore
3. Lord Jagannath Temple, Puri
4. Meenakshi Temple, Madurai

1. GST slabs for reference



2. Wassenaar Arrangement:

About:

- The Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies, commonly known as the Wassenaar Arrangement, is a multilateral export control regime (MECR) with 41 participating states
- The Wassenaar Arrangement was established to contribute to regional and international security and stability by promoting transparency and greater responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies, thus preventing destabilizing accumulations.
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- Every six months member countries exchange information on deliveries of conventional arms to non-Wassenaar members that fall under eight broad weapons categories:

Control List:

- The list of restricted technologies is broken into two parts, the “**List of Dual-Use Goods and**

Technologies ” (also known as the **Basic List**) and the “ **Munitions List**”.

The Basic List is composed of ten categories based on increasing levels of sophistication:

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- Category 8 – Marine
- Category 9 – Aerospace and Propulsion

Basic List has two nested subsections— **Sensitive and Very Sensitive** . Items of the Very Sensitive List include materials for stealth technology—i.e., equipment that could be used for submarine detection, advanced radar, and jet engine technologies.

- The Munitions List has 22 categories, which are not labeled.

Admission requires states to:

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- Maintain non-proliferation policies and appropriate national policies, including adherence to:
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 - Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and, where applicable, START I (including the Lisbon Protocol)
- Maintain fully effective export controls
- Admission of new members requires the consensus of all members.

The People’s Republic of China and Israel are not members, but they have aligned their export controls with Wassenaar lists, and are significant arms exporters.

New amendment : In December 2013, the list of export restricted technologies was amended to include **internet-based surveillance systems**. New technologies placed under the export control regime include “intrusion software”—software designed to defeat a computer or network’s protective measures so as to extract data or information—as well as IP network surveillance systems.

(d)

Topic: Current Affairs

Level: Moderate

Explanation:

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations for coordinating the economic, social and environmental issues, as well as for implementing internationally agreed development goals. Recently, it is in news because India has been re-elected to the United Nations ECOSOC for another 3-year term. India was among 18 nations to win election to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). India obtained 183 votes, the second highest after Japan in the Asia Pacific category. The elected members of ECOSOC for a three-year term beginning 1 January, 2018 are Belarus, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Germany, Ghana, India, Ireland, Japan, Malawi, Mexico, Morocco, Philippines, Spain, Sudan, Togo, Turkey and Uruguay. The headquarters of the ECOSOC is located in New York, United States.

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Topic: Polity

1. EC disqualifies Minister in M.P.

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/ec-disqualifies-minister-in-mp/article19143645.ece>

In news:

- The Election Commission **disqualified** Narottam Mishra, Minister in the Madhya Pradesh government from **membership of any State legislature and contesting polls for the next three years** .
- **Why?:** for filing wrong accounts of election expenditure.
- Mr. Mishra's membership has been revoked under **section 10A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951** , to be read with Sections 77 and 78 of the Act.

Basic Information:

- **Section 10A. Disqualification for failure to lodge account of election expenses.**—If the Election Commission is satisfied that a person—
 - (a) has failed to lodge an account of election expenses, within the time and in the manner required by or under this Act, and
 - (b) has no good reason or justification for the failure, the Election Commission shall, by order published in the Official Gazette, declare him to be disqualified and any such person shall be disqualified for a period of three years from the date of the order.
- **Section 77. Account of election expenses and maximum thereof.**—
 - (1) Every candidate at an election shall, either by himself or by his election agent, keep a separate and correct account of all expenditure in connection with the election incurred or authorised by him or by his election agent between 2[the date on which he has been nominated] and the date of declaration of the result thereof, both dates inclusive.
3[4]Explanation 1.—For the removal of doubts, it is hereby declared that

 - (a) the expenditure incurred by leaders of a political party on account of travel by air or by any other means of transport for propagating programme of the political party shall not be deemed to be the expenditure in connection with the election incurred or authorised by a candidate of that political party or his election agent for the purposes of this sub-section;
 - (b) any expenditure incurred in respect of any arrangements made, facilities provided or any other act or thing done by any person in the service of the Government and belonging to any of the classes mentioned in clause (7) of section 123 in the discharge or purported discharge of his official duty as mentioned in the proviso to that clause shall not be deemed to be expenditure in connection with the election incurred or authorised by a candidate or by his election agent for the purposes of this sub-section.

Explanation 2.—For the purpose of clause (a) of Explanation 1, the expression “leaders of a political party”, in respect of

any election, means,—

(i) where such political party is a recognised political party, such persons not exceeding forty in number, and

(ii) where such political party is other than a recognised political party, such persons not exceeding twenty in number, whose names have been communicated to the Election Commission and the Chief Electoral Officers of the States by the political party to be leaders for the purposes of such election, within a period of seven days from the date of the notification for such election published in the Gazette of India or Official Gazette of the State, as the case may be, under this Act: Provided that a political party may, in the case where any of the persons referred to in clause (i) or, as the case may be, in clause (ii) dies or ceases to be a member of such political party, by further communication to the Election Commission and the Chief Electoral Officers of the States, substitute new name, during the period ending immediately before forty-eight hours ending with the hour fixed for the conclusion of the last poll for such election, for the name of such person died or ceased to be a member, for the purposes of designating the new leader in his place.]]

(2) The account shall contain such particulars, as may be prescribed.

(3) The total of the said expenditure shall not exceed such amount as may be prescribed.]

- **Section 78. Lodging of account with the 2[district election officer].**

(1)] Every contesting candidate at an election shall, within thirty days from the date of election of the returned candidate or, if there are more than one returned candidate at the election and the dates of their election are different, the later of those two dates, lodge with the 2[district election officer] an account of his election expenses which shall be a true copy of the account kept by him or by his election agent under section 77.]

1. Red carpet welcome awaits Modi

[### Context:](http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/red-carpet>Welcome awaits modi/article19143416.ece</p></div><div data-bbox=)

- **India-U.S relations.**
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first meeting with President Donald Trump on 26th June.

In news:

- Mr. Modi will be the first foreign dignitary who will be hosted by Mr. Trump for a White House dinner.(Mr. Trump hosted Chinese President Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe for state dinners at his private golf resort Mar-a-Lago in Florida.)
- **Prime focus areas:**
- Defence cooperation- The Obama administration had designated India as a ‘major defence partner’, an undefined term.
- Cooperation in energy- particularly natural gas
- Anti-terrorism cooperation
- Willingness to increase information sharing, data sharing, access to data bases, regarding terrorist activities



- **Nod to drone request** Indian request for 22 unarmed Guardian drones would be cleared during the visit
- **U.S Concerns:** seek for stronger IPR protection in India and lowering trade barriers.

Topic: World Affairs

1. Frustration again for India at NSG meet

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/frustration-again-for-india-at-nsg-meet/article19142456.ece>

Context:

- The annual plenary meeting of the Nuclear Suppliers Group in the Swiss capital of Berne on June 22 and 23 ended without agreeing on India's case for a membership.

In news:

- The 48 member states agreed to convene another meeting on the subject of non-signatories to the Non Proliferation Treaty, such as India and Pakistan, in another five months.
- **Berne meeting:** The NSG had discussions on the issue of 'Technical, Legal and Political Aspects of the Participation of non-NPT States in the NSG'.

India's Special relation with NSG:

- NSG group granted nuclear waiver to India in 2008 to conduct nuclear business.
- The NSG said the Berne plenary had "continued to consider all aspects of the implementation of the 2008 Statement on Civil Nuclear Cooperation with India and discussed the NSG relationship with India".
- The "technical, legal and political aspects" phrase in the NSG statement is part of a process decided on in 2016, when India and Pakistan had both formally applied for membership to build criteria for admitting non-NPT members.
- India would prefer to see a "case-by-case" basis membership process employed, given it has an impeccable record on nuclear transparency compared to Pakistan, which is accused of nuclear smuggling.

1. Qatar says Saudi-led demands not 'reasonable'

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/qatar-says-saudi-led-demands-not-reasonable/article19141117.ece>

Context: Ongoing tussle between Gulf Countries and Qatar.

In news:

- Saudi Arabia has imposed a **13-point list of demands** to be fulfilled by Qatar, in order to remove the embargos which were imposed.
- **Some of the demands are:**
- They require Doha to join Riyadh and its allies in outlawing the Muslim Brotherhood, which it has long supported.
- They also require it to close Iran's embassy and a base on its territory operated by its ally Turkey, as well as to shut Al-Jazeera television.
- Qatar is also required to end all contacts with opposition groups in the four countries — Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.
- **Qatar response:**
- This blockade is not aimed at fighting terrorism but at impinging on Qatar's sovereignty and interfering in its foreign policy.

Topic: Health Issues

1. World drug report stresses drug-terror link

<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/world-drug-report-stresses-drug-terror-link-4719390/>

Context:

- A World Drug Report is released by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
- It reiterates the important role drugs play in funding organised crime and stresses the link between drugs and terror

In news:

- Terrorists and non-state armed groups are profiting from the drug

trade

- By some estimates, up to 85% of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan is in territory under influence of the Taliban
- However, evidence on the organised crime-terrorism nexus remains patchy at best

ISIS and Drugs

- The Report refers to media reports to talk about claims that the Islamic State and other armed groups in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic produce and consume captagon tablet
- Captagon tablet is typically amphetamine mixed with caffeine
- The group operates in an area likely to be a manufacturing hub

Drugs in West Africa

- Boko Haram has helped drug traffickers smuggle heroin and cocaine across West Africa, says the report
- Some evidence suggests that Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb has been involved in cannabis and cocaine trafficking, or protecting traffickers
- The report estimated that in 2015 about a quarter of a billion people used drugs

Basic Information:

World drug report:

- The World Drug Report is a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime annual publication
- It analyzes market trends, compiling detailed statistics on drug markets
- Using data, it helps draw conclusions about drugs as an issue needing intervention by government agencies around the world
- To celebrate 20 years since its inception, the World Drug Report 2017 presented a new five-booklet format

Topic: Economic

1. M-banking now under ombudsman's purview

[**http://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/ombudsman-can-rule-on-mobile-transactions/article19136267.ece**](http://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/ombudsman-can-rule-on-mobile-transactions/article19136267.ece)

In News:

- The Reserve Bank of India has widened the scope of the Banking Ombudsman Scheme 2006
- A customer can now lodge a complaint against the bank for non-adherence to instructions related to mobile banking and electronic banking services

Pecuniary jurisdiction widened

- The pecuniary jurisdiction of the Banking Ombudsman to pass an award has been increased from the existing Rs. 10 lakh to Rs. 20 lakh
- Compensation (not exceeding Rs. 1 lakh) can also be awarded by the Banking Ombudsman to the complainant for loss of time, expenses incurred as also harassment and mental anguish suffered by the complainant

Basic Information:

Banking Ombudsman Scheme 2006

- The Banking Ombudsman Scheme enables an expeditious and inexpensive forum to bank customers for resolution of complaints relating to certain services rendered by banks
- The Banking Ombudsman is a senior official appointed by the Reserve Bank of India to redress customer complaints against deficiency in certain banking services
- All Scheduled Commercial Banks, Regional Rural Banks and Scheduled Primary Co-operative Banks are covered under the Scheme
- The Banking Ombudsman can receive and consider any complaint

- relating to the following deficiency in banking services (including internet banking + now mobile banking)
- One can file a complaint before the Banking Ombudsman if the reply is not received from the bank within a period of one month after the bank concerned has received one's representation, or the bank rejects the complaint, or if the complainant is not satisfied with the reply given by the bank
 - If one is not satisfied with the decision passed by the Banking Ombudsman, one can approach the appellate authority against the Banking Ombudsmen's decision. Appellate Authority is vested with a Deputy Governor of the RBI

G.S. Paper -4

Drunk driving puts you at a crossroads

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Vijayawada/a-novel-punishment-for-traffic-offenders-in-guntur/article19141711.ece>

- A new innovative approach devised by the Guntur's second class magistrate Santha Kumari, Andhra Pradesh to deal with cases related to drink and drive offence.
- Hefty fine
- Help police man to regulate traffic at a crowded road junction.

Prelims worthy factual information

Kovalam Beaches:

- Kovalam has three beaches separated by rocky outcroppings in its 17 km coastline, the three together form the famous crescent of the Kovalam beach.
- **Lighthouse Beach:** The southernmost beach, the Lighthouse Beach is the one most frequented by tourists, Lighthouse Beach got its name due to the old Vizhinjam Lighthouse located on a 35 meter high on top of the **Kurumkal hillock**.
- **Hawah Beach:** Eve's Beach, more commonly known as Hawa Beach, ranks second, in the early day, is a beehive of activities with

fishermen setting out for sea. With a high rock promontory and a calm bay of blue waters, this beach paradise creates a unique aquarelle on moonlit nights.

- **Samudra Beach:** A large promontory separates this part from the southern side. Samudra Beach doesn't have tourists thronging there or hectic business. The local fishermen ply their trade on this part.
- The sands on the beaches in Kovalam are partially black in colour due to the presence of **ilmenite and Monazite** .

Practice questions

1. The sands on the beaches in Kovalam are partially black in colour due to the presence of

1. Ilmenite
2. Monazite.
3. Both A and B
4. Neither A nor B

2. Hawah Beach is found in which state?

1. Kerala
2. Tamil Nadu
3. Andhra Pradesh
4. Goa

3. Which of the following parts of constitution explicitly mentions that India is a secular state?

1. Preamble
2. Fundamental Rights
3. Directive Principles of state policy
4. The Union

4. With reference to the State Legislative Council in India, which among the following statements is / are correct?

1. The Legislative Council is a continuing House & two-third of the

members retire in two years.

2. Members of local bodies elect one-third of the total number of members of the legislative council
3. If a state legislative council is to be created or abolished , a resolution to that effect is to be first passed by the State legislature by a two-third majority

Choose the correct option from the codes given below:

1. Only 1 & 2
2. Only 2 & 3
3. Only 1 & 3
4. 1, 2 & 3

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B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. U'hand govt approaches SC challenging human status of Ganga, Yamuna

Context:

- **Uttarakhand High Court March 20 order:** bestowed on Ganga, Yamuna and their tributaries the status of living human entities and declares the state chief secretary as their local guardian (loco parentis)
- The Uttarakhand government has moved the Supreme Court challenging the High Court order granting rivers Ganga, Yamuna and their tributaries the status of living human entities.
- The state government has urged the apex court to consider “substantial questions of law” arising from the verdict.

Petition questions:

- Whether in case of human casualties in a flood, the affected people can file suit for damages against the chief secretary of the state and whether state government would be liable to bear such financial burden.
- The order was passed by the high court in spite of the fact that these rivers and their tributaries pass through different states through the jurisdiction of different governments.
- Citing the provisions under **item no. 56 of the union list of the 7th Schedule (Article 246) of the Constitution**, the petition also says it is the sole constituent right of the Union government to frame out rules for efficacious management of all the inter-state rivers and hence whether or not it will be within the powers of the state of Uttarakhand to declare the river Ganga and Yamuna as legal persons or living entities.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Indo-U.S. statement focusses on fight against terrorism

Context: Visit of Indian Prime Minister to U.S.

In news:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. President Donald Trump jointly declared that bilateral ties between India and the U.S. would continue to grow, seeking to dispel notions that the latter’s election to the White House on a nationalist agenda might have a negative impact on the relationship.
- Modi invited the President’s daughter Ivanka to lead the U.S. delegation to the **Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES)** which India will host later this year.

Important announcement made:

- Fight against terrorism as a cornerstone of mutual cooperation between the countries.
- Continuing the course on strategic convergence in Asia Pacific, increasing defence trade partnership and added energy as a new thrust area of cooperation.
- Sale of Guardian drones, Apache attack helicopters, and C-17 aircraft, defence orders by India for American companies will be nearly \$19 billion.

About Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES):

- The summit will promote economic growth, inclusion and opportunities among entrepreneurs from across the world, with a special focus on emerging nations from Africa and Asia. The GES is a personal initiative of US President Barack Obama to bring entrepreneurs from across the globe on one platform.

2. Faster entry for Indians

In news:

- India recently signed International Expedited Traveler Initiative Programme with the United States. Also called as Global Entry Programme, this scheme will allow expedited entry into the US to low-risk travellers from India., with India making a formal entry into an American initiative.
- The move would facilitate closer business and educational ties between the citizens of India and the U.S.

What is Global Entry Programme?

- Global Entry is a US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) program that allows speedy clearance for low-risk travellers upon their arrival in US.
- The travellers are pre-approved for the programme after a rigorous background check. In-person interviews are also taken to check the ‘low-risk’ status of the applicants before the enrollment. Apart from this, the travellers may further be questioned when they enter the United States in case the need arises.

Which countries are members of this programme?

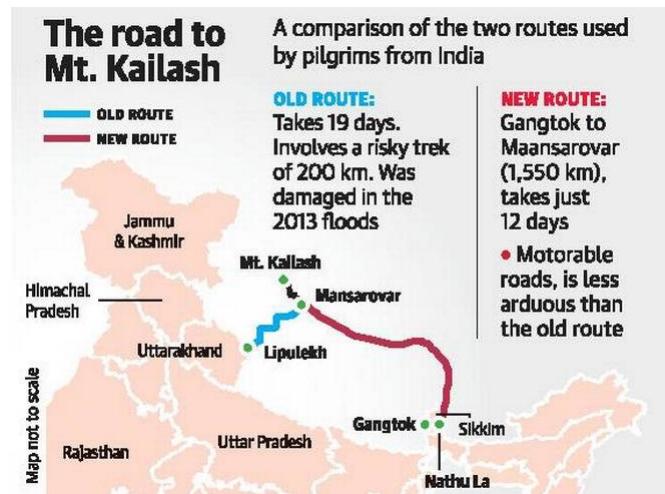
- Apart from India, citizens of Colombia, United Kingdom, Germany, Panama, Singapore are eligible to become members of this programme. South Korea and Mexican nationals are also included under Global Entry Programme. Canadian residents can apply for enrollment under this through their membership in NEXUS programme.

3. Netherlands backs UNSC, NSG bids

In news:

Key point: The Netherlands backed India's early entry into the NSG and other multilateral export control regimes, and supported the country's bid for a permanent UN Security Council seat.

4. China protests against 'incursion'



Context:

- China confirmed that it had suspended the entry of Indian pilgrims undertaking the **Kailash Mansarovar Yatra** and lodged a formal protest with New Delhi, following an **alleged cross-border incursion by Indian troops**.

In news:

- Chinese Defence Ministry said in a statement that the occurrence at the frontier was "**seriously endangering the peace and stability of the border areas**."

Incident took place:

- Doka La region** along the Sikkim-Bhutan-Tibet tri-junction.
- Face-offs between Indian and Chinese troops in this area are rare in recent years.

Chinese Foreign Ministry view:

- The area where the border incident took place is undisputed, as it has been delineated and endorsed in the past.
- The Sino-Indian border of Sikkim** has been delineated by the **1890 Sino-British Treaty on Tibetan Customs**. After the independence of India, the Indian government has confirmed this in writing several times, acknowledging that there is no objection to the border between the two sides.

Indian Defence Ministry view : Indian troops recently crossed the border in an attempt to block a road construction in Donglang (Doklam) area by the Chinese.

5. WHO for use of devices to test multiple diseases

One-stop shop for disease testing

The new multi-disease testing device is

- The size of a microwave oven
- Can run molecular tests
- Can diagnose TB and HIV infection
- Can measure the viral loads of Hepatitis C
- Has been encouraged for use in multi-disease testing by the WHO



In news:

- The World Health Organization (WHO) released new advice to countries, recommending the use of **multi-disease testing devices for Tuberculosis, HIV and Hepatitis**.
- A single device called the **GeneXpert** can be used to diagnose TB and HIV infections, and quantitatively measure HIV and hepatitis C viral loads.
- India recently procured 600 GeneXpert machines for the National Tuberculosis programme.
- **Advantages:**
 - Multi-disease devices can increase system efficiencies and improve access to testing for patients in need.
 - Such devices can also help overcome specific challenges in diagnosis and treatment, such as HIV early infant diagnosis and viral load monitoring for both HIV and hepatitis

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. [Bihar bets big on nuclear power; plans 3,000 MW plant](#)

Context : In its attempt to become power surplus and increase the share of renewable energy, the Bihar government has planned to set up a nuclear plant

Location: Rajauli in Nawada district.

Capacity: around 3,000 MW capacity.

2. ['Men preferred over women in hiring'](#)

Highlights of **Randstad Workmonitor survey** :

- Reality in corporate hiring: **men are preferred to women even if the two are equally qualified**.
- 55% of overall respondents from India indicated that men are favoured over women when two candidates are equally qualified for the same set of responsibilities.
- **Gender pay gap:** 91% of respondents from India believed that both men and women in similar roles were rewarded equally at their workplace, much higher than the global average of 79%.
- **Promotion:** 88% felt that both men and women were equally supported while seeking a promotion

Way forwards : All the corporate and government initiatives are just a start, the real change can happen only when we succeed in addressing the deep-rooted mindsets about the role of women at work.

3. ['Few household items may be cheaper on GST'](#)

In news:

- **Cheaper:** The Goods and Services Tax will make **several household commodities** like soap cheaper.
- **How?** Household items like soap, which were earlier taxed at 31% combining central and state taxes, will now be in the 18% bracket.
- **'Equivalence principle':** The equivalence principle followed in setting the rates in GST was based on what the rate on a good or service was prior to June 30 combining the centre's excise duty and the states' VAT.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY – DEFENSE

1. Global wave of cyberattacks affects MNCs

In news:

- A global wave of cyberattacks that began in Russia and Ukraine wrought havoc on government and corporate computer systems as it spread to Western Europe and across the Atlantic.
- **Target:** Several multinational companies including U.S. pharmaceutical giant Merck, Russian state oil giant Rosneft, British advertising giant WPP and the French industrial group Saint-Gobain.
- **“Petrwrap” virus:** “Petrwrap”, a modified version of the Petya ransomware which hit last year and demanded money from victims in exchange for the return of their data.
- **‘Unprecedented attack’:** radiation monitoring system at Ukraine’s Chernobyl nuclear site has been taken offline after it was targeted in the attack

Basic Information

CERT-In:

The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) is an office within the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

It is the nodal agency to deal with cyber security threats like hacking and phishing. It strengthens security-related defence of the Indian Internet domain.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in May, 2016 between Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) and Ministry of Cabinet Office, UK.

Earlier CERT-In signed MoUs with counterpart/similar organizations in about seven countries - Korea, Canada, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan and Uzbekistan.

Ministry of External Affairs has also signed MoU with Cyber Security as one of the areas of cooperation with **Shanghai Cooperation Organization**.

With the MoUs, participating countries can exchange technical information on Cyber response to cyber security incidents and find solutions to counter the cyber attacks.

They can also exchange information on prevalent cyber security policies and best practices.

The MoUs helps to strengthen cyber space of signing countries, capacity building and relationship between them.

2. Setting up the defence industrial ecosystem

Context: India can become self sufficient in Defence Sector

Recent developments:

- Recently, Tata Advanced Systems Ltd and US plane-maker Lockheed Martin Corp. have signed an agreement at the Paris Air Show to produce F-16 fighter jets in India
- Reliance Defence entered into a strategic partnership with Serbia's Yugoimport for ammunition manufacturing in India
- And Reliance Defence joined hands with France's Thales to set up a joint venture that will develop Indian capabilities in radars and high-tech airborne electronics

India's tag of world's largest importer

- According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Sipri), between 2012 and 2016, India was the world's largest importer of major arms
- India accounts for 13% of the global total defence equipments(of imports)
- India has increased its arms imports by 43% from the 2007-11 period

Steps taken in recent years to remove this tag

- In recent years there has been a greater focus on developing indigenous capabilities by India, through technology transfers and joint production projects with international partners
- Government is also focusing on the Make in India initiative in the defence sector
- The defence manufacturing industry has been open to the private sector from last decade
- Several foreign firms are involved in the joint production of weapons systems in India

Government's Target

- The target is to source about 70% of India's military needs from domestic sources by 2020
- That's approximately how much India imports at the moment

Current Status

- The Indian military is still heavily reliant on foreign imports and state-owned defence firms are still the dominant force in the market
- Private sector is still finding its right place

What is Strategic Partnership model?

- This model was conceptualized by the Dhirendra Singh committee in 2015
- In this model, Defence ministry identifies Indian private companies as strategic partners (SPs) to tie up with a few foreign original equipment manufacturers to produce some important military platforms

The way forward

- The role of small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) needs to be identified with an effective policy
- Outside of policy design, the biggest challenge to developing India's defence industry ecosystem is human resource and skill development
- This needs to be addressed

D. GS4 Related

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3. Draft National Energy Policy: Niti Aayog suggests to convert CIL subsidiary companies
4. Govt. unveils new hydrocarbon policy
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Internal Security

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Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. PLA constructing road in disputed territory: Bhutan

Context: India-China-Bhutan tri-junction road.

In news:

- **Chinese:** road is being constructed in the indisputable part of its own territory.
- **Bhutanese:** Road construction by the Chinese army is a “a progression” towards camp of the Royal Bhutan Army at Zom Perli and it is being constructed in the disputed area.
- China and Bhutan have held 24 rounds of talks, with the latest one held in August 2016, to discuss the disputed part of the border. As per the talks held the two sides had committed to maintain peace along the border and refrain from unilateral action to change the status quo.
- **Chinese Ministry of Foreign affairs:** the current impasse with India, including the area of Donglong(Dok La) is a part of Chinese territory since ancient times and it does not belong neither to India nor to Bhutan. The boundary between China and Bhutan has not been delimited and no third party should interfere in this matter.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. [Govt. to shed stake in loss-making AI](#)

Context: disinvestment of debt ridden national carrier –Air India

In news:

- Disinvestment decided as a way out for the debt-ridden flag carrier
- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister met and took the following decisions:
 - In-principle approval for strategic disinvestment of Air India and five of its subsidiaries
 - Constitution of an Air-India specific Alternative Mechanism to decide the following:
 - Treatment of unsustainable debt;
 - Hiving off certain assets to a **shell company** .
 - Demerger and strategic disinvestment of three profit making subsidiaries
 - Quantum of **disinvestment**
 - Universe of bidders.
 - A group of ministers under Finance Minister has been formed to work out the modalities for the strategic sale.

Key facts:

- Air India has been posting losses for more than a decade.
- Nationalization of Air India:1953-54

What are shell companies?

- A shell company is described as a non-trading organization that does not engage in any activity but exists only as medium for another organization’s business activity.
- Shell companies are usually listed on the stock exchange and are not illegal inherently; however a large number of them are used as a vehicle for illegal activities like tax avoidance or for trying to cover up a trail of money. These companies exist only on paper and have no physical presence.

2. [Niti Aayog moots new regulator for coal, gas](#)

In news:

- Niti Aayog has suggested creation of regulators for coal as well as oil and gas.
- Reasons for not having a regulator till now:
 - Strong presence of PSU’s and
 - Limited number of private operators.

3. [Draft National Energy Policy: Niti Aayog suggests to convert CIL subsidiaries into separate companies](#)

In news:

- NITI Aayog has Released the Draft National Energy Policy
- Draft of the policy aims to find a way to achieve the energy security targets announced by the government

Recommendations by NITI Aayog:

- Niti Aayog has recommended that the seven subsidiaries of India's largest coal miner Coal India Ltd should be converted into independent companies
- And these subsidiaries be allowed to compete against each other in the open market

NITI Aayog's Criticism:

- Niti Aayog has criticised Coal India setting prices that are significantly higher than the implicit cost of mining by the independent power producers
- NITI Aayog has also pushed for higher production from private coal miners

4. Govt. unveils new hydrocarbon policy

In news:

- Petroleum Ministry introduced a new oil and gas block licensing policy – **Open Acreage Licensing policy and The National Data Repository**, that is expected to open up 2.8 million square kilometers of sedimentary basins to exploration and production activities.

National Data Repository:

- Lack of sedimentary data had been hampering oil and gas exploration and production.
- 52% of India's basin had not been apprised yet.
- Repository is expected to improve the situation.

Open Acreage Licensing policy:

- The OALP, is a part of government's Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy.
- It gives exploration companies the option to select the exploration blocks on their own, without having to wait for the formal bid round from the government.
- The company then submits an application to the government, which puts that block up for bid.
- Initially the applications and related bids for the blocks would be held twice a year- January and July- this could be held more frequently as the industry becomes used to the new model.

Industrialists opinion:

- Policy reiterates governments commitment to reduce administrative and regulatory burden, thus enhancing ease of doing business.
- A single license to explore all forms of hydrocarbons, no oil cess , reduced rates of royalty are just few of many enabling provisions which will stimulate the investments in the sector.
- Reduce import dependence and helps India to achieve energy security.

5. Sri Lanka, India to setup solar unit soon

Location : Eastern port town Trincomalee , Sri Lanka

In news:

- **April 2017:** both the governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding, for cooperation in a host of development projects including the setting up if a Liquefied Natural Gas(LNG) plant in suburban Colombo and a solar power plant in Sampur, Trincomalee.
- **Sampur:** India and Sri Lanka have agreed to jointly operate a world war era oil storage facility in the town, with the aim of developing it into a regional petroleum hub.
- The proposed solar power plant is in line with Soorya Bala Sangramaya(Battle for Solar Energy), an initiative that President Sirisena launched last year to add 220MW of solar power to Sri Lanka's energy grid by 2020.
- Currently Sri Lanka relies heavily on thermal sources that meet 70% of country's energy needs.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY – DEFENSE

1. Not much impact of ransomware attack on India, says govt

Context: Petya global ransomware spread to India.

In news:

- Govt is closely monitoring the situation and there has been no large scale impact on India yet.

Petya :

- The Petya ransomware not only encrypts the file, but it locks the entire disk, making it basically unusable until the infection is removed.
- Petya also overwrites and encrypts the aster boot record.
- The ransomware waits for up to 60minutes post infection to initiate a system reboot, post which a ransom message is displayed.
- It shuts down the system and asks for a ransom of \$300 in bitcoins on reboots.
- The Pety/ Notpetya ransomware is the second major global ransomware since WannaCry hit over 3,00,000 computers worldwide.
- It uses Eternal Blue exploit as one of the means to propagate itself.

Experts warning:

- Bigger damage this time due to Petya as it is much more “professional attempt”
- WannaCry’s damage was quickly minimized due to “sloppy coding”.

Country’s impacted:

- Ukraine seems to be the most impacted by ransomware.
- Other countries- Russia, UK, US and India .

Measures for protection:

- Make sure Microsoft Windows and all third party software’s are updated.
- Don’t open attachment in unsolicited e-mails.
- Never click on a URL contained in an unsolicited e-mail, even if the link seems benign.
- Maintain updated anti-virus software on all system.
- Ensure the web browser is secured enough with appropriate content controls.
- Individuals or organizations are not encouraged to pay the ransom as this does not ensure files will be released. Report such instance of fraud to CERT-In (Computer Emergency Response team- India) and Law enforcement agencies.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [GSAT-17 to add teeth to ISRO satellite fleet](#)

In news:

- GSAT-17, the country’s newest communication satellite to be launched, will soon join the fleet of 17 working Indian communication satellite in space and augment their overall working capacity.
- GSAT-17 mainly built for broadcasting, telecommunication and VSAT services, carries over 40 transponder.
- To be launched from European sea port of Kourou in French Guiana.

2. [Air pollutants on solar panel cut power generation by 17%](#)

Study: published in the journal Environmental science and Technology letters, based on the samples collected from multiple solar panels located at IIT, Gandhinagar.

Highlights:

- **Particulate matter-** dust, black carbon and organic carbon from bio-mass burning and fossil fuel- deposited on the solar panel and present in the ambient air is responsible for about 17% reduction in solar power generation.
- **Key fact:** The centre has set an ambitious renewable energy target of 175GW by 2022.
- Dust and non-dust particulate matter deposited on the solar panels and present in the air prevent shortwave solar radiation from reaching the panels, thereby reducing energy production.

- **Man made particles:** organic carbon, black carbon and ions produced from sources linked to human activity has higher influence on reducing solar energy production compared to the natural dusts.
- Man – made particles are also small and sticky, making them much more difficult to clean off.
- **Efficient emission control measure is required to maximize solar energy generation.**

3. Painless patch could replace flu jab: Study

In news:

- Vaccines delivered via a disposable patch; this could possibly eliminate the requirement for needle and syringe flu injections in the near future.
- The patches are equipped with micro needles-long enough to penetrate the skin –embedded in each patch dissolves within minutes when exposed to moisture from the body.
- The new technology can be self-administered and stored without refrigeration (remains stable even at 40 degree Celsius), making it significantly cheaper than the traditional ones.
- Adhesive holds the patch close the skin while vaccine is released and can be peeled away after 20minutes and discarded.

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- Election for the post will be conducted on August 5.

In news:

- The Election Commission said a notification to this effect would be issued on July 4. Contestants can file nominations till July 18, while the last date for the withdrawal of candidatures is July 21. The counting will be done on August 5.

What does the constitution of India say?

- An election to fill the vacancy to be caused by the expiration of the term of office of the outgoing Vice-President needs to be completed before the expiration of the term of the present incumbent.
- The Vice-President is elected by the Electoral College consisting of members of both the Houses of Parliament in accordance with the system of proportional representation, by means of single transferable vote. The nominated members of Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha are also eligible to participate in the election.
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Presidential and Vice Presidential Election Act, 1952:

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Context:

- On June 21, the Karnataka assembly Speaker ordered the imprisonment of two journalists for a year based on recommendations in two separate reports of its privilege committees
- Though dozens of people are summoned every year before the privileges committees of Parliament and state legislatures on charges of breach of privilege of legislators, it is rare that punitive action like imprisonment has been ordered
- With no codified laws for what constitutes a breach of privilege offence or prescriptions for punishment, this is largely a grey area in legal terms

What provisions of the Constitution protect the privileges of the legislature?

- Article 105 pertains to the powers, privileges, etc, of Parliament, its members and committees
- Article 194, which is identical to 105, protects the privileges and powers of the houses of legislature, their members and committees in the states
- These sections protect the freedom of speech of parliamentarians and legislators
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What are the origins of the privileges?

- These are derived from the British House of Commons

- The privileges are reported to have originated when a nascent British parliament was attempting to establish itself in the light of monarchy

What constitutes a breach of privilege?

- These powers and privileges are not codified
- There are no clearly laid out rules on what constitutes breach of privilege and what punishment it entails
- In Karnataka, privileges panels often refer to Practice and Procedure of Parliament by M N Kaul to define breach of privilege
- As per book, “It is a breach of privilege and contempt of the House to make speeches or to print or publish any libel reflecting on the character or proceedings of the house, its committees or any member of the house relating to his character or conduct as a member of Parliament”

What is the criticism of this provision?

- It is sometimes used to counter media criticism of legislators and as a substitute for legal proceedings
- All persons have a right to trial by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal
- Breach of privilege laws allow politicians to become judges in their own cause, raising concerns of conflict of interest and violating basic fair trial guarantees

What is the procedure in privilege cases?

- All state legislatures have special privilege committees comprising 10 to 12 legislators as members and usually headed by a senior politician from the ruling party
- Whenever a legislator has a complaint he can send a letter to the committee
- These matters can pertain to the sidelining of a legislator by government employees when it comes to projects and initiatives, impolite behaviour by government servants, not being invited to public events etc
- The committee will begin proceedings as per the Criminal Procedure Code
- The accused person is summoned and an inquiry is conducted by the committee and based on findings a recommendation is made to the legislature
- When the matter is tabled in the legislature, a debate can be initiated on the report
- Based on the assertions of the House the Speaker can order the punishment as defined by the privileges committee or order otherwise

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu to visit India later this year](#)

In news:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel next week will be reciprocated by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu later this year.
- 2017 year marks the celebration of 25th year of full relations between India and Israel.

July 4- 6: P.M Modi's visit to Israel-

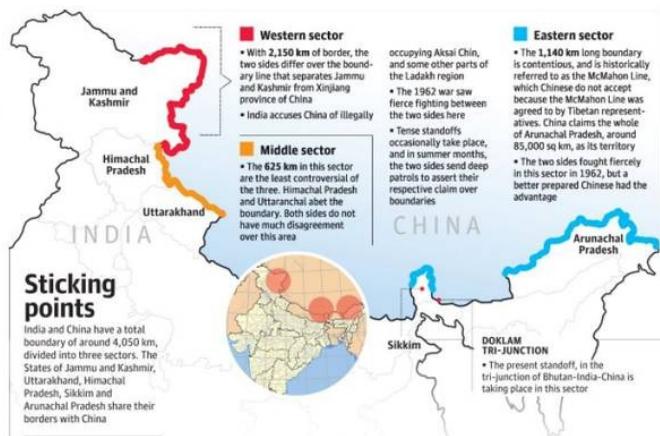
- The visit will see the partnership being upgraded to a “Strategic Partnership” on issues like water, agriculture, science and technology, and space.
- The leaders are expected to sign MoUs to upgrade ties in more than 30 areas, including cybersecurity, agriculture, tourism, health, connectivity, education, Ganga rejuvenation and “attracting Bollywood”.

- Both sides will also commit \$40 million to an Industrial Research & Development fund to encourage applied scientific research, using Israeli innovation and Indian expertise.
- Issues regarding air connectivity between India and Israel would be taken up during the visit. Despite close ties, there are no direct flights between the capitals of the countries.

Key fact: Israel is one of India's largest arms suppliers. In April, India signed a \$2 billion deal with an Israeli firm for advanced medium – **range surface-to-air missiles (MRSAMs)**, the biggest such deal for the Israeli industry.

2. Army, PLA in a tug of war over Doklam Plateau

Doklam Plateau:



- The Doklam Plateau, north of the tri-junction between Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet by Indian claim, is not just a disputed area, but has huge **strategic significance** for both India and China.
- Wedged between Bhutan, India and China are few areas of dispute — together accounting for just over 750 square kilometres.
- Among the disputed areas is Doklam (also called Donglang in China), which is just about 90 square kilometres where the present dispute is taking place.

Strategic significance:



- Chinese to reach the China-Bhutan border posts, Doklam provides an easy way to construct their road, and they have been trying to do so and India has consistently objected to it.
- Not very far from Doklam is the strategically important **Chumbi Valley** in the Tibetan region, to which Chinese are now planning to expand their rail connectivity.

Bigger buffer: according to India perspective, Doklam acts as a bigger buffer to its sensitive Chicken's

Neck, or the **Siliguri Corridor**, which is an extremely narrow stretch of land that connects the north-eastern region to the rest of India. From the Chumbi Valley it is just a little over 100 kilometres away.

Skirmish between India and China

- **Bunkers destroyed:** Chinese are believed to have destroyed temporary bunkers of the Indian Army.
- Indian Army is accused of objecting to a road construction by the Chinese side on the disputed area. There was also an incident of jostling among the soldiers of the two sides.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Reforms, CEZs to aid growth

In news:

- NITI Aayog vice chairman Arvind Panagariya pitched in for labour, land and agriculture reforms along with development of coastal economic zones (CEZs) and new cities to help India achieve rapid economic growth.
- Speaking at a discussion on 'NITI Action Agenda and the Indian Economy' organised by the Reserve Bank of India, Mr . Panagariya suggested that **India should undertake projects with a lower gestation period, similar to China** .
- The **three-year action plan** — prepared after extensive consultation with state governments — that was recently released by NITI Aayog enlists 300 specific action points.

The Aayog has also proposed reduction of **fiscal deficit to 3%** of the GDP by 2018-19 and the **revenue deficit to 0.9%** of the GDP by 2019-20.

2. GST transition to pose hurdles: ADB

In news:

- Asian Development Bank president Takehiko Nakao termed the roll-out of the Goods and Services Tax as an important reform achievement of the NDA government, but suggested that it could pose challenges on account of several factors — **especially the multiplicity of tax rates** .

Focus areas: India must put more energy into reforms of its labour and land acquisition laws as well as regulations governing foreign direct investment so that the economy can grow faster than countries like China on a sustained basis.

- Nakao said the impact of GST on the economy is difficult to gauge at this stage but its biggest benefit would be the integration of the Indian economy into a single market.
- The **dual tax enforcement structure India has adopted** – whereby both States and the Centre would be in charge of enforcement – could be problematic too.
- Nakao said it is time for India to take advantage of its young working age population by inviting more investment from within and outside the country.

Other focus areas:

- Labour rules still need rationalization
- Regulations for FDI should be further reformed.
- Land acquisition is a very politically difficult issue, the States and authorities should address it.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY – DEFENSE

1. India worst hit in APAC by Petya: Symantec

In news:

- India has been the **worst hit** country in the **Asia Pacific region** and the seventh most impacted nation worldwide by the **Petya ransomware**, according to cybersecurity service provider **Symantec**.
- As per findings by Symantec, Ukraine was worst hit by the ransomware, followed by the U.S., Russia, France, the U.K., Germany, India China and Japan.

How Petya is inserted into networks?

- MEDoc, a tax and accounting software package, is used for the initial insertion of Petya into corporate networks. MEDoc is widely used in Ukraine, indicating that organizations in that country were the primary target
- After gaining an initial foothold, Petya uses a variety of methods to spread across corporate networks.

Petya ransomware:

- The Petya ransomware was the second big scale cyberattack after WannaCry in May.
- The Petya ransomware not only encrypts files, it locks the entire disk, making it basically unusable until the infection is removed.
- It shuts down the system after the infection and asks for ransom of \$300 in bitcoins on rebooting.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Communication satellite GSAT-17 launched from French Guiana

In news:

- GSAT-17, the country's newly launched communication satellite, will soon join the fleet of 17 working Indian communication satellites in space and augment their overall capacity to some extent.
- **Launching station:** space port of Kourou in French Guiana.
- GSAT-17 was sent up as the second passenger on the European booster, Ariane-5 ECA VA-238.
- Operational areas: for broadcasting, telecommunication and VSAT services, carries over 40 transponders. It also has equipment to aid meteorology forecasts and search and rescue operations across the sub-continent.

2. India gets a sharper eye in the sky

In news:

- Cartosat-2E, is the third Indian remote sensing (IRS) or earth observation satellite that can send 60-cm resolution pictures from an orbit 500 km above the earth.
- It will provide useful space-based data for town planners, creators of urban infrastructure, for agriculture and project monitoring, and for decision makers in Smart City and AMRUTH projects.
- Cartosat-2E is the sixth and last of the second generation cartography themed series, which started in 2007 with Cartosat-2 and includes Cartosat-2A, 2B, 2C and 2D.

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PIB Articles Editorials Roundup

E. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

PRELIMS WORTHY FACTUAL INFORMATION

United Nations Public Service Award:

- The West Bengal government has received the highest award for Public Service, the United Nations Public Service Award, at a ceremony held at the World Forum, The Hague, on 23rd June, 2017.
- Bengal's 'Kanyashree Prakalpa' was chosen from amongst 552 competitive schemes from 62 countries while securing the first position.
- The UN in its praise for the Kanyashree states that this scheme works towards creating a supportive environment in which girls are encouraged to express their full potential and are free to become the architects of their own lives.
- In the category of reaching the poorest and most vulnerable through inclusive services and participation, the Hon'ble CM received a trophy and a certificate. 40 Lakh Kanvashree girls got benefitted from a specially created fund of nearly Rs. 3300 Crores, and the numbers are constantly increasing.

F. Bills/Acts/Schemes/Orgs in News

Articles in news About the article

- (1) The Vice-President shall be elected by the members of an electoral college consisting of the members of both Houses of Parliament in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote and the voting at such election shall be by secret ballot.
- (2) The Vice-President shall not be a member of either House of Parliament or of a House of the Legislature of any State, and if a member of either House of Parliament or of a House of the Legislature of any State be elected Vice-President, he shall be deemed to have vacated his seat in that House on the date on which he enters upon his office as Vice-President.

Article 66:

Election of Vice-President

- (3) No person shall be eligible for election as Vice-President unless he –
(a) is a citizen of India;
(b) has completed the age of thirty-five years; and
(c) is qualified for election as a member of the Council of States.
- (4) A person shall not be eligible for election as Vice-President if he holds any office of profit under the Government of India or the Government of any State or under any local or other authority subject to the control of any of the said Governments.

Explanation: For the purposes of this article, a person shall not be deemed to hold any office of profit by reason only that he is the President of Vice-President of the Union or the Governor of any State or is a Minister either for the Union or for any State.

*Article 68: Time
of holding
election to fill
vacancy in the
office of Vice-
President and the
term of office of
person elected to
fill casual
vacancy*

- (1) An election to fill a vacancy caused by the expiration of the term of office of Vice-President shall be completed before the expiration of the term.
- (2) An election to fill a vacancy in the office of Vice-President occurring by reason of his death, resignation or removal, or otherwise shall be held as soon as possible after the occurrence of the vacancy, and the person elected to fill the vacancy shall, subject to the provisions of article 67, be entitled to hold office for the full term of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office.

*105. Powers,
privileges, etc of
the Houses of
Parliament and of
the members and
committees
thereof*

- (1) Subject to the provisions of this constitution and the rules and standing orders regulating the procedure of Parliament, there shall be freedom of speech in Parliament
- (2) No member of Parliament shall be liable to any proceedings in any court in respect of anything said or any vote given by him in Parliament or any committee thereof, and no person shall be so liable in respect of the publication by or under the authority of either House of Parliament of any report, paper, votes or proceedings
- (3) In other respects, the powers, privileges and immunities of each House of Parliament, and of the members and the committees of each House, shall be such as may from time to time be defined by Parliament by law, and, until so defined shall be those of that House and of its members and committees immediately before the coming into force of Section 15 of the Constitution (Forty fourth Amendment) Act 1978
- (4) The provisions of clauses (1), (2) and (3) shall apply in relation to persons who by virtue of this constitution have the right to speak in, and otherwise to take part in the proceedings of, a House of Parliament or any committee thereof as they apply in relation to members of Parliament

*194. Powers,
privileges, etc, of
the House of
Legislatures and
of the members
and committees
thereof*

- (1) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution and to the rules and standing orders regulating the procedure of the Legislature, there shall be freedom of speech in the Legislature of every State
- (2) No member of the Legislature of a State shall be liable to any proceedings in any court in respect of anything said or any vote given by him in the Legislature or any committee thereof, and no person shall be so liable in respect of the publication by or under the authority of a House of such a Legislature of any report, paper, votes or proceedings
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- Kanyashree's core objectives are simple and focussed: it aims to ensure that girls stay in school and delay their marriages till at least age 18. Kanyashree's approach is also simple: it uses a social safety net mechanism that has shown a high degree of success in transforming the lives of children and adolescents in several countries in the world: Conditional Cash Transfers. The scheme has two cash transfer components:
- The first is an Annual Scholarship of Rs. 750/- to be paid annually to the girls in the age group 13 to 18 years (studying in Class VIII equivalent or above for every year that they remained in education, provided they are unmarried at the time).
- The second is a One-Time Grant of Rs. 25,000/-, to be paid after a girl turns 18, provided that she was engaged in an academic or occupational pursuit and was unmarried.
- The term 'education' encompasses secondary and higher secondary education, as well as the various vocational, technical and sports courses available for this age group. Given that children from socio-economically disadvantaged families are more vulnerable to child marriage, the scheme is open only to girls from families whose annual income is Rs. 1,20,000/- or less. For girls with special needs, orphans and girls in J. J. Homes the income criterion is waived. Girls with special needs, but in a class below class VIII, can also apply for the annual scholarship.

Objective:

Kanyashree Prakalpa seeks to improve the status and wellbeing of girls, specifically those from socio-economically disadvantaged families through Conditional Cash Transfers by:

- Incentivizing them to continue in education for a longer period of time, and complete secondary or higher secondary education, or equivalent in technical or vocational streams, thereby giving them a better footing in both the economic and social spheres.
- Disincentivising marriage till at least the age of 18, the legal age of marriage, thereby reducing the risks of early pregnancies, associated risks of maternal and child mortality, and other debilitating health conditions, including those of malnutrition.
- It was also decided that the Scheme should confer more than just monetary support; it should be a means of financial inclusion and a tool of empowerment for adolescent girls. The scheme's benefits are therefore paid directly to bank accounts in the girls' names, leaving the decision of utilization of the money in their hands.
- To reinforce the positive impact of increased education and delayed marriages, the scheme also works to enhance the social power and self-esteem of girls through a targeted behaviour change communication strategy. The communication strategy not only builds awareness of the scheme, but includes adolescent-friendly approaches like events, competitions and Kanyashree clubs, and the endorsement of strong women figures as role models to promote social and psychological empowerment.

As more and more girls remain in school, it is envisaged that they will use the opportunity to gain skills and knowledge that will help them become economically independent. Even if girls do get married soon after they turn 18, it is expected that their education and enhanced social and emotional development will give them a

better foundation for in their adult lives. And over time, as entire generations of women enter marriages only after they have some degree of economic independence, it is expected that the practice of child marriage is completely eradicated, and women will attain their right to health, education and socio-economic equality.

G. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – June 30

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- Breach of privilege laws allow politicians to become judges in their own cause, raising concerns of conflict of interest and violating basic fair trial guarantees

What is the procedure in privilege cases?

- All state legislatures have special privilege committees comprising 10 to 12 legislators as members and usually headed by a senior politician from the ruling party
- Whenever a legislator has a complaint he can send a letter to the committee
- These matters can pertain to the sidelining of a legislator by government employees when it comes to projects and initiatives, impolite behaviour by government servants, not being invited to public events etc
- The committee will begin proceedings as per the Criminal Procedure Code
- The accused person is summoned and an inquiry is conducted by the committee and based on findings a recommendation is made to the legislature
- When the matter is tabled in the legislature, a debate can be initiated on the report
- Based on the assertions of the House the Speaker can order the punishment as defined by the privileges committee or order otherwise

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu to visit India later this year](#)

In news:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel next week will be reciprocated by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu later this year.
- 2017 year marks the celebration of 25th year of full relations between India and Israel.

July 4- 6: P.M Modi's visit to Israel-

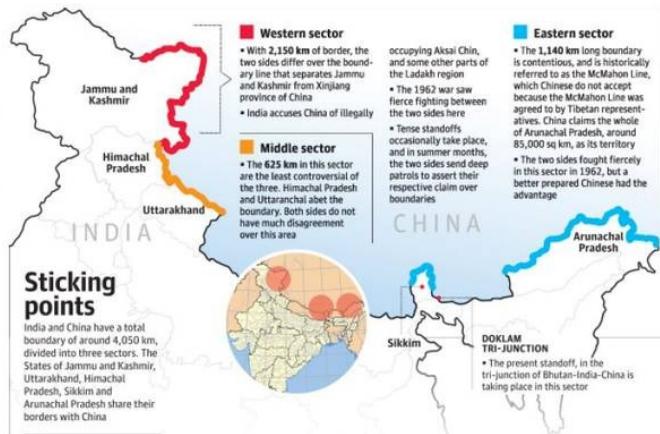
- The visit will see the partnership being upgraded to a “Strategic Partnership” on issues like water, agriculture, science and technology, and space.
- The leaders are expected to sign MoUs to upgrade ties in more than 30 areas, including cybersecurity, agriculture, tourism, health, connectivity, education, Ganga rejuvenation and “attracting Bollywood”.

- Both sides will also commit \$40 million to an Industrial Research & Development fund to encourage applied scientific research, using Israeli innovation and Indian expertise.
- Issues regarding air connectivity between India and Israel would be taken up during the visit. Despite close ties, there are no direct flights between the capitals of the countries.

Key fact: Israel is one of India's largest arms suppliers. In April, India signed a \$2 billion deal with an Israeli firm for advanced medium – **range surface-to-air missiles (MRSAMs)**, the biggest such deal for the Israeli industry.

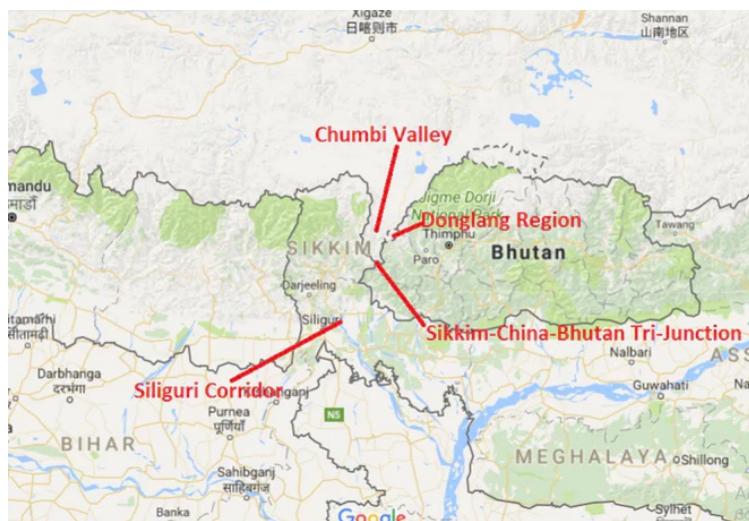
2. Army, PLA in a tug of war over Doklam Plateau

Doklam Plateau:



- The Doklam Plateau, north of the tri-junction between Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet by Indian claim, is not just a disputed area, but has huge **strategic significance** for both India and China.
- Wedged between Bhutan, India and China are few areas of dispute — together accounting for just over 750 square kilometres.
- Among the disputed areas is Doklam (also called Donglang in China), which is just about 90 square kilometres where the present dispute is taking pace.

Strategic significance:



- Chinese to reach the China-Bhutan border posts, Doklam provides an easy way to construct their road, and they have been trying to do so and India has consistently objected to it.
- Not very far from Doklam is the strategically important **Chumbi Valley** in the Tibetan region, to which Chinese are now planning to expand their rail connectivity.

Bigger buffer: according to India perspective, Doklam acts as a bigger buffer to its sensitive Chicken's

Neck, or the **Siliguri Corridor**, which is an extremely narrow stretch of land that connects the north-eastern region to the rest of India. From the Chumbi Valley it is just a little over 100 kilometres away.

Skirmish between India and China

- **Bunkers destroyed:** Chinese are believed to have destroyed temporary bunkers of the Indian Army.
- Indian Army is accused of objecting to a road construction by the Chinese side on the disputed area. There was also an incident of jostling among the soldiers of the two sides.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Reforms, CEZs to aid growth

In news:

- NITI Aayog vice chairman Arvind Panagariya pitched in for labour, land and agriculture reforms along with development of coastal economic zones (CEZs) and new cities to help India achieve rapid economic growth.
- Speaking at a discussion on 'NITI Action Agenda and the Indian Economy' organised by the Reserve Bank of India, Mr . Panagariya suggested that **India should undertake projects with a lower gestation period, similar to China** .
- The **three-year action plan** — prepared after extensive consultation with state governments — that was recently released by NITI Aayog enlists 300 specific action points.

The Aayog has also proposed reduction of **fiscal deficit to 3%** of the GDP by 2018-19 and the **revenue deficit to 0.9%** of the GDP by 2019-20.

2. GST transition to pose hurdles: ADB

In news:

- Asian Development Bank president Takehiko Nakao termed the roll-out of the Goods and Services Tax as an important reform achievement of the NDA government, but suggested that it could pose challenges on account of several factors — **especially the multiplicity of tax rates** .

Focus areas: India must put more energy into reforms of its labour and land acquisition laws as well as regulations governing foreign direct investment so that the economy can grow faster than countries like China on a sustained basis.

- Nakao said the impact of GST on the economy is difficult to gauge at this stage but its biggest benefit would be the integration of the Indian economy into a single market.
- The **dual tax enforcement structure India has adopted** – whereby both States and the Centre would be in charge of enforcement – could be problematic too.
- Nakao said it is time for India to take advantage of its young working age population by inviting more investment from within and outside the country.

Other focus areas:

- Labour rules still need rationalization
- Regulations for FDI should be further reformed.
- Land acquisition is a very politically difficult issue, the States and authorities should address it.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY – DEFENSE

1. India worst hit in APAC by Petya: Symantec

In news:

- India has been the **worst hit** country in the **Asia Pacific region** and the seventh most impacted nation worldwide by the **Petya ransomware**, according to cybersecurity service provider **Symantec**.
- As per findings by Symantec, Ukraine was worst hit by the ransomware, followed by the U.S., Russia, France, the U.K., Germany, India China and Japan.

How Petya is inserted into networks?

- MEDoc, a tax and accounting software package, is used for the initial insertion of Petya into corporate networks. MEDoc is widely used in Ukraine, indicating that organizations in that country were the primary target
- After gaining an initial foothold, Petya uses a variety of methods to spread across corporate networks.

Petya ransomware:

- The Petya ransomware was the second big scale cyberattack after WannaCry in May.
- The Petya ransomware not only encrypts files, it locks the entire disk, making it basically unusable until the infection is removed.
- It shuts down the system after the infection and asks for ransom of \$300 in bitcoins on rebooting.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Communication satellite GSAT-17 launched from French Guiana

In news:

- GSAT-17, the country's newly launched communication satellite, will soon join the fleet of 17 working Indian communication satellites in space and augment their overall capacity to some extent.
- **Launching station:** space port of Kourou in French Guiana.
- GSAT-17 was sent up as the second passenger on the European booster, Ariane-5 ECA VA-238.
- Operational areas: for broadcasting, telecommunication and VSAT services, carries over 40 transponders. It also has equipment to aid meteorology forecasts and search and rescue operations across the sub-continent.

2. India gets a sharper eye in the sky

In news:

- Cartosat-2E, is the third Indian remote sensing (IRS) or earth observation satellite that can send 60-cm resolution pictures from an orbit 500 km above the earth.
- It will provide useful space-based data for town planners, creators of urban infrastructure, for agriculture and project monitoring, and for decision makers in Smart City and AMRUTH projects.
- Cartosat-2E is the sixth and last of the second generation cartography themed series, which started in 2007 with Cartosat-2 and includes Cartosat-2A, 2B, 2C and 2D.

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for Today!! !

PIB Articles Editorials Roundup

E. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

PRELIMS WORTHY FACTUAL INFORMATION

United Nations Public Service Award:

- The West Bengal government has received the highest award for Public Service, the United Nations Public Service Award, at a ceremony held at the World Forum, The Hague, on 23rd June, 2017.
- Bengal's 'Kanyashree Prakalpa' was chosen from amongst 552 competitive schemes from 62 countries while securing the first position.
- The UN in its praise for the Kanyashree states that this scheme works towards creating a supportive environment in which girls are encouraged to express their full potential and are free to become the architects of their own lives.
- In the category of reaching the poorest and most vulnerable through inclusive services and participation, the Hon'ble CM received a trophy and a certificate. 40 Lakh Kanvashree girls got benefitted from a specially created fund of nearly Rs. 3300 Crores, and the numbers are constantly increasing.

F. Bills/Acts/Schemes/Orgs in News

Articles in news About the article

- (1) The Vice-President shall be elected by the members of an electoral college consisting of the members of both Houses of Parliament in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote and the voting at such election shall be by secret ballot.
- (2) The Vice-President shall not be a member of either House of Parliament or of a House of the Legislature of any State, and if a member of either House of Parliament or of a House of the Legislature of any State be elected Vice-President, he shall be deemed to have vacated his seat in that House on the date on which he enters upon his office as Vice-President.

Article 66:

Election of Vice-President

- (3) No person shall be eligible for election as Vice-President unless he –
(a) is a citizen of India;
(b) has completed the age of thirty-five years; and
(c) is qualified for election as a member of the Council of States.
- (4) A person shall not be eligible for election as Vice-President if he holds any office of profit under the Government of India or the Government of any State or under any local or other authority subject to the control of any of the said Governments.

Explanation: For the purposes of this article, a person shall not be deemed to hold any office of profit by reason only that he is the President of Vice-President of the Union or the Governor of any State or is a Minister either for the Union or for any State.

*Article 68: Time
of holding
election to fill
vacancy in the
office of Vice-
President and the
term of office of
person elected to
fill casual
vacancy*

- (1) An election to fill a vacancy caused by the expiration of the term of office of Vice-President shall be completed before the expiration of the term.
- (2) An election to fill a vacancy in the office of Vice-President occurring by reason of his death, resignation or removal, or otherwise shall be held as soon as possible after the occurrence of the vacancy, and the person elected to fill the vacancy shall, subject to the provisions of article 67, be entitled to hold office for the full term of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office.

*105. Powers,
privileges, etc of
the Houses of
Parliament and of
the members and
committees
thereof*

- (1) Subject to the provisions of this constitution and the rules and standing orders regulating the procedure of Parliament, there shall be freedom of speech in Parliament
- (2) No member of Parliament shall be liable to any proceedings in any court in respect of anything said or any vote given by him in Parliament or any committee thereof, and no person shall be so liable in respect of the publication by or under the authority of either House of Parliament of any report, paper, votes or proceedings
- (3) In other respects, the powers, privileges and immunities of each House of Parliament, and of the members and the committees of each House, shall be such as may from time to time be defined by Parliament by law, and, until so defined shall be those of that House and of its members and committees immediately before the coming into force of Section 15 of the Constitution (Forty fourth Amendment) Act 1978
- (4) The provisions of clauses (1), (2) and (3) shall apply in relation to persons who by virtue of this constitution have the right to speak in, and otherwise to take part in the proceedings of, a House of Parliament or any committee thereof as they apply in relation to members of Parliament

*194. Powers,
privileges, etc, of
the House of
Legislatures and
of the members
and committees
thereof*

- (1) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution and to the rules and standing orders regulating the procedure of the Legislature, there shall be freedom of speech in the Legislature of every State
- (2) No member of the Legislature of a State shall be liable to any proceedings in any court in respect of anything said or any vote given by him in the Legislature or any committee thereof, and no person shall be so liable in respect of the publication by or under the authority of a House of such a Legislature of any report, paper, votes or proceedings
- (3) In other respects, the powers, privileges and immunities of a House of the Legislature of a State, and of the members and the committees of a House of such Legislature, shall be such as may from time to time be defined by the Legislature by law, and, until so defined, shall be those of that House and of its members and committees immediately before the coming into force of Section 26 of the Constitution forty fourth Amendment Act, 1978
- (4) The provisions of clauses (1), (2) and (3) shall apply in relation to persons who by virtue of this Constitution have the right to speak in, and otherwise to take part in the proceedings of a House of the Legislature of a State or any committee thereof as they apply in relation to members of that Legislature

- Kanyashree's core objectives are simple and focussed: it aims to ensure that girls stay in school and delay their marriages till at least age 18. Kanyashree's approach is also simple: it uses a social safety net mechanism that has shown a high degree of success in transforming the lives of children and adolescents in several countries in the world: Conditional Cash Transfers. The scheme has two cash transfer components:
- The first is an Annual Scholarship of Rs. 750/- to be paid annually to the girls in the age group 13 to 18 years (studying in Class VIII equivalent or above for every year that they remained in education, provided they are unmarried at the time).
- The second is a One-Time Grant of Rs. 25,000/-, to be paid after a girl turns 18, provided that she was engaged in an academic or occupational pursuit and was unmarried.
- The term 'education' encompasses secondary and higher secondary education, as well as the various vocational, technical and sports courses available for this age group. Given that children from socio-economically disadvantaged families are more vulnerable to child marriage, the scheme is open only to girls from families whose annual income is Rs. 1,20,000/- or less. For girls with special needs, orphans and girls in J. J. Homes the income criterion is waived. Girls with special needs, but in a class below class VIII, can also apply for the annual scholarship.

Objective:

Kanyashree Prakalpa seeks to improve the status and wellbeing of girls, specifically those from socio-economically disadvantaged families through Conditional Cash Transfers by:

- Incentivizing them to continue in education for a longer period of time, and complete secondary or higher secondary education, or equivalent in technical or vocational streams, thereby giving them a better footing in both the economic and social spheres.
- Disincentivising marriage till at least the age of 18, the legal age of marriage, thereby reducing the risks of early pregnancies, associated risks of maternal and child mortality, and other debilitating health conditions, including those of malnutrition.
- It was also decided that the Scheme should confer more than just monetary support; it should be a means of financial inclusion and a tool of empowerment for adolescent girls. The scheme's benefits are therefore paid directly to bank accounts in the girls' names, leaving the decision of utilization of the money in their hands.
- To reinforce the positive impact of increased education and delayed marriages, the scheme also works to enhance the social power and self-esteem of girls through a targeted behaviour change communication strategy. The communication strategy not only builds awareness of the scheme, but includes adolescent-friendly approaches like events, competitions and Kanyashree clubs, and the endorsement of strong women figures as role models to promote social and psychological empowerment.

As more and more girls remain in school, it is envisaged that they will use the opportunity to gain skills and knowledge that will help them become economically independent. Even if girls do get married soon after they turn 18, it is expected that their education and enhanced social and emotional development will give them a

better foundation for in their adult lives. And over time, as entire generations of women enter marriages only after they have some degree of economic independence, it is expected that the practice of child marriage is completely eradicated, and women will attain their right to health, education and socio-economic equality.

G. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

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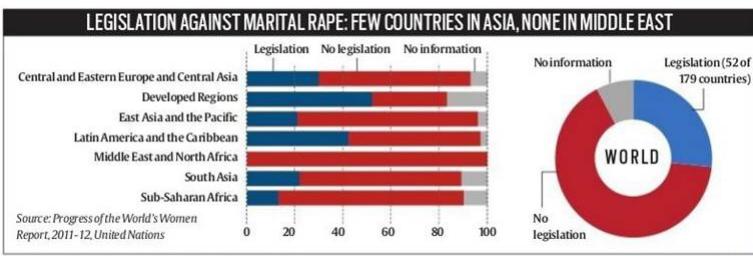
F. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. [Marital rape a crime in many countries, an exception in many more](#)

Context:



- **Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code**, which defines rapes, makes an exception for marital rape by stating, “**Sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under fifteen years of age, is not rape.**”
- Central government had filed an affidavit in Delhi High Court, arguing against the decriminalization of marital rape on the ground that it may “**destabilise the institution of marriage**”.
- The grounds for “marital immunity” for rape prosecution were laid by Chief Justice Sir Matthew Hale in The History of the Pleas of the Crown, published in 1736, which is called as ‘**Implied Consent Theory of Sir Hale**’ .
- This theory found its way into the legal system of all former British colonies.
- Australia in 1970’s, was the first common law country to pass reforms criminalizing rape in marriage.
- In 1950’s, several Scandinavian countries and countries in the Communist bloc passed laws criminalizing spousal rape including Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and the former Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. (**Poland in 1932 was the first**)
- Since the 1980s, many common law countries (include South Africa, Ireland, Canada, the United States, New Zealand, Malaysia, Ghana, and Israel) have legislatively abolished the marital rape immunity.
- In the US all 50 states made marital rape a crime.
- UK repealed its common law code that a marriage contract implied a woman’s consent to all sexual activity.
- In **2002, Nepal got rid of the marital rape exception** after its Supreme Court held that it went **against the constitutional right of equal protection and the right to privacy**.
- According to the **UN Women’s 2011 report**, out of 179 countries for which data was available, **52 had amended their legislation to explicitly make marital rape a criminal offence**.

Category: POLITY

1. Consumer is king if new law gets nod

In news:

The new Consumer Protection Bill 2016:

- It seeks to replace a 31-year-old archaic law, **the Consumer Protection Act, 1986**.

Highlights of the Bill

- It provides a mechanism for redressal of complaints regarding defect in goods and deficiency in services.
- **Consumer Dispute Redressal Commissions** will be set up at the district, state and national levels for adjudicating consumer complaints.
- The Bill establishes a **Consumer Protection Authority** to investigate into consumer complaints, issue safety notices for goods and services, and pass orders for recall of goods and against misleading advertisements.
- If a consumer suffers an injury from a defect in a good, he may file a claim of **product liability** against the manufacturer.
- The Bill classifies six contract terms as ‘unfair’. These cover terms such as (i) payment of excessive security deposits; (ii) disproportionate penalty for a breach ; (iii) unilateral termination without cause; (iv) one which puts the consumer at a disadvantage.

Product liability: If defects in the manufacture, construction, design, testing, service marketing etc. of a product results in any personal injury or property damage to a consumer, the manufacturer is liable in a product liability action.

Rights of consumers: The rights of consumers include the right to: (i) be protected against marketing of goods and services which are hazardous to life and property, (ii) be informed of the quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods or services, (iii) be assured of access to a variety of goods or services at competitive prices, and (iv) to seek redressal against unfair or restrictive trade practices.

Consumer Mediation Cell : The Bill introduces mediation as a mode of consumer dispute resolution. Consumer

Mediation Cells will be established and attached to the redressal commissions at the district, state and national levels.

Penalties: Any person who fails to comply with an order of either of the Commissions would be liable for imprisonment from one month to three years, or with a fine from 10,000 rupees to 50,000 rupees.

2. Religion At State Expense

Context:

- SC judgment in the **Gujarat shrines compensation case** raises important questions.
- **Article 32 is the “soul of the Constitution”** as it guarantees the citizens of their fundamental rights under it.

The questions at the wake of the judgement are:

- Should the court give relief in writ jurisdiction only when one's right to life or personal liberty under Article 21 is violated?
- Or can the state be held liable even with respect to violation of other fundamental rights such as the freedom of religion?
- Will an order for the payment of compensation for the repair of religious places be contrary to Article 27 of the Constitution?
- Article 27 prohibits the state from imposing any religious tax and the imposition of any tax whose proceeds are used for the maintenance of any particular religion.

Keypoints:

- In the 2002 communal riots in Gujarat, as many as 567 religious places were either desecrated, damaged or destroyed.
- On February 8, 2012, the Gujarat High Court ordered the state government to get these religious places repaired and reimburse their owners/managers if they had already got them repaired.
- The Gujarat government appealed to the Supreme Court stating that for any loss of property, the remedy is in civil law and in its writ jurisdiction under Article 226, cannot pass such an order as the right to property after the 44th Amendment is not a fundamental right but simply a constitutional right.
- The state government admitted that for the violation of the right to life and personal liberty, writ jurisdiction of high courts could be invoked. But it argued that since India is a secular state it couldn't spend government money for any religious purpose due to Article 27.
- But the writ jurisdiction of high courts is wider than the apex court's powers as while the SC can issue writs just for the violation of fundamental rights, the HCs can do it additionally for the violation of other rights.
- The respondents claimed that the right to equality and right to personal liberty was at stake during the riots.
- The maintenance of law and order is the primary duty of the state government and the compensation is not being sought for the maintenance of any particular religion but for the **failure of the government in fulfilling its basic duty**.

3. All seven parliamentary secretaries of Mizoram resign in deference to SC ruling which held their appointment unconstitutional

Context:

- **Supreme Court observations:**
 - Struck down the practice of appointing parliamentary secretaries.
 - State assemblies do not have the power to enact a law that enables them to appoint parliamentary secretaries
- **All seven parliamentary secretaries of Mizoram** resigned from their posts.
- Mizoram became the first state in the Northeast to implement the SC ruling.

Basic Information

Parliamentary secretaries:

- Secretaries is **ultra vires** the 91st Amendment of the Indian Constitution which introduced **Article 164 (1A)** to the Constitution.
- Article 164 (1A) provides for limiting the number of ministers in the state cabinets. The total number of ministers including the Chief Minister, has to be within 15 per cent of the total number of members of the legislative

assembly of the state.

- Article 164 (1A) was inserted in the Constitution on the recommendation of the National Commission for Review of the Working of the Constitution headed by former Chief Justice of India, **M.N. Venkatachaliah** on misuse and drainage of public money to put a ban on over-sized cabinet.

4. Delhi HC no to order granting SCs, STs quota in promotion

In news:

- The Delhi High Court has **quashed a Central notification** granting reservation in promotion for SCs and STs beyond the five-year period
- It was stipulated in the **Indira Sawhney case**, by the Supreme Court

Court's observation:

- Court said such a move made under **Article 16 (4A)** was not permissible without adequate data to prove inadequacy of representation and backwardness
- It made the observation while quashing Department of Personnel and Training's Office Memorandum dated August 13, 1997

Indra Sawhney Case 1992

The opinion of the Supreme Court in the Indra Sawhney case is summarized as:

- (1) Backward Classes of the Citizens of in Article 16(4) can be identified on the basis of caste and not only on the economic basis.
- (2) Article 16(4) is not an exception to Article 16(1)
- (3) The backward classes in Article 16(4) are not similar to as socially backward classes in Article 15(4) i.e. SC and ST
- (3) Creamy layer can be and must be eliminated from the Backward Classes
- (4) Article 16(4) permits the classification of backwards classes into more backward classes.
- (5) Reservation shall not exceed 50%. The court said that this rule should be applied every year. However, it may be relaxed in favour of people from far flung and remote areas because of their peculiar conditions. However, extreme caution should be exercised in doing so
- (6) Carry forward rule is valid but it is subject to 50%
- (7) There should be NO reservation in the Promotions

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Switzerland President on 3-day visit

In news:

- Swiss President Doris Leuthard began his three-day visit to India.
- **Why the visit is significant?**: Switzerland is the chair of the Nuclear Suppliers Group where India has been seeking membership. The visit is likely to help closer consultation on NSG membership.

Basic Information

Nuclear Suppliers Group:

- Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is a group of nuclear supplier countries that seek to prevent nuclear proliferation by controlling the export of materials, equipment and technology that can be used to manufacture nuclear weapons.
- As of 2017 the NSG has 48 participating government.
- The NSG Chair for 2017-2018 is Switzerland.

2. Giving Bhutan its due

Context:

- Bhutan rescues India's interests at its own cost in the Doklam stand-off.
- In the Doklam stand-off, it was India's security that was at stake, its "chicken neck" on the line.

Keypoints:

- China came up with a "**package deal**" in 1990's , where in return for the smaller disputed Doklam area, it was willing to give bigger territorial concessions in disputed territories in central Bhutan.
- It was an occasion for Bhutan to **resolve its border dispute with China** and also **benefit Chinese "goodwill"**.
- Importance of Doklam, from the Bhutanese point of geography, is **neither strategically important nor does it hold any economic value**, as the stand-off area is frozen for most of the year and nothing can grow up there.
- Bhutan in 1996 turned down the package deal offer mainly on the basis of Indian security concerns over Doklam.
- As a result **China was building six roads towards Bhutan** with four roads already intruding well into Bhutanese territory. Bhutan protested against this move and it resulted in agreement to freeze the construction of roads.
- China, over the decades, has applied pressure on Bhutan, using various tactics so that Bhutan lets go of the Doklam area.
- India never raised its voice in the past, about numerous Chinese incursions into the Bhutanese side, including the more serious road-building activities. This is because they did not affect Indian security, unlike Doklam.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. 99% of demonetised notes returned, says RBI report

Context: Demonetization of high-value Currency

In black and white

RBI reveals that only 1.04% of the demonetised cash was not deposited or exchanged for new notes.

Extract from RBI Annual Report:

₹ Subject to future corrections based on verification process when completed, the estimated value of SBNs received on June 30, 2017 is ₹15.28 lakh crore



- Prior to demonetisation, the total number of ₹500 notes and ₹1000 notes were 17,165 mn and 6,858 mn pieces respectively, amounting to **₹15.44 lakh crore***.
- Thus cash not deposited or exchanged, amounted to **₹16,000 crore** or **1.04%** of the value of the old notes

*Rajya Sabha Q & A

In News:

- RBI's revelation in its final annual report: approximately, **₹ 28 lakh crore** of the high-value currency that was demonetised in November returned to the central bank.
- **Stats** : 98.96% of the withdrawn currency — at the time of demonetization, the value of old ₹500 and ₹1,000 notes in circulation was ₹44 lakh crore — was deposited with the banks.
- **Key fact** : Demonetization which involved withdrawal of high-value banknotes was a means to combat counterfeiting, black money and the financing of terrorist activities.

2. First GST data in: 65 per cent pay Rs 92,000 crore

Context

- The Centre and states have collected Rs **92,283 crore** as Goods and Services Tax (GST) in July, the first month of the implementation of the indirect tax regime.
- The amount is marginally higher than the projected target

- **42 per cent** of the total registered taxpayers, excluding composition dealers and registrants in August, filed GST returns for July.
- The tax collection number would “somewhat increase” with more compliance
- For those who haven’t yet paid the GST, a late filing penalty of Rs 100 per day for CGST and SGST each will be levied

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Govt. approves plan to deploy more troops on the frontline

In news:

- **B. Shekatkar committee** : appointed by then Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar in May last year and the report was submitted to the Defence Ministry in December 2016.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Increase **teeth-to-tail ratio** for enhancing combat capability and rebalancing defence expenditure of the Armed Forces.
 - **Areas of reform:** optimisation of signal establishments, restructuring of repair echelons including base workshops, redeployment of ordnance depots, better utilisation of supply and transport echelons and animal transport units, closure of military farms and Army postal establishments in peace locations, and improving efficiency of the National Cadet Corps (NCC).
- **Impact:** if recommendations are implemented over the next five years, the recommendations can result in savings of up to ₹25,000 crore in defence expenditure.
- **Governments move:** increased soldiers available for active combat in the Indian Army by over 57,000. This restructure by the Indian Army is aimed at enhancing combat capability in a manner that personnel will be used for improving operational preparedness and civilians will be redeployed in different wings of the Armed Forces for improving efficiency.

2. When it pours

Context:

- The total rainfall (2017) in the country, is beyond the IMD’s forecast of a “normal” monsoon.
- The flood governance in India is still about ad hoc relief measures. It’s time to change.

Key Points:

- Parts of Assam, Bihar and Gujarat are submerged in historic levels of floodwater.
- Urban areas like Mumbai and Bengaluru were lashed with heavy rainfall.
- Mount Abu, got over 50% of its annual rainfall in two days.
- Bengaluru got about 30 per cent of its monsoon rainfall on one day.
- Chandigarh received nearly 15 per cent of its annual rainfall in a few hours.
- The weather patterns during this rainy season where days of severe downpour sandwiched between spells of dry weather, raise questions about our understanding of the monsoon, as well as about the ways in which we prepare for and deal with floods.

Study and Warnings:

- A 2013 **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report** warned that **Mumbai remains vulnerable to rainfall** of the kind that led to the 2005 floods.
- The **indiscriminate destruction of wetlands** has bargained the city’s capacity to deal with floods which holds true for Bengaluru, Guwahati, and several other cities of the country.

Governance efforts

- Steps taken for the restoration of wetlands at the center of flood control programs remains minimal.
- Flood governance in the country has not gone beyond ad hoc relief measures and building embankments.
- Thus it’s the need of the hour that we require fresh thinking on how to prepare for the monsoons and deal with floods.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. IRNSS-1H set to launch on Thursday

In news:

- **Background Information:**
 - **2013 – 2016:** ISRO put up seven **IRNSS satellites** to form the **Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System**, since called **NavIC or Navigation with Indian Constellation**.
 - **NavIC** is the Indian regional version similar to the US Global Positioning System GPS. It will drive all position-based activities on ground, sea and air by giving near-accurate location details of persons or objects. It will be put to military, commercial and common everyday uses.
 - **Mid-2016:** all three rubidium atomic clocks on IRNSS-1A failed.
- **Now, ISRO is all set to launch country's eighth regional navigation satellite-IRNSS-1H.**
- IRNSS-1H is being sent to space to back-up — and mostly replace — the functions of India's first navigation satellite IRNSS-1A.

2. U.S. approves first gene therapy for cancer

In news:

- The United States approved the first **gene therapy** in the nation—a treatment that uses a patient's own immune cells to fight childhood **leukaemia**.
- The treatment is made by **Novartis** and is called **Kymriah** (tisagenlecleucel).
- This type of immunotherapy, known as a **CAR-T cell therapy**.
- It was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for children and young adult patients up to age 25 with a form of acute lymphoblastic leukaemia.

How the treatment works?

- It uses a patient's own immune cells, called T-cells, along with white blood cells.
- These cells are removed from a patient, sent to a lab, and encoded with a viral vector, reprogrammed, and returned to the patient.

Basic Information

What is Gene Therapy?

- Gene therapy is an experimental technique that uses genes to treat or prevent disease.
- In the future, this technique may allow doctors to treat a disorder by inserting a gene into a patient's cells instead of using drugs or surgery.
- Researchers are testing several approaches to gene therapy, including:
 - Replacing a mutated gene that causes disease with a healthy copy of the gene.
 - Inactivating, or “knocking out,” a mutated gene that is functioning improperly.
 - Introducing a new gene into the body to help fight a disease.
- Although gene therapy is a promising treatment option for a number of diseases (including inherited disorders, some types of cancer, and certain viral infections), the technique remains risky and is still under study to make sure that it will be safe and effective.
- Gene therapy is currently only being tested for the treatment of diseases that have no other cures.

Nothing here for Today!!!

NATIONAL PARKS/SANCTURIES/BIOSPHERE RESERVES:

1. Valley of Flowers National Park

Location: Located in West Himalaya, in the state of Uttarakhand

Key Features : Known for its meadows of endemic alpine flowers and the variety of flora. This richly diverse area is also home to rare and endangered animals, including the Asiatic black bear, snow leopard, musk deer, brown bear, red fox and blue sheep.

This Reserve is in the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves since 2004

2. Gangotri National Park

Location : Located in Uttarkashi District Uttarakhand, India.

Key Features: It was third largest National park of India. The park provides majestic beauty of coniferous forests and grandeur of glacial world combined with lush green meadows.

IUCN Red List:



1. Dhole/ Asiatic wild dog or Indian wild dog (*Cuon alpinus*)

- **Distribution:** They occur in most of India south of the Ganges, particularly in the Central Indian Highlands and the Western and Eastern Ghats of the southern states.
- In north-east India, they inhabit Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, and West Bengal.
- **Threats:** Habitat loss, depletion of its prey base, competition from other predators, persecution and possibly diseases from domestic and feral dogs.



2. Eld's deer/ thamin or brow-antlered deer (*Panolia eldii*)

- **Distribution:** Keibul Lamjao National Park (KLPN), Manipur.
- **Threats:** Overgrazing, loss of grassland habitat .

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. Section 375 is a hindrance to women empowerment. Discuss.

GS Paper II

1. Should the court give relief in writ jurisdiction only when one's right to life or personal liberty under Article 21 is violated?
2. Is Doklam solution a burden on Indo-Bhutan relations? Critically analyze.

GS Paper III

1. Considering the threats cyberspace poses for the country, India needs a "Digital Armed Force" to prevent crimes. Critically evaluate the National Cyber Security Policy, 2013 outlining the challenges perceived in its effective

implementation.

2. Are urban floods a cause of concern? What are the measures taken in pre and post disaster management as per the NDMA,2005 guidelines with respect to the urban floods?
3. Despite many guidelines the ease of doing business lies abysmal in the country as per the recent NITI aayog survey. What are the hurdles inhibiting the growth in this area despite a significant progress post the economic reforms?What measures can be taken to address the issue?

GS Paper IV

Topic: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Question 1.

What is a gene therapy? What are the ethical issues surrounding gene therapy?

Question 2.

Recently a peon was appointed in your office (DM office). He is illiterate and mentally not sound. Ever since his appointment he has been more of a ‘burden’ than any help in the office. He doesn’t know any work. Staff in your office feel that their work is disturbed by his behaviour. The peon is always found to be talking either alone or with anyone he encounters. He is not obeying your staff’s orders in the office.

He was appointed on sympathy grounds after his father’s untimely death. His mother is ill and always bedridden. His income is the only source for his family now. He got the job after lobbying by a group representing his caste. He was appointed by your predecessor after he was pressurized by local MP. Some moves to remove him by your predecessor were met with public protests by a group representing his caste.

You are very strict and disciplined in your office. You are being respected in your district for your integrity and honesty. You come to know about the peon few days after you assume power. You have observed his behavior and found him to be unfit to continue in his job. The peon has no other relatives except his mother.

Identify your moral and professional responsibilities in this case study and explain how will you deal with the peon.

Answer

Since the peon is unfit for the job, the option of continuing him is ruled out. So protection to his family should remain the priority of DM.

Responsibilities of DM:

1. social security and health care to peon and his mother
2. removing the peon peacefully after pacifying all parties involved

Course of action to be followed:

1. Certain actions of peon in the office should be video-recorded such as not heeding to the officers, disturbing others in office etc.
2. On priority, DM should make an arrangement for social security benefits along with health insurance to peon and his mother. A request for pension should also be made to higher authorities on exceptional grounds.
3. There after a meeting should be arranged with his caste members to explain the real problem being faced in the office and why he should be removed from the office by showing them video-clips.
4. At the same time DM should take own responsibility for peon’s pension and other benefits before the members.
5. Once they agree, his removal would be done in a smooth manner without any controversy.
6. In case they do not agree immediately, steps should be taken to constantly persuade the key members of his caste group one-by-one through constant consultations and that would surely resolve the problem.
7. In doing the above, work culture and discipline in the organisation will be protected but at the same time solved the problems of most vulnerable people i.e. peon and his mother empathetically.

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3. German Parliament Approves Same-Sex Marriage

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2. For upstream companies: Exemption of petro products from GST to push up cost
3. Under the GST umbrella, three taxes for states/UTs and Centre
4. Don't Tax Clean Energy

Science and Technology

1. NASA launches Rocket to produce Colourful Artificial Clouds
1. Lost and found: the tale of two cities (S&T / History)

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B. GS2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India offers help to Sri Lanka's Northern province

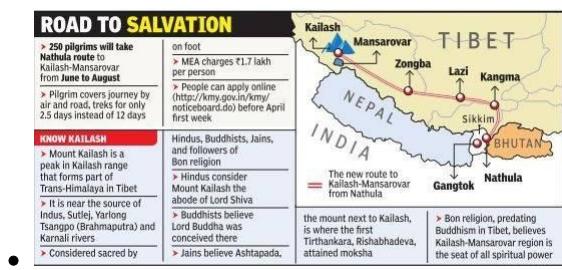
In news:

- India has expressed willingness to further partner Sri Lanka's Northern Provincial administration in development initiatives.
- **Infrastructure projects:**
- India has been involved in key infrastructure projects in the north in the post-war years, building 46,000 homes in the island's north and east and helping restore the railway line from Omanthai to Pallai, with a \$800 million line of credit.

- Currently, the Indian side appears keen on working with the Northern Provincial Council, on economic development, skills training and job creation.

2. Now, a hard trek via Lipulekh

In news:



- The Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra through the Nathu La pass in Sikkim has been cancelled due to ongoing face-off between Indian and Chinese troops along the India-China border.
- China had declined permission for the first group of 50 pilgrims to proceed to Mount Kailash through the Nathu La pass.
- The pilgrims had to return to Gangtok after they were denied permission.



Lipulekh pass in Uttarakhand

- Lipulekh pass in Uttarakhand is another pass used by pilgrims to proceed to Mount Kailash.

Nathu La versus Lipulekh pass:

- The route through the Nathu La pass that opened two years ago shortens the entire distance, making the pilgrimage less arduous.
- The Lipulekh route involves a treacherous trek of about 200 km, while the Nathu La route calls for trekking for only 35 km.

3. German Parliament Approves Same-Sex Marriage

In news:

- German lawmakers voted to legalise **same-sex marriage** after a short but emotional debate, bringing the country in line with many of its Western peers.
- Germany has allowed same-sex couples to enter civil partnerships since 2001, but has not granted them full marital rights, which include the possibility to jointly adopt children.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. At stroke of midnight, India gets a ‘good and simple tax’

In news:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi termed the new Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, to be implemented from Saturday, as a ‘**Good and Simple Tax**’ and said its introduction was **not just a tax or economic reform**, but a

social reform that would nudge people on the path to honesty and benefit the poor the most.

- **'More transparent':**

- GST will do away with 500 different taxes levied across the country's 29 States and seven Union Territories
- It would end the spectre of tax terrorism and Inspector Raj that India's businesses have had to endure for long.
- The GST Council chaired by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley slashed the tax rate on fertilizers from 12% to 5% and tractor parts from 28% to 18%, in a bid to make the new tax regime more farmer-friendly.

2. For upstream companies: Exemption of petro products from GST to push up cost of production

In News:

- Keeping petroleum products such as petrol, diesel, natural gas out of the ambit of the Goods and Service Tax (GST) is expected to result in higher cost of production
- This will be for upstream companies such as oil and gas exploration firms as well as for downstream refining companies
- For the end-consumer, this exclusion from GST, however, is unlikely to result in any significant increase in prices

Inclusion/Exclusion:

- The output of upstream and downstream companies have been kept out of the GST
- The inputs that go into their making is subject to levy of GST
- For instance, an oil or gas refiner that imports inputs such as gases, platforms, parts of platform, cranes, chemicals etc will have to pay 5 per cent tax under the GST regime
- All these are tax-free in the current regime

Increase in prices + No input tax credit:

- No passing on to customers: Even though the cost of production increases, these can't be totally passed on to customers such as domestic refineries or exports since the prices of these products are linked to international benchmarks
- Possible migration: Any increase in prices due to higher taxes locally will encourage buyers to scout for international contracts offering similar products at cheaper prices
- For refineries, nearly 70 per cent of their refined products are petrol, diesel, natural gas, aviation turbine fuel (ATF), which are out of the GST net
- Currently, the refineries take input tax credit on almost 80 per cent of the taxes paid
- Now the refineries cannot take credit for inputs that go in for production of petrol, diesel and ATF

3. Under the GST umbrella, three taxes for states/UTs and Centre

Context

Under the GST regime, the Centre and states/Union Territories shall simultaneously levy indirect taxes on a common tax base

Taxes within GST

- Within the umbrella of GST, the GST levied by the Centre on intra-state supply of goods and/or services will be called Central GST (CGST) and levied by states/UTs, State GST (SGST/UTGST)
- Integrated GST (IGST) will be levied and administered by the Centre on the inter-state supply of goods and services

Why the state tax?

- CGST and SGST/UTGST were decided keeping in mind the federal structure of the country
- Here both the Centre and the states have the powers to levy and collect taxes through appropriate legislation
- The CGST and SGST will be levied simultaneously on every transaction of supply of goods and services except exempted goods and services
- They will not be implemented on goods which are outside the purview of GST, and transactions which are below the prescribed thresholds

Some understanding of GST implementation

- SGST and CGST will be levied on the same price or value
- This will be unlike state VAT, which is levied on the value of the goods inclusive of CENVAT
- The location of the supplier and recipient within the country is immaterial for the purpose of CGST
- SGST will be chargeable only when the supplier and recipient are both located within a state
- IGST shall be levied and collected by the Government of India, and such tax shall be apportioned between the Centre and the states

How Will GST Work?

- Under the GST regime, tax liability arises when the taxable person crosses the turnover threshold of Rs 20 lakh
- For Northeastern and ‘Special Category’ states, it is Rs 10 lakh
- Cross-utilisation of input credit of one component of tax against the other is allowed except utilisation of credit of CGST for SGST and vice versa

4. Don’t Tax Clean Energy

Context

The GST Rate Schedule for goods has put ‘solar power generating systems’ and ‘photovoltaic cells whether or not assembled into modules or made into panels’ into different tax brackets

Tax on solar power

- GST rate schedule suggested that all solar power generating systems will be taxed at 5%
- This will be similar to the tax on wind systems
- This would put solar and wind in the same tax bracket as coal
- Coal was previously taxed at 11.69%
- Nuclear fuel too will be taxed at 5%

The state of confusion

- Another chapter of the GST rate schedule noted that semi-conductor devices including PV cells, which may or may not be assembled into modules or panels, would be taxed at 18%
- The council has put solar panels in the 5% category
- The issue of tax on the remaining components of solar systems remains unresolved even on the eve of the rollout of the new fiscal regime

What will be the impact?

- In the first scenario, utility scale solar (panels and parts), along with other renewable energy sources of electricity as well as coal, is taxed at 5%
- Analysis suggests that GST would result in a minor rise of 1.6% in solar tariffs
- In a thriving solar market, this is unlikely to create any setback for the sector
- While 5% doesn’t seem a mammoth figure, the rise in price of solar power is not insignificant when seen in conjunction with the decline in taxes on coal
- 60% decline in taxation on coal is likely to make thermal power cheaper by as much as Rs 0.15
- This would set back some of the rapid advances made in recent times to close the price gap between the prices of solar power and thermal power
- The cumulative result, with a lower tax bracket for coal and higher (effective) tax implication for solar, would do little to incentivise already apprehensive utilities to purchase more solar power

What about the cess?

- The change in the tax regime would be accompanied by a change in use for the coal cess
- The cess is currently contributing to the National Environment Fund (NEF), with a mandate to finance and promote clean energy initiatives
- It is a carbon tax that will now be redirected

Use of cess:

- Collections from the cess on coal are now expected to be used to compensate states for the loss of revenue due to the GST regime

- Between 2010 and 2017, this cess has been used to make budgetary allocations to the ministries of New and Renewable Energy; Environment, Forests, and Climate Change; Water Resources, etc.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. NASA launches Rocket to produce Colourful Artificial Clouds

In news:

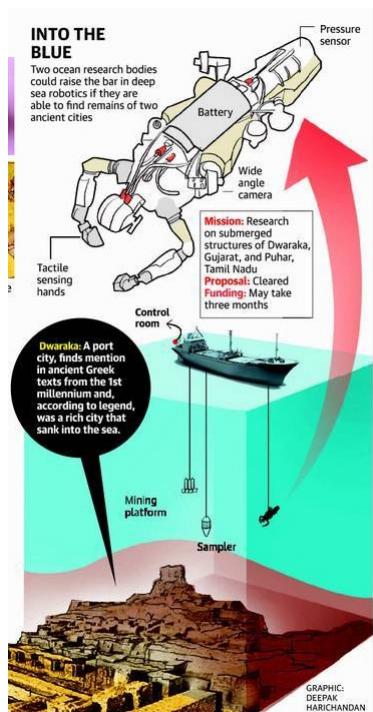
- The NASA has successfully launched **Terrier-Improved Malemute sounding rocket** that created colourful artificial clouds visible in the skies of the US.
- The rocket was launched from its Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia.
- **Salient Facts:**
 - The rocket during the 8-minute flight had released 10 canisters about the size of a soft drink into space.
 - The canisters deployed blue-green and red vapour that formed artificial clouds visible in the skies of the United States from New York to North Carolina.
 - The artificial clouds are formed through the interaction of barium, strontium and cupric-oxide.
 - The vapour tracers will help in understanding the movement of the particles in the ionosphere.
 - It will help to learn more about the movement of the air currents at that altitude.

Basic Information:

- **Ionosphere:** The ionosphere is called so because it is ionised by solar radiation. It plays an important part in atmospheric electricity and forms the inner edge of the magnetosphere. Ionosphere stretches from 50 to 1,000 km and typically overlaps both the exosphere and the thermosphere. It has practical importance because it influences, for example, radio propagation on the Earth. It is also responsible for auroras.

2. Lost and found: the tale of two cities

In news:



- The Department of Science and Technology (DST) is looking to send robotic vehicles into the sea **near Dwaraka, Gujarat, and Puhar, Tamil Nadu**, to look for **submerged structures** that may point to evidence on the ancient cities.
- The programme, still a preliminary proposal, is expected to involve organisations such as the **National Institute of Ocean Technology, Chennai, and the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), Goa**.
- NIO, Chennai has indigenously built vehicles capable of plumbing 5,000 metres underwater and the NIO has previous experience in marine archaeology.
- New technology to be tested: Along with historical interest, this is also to test several technologies such as

sophisticated imaging technology , being able to map the ocean floor with sonar and being able to date old stones and recoverable implements using the latest techniques .

Previous excavations findings:

- Nearly a decade ago, the Underwater Archaeology Wing of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) found copper coins and segments of granite structures.
- Mentioned in the Mahabharata as ‘Dvaraka’ or ‘Dvaravati,’ it is also linked to the god Krishna.
- Dwaraka, a port city, finds mention in ancient Greek texts from the 1st millennium and, according to legend, was a rich city that sank into the sea.
- Last year, divers, geologists and archaeologists with the NIO, working off the coast of Tamil Nadu, reportedly found stone remains suggestive of an ancient port and temples, which were reportedly buried about 30 feet into the sea.
- Tamil and Buddhist literature have references to Poompuhar, or Puhar, as being the port capital of the Chola dynasty.

Evidence of the course of the Saraswati:

- An expert committee of geologists, archaeologists and hydrologists said it had found evidence of the course of the Saraswati, a river mentioned in the Rig Veda and in Hindu mythology.
- A study commissioned by the Water Resources Ministry and led by Professor K.S. Valdiya of the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research.
- Report concluded that evidence from palaeochannels — remnants of defunct rivers — suggested that the **Sarsuti-Markanda rivulets in Haryana were the water courses of the “eastern branch of a Himalayan river” and the Ghaggar-Patiali channels were the western branches.**

Nothing here for Today!! !

PIB Articles Editorials Roundup

- E. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn**
- F. Bills/Acts/Schemes/Orgs in News**
- G. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam**

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – July 02

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UPSC Current Affairs 2017: News Analysis

A. GS1 Related

Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. Antarctica's ice-free islands set to grow

Context: Climate change and impact on biodiversity

In news:

Antarctica's ice-free islands:

- Within the Antarctica's continent one can find isolated ice-free nooks — nunataks (exposed mountain tops), scree slopes, cliffs, valleys and coastal oases — which cover less than 1% of the area.
- These ice-free areas support almost all of the continent's biodiversity.
- A paper published in Nature indicates the possibility of expansion of these ice-free islands over 17,000 sq.km (a 25% increase) due to climate change
- Much of the life thrives in Antarctica's ice-free pockets: small invertebrates (nematodes, springtails, and tardigrades) vascular plants, lichen, fungi, mosses and algae. They also serve as breeding ground for sea birds (including the Adelie penguins) and elephant seals.

Possible impacts:

- **Positive:** good news for Antarctica's biodiversity that is likely to find larger habitats.
- **Negative :**
 - Biggest threats from an increase in ice-free area appears to be the spread of invasive species
 - As ice-free islands expand and coalesce, biodiversity could homogenise, less competitive species could go extinct and ecosystems destabilise from the spread of **invasive species**
 - The species that will lose will most likely be those that are not very competitive and can't cope with the invasive species.

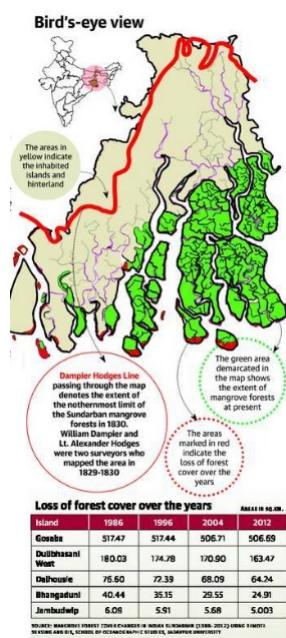
Climate change:

- The greatest change in climate is projected for the Antarctic Peninsula by the end of the century, and more than 85% of the new ice-free area is believed to occur in the **north Antarctic Peninsula**.

Basic information:

Invasive species: An invasive species is a plant, fungus, or animal species that is not native to a specific location (an introduced species), and which has a tendency to spread to a degree believed to cause damage to the environment, human economy or human health

2. Sunderbans mangrove cover at risk



Highlights of study by Jadavpur University

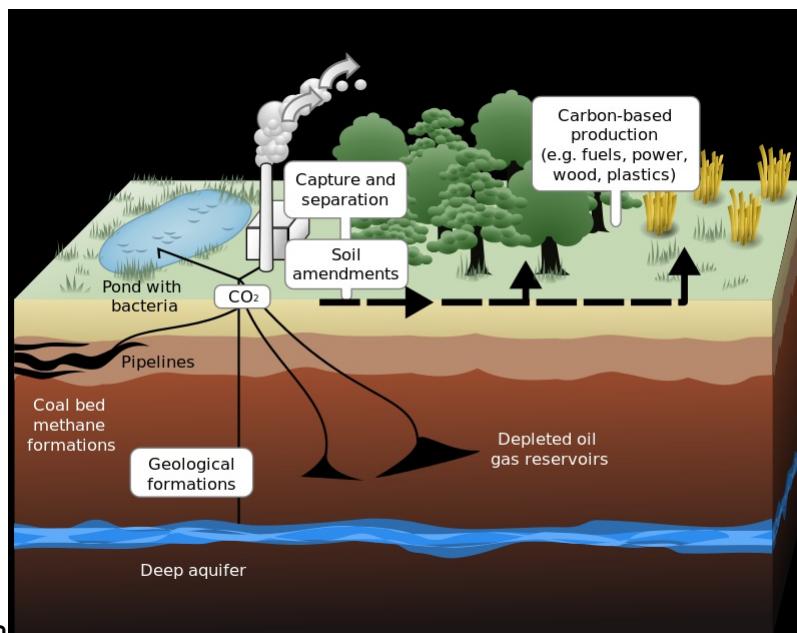
- **Study:** Mangrove Forest Cover Changes in Indian Sundarban (1986-2012) Using Remote Sensing and GIS, a publication by the School of Oceanographic Studies, Jadavpur University

- Depleting Mangrove forest cover in the Sunderbans at an alarming rate over the past few decades.
- From 1986 to 2012, 124.418 sq. km., or about 5.5% of the mangrove cover, was lost.
- Climate change and sea level rise has contributed to the phenomenon of losing land, including mangrove forests in the Sundarbans, in the last part of the 21st century. Mean sea level rise can be considered a driving factor for coastal erosion, coastal flooding, and an increase in the number of **tidal creeks**.
- Sunderbans has lost 3.71% of its mangrove and other forest cover, while losing 9,990 hectares of its landmass to erosion in one decade.

Threats associated with mangrove damage:

- The continuation of this process(damage to mangroves) in response to climate change and sea level rise poses a serious threat to the **carbon sequestration** potential and other ecosystem services of this mangrove forest in future.
- A critical minimal inflow of freshwater is necessary for the luxuriant growth of mangroves. When freshwater inflow is missing, there is a change in mangrove succession, and freshwater loving species of mangroves are replaced by salt-water loving ones. Immediate impact of salinity will be on the fishing community, where commercially sought after fish species will be replaced by fish that does not have as much market value.

Basic information:



Carbon sequestration

Carbon sequestration is the process involved in carbon capture and the long-term storage of atmospheric carbon dioxide. Carbon sequestration involves long-term storage of carbon dioxide or other forms of carbon to mitigate or defer global warming. It has been proposed as a way to slow the atmospheric and marine accumulation of greenhouse gases, which are released by burning fossil fuels.

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is naturally captured from the atmosphere through biological processes like photosynthesis by plants and trees, and through geological processes like the dissolution of CO₂ in oceans and the formation of sedimentary rocks.

chemical, and physical processes. Artificial processes have been devised to produce similar effects, including large-scale, artificial capture and sequestration of industrially produced CO₂ using subsurface saline aquifers, reservoirs, ocean water storage, aging oil fields, or other carbon sinks.

B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. Minister calls for quota in cricket team

In news:

- Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale demanded **25% reservation for Dalits and Adivasis in the cricket team and other sports.**
- **Reason:** Dalits and Adivasis don't get proper representation in sport.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Why Bhutan is special to India

Context: standoff between Indian and Chinese troops in Doklam (Doklam)

India's role in Bhutan's security:

• 2007 India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty :

- The two sides have agreed to "cooperate closely with each other on issues relating to their national interests. Neither Government shall allow the use of its territory for activities harmful to the national security and interest of the other."
- India to "guide" Bhutan on foreign and defence policies.
- The 2007 treaty, is meant to respect the sensitivities of Bhutan regarding its sovereignty.
- Indian military is virtually responsible for protecting Bhutan from the kind of external threat that the Chinese military poses.
- The Indian Military Training Team (IMTRAT), headed by a Major General, plays a critical role in training Bhutanese security personnel.
- The Eastern Army Command and the Eastern Air Command both have integrated protection of Bhutan into their role.

2. Xi draws 'red line' in Hong Kong

In news:

- China's President Xi Jinping warned that any challenge to Beijing's control over Hong Kong crossed a "red line".

Background:

- tens of thousands calling for more democracy marched through the city 20 years after it was handed back by Britain.

Situation in Hong Kong:

- Many are angry at Beijing's tightening grip on the freedoms.
- Young activists have emerged calling for self-determination or even full independence for Hong Kong

Beijing's warning:

- Any threat to China's sovereignty and security or to the power of the central government "crosses the red line and is absolutely impermissible."

- Warned against anyone endangering Hong Kong's Constitution or using the city "to carry out infiltration and sabotage activities against the mainland."

Basic Information:



Hong Kong:

Hong Kong, officially the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, is an autonomous territory on the Pearl River Delta of China.

Hong Kong ranks as the world's fourth most densely populated sovereign state or territory.

Hong Kong and China:

After the First Opium War (1839–42), Hong Kong became a British colony.

Hong Kong was later occupied by Japan during World War II until British control

In the early 1980s, negotiations between the United Kingdom and China resulted in the Sino-British Joint Declaration, which paved way for the transfer of sovereignty in 1997, when it became a special administrative region (SAR) of the Peoples Republic of China with a high degree of autonomy.

Under the principle of "one country, two systems", Hong Kong maintains a separate economic system from China. Except in military defence and foreign affairs, Hong Kong has independent executive, legislative and judiciary powers.

In addition, Hong Kong develops relations directly with foreign states and international organizations in a broad range of "appropriate fields".

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Indians' money in Swiss banks hit record low at Rs. 4,500 crore

In news:

- Money parked by Indians in Switzerland's banks nearly halved to 676 Swiss francs (about Rs. 4,500 crore) in 2016 to hit a record low.
- In comparison, the total funds held by all foreign clients of Swiss banks somewhat rose to CHF 1.42 trillion or about Rs 96 lakh crore (from CHF 1.41 trillion a year ago).
- The total money of Indians fell by 45 % during 2016 to CHF 675.75 million, marking the biggest ever yearly decline in such funds.
- Swiss banks have also said Indians have "few deposits" in Swiss banks compared to other global financial hubs like Singapore and Hong Kong amid stepped-up efforts to check the black money menace.

Automatic exchange of information:

- A new framework for automatic exchange of information between Switzerland and India, to help check the black money menace.
- Adopting the dispatch on introduction of the AEOI, a global convention for automatic information exchange on tax matters, the Swiss Federal Council said on June 16 that the implementation is planned for 2018 and the first set of data should be exchanged in 2019.
- There have been several rounds of discussions between Indian and Swiss government officials on the new framework and also for expediting the pending information requests about suspected illicit accounts of Indians in Swiss banks.

Possible transfer:

- SNB's official figures also do not include the money that Indians, NRIs or others might have in Swiss banks in the names of entities from different countries.
- There is a view that the Indians alleged to have parked their illicit money in Swiss banks in the past may have shifted the funds to other locations after a global clampdown began on the mighty banking secrecy practices in Switzerland.

2. BIZ-GDP-ANANT

In News:

- The base year of the new GDP series has been fixed at 2017-18
- The current base year is 2011-12

Why revision?

- It is necessary to review the base year every five years or so
- Change of base year to calculate GDP is done in line with the global exercise to capture economic information accurately
- This ensures capturing latest information and hence accurately reflects the current economic situation in the country
- The new series is compliant with the latest United Nations guidelines in System of National Accounts-2008

3. One lakh suspect firms deregistered

Context: Demonetisation.

In news:

- The government has **cancelled** the registration of one lakh companies.
- These companies had suspicious and questionable operations, identified on the basis of data mined from the deposit of bank notes following last November's demonetization policy of the govt.

Who has the power to cancel the registration?

- **The Registrar of Companies** has removed these one lakh companies

Quote: Quoting Chanakya, the Prime Minister held out a sombre warning to accountants: “**After the time to do the right thing has passed, time itself consumes those who didn’t act.**”

Basic information:

The Registrar of Companies

The Registrar of Companies (ROC) is an office under the Indian Ministry of Corporate Affairs that deals with administration of the Companies Act 1956 and Companies Act, 2013.

There are currently 22 Registrars of Companies (ROC) operating from offices in all major states of India.

Some states, such as Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, have two ROCs each. Section 601 of the Companies Act, 1956 tasks the ROCs with the primary duty of registering companies and LLPs- limited liability partnership, floated in the respective states and the union territories under their administration.

Administrative control:

The Union Government maintains administrative control over ROCs through Regional Directors. There are 7 Regional Directors, and they supervise the functioning of ROCs with regions.

Function: The Registrar of Company takes care of company registration (also known as incorporation) in India, completes reporting and regulation of companies and their directors and shareholders, and also oversees government reporting of various matters including the annual filling of various documents.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. New material uses sunlight to detoxify water

In news:

- **Novel approach:** Scientists have developed a **new non-toxic material** that uses solar energy to degrade harmful **synthetic dye pollutants** which are released at a rate of nearly 300,000 tonnes a year into the world’s water.
- The novel, **non-hazardous photocatalytic** material removes dye pollutants from water, **adsorbing more than 90% of the dye and enhancing the rate of dye breakdown by almost ten times using visible light.**

Technical details: (not required)

- **Catalyst synthesis:** By heating the reaction mixture at high pressures inside a sealed container, the composite is synthesised by growing ultrathin “nanowires” of tungsten oxide on the surface of tiny particles of tantalum nitride.
- The composite provides a huge surface area for dye capture(incredibly small size of the two material components-typically less than 40 billionths of a metre in diameter)
- The material then proceeds to break the dye down into smaller, harmless molecules using the energy provided by sunlight, in a process known as “ **photocatalytic degradation** ”
- Having removed the harmful dyes, the catalyst may simply be filtered from the cleaned water and reused.

2. The pursuit of app-iness

iBobby app :

- Developed by researchers at Black Dog Institute, a mental health organisation in Australia, and launched in the country in 2014.
- The world's first suicide prevention app

Target group:

- The app is specially targeted at young people from the indigenous communities, who are at four times the risk of suicide compared to the rest.
- iBobby doesn't need the Internet to be accessed once downloaded.

How does it operate?

- It allows a person to keep a ‘mood diary’ after self-assessment, and teaches the user to manage thoughts — especially suicidal thoughts — and feelings and create a personalised action plan with tools to monitor progress.
- The programme maintains patient confidentiality and is password-protected.

Results:

- Participants from the Kimberley region in Western Australia who used the app over a six-week period reported a 42% reduction in symptoms of depression, 30% reduction in suicidal ideation and 28% reduction in distress.

iBobby app and Lessons for India:

Key fact:

- As per World Health Organization's (WHO) latest suicide data, nearly 1,00,000 people commit suicide.
- The country's suicide mortality rate is 20.9 per 1,00,000 people, among the highest in the world, with majority of the vulnerable groups not able to get the help they need.
- The use of technology has increased among youth and the app allows mental experts to reach them anonymously

‘Atmiyata’:

- Similar project like iBobby in India
- Meaning: Compassion in Sanskrit.
- This project involves using short films loaded on a basic Android app as a training tool to enable a bunch of villagers to identify mental health disorders.
- The project was rolled out in the Peth block of Nashik district, Maharashtra, in December 2013, making mental health care accessible to many in this part for the first time.

3. Cheaper, indigenous TB test enters final validation phase

Context:

- Truenat MTB is being tested in 100 microscopy centres in 10 States
- It's validation and operational feasibility testing is being done by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)

What is Truenat MTB?

- Truenat MTB, a chip-based nucleic acid amplification test which uses sputum samples for

diagnosing Mycobacterium tuberculosis (MTB)

What is its speciality?

- It's a cheaper and indigenously developed molecular diagnostic test for TB.
- The samples were also tested for resistance to the drug rifampicin which is an antibiotic used chiefly to treat tuberculosis and leprosy
- It is a battery-operated, hand-held machine allows detection of TB in approximately one hour
- In Truenat MTB only about 0.5 ml sample is required compared to it's counterpart GeneXpert in the US which requires 1ml sample.

Truenat MTB V/S GeneXpert.

- Truenat MTB is 50% cheaper than GeneXpert
- Truenat MTB is chip-based and will be more environment-friendly compared to GeneXpert which is cartilage-based
- Truenat MTB can be expanded to primary health centre level, which cannot be done using GeneXpert which needs uninterrupted power supply and air conditioning

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Category: HISTORY/ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Thirsty Vijayapura reaches into ancient bawadis 21 huge open wells, built around 500 years ago, are filling up after desilting and providing a vital source of water for the arid city

In news:

- 21 huge, open wells, built around 500 years ago, are filling with water after desilting and providing a vital source of water for this arid city in Karnataka.
- A little over two months ago, the historic **Taj bawadi (huge open wells)**, built during the **Adil Shahi** era (1490-1686) in **Vijayapura in Karnataka** was a filthy cesspool, with the polluted water unfit for any use.
- Today the 223 ft wide structure has potable water, with hundreds of springs injecting fresh water into it.
- Built in 1620 in the name of Taj Sultana, the queen of Ibrahim Adil Shah-II, the Taj bawadi is one of 21 such open wells being revived by the district administration in a first ever attempt at cleaning and desilting them.
- Some of the others being revived are the Chanda Bawadi, Sandal Bawadi, Ibrahimpur Bawadi, Pethi Bawadi and the Gunnapur Bawadi.
- **Dr Rajendra Singh, noted water conservationist**, also lauded the work on reviving the water source during his recent visit.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Pakistan denies consular access to Jadhav yet again Says equating him with other prisoners is ‘travesty of logic’

In news:

- Pakistan on Sunday again rejected India's request for consular access to Kulbhushan Jadhav, a former Indian naval officer who was sentenced to death for espionage and terrorism by a Pakistani military court in April this year.
- His mercy petition is pending with Pakistani Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa. India denied the charges made out against Jadhav, and moved the International Court of Justice against the conviction and got a stay on the execution. Pakistan insists that the reprieve is temporary.

2. On eve of PM's tour, Palestine hopes to keep India ties firm Modi will be in Tel Aviv & Jerusalem from July 4; will not travel to Palestinian side

Context:

- Modi will travel to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem from July 4, and will be the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Israel.

In News:

- India's relations with Israel should not come at the “expense of ties” with Palestine, but the Palestinian Authority (PA) understands the need for India to de-hyphenate ties with both, says the Palestinian President's diplomatic adviser Dr. Majdi ElKhaldi in an interview ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel.

3. Step back Sustained tension at the Bhutan tri-junction suits neither China nor India

Context:

- The boundary stand-off with China at the Doka La tri-junction with Bhutan is by all accounts unprecedented; it demands calmer counsel on all sides. The tri-junction stretch of the boundary at Sikkim, though contested, has witnessed far fewer tensions than the western sector of the India-China boundary even as India and Bhutan have carried on separate negotiations with China.

Issue:

- China's action of sending People's Liberation Army construction teams with earth moving equipment to forcibly build a road upsets a carefully preserved peace.

Other concerns and issues:

- Delhi has expressed disappointment over China's rejection of its concerns on sovereignty issues, and refusal to corner Pakistan on cross-border terrorism or help India's bid for Nuclear Suppliers Group membership.
- In turn, India's spurning of the Belt and Road Initiative and cooperation with the U.S. on maritime issues has not played well in China — neither has the uptick in rhetoric, including statements from the Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister questioning India's “One China Policy” on Tibet, and from Army chief Bipin Rawat on India being prepared for a two-and-a-half front war.

Conclusion and Way Forward:

- These issues have to be addressed through sustained dialogue.
- In the immediate term, however, talks must focus on defusing the tensions at the tri-junction.
- China has made the withdrawal of Indian troops a precondition for dialogue. This would be unacceptable to India, unless the PLA also withdraws its troops and road-building teams.
- Apart from its own commitments to the status quo, Beijing must recognise the special relationship India and Bhutan have shared since 1947, the friendship treaty of 2007 that commits India to protecting Bhutan's interests, and the close coordination between the two militaries.
- For its part, India would be keen to show that it recognises that the face-off is in Bhutanese territory, and the rules of engagement could be different from those of previous India-China bilateral clashes — at Depsang and Demchok in the western sector, for example.
- Bhutan's sovereignty must be maintained as that is the basis for the “exemplary” ties between New Delhi and Thimphu.
- The Indian government has been wise to avoid escalation in the face of China's aggressive barrage, but that should not stop it from communicating its position in more discreet ways.

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Category: ECONOMICS

1. GST positive for India's credit profile: Moody's 'To support higher government revenue through improved tax compliance'

In News:

- The Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime will be positive for India's credit profile as it will contribute to productivity gains and higher GDP growth as well as support higher government revenue generation through improved tax compliance, according to **global ratings agency Moody's**.
- The GST regime is expected to contribute to ease of doing business and accelerate new ventures

2. Steel sector bullish on GST, exporters worry Reactions abound on impact of tax

- With India moving towards its biggest tax reform, here's how various sectors in India have reacted to the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and how it will impact business.
- Following the implementation of the GST, the hospitality and travel sectors expect teething issues in the first few months but are not unduly worried, expecting support from government.
- The Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) has approached the government to reduce the restrictions on using duty credit scrips — a pass that allows holders to import goods by not paying a certain amount in import duties.
- The steel sector is feeling bullish after the GST rollout. Players in the sector said that with GST, unorganised players will have to move to the organised form of doing business.
- The cotton textile industry is also feeling positive.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Aerosols 'shrinking' India's monsoon Greenhouse gases cause concern, but scientists are more worried about particulates

In news:

- While greenhouse gases, or GHGs, are causing concern about the long-term fate of the Indian monsoon, researchers now think aerosols from vehicular exhaust, half-burnt crop residue, dust and chemical effluents may be weakening the life-giving rainy season even more than GHGs.

Study Report:

- An Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, team led by climatologist R. Krishnan studying the likely monsoon impact of GHGs over the next century has come to this conclusion.

Scientists have used new model:

- The scientist and his team used an upgraded forecasting model that was used this year by the India Meteorological Department for forecasts. The model will help prepare India's first home-grown forecast of climate change from global warming, and be part of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports.
- Dust clouds shield the earth from the sun's rays, depressing land and sea temperatures. The monsoon, which is produced by the difference in temperature between the two, is thus weakened.

2. Nine more bird, biodiversity areas in Kerala

In news:

- The bird and biodiversity-rich areas in Kerala are drawing global attention with nine more locations being identified as **Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs)**.
- The newly identified IBAs of Kerala are Achencoil Forest Division; Anamudi Shola National Park; Camel's Hump Mountain, Wayanad; Kurinjimala Wildlife Sanctuary; Malayattoor Reserve Forest; Mankulam Forest Division; Mathikettan Shola National Park; Muthikulam-Siruvani; and Pampadum Shola National Park.

Who released the list ?

- The new list was released by the **Bombay Natural History Society**, a partner of **BirdLife International**, in its recent publication, Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas in India Priority sites for conservation.
- The IBAs are “places of international significance for the conservation of birds and other biodiversity” and are “distinct areas amenable to practical conservation action,” according to BirdLife International.
- Kerala IBAs are home to three critically endangered species — Whiterumped Vulture, Indian Vulture, and Red-headed Vulture.

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Category: POLITY

1. Mysore Lancers' tryst with Haifa

Context:

- A long forgotten slice of martial history related to Mysuru will be revisited when Prime Minister Narendra Modi pays tribute to fallen Indian soldiers at the Haifa cemetery in Israel.

The Mysore Imperial Service and the liberation of Haifa:

- The Mysore Imperial Service played a big role in the liberation of Haifa on September 23, 1918, from Ottoman Turks and Germans, by allied forces.
- This is seen as one of the **fiercest battles** in the west Asian theatre of World War I in which India, as a British colony, fought German and the Ottoman troops.
- The Mysore Lancers were in the 15th Imperial Service as the forces sent by the princely states of Mysore, Jodhpur and Hyderabad.
- The then Mysuru Maharaja Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wadiyar sent his troops to defend the empire and even gave nearly ₹50 lakh to the India War Fund.

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Category: POLITY

1. SC open to liquor sale on city highways

Context:

- **December 15, 2016 Supreme Court order:** prohibited the sale of liquor within a distance of 500 metres from the outer edge of national and State highways.
- **March 2017 order:** the ban was not restricted to just liquor shops alongside the highways but also to other larger establishments, including pubs and hotels.
- **Intention:** to prevent drunken driving on high-speed thoroughfares.
- Many states started de-notifying highways in order to circumvent the December 15th

Petition: filed by NGO Arrive Safe Society challenging the Chandigarh administration's move to de-notify certain roads.

In news:

The Supreme Court observations

- nothing wrong in de-notifying particular stretches of highways running inside city limits as city roads and such de-classification does not violate its earlier order of banning liquor sales near National and State highways.

Reasons given:

- Traffic inside city limits is usually slow and heavy, and stretches de-notified fall within the city limits.
- The goal of the liquor ban was to prevent drunken driving in fast-moving traffic.
- The pace of traffic with the city is very different from traffic outside city limits.
- Purpose of the ban is to avoid drivers getting inebriated while driving on highways inter-linking cities.

Widespread relief: especially to pubs and restaurants in the metros, which were forced to shut down

2. Allow people with genuine reasons to deposit banned notes: SC to govt

Context: demonetization

In news:

- The Supreme Court asked the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to come up with a policy to offer a window to people who could not deposit their demonetised notes for legitimate reasons before last year's December 30 deadline.

3. Centre may partially lift AFSPA

In news:

- As per the inputs from a senior Home Ministry official: The Centre is considering **partial removal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)** from **Assam and Arunachal Pradesh**. There was no proposal to withdraw it in Jammu and Kashmir.
- In Arunachal Pradesh, complete withdrawal, except two districts in the east bordering Myanmar and Nagaland.
- **Views sought:** The Ministry has asked the two States for their views on AFSPA withdrawal and said that it was open to reviewing the stringent law in other States like Manipur.

Basics of AFSPA :

- Armed Forces (Special Powers) Acts (AFSPA), are Acts of the Parliament of India that grant special powers to the Indian Armed Forces in what each act terms "disturbed areas". According to The Disturbed Areas (Special Courts) Act, 1976 once declared 'disturbed', the area has to maintain status quo for a minimum of 3 months.
- The AFSPA gives powers to the Army and Central forces deployed in "disturbed areas" to kill anyone acting in contravention of law, arrest and search any premises without a warrant.
- It provides cover to forces from prosecution and legal suits without the Centre's sanction.

Active AFSPA:

- Whole of Nagaland, Assam, Manipur (excluding the seven Assembly constituencies of Imphal).
- In Arunachal Pradesh, it is in force in 16 police stations and in Tirap, Longding and Changlang districts bordering Assam.
- Tripura withdrew AFSPA in 2015.
- It is not in force in Meghalaya (except 20 kilometre area along Assam border) and Mizoram.

Supreme court ruling:

- On July 8, 2016, in a landmark ruling, The Supreme Court of India ended the immunity of the armed forces from prosecution under AFSPA, saying, "It does not matter whether the victim was a common person or a militant or a terrorist, nor does it matter whether the aggressor was a common person or the state. The law is the same for both and is equally applicable to both... This is the requirement of a democracy and the requirement of preservation of the rule of law and the preservation of individual liberties."
- Supreme Court said that any encounter carried out by armed forces in the garb of AFSPA should be subjected to thorough inquiry.

4. 'Make registration of marriages compulsory

In news:

- The Law Commission of India- the commission headed by former Supreme Court judge Justice B.S. Chauhan, has recommended compulsory registration of marriages.

Why?

- To protect gullible women who become victims of fake marriages.
- The lack of provisions for compulsory registration of marriages had proven disastrous for women and

deprived them of societal recognition and legal security.

Key fact: Fraudulent marriages are on the rise especially among non-resident Indians. Compulsory registration can serve as a means to ensure that conditions of a valid marriage have been performed.

Minor amendment:

- Minor amendment to the **Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969**, including a provision for compulsory registration of marriage, would serve the purpose.
- And there was no need to amend any of the personal laws of religious communities.

2006 Supreme Court in Seema vs Ashwani case:

- Marriages of persons who are citizens of India belonging to various religions should be registered compulsorily in their States.

Category: *INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS*

1. Moving beyond security ties

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel

In news:

The leaders to focus on a “non-security” strategic partnership involving **agriculture, water, tourism, science technology and space**.

2. Incursions by PLA rose in 2017

In News:

- Incidents of transgression by the People's Liberation Army(PLA) has increased marginally this year along the disputed Sino-Indian border compared to 2016.
- **Key Fact :** 20-25% increase in transgressions by the Chinese PLA till May this year, particularly in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh. On an average around 300 transgressions are reported along the China border due to “difference in perception.

Sovereignty claims:

- Over the years both sides have developed a strategy of sending long patrols into disputed areas in summer months to assert their claims for sovereignty.
- These patrols are undertaken at eight of the key disputed locations, mostly in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh and are believed to enjoy political sanction.

Reasons for increased transgression:

- Indian troops have improved their observation of the presence of Chinese patrols in disputed areas.
- The Chinese have stepped up border patrols as part of an aggressive posture along the border.



Ladakh border:

- Along the Ladakh border, India sticks mostly to a boundary drawn by British civil servant **H. Johnson**

in 1865, which showed Aksai Chin as part of J&K.

- China disputes this claim and in the 1950s built a road connecting Xinjiang and Tibet which ran through Aksai Chin.
- In northeast India, New Delhi sticks to the **McMahon Line**. China claims that McMahon Line has no legal standing and claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of Tibet.

3. Vietnam for greater Indian role in SE Asia

Delhi Dialogue IX:

- A platform for discussion between ASEAN and India.
- The Delhi Dialogue IX marks the beginning of the celebrations to mark the 25th anniversary of India-ASEAN diplomatic ties
- Vietnam asked:
- India to play a greater role in ASEAN's strategic and security affairs.
- India should support freedom of navigation in the South China Sea on the basis of international law and conventions.

India and ASEAN: India's tie with ASEAN is at the centre of India's Act East Policy.

4. North Korea claims it tested intercontinental missile

In news:

- North Korea claimed it successfully test-launched its **first intercontinental ballistic missile**
- North Korea's Academy of Defence Science said the test of an ICBM the Hwasong-14 marked the "final step" in creating a "confident and powerful nuclear state that can strike anywhere on Earth."
- Test a direct rebuke to U.S. President Donald Trump's earlier declaration that such a test "won't happen!"

Capability:

- A U.S. scientist examining the height and distance said the missile could potentially be powerful enough to reach Alaska.

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Category: ECONOMICS

1. Tap GST for jobs data: PM-appointed panel

Task force led by NITI Aayog vice chairman Arvind Panagariya recommends:

- The task force to improve India's data on jobs was set up by Prime Minister Narendra Modi
- The Centre could use lakhs of firms registered under the new Goods and Services Tax (GST) as the sample frame to capture employment data through a new Annual Survey of Enterprises.
- The traditional Employment-Unemployment Surveys carried out by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) every five years must be scrapped.

New definition of formal employment:

- The task force has called for a fresh definition of formal employment to include any person who gets a Form 16 reflecting income tax deductions at source.
- Workers covered under any one of the The Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948 or EPF and miscellaneous Provision Act 1952, government and other public sector employees, workers having coverage under private insurance or pension schemes of PFs," be considered formal workers

Labour force survey

- A new periodic labour force survey (the first one has already begun this April) will be conducted annually to provide estimates of labour force, employment, unemployment, nature of employment and industry.
- To get more frequent employment trends data, an urban module of this survey will be updated every quarter.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Drug-resistant TB higher among children than expected: report

In news:

- Multi-Drug Resistant (MDR) TB is higher among children than expected.
- This trend has been described as a “worrying trend” by the Union Health Ministry.

Who conducted the tests?

- Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND) conducted the tests in collaboration with the Central TB Division under the Revised National TB Control Programme (RNTCP).

Key fact:

- Detection of tuberculosis (TB) in children remains a challenge.
- 5,500 of over 76,000 children tested in nine cities have been diagnosed with TB.
- Nine per cent of these paediatric TB cases have been diagnosed to have MDR TB

Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND)

- FIND initially started a unique initiative for diagnosing paediatric TB in four cities of Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad and Kolkata from April 2014 with funding from the **United States Agency for International Development (USAID)**.
- The aim of the project is to provide rapid access to quality TB diagnosis for all presumptive paediatric TB patients in the project intervention areas.

Challenges associated with paediatric TB case detection

- Absence of appropriate samples coupled with decentralised capacity to get good samples from children to test for TB remains a challenge in paediatric TB case detection.
- Poor sensitivity of tests like the Acid fast bacilli (AFB) smear
- Children were more prone to primary MDR infection as they were in close contact with their parents and grandparents

Basic Information:

The Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND)

- **The Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND)** is a global health non-profit based in Geneva, Switzerland. FIND functions as a product development partnership, engaging in active collaboration with over 150 partners to facilitate the development, evaluation, and implementation of diagnostic tests for poverty-related diseases. The organisation's Geneva headquarters are in Campus Biotech. Country offices are located in New Delhi, India; Cape Town, South Africa; and Hanoi, Viet Nam.
- **Priorities:** The organization focuses on improving diagnosis in several disease areas, including hepatitis C, HIV, malaria, neglected tropical diseases (sleeping sickness, Chagas disease, leishmaniasis,

buruli ulcer), and tuberculosis. Alongside this, FIND works on diagnostic connectivity, antimicrobial resistance, acute febrile illness, and outbreak preparedness.

GeneXpert MTB/RIF

The Xpert MTB/RIF is a cartridge based nucleic acid amplification test, automated diagnostic test that can identify *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (MTB) DNA and resistance to rifampicin (RIF) by nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT)

N A nucleic acid test (NAT) or nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT) is a molecular technique used to detect a particular pathogen (virus or bacterium) in a specimen of blood or other tissue or body fluid. It does so by detecting and amplifying the RNA or DNA of the pathogen, that is, making extra copies of its nucleic acids.

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Category: POLITY

1. Selection of ECs must be transparent, SC tells Centre

Needed, a relook

Past demands for giving Parliament more say in EC selection

- In the Constituent Assembly debates in 1949, Prof. Shiban Lal Saksena stressed that EC's appointment should be made by a two-third majority in both the Houses

- Due to this demand, the Constituent Assembly included Article 324(2), which says that the EC's appointment will be "subject to the provisions of law made by Parliament"

- In 1974, the V.M.Tarkunde panel recommended that the EC be appointed by the President on the advice of a panel consisting of the PM, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, and the CJI

Context:

- Appointment of ECs.
- Fair, just and transparent process" for selection of ECs.

In news:

Supreme Court advice to Centre:

- Election Commissioners should be selected through the "most transparent and just process" formalised in a law enacted by Parliament.

Supreme Court observation:

- There is a "gap" caused by the **lack of a parliamentary law** which transparently spells out the process of appointment of an election commissioner: "Who should be shortlisted? Who shortlists these names? What is the eligibility?"
- **Key Fact:** selection procedure of the CBI Director is formalised by a written law, but not that of Election Commissioners.

Practice at present:

- The filtering of names of suitable persons for appointment as Election Commissioners is done under the aegis of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet, who in turn advise the President.

Constitutional obligation:

Article 324. Superintendence, direction and control of elections to be vested in an Election Commission

Clause(2): The Election Commission shall consist of the Chief Election Commissioner and such number of other Election Commissioners, if any, as the President may from time to time fix and the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners shall, **subject to the provisions of any law made in that behalf by Parliament**, be made by the President

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India, Israel to set up \$40 mn research fund

Context: Prime Minister Modi visit to Israel.

On Day Two of Narendra Modi's Israel visit, the two countries announced a strategic partnership and signed seven agreements in the fields of water, agriculture and space. The agreements include a \$40-million joint fund for research and development in innovation.

PACTS SIGNED

- An agreement in the field of water deals with increasing awareness of the need for conservation; the Israeli Water Ministry and the U.P. Jal Nigam Board signed an MoU
- Three MoUs on space cooperation included one for electric propulsion for small satellites, and for the development of an optical link, as well as cooperation on atomic clocks
- The fund of Research and Development, called the "I4F", or the India Israel Industrial Innovation Fund, will see both governments contribute \$20 million to help research scholars manufacture their inventions easily



In news:

- India and Israel announced **a strategic partnership between the two countries** after a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu
- Signed seven agreements in the fields of water, agriculture, space, including a \$40 million joint fund for research and development in innovation.
- Agreed to cooperate to combat the growing radicalisation and terrorism, including in cyberspace.
- The two sides also agreed to increase air linkages between the two countries, with Air India expected to commence flights to Tel Aviv, as well as a "Cultural Centre" at a location yet to be identified.
- Possibility in the near future of "joint development of defence products, including the transfer of technology from Israel."

Water conservation:

- The two agreements in the field of water deal with the "increasing awareness" of the need for water conservation

Memorandum of understanding signed:

- MoU between the Israeli Water Ministry and the Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam Board.
- Three MoUs on space cooperation included one for Electric Propulsion for Small Satellites, and for the development of an optical link as well as cooperation on atomic clocks.

\$40 million joint fund for research and development:

- The fund of research and development, called the "**I4F or India Israel Industrial Innovation Fund**", will see both governments contribute \$20 million to help research scholars manufacture their inventions easily.

2. Pak successfully test fires short-range ballistic missile Nasr

In news:

- Pakistan successfully test fired short-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile ‘Nasr’.
- ‘Nasr’ is a high-precision weapon system with the ability to be deployed quickly and with enhanced range from 60-70 kilometres and flight maneuverability.
- Pakistan army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa response after the test fire: the successful test has put “cold water” on Indian military’s “Cold Start” doctrine.

3. Signs of a Persian gulf

Context:

- Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei’s provocation on Kashmir by equating the Kashmir conflict with those in Yemen and Bahrain
- India has always been worried of Iran’s support for Pakistan in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) regarding Kashmir.

Reason for Iran’s interference in Kashmir issue

- India’s growing closeness to Saudi Arabia and the UAE
- Reminder to India that Iran too has a role in the Islamic world which can’t be ignored.
- Iran getting regionally isolated in the backdrop of Donald Trump administration’s hard line against Tehran
- Saudi Arabia and its allies tries to squeeze Iran out of the regional matrix.

What is happening in Arab world?

- Blockade of Qatar by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain and UAE after cutting off their diplomatic ties
- Arab states issued a 13-point demands to Qatar to curb diplomatic ties with Iran, severing ties with the Muslim Brotherhood and shuttering the Al-Jazeera news network
- Saudi Arabia and Iran’s proxy wars across the region — in Bahrain, Syria, Yemen, apart from their growing hostility in Iraq.
- Attack on Iran’s Parliament , for which it blames Saudi Arabia, has further heightened the tensions.

India’s irking economic ties with Iran

- Iran hasn’t taken a decision on contract for gas exploration in its Farzad B offshore field.
- So India has decided to decrease the volume of Iranian crude oil it will be buying this year.
- There are reports that Tehran has signed an agreement for the gas field with Russian giant Gazprom.
- Now Iran stated that Chabahar port project,won’t be exclusive to India.
- Pakistan and China might also be invited to get involved.

How it affects India?

- For India, this undercuts the very strategic utility of the port
- Chabahar port is viewed as India’s answer to the Gwadar port and to circumvent Pakistan and open up a route to landlocked Afghanistan

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. UDAY covers 97% of discom debt: Centre

In News:

- About 97% of the total outstanding debt of all state power distribution companies (discoms) has been covered under the Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY), the government announced
- 86% of the restructurable debt has been revamped under the scheme

What was the debt amount?

- As on September 30, 2015, the total debt of all state-owned discoms was Rs. 3.95 lakh crore
- The total liability opted for restructuring by the states through the issuance of bonds was Rs. 2.69 lakh crore

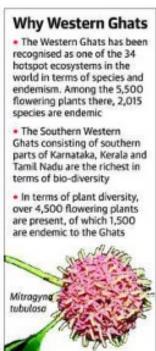
National average:

- The national average of aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses (from all UDAY states) stood at 20.2% in FY17

The difference between the average cost of supply (ACS) and the average revenue realised (ARR) had come down in the last year

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Of plant species few and far between



In news:

- Scientists have recorded a major section of **Rare Endemic and Threatened plants** and trees in the Western Ghats, some of which have not been assessed by international conservation bodies for nearly two decades.
- The Botanical Survey of India (BSI) project on endemic tree resources in the southern Western Ghats, including Kerala and Tamil Nadu, has now documented about 250 'RET' species.
- The assessment of some of these conducted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature for the IUCN Red List puts them under vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered categories based on literature from 1998.

- **Heavily exploited**
 - Poorly documented, heavily exploited or habitat-deprived species such as Kingiodendron pinnatum, known in Malayalam as Chukannapayini, Cynometra travancorica, Vateria indica and Hopea parviflora now have better records.
 - Evidence on medicinally important plants including Aglaia malabarica (critically endangered in the Red List), Myristica malabarica (vulnerable), Syzygium stocksii and Syzygium dhaneshiana as well as economically important ones like Humboldtia vahliana (unsustainably collection) and Hopea ponga has been gathered.

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for Today!!!

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E. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

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F. Bills/Acts/Schemes/Orgs in News

**Articles in
News** [About the Articles](#)

1. The superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of the electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to Parliament and to the Legislature of every State and of elections to the offices of President and Vice President held under this Constitution shall be vested in a Commission (referred to in this Constitution as the Election Commission)
2. The Election Commission shall consist of the Chief Election Commissioner and such number of other Election Commissioners, if any, as the President may from time to time fix and the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners shall, subject to the provisions of any law made in that behalf by Parliament, be made by the President
3. When any other Election Commissioner is so appointed the Chief Election Commissioner shall act as the Chairman of the Election Commission
4. Before each general election to the House of the People and to the Legislative Assembly of each State, and before the first general election and thereafter before each biennial election to the Legislative Council of each State having such Council, the President may also appoint after consultation with the Election Commission such Regional Commissioners as he may consider necessary to assist the Election Commission in the performance of the functions conferred on the Commission by clause (1)
5. Subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament, the conditions of service and tenure of office of the Election Commissioners and the Regional Commissioners shall be such as the President may by rule determine; Provided that the Chief Election Commissioner shall not be removed from his office except in like manner and on the like grounds as a Judge of the Supreme Court and the conditions of service of the Chief Election Commissioner shall not be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment: Provided further that any other Election Commissioner or a Regional Commissioner shall not be removed from office except on the recommendation of the Chief Election Commissioner
6. The President, or the Governor of a State, shall, when so requested by the Election Commission, make available to the Election Commission or to a Regional Commissioner such staff as may be necessary for the discharge of the functions conferred on the Election Commission by clause (1)

324.
*Superintendence,
direction and
control of
elections to be
vested in an
Election
Commission*

**Schemes in
news**

About the schemes

*Ujwal DISCOM
Assurance
Yojana (UDAY)*

- Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY) is the financial turnaround and revival package for electricity distribution companies of India (DISCOMs) initiated by the Government of India with the intent to find a permanent solution to the financial mess that the power distribution is in.
- It allows state governments, which own the discoms, to take over 75 percent of their debt as of September 30, 2015, and pay back lenders by selling bonds. Discoms are expected to issue bonds for the remaining 25 percent of their debt.
- **The scheme envisages:**
 - Financial Turnaround
 - Operational improvement
 - Reduction of cost of generation of power
 - Development of Renewable Energy
 - Energy efficiency & conservation

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A. GS1 Related

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Rural India starts to go nuclear, urban families grow in shrinking space

In news:

- Data released by the central government shows decline in the proportional share of nuclear households in urban areas.
- Whereas in rural areas nuclear families are rising and joint families declining at a faster pace than in urban areas.

Reasons

- Lack of adequate housing in urban areas forcing people to stay together

- Increased migration as well as lack of housing

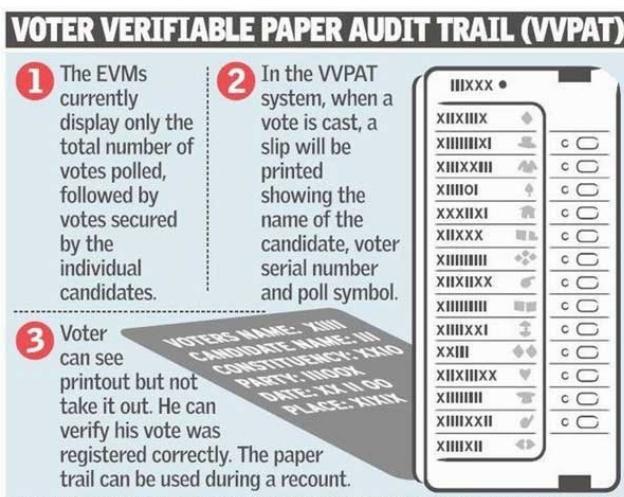
Classification based on family size

- Sub-nuclear family: It is a fragment of a nuclear family, such as a widow with unmarried children, or siblings living together.
- Supplemented nuclear families: Include a nuclear family's members plus other relations, without spouses.
- Broken extended nuclear families: Comprise a head without a spouse with other relations, of whom only one has a spouse.

C. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. Why not use VVPAT units for Gujarat polls, SC asks EC



In news:

- The Supreme Court questioned the Election Commission on its reluctance to use **voter verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT)** units with electronic voting machines for the Gujarat Assembly polls in 2017, warning the poll panel against making excuses and compelling the court to force its hand.

Petition:

- Filed by Mohit Singh, represented by counsel Kapil Sibal.
- Plea to direct the commission to implement the VVPAT voting mechanism in the Gujarat polls or otherwise use ballot papers to ensure a transparent, free and fair election.
- Gujarat High Court dismissed it.
- Supreme Court's 2013 judgment in Subramanian Swamy vs Election Commission of India**
- Court's observation: "paper trail is an indispensable requirement of free and fair elections. The confidence of the voters in the EVMs can be achieved only with the introduction of the "paper trail". **EVMs with VVPAT system ensure the accuracy of the voting system.**"

VVPAT and fair elections:

- The execution of the VVPAT concept would result in printed receipts of what party the EVM machine has registered a vote for.
- The said printed receipts would then ideally be collected by the voters and subsequently dropped in a ballot box.
- Therefore, the votes registered in the EVM may then be tallied with the ballot papers collected in the ballot box, thus, allowing the commission to ascertain whether a recount is required or not.
- Such printed receipts ensure that the voting is carried out in a more transparent fashion and further inspiring confidence in the election process.

2. Jobs secured with fake caste claim invalid: SC

False claims

About 1,832 appointments were secured on the basis of fake caste certificates, as per Lok Sabha questions

- Disciplinary proceedings had been instituted in all the cases
- 276 had resulted in suspension/removal
- 521 cases were caught in litigations
- In the remaining 1,035 cases, disciplinary proceedings are pending

In news:

Supreme Court:

- Persons who secured government employment and got academic admissions under reserved categories with the help of forged caste certificates can have their jobs and admission declared invalid.
- **No retrospective effect:** verdict would not be made applicable with retrospective effect.
- Quashed earlier directives issued by Bombay High Court.

Bombay High Court decision in 2014: public servants who got their jobs using fake caste certificates and have spent considerable time in service can be afforded protection. Such persons could be allowed to keep their jobs.

3. Constitutional status for backward classes panel?

Context:

- The Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill, 2017 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Mr. Thaawarchand Gehlot on April 5, 2017.
- It seeks to grant the National Commission on Backward Classes (NCBC) constitutional status, at par with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.

Bone of contention:

- Constitutional status to the NCBC will take away powers from States to add or remove communities to the backward class category for the purpose of reservation.
- The State governments will then only be left with the power to make a recommendation in this regard.

4. No-detention policy to go from 2018

In news:

- The government has decided to do away with the no-detention policy for students from the next academic session.

What does the law say?

- Under the Right to Education Act, 2009, no child admitted to a school will be held back in any class or expelled till the completion of elementary education covering Classes 1 to 8.

Why such a move?

- The decision was taken following representation from most of the States as they said the **standard of education had deteriorated** because of the policy.

What is the no-detention policy?

- No student up to Class VIII can be detained or failed. All students up to Class VIII are automatically promoted to the next class.

When were these implemented? Why?

- The no-detention policy was implemented as part of the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) under the RTE Act in 2010 to ensure holistic development of students. The idea was also to reduce dropout rates. Several states already had no-detention policies. Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation emphasises on evaluating a child through the year, and not just based on performance in one or two term exams.

What is wrong with the no-fail policy?

- A section of teachers and parents have complained that this policy has led to students developing a lackadaisical attitude, with there being no risk of failing. They also say this system makes no distinction between good and bad students, and between those who work hard and those who don't. Some states have demanded revocation of the policy, claiming this has led to a sharp fall in learning outcomes and academic levels.

5. CJI, governors should come under RTI: SC

In news:

- Supreme Court for the first time favoured bringing the **office of the chief justice** within the domain of the transparency law.

Supreme Court Observation:

- All constitutional functionaries should be made amenable to the RTI law to bring transparency and accountability in their functioning.
- The court specifically pointed out that the offices of governors and the Chief Justice of India should be brought under the ambit of RTI Act.

Central Information Commission (CIC) : declared the CJI's office as public authority under the RTI Act.

The Delhi high court had in 2009 declared the CJI as a public authority under the Act and asked the top court to make assets of its judges public.

A case before Constitutional bench

- The issue whether the Supreme Court should come within the ambit of RTI Act making it obligatory for the CJI to make public information pertaining to appointment of judges and his correspondences with the government is under consideration before a Constitution bench.
- But it is for the first time that the apex court batttered for implementation of RTI in judiciary .

6. PETA moves SC to quash T.N.'s amended jallikattu law

Context:

- 2014 Supreme court judgment in the **Animal Welfare Board of India vs. A. Nagaraja and others** : banned jallikattu as cruelty and held it violative of Sections 3 and 11 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.

- The People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) moved the Supreme Court for quashing the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Act 2017 and the Tamil Nadu Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Conduct of Jallikattu) Rules, 2017.**
- **Tamil Nadu:** brought bulls back into the fold of ‘performing animals’ and opened the gates for the conduct of the popular bull-taming sport in the name of **culture and tradition** despite a 2014 ban by the Supreme Court.

PETA’s contention in the petition filed:

- **Jallikattu abuse:** events lead to severe injuries, including broken bones, and even the death of humans and bulls.
- **Jallikattu Act and Rules violate the five internationally recognised freedoms** – the freedom from hunger, malnutrition and thirst; freedom from fear and distress; freedom from physical and thermal discomfort; freedom from pain, injury and disease; and freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour.

Basic information:

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals is an American animal rights organization based in Norfolk, Virginia, and led by Ingrid Newkirk, its international president.

Section 3 in The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960

3. Duties of persons having charge of animals.—It shall be the duty of every person having the care or charge of any animal to take all reasonable measures to ensure the well-being of such animal and to prevent the infliction upon such animal of unnecessary pain or suffering.

Section 11 in The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960

11. Treating animals cruelly.—

(1) If any person—

(a) beats, kicks, over-rides, over-drives, over-loads, tortures or otherwise treats any animal so as to subject it to unnecessary pain or suffering or causes or, being the owner permits, any animals to be so treated; or

(b) 13 [employs in any work or labour or for any purpose any animal which, by reason of its age or any disease], infirmity, wound, sore or other cause, is unfit to be so employed or, being the owner, permits any such unfit animal to be so employed; or

(c) wilfully and unreasonably administers any injurious drug or injurious substance to 14 [any animal] or wilfully and unreasonably causes or attempts to cause any such drug or substance to be taken by 14 [any animal]; or

(d) conveys or carries, whether in or upon any vehicle or not, any animal in such a manner or position as to subject it to unnecessary pain or suffering; or

(e) keeps or confines any animal in any cage or other receptacle which does not measure sufficiently in height, length and breadth to permit the animal a reasonable opportunity for movement; or

(g) being the owner, neglects to exercise or cause to be exercised reasonably any dog habitually chained up or kept in close confinement; or

(h) being the owner of 15 [any animal], fails to provide such animal with sufficient food, drink or shelter; or

(i) without reasonable cause, abandons any animal in circumstances which render it likely that it will suffer pain by reason of starvation or thirst; or

(j) wilfully permits any animal, of which he is the owner to go at large in any street while the animal is affected with contagious or infectious disease or, without reasonable excuse permits any diseased or disabled animal, of

which he is the owner, to die in any street; or

(k) offers for sale or, without reasonable cause, has in his possession any animal which is suffering pain by reason of mutilation, starvation, thirst, overcrowding or other ill-treatment; or

16 [(l) mutilates any animal or kills any animal (including stray dogs) by using the method of strychnine injections in the heart or in any other unnecessarily cruel manner; or;]

17 [m) solely with a view to providing entertainment—

(i) confines or causes to be confined any animal (including tying of an animal as a bait in a tiger or other sanctuary) so as to make it an object of prey for any other animal; or

(ii) incites any animal to fight or bait any other animal; or]

(n) 18 [***] organises, keeps, uses or acts in the management of, any place for animal fighting or for the purpose of baiting any animal or permits or offers any place to be so used or receives money for the admission of any other person to any place kept or used for any such purposes; or

(o) promotes or takes part in any shooting match or competition wherein animals are released from captivity for the purpose of such shooting; he shall be punishable, 19 [in the case of a first offence, with fine which shall not be less than ten rupees but which may extend to fifty rupees, and in the case of a second or subsequent offence committed within three years of the previous offence, with fine which shall not be less than twenty-five rupees but which may extend to one hundred rupees or with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three months, or with both.]

(2) For the purposes of sub-section (1), an owner shall be deemed to have committed an offence if he has failed to exercise reasonable care and supervision with a view to the prevention of such offence: Provided that where an owner is convicted of permitting cruelty by reason only of having failed to exercise such care and supervision, he shall not be liable to imprisonment without the option of a fine.

(3) Nothing in this section shall apply to—

(a) the dehorning of cattle, or the castration or branding or nose-roping of any animal, in the prescribed manner; or

(b) the destruction of stray dogs in lethal chambers or 20 [by such other methods as may be prescribed]; or

(c) the extermination or destruction of any animal under the authority of any law for the time being in force; or

(d) any matter dealt with in Chapter IV; or

(e) the commission or omission of any act in the course of the destruction or the preparation for destruction of any animal as food for mankind unless such destruction or preparation was accompanied by the infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Indian, Israeli defence firms join hands

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel

In news:

- Indian and Israeli companies entered into agreements to bid **jointly for defence contracts for the Indian military** and locally build the systems under "Make in India".
- MoU between Bharat Forge and Israel Aircraft Industries
- To expand the joint venture that the companies are establishing as part of a February 2017 agreement meant to develop, build, market and manufacture selected air defence systems and light weight special purpose

munitions.

- The new MoU covers the establishment of a maintenance centre for selected advanced air defence systems in Hyderabad in Telangana in India
- Dynamatic Technologies, IAI and Elcom signed a strategic teaming agreement for industrial cooperation and local production of **Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) in India**.

2. [**Modi, Xi will not hold talks at G-20 summit**](#)

Context:

- The Prime Minister of India is visiting Hamburg, Germany from July 6-8 for the G-20 summit.

Planned meetings:

- Pre-planned bilateral meetings of India, on the sidelines of the summit are with Argentina, Canada, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Republic of Korea, the U.K. and Vietnam.
- Prime Minister Modi to also participate in the BRICS leaders' meeting which will be held a day before the main summit
- No bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping had been scheduled on the sidelines of the G-20 meeting in German

C. GS3 Related

Nothing here for Today!!!

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for Today!!!

[**PIB Articles Editorials Roundup**](#)

E. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

PRELIMS WORTHY FACTUAL INFORMATION

Haifa Day

- The Indian Army commemorates September 23 every year as Haifa Day to pay its respects to the two brave Indian Cavalry Regiments that helped liberate the city following a dashing cavalry action by the 15th Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade.
- In the autumn of 1918, the Indian Brigade was a part of the Allied Forces sweeping northwards through Palestine in what is seen as the last great cavalry campaign in history.
- Captain Aman Singh Bahadur and Dafadar Jor Singh were awarded the Indian Order of Merit and Captain Anop Singh and 2nd Lt. Sagat Singh were awarded the Military Cross in recognition of their bravery in this battle. Major Dalpat Singh was awarded a military cross for his bravery.

F. Bills/Acts/Schemes/Orgs in News

Articles in
News

About the Articles

- The Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002 inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine.
- The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which represents the consequential legislation envisaged under Article 21-A, means that every child has a right to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards.
- The title of the RTE Act incorporates the words ‘free and compulsory’. ‘Free education’ means that no child, other than a child who has been admitted by his or her parents to a school which is not supported by the appropriate Government, shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing elementary education.
- ‘Compulsory education’ casts an obligation on the appropriate Government and local authorities to provide and ensure admission, attendance and completion of elementary education by all children in the 6-14 age group

Main objectives:

- Right of children to free and compulsory education till completion of elementary education in a neighbourhood school.
- It clarifies that ‘compulsory education’ means obligation of the appropriate government to provide free elementary education and ensure compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education to every child in the six to fourteen age group. ‘Free’ means that no child shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing elementary education.
- It makes provisions for a non-admitted child to be admitted to an age appropriate class.
- It specifies the duties and responsibilities of appropriate Governments, local authority and parents in providing free and compulsory education, and sharing of financial and other responsibilities between the Central and State Governments.
- It lays down the norms and standards relating inter alia to Pupil Teacher Ratios (PTRs), buildings and infrastructure, school-working days, teacher-working hours.
- It provides for rational deployment of teachers by ensuring that the specified pupil teacher ratio is maintained for each school, rather than just as an average for the State or District or Block, thus ensuring that there is no urban-rural imbalance in teacher postings. It also provides for prohibition of deployment of teachers for non-educational work, other than decennial census, elections to local authority, state legislatures and parliament, and disaster relief.
- It provides for appointment of appropriately trained teachers, i.e. teachers with the requisite entry and academic qualifications.
- It prohibits (a) physical punishment and mental harassment; (b) screening procedures for admission of children; (c) capitation fee; (d) private tuition by teachers and (e) running of schools without recognition,
- It provides for development of curriculum in consonance with the values enshrined in the Constitution, and which would ensure the all-round development of the child, building on the child’s knowledge, potentiality and talent and making the child free of fear, trauma and anxiety through a system of child friendly and child centred learning.

*The Right to
education
Act, 2009*

- The Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill, 2017 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Mr. Thaawarchand Gehlot on April 5, 2017. It seeks to grant the National Commission on Backward Classes (NCBC) constitutional status, at par with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.
- **Role of NCSC:** Currently, under the Constitution the NCSC has the power to look into complaints and welfare measures with regard to Scheduled Castes, backward classes and Anglo-Indians. The Bill seeks to remove the power of the NCSC to examine matters related to backward classes.
- **Constitutional status to National Commission for Backward Classes:** The NCBC is a body set up under the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993. It has the power to examine complaints regarding inclusion or exclusion of groups within the list of backward classes, and advise the central government in this regard. The Bill seeks to establish the NCBC under the Constitution, and provide it the authority to examine complaints and welfare measures regarding socially and educationally backward classes.
- Note that this Bill was introduced alongside the National Commission for Backward Classes (Repeal) Bill, 2017 that seeks to repeal the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993.
- **Backward classes:** The Constitution Amendment Bill states that the President may specify the socially and educationally backward classes in the various states and union territories. He may do this in consultation with the Governor of the concerned state. However, a law of Parliament will be required if the list of backward classes is to be amended.
- **Composition and service conditions:** Under the Constitution Amendment Bill, the NCBC will comprise of five members appointed by the President. Their tenure and conditions of service will also be decided by the President through rules.
- **Functions:** Under the Constitution Amendment Bill, the duties of the NCBC will include: (i) investigating and monitoring how safeguards provided to the backward classes under the Constitution and other laws are being implemented, (ii) inquiring into specific complaints regarding violation of rights, and (iii) advising and making recommendations on socio-economic development of such classes. The central and state governments will be required to consult with the NCBC on all major policy matters affecting the socially and educationally backward classes.
- The NCBC will be required to present annual reports to the President on working of the safeguards for backward classes. These reports will be tabled in Parliament, and in the state legislative assemblies of the concerned states.
- **Powers of a civil court :** Under the Constitution Amendment Bill, the NCBC will have the powers of a civil court while investigating or inquiring into any complaints. These powers include: (i) summoning people and examining them on oath, (ii) requiring production of any document or public record, and (iii) receiving evidence.

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Category: POLITY

1. SC stays HC verdict on Ganga status

Context:

- Uttarakhand High Court in March 2017 accorded the status of “legal persons” to rivers Ganga and Yamuna.
- **Uttarakhand High Court’s observation:** Rights of the two major rivers “shall be equivalent to the rights of human beings and the injury/harm caused to these bodies shall be treated as harm/injury caused to the human beings.”
- The High Court had ordered the Director, Namami Gange project, for cleaning and rejuvenating the river, the Chief Secretary and the Advocate General of Uttarakhand to act as “legal parents” of the holy rivers and work as a human face to protect, conserve and preserve them and their tributaries.

In news:

- The Supreme Court has frozen the status of “legal persons” accorded to rivers Ganga and Yamuna by the Uttarakhand High Court.

2. Call for law to end mob killings

In news:

- **The National Campaign Against Mob Lynchings (NCAML)** released a draft law of the **Manav Suraksha Kanoon** to tackle such killings and asked the Modi government to get it passed by Parliament in the upcoming monsoon session.
- The NCAML was launched last month. The move comes in the wake of alleged government indifference to mob killings in different parts of the country.

Draft Law:

- The draft law includes a definition of ‘mob’ and ‘lynching’, suggests that lynching be made a non-bailable offence, recommends immediate suspension of the SHO of the area until a time-bound judicial probe takes place and mandates life imprisonment for those convicted under mob lynching.
- The draft also has India-specific provisions stating how mobs are created, with technology being used for rumour-mongering.
- It states that a peaceful protest against leaders, policies etc. cannot be termed as a mob.
- Under the draft law, videographic evidence of survivors statements would also act as evidence.
- It also has provisions for a time-bound judicial enquiry, which should not take more than six months.
- Even compensation and rehabilitation has been recommended for the victims’ families.

3. India’s tough anti-hijacking law comes into force

Context:

- The country’s new anti-hijacking law, which prescribes capital punishment in the event of death of “any person”, has come into force

In News:

- The 2016 Anti-Hijacking Act replaces a 1982-vintage law

What are the provisions of the new law?

- Hijackers could be tried for death penalty only in the event of death of hostages, such as flight crew, passengers and security personnel
- Definition has been expanded to include death of “security personnel on board” or “ground support staff” as well.
- In other cases of hijacking, guilty will be punished with imprisonment for life and fine, besides confiscation of movable and immovable property held by him or her.
- Making a threat, attempts or abetment to commit the offence were included in the definition of hijacking
- Those who organise or direct others to commit such offence will also be considered to have committed the offence of hijacking
- It mandates central government to confer powers of investigation, arrest and prosecution on any officer of the **central government or National Investigation Agency (NIA)**

4. Don’t undermine our powers, southern State backward classes commission chiefs tell Centre

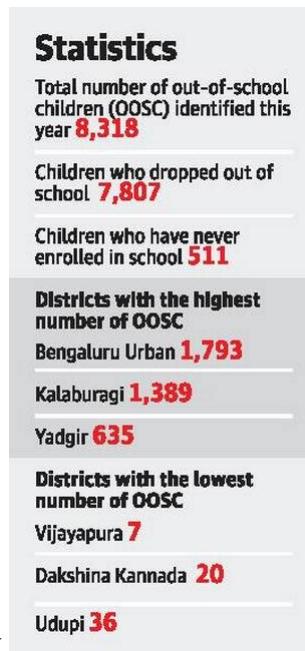
Context:

- The Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes had convened a meeting to discuss the implications of the Centre's move to provide constitutional backing to the **National Commission for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (NCSEBC)**.
- Meeting was attended by commission heads of Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Kerala.

Highlights of the meeting:

- The chairpersons of backward classes commissions of southern States resolved to urge the Centre against "interfering with the acts of inclusion into or exclusion from the list of socially backward classes for the purpose of reservation in any State".
- The Bill that seeks to give constitution status to the NCSEBC, they argued, had provisions that were contrary to the **federal structure and undermined their powers**.
- The commission heads collectively urged the Centre against interfering in the process of extending any benefit of reservation and other welfare measures within the State.
- They sought a review of all provisions that centralise the functions aimed at the welfare of socially and educationally backward classes.
- **12 resolutions passed in the meeting:** In one of the resolutions, they objected to clauses which empower the NCSEBC to make it mandatory for every State government to consult the national commission on all major policy matters.
- They demanded constitutional status for the State commissions on a par with the NCSEBC and the National Commissions for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

5. 63% of school dropouts in Karnataka in 11 to 13 age group: Survey



Highlights of the survey

- conducted by the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) to identify 'out-of-school' children across Karnataka ahead of the 2017–18 academic year.
- Nearly 63% of children who dropped out of school prior to the commencement of this academic year are between the ages of 11 and 13, indicating that most leave the education system after completing lower primary classes.
- The SSA identified 7,807 children between the ages of seven and 13 who had dropped out before the start of the academic year. Another 511 are children who never enrolled in school. This brings the total number of children in the State who have either dropped out of school or not enrolled in one to 8,318.
- About 49% of the 7,807 children are those belonging to the Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes category; 48.9% are from minority communities and other backward classes. The maximum number of out-of-school children are from Bengaluru Urban (1,739), followed by Kalaburagi (1,389). Vijayapura district has the best record, reporting only seven such children.
- The fact that children are not completing their education has been in focus since April 2013 after the High Court took suo motu cognisance of the issue.
- Last year, the Education Department identified 9,468 out-of-school children.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Modi targets Pakistan at G20

Context: G20 Summit, City of Hamburg, Germany

In news:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi speech highlights:

- Some countries were using terror as a tool to achieve political objectives and pressed for “deterrent” action collectively by the G20 members against such nations.
- He equated the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohamamid, as also the Haqqani network to the Islamic State and al-Qaeda, saying their names may be different but their ideology is the same.
- He regretted that the international response to terrorism was weak, and said more cooperation was needed to fight the menace.
- Pitched in for a **11-point ‘Action Agenda’**: for exchange of lists of terrorists among G20 nations, easing and expediting of legal processes like extradition and concrete steps to choke funds and weapon supply to the terrorists.
- **The Financial Action Task Force (FATF)** and other mechanisms to choke sources of funds to terrorists should be strengthened.
- **Explosives Action Task Force (EATF)** : On the pattern of FATF, an Explosives Action Task Force (EATF) should be constituted- to choke the sources of deadly arms reaching the terrorists can be ended.

Basic Information:

G20:

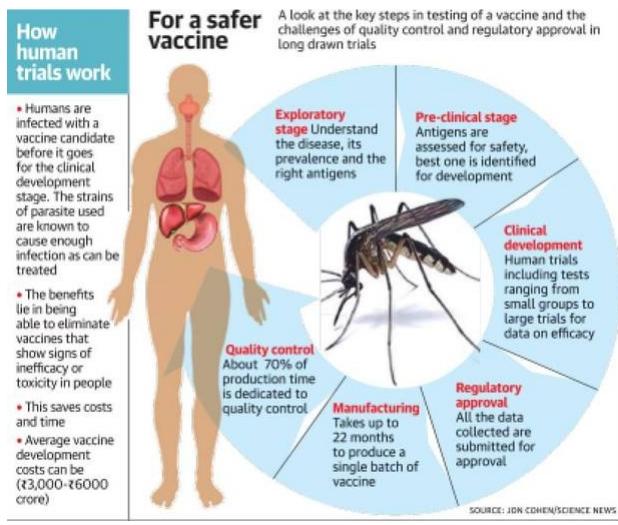
- The G20 (or G-20 or Group of Twenty) is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors from 20 major economies.
- Founded in 1999, the G20 aims to discuss policy issues pertaining to the promotion of international financial stability.
- It seeks to address issues that go beyond the responsibilities of any one organization.
- The G20 heads of government or heads of state have periodically conferred at summits since their initial meeting in 2008, and the group also hosts separate meetings of finance ministers and foreign ministers due to the expansion of its agenda in recent years.
- Membership of the G20 consists of 19 individual countries plus the European Union (EU).

FATF:

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) was established in July 1989 by a Group of Seven (G-7) Summit in Paris, initially to examine and develop measures to combat money laundering.
- In October 2001, the FATF expanded its mandate to incorporate efforts to combat terrorist financing, in addition to money laundering.
- **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.**
- The FATF is therefore a “policy-making body” which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in these areas.
- 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.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. Central labs moot ‘human first’ approach to test malaria vaccine



Context: What if a potential vaccine for malaria was to be first tested in humans before mice and animals?

In news:

- This November, experts at the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and labs affiliated to the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), will have a first-of-its kind “ethics meeting” here to discuss the feasibility of conducting these so-called ‘human challenge’ trials in India.
- Meeting also to discuss testing two vaccine-candidates — one that causes falciparum malaria and the milder-but-more-prevalent vivax — developed at the New Delhi-based International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology.

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Category: ECONOMICS

1. MRP to be sole price decider from Jan. 1

Context:

From January 1, 2018, the price of a packaged good would be same, whether it is a local kirana store, a mall, a five-star hotel or an airport

In News:

The Consumer Affairs Ministry has amended the rules that govern packaged commodities to this effect.

What the amended law says?

- Retail sale price shall be the maximum retail price (MRP) inclusive of all taxes, with the provision to round off the price to the nearest rupee or 50 paise.
- No person shall declare different MRPs on an identical pre-packed commodity.
- Require sellers to enhance the size of letters and numerals for making declarations such as “best before date, month and year” to indicate shelf life, for making it easier for consumers to read vital information.

E-Commerce

- For e-commerce marketplaces, declaring the month and year in which a commodity is manufactured or packed is not mandatory
- And if they fulfill certain conditions, they will not be held liable for whether the declarations were correct or incorrect.

2. Loan waivers: State government borrowings may jump to 5.30 lakh Cr

In News:

- Farm loan waivers announced by several states will push up borrowings by at least Rs 1,50,000 crore and raise the cost of funds for states, rating agencies have said
- Full funding of announced crop loan waivers through state development loans (SDL) could push up fresh issuance to Rs 5,30,000 crore in FY18 from Rs 3,80,000 crore in FY17

Mode of funding not clear:

- It is unclear whether the loan waivers would be funded through issuance of State Development Loans (SDL) or other modes of financing, such as loans from banks to the state governments or bonds issued by the latter to the banks
- If the funding of the announced waivers of Rs 88,170 crore is done entirely through SDL in FY2018 (which is unlikely), the issuance of fresh SDL could rise to Rs 5,30,000 crore in FY18

Effects of SDL issuance:

- The rise in SDL issuance would firm up their yields and widen their spread relative to Central Government securities (G-sec) to above 100 bps during second half of FY2018
- The expected increase in SDL issuance is likely to contribute to crowding out the private sector from accessing the bond markets at competitive rates

Do states have desired fiscal capacity for farm loan waivers?

- Punjab government lacks the fiscal space to accommodate the full funding of the loan waiver in FY18
- Uttar Pradesh would have to curtail its budgeted capital expenditure by more than 70 per cent to accommodate loan waiver
- Karnataka government appears to have the fiscal space to fully fund the crop loan waiver in FY18
- Maharashtra state government may lack the space to raise borrowings to fund the entire loan waiver of Rs 34,000 crore in FY18, which may be on account of other spending that is not fully budgeted

Basic Information:

State Development loans

- State Development Loans (SDLs) are dated securities issued by states for meeting their market borrowings requirements. In effect, the SDL are similar to the dated securities issued by the central government.
- Purpose of issuing State Development Loans is to meet the budgetary needs of state governments. Each state can borrow upto a set limit through State Development Loans.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Should we grow GM crops?

Context:

A PIL has been filed against GM crops in the Supreme Court of India

Issues associated with GMO

- GMOs carry risks of ‘unintended’ effects and toxicity and long term health impacts such as cancer.
- GMOs are self-replicating organisms and genetic contamination of the environment, of non-GM crops and wild species through gene flow
- It cannot be contained, reversed, remedied or quantified.
- Our seed stock will be contaminated at the molecular level.
- The traits for disease, saline and drought resistance, yield, etc. are found in nature, not biotech labs.
- California reaffirmed glyphosate, included in a list of chemicals labelled as “cancer-causing”

What is Glyphosate?

- Glyphosate is one of the most widely used herbicides in the United States and considered the safest herbicide.

Issues associated with Glyphosate

- Glyphosate is an endocrine (hormone) disruptor.
- But no regulatory agency regulates for endocrine disruption despite evidences from Argentina that it causes birth defects because of glyphosate used herbicide-tolerant (HT) soybeans

Concerns with GMOs in India?

- Bayer's glufosinate, the herbicide linked with Indian HT mustard, is an acknowledged neurotoxin banned in the EU.
- The Supreme Court-appointed technical expert committee recommended a ban on any HT crop in India
- The myths with GM crop technology that it "will feed the world" — are fast dissolving.
- The current GMOs, Bt cotton and HT on empirical evidence are proven unsustainable technologies.
- There are promises of GMOs with traits for disease, drought etc, but these are complex, multi-gene traits and remain futuristic.

Where India lacks?

- Serious lack of expertise in risk assessment, and we are sitting on an agri-biosecurity danger situation.
- We have moved from dismal regulation in Bt cotton in 2002 to outright delinquency in commercialising HT mustard.
- The regulation is subterranean, unconstitutional and also in contempt of Supreme Court orders pertaining to Bt brinjal/mustard.

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Category: ART AND CULTURE

1. Kerala boat races off to colourful start

In news:

- Hundreds of oarsmen take part in the **Champakulam event**, the season's first

History and its cultural significance:

- The history of the race dates back to the 15th century when the erstwhile Travancore State was ruled by the **Chembakassery dynasty**.
- The **Moolam boat race** commemorates an episode associated with the **installation of the idol of Lord Krishna at the Ambalappuzha Sri Krishna temple**.
- The idol was brought from Kurichi near Kottayam by boat.
- The boat carrying the idol had a halt at Mappilasseri, a traditional Christian home at Champakulam. It was given a reception by people of all communities and the voyage to Ambalappuzha was marked by festivities.
- **The annual race falls on Moolam star in the month of Mithunam in the Malayalam calendar.**

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Category: POLITY

1. Panel calls for ‘light regulation’ of NGOs

In news:

- A high-power committee appointed by the Central government on the orders of the Supreme Court has recommended several steps to ensure the “light regulation” of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) so as to reduce their harassment.
- The committee is headed by S. Vijay Kumar, a former Secretary in the Ministry of Rural Development.

Fresh outlook

A look at some of the measures suggested by the committee headed by former secretary S. Vijay Kumar

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernise registration procedures for NGOs • Ensure seamless operation of the applicable provisions of the IT Act and FCRA • Reduce the need for a physical interface between NGOs and public officials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A three-tier monitoring system for NGOs receiving support from the Central government
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The panel was formed as part of the Centre's response to a writ petition filed by lawyer Manohar Lal Sharma

Major recommendations of the Committee:

- **Registration procedures** be modernised so as to facilitate the seamless operation of the applicable provisions of the IT (Income Tax) Act and FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act) with respect to NGOs, without the need for cumbersome and intrusive processes.
- Steps must be taken to “reduce the need for a physical interface between NGOs and public officials acting under the IT Act and the FCRA, along with reduction in mutual distrust and scope for misuse.
- The committee has drawn up a framework of guidelines for the accreditation of NGOs, audit of their accounts, and procedures to initiate action for recovering grants in case of misappropriation.
- A nodal body to oversee the various interfaces between NGOs and the government, and has recommended that NITI Aayog be vested with the power
- It has recommended an overarching legislation with best practices that would replace various State-level and existing Central laws.
- Details of NGOs should be available as searchable database information.

2. Coming: direct to home coaching for students, IIT aspirants

Swayam Prabha:

- The Union government will formally launch **Swayam Prabha** — a project for telecasting “high-quality educational programmes” through 32 DTH channels —at a National Convention on Digital Initiatives for Higher Education.



Features of SWAYAM Prabha- Educational Contents through DTH

The 32 channels are proposed to be launched before September 2016

English & Regional languages



Covers all level of education

School education, undergraduate, postgraduate, engineering, out of school children, vocational courses and teacher training

Curriculum

Arts, science, commerce, performing arts, social sciences and humanities subjects, engineering, technology, law, medicine, agriculture etc.

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Features:

- The project envisages 24X7 access to educational content.
- Every day, there will be content of four hours that will be repeated six times, thus covering all 24 hours of the day. This will allow the student to choose a time of his own convenience.

The DTH Channels shall cover the following:

1. **Higher Education:** Curriculum-based course contents at post-graduate and under-graduate level covering diverse disciplines such as arts, science, commerce, performing arts, social sciences and humanities, engineering, technology, law, medicine, agriculture, etc.
2. **School education (9-12 levels):** modules for teacher's training as well as teaching and learning aids for children of India to help them understand the subjects better and also help them in preparing for competitive examinations for admissions to professional degree programmes.
3. **Curriculum-based** courses that can meet the needs of life-long learners of Indian citizens in India and abroad.
4. **Assist students** (class 11th & 12th) prepare for competitive exams.
5. The content would also include IIT-PAL modules, aimed at helping students of Classes 11 and 12 prepare for the IITs by developing a strong conceptual understanding.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. PMO, NSA tracking impact of Chinese FDI in South Asia

Context: India's tense border stand-off in Sikkim with China

In news:

- The Union Government of India has begun its first ever in-depth assessment of Chinese investments in India's neighbouring countries.
- The move has been initiated by the Prime Minister's Office and the National Security Adviser.

Chinese FDI in the Indian subcontinent:

- Trends show that there have been an increasing influence of China in the Indian sub-continent and South Asia
- Pakistan government data shows that FDI from China jumped from \$256.8 million in 2014-15 to \$878.8 million in 2016-17 (July-May).

Chinese investments and threats to India's national security:

- The study will analyse the impact of these Chinese investments — including those being made as part of the

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, also known as One Belt One Road or OBOR) — on India's national security.

- In addition to assessing the nature and impact of Chinese FDI in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the study will track Chinese investments in Afghanistan and Maldives too.
- The major challenge in the study will be the lack of detailed, country-wise data on overall FDI (year-wise) and Chinese FDI, in particular.

Economic market threats:

- Chinese investments in countries like Pakistan could, in turn, set the stage for Pakistan to make inroads into markets in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal and challenge the presence of Indian firms in these markets, where India is currently the major player.
- The CPEC(China – Pakistan Economic Corridor)/OBOR projects can also better link Pakistan with the Central Asian Republics (CAR) and help the country establish a footprint in those markets

2. [**122 nations adopt first treaty banning nuclear weapons**](#)

In news:

- More than 120 countries approved the first-ever treaty **to ban nuclear weapons** at a **UN meeting boycotted by all nuclear-armed nations**.
- None of the nine countries known or believed to possess nuclear weapons – the United States, Russia, Britain, China, France, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel – is supporting the treaty. Many of their allies also did not attend the meeting.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. [**IMF, World Bank and WTO call for removing trade barriers to boost growth**](#)

In News

- IMF, World Bank and WTO suggested for removing trade barriers and expediting economic reforms to boost global growth and employment, at G-20 Summit

Reason behind low employment

According to all the three organisations, technology is the prime reason for job losses in some regions

Way forward:

- Deeper trade integration and supportive domestic policies is required by the leaders of the grouping(G-20)
- Deeper trade integration twinned with supportive domestic policies can help boost incomes and accelerate global growth

Basic Information:

Economic or Trade Integration

- Economic integration is the unification of economic policies between different states through the partial or full abolition of tariff and non-tariff restrictions on trade taking place among them prior to their integration
- This is meant in turn to lead to lower prices for distributors and consumers with the goal of increasing the level of welfare, while leading to an increase of economic productivity of the states
- The trade stimulation effects intended by means of economic integration are part of the contemporary economic Theory of the Second Best: where, in theory, the best option is free trade, with free competition and no trade barriers whatsoever
- Free trade is treated as an idealistic option, and although realized within certain developed states, economic integration has been thought of as the “second best” option for global trade where barriers to full free trade

exist

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Cocoa: A tonic for cognition and memory retention

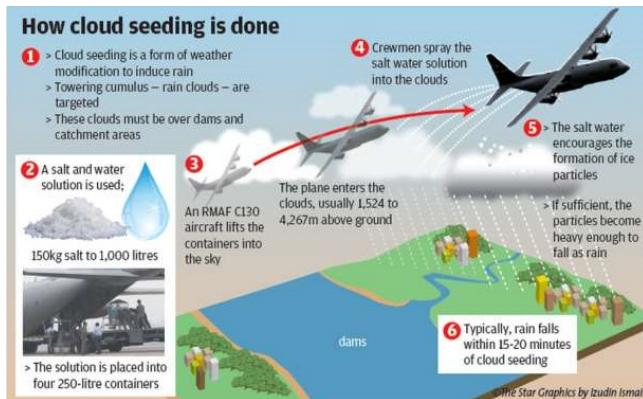
Cocoa and health benefits:

- Cocoa and chocolates are good for cognition. Of particular interest is a paper
- The family of flavonoids (catechins, quercetin, anthocyanidins) present in cocoa not only act as antioxidants and cell protectants just as tea does, but they protect human cognition, counteract cognitive decline and memory loss as well.
- **Cocoa and cognition:** they may protect neurons against damage, reduce inflammation, promote and even generate new connections between nerve cells.

2. Cloud seeding: expensive, but no guarantees

In news:

The Karnataka State government's proposal for cloud seeding is gathering steam even as many meteorologists warn that the costly 'experiment' may end up yielding little.



Basic Information:

Cloud seeding:

- Cloud seeding is a form of weather modification, a way of changing the amount or type of precipitation that falls from clouds, by dispersing substances into the air that serve as cloud condensation or ice nuclei, which alter the microphysical processes within the cloud.
- The usual intent is to increase precipitation (rain or snow), but hail and fog suppression are also widely practiced in airports.
- The most common chemicals used for cloud seeding include silver iodide, potassium iodide and dry ice (solid carbon dioxide). Liquid propane, which expands into a gas, has also been used.
- This can produce ice crystals at higher temperatures than silver iodide. After promising research, the use of hygroscopic materials, such as table salt, is becoming more popular.

3. Using AI to achieve development goals

Context:

How AI can provide solutions to human and social development challenges?

Health and nutrition

- High level of malnutrition and stunted growth in pre-school children in India is alarming
- AI-based systems can be used to improve delivery of child nutrition programmes

How AI can help?

- AI-based systems collect and examine data about children and track the progress of an individual child in terms of their cognitive development and health.
- Image-recognition techniques can help in early identification of stunted growth, epidemics and other health issues.
- It assist in diagnosis of problems being faced—from drought to poor sanitation and inadequate supplies

Agriculture

- US have used AI to develop “precision farming” practices, which lead to a more efficient use of inputs and higher yields.

How it works?

- Sensors gather information about the condition and colour of foliage and soil moisture content.
- This information is fed to the system, which determines the amount of water, and fertilizer to be provided.
- It also specifies which part of the plant needs to be provided with these inputs.
- These systems have reported higher yields and reduction in agricultural inputs.
- Education
- Learning outcomes of young minds are notoriously poor in our current education system.

AI-based systems can assist students with their learning experience.How?

- Changing the form and nature of content to suit the student.
- “Smart content” is generated with text summaries, supported with related videos and simulations.
- Intelligent tutor systems are an example of the same (see Carnegielearning.com).
- MIT’s Media Labs has also developed “personal robots” which work and interact with humans as peers.
- Some of them are even capable of identifying and correcting misconceptions of a student as they learn the material.
- Provides timely feedback to students and teachers.

Concerns about AI?

- Expensive today.
- Ethical issues of privacy of data, equity and liability of actions.

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Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. Easier access to H1N1 medicines raises fears of drug resistance Doctors feel misuse will lead to a situation of anti-viral medications turning ineffective

In news

- Concerns regarding a build-up of resistance to antiviral drugs used to treat swine flu are surfacing, after two such

drugs — Oseltamivir and Zanamivir — were taken off the restrictive Schedule X of the Drugs and Comestics Rules.

- Now under Schedule H1, the drugs can be stocked by all chemists.
- Central health authorities have also advised doctors to prescribe the drugs based on strong symptoms, without opting for the swab test. Medical experts say these decisions could lead to misuse and eventually, severe drug resistance.

Drugs for H1N1

- Oseltamivir and Zanamivir are antiviral drugs that block the actions of influenza virus types A and B in the body. While Oseltamivir is available as tablets, Zanamivir comes in powder form.

Concern

- We are already witnessing antibiotic resistance and related hazards.
- Resistance built up only because antibiotics were easily available and even sold over the counter.
- Now, it seems to be going the same way with antiviral drugs.

Mixed Reaction

- It is good, because when H1N1 cases are on the rise, the drug will be available to patients easily.
- However, it could backfire because in India, we don't use caution.
- The doctors will prescribe these drugs so widely that eventually it will stop working.

Restrictions in place

- Drugs under Schedule X require three copies of prescription for the doctor, patient and chemist, and can be sold by a chemist who holds a special Schedule X licence.
- Also, the chemist has to preserve the prescription copy for up to three years.
- In Schedule H1, only one copy of the prescription is required, and drugs in this category can be sold by all chemists.

Way forward

- Chemists will still need a prescription to sell the drug. The only difference is, the drug will be widely available. It all depends on doctors now. If they prescribe the drug with caution, there won't be misuse.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. G20 hails India's labour reforms, start-up policy Hamburg Action Plan praises efforts to boost innovation

- Acknowledging the steps being taken by India for sustainable and inclusive growth as well as support to global economy, the G20 has praised the initiatives in the country for promoting ease of doing business, start-up funding and labour reforms.

Areas where improvement need for ease of doing business

- The areas where India ranks poorly as per the World Bank ranking include starting a business, dealing with construction permits, registering property, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts and resolving insolvency.

Reforms taken

- The country has implemented a spate of reforms in the recent months in areas like insolvency, taxation and starting a business and expects the rankings to improve substantially.
- In the financial sector, India is popularising a number of derivative instruments in exchanges or electronic trading platforms as part of the measures to enhance resilience of its economy.
- India is facilitating external commercial borrowings (ECBs) by start-ups to encourage innovation and promote ease of doing business, as part of the efforts being taken by the G20 members this year for maintaining momentum on structural reforms and sustainable growth.

Partners to the G20

- Global institutions like the World Bank, IMF, WTO, OECD, ILO, WHO and the Financial Stability Board (FSB) are among the partners to the G20.

G20 Hamburg Action Plan

- The G20 Hamburg Action Plan, which sets out the group's strategy for achieving strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth, also said the closer partnership and action by G20 members will boost confidence and contribute to shared prosperity.
- In the action plan, the G20 members resolved that they would continue to use all policy tools — monetary, fiscal and structural — individually and collectively to achieve the goal of strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth, while enhancing economic and financial resilience.

Challenges to global growth

- Weak productivity growth, income inequality and ageing populations represent challenges to growth in the longer term.

2. Iraq Prime Minister declares victory in 'liberated'

In news

- The declared victory in Mosul marks an epic milestone for the Iraqi security forces, who had crumbled in the face of an IS onslaught across Iraq in 2014.

Background

- IS swept across much of Iraq's Sunni Arab heartland in a lightning offensive that year, proclaiming a self-styled "caliphate" straddling Iraq and neighbouring Syria.
- But the jihadist group, which is facing twin offensives backed by a U.S.-led coalition in both countries, has since lost large parts of the territory it once controlled.
- The Iraqi forces launched their campaign to recapture Mosul in October, seizing its eastern side in January and launching the battle for its western part the next month.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Two large groups bid to supply equipment for Chabahar port India keen to expedite work on the strategic facility in Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan

In news

- Two major Indian conglomerates have bid for supplying key equipment for the strategic Chabahar Port in Iran, while the process is on to expand financial eligibility criteria to attract more bidders.
- India is keen on expediting work on this port, located in the Sistan-Baluchistan province on the energy-rich Persian Gulf nation's southern coast that can be easily accessed from India's West coast, bypassing Pakistan.

2. Process eased for exporters who have not paid IGST Exports had come to a halt in the absence of clarity

In news

- The Centre has, through a notification and a circular, eased the paperwork required to export goods without the exporter having paid the Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST).
- This is in accordance with government's commitment of improving ease of doing business.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Army in for the long haul in Doklam

In news

- Soldiers pitch tents, and a steady line of supplies is being maintained for them.
- The Army is ready for the long haul in holding onto its position in the Dokalam area near the Bhutan tri-junction, notwithstanding China ratcheting up rhetoric against India, demanding pulling back of its troops.

Security implications

- Both the countries had agreed to a mechanism in 2012 to resolve border flare-ups through consultations at various levels.
- The mechanism has not worked so far in the current case as the standoff near the Bhutan trijunction, triggered by China's attempt to build a road in the strategically important area, has dragged on for over three weeks.
- New Delhi has already conveyed to Beijing that such an action would represent a significant change of status quo with "serious" security implications for India. The road link could give China a major military advantage over India.

Doka La

- Doka La is the Indian name for the region which Bhutan recognises as Dokalam, while China claims it as part of its Donglang region.
- China and Bhutan are engaged in talks. India argues that since it is a tri-junction involving the three countries, it also has a say in the issue.

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Category: ART AND CULTURE

1. Ahmedabad gets world heritage tag

In news:

- The Walled City of Ahmedabad, founded by **Sultan Ahmed Shah** in the 15th century, has been declared **India's first World Heritage City**.
- The **World Heritage Committee (WHC) of UNESCO** made the announcement
- The UNESCO had preferred Ahmedabad over Delhi and Mumbai.
- The 5.5 km walled city area with an approximate population of four lakh, living in century-old wooden residences is regarded as a living heritage.
- It has now joined the privileged club of heritage cities like **Paris, Cairo, Edinburgh and two cities in the subcontinent, Bhaktapur in Nepal and Galle in Sri Lanka**

Ahmedabad

The walled city of Ahmedabad on the eastern banks of Sabarmati river presents a rich architectural heritage from the sultanate period, notably the **Bhadra citadel**, the walls and gates of the Fort city and numerous mosques and tombs, as well as important Hindu and Jain temples of later periods.

C. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. Committee formed to study legalities for separate State flag

Context: separate flag for Karnataka

In news:

- The Karnataka State government has constituted a nine-member committee headed by Principal Secretary, Department of Kannada and Culture, to study and submit a report to the government on the possibility of “designing a separate flag for Karnataka and providing it a statutory standing.”

Constitutional and legal position of the State having its own flag:

- **R. Bommai v/s Union of India (Supreme Court 1994) case verdict:**
- The Supreme Court has declared that federalism is a basic feature of the Constitution and States are supreme in their sphere.

Inference:

- This being the Constitutional position, there is no prohibition in the Constitution for the State to have its own flag. However, the manner in which the State flag is hoisted should not dishonour the national flag. It has to be always below the national flag.
- The national flag code specifically authorises use of other flags subject to the regulation by the court. So State flag is not unauthorized.

2. Do what you feel is good for your faith and let others do the same: Chief Justice of India

Context:

- A plea was filed before Supreme Court seeking an end to the practice of burning effigy of Ravana on the eve of Dussehra festival.
- Supreme Court dismisses the plea upholding Article 25 of the Indian Constitution.

Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar's Observation:

- Every person has the right to do what he feels is good for his faith
- “This court is not about good or bad. It is about what is legal and what is illegal. You do what you feel is good for your faith and let others do what is good for their faith.”

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Category: INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE

1. Cyberattack link to glitches in RJio, NSE under probe

Context:

Last week's attack:

Data breach fears loom

Major glitches and data breaches that occurred in the first week of July

R-Jio

On July 9, magicapk.com posted details of R-Jio customers, their email IDs and Aadhaar data. The website was suspended

Airtel

On July 7, Airtel said it experienced a network outage in Delhi and parts of NCR. The outage affected lakhs of customers in Delhi

NSE

Trading at the country's largest stock exchange was stalled for three hours on Monday due to a technical glitch. Finance ministry has sought a report



1. Outage of Airtel network in Delhi
2. Data breach of users of Reliance Jio Infocomm
3. Technical glitch at the National Stock Exchange (NSE)

In news:

- India is investigating on a “possible cyber attack.”
- The Home Ministry is preparing an internal cybersecurity policy as it is required under the national plan.

2016 data breach: In 2016, security codes of around 32 lakh debit cards were breached and several users reported unauthorised transactions from locations in China.

Worrisome dependence on Chinese equipments:

- Two years ago various telecom giants had been sensitised by the Government, about the vulnerability of equipment and products imported from China.
- Both Airtel and Jio use Chinese equipment.

2. Ships and planes arrive, it's days of war games

Matching skills	PARTICIPANTS
Malabar Exercise began in 1992 as a bilateral naval exercise between India and the U.S. In 2015, it was expanded into a trilateral format with the inclusion of Japan. The 21st edition of Malabar naval exercises is currently under way off Chennai	Indian Navy <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya• Guided missile destroyer Ranvir• Indigenous stealth frigates Shivalik and Sahyadri• Anti-submarine corvette Kamorta• Missiles corvettes Kora and Kirpan• Fleet tanker Jyoti• Sindhughosh class Sindhudhvaj• One long-range P-8I patrol aircraft
U.S. Navy <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68) with embarked Carrier Air Wing 11• Guided-missile cruiser USS Princeton• Guided-missile destroyers USS	Japanese SDF <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Howard, USS Shoup, USS Kidd and USS Pinckney• One P-8A Poseidon aircraft• One Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS Jacksonville• Helicopter carrier JS Izumo (DDH 183) and missile destroyer JS Sazanami

Context:

- The Malabar Exercise 2017.
- Participants: naval forces of India, Japan and the United States.

Exercise not aimed at China

- Malabar is not to send a message to any specific country.
- The underlying theme of Malabar is to understand each other's standard operating procedures and each other's ways of working better, to enhance camaraderie and bonhomie
- S. Navy officer: U.S. participation in the exercises indicated the country's interests in maritime security in the Indo-Asia Pacific region.

Focus Areas:

The thrust of the exercise at sea this year would be on aircraft carrier operations, air defence, anti-submarine warfare (ASW), surface warfare, visit board search and seizure (VBBS), joint manoeuvres and tactical procedures.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Curcumin nanoparticles found to shorten TB treatment time

In news

- Researchers have found that the basic ingredient of turmeric, when administered in a nanoparticle formulation has several favourable properties in the treatment of tuberculosis in mice
- Name of the basic ingredient: Curcumin
- The results were published in the journal *Frontiers in Immunology*

Results of the Research

- During the research, regular curcumin was able to drastically reduce liver toxicity induced by TB drug isoniazid
- Also, the treatment of TB with isoniazid along with 200 nanometre curcumin nanoparticles led to “**dramatically reduced**” risk of disease reactivation and reinfection
- Because of the increased bioavailability of curcumin, the duration of treatment to achieve complete eradication of the bacteria is reduced significantly

Other positive effects of using ‘Curcumin’

- Quite often, patients stop taking anti-TB drugs for a few days due to liver toxicity
- Since the addition of curcumin reduces liver toxicity there can be better treatment and lesser risk of drug resistance emerging

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Concrete may help curb air pollution

In news:

- Scientists found that Concrete surfaces can help tackle air pollution as it absorbs **sulphur dioxide** — a major pollutant.

Importance:

- The strategy of using pollution-causing material and turning it into an environmental solution could lead to new thinking in urban design and waste management.
- Concrete buildings in urban areas can serve as a kind of sponge adsorbing sulphur dioxide to a high level.
- Waste concrete coming from building demolitions can also be used to adsorb these pollutants

Air Pollution menace

- According to the WHO, as many as seven million premature deaths of people worldwide may be linked to poor air quality and pollution
- Sulphur dioxide emissions are among the most common pollutants into the air globally, with power plants emitting the most sulphur dioxide.

Basic Information:

Sulphur dioxide (SO₂)

- It is a toxic gas with a pungent, irritating smell.
- The SO₂ is hygroscopic, when it is in the atmosphere it reacts with humidity and forms sulphuric and sulphurous aerosol acid that is later part of the so-called acid rain.

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ARTICLE IN NEWS	ABOUT THE ARTICLE
<i>Article 25. Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion</i>	<p>(1) Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion</p> <p>(2) Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law</p> <p>(a) regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice;</p> <p>(b) providing for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus Explanation I The wearing and carrying of kirpans shall be deemed to be included in the profession of the Sikh religion Explanation II In sub clause (b) of clause reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jaina or Buddhist religion, and the reference to Hindu religious institutions shall be construed accordingly</p>

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Category: ART AND CULTURE

1. India to celebrate Falun Gong

In news:

- Falun Gong, the ancient Chinese holistic system that is banned in China, will be celebrated in India on July 15 with a parade and Human Word Formation in New Delhi

Basic Information:

Falun Gong:

- Falun Gong (literally, “Dharma Wheel Practice” or “Law Wheel Practice”) is a Chinese spiritual practice that combines meditation and **qigong exercises** with a moral philosophy centered on the tenets of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance
- The practice emphasizes morality and the cultivation of virtue, and identifies as a qigong practice of the Buddhist school, though its teachings also incorporate elements drawn from Taoist traditions. Through moral rectitude and the practice of meditation, practitioners of Falun Gong aspire to eliminate attachments, and ultimately to achieve spiritual enlightenment.
- **Qigong** is a holistic system of coordinated body posture and movement, breathing, and meditation used for health, spirituality, and martial arts training

C. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. SC stays cattle sale rules across nation

Context:

- **Union Government’s May 26 notification:** banned cattle sale in livestock markets for slaughter and religious sacrifices.
- The rules banned trading in cattle for slaughter at animal markets. The rules included buffaloes in their definition of cattle, raising concerns that they would jeopardize the buffalo meat export business as the supply chain of spent buffaloes will be disrupted.
- The Central rules drew criticism from various quarters, including opposition parties, who argued that they virtually ban the sale of cattle in the country.

In news:

- The Supreme Court stayed the Centre’s May 26 notification.
- **Government’s stance:** the government acquiesced that public outcry and objections from the States about the law’s impact on livelihoods made it realize that the rules need “tweaking”.
- **Additional Solicitor- General P. Narasimha response:** the government had received a “large number of representations” that “certain aspects” of the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Regulation of Livestock Markets) Rules, 2017** and the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Maintenance of Case Property Animals) Act, 2017** were “troubling” and threw up some “sensitive” questions about the Central rules.

2. Ministry forms panel for cruise tourism

In News

- The Shipping Ministry is setting up a committee to examine cruise tourism reforms

Objectives of the Committee

The committee will consider a single window system for

1. cruise requirements
2. dedicated approach road for cruise terminals
3. reducing security layer for passengers and other measures

Other efforts by the Government

- The Ministry had hired a global consultant to firm up an action plan aimed at facilitating customer-friendly and hassle-free logistics process for the cruise tourism industry

Current Scenario of the cruise tourism in India

- India's cruise passengers stood at 1.76 lakh in 2016-17, which was merely 0.5% of the global share
- Domestic cruise passengers are estimated to grow to 1.5 million by 2031-32
- Of the 12 major ports Mumbai, Goa, Cochin, New Mangalore and Chennai have facilities to berth international cruise ships

3. Minimum qualifications for coop. societies' polls

In news:

- Rajasthan has become the country's first State to lay down the minimum educational qualifications for contesting elections to **village cooperative societies and various other cooperative bodies**.
- The State Cooperative Societies Rules, 2003, were amended for the purpose and notified on Monday.
- **Qualification:**
 - The educational qualifications will range from Class V to Class VIII for election as members of governing boards of dairy societies, farming societies, consumer societies, weavers' societies, housing construction societies, urban banks, primary land development banks, credit societies, salary earners' societies and cooperative unions.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. U.S. may tighten rules for foreign students

Present System:

- International students can stay in the U.S. as long as they are enrolled for a programme.
- Students who enter the U.S on **F-1 visas** are issued an entry document with an end date that states "duration of stay", which is theoretically open-ended. They can stay as long as they have a valid I-20 document, which is issued by the university, with all details regarding the student's programme of study, financing, etc. They can also move from one programme to another and from one institution to another, by a notification, based on a new I-20 document that the institution issues.

Key fact:

- Indians are the fastest growing group among the international student population in the U.S.
- There are 1,66,000 students from India pursuing higher education in the U.S. now, up from about 1,00,000 two years earlier. A large majority of them pursue science, technology, engineering and math courses.
- Around 1.4 million international students are currently present in the U.S.

New proposed Changes: Foreign students in the United States may be required to reapply every year for permission to stay in the country.

Impacts: The proposed measures could increase costs and paper work for students and universities.

Why such a move?

The proposal is part of an ongoing review of the immigration policy to ensure that it “promotes the national interest, enhances national security and public safety and ensures the integrity of our immigration system.”

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. [5 States, a UT sign pact with Centre on e-Marketplace](#)

In news:

- In a spirit of cooperative federalism, 5 States and a Union Territory (UT) on Tuesday formally adopted the Centre's initiative called the **Government e-Marketplace (GeM)**
- **Aim :** GeM ensures that public procurement of goods and services in India worth more than Rs. 5 lakh crore annually is carried out through the online platform for transparency and to eliminate corruption.
- The States and the UT that signed an MoU with the Centre include Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Telangana, Puducherry and Arunachal Pradesh.
- GeM can enhance transparency, efficiency and speed in public procurement.

2. [Sugar import duty increased to 50% to support domestic prices](#)

In News:

- The government on Monday raised the import duty on sugar to 50 per cent from 40 per cent to discourage dumping of cheaper supplies from abroad and as local prices stabilise after a spike earlier this marketing year
- The move will improve the ability of sugar mills to pay farmers for their supplies of cane, according to the sugar industry

Relief for producers:

- The hike in the duty comes as a relief for mills amid slowing domestic demand, especially after demonetisation
- Cost of production is also increased due to high cane prices
- This will help the sugar industry pay the cane price (fair and remunerative price), which has been raised by 11 per cent for the marketing year starting October 2017

Sugar import:

- In April this year, the government had allowed duty-free imports of raw sugar up to five lakh tonnes to improve domestic availability
- It was due to fear that a drop in domestic output in 2016-17 could trigger a spiral in prices to irrational levels
- This was for the first time since 2012 that imports of sugar under the open general license (OGL) was allowed at zero duty, albeit in limited quantity

3. [Railways to promote small entrepreneurs in big way](#)

In News:

- Indian Railways has taken a big step in a plan to promote micro and small enterprises
- It has reserved 358 items including cleaning apparatus, stationery and leather items exclusively for procurement from the MSE sector
- Besides, the sector has been exempted from paying tender cost and earnest money deposit for participating in the railway tender

Other changes:

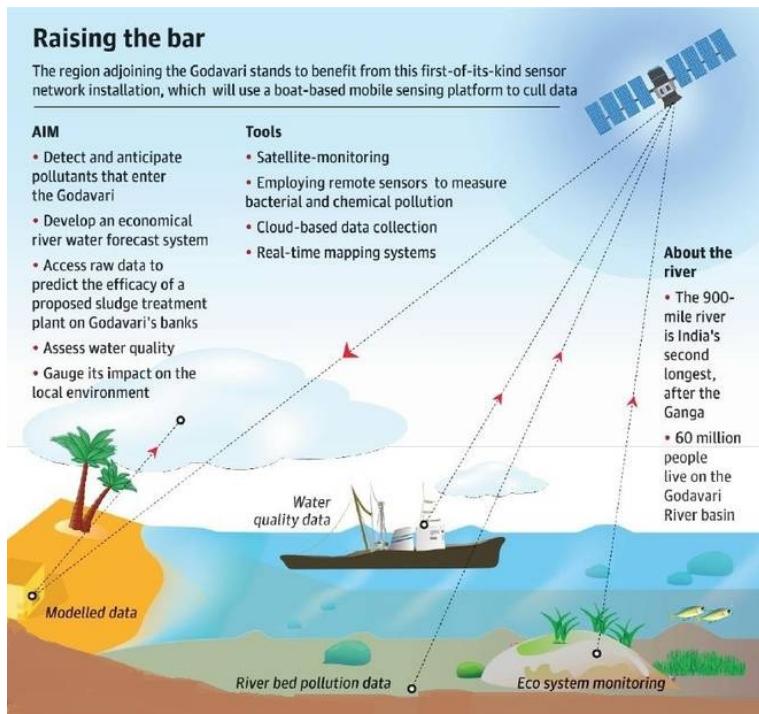
- MSEs will be now encouraged to participate in the business of maintenance and operation of rolling stock and also in procurement of cables, linen, paints, coupler body, wall panelling, cutting and drilling machines

Taking up advice:

- Recently the national transporter has organised a meeting to increase the participation of micro and small enterprises in railway procurement
- The meeting was attended by Railway Minister and senior officials from the ministry and the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) besides MSE vendors
- The Research Designs and Standards Organisation (RDSO), the research wing of the Railways, was advised to extend its support to MSE vendors on technical issues and SIDBI was advised to provide financial support to MSEs

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Sensor network to map and predict pollution, effluents in Godavari



In news:

- A group of U.S. researchers is working on a system to map undulating pollution trends in the Godavari.

New approach:

- Using a mix of methods, including satellite-monitoring, traversing stretches of the river to collect

water samples and using special sensors to measure bacterial and chemical pollution, the researchers are trying to develop a cost-effective forecast system.

- The team's long-term objective is to be able to inform State officials and citizens of a probable spike in, say, levels of dangerous microbes or effluents, similar to weather and air pollution forecasts
- It is to be able to access "raw data" that could be used to inform the efficacy of a proposed faecal sludge treatment plant and whether behavioural interventions — including incentives or punishments — to restrict activities that pollute the river could actually work.
- The project measures parameters such as total dissolved salts, nitrate, pH, temperature, turbidity and electrical conductivity. These are relayed to a website called Thoreau, a wireless sensing network maintained at the University of Chicago to map environmental parameters, for analysis. Some river attributes such as microbial levels require to be measured in laboratories, though the team hopes eventually to be able to use low-cost sensors that measure them, too, in real time.

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Category: INDIAN SOCIETY

1. [Enrolment of Muslims in Bengal varsities abysmally low, says survey](#)

In news:

The 6th All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) for the year 2015-16 reports:

- The percentage of Muslim students in leading State and Central universities of West Bengal is abysmally low.
- The report, prepared by the **Ministry of Human Resource Development (MoHRD)**.
- No Muslims students in elite institutions – the Presidency University in Kolkata, Visva Bharati in Shantiniketan, the Indian Institute of Technology-Kharagpur, the West Bengal University of Teachers' Training, Education Planning and Administration in Kolkata, the Indian Institute of Information Technology in Kalyani, the Kazi Nazrul University in Asansol, the West Bengal State University in Kolkata, and the Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswa

Vidyalaya in Mohanpur. Amity, a private university

- A little over **27% of Bengal's population is Muslim**. In nearly all of the State's universities and institutes of higher education, the percentage of Muslims stands between 0 and 3%.

C. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. [**Two out of three people lodged in prisons are undertrials: Amnesty**](#)

In news:

Amnesty International India report highlights:

- Two out of three people lodged in the country's prisons are undertrials.
- While the system struggles with an occupancy rate of 114%, there has been no change to ensure legal safeguards to prevent excessive pre-trial detention.
- The report shows that 29% of undertrials had no formal training and were illiterate.
- According to the report, between September 2014 and February 2015, there were over 1.10 lakh instances of undertrials not being produced in courts for hearings. While there is a shortage of personnel to escort undertrials, this figure includes those who were not produced even through video-conferencing.

2. [**Arunachal, Andaman and Nicobar Islands get exemption from SC highway liquor ban**](#)

Context:

- Ban on sale of liquor within 500 metres of National and State Highways.
- The ban was ordered to prevent drunk driving, one of the major killers plaguing Indian roads.

In news:

- The Supreme Court allowed Arunachal Pradesh and Andaman and Nicobar Islands to join the club of Sikkim and Meghalaya, both of which **enjoy full exemption** from the court's ban on sale of liquor within 500 metres of National and State Highways.

- **Reason for exemption:**

- The geographical quirks of Arunachal Pradesh and the islands.
- The north-eastern States of Sikkim and Meghalaya got a full exemption from the 500-m no-liquor zone ban after the court took into consideration their hilly terrain and also the fact that 82% of its area was forest land and over 90% of its liquor shops would be closed if the ban was imposed strictly in its original form.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [**India-China trade talks deadlocked**](#)

Marginal drop in trade deficit

An increase in exports to China in 2016-2017 has resulted in a narrowing trade deficit with the country. A look at India's trade balance with China over the past five years



Context: Military standoff in the Doklam area of the India-Bhutan-China tri-junction.

In news:

- Trade talks on issues relating to farm products, between India and China remained deadlocked with neither side willing to offer concessions to end the impasse.
- China deferred taking a decision on grant of market access to Indian rice, pomegranate, okra and bovine meat, while India opted to stick to its ban on imports of apple, pear, milk and milk products from China.

Key points:

- India has an alarming trade deficit with China
- India's goods trade deficit, which had ballooned to \$52.7 billion in 2015-16 from just \$1.1 billion in 2003-04, eased marginally to \$51.1 billion in 2016-17.

2. China sends PLA unit to man overseas base

In news:



- China has dispatched People's Liberation Army (PLA) personnel to man its **first overseas military base at Djibouti in the strategic Indian Ocean region**, a move likely to spark concerns in the U.S.
- It is the first such base being set up by China. The second base is coming up in Gwadar, Pakistan, which links up with China through the \$50 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.
- The base will ensure China's performance of missions, such as escorting, peace-keeping and humanitarian aid in Africa and West Asia, the report said.
- The base will also conduct overseas tasks, including military cooperation, joint exercises, evacuating and protecting overseas Chinese and emergency rescue, as well as jointly maintaining security of international strategic seaways.

3. Nod for Bangladesh JIN pact

In news:

- The Cabinet gave its approval for the **Joint Interpretative Notes (JIN)** on the Agreement between both the nations for the **Promotion and Protection of Investments**.
- The JIN would impart clarity to the interpretation of the existing Agreement between India and Bangladesh for the

Promotion and Protection of Investments.

- The JIN includes interpretative notes to be jointly adopted for many clauses, including, the definition of investor, definition of investment, exclusion of taxation measures, Fair and Equitable Treatment, National Treatment and Most Favoured Nation treatment, expropriation, essential security interests and Settlement of Disputes between an Investor-and a Contracting Party.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Bitcoin trade may come under SEBI

In news:

- The government is considering the introduction of a regulatory regime for virtual or crypto currencies, such as Bitcoin, that would enable the levy of the Goods and Services Tax on their sale.
- The new regime may possibly bring their trading under the oversight of the stock market regulator, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
- In India, they are neither legal nor illegal.

Why such a move?

- The idea is to treat such currency in a manner similar to gold sold digitally, so that it can be traded on registered exchanges in a bid to “promote” a formal tax base, while keeping a tab on their use for illegal activities such as money laundering, terror funding and drug trafficking.

Crypto-Currency: Crypto-currency is a digital currency which allows transacting parties to remain anonymous while conforming that the transaction is a valid one. It is not owned or controlled by any institution – government or private.

Eg: Bitcoin, Ethereum and Ripple

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Earth facing sixth mass extinction

Context: Scientists observed the sixth mass extinction of life on Earth is unfolding more quickly than feared.

In news:

- More than 30% of animals with a backbone- fish, birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals are declining in both range and population,
- This is the case of a biological annihilation occurring globally
- The mammal species that were monitored have lost at least a third of their original habitat
- Several species of mammals, were relatively safe one or two decades ago are now endangered,” including cheetahs, lions and giraffes.

Background Information:

Mass extinction: The extinction of a large number of species within a relatively short period of geological time, thought to be due to factors such as a catastrophic global event or widespread environmental change.

How many mass extinctions have there been?

- There have been five mass extinctions in Earth’s history. Now we’re facing a sixth.
 1. Ordovician-Silurian mass extinction
 2. Late Devonian mass extinction
 3. Permian mass extinction
 4. Triassic-Jurassic mass extinction
 5. Cretaceous-Tertiary mass extinction

Impact

- On an average, two vertebrate species disappear every year.
- Tropical regions have seen the highest number of declining species
- While fewer species are disappearing in temperate zones, the percentage is just as high or higher.

Reasons for the decline

- Habitat loss
- Over consumption
- Pollution
- Invasive species
- Disease
- Climate change
- Poaching of tigers, elephants, rhinos and other large animals prized for their body parts.

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Schemes in News About the Schemes

- The Union **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** is going to launch Mission Parivar Vikas for improved family planning services in 145 High Focus districts in seven states.
- The objective of mission is to accelerate access to high quality family planning choices based on information, reliable services and supplies within a rights-based framework.
- Family Planning Logistics Management Information System (FP-LMIS) is designed to provide robust information on the demand and distribution of contraceptives to health facilities and ASHAs to strengthen supply chain management

Mission Parivar Vikas Key features of Mission Parivar Vikas:

- These districts are located in the seven high focus states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Assam.
- They are having the highest total fertility rates and constitute 44% of the country's population.
- They also have a substantial impact on maternal and child health indicators. As about 25 to 30% of maternal deaths and 50% of infant deaths occur in these districts.
- The key strategic focus of this initiative will be on improving access to contraceptives through delivering assured services, dovetailing with new promotional schemes.
- It will also ensure building capacity (service providers), commodity security, creating an enabling environment along with close monitoring and implementation.

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Category: POLITY

1. [**Tribunal prohibits dumping of waste near Ganga banks**](#)

In news:

National Green Tribunal (NGT)

- Area of **100 metres** from the edge of the Ganga between Haridwar and Unnao has been declared a ‘**No Development Zone**’.
- Prohibited dumping of waste within **500 metres** of the river.
- An environment compensation of Rs. 50,000 will be imposed on anyone dumping waste in the river.
- Directed the Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand governments to formulate guidelines for religious activities on the ghats of the Ganga and its tributaries.

Other orders by NGT

- The authorities concerned should complete projects, including a sewage treatment plant and cleaning of drains, within two years.
- The Uttar Pradesh government is duty-bound to shift tanneries, within six weeks, from Jajmau in Kanpur to leather parks in Unnao or any other place it considers appropriate
- All industrial units in the catchment areas of the Ganga should be stopped from indiscriminate groundwater extraction.
- No in-stream mechanical mining is permitted and even the mining on the floodplain should be semi-mechanical and preferably more manual.

Supervisory panel

- The court also appointed a supervisory committee, headed by the Secretary of the Water Resources Ministry and comprising IIT professors and officials of the Uttar Pradesh government, to oversee implementation of the directions passed in its verdict.
- The committee is to submit reports at regular intervals.

2. From this year, Kannada is compulsory in all schools

In news:

- **Karnataka:** Students will be taught Kannada in all schools in the State, including private, linguistic minority and Central board schools.
- **Coverage :** from Class one.
- **Stringent action ,** including withdrawal of the no-objection certificate issued by the Education Department, would be initiated in case of non-compliance.
- **Singing Nada Geethe likely to be made mandatory in all schools**

3. President's nod for Bill against social boycott

In News

- Maharashtra has become the first State in the country to enact a law against social boycott from caste panchayats
- President has given his nod to implement the Prohibition of Social Boycott Bill in the State

Motive behind the enactment of this law

- There are growing instances of boycotts of individuals or families by caste panchayats
- Maharashtra Government was considering to enact a special law for such kind of cases from 2010(Congress at that time)

Provisions of Punishment under the new law

- The bill makes provision for punishment of up to three years in jail and/or a fine up to Rs. 1 lakh
- The case has to be fast tracked within six months from the date of filing the charge sheet
- The fine charged from accused will be partially or fully handed over to the victim

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. US panel endorses new gene-altering cancer treatment

In news:

- A US Food and Drug Administration panel opened a new era in medicine on, unanimously recommending that the agency approve the first-ever treatment that genetically alters a patient's own cells to fight cancer, transforming them into what scientists call “ **a living drug** ” that powerfully bolsters the immune system to shut down the disease.

- Severe possible side effects — raging fever, crashing blood pressure, lung congestion.

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Category: ECONOMICS

1. PM's task force recommends scrapping 5-yearly job survey

In News:

- The Prime Minister-appointed task force headed by NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Arvind Panagariya, in the report has recommended that traditional **Employment-Unemployment Surveys** carried out by the **National Sample Survey Office (NSSO)** every five years be scrapped.

Other measures recommended:

- A new periodic labour force survey to provide estimates of labour force, employment, unemployment, nature of employment and industry.
- To get more frequent employment trends data, an urban module of this survey will be updated every quarter.
- A time use survey should also be conducted at three year intervals to provide data on time spent in various occupations and non-market activities. This survey will collect information on how individuals allocate their time over a specified time period, usually a day or a week.
- The survey will help track how time spent by households has been changing and measure women's participation in unpaid work.
- Centre can tap the GST Network database as a sample frame for a new annual survey of enterprises.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE

1. Incentivising financial sector cybersecurity

Context:

- Government made public a report by the working group to set up the Computer Emergency Response Team in the Financial Sector (Cert-Fin)
- RBI released guidelines on customer liability in case of unauthorized electronic banking transactions.

Significance:

- They represent different aspects of the cybersecurity problem—the technical and the economic framework

- Push for a less-cash economy is increasing the digital density of India's financial services space.
- The cyberattacks getting audacious

Current issues:

- New Delhi's response thus far has focused only on the technical aspects of the problem
- There is a risk that Cert-Fin will become deadwood given that sectoral regulators RBI, SEBI and IRDA are already working on cybersecurity issues.
- So proper coordination across the sector is necessary.
- Companies and institutions will rarely expend the resources necessary for the collective security needed to protect the sector, until the right economic incentives are found.

No cybersecurity architecture can be foolproof .Why?

- In case of a complex system, attackers will always have the edge over defenders. The number of potential bugs and vulnerable points in any system mean that the mathematical odds favour the attackers.
- No code can be perfect enough to compensate for human error.
- Example: A bank might have robust cybersecurity architecture, but it will still be vulnerable if the systems of other networks that carry pertinent information are not secure.
- In software industry, the more people use a particular software, the more valuable it becomes- has led to a “release first, patch later” approach

Guideline on Burden of proof. What it is?

- In case of ATM frauds, in US, burden of proof lay with the banks, fared much better than Britain, Norway and the Netherlands, where burden of proof lay with the customer.
- The RBI's guidelines on customer liability are welcome in this context.

Way forward

- Data breach disclosure norms, with penalties for failing to do so, are important;
- Incentivise financial institutions to swiftly report cyberattacks instead of keeping mum to avoid reputation loss, regulatory intervention and liability. Many countries have such norms, but India does not.
- Address the issues such as regulatory burden and the negative effects of heavy-handed liability laws.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Four ways to shrink your carbon footprint

Context: Researchers in Sweden have identified the top four things people can do to reduce their carbon footprint, but warned these steps are rarely promoted in the public sphere.

Four Actions

Four actions that could result in substantial decreases in an individual's carbon footprint are: eating a plant-based diet, avoiding air travel, living car-free, and having smaller families.

- **A plant-based diet** -While eating plant-based diet saves 0.8 tons of CO₂ equivalent a year.
- **No airplanes** -Avoiding airplane travel saves about 1.6 tons of CO₂ equivalent per trip.
- **Living car-free** -Saves about 2.4 tons of CO₂ equivalent per year.
- **Smaller families** -One less child saves an average of 58.6 tons of CO₂-equivalent emission reductions per year, the report said.
- Commonly promoted government strategies included changing light bulbs and comprehensive recycling but researchers said these steps are respectively eight and four times less effective than a plant-based diet.

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Category: POLITY

1. SC orders CBI probe into Manipur extra-judicial killings

In news:

- The Supreme Court directed a probe by the CBI into the alleged **extra-judicial killings** by the Army, the Assam Rifles and the Manipur Police in the insurgency—hit Manipur State.

Public Interest Litigation

- The court was hearing a PIL seeking probe and compensation in the alleged 1,528 extra-judicial killings in Manipur from 2000 to 2012 by security forces and police.

Army's Response

- It cannot be subjected to FIRs for carrying out anti-militancy operations in insurgency-prone areas like Jammu and Kashmir and Manipur.
- Local bias in judicial inquiries conducted against army in these regions, have tarnished its image.

Governments response

- The alleged extra-judicial killing cases in Manipur are not cases of massacre, rather these are cases of military operations
- Every judicial inquiry cannot be against the Army
- **July-2016:** the apex court had directed a thorough probe into the alleged fake encounter killings in Manipur saying the use of “**excessive or retaliatory force**” by the armed forces or police was not permissible in ‘disturbed areas’ under the controversial Armed Force Special Powers Act.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [EU, India set up fund for investments](#)

In news:

- European Union (EU) and India announced the establishment of an **Investment Facilitation Mechanism (IFM)** for EU investments in India.
- The mechanism will allow for a close coordination between the European Union and the Government of India with an aim to promote and facilitate EU investment in India.

Objective

- The IFM has been established with the key objectives of paving the way for identifying and solving problems faced by EU companies and investors with regard to their operations in India.
- The IFM is also going to serve as a platform for discussing general suggestions from the point of view of EU companies and investors with regard to ease of doing business in India

2. [Nepal to soon get internet services from China, India's monopoly to end: Report](#)

In News:

- Nepal is scheduled to get Chinese internet services from August ending India’s monopoly over the same
- With Chinese firms offering services, Nepali people will now have alternatives to choose from alongside Indian firms

Concern for India:

- Currently, the tiny Himalayan country accesses internet using Indian bandwidth
- China linking Nepal with optical fibre cables is seen as yet another attempt to ratchet up its presence in the south Asia region challenging India
- India has already made its opposition clear to the economic corridor it is building in Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK) apart from the Belt and Road Initiative

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Category: ECONOMICS

1. [APG meet on money laundering in Colombo](#)

In news:

Asia Pacific Group (APG) on Money Laundering meet:

- **Main issue focus:** Policy frameworks on checking terror financing. The Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) initiatives on curbing money laundering and terror funding in different parts of the world will also be discussed.
- Meeting to be held in Colombo.

2. [WPI inflation slows to 11-month low of 0.9% in June](#)

In news:

- Wholesale price inflation slowed to a 11-month low of 0.90% in June due to **subdued food inflation and weak manufacturing prices**, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce.
- **WPI components weight**
 - Manufactured Products: Wieghtage-64.97
 - Primary Articles: Wieghtage-20.12
 - Fuel & Power: Wieghtage-14.91

3. [Web nod soon for dry ports, cargo stations](#)

In news:

- The Centre will soon announce a mechanism that will facilitate online submission and processing of applications for setting up Inland Container Depots (ICD), Container Freight Stations (CFS) and Air Freight Stations (AFS).
- ICDs (considered as dry ports), CFS and AFS provide- services for handling and temporary storage of import/export laden and empty containers carried under customs control. Transhipment of cargo can also take place from such stations.
- The newly proposed web-based mechanism, being developed by the government-owned **National Informatics Centre Services Inc**., is aimed at enabling the developer to submit applications online and track their status on a real-time basis.
- **More transparency:** The objective is also to ensure greater transparency and accountability in the IMC mechanism. The web-based module is also expected to lower entry barriers and help more players enter the field.

4. [USIBC plans to break free from Chamber](#)

In News

Delinking from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce

- The U.S. India Business Council (USIBC) has decided to delink from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and function as an autonomous entity
- MasterCard, Pepsi, Lockheed Martin, Boeing and Federal Express are on the board that decided that the USIBC must maintain its policy and financial autonomy in the face of Chamber of Commerce interference

More about the USIBC

- The U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC) was formed in 1975 as a business advocacy organization to enlighten and encourage the private sectors of both India and United States to enhance investment flows
- The organization serves as a direct link between business and Government leaders, resulting in increased trade and investment to strengthen ties between the two nations

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [Saraswati, a supercluster of galaxies](#)

In news:

- Saraswati- a massive supercluster of galaxies discovered by a group of Indian astronomers.
- The supercluster is about 4 billion light years away and spreads over a “great wall” about 600 million light years across. This makes it one of the largest superclusters to be discovered and also the furthest.

Galaxies discovered till now:

- The first supercluster of galaxies, the **Shapley Supercluster**, was discovered in 1989.
- The second, the Sloan Great Wall in 2003.
- The Milky Way galaxy is part of the Laniakea Supercluster, which was discovered in 2014.

Clumpy universe:

- The structure of the universe is not a homogeneous distribution of matter.
- It is clumpy with galaxies forming clusters and these in turn forming superclusters.
- There are thin “filaments” that connect galaxies, forming a cosmic web, and there are large voids in between. The current belief is that infant galaxies form in these filaments and then drift to the intersections of the filaments where they grow.
- Dark matter and dark energy are invoked to explain the structure of the universe. Dark matter, being massive, binds together the universe while dark energy, exciting the surrounding space, drives it apart; the balance of the two effects helps in maintaining the universe in its present form.

Light year

- A light year is the distance travelled by light in one year.

What are galaxy clusters? How big are they?

- Galaxies are like the building blocks of the universe, they contain a huge number of stars, something like 100 billion at a count. Galaxy groups can have three to 20 galaxies, the richest systems are called clusters (like the Virgo cluster) which can have several hundred galaxies.
- Superclusters are clusters of clusters. They can have as few as two clusters, and superclusters with two to four clusters are common. Saraswati has 42.
- Within superclusters, clusters are connected by filaments and sheets of dark matter with galaxies embedded in them.
- It is supposed that the galaxies are born in the filaments and then migrate towards the intersection of the filaments where they are assimilated into clusters.

What are superclusters?

- These are the largest coherent structures seen in the universe. Firstly there are clusters of galaxies together with associated gas and dark matter. Large groups of such clusters, linked by filaments, separated by voids together form the superclusters. Though initially a supercluster was used to describe groups of two-four clusters, now it is understood that much larger superclusters, comprising clusters that number an order of magnitude higher, exist. The first such large supercluster to be discovered was the Shapley supercluster.

How does the Saraswati supercluster compare with the Milky Way?

- The newly discovered Saraswati supercluster is 600 million light years across. The Milky Way is 150,000 light years across.

Where does the supercluster Saraswati lie in the sky?

- The supercluster Saraswati lies in the Stripe 82 of the Sloan Digital Sky Survey. It is about 4000 million light years away from us. It is in the constellation of Pisces.

What is “Stripe 82 region of SDSS”?

- SDSS stands for the Sloan Digital Sky Survey. This is an ambitious plan to make a digital 3D map of the universe. Started in 2000, it has, over eight years, mapped more than a quarter of the sky. It has mapped nearly 930,000 galaxies. The SDSS has found nearly 50 million galaxies so far.

What is the significance of this discovery? Is there a puzzle posed by the discovery of Saraswati?

- Spotting a supercluster which is 4000 million light years away means that you are looking at light that has come in from four billion years ago. This is because a light year is the distance travelled by light in one year. Since the universe is believed to be 13.8 billion years old, this means we are looking at light from when the universe was

about 10 billion years old, just about 70% of its present age.

- This poses a puzzle. According to present theories, it is difficult for such a huge galaxy to have formed so early in the universe's lifetime.

2. When DNA is the new hard drive

In News

- Scientists store film clip in hereditary unit, where it can be retrieved at will and multiplied indefinitely
- It is now the first movie ever to be encoded in the DNA of a living cell.
- Astonishing example of the genome's potential as a vast storage device.

Gene editing technique

- The vast chains of DNA in each cell are made of just four molecules — adenine, guanine, thymine and cytosine — arranged in enormously varied configurations.
- The geneticists ended up with a sequence of DNA molecules that represented the entirety of the film.
- Then they used a powerful new gene editing technique, Crispr, to slip this sequence into the genome of a common gut bacteria, coli.
- Despite the modification, the bacteria thrived and multiplied.
- The film stored in the genome was preserved intact with each new generation of progeny

Basic Information:

CRISPR/CAS9:

- It is a new gene-editing technology that promises to revolutionize the genetics field.
- Using this technology, genes of any living organism can be edited at a faster and cheaper rate than the present technologies.

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PRELIMS WORTHY FACTUAL INFORMATION

- International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), South Asia Regional Center (ISARC) in Varanasi: The Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday approved the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), South Asia Regional Center (ISARC) in Varanasi, which will work to develop special rice varieties.
- It will be the first such international centre in eastern India and will play a major role in sustaining rice production in the region.
- The ISARC will be established on the campus of the National Seed Research and Training Centre.

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Category: POLITY

1. 'Scant respect for NHRC'

Basic Information:

In News

- In a 26-page judgment, the Supreme Court throws points out that human rights and the National Human Rights Commission have suffered a slow death at the hands of the government and the State authorities.
- Neglect and stagnation suffered by the NHRC has imperilled human rights in the nation like in fake encounter' killings of Manipur

Problems faced by NHRC

- The NHRC, which had investigated 20 of these deaths, was stonewalled for years by the authorities.

- It is actually headed by a former Chief Justice of India or judges of the Supreme Court, had declared its own failure and termed itself a “toothless tiger”.
- The intention of the NHRC is to more effectively assist the criminal justice delivery system and avoid any factual controversies while respecting human rights.
- It is not as if the dignity of only living persons needs to be respected. Even the dignity of the dead must be given due respect.

NHRC's revised guidelines of 2010

- It makes magisterial inquiry into every police encounter death
- The NHRC has to be informed of every encounter death.
- However, these guidelines are given scant respect by the States.
- In many States, human rights commissions are obvious in their absence for years.

Basic Information

National Human Rights Commission

- It is autonomous body created by an Act of Parliament.
- Headed by a former Chief Justice of India
- Authority to grant interim relief
- Authority to recommend payment of compensation or damages
- The Chairperson and the Members of the Commission are appointed by the President of India, on the recommendations of a Committee consisting of:
 - The Prime Minister (chairperson)
 - The Home Minister
 - The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha
 - The Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha
 - The Speaker of the Lok Sabha
 - The Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha

2. Give data of C-section and normal deliveries: Maneka

What is the issue?

- To combat the alarming rise in caesarean section operations in India, Union Government is considering audit of private hospitals
- They will be asked to display the data of normal and C-section deliveries prominently

Recent step taken by the Women and Child Development (WCD) Ministry

- The Ministry has written to Health Ministry asking that it be made mandatory for private hospitals enrolled with the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) to display the data of C-section and normal deliveries
- The Ministry has further demanded that the Health Ministry direct State governments to conduct periodic audits of private hospitals to ensure unnecessary procedures are not being conducted

Increased cases of C-Section Deliveries

- According to the latest data from the National Family Health Survey 2014-15 (NFHS-4), C-section surgeries have doubled over the last decade across India
- The NFHS-4 data revealed that Telangana has the highest number of C-section deliveries in the country, with 74.9% babies born this way in private hospitals
- Over 40% of the deliveries in Bihar were C-sections, while 58 % of the deliveries in Maharashtra were through C-section procedures
- As per World Health Organization guidelines, 10-15% of deliveries being C-sections is considered appropriate

Basic Information

What are C-Section Deliveries?

- Caesarean section, also known as C-section or caesarean delivery, is the use of surgery to deliver one or more babies

- A caesarean section is often performed when a vaginal delivery would put the baby or mother at risk
- This may include obstructed labour, twin pregnancy, high blood pressure in the mother, breech birth, problems with the placenta, umbilical cord or shape of the pelvis, and previous C-section
- A trial of vaginal birth in some of these situations, including after C-section, may be possible
- Some C-sections are also performed upon request
- The World Health Organization recommends that they should be done based on medical need and in many cases they are lifesaving for the mother and baby.

3. Housing For All By 2022: With demand-supply gap shrinking, affordable housing segment set to grow

In News

Demand-Supply gap shrinking

- Affordable housing schemes are on a growth curve in 2017
- Huge demand in housing segments is being met with increasing supply

Present Scenario

- In housing sector, massive demand and massive unsold residential inventory is co-existing
- Why: This is the result of pricing mismatch

Governments Efforts under the ‘Housing for All by 2022’

- The government is collaborating with private builders and developers under a public-private partnership (PPP) model to make ‘Housing for All by 2022’

Other efforts by the government

- The government has provided 39 per cent higher allocations for affordable housing development vis-à-vis FY17 under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)
- It has also extended the Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme to loans of value up to Rs 12 lakh
- Government policies like the Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) have infused fresh buyer confidence into the realty sector
- The most important decision by government is that it has granted infrastructure status to affordable housing

Observation of ICRA

- According to the ICRA, the affordable housing segment in India is set to grow at a faster pace than the rest of the real estate sector
- Also, it will be the key growth driver for the Indian mortgage finance market

Positive things that are coming in the affordable Housing sector

- The segment has lost its “down market” label and become a serious and respectable business sector for developers
- It is a given that the demand-supply gap is huge, but the fact is that it is narrowing visibly for the first time in several decades

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Fixing a major piece of the climate puzzle

In news:

- The Trump administration is likely to unveil its South Asia policy in the coming weeks.
- The review is likely to include the United States' position on its relations with India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- **National Defense Authorization Act 2018:** The U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill worth about \$ 621.5 billion that will enable increased cooperation with India in the defense sector.

2. Malabar drills aim at giving regional security, says Japan

In News:

Trilateral Naval exercise, Malabar 2017

- The trilateral Naval exercise, Malabar 2017, involving India, the U.S. and Japan, is strategically very important and meant to maintain the rule of law and maritime security in the region.
- It is for safeguarding peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region” and there could be more exchanges involving ground and air forces and an exchange of personnel in various areas.

Asia-Africa Growth Corridor project

- Envisaging an India-Japan collaboration in Africa
- For a free and open Indo-Pacific region and to make this region more inter-connected and prosperous.
- It is not particularly counter-balancing to some initiative such as China’s Belt and Road project,
- This initiative is important for prosperity and security of this region
- India has vast experience, network in eastern part of Africa and Japan have good technology and financing to support African development.
- Japan has been working with Indian officials and businessmen for “a concrete development plan” in Africa.

Recent takeaways

- Civil nuclear agreement, signed between the two countries last year, given the Diet’s approval.
- Japanese investors in India were “very happy” with roll out of the GST.

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Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Fixing a major piece of the climate puzzle

In News

- Fixing air-conditioning would be the best and more effective solution to climate change
- New research indicates that adding improved efficiency in refrigeration and phasing out fluorinated gases used for cooling, as mandated by international agreement, could eliminate a full degree Celsius of warming by 2100

Air-conditioners and Climate change

- Hydrofluorocarbons account for about 1 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, but it is thousands of times as potent as carbon dioxide and may account for up to 19 percent of emissions by 2050 if their manufacture continues unchecked.
- India to the Philippines to South Africa, air-conditioners are increasingly a must-have item.
- Businesses and homeowners in Asia and Africa are expected to buy about 700 million air-conditioners by 2030, and 1.6 billion by mid -century.

Measures taken

- Kigali amendment to the Montreal Protocol.
- The landmark 1987 pact designed to close the hole in the ozone layer by banning ozone-depleting coolants called chlorofluorocarbons/CFCs.
- The amendment reached last year in the capital of Rwanda binds nations to phase out HFCs, avoiding an estimated half degree Celsius of warming by 2100.

Way forward?

- Nations must call for new regulatory policies on manufacturing standards and labeling.

Basic Information

Kigali agreement

- Kigali Amendment which amends the 1987 Montreal Protocol aims to phase out Hydrofluorocarbons by the late 2040s.
- Under Kigali Amendment, in all 197 countries, including India have agreed to a timeline to reduce the use of

- HFCs by roughly 85% of their baselines by 2045
- The Kigali Agreement for HFCs reduction will be binding on countries from 2019
 - It also has provisions for penalties for non-compliance

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Category: *POLITY*

1. The past catches up

Context

- By ordering an investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation into more than 80 cases of suspected extra-judicial killings in Manipur, the Supreme Court has reiterated the principle of accountability as an essential part of the rule of law.
- These cases involved either suspected fake encounters or the use of excessive or retaliatory force.
- Even after this ruling on petitions demanding an inquiry into 1,528 deaths in counter-insurgency operations in Manipur, the Attorney General had argued against the court ordering an investigation into some specific instances.

What the SC has said?

- The court has rightly rebuffed an attempt by the government to stall any probe into these deaths on the ground that they were too old to be raked up now.
- It has taken the view that the killing of a person who was possibly innocent cannot be overlooked owing to mere lapse of time.
- The state cannot take advantage of its own inaction and scuttle a probe by citing the delay as a reason.
- Last year, the court had ruled that the armed forces cannot escape investigation for excesses even in places where they enjoy special powers, and that the legal protection provided by the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, or AFSPA, will have to yield to the principles of human rights.

Centre's argument

- AG had come up with the unpalatable argument that inquiries conducted by the authorities in Manipur were biased in favour of the citizens owing to local pressure and the ground situation.

Court's response

- The court stood firm in its assessment, deprecating the suggestion that all inquiries were biased and motivated.
- The court's order is yet another reminder that AFSPA has contributed to the climate of impunity in States where it is in force, especially in Manipur, and this may trigger a fresh demand for its repeal.

National Human Rights Commission as “toothless tiger”

- Another worrying aspect in the domain of human rights is that the National Human Rights Commission has been reduced to a “toothless tiger”.
- It is grossly understaffed despite its increasing workload, and many State governments show little respect for its guidelines and instructions.
- The court's directive that the Centre take note of the NHRC's concerns and remedy the situation could not have come a day too soon.

Category: **HEALTH ISSUES**

1. A looming threat: on the TB crisis

In news

- About 5,500 of over 76,000 children tested in nine Indian cities have been diagnosed with tuberculosis, 9% of them with multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB), highlighting the silent spread of the disease.
- About 5,500 of over 76,000 children tested in nine Indian cities have been diagnosed with tuberculosis, 9% of them with multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB), highlighting the silent spread of the disease.
- Though the actual prevalence of MDR-TB among children in India is not known, the results from a limited number of children tested in this sample, under the Revised National TB Control Programme, is worrying.

Statistics

- According to a 2015 study, of the over 600 children who had tested positive for TB in four cities, about 10% showed resistance to Rifampicin, a first-line drug.

WHO Guidelines

- In line with World Health Organisation guidelines, the RNTCP requires all household contacts, particularly children, of a newly diagnosed pulmonary TB patient to be tested and started on treatment if needed.

- Children below six years of age in the household of a newly diagnosed patient are required to be given the drug Isoniazid as a prophylactic even when they do not have the disease.

Measures to be taken

- A proactive approach to testing helps in early and correct diagnosis of all contacts and in cutting the transmission chain.
- Unfortunately, as several studies have shown, the RNTCP guidelines on contact screening are heeded mostly in the breach.
- The results from this limited study should now compel the government to take up contact screening more urgently.
- In 2010, WHO had revised the dosage of certain TB drugs for children. Fixed-dose combination (FDC) drugs that take into account the revised dosages for children were finally made available in late 2015.
- The FDCs are meant for treating children with drug-susceptible TB and cannot be used to treat children who require second-line drugs or who have MDR-TB. After more than a year's delay, a few months ago India finally introduced FDCs in six States.
- The remaining States will be covered by the end of this year. Adherence to treatment will improve, and correct dosage for children weighing less than 25 kg will become easier when child-friendly FDCs become available throughout the country.
- Using the Xpert molecular diagnostic test to screen children with TB is a positive step and should be welcomed, but all the diagnosed children should be guaranteed paediatric FDCs. It would be unethical to deny them this lifeline.

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Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. [Plea in SC seeks curbs on cryptocurrencies](#)

In news

- The Supreme Court has asked the Reserve Bank of India to consider the issues raised by a PIL petitioner seeking urgent steps to restrain the sale and purchase of illegal cryptocurrencies or “Virtual Currency” (VCs) like bitcoins.

PIL was filed in SC to seek curb on [cryptocurrencies](#) on following grounds

- Virtual currency was being traded anonymously over the Internet and used for a host of anti-national and illegal activities, from terror funding to illicit trade of

arms and drugs and so on.

- The use of the parallel currency is having a negative impact on Indian currency.
- The online use of this currency, was without any border restrictions or geographical constraints, resulting in danger to the integrity and sovereignty of the nation.

2. IBBI notifies rules for bankruptcy probe

In news

- IBBI, which is implementing the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), has notified the regulations for inspection and investigation of service providers registered with it.

New regulation

- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has powers to start probe against service providers registered with it without intimating them.
- As per the regulations, the investigation authority has to serve a notice intimating the entity concerned about the probe at least ten days in advance.
- However, the requirement could be done away with on grounds such as apprehensions that the records of the particular service provider might be destroyed before the probe starts.
- Insolvency professional agencies, professionals, entities and information utility are considered as service providers under the Code.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Super-flexible and strong artificial silk developed

In news

- Scientists from the University of Cambridge have developed super-stretchy and strong artificial silk, composed almost entirely of water, which may be used to make eco-friendly textiles and sensors.
- The fibres, which resemble miniature bungee cords as they can absorb large amounts of energy, are sustainable, non-toxic and can be made at room temperature.
- The fibres are spun from a soupy material called a hydrogel, which is 98% water.
- The remaining 2% of the hydrogel is made of silica and cellulose, both naturally available materials, held together in a network by barrel-shaped molecular “handcuffs” known as cucurbiturils. The chemical interactions

between the different components enable long fibres to be pulled from the gel, said the researchers.

These fibres are Non-toxic

- Although these fibres are not as strong as the strongest spider silks, they can support stresses in the range of 100 to 150 megapascals, which is similar to other synthetic and natural silks. However, these fibres are non-toxic and far less energy-intensive to make.

2. 3D-printed, functional heart made

In news:

- Scientists have developed a 3D-printed soft silicone heart that closely resembles and functions like the human organ, and could help save lives of people who suffer from cardiac failure.
- About 26 million people worldwide suffer from heart failure. The soft artificial heart weighs 390 grams and has a volume of 679 cubic centimetres.
- It is a silicone monoblock with complex inner structure.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Safe haven for endangered Egyptian vultures

In news:

- Breeding of the rare and threatened Egyptian vultures in a human habitat at the Punjabi University campus in Patiala has come as a pleasant surprise for birding enthusiasts.

Egyptian vulture

- The Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*), one among the globally threatened vulture species found in India, is classified under the ‘Endangered’ (EN) red list of the International Union for Conversation of Nature (IUCN).
- The species is popularly known as safed giddh (white vulture) in Hindi.
- According to BirdLife International, a global partnership of organisations working for the conservation of birds, the present global breeding population of the Egyptian vulture is estimated to be 12,000 to 38,000 individuals.

Habitat Niche

- Egyptian vultures usually build their nests on the cliffs of mountains, roofs of

buildings and on tree-tops.

Food Niche of the species

- The species rarely hunt its food — the birds mostly feed on dead carcasses of animals, birds and reptiles. They eat eggs and sometimes, in the absence of animal carcasses, switch over to household solid waste like rotten fruits and vegetables.

2. GM mustard release faces another hurdle

In news

- Dissent has crept in among agricultural scientists of the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS) over the possible release of genetically modified mustard.

Background

- In May, NAAS President wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, endorsing DMH-11, a variety of mustard developed by Deepak Pental of Delhi University, a NAAS Fellow, that employs genes from soil bacterium.
- If approved, it would be the first transgenic edible crop to be grown in Indian fields.
- The plant had gone through adequate tests and was declared “safe” and passed regulatory muster.

A dissent note by a member

- However, P.C. Kesavan, also a Fellow of the NAAS, wrote that he disagreed with this endorsement.
- According to him, the resolution of the NAAS is neither scientifically valid, nor ethical, and therefore not maintainable.

Counter arguments to GM Mustard

- **DMH-11** is a hybrid variety of mustard developed by crossing a traditional variety of mustard, called Varuna, and an East European variety.
- DMH-11 did not perform as well as several other varieties and mustard hybrids and that the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), the Environment Ministry body that cleared DMH-11, was riddled by a “conflict of interest.”
- Using genetically-modified technology to produce hybrid seed varieties was a “failed experiment” as evidenced by the experience of Bt cotton.

- Though the latter occupied 95% of India's acreage, its yields were on the decline since 2006, largely due to insect resistance, and that it nearly tripled the cost of producing cotton between 2006-2013.

Bodies associated

- The **NAAS** — a 625-member body of agricultural scientists — had about 200 scientists in its quorum when it passed a resolution endorsing the GEAC's decision to clear DMH-11 for commercial field trials.
- The **GEAC**, India's apex regulator for genetically modified seeds, had cleared GM mustard for environmental release and use in farmer fields on May 11 this year.

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- BirdLife International (formerly the International Council for Bird Preservation) is a global partnership of conservation organisations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources.
- It is the world's largest partnership of conservation organisations, with over 120 partner organisations.
- Bombay Natural History Society is India's partner.

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Category: POLITY

[1. Centre seeks debate in SC on J&K special status](#)

In news:

- The Centre has asked the Supreme Court to debate on the **special status** granted to the State of Jammu and Kashmir, saying it was both a sensitive and constitutional matter.
- **Public Interest Litigation** : a PIL plea filed by a Delhi-based NGO, We the Citizens, contending that the J&K government, given the State's special autonomous status under **Articles 35A and 370**, was discriminatory against non-residents as far as government jobs and real estate purchases were concerned.
- **J and K government response :**

- The State government argued that its special status was sourced from the 1954 Presidential Order, which gave special rights to the State's permanent residents.
- The hearing comes in the backdrop of an earlier Jammu and Kashmir High Court, which ruled that Article 370 assumed a place of permanence in the Constitution and the feature was beyond amendment, repeal or abrogation.
- The court said Article 35A gave "protection" to existing laws in force in the State.

2. Sports Ministry lays ground for making online betting legal

Context:

- The Sports Ministry has begun the groundwork to frame a legislation to legalise online sports betting in India
- The Sports Ministry is also likely to seek assistance from its counterparts in the UK, where gambling is legal
- Sports Secretary Injeti Srinivas, who is currently in England, is likely to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in which online sports betting will be one of the key points

Betting in India

- Betting is seen as a sensitive socio-political issue. More so in sports because of the match-fixing and spot-fixing controversies.
- The issue of legalising betting gathered momentum when former Chief Justice of India R M Lodha recommended that betting should be legalised in cricket
- Illegal betting market in India is worth \$150 billion, or roughly Rs 9.6 lakh crore.
- Most of it is via local bookmakers and unregulated offshore websites.
- At present, betting is legal only on horse racing, and it is taxed at 28 per cent under GST.

Advantages of legalising betting in India?

- It can address the issue of poor funding for sports at central and state level by making online betting legal.
- The possibility of diverting a sizeable part of the revenue generated from betting towards the ministry's programmes is also being deliberated.
- It can be beneficial to the economy as well as sports overall.

3. Centre's proposal to states: Enact your own Aadhaar Acts too

Context:

- Central government has floated the idea of state governments enacting their own "State Aadhaar Act", on the lines of the central Act passed by Parliament last year.

Background

- The central Act makes Aadhaar mandatory for any "subsidy, benefit or service" for which the expenditure is borne fully or shared partially by the Consolidated Fund of India.
- This means that every welfare subsidy or benefit, from fully-funded or centrally-sponsored schemes (where states share part of the fiscal burden), is conditional on verification through Aadhaar.

Why state Aadhaar Act ?

- Several state governments have their own subsidies or benefit schemes, where the burden is defrayed out of their Consolidated Fund
- Consequently, the central Aadhaar Act cannot provide legal basis for making Aadhaar mandatory for such schemes.
- However, a State Aadhaar Act, as suggested by the Cabinet Secretariat, could provide legal basis for making it mandatory for state-funded welfare schemes

Other concerns

- But the Centre's suggestion could prove tricky as the enactment of a state legislation is the prerogative of the state legislatures.
- Also, it impinges on the state government's autonomy to set up a mechanism for expenditure from the state exchequer.

4. Home to dilute new property destruction Bill, exclude political leaders

Context:

- Union Home Ministry is reworking the proposed Prevention of Destruction of Public Property (PDPP) Amendment Bill to exclude provisions that hold leaders of political parties responsible for such damage,
- The move runs contrary to the ministry's stand in 2015, when it had argued for severe measures to hold leaders of political parties accountable for damage to public property caused during bandhs, protests and demonstrations called by them. It had also pushed for the parties to pay the market value of property destroyed by their supporters.
- According to the National Crime Records Bureau, Tamil Nadu (1,671), Uttar Pradesh (1,131) and Haryana (529) recorded the highest number of cases under the PDPP Act in 2015.

Reasons behind making changes in the proposed bill?

- Law enforcement agencies expressed the fear that the amended law may be misused to frame Opposition leaders who call for bandhs, by inciting violence and damaging property.
- It can be used to send their political opponents behind bars.
- Plan to emphasise on improving the quality of evidence, which will require police officers to record on video all protests, hartal or bandhs,
- The soft copies of video evidence will be deposited by the officer in charge at the local police station with the sub-divisional magistrate or executive magistrate who will hand it over to the investigating officer.
- The Bill may also include a provision to make such offences non-bailable unless "there are reasonable grounds to believe that (the accused) is not guilty".
- However, the provision to include "damage to private properties" is likely to be dropped in the reworked Bill, since they are covered under different insurance schemes.

Supreme Court's findings

- In 2007, the Supreme Court had asked the government to bring amendments to the PDPP Act.
- While appointing a committee to examine the law, the apex court had observed in 2009: "In almost all such cases, top leaders of such organisations who really instigate such direct actions will keep themselves in the background, and only the ordinary or common members or grassroot-level followers directly participate, and they alone would be vulnerable to prosecution proceedings."

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. China holds military drill near Arunachal border, 'enemy' aircraft the target

In news:

- China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has held "live-fire drills" in Tibet, close to the India's border in Arunachal, to practice quick movement of troops and destroy enemy aircraft.
- The drill is being seen as a message to the Indian government and military, as China claims large parts of Arunachal, India's easternmost state, as southern Tibet.
- The drill was held in the Tibet Autonomous Region in the middle and lower reaches of Yarlung Zangbo river, which is located in the upper stream of the Brahmaputra river which flows through China, India and Bangladesh.
- The Yarlung Zangbo enters India through Arunachal where it is called Siang before it becomes the Brahmaputra in Assam. China has been building dams over it, causing concern in India that it could affect the flow of the Brahmaputra.

2. U.K. raises issue of overstaying Indians

In news:

- Britain claims a thousand Indians overstay their visa in Britain every year, and the two countries are working together to improve the process for returning those who remain in Britain illegally, and can be successfully identified as Indian.
- Home Affairs remains one of the most sensitive areas of bilateral relations, with Britain repeatedly raising the issue of overstaying Indians, and India pointing to the process and cost of obtaining visa for its citizens as issues that stood in the way of improving relations in a number of areas.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Industrial policy, clusters for manufacturing on anvil

Context: The process for formulation of a new industrial policy has been initiated and consultations are being held with stakeholders.

In news:

- **Manufacturing clusters:** The government is preparing a national plan for manufacturing clusters with an aim to bring about convergence in development of industrial areas by central and state governments.

2. When too much is too little

In News:

Food wastage in India

- Food wastage means, Food is lost or wasted throughout the supply chain, from initial agricultural production to final household consumption. The losses, represent “a waste of resources used in production such as land, water, energy and inputs, increasing the green gas emissions in vain”.
- According FAO, “One third of food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted globally, which amounts to about 1.3 billion tons per year.
- India ranked 97th among 118 countries in the Global Hunger Index for 2016
- According to one estimate, 21 million tonnes of wheat are wasted in India every year

Reasons behind food-wastage?

- It can be linked to people's behaviour.
- Absence of an effective distribution mechanism and legal framework.
- Due to food's perishability.
- Poor supply-chain management, results in significant wastage, both at pre- and post-harvest stages
- A recent study by the IIM, Calcutta, revealed that only 10% of food is covered by cold storage facilities in India

Food wastage has multiple socio-economic and environmental impacts.

Social

- Wastage of food is not less than a social delinquency.
- Though hunger cannot be tackled directly by preventing food wastage, food that is wasted in our country can feed many hungry people.

Environmental

- The increasing wastage results in land degradation by about 45%, mainly due to deforestation, unsustainable agricultural practices, and excessive groundwater extraction.
- The energy spent over wasted food results in 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide production every year.
- Decay also leads to harmful emission of other gases in the atmosphere; for instance, decaying of rice produces methane.
- Food waste emissions have a major impact on climate change and result in greater carbon footprint

Economic

- Wastage results in national economic loss.
- Monetary value of the loss in terms of wastage, accounts to ₹58,000 crore every year—The CSR Journal.

Initiatives in India?

- There are many civil society, private sector and community initiatives aimed at distributing food among the poor.
- National Food Security Act, 2013 securing availability of food grains for two-thirds of the 1.3 billion population.

- India Food Banking Network (IFBN), promoting the concept of collaborative consumption with support from the private sector and civil society organisations.
- Such initiatives, creating networks and channels of distribution between those who have surplus food and those who are in need of them, are necessary.

Global best practices:

- 1996 Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act in the U.S, encourage donation of food and grocery products that meet quality and labelling standards
- France, first country in the world to ban supermarkets from destroying unsold food, forcing them instead to donate it to charities or food banks or send it to the farmers to be used as fertilisers in crop production.

Way forward?

- Devise a national-level strategy to combat the problem so that surplus of food can be turned into an advantage instead of resulting in wastage.
- The government can create a time-bound task force under Niti Aayog, with experts from different sectors, to frame a national policy to address the issue, which can recommend the legal framework to support initiatives to reduce food loss and waste.
- Hunger and food wastage are two sides of the coin. The cycle of hunger cannot be broken without channelising the wasted food to help the needy.

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Category: POLITY

1. [Aadhaar: 9-judge Bench to consider whether privacy is a basic right](#)



We have to first determine whether right to privacy is a fundamental right or not before going into the issue [on the constitutionality of the Aadhaar scheme]

CHIEF JUSTICE
J.S. KHEHAR



In a Republic founded on a written Constitution, it is difficult to accept there is no fundamental right to privacy.. There is a battery of judgments saying privacy is a fundamental right. We have to give serious thought to this question

JUSTICE J. CHELAMESWAR
Supreme Court judge



In news:

- A **nine-judge Bench** of the Supreme Court will hear the question **whether privacy is a fundamental human right and is part of the basic structure of the Constitution.**
- **Petitioner's contention:**
 - The Aadhaar scheme, is a violation of the citizens' **right to privacy** .
 - The petitioners have argued that right to privacy is part of **Article 21** , the right to life, and interspersed in **Article 19** , though not explicitly stated in the Constitution.
- **Supreme Court verdicts on right to privacy:**
 1. P. Sharma case-1954
 2. the Kharak Singh case verdict of 1962

Both judgments had concluded that privacy was not a fundamental or 'guaranteed' right.

- **The nine-judge Bench to decide:** once and for all whether privacy is negotiable or not.

2. State legislatures have 'exclusive' powers to enact laws on cattle protection: Govt

In news:

- State legislatures have "**exclusive**" **powers** to enact laws for **preservation of cattle** , the government told the Rajya Sabha .
- Rajasthan High Court vide order dated 31.5.2017 advised that cow should be declared a national animal and directed the state government of Rajasthan to take steps for preservation and conservation of cows and for declaring cow as a national animal.

Key Fact: Under the distribution of legislative powers between Union of India and states under article 246(3) of the Constitution, the preservation of cattle is a matter on which the legislature of the states have exclusive powers to legislate.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India set to extradite Bangladeshi national to Britain

In news:

- India is all set to extradite a Bangladeshi national, **Mohammad Abdul Shakur** , to the U.K., where he is accused of murdering his wife and children ten years ago.
- **Positive step:** This is being seen as another signal of **increasing cooperation** between the two nations on sensitive, and potentially thorny issues in the home affairs arena.

2. US asks countries in East and South China Sea to exercise restraint

News

- The Pentagon has asked countries in East and South China Sea to exercise restraint and avoid indulging in provocative behaviour
- It asked not do things that are provocative and to respect each other's sovereignty in their operations

Background

- This was due to Chinese H-6 bombers flying over the **Bashi Channel** and the **Miyako Strait** several times over the past week
- Japan scrambled fighters in response
- Chinese Defense Ministry has told Japan that it should get used to it

Protest by China

- China had protested when a US Air Force Bomber flew over the South China Sea before G-20 summit in Hamburg, Germany

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. An uphill fight

Context

- The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's plan to eliminate malaria by 2027.
- It aims to eradicate the mosquito-borne disease from India **three years ahead of the global deadline** set by the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**.

New plan approach

- It is the country's first time-bound malaria elimination programme since the National Malaria Eradication Programme was aborted in the late 1960s.
- Since the 1970s, the thrust of India's anti-malaria programme has been on controlling the disease.
- The National Vector and Disease Control Programme, 2004, the plan's predecessor, too aimed at "controlling" malaria.
- There are time-bound targets for all districts, based on their vulnerability to malaria.
- The plan lays emphasis on awareness programmes, entomological surveillance and outbreak warning systems — methods that have contributed to eradicating malaria in several parts of the world, including Sri Lanka.

Challenges

- Manpower shortage which has virtually crippled a large number of the country's primary health centres.
- This shortage not only jeopardises early detection and treatment of the disease, but is also a cause for a large number of cases going unreported.
- Under-reporting of malaria makes it difficult to accurately estimate the burden of the disease.

India's Vulnerability to malaria

- Malaria parasite has been particularly resilient for centuries.
- **Plasmodium vivax parasite** responsible for almost 50 per cent of India's malaria burden has adapted to anti-malarial drugs.

Way forward

- Compared to several other communicable diseases, malaria is not a particularly complex disease. What we need to do is to stop mosquitoes from transmitting the parasite or make the parasite ineffective.
- Beefing up indigenous research on the disease

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Does a minimum wage kill jobs?

Context

- The Union Cabinet is expected to approve a bill that, mandates a **universal minimum wage**.
- The code empowers the **Centre to set a minimum wage** to help poor, unskilled workers earn more.

Problems with minimum wage

- Economists warned that price floors prevent the available supply of goods from being fully sold.
- So, the minimum wage would logically hurt workers by increasing unemployment

Minimum wage and unemployment:

- Famous 1993 study by David Card and Alan B. Krueger found that a rise in the minimum wage in New Jersey actually decreased unemployment.
- “Seattle’s Minimum Wage Experience 2015-16”, a 2017 found that since the city raised its minimum wage in 2015, unemployment dropped from 4.3% to 3.3%.
- Since then, a flurry of studies has concluded that a minimum wage has either no, or very little, negative effect on employment.
- But another paper, found that employment among the youth in Denmark decreased by one-third when they attained the age at which their minimum wage increases by 40%.

The real effect:

- The minimum wage increases unemployment, except when it is set below the market price for labour; or only marginally higher, in which case the minimum wage enhances the bargaining power of workers.
- But figuring out, and also periodically adjusting, the wage rate at which the worker benefits is often impractical.

Other effects of minimum wage?

- Even when it looks like the minimum wage has no negative effect on employment; it can have other unintended effects.
- Companies, for example, instead of firing workers, may employ them for fewer hours, which in turn will affect the quality of their services
- “Minimum Wage and Restaurant Hygiene Violation”, a 2017 paper found that hygiene violations by restaurants increased significantly after a rise in the minimum wage as the restaurants tried to cut down on cleaning-staff expenses.

2. After globalisation’s promise

Context

- ‘Hyperglobalisation’ has been used to describe the dramatic increase in international trade witnessed for about a decade and a half from the early 1990s up to the global financial crisis of 2008
- The imagery intended is one of an increasing connectedness among nations leading to a virtuous cycle of economic expansion

History of Globalisation

- Starting some time in the last quarter of the 19th century, for close to 50 years, the world saw an expansion in trade that was actually as great or even greater than during the recently concluded phase
- Then had also occurred an unprecedented movement of capital and of people
- British capital flowed into building the railways across the world, immigrants moved from Europe to the United States and Asian labour was moved to the sites of deployment of western capital
- The phase of high trade starting 1870 came to an end with the First World War and was to revive, slowly, only after the Second
- Then, following the collapse of East European communism in the early 1990s, there was a resurgence in global trade
- Now even this phase has somewhat abruptly ended with the global financial crisis

Role of technology

- 19th century globalisation was underpinned by technological advances that facilitated trade
- It may as well be said that trade expanded as the demand for goods grew

The slowdown and India

- If the world economy is set to grow slowly for the foreseeable future, a premise of much of the economic policy in India since 1991 would have to be replaced
- The shift that has taken place is most visible in the IT industry

- Now, “bricks and mortar” is no longer something to be spurned and soiling our hands may be part of the business of earning our living for some time to come

What does India need to do?

- Recognising the diminished tempo of globalisation, India’s economic policymakers must address the growth of the home market
- This means increasing the demand for goods and services emanating from within the country
- There is a case for cutting the repo rate now, but its effects are doubtful

Way forward

- Independently of the ‘twin balance sheet problem’, Keynesian economics has long recognised that lowering the rate of interest may not do much for private investment if the expected rate of return is depressed
- The slowing of both global trade and domestic manufacturing may have had precisely this effect by lowering the long-term expectations held by private investors
- Buoying up of flagging demand can be done through public investment
- Infrastructure is unique in that spending on it raises aggregate demand and when it actually comes on stream, it raises the productivity of investment elsewhere in the economy
- ‘Roads and bridges’ are a metaphor for the public infrastructure that the Indian economy can fruitfully absorb today

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Govt. panel to study cow derivatives

In News

- The government has set up a 19-member panel to carry out scientifically validated research on cow derivatives including its urine, and their benefits
- The panel has been named as National Steering Committee

About project

- The government has given the project the acronym SVAROP, which stands for Scientific Validation and Research on Panchagavya
- The committee will select projects that can help scientifically validate the benefits of panchgavya — the concoction of cow dung, cow urine, milk, curd and ghee — in various spheres such as nutrition, health and agriculture
- It is being conducted by the Department of Science and Technology, Department of Biotechnology, and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) of the Ministry of Science and Technology in collaboration with IIT-Delhi
- It will cover five thematic areas including scientific validation of uniqueness of indigenous cows

D. GS4 Related

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GS Paper II

1. Examine how Aadhaar's design protects individual's identity and privacy?

GS Paper III

1. Discuss the effects of minimum wages on employment?
 2. What do you mean by Hyper-globalisation? Discuss how hyper-globalisation has lead to a “virtuous cycle of economic expansion”?
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A. GS1 Related

Category: ART AND CULTURE

1. [Demand for religion status for Lingayat gains momentum](#)

Context

- The demand for **independent religion status** for Lingayats once again gathered new momentum.
- Lakhs of people belonging to Lingayat community took to the streets in Bidar – Karnataka.
- Their anger was not just against those who projected Lingayat community as an integral part of Hinduism but also those who argued Lingayat and Veerashaiva were one and the same.

Lingayat and Veerashaiva

- The heads of the different Lingayat mutts who arrived from different parts of the country to participate in the agitation invariably asserted that Lingayats had been neither part of the Hindu religion nor were a synonym for the Veerashaiva sect.
- There are two main religious streams in Hinduism — **Shaivas and Vaishnavas**. Veerashaiva is one among the seven sects of Shaivas. Both Shaivas and Vaishnavas uphold Vedas, Agamas, Shastras and Puranas and follow the Vedic religious practices. However, Lingayat religion founded by Basaveshwara vehemently opposed them.
- Lingayats are spread across Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and other States. Historically, ours is an independent religion founded by Basaveshwara in the 12th century. It has never been a part of Hinduism. Contrarily, it fought Hinduism.

B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. [Get real on Swachh: on manual scavenging](#)

Context:

- Despite the most stringent penal provisions in the law against manual scavenging, it continues in parts of India.
- Recently Madras High Court ordered the Centre and the Tamil Nadu government to ensure the strict enforcement of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, in the wake of the death of 30 people engaged in the activity in the State.

Current Issue

- Vigorous national campaign for the rehabilitation of those engaged to manually clean insanitary latrines, and urban structures into which human excreta flows without sewerage, has been unable to break governmental indifference and social prejudice.

Why manual scavenging still persists?

- Because of the continued presence of insanitary latrines, of which there are about 2.6 million that require cleaning by hand.
- In spite of a legal obligation, State governments are not keen to demolish and rebuild old facilities lacking sanitation.
- Government hasn't conducted a full census of both the latrines and the people engaged in clearing such waste.
- The Central government, which runs the self-employment scheme for the rehabilitation of these workers, has reduced funds from ₹448 crore in the 2014-15 budget to ₹5 crore this year.
- Even high allocation in the past also did not utilise effectively.

Social prejudices that impedes solutions

- Many communities still regard the inclusion of a sanitary toilet as ritual and physical pollution of the house.
- Even the less conservative are ready to accept only large, expensive and unscientific structures much bigger than those recommended by the WHO
- Entrenched belief in the caste system, that assumes Dalits will readily perform the stigmatised task of emptying latrines.

Way forward:

- Effective implementation of the law requires willingness of the courts to fix responsibility on State governments, and order an accurate survey of the practice especially in those States that claim to have no insanitary latrines or manual scavenging.
- Raising the confidence level among those engaged in manual cleaning, even official data show their reluctance to take up self-employment.
- Empowerment holds the key to change.
- Break the caste barriers through education and economic uplift.
- Compensation for the families of those who died in the course of the humiliating and hazardous work should be

paid immediately.

2. IIITs now Institutes of National Importance

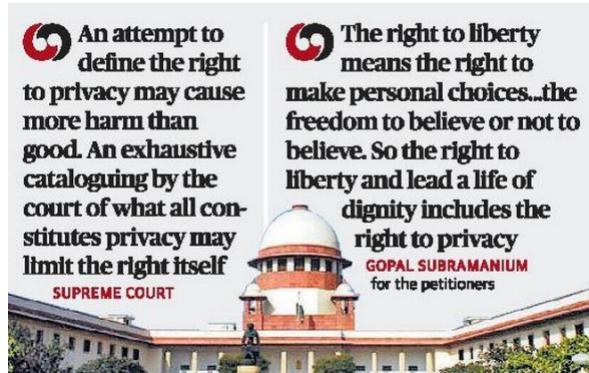
In news:

The Lok Sabha passed a Bill to declare the Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIIT) established under the public-private partnership (PPP) route as Institutes of National Importance (INIs).

3. SC wonders whether privacy could be an absolute right

Context: The decision of the nine-judge Bench on whether privacy is a fundamental right or not will be pivotal to the petitioners' challenge that Aadhaar, which mandates citizens to part with their biometrics, is unconstitutional.

In news:



Supreme Court Observation:

- **Right to privacy is not absolute and cannot prevent the state from making laws imposing reasonable restrictions on citizens.**
- ‘Right to privacy’ is too ‘amorphous’ a term. To recognise privacy as a definite right, it has to first define it. But this would be nearly impossible as an element of privacy pervades all the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution.
- An attempt to define the right to privacy may cause more harm than good.
- An exhaustive cataloguing by the court of what all constitutes privacy may limit the right itself.

Attorney-General response:

- **‘A common law’:** right to privacy is merely a common law right and the Constitution makers “consciously avoided” making it a part of the fundamental right.

4. Ministry, NITI Aayog moot privatisation of select services in district hospitals

Radical ‘privatisation project’

- The Union Health Ministry and the NITI Aayog have developed a framework to let **private hospitals** run select services within district hospitals, on a 30-year lease.
- Framework prepares in consultation with the World Bank.
- **The government will be allowing a single private partner or a single consortium of private partners to bid for space in district level hospitals, especially in tier 2 & 3 cities.**
- Under this Public Private Partnership (PPP), care for only three non-communicable diseases — cardiac disease, pulmonary disease, and cancer care — will be provided.
- According to the draft model contract, private hospitals will bid for 30-year leases over portions of district hospital buildings to set up 50- or 100-bed hospitals in smaller towns across the country. The State governments could lease up to five or six district hospitals within the State.
- **Viability gap funding:** the State governments will give Viability Gap Funding (VGF), or one-time seed money, to private players to set up infrastructure within district hospitals. The private parties and State health departments will share ambulance services, blood banks, and mortuary services.
- There will be no reserved beds or no quota (sic) of beds for free services in these facilities.

Criticism:

- The policy document has come under sharp criticism for the Ministry's failure to consult with key stakeholders from civil society and academia.
- The government is planning to hand over critical public assets without gaining anything much in return.
- NITI Aayog has no locus standi to make health policy, which is a state subject in India. **The logic behind shutting down the Planning Commission was to ensure that policies are not centralised**. NITI Aayog was to be an advisory body but here they are rushing through a policy that will essentially hand over public assets to the private sector, leading to a further dismantling of the public services available for free.
- Only Below Poverty Line (BPL) patients and those in insurance schemes will be able to access free care. This would effectively **exclude** hundreds of millions of the Indian population from vital hospital services.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Australia and India: partners in regional security and prosperity

Context

- Rising ties between India and Australia

Importance of Indo-Australian relationship:

- India is Australia's ninth largest trading partner, with boundless potential for growth
- Indian-origin residents are the fourth largest group of overseas-born Australians
- Australia-India Exercise (AUSINDEX): Military cooperation between Australia and India includes the regular joint naval exercise AUSINDEX

Areas that needs to be focused upon:

- India and Australia need to build and strengthen international institutions that promote cooperation
- And manage competing interests in fair and transparent ways, in order to maintain regional and global stability

What Australia wants from India?

- Australia looks forward to India liberalising its trade and investment regime further to realise its economic growth prospects and increase its influence in the region

The way forward

- India and Australia need to increase bilateral cooperation and collective efforts with other like-minded countries
- Together both countries can shape a future region in which strong and effective rules and open markets deliver lasting peace and prosperity

2. U.S. Senate Committee for bigger Indian role in Afghanistan

In news:

The U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Forces observation:

- India has a "critical role" to play in breaking the stalemate in Afghanistan.
- It also pitched for enhancing trilateral cooperation among Afghanistan, India and the U.S.
- In a report accompanying the National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA) 2018, the committee also called for enhancing the overall defence cooperation between the U.S. and India, and eventually joint naval patrol of the Indian Ocean.
- The Senate Committee also pulled up the Department of Defence for not making faster progress in improving cooperation between India and the U.S.

Afghanistan and regional stability:

- The committee is concerned by the current stalemate in Afghanistan, and believes that the United States should leverage the capabilities of allies and partners to more effectively secure regional stability and security.
- The committee believes that the United States needs to recommit to the fight in Afghanistan and that India, as a major defence partner of the United States and a contributor to regional security, has a critical role to play in this effort.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. [New social security net planned](#)

In news:

- The Union government plans to introduce a **universal social security network** for workers in both **the informal and formal sectors**.
- The scheme will be rolled out in a phased manner.

Amnesty scheme

- The government brought in an amnesty scheme for employers who were earlier not part of the Provident Fund regime.
- 20 lakh new employees were included as part of the amnesty scheme and 80 lakh contract labourers, including construction workers and those engaged by the public sector units at the Centre and the States, were also registered.

Key fact: EPF security network currently covered 4.8 crore contributory members and had a corpus of over ₹10.43 lakh crore.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. [World's northernmost corals bleached](#)

Context:

- Bleaching has damaged the world's northernmost coral reef in Japan, the latest example of a global phenomenon scientists have attributed to high ocean temperatures.

Coral bleaching

- About 30% of the coral reef off the coast of **Tsushima island** in Japan, which lies in the temperate zone some 1,000 km southwest of Tokyo, suffered bleaching
- Early in 2017, the rise in water temperature caused significant bleaching in the Great Barrier Reef in Australia for the second consecutive year.
- Since 2015, all tropical coral reefs have seen above-normal temperatures, and more than 70% experienced prolonged high temperatures that can cause bleaching.

Coral reef-advantages:

- Healthy coral reefs protect shores from storms.
- Offer habitats for fish and other marine life, including ecologically and economically important species.

Recovery option:

- After coral dies, reefs quickly degrade and the structures that coral build erode. While coral can recover from mild bleaching, severe or long-term episodes are often lethal.
- According to U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration coral reef bleaching may be easing after the three years of high ocean temperatures, the longest such period since the 1980s.
- Satellite data showed widespread bleaching was no longer occurring in all three ocean basins — Atlantic, Pacific and Indian — “indicating a likely end to the global bleaching event”.

Basic Information:

Coral reefs

- Coral reefs are large underwater structures composed of the skeletons of coral, which are marine invertebrate animals.
- The coral species that build coral reefs are known as hermatypic or “hard” corals because they extract calcium

carbonate from seawater to create a hard, durable exoskeleton that protects their soft, sac-like bodies.

- Each individual coral is referred to as a polyp. New coral polyps live on the calcium carbonate exoskeletons of their ancestors, adding their own exoskeleton to the existing coral structure.

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GS Paper II

1. “Right to privacy is merely a common law right and the Constitution makers consciously avoided making it a part of the fundamental right” Examine?
2. Recently, the Union Health Ministry and the NITI Aayog have developed a framework to let **private hospitals** run select services within district hospitals, on a 30-year lease. If implemented, these proposals could threaten to take India away from Universal Health Coverage, a key sustainable development goal, rather than towards it- Examine?

GS Paper III

1. How are coral reefs formed? Assess the impact of climate change and anthropogenic factors on coral reefs.
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UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – July 23

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Category: INDIAN SOCIETY

1. Every third child bride in the world is Indian: report

Report: ‘ Eliminating Child Marriage in India’, released by ActionAid India highlights-

- Every third child bride in the world is an Indian.
- There had been some improvement in the age of marriage, but that India still accounted for about 33% of all child marriages in the world. Of the married female population in India, 30.2% had been child brides.
- 75% of all child marriages took place in rural areas as on 2011. The number was even higher for the period between 2007 and 2011, at 82%.
- Uttar Pradesh accounted for the highest percentage of child marriages in India, at 16.6%. U.P., Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Bihar, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh accounted for 70% of all child marriages in India as of 2011.

B. GS2 Related

Category: *POLITY*

1. Mentally retarded adult not a child: SC

Context

- A “mentally-retarded” adult cannot be considered a child and given refuge under the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act of 2012** , the Supreme Court held.
- The case before the court was that of a rape victim, whose biological age is 38 though medical reports conclude that her “mental age” is that of six-year-old.

Biological age

- The petitioner said the biological age of a person should not be the governing yardstick for POCSO, which seeks to protect children from sexual abuse.
- Treat them with fragility and provide them gentle care throughout the criminal trial and swiftly punish the guilty.
- Any person, even an adult, who is incapable of understanding what is happening to her, is equal to a child.
- A holistic interpretation of the term ‘child’ to include intellectually-vulnerable adults serves the basic purpose of the 2012 Act.

SC Judgement

- In separate judgments, agreed that a judge cannot take on the role of the

legislator.

- It is not for the judge to decide “what the law ought to be instead of what the law is”.
- Definition of the term ‘child’ in Section 2(d) is exhaustive and includes only persons below the biological age of 18.
- The 2012 Act recognises the phenomenon of “mental disability,” but confines its ambit to only the mental disability of minors.

BASIC INFORMATION

- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 Definition of a child under the Act: The Act is gender-neutral and defines a child as any person below the age of eighteen years.
- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 provides:
 - Precise definitions for different types of Child abuse crimes
 - Stringent punishments
 - Mandatory reporting
 - Child-friendly procedures
 - Under Section 45 of the Act, the power to make rules rests with the Central Government
 - Qualifications and experience of interpreters
 - Arrangements for care and protection
 - Criteria for award of compensation by the Special Court
 - The rules rely on the structures established under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2000.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. [WCO lauds India's trade facilitation plan](#)

In news:

- The World Customs Organisation (WCO) describes India’s National Trade Facilitation Action Plan (NTFAP) as a ‘best practice’ other nations can adopt
- The WCO is impressed by the fact that as many as 51 of the 76 activities mentioned in the NTFAP “go beyond” the implementation requirements of the World Trade Organisation’s Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)
- The TFA is meant to ease Customs norms for faster flow of goods across borders- had come into effect in February 2017

What is NTFAP?

- It aims to cut cargo release time for exports and imports as part of measures to boost goods trade
- The NTFAP is to be implemented between 2017 and 2020, is part of India's efforts to improve its ease of doing business ranking

BASIC INFORMATION

World Customs Organization

- The World Customs Organization (WCO) is an intergovernmental organization headquartered in Brussels, Belgium
- It has 182 member nations (including India) that manage more than 98% of world trade.
- The WCO is noted for its work in areas covering the development of international conventions, instruments, and tools on topics such as commodity classification, valuation, rules of origin, collection of customs revenue, supply chain security, international trade facilitation, customs enforcement activities, combating counterfeiting in support of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), drugs enforcement, illegal weapons trading, integrity promotion, and delivering sustainable capacity building to assist with customs reforms and modernization
- The WCO maintains the international Harmonized System (HS) goods nomenclature, and administers the technical aspects of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreements on Customs Valuation and Rules of Origin

Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)

- The TFA is the WTO's first-ever multilateral accord that aims to simplify customs regulations for the cross-border movement of goods. It was outcome of WTO's 9th Bali (Indonesia) ministerial package of 2013
- The agreement includes provisions for Lowering import tariffs and agricultural subsidies: It will make it easier for developing countries to trade with the developed world in global markets
- Abolish hard import quotas: Developed countries would abolish hard import quotas on agricultural products from the developing world and instead would only be allowed to charge tariffs on amount of agricultural imports exceeding specific limits
- Reduction in red tape at international borders: It aims to reduce red-tapism to facilitate trade by reforming customs bureaucracies and formalities.

2. Digital trade games

Context:

- Need for an efficient 'data flow' strategy for India

- Many countries are placing great limitations on digital policymaking in the name of promoting e-commerce
- Few people understand the real nature of the digital issues involved
- And the relevant policy requirements of the present and the future

Wrong consideration

- Free global flow of data is wrongly presented as being the same as the free flow of information
- The data that underpins global media, or personal/social communication networks is one thing
- And the data basic to banking, retailing, the defence forces, public services, health, education services, etc is an entirely different matter

Needs to be done?

- Instead of seeing it as a global flow of data, one must see it as a global flow of intelligence

Nature of digital intelligence

- First, digital intelligence is going to be by far the single most important economic resource
- Whoever has it controls everything
- Second, digital intelligence tends to concentrate strongly around a few poles or centres

Effects of digital intelligence on future world

- The nature of digital intelligence will result in every sector getting organised around a very few centres of sectoral digital intelligence
- Countries will be forced to negotiate with countries which supply most of their A.I. software, for example, China or the United States
- Why: to essentially become that country's economic dependent
- How: by taking in welfare subsidies in exchange for letting the "parent" nation's A.I. companies continue to profit from the dependent country's users
- Such economic arrangements would reshape today's geopolitical alliances

Digital Industrialisation in India

- India must consider a digital industrialisation strategy
- **Why:** to ensure that digitally-induced efficiencies in every sector to be retained within India and not allowed to flow out without any obstruction
- This will not only ensure that our economy and society are not controlled from

- outside but also protect existing jobs and create many more new ones
- But if it allows such outflows, it will soon find itself on the wrong side of digital colonisation

Requirements for starting a Digital Industrialisation in India

- This requires an independent digital policy, including protections for India's digital industry

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. [A Sunderbans denizen staves off extinction](#)

In news:

- A **critically endangered**- the rare Northern river terrapin (Batagur baska), resident of the **Sunderbans** is set to get a new home, beginning a slow journey to recovery from a disastrous decline in the wild. It is more threatened than the Bengal tiger, but far less known.
- Batagur baska, the 60-cm-long turtle that is presumed extinct in several Southeast Asian countries, is classified as critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in its Red List of threatened species. The tiger, by comparison, is endangered.
- Batagur baska is described as the world's second most endangered turtle.
- The Yangtze giant soft shell turtle, Rafetus swinhoei, is considered the most endangered freshwater turtle.
- Habitat of Batagur baska: river estuarine.
- Of six large fresh water turtles of the genus Batagur, three are found in India. Batagur kachuga (Red-crowned roofed turtle) and Batagur dhongoka (Three-striped roofed turtle) are found in the tributaries of the Ganga, such as Chambal.

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GS Paper II

Indian Society

1. “Spreading education and building confidence among girls enables them to resist child marriage and chart their own lives” Discuss.
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Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. The boycott ban: on Maharashtra's law against social boycott

Context

- Maharashtra's new law prohibiting the social boycott of individuals, families or any community by informal village councils is a step in the right direction, given the pervasive nature of the problem.
- The progressive legislation, which received Presidential assent recently and was gazetted earlier this month, targets the pernicious practice of informal caste panchayats or dominant sections using ostracism as a means of enforcing social conformity.

The Maharashtra Protection of People from Social Boycott (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2016

- The act may serve as a template for similar legislation in other States.
- The Act lists over a dozen types of actions that may amount to 'social boycott', which has been made a criminal offence punishable with imprisonment up to three years or a fine of Rs. 1 lakh or both.
- The practices it prohibits range from preventing the performance of a social or religious custom, denial of the right to perform funerals or marriages, cutting off someone's social or commercial ties to preventing access to educational or medical institutions or community halls and public facilities, or any form of social ostracism on any ground.
- The law recognizes the human rights dimension to issues of social boycott, as well as the varied forms in which it occurs in a caste-based society.
- Its progressive sweep takes into account discrimination on the basis of morality, social acceptance, political inclination, sexuality, which it prohibits. It even makes it an offence to create cultural obstacles by forcing people to wear a particular type of clothing or use a particular language.

Previous instances

- This is not the first law of its type. Bombay enacted a law against excommunication in 1949, but it was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1962 after the Dawoodi Bohra community successfully argued that it violated the community's constitutional right to manage its own religious affairs.

Article 17

- One hopes the latest Act will not be vulnerable to legal challenge. Article 17 of the Constitution and the Protection of Civil Rights Act outlaw untouchability in all its forms, but these are legal protections intended for the Scheduled Castes.
- In reality, members of various castes and communities also require such protection from **informal village councils and gatherings of elders who draw on their own notions of conformity, community discipline, morality and social mores** to issue diktats to the village or the community to cut off ties with supposedly offending persons and families.

The inhuman practice of social boycott

- The case of a mountaineer from Raigad is somewhat notorious. He had conquered Mt. Everest but could not escape a social boycott in his village because his wife wore jeans and did not wear a mangalsutra.

Conclusion

- It is not a proud moment for a country when special legislation is required to prohibit social discrimination, ostracism and practices repugnant to human dignity. Yet, given the prevailing circumstances, any legislative assault on abhorrent social practices ought to be welcomed.

B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. Ordinances should be last resort: Pranab

Context

- Bidding farewell to Parliament at a function to mark the end of his tenure, President Pranab Mukherjee said here on Sunday that the institution was for “debate, discussion and dissent.” Disruptions, he said, hurt the Opposition as it took away from it the opportunity to raise people’s concerns.

The president had a word of advice for the government too

- **Ordinances should be resorted to only in “compelling circumstances.”**
- The President’s remark is significant as the Modi government, after repeatedly failing to amend the Enemy Property Act, 1968 in the last three years, had promulgated five ordinances. The Bill was passed by Parliament in March. Senior Union Ministers were reportedly deputed to convince the President to sign the fourth and fifth Enemy Property ordinances as he was against their promulgation.

The passage of the GST Bill

- The passage of the GST Bill was a **sign of Parliament’s maturity**. Its launch on July 1 was a shining example of cooperative federalism.
- **Values like fraternity, dignity and unity had become the lodestar for the country since Independence.**

BASIC INFORMATION

Ordinance making powers of the Executive in India

The Ordinance will only be promulgated after it receives the assent of the President.

I. Separation of powers between the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary

- In India, the central and state legislatures are responsible for law making, the central and state governments are responsible for the implementation of laws and the judiciary (Supreme Court, High Courts and lower courts) interprets these laws.
- However, there are several overlaps in the functions and powers of the three institutions. For example, the President has certain legislative and judicial functions and the legislature can delegate some of its functions to the executive in the form of subordinate legislation.

II. Ordinance making powers of the President

- Article 123 of the Constitution grants the President certain law making powers to promulgate Ordinances when either of the two Houses of Parliament is not in session and hence it is not possible to enact laws in the Parliament.
- An Ordinance may relate to any subject that the Parliament has the power to legislate on. Conversely, it has the same limitations as the Parliament to legislate, given the distribution of powers between the Union, State and Concurrent Lists. Thus, the following limitations exist with regard to the Ordinance making power of the executive:
 - **Legislature is not in session :** The President can only promulgate an Ordinance when either of the two Houses of Parliament is not in session.
 - **Immediate action is required :** The President cannot promulgate an Ordinance unless he is satisfied that there are circumstances that require taking ‘immediate action’.
 - **Parliamentary approval during session :** Ordinances must be approved by Parliament within six weeks of reassembling or they shall cease to operate. They will also cease to operate in case resolutions disapproving the Ordinance are passed by both the Houses.

III. Ordinance making powers of the Governor

- Just as the President of India is constitutionally mandated to issue Ordinances under Article 123, the Governor of a state can issue Ordinances under Article 213, when the state legislative assembly (or either of the two Houses in states with bicameral legislatures) is not in session. The powers of the President and the Governor are broadly comparable with respect to Ordinance making. However, the Governor cannot issue an Ordinance without instructions from the President in three cases where the assent of the President would have been required to pass a similar Bill.

IV. Key debates relating to the Ordinance making powers of the Executive

- There has been significant debate surrounding the Ordinance making power of the President (and Governor). Constitutionally, important issues that have been raised include judicial review of the Ordinance making powers of the executive; the necessity for ‘immediate action’ while promulgating an Ordinance; and the granting of Ordinance making powers to the executive, given the principle of separation of powers.

Table 1 provides a brief historical overview of the manner in which the debate on the Ordinance making powers of the executive has evolved in India post independence.

Table 1: Key debates on the President’s Ordinance making power

Year	Legislative development	Key arguments
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	In RC Cooper <i>vs.</i> Union of India (1970) the Supreme Court, while examining the constitutionality of the Banking Companies (Acquisition of Undertakings) Ordinance, 1969 which sought to nationalise 14 of India's largest commercial banks, held that the President's decision could be challenged on the grounds that 'immediate action' was not required; and the Ordinance had been passed primarily to by-pass debate and discussion in the legislature.
RC Cooper 1970 <i>vs.</i> Union of India	
38 th 1975 Constitutional Amendment Act	Inserted a new clause (4) in Article 123 stating that the President's satisfaction while promulgating an Ordinance was final and could not be questioned in any court on any ground.
44 th 1978 Constitutional Amendment Act	Deleted clause (4) inserted by the 38 th CAA and therefore reopened the possibility for the judicial review of the President's decision to promulgate an Ordinance.
AK Roy <i>vs.</i> 1980 Union of India	In AK Roy <i>vs.</i> Union of India (1982) while examining the constitutionality of the National Security Ordinance, 1980, which sought to provide for preventive detention in certain cases, the Court argued that the President's Ordinance making power is not beyond the scope of judicial review. However, it did not explore the issue further as there was insufficient evidence before it and the Ordinance was replaced by an Act. It also pointed out the need to exercise judicial review over the President's decision only when there were substantial grounds to challenge the decision, and not at "every casual and passing challenge".
T Venkata Reddy <i>vs.</i> 1985 State of Andhra Pradesh	In T Venkata Reddy <i>vs.</i> State of Andhra Pradesh (1985), while deliberating on the promulgation of the Andhra Pradesh Abolition of Posts of Part-time Village Officers Ordinance, 1984 which abolished certain village level posts, the Court reiterated that the Ordinance making power of the President and the Governor was a legislative power, comparable to the legislative power of the Parliament and state legislatures respectively. This implies that the motives behind the exercise of this power cannot be questioned, just as is the case with legislation by the Parliament and state legislatures.
DC Wadhwa <i>vs.</i> State of Bihar 1987	It was argued in DC Wadhwa <i>vs.</i> State of Bihar (1987) the legislative power of the executive to promulgate Ordinances is to be used in exceptional circumstances and not as a substitute for the law making power of the legislature. Here, the court was examining a case where a state government (under the authority of the Governor) continued to re-promulgate ordinances, that is, it repeatedly issued new Ordinances to replace the old ones, instead of laying them before the state legislature. A total of 259 Ordinances were re-promulgated, some of them for as long as 14 years. The Supreme Court argued that if Ordinance making was made a usual practice, creating an 'Ordinance raj' the courts could strike down re-promulgated Ordinances.

2. Bengaluru Declaration calls for SC/ST quota in judiciary

- The Bengaluru Declaration adopted by the State government sponsored Dr. B.R. Ambedkar International Conference 2017, on Sunday recommended a slew of affirmative action measures in private sector, judiciary, educational institutions, government contracts and promotions for Dalits.

The Bengaluru Declaration

- The declaration, coming in an election year, significantly concentrates not just on SC/STs, but has also proposed several measures for the larger AHINDA (Kannada acronym for minorities, backward classes and Dalits) community, the political constituency of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.
- It called for reservation of seats in legislature for other backward classes and setting up of a farmers' income commission.
- The eight-page declaration has 40 recommendations under six broad categories — safeguarding the people, strengthening democratic institutions, deepening social justice, enhancing human development, ensuring responsive governance, and promoting social security.
- “This Peoples’ Declaration hopes to be a dynamic blueprint that addresses the needs and aspirations of all Indians, and a starting point for an ‘alliance of equity’ of all progressive forces committed to safeguarding the idea of India,” the preamble stated.”
- **The Bhopal Declaration** that called for “ **liberalisation of capital for Dalits** ” was adopted in 2002 during the tenure of Congress leader Digvijaya Singh in Madhya Pradesh.
- Significantly, the Bengaluru Declaration called for upholding Rule of Law through police reforms and state action to prevent lynchings. It called for a law against gender and caste discrimination at education institutions.
- It further recommended for SC/ST reservation in appointment of judges, promotions, government contracts up to ₹1 crore, in private higher educational institutions and private s It also proposes establishment of an Equal Opportunities Commission, to oversee affirmative action.
- Much focus is also given on ensuring land ownership for SC/STs, including a proposal to establish SC/ST land bank, where government buys these lands at market prices and re-allots to the same community, to ensure non-dilution of ownership. It further recommends allocation of 20% of the land in private housing layouts for urban poor.
- The declaration calls for a wider social security net. It recommended a “living wage” and comprehensive social security scheme for all labourers working in the unorganised sector apart from ensuring dignity in retirement through enhanced pensions of ₹1,500 per month.

3. CAG flags delay in work on corvettes

In news

- The Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) has faulted the Navy and Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Ltd. for delay in construction of anti-submarine warfare corvettes and hampering their capabilities because of delayed decisions.

Weapons not installed

- In the report presented in Parliament last week, the CAG said, “Against the 18 weapons and sensors to be installed on ASW corvettes, audit observed that the two ASW corvettes

delivered were not fitted with ‘X’ weapon and sensor systems. Thus, ASW corvettes could not perform to its full potential as envisaged.”

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. MPC members to get Rs.1.5 lakh per meet, must disclose assets

- The government appointees on the powerful Monetary Policy Committee will be paid Rs.5 lakh per meeting along with air travel and other reimbursements, but will need to observe a “silent period” seven days before and after the rate decision for “utmost confidentiality”.
- The silent period and confidentiality requirements will also apply to the three RBI members, including the Governor, on the panel that has been deciding on policy rates since October last year, the central bank has said.

‘Conflict of interest’

- The Reserve Bank released its newly notified regulations for functioning of the committee.
- The members of the RBI Governor-chaired panel, which has to hold meetings at least four times in a year, are also required to be mindful of any conflict between their personal and public interest while interacting with profit making organisations and making personal financial transactions

Monetary Policy Committee

- The six-member MPC, constituted in September 2016, has three persons appointed by the central government while the rest, including the Governor, are from the RBI.
- The panel is required to meet at least four times in a year and the RBI has been convening a bi-monthly meeting of this committee.
- According to the Monetary Policy Committee and Monetary Policy Process Regulations, 2016, MPC members should also take adequate precaution to ensure utmost confidentiality of its policy decision before that is made public and preserve confidentiality about the decision making process,
- Each member of the MPC has one vote and in case the numbers are equal, the governor has the casting vote.
- The MPC, which has the responsibility of achieving a set inflation target, should submit a report to the government in case of failure to achieve the required target.
- In such instances, the report shall be sent to the central government “within one month from the date on which the bank has failed to meet the inflation target“.

Annual disclosure

- All members need to disclose their assets and liabilities and update this information once every year.
- Also, members cannot reveal outside the committee any confidential information accessed during the monetary policy deliberations.
- After conclusion of MPC meeting, a resolution needs to be made public including on the policy repo rate and any other monetary policy measures at the discretion of the

Chairperson while keeping in view the functioning and timing of financial markets.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Once hero, now ‘white elephant’

In news

- Decommissioned **submarine Vagli** lies idle in Chennai port after plan to convert it into a museum fails.
- She served the Indian Navy and the nation for over 36 years and could have become only the second submarine museum of the country. But since her decommissioning in 2010, the Russia-designed submarine INS Vagli has taken a tedious and uncertain course. She currently lies idle at the Chennai port.
- The submarine, which was to be the centrepiece of the maritime heritage museum planned by the Tamil Nadu government in the tourist town of Mamallapuram, was expected to be displayed on a 30-acre stretch of land near the Shore Temple of the UNESCO-declared World Heritage group of monuments.
- However, the inability of a contractor to mount the submarine on the intended site at Mamallapuram has forced the vessel to lie idle at the Chennai port.

‘Wasteful expenditure’

- A 2016 report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India questioned the process adopted by the government to move the submarine to Mamallapuram in one piece and observed that an “infructuous expenditure of Rs. 4.41 crore” was incurred due to a lack of proper planning.
- In December 2016, the submarine was almost damaged when Cyclone Vardah hit the Chennai coast.

INS Vagli

- INS Vagli was commissioned into the Indian Navy at Riga in Latvia, which was part of the erstwhile Soviet Union in 1974, and was decommissioned at Visakhapatnam in December 2010.

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Social Issues

1. The inhuman practice of social boycott still prevalent in the society. What are the issues involved and discuss how to stop the practice.

GS Paper II

Polity

1. Khap panchayats have been in the news for functioning as extra – constitutional authorities, often delivering pronouncements amounting to human right violations. Discuss critically the actions taken by the legislative, executive and judiciary to set the things right in this regard. **(2015 Mains Question)**.
 2. Resorting to ordinances has always raised concern on violation of the spirit of separation of power doctrine. While noting the rationales justifying the power to promulgate, analyse whether the decision of the Supreme Court on the issue have further facilitated to resorting to this power. Should the power to promulgate the ordinances be repealed? **(2015 Mains Question)**
-

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Category: POLITY

1. [SC gives BCCI some flexibility to implement Lodha reforms](#)

Context

- **July 18, 2016 ruling by Supreme Court** : ordered for full implementation of Lodha panel's recommendations.

In news

- The Supreme Court indicated that it was **open to relaxing its order** directing the Indian cricket board (BCCI) to accept the **Justice Lodha panel's recommendations** in full.
- Areas to be rethought:
 - Reduction in the number of national selectors to three from five.
 - Restricting the appointment of selectors to players who have played Tests.
 - The one-state one-vote norm
 - The associate membership criteria.

BCCI stance: BCCI had opposed the panel's recommendations, including sweeping changes in administration, virtually marginalising the board.

BASIC INFORMATION

Lodha Committee:

The Lodha committee was formed in January, 2015 by the Supreme Court after the Mudgal committee report on IPL.

Structural Reforms:

- The committee recommended that a 9-member apex council replace the 14-member BCCI working committee.
- Each of these office-bearers has a three-year term and can contest for a maximum three terms.
- The Lodha Committee also calls for dividing the governance into two parts: cricketing and non-cricketing.
- The non-cricketing management will be handled by 6 professional managers headed by a CEO, and the cricket matters like selection, coaching and performance evaluation should be left to the players

Organisation & Office-bearers: Restrictions imposed

- Each of these office-bearers has a 3-year term and can contest for a maximum three terms.
- There will be a mandatory cooling off period after each term. Therefore, no office-bearer can hold office consecutively in a row.
- No BCCI office-bearer can be Minister or government servant.

State Cricket Associations: One Vote/State

- The Committee recommended that one association should represent an entire state and only one vote per state

Indian Premier League: Maintain distance

- It recommends separate governing bodies for the IPL and BCCI.
- There should be a 15-day gap between IPL season and national calendar.

Betting: Legalize it

- It made a strong recommendation to lawmakers to legalise betting in cricket for all except cricket players, officials and administrators.
- The players and others banned officials should disclose their assets to BCCI in a measure to ensure that they do not bet.
- Betting is a \$ 400 billion phenomenon practised across the globe and lawmakers in India should enact laws to legalise it.

Fixing: Criminalize it

- The committee said that match-and spot-fixing should be made a criminal offence.

Conflict of Interest & Corruption

- One individual hold only one post in cricket administration. The office-bearers would have to choose between positions in respective state associations and the parent body.
- A former High Court judge should be appointed as ethics officer by the BCCI to administer issues relating to conflict of interest, misdemeanour and corruption.
- A former Supreme Court judge should be appointed ombudsman to resolve internal disputes.

Transparency: Bringing RTI to BCCI

- It recommended that the Legislature must seriously consider bringing BCCI within the purview of the RTI Act

Securing player's interest

- It recommended the setting up of a Players' Association to safeguard the interests of the cricketers.
- The report said players that are the driving force of the game, but they had been reduced to the status of employees and subordinates of those governing the game.
- The idea is to give players voice, use their expertise and skills for the development and betterment of the game

Women Cricket: Often ignored by BCCI

The Women's Cricket Committee to be formed to exclusively pay attention to this much ignored department, along with Women's Selection Committee.

2. To widen SC scholarship net, govt for raising income criteria

• Widening the Scope:

- According to the current eligibility criteria, the annual income of parents of the SC students seeking scholarships shouldn't exceed Rs 4.5 lakh
- This figure is now proposed to be revised to Rs 6 lakh per annum
- The funding, available in 175 notified top institutes, covers much of the expenses incurred towards fees, living expenses, books and computer

Other proposals

- For pre-matric scholarships for SC students, the annual income is proposed to be revised from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 2.5 lakh
- The ministry is also looking at revising the varying income criteria for other schemes for students from SC, OBC, and economically backward communities

Objective behind the move :

This is a part of the plans for 'rationalisation of all scholarship schemes', to correct the wide variation in income criteria

3. Govt mulls LPG-like subsidy transfer for PDS foodgrain

In news

- Food ministry is working on a pilot to emulate the direct cooking gas subsidy transfer scheme model for public distribution system (PDS) of subsidised foodgrains.

Modus operandi: The beneficiaries will get the subsidy amount in advance in their bank accounts and they will have to buy the foodgrains from any ration shop, which has got the electronic point of sale (e-PoS) devices.

Advantages

- This initiative will ensure zero leakage of the subsidy and foodgrain as well.
- The beneficiaries' failure to buy the foodgrains from the e-PoS enabled ration shop would result in no transfer of the subsidy for the next month. This will also ensure that beneficiaries under National Food Security Act don't use the subsidy amount for anything else.

Elsewhere: Union Territories of Chandigarh, Puducherry and Dadra & Nagar Haveli- the entire subsidy amount is transferred to the beneficiaries' account and they are free to buy the grains from anywhere.

4. Reporting sexual harassment at workplace now a mouse click away on 'SHe-Box'

In news:

- On the lines of the POCSO e-box for children, the Central government has now launched an online complaint management system called "**Sexual Harassment electronic-Box (SHe-Box)**" for registering complaints related to **sexual harassment at workplace**.
- Currently applicable only for women working in or visiting central government departments, the ministry of women and child development plans to extend to cover private workplaces too.

• Modus operandi:

- This portal will provide a platform to women working or visiting any office of Central Government (Central Ministries, Departments, Public Sector Undertakings, Autonomous Bodies and Institutions etc.) to file complaints related to sexual harassment at workplace under the **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013**.
- Those who have already filed a written complaint with the concerned Internal Complaint Committee (ICC)

- constituted under the SH Act are also eligible to file their complaint through this portal.
- Once a complaint is submitted to the portal, it will be directly sent to the ICC of the concerned Ministry or department.
- Through this portal, WCD as well as complainant can monitor the progress of inquiry conducted by the ICC.

BASIC INFORMATION Vishaka case guideline- Key features

- It mentioned that it is the duty of the employer or other responsible persons in work places or other institutions to prevent or deter the commission of acts of sexual harassment and to provide the procedure for the resolution, settlement or prosecution of acts of sexual harassment by taking all steps required.
- It also provided with the range to behaviour that would be termed as sexual harassment, which includes such unwelcome sexually determined behaviour (whether directly or implication) as :-
 - physical contact and advances;
 - a demand or request for sexual favours;
 - sexually coloured remarks;
 - showing pornography;
 - any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature.
- It also provided with Complaints mechanism by stating that-
- All workplaces should have an appropriate complaints mechanism with a complaints committee, special counsellor or other support services.
- A woman must head the complaints committee and no less than half its members should be women.
- The committee should include an NGO/individual familiar with the issue of sexual harassment.
- The complaints procedure must be time-bound.
- Confidentiality must be maintained.
- Complainants/witnesses should not experience victimization/discrimination during the process.

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013

This act was enacted in April 2013 as India's first law dealing with the protection of women against sexual harassment at workplace. Some important feature of this act are as follows:

- This Act aimed to provide every woman, irrespective of her age or employment status, a safe and secure working environment free from all forms of harassment.
- This Act covered both the organized and unorganized sectors in India. The statute applied to all government bodies, private and public sector organizations, non-governmental organizations, organizations carrying out commercial, vocational, educational, entertainment, industrial, financial activities, hospitals etc.
- This Act defined 'sexual harassment' in line with the Supreme Court's definition in the Vishaka Judgment.
- The Act extended the meaning of the word sexual harassment to include "presence or occurrence of circumstances of implied or explicit promise of preferential treatment in employment, threat of detrimental treatment in employment, threat about present or future employment, interference with work or creating an intimidating or offensive or hostile work environment, or humiliating treatment likely to affect the lady employee's health or safety could also amount to sexual harassment".
- The Act also introduced the concept of '**extended workplace**' since sexual harassment is not always confined to the primary place of employment. Therefore, the Act defined 'workplace' to include any place visited by the employee arising out of or during the course of employment, including transportation provided by the employer for the purpose of commuting to and from the place of employment.
- The Act provided for the establishment of **Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)** at each and every office or branches of the organization employing 10 or more employees, in order to provide a forum for filing complaints to facilitate fast redressal of the grievances pertaining to sexual harassment.
- It also provided for the establishment of **local complaints committee (LCC)** at the district level by the Government to investigate and redress complaints of sexual harassment of the unorganized sector or from those establishments where the ICC has not been constituted for the reason being, it having less than 10 employees.

5. NITI Aayog: An institution to fix implementation issues

Context: NITI Aayog's 'Outcome based monitoring'

Outcome based monitoring of NITI Aayog

- NITI Aayog is engaged in outcome-based monitoring with states in sectors such as healthcare, education and water supply

- It is also discussing the idea of ranking each state based on health, education and water index, and identifying states with good performance
- For example, it has developed a composite water management index, comprising several key performance indicators, with different weights assigned to indicators
- This is expected to incentivise states to collect data and analyse it to make better policies

Possible Disadvantage of Outcome based monitoring

- Some experts suggests that owing to self-ranking by states without independent review, reforms remain mostly on paper with key concerns remaining unaddressed.
- Also, legitimate beneficiaries may get excluded.
- Consequently, such approach of self-ranking and comparing needs to be viewed with caution.

Outcomes of efficient policy implementation by States:

- Experts suggest that significant improvement in the ability to implement policies and projects in the states, cities, and at the centre can considerably add to citizens' well-being.
- And also, could even add about 2-3% to the country's GDP, without any additional resources.

The way forward

- Agencies struggling with implementation should not be burdened with additional responsibilities of data collection and analysis.
- NITI Aayog must create a repository of best practices(as a benchmark) for dealing with implementation challenges, based on case studies from around the world.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. [**'Enough political will to seal RCEP talks'**](#)

In news:

- India is 'fully committed' to taking forward the negotiations for a mega Free Trade Agreement (FTA) called the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**, to ensure that it is a 'balanced' pact that benefits all the 16 Asia-Pacific nations including itself that are participating in the talks.
- India is pushing for liberalisation of services, including easing norms for movement of professionals across borders for short-term work. However, the slow progress of the services negotiations has been worrying India.

BASIC INFORMATION

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

- Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) and the six states with which ASEAN has existing free trade agreements (Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand).
- RCEP negotiations were formally launched in November 2012 at the ASEAN Summit in Cambodia.
- The agreement is scheduled to be finalized by the end of 2017.
- RCEP is viewed as an alternative to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a proposed trade agreement which includes several Asian and American nations but excludes China and India.

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GS Paper II

1. Critically evaluate implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act?
 2. “NITI Aayog is responsible for monitoring and evaluating government schemes.” Evaluate?
-

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B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. [Vande Mataram must be sung in all educational institutions once a week: Madras High Court](#)

In news:

- The Madras High Court on Tuesday ordered that “Vande Mataram” must be played and sung in all schools, colleges and universities at least once a week, preferably on Monday or Friday
- “Vande Mataram” should be played and sung in all government offices and institutions, private companies, factories and industries at least once a month, Madras High Court has ordered
- A person who has difficulty in singing the national song will not be compelled or forced to sing it provided there are valid reasons.

Basic Information

National Song

- The song Vande Mataram, composed in Sanskrit by Bankimchandra Chatterjee, was a source of inspiration to the people in their struggle for freedom. It has an equal status with Jana-gana-mana. The first political occasion when it was sung was the 1896 session of the Indian National Congress.

Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971

- This act is applicable in whole of India (including Jammu & Kashmir) and it prohibits the desecration of or insult to the National Flag, Constitution, National Anthem, India's Map etc.
- **Provisions Regarding National Flag and Constitution:** This act makes provision that whoever burns, mutilates, destroys, disfigures or otherwise shows disrespect to India's National Flag or Constitution shall be punished with an imprisonment (max-3 years) or a fine or both. The definition of Indian Flag included any picture, drawing, photograph or any other visible representation.
- **How the above provisions are related to Flag Code of India 2002?** Display of National Flag is governed by the provisions of two acts viz. Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950 and Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971. Further, the government also issues non-statutory instructions from time to time. The Flag Code of India brings these laws, conventions and other instructions together and serves as a single reference point about how to properly hoist flag of India with due honour. The Flag Code of India itself is not an act of parliament.
- **How provisions of IPC are related to disrespect to National Anthem?** Disrespect to national insignia has been linked to Section 124(A) of IPC, which refers to sedition. This section was slapped on few people in Kerala who failed to stand while National Anthem was being played in a theatre. Similarly, a youth was arrested under Section 66-A of the IT Act in 2014 {this section is now null and void} for posting a picture of National Flag with a derogatory comment on it on Facebook.
- **Provisions Regarding National Anthem:** The section 3 of the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act says that whoever intentionally prevents the singing of National Anthem or causes any disturbance in such singing shall be punished with imprisonment (max 3 years) or a fine or both.

2. Admiralty Bill gets Rajya Sabha nod

In news

Two Bills were passed by Rajya Sabha

1. On jurisdiction and settlement of maritime claims
2. The Footwear Design and Development Institute

The Admiralty (Jurisdiction and Settlement of Maritime Claims), Bill, 2017

- It was already passed by the Lok Sabha
- The Bill seeks to consolidate the laws relating to admiralty jurisdiction, legal proceedings in connection with vessels, their arrest, detention, sale and other related matters
- Earlier only the High Courts of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras could take up maritime cases
- The Bill extends the power to the High Courts of Karnataka, Kerala, Hyderabad, Orissa and Gujarat, besides any other High Courts as notified by the Centre

The Footwear Design and Development Institute Bill, 2017

- It was already passed by the Lok Sabha
- The bill seeks to establish the institute as an institution of national importance

3. Meet on island development

In news

Island Development Agency (IDA)

- Its first meeting is held recently
- **Decision:** Ten islands Smith, Ross, Aves, Long and Little Andaman in Andaman & Nicobar and Minicoy, Bangaram, Suheli, Cherum and Tinnakara in Lakshadweep have been **identified for development** in the first phase.
- The IDA was set up on June 1 this year following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's review meeting for the development of islands

4. What's brewing in Darjeeling

Context

- A resurgent Gorkhaland movement and subsequent state crackdown have infused life with violent uncertainty.

What triggered the issue?

- In May, the West Bengal government announced Bengali as a compulsory language in schools across the State.
- This triggered protests and claims of ‘linguistic imperialism’ in the Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts.
- Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee then decided to hold a Cabinet meeting in Darjeeling for the first time in over 40 years.
- But representatives of the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) or the three hill MLAs, were not included, eliciting protests.
- Subsequent protests and crackdowns have led to further destruction and deaths.

Gorkhaland

- The Gorkhaland movement is a long-standing quest for a separate State of Gorkhaland within India for Nepali-speaking Indian citizens (often known as ‘Gorkhas’).
- Gorkhaland is a classic sub-nationalist movement, similar to those that have produced other States like Telangana, Uttarakhand etc.
- Gorkhaland is a desire for the recognition, respect, and integration of Gorkha peoples in the Indian nation-state.
- The movement is neither separatist nor anti-nationalist; it is about inclusion and belonging in India.
- It stands as a key means to redress the Gorkhas’ enduring history of discrimination, misconception, and marginalisation in India.
- By demanding Gorkhaland, the people of Darjeeling-Kalimpong are opting out of West Bengal’s domination, and opting in to the democratic frameworks of India.

Gorkhas hardships on many fronts

- Gorkhas remain pegged to the lowest levels of employment.
- Outsiders own the tea industry, and profits flow out of the hills.
- Gorkhas face discrimination when they seek education and work in places like Kolkata, Bengaluru, and New Delhi. Called ‘foreigners’, ‘outsiders’ and ‘chinkys’, racial discrimination affects aspiring Gorkhas at every turn.

Reasons for resurgence

- Since 1947, the Darjeeling-Kalimpong region has remained under West Bengal, despite no substantive pre-Partition evidence to support West Bengal’s territorial claims to this region.
- Conciliatory set-ups like the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (1988-2012) and the GTA (2012-present) have failed to provide meaningful autonomy.
- Banerjee and others stridently lay claim to Darjeeling, insisting that Bengal will never be divided.
- Imposition of compulsory Bengali is an extension of histories of domination that the Gorkhas are trying to escape.
- West Bengal’s recent creation of the Kalimpong district (2017) and the State’s doling out of Tribal Development Boards to ethnicities within the Gorkha conglomerate (Tamang, Sherpa, etc.) might appear as paving the way for the TMC’s electoral gains.
- These seem clear examples of ‘divide and rule’ — causing splits in the Gorkha electorate and undermining the already-limited authority of the GTA.
- By summoning thousands to the streets, the GJM (Gorkha Janmukti Morcha) demonstrated its ability to evoke the emotional force of Gorkhaland. But then violence took hold.
- For Gorkhas, the troubling realities of colonial and present-day Darjeeling are eerily similar: linguistic chauvinism, ethnic and racial discrimination, resource extraction, unilateral territorial claims, the denial of self-governance, political suppression; and ultimately, an unwillingness to respect the ‘native point of view’.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Taxing times for the States

- Constitutional scheme regarding Taxation

- The Central government was given the power to tax income other than agricultural income, and levy indirect taxes in the form of customs and excise duties
- The State governments were given the sole power to tax the sale of goods and the entry of goods into a State
- Why this division:
- This division of fiscal responsibility was made with a view to making States self-sufficient
- And with a view to supplying to regional powers the flexibility needed to govern according to the respective needs of their people

Functions of GST Council

- This council will recommend a number of things
 - the list of taxes that will be subsumed by the GST
 - the goods and services that will be exempt from the levy of tax
 - the rates at which tax shall be levied

Virtual Veto of the Union Government in the GST Council

- The council's decisions will require a three-fourths majority.
- But the Central government's votes will have a weightage of one-third of the total votes cast.
- This gives a virtual veto to the Union Government.

Confusion regarding GST Council

- The newly introduced Article 279A describes Council's decisions as "recommendations"(advisory).
- Due to this advisory recommendations, States can choose to ignore the council's advice, by levying additional tax not only on the sale of goods but also on services and manufacturing.
- On the other hand, if these recommendations are treated as obligatory, we are left with a situation where States would have altogether surrendered their fiscal autonomy to the Central government.

2. [Finance Ministry introduces bill to replace Banking Regulation Ordinance](#)

The Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2017

- It seeks to amend the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 and replace the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2017.
- It aims to authorise the RBI to direct banking companies to resolve the problem of stressed assets.

Greater power to RBI

- The measure in the bill allows the RBI to initiate insolvency resolution process on specific stressed assets.
- The RBI would also be empowered to issue other directions for resolution, appoint or approve for appointment, authorities or committees to advise the banking companies for stressed asset resolution.

D. GS4 Related

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E. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

F. Bills/Acts/Schemes/Orgs in News

**Bills in
News**

About the Bill

- The Admiralty (Jurisdiction and Settlement of Maritime Claims) Bill, 2016 was introduced in Lok Sabha on November 21, 2016 by the Minister of State for Shipping, Mr. Mansukh Mandaviya. The Bill seeks to consolidate the existing laws on civil matters of admiralty jurisdiction of courts, admiralty proceedings on maritime claims, and arrest of ships. Admiralty laws deal with cases of accidents in navigable waters or involve contracts related to commerce on such waters. The Bill repeals laws such as the Admiralty Court Act, 1861, the Colonial Courts of Admiralty Act, 1890. Key features of the Bill include:
- **Admiralty jurisdiction:** The jurisdiction with respect to maritime claims under the Bill will vest with the respective High Courts and will extend up to the territorial waters of their respective jurisdictions. The central government may extend the jurisdiction of these High Courts. Currently admiralty jurisdiction applies to the Bombay, Calcutta and Madras High Courts. The Bill further extend this to the High Courts of Karnataka, Gujarat, Orissa, Kerala, Hyderabad, and any other High Court notified by the central government.
- **Maritime claims:** The High Courts may exercise jurisdiction on maritime claims arising out of conditions including: (i) disputes regarding ownership of a vessel, (ii) disputes between co-owners of a vessel regarding employment or earnings of the vessel, (iii) mortgage on a vessel, (iv) construction, repair, or conversion of the vessel, (v) disputes arising out of the sale of a vessel, (vi) environmental damage caused by the vessel, etc. The Bill defines a vessel as any ship, boat, or sailing vessel which may or may not be mechanically propelled.
- While determining maritime claims under the specified conditions, the courts may settle any outstanding accounts between parties with regard to the vessel. They may also direct that the vessel or a share of it be sold. With regard to a sale, courts may determine the title to the proceeds of such sale.

*The
Admiralty
(Jurisdiction
and
Settlement
of Maritime
Claims) Bill,
2016*

- **Priority of maritime claims:** Among all claims in an admiralty proceeding, highest priority will be given to maritime claims, followed by mortgages on the vessel, and all other claims. Within maritime claims, the highest priority will be given to claims for wages due with regard to employment on the vessel. This would be followed by claims with regard to loss of life or personal injury in connection with the operation of the vessel. Such claims will continue to exist even with the change of ownership of the vessel.
- **Jurisdiction over a person:** Courts may exercise admiralty jurisdiction against a person with regard to maritime claims. However, the courts will not entertain complaints against a person in certain cases. These include: (i) damage, or loss of life, or personal injury arising out of collision between vessels that was caused in India, or (ii) non-compliance with the collision regulations of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 by a person who does not reside or carry out business in India. Further, Courts will not entertain action against a person until any case against them with regard to the same incident in any court outside India has ended.
- **Arrest of vessel:** The courts may order for the arrest of any vessel within their jurisdiction for providing security against a maritime claim which is the subject of a proceeding. They may do so under various reasons such as: (i) owner of the vessel is liable for the claim, (ii) the claim is based on mortgage of the vessel, and (iii) the claim relates to ownership of the vessel, etc.
- **Appeals:** Any judgments made by a single Judge of the High Court can be appealed against to a Division Bench of the High Court. Further, the Supreme Court may, on application by any party, transfer an admiralty proceeding at any stage from one High Court to any other High Court. The latter High Court will proceed with the matter from the stage where it stood at the time of the transfer.
- **Assessors:** The central government will appoint a list of assessors qualified and experienced in admiralty and maritime matters. The central government will also determine the duties of assessors, and their fee. Typically, assessors assist the judges in determining rates and claims in admiralty proceedings.

Schemes in News About the Scheme

“Hmari Dharohar” scheme for preservation of rich heritage and culture of minority communities of India in 2014-15.

- Implemented by: Ministry of Minority Affairs
- 100% central Sector scheme.

Objectives:

- To curate rich heritage of minorities under overall concept of Indian Culture.
- Curating iconic exhibitions.
- Preservation of literature/ documents etc.
- Support and promotion of calligraphy etc.
- Research and Development.

*Hamari
Dharohar
Scheme*

Activities to be covered under the scheme : Selective intervention for preservation of heritage and may cover following kinds of projects:

- Curating exhibitions including iconic exhibitions.
- Support and promotion of calligraphy etc.
- Preservation of literature, documents, manuscripts etc.
- Documentation of oral traditions and art forms.
- Support to ethnic museums (not supported under schemes of Ministry of Culture or its bodies) for showcasing and preserving heritage of minority communities.
- Support for organizing heritage related seminars/ workshops.
- Fellowship for research in preservation of heritage and development.
- Any other support to individual/ organization in furtherance of cause of protection and promotion of rich heritage of minority communities.

G. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Did the Government of India Act, 1935 lay down a federal constitution? Discuss.(Mains 2016)
2. Discuss the possible factors that inhibit India from enacting for its citizens a uniform civil code as provided for in the Directive Principles of State Policy.

GS Paper III

1. The nature of economic growth in India is described as jobless growth. Do you agree with this view? Give arguments in favour of your answer.(Mains 2015)

Also, check previous [**Daily News Analysis**](#).

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2. [Supreme Court nixes Assam law to bypass mantri cap](#)
3. [Panel for action against farmers using herbicides on GM mustard](#)

International Relations

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2. [India rejects OIC move on vigilantism](#)
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B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. Law panel nod for DNA bank to fight crime

In news

- The Law Commission approved a central bill for **regulating use of DNA-based technology as a forensic tool** in civil and criminal proceedings, and for identification of missing persons and unidentified bodies.
- The 271st report of the Law Commission headed by **Justice B S Chauhan** submitted to law minister, a new draft bill — **the DNA Based Technology (Use and Regulation) Bill, 2017** — in place of an earlier bill on the issue referred to it by the Union government in September 2016 and said it had **enough safeguards to protect right to privacy of citizens**.
- Concerns raised by sections of civil society: proposed law amounts to breach the privacy of individuals.
- Law panel response: use of DNA-based technology for criminal investigation, identification of missing persons and unidentified bodies as well as the proposed National DNA Data Bank would in no way breach the privacy of individuals.
- **Why DNA Data Banks?**
DNA Data Banks, both national and at state level, will be responsible for storing DNA profiles received from accredited laboratories and maintaining certain indices for various categories of data, like crime scene index, suspects' index, offenders' index, missing persons' index and unknown deceased persons' index.
- **DNA profiling and Law commission recommendations:**
 - DNA profiling would be undertaken exclusively for identification of a person and would not be used to extract any other information.
 - Strict confidentiality in safekeeping of records of DNA profiles and their use. Violation of confidentiality would be liable for punishment of imprisonment, which may extend up to three years and also fine which may extend to Rs 2 lakh.
- **DNA Profiling Board**
 - The bill drafted by the commission proposed setting up of a statutory DNA Profiling Board which would lay down procedures and standards for establishment of DNA laboratories, supervise their functioning and frame guidelines for training police and other investigating agencies dealing with DNA-related matters.

2. Supreme Court nixes Assam law to bypass mantri cap

In news

- The Supreme Court struck down as **unconstitutional** a law passed by Assam assembly 13 years ago to allow the then Congress government headed by Tarun Gogoi to appoint MLAs as parliamentary secretaries after Parliament had put a cap on the number of ministers.
- The SC had earlier declared appointment of **parliamentary secretaries** by some other states by executive order, as done by the AAP government in Delhi, as illegal and struck down these appointments.

- This SC order striking down a law for appointment of parliamentary secretaries could nudge the Election Commission to decide the issue of disqualification of 21 MLAs who were appointed parliamentary secretaries by Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal.
- The appointment of AAP MLAs as parliamentary secretaries was struck down as unconstitutional by the Delhi high court in September last year.

Constitution 91st Amendment Act

- Parliament had on January 1, 2004 passed the Constitution 91st Amendment Bill, 2003, to modify Articles 75 and 164 of the Constitution.
- The Act provided that under Article 164(1A), the size of the council of ministers in a state should not exceed 15% of the total strength of the assembly.

Background information

- When the 91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003, came into force, the Assam council of ministers had 36 members in a House of 126 MLAs, or 28.57% of the strength of the assembly.
- In view of Article 164(1A), the number of ministers was to be brought down to 19 to be consistent with the 15% ceiling.
- To appease MLAs who lost their place in the council of ministers, the government promulgated **Assam Parliamentary Secretaries (Appointment, Salaries, Allowances and Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance, 2004**, which took the shape of a law on December 29, 2004.
- In the first instance, the Tarun Gogoi government appointed eight parliamentary secretaries. Six months before elections in September 2015, the government appointed 13 more parliamentary secretaries.

Similar instances

In June 2015, the Calcutta HC quashed appointment of 24 parliamentary secretaries in West Bengal and termed it unconstitutional. The Bombay HC in 2009 had struck down appointment of two parliamentary secretaries in Goa. The Himachal Pradesh HC in 2005 had in a similar ruling struck down appointment of eight chief parliamentary secretaries and four parliamentary secretaries. In May 2015, the Hyderabad HC had stayed appointment of parliamentary secretaries in Telangana.

3. Panel for action against farmers using herbicides on GM mustard

In news

- The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee's (GEAC) sub-committee has drafted several recommendations on GM mustard before it approved the crop for commercial release in May this year.
- These included a proposal for **legal action on farmers** using the **glufosinate-based herbicide (Basta)** on the crop unless otherwise approved by the Central Insecticides Board and Registration Committee.

Detrimental to humans

- According to the U.S. National Institute of Health, Glufosinate-based herbicides act as a

neurotoxin and have adverse impacts on humans

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Mediate in Al-Aqsa row: Palestine to India

In news:

- Palestine wants India to intervene to stop excessive security measures imposed by Israel on worshippers at Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem.
- In a rare press conference, Adnan M A Abualhayjaa, Palestine ambassador to India said that the Indian government with close ties to Israel should persuade them to stop impositions resulting in the worst clashes in Jerusalem in years.

2. India rejects OIC move on vigilantism

In news:

Strong Rejection

- India has strongly rejected the resolutions of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)
- The resolution had expressed concern about the recent attacks on people by cow-vigilante groups

Government Response:

- Government has stated that the resolutions adopted at the Organisation's latest foreign ministers' meeting were "factually incorrect"

Basic Information

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

- Organisation of Islamic Cooperation is an international organization founded in 1969, consisting of 57 member states, with a collective population of over 1.6 billion as of 2008.
- The organisation states that it is "the collective voice of the Muslim world" and works to "safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony".
- The OIC has permanent delegations to the United Nations and the European Union.
- The official languages of the OIC are Arabic, English, and French

3. The crossroads at the Doklam plateau

Context: The Indo-Bhutanese relationship amid the current stand off between Indian and Chinese Army

Historical overview

- Since 1960, 1,500 Km of roads have been built by India across Bhutan's most difficult mountains and passes
- These roads built and maintained by the Indian Border Roads Organisation (BRO) under Project Dantak

Past discussions on Doklam Plateau

- The Doklam plateau is an area that China and Bhutan have long discussed(over 24 rounds of negotiations that began in 1984)
- Chinese also offered a “package deal” to Bhutan, under which the Chinese agreed to renounce their claim over the 495-sq.-km disputed land
- In exchange for a smaller tract of disputed land measuring 269 sq. km, the Doklam plateau
- But India was able to convince Bhutan to defer a decision

Indian Government must give importance to Bhutan's sovereignty

- India should avoid any irresponsible comment on Bhutan
- Why: because it matter to Bhutanese people

India's Concerns

- India must also be aware that other neighbours are watching the Doklam stand-off closely
- Bhutan is also the only country in the region that joined India in its boycott of Chinese President Xi Jinping's marquee project, the Belt and Road Initiative
- That's why, India relations with Bhutan has became more important

Category: **HEALTH ISSUES**

1. Policy boosts care for blood disorders

In News

- People living with Thalassaemia, sickle cell anaemia and other variant haemoglobins can now look forward to better screening and treatment, based on the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry's new policy.
- Ministry released a policy on the Prevention and Control of haemoglobinopathies in India.

What is Thalassaemia, sickle cell anaemia?

- Sickle cell disease and thalassemia are genetic disorders caused by errors in the genesSickle_cell_01 for hemoglobin, a substance composed of a protein (globin) plus an iron molecule (heme) that is responsible for carrying oxygen within the red blood cell. These disorders can cause fatigue, jaundice, and episodes of pain ranging from mild to very severe. They are inherited, and usually both parents must pass on an abnormal gene in order for a child to have the disease. When this happens, the resulting diseases are serious and, at times, fatal.
- **Thalassaemia** : Is the name for a group of inherited conditions that affect a substance in the blood called haemoglobin. People with the condition produce either no or too little haemoglobin, which is used by red blood cells to carry oxygen around the body. This can make them very anaemic (tired, short of breath and pale).

About the policy

- The policy aims at creating treatment protocol benchmarks, to improve the quality of life of patients.
- It is also a guide on prevention and control, which includes antenatal and prenatal testing to

reduce the incidence of live haemoglobin disorder births (currently pegged at 10,000-15,000 live births a year).

- Supported by the National Health Mission, Blood Cell and the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram, the guidelines provide for screening of pregnant women during antenatal check-up, pre-marital counselling at college level and one-time screening for variant anaemia in children.
- Using public health awareness programmes and education, it highlights various haemoglobinopathies.
- The guidelines include the creation of a national registry to plan future patient services.
- The registry will also collect useful data, such as the location of patients to identify areas of high concentration, ethnicity or other characteristics, age distribution, records of deaths and their cause.
- 20% of patients can afford treatment, the government should ensure that all patients get it free.
- Such free treatment is given in States such as Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Odisha and Karnataka besides Delhi, and others should follow suit.
- All chelation drugs should be made available free because one drug does not suit all.

Policy fails to address

- The policy makes no reference to carrier testing for relatives of patients. In Pakistan, a law making carrier testing compulsory for relatives of Thalassaemia patients was passed in February. A similar system is in place in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia.

2. A grievous lag

Context

- A 10-year old rape victim is seeking the mercy of the court to get permission for abortion.
- But the court is fettered by Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971 in allowing abortion of a pregnancy caused by sexual assault.
- Supreme Court was constrained to seek the opinion of a panel of doctors to “affirm” if the health of a 10-year old, in Chandigarh, will be “adversely affected if her pregnancy is allowed to be full term”.

MTP Act and constraints

- The MTP Act allows abortions of more than 20-week pregnancies only when “it is immediately necessary to save the life of the pregnant woman”.
- It also requires the judiciary’s sanction for such abortions.

Recent issues

- In many occasions, the court has rejected abortion petitions on the ground that its hands are tied by the MTP Act
- In January, it did allow a rape victim to abort a 24-week old foetus that had severe abnormalities, but only after a panel of doctors ruled that the pregnancy could put her life in danger.
- A month later, the same court cited the constraints imposed by the MTP Act while refusing permission to a woman to abort her 26-week old foetus that would be born with Down’s Syndrome

Why the act should be amended?

- There is near unanimity among medico-legal experts that the MTP act has failed to keep up with changes in science.
- They argue that foetal abnormalities show up after 18 weeks and a two-week window after that is too small for the parents to take the difficult call on keeping their baby.
- The growing number of sexual crimes against women and the need to empower them with sexual rights have also made it imperative that the MTP Act be changed.

Draft Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2014

- It do away with the need for the court's sanction for aborting a more than 20-week old pregnancy
- It vest that decision on the healthcare provider if the pregnancy involves substantial risks to the mother or child, or if it is "alleged by the pregnant woman to have been caused by rape".
- Significantly, the draft recognises that "rape may be presumed to constitute a grave injury to the mental health of the pregnant woman, and that such an injury could be a ground for allowing abortion".
- It has been three years since these progressive changes to the MTP Act were drafted.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. CAC adopts Codex norms for three spices

In news:

- The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) adopted three Codex standards for black, white and green pepper, cumin and thyme paving the way for an universal agreement on identifying quality spices in various countries.
- The CAC cleared these standards at its session held in Geneva recently.
- **Why?** The adoption of Codex standards for the three spices, it is pointed out, will help evolve a common standardisation process for their global trade and availability of high quality, clean and safe spices to the world.

What is 'Food code'?

- The Codex Alimentarius or "Food Code" is a collection of standards, guidelines and codes of practice adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.
- The Commission, also known as CAC, is the central part of the joint FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations)/WHO (World Health Organisation) Food Standards Programme.
- It was established by FAO and WHO to protect consumer health and promote fair practices in food trade.

CAC and India

- The CAC move is considered a crucial endorsement of the India's initiatives to usher in a common standard across the globe for spices trade.

- The adoption of Codex standards by CAC must be read in the context of the efforts put in by New Delhi in arriving at a common code for spices trade.
- India conducted three sessions of Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH) at Kochi (2014), Goa (2015) and Chennai (2017).
- The Chennai session especially succeeded in achieving this consensus. Subsequently, these drafts were placed before the CAC and the member-nations adopted them by consensus.

2. ‘India’s concerns slowing RCEP talks’

India’s concern

- India’s concern is regarding the potential adverse impact of eliminating duties on its local manufacturing and job creation
- Effect: It said to be(by other members) slowing down the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations

Other members view

- According to some of the members, most RCEP countries have agreed to quickly eliminate barriers affecting goods trade
- India is seeking more time to do so, and that is delaying the negotiations

India’s View

- According to CII, many countries were urging greater focus on duty elimination
- But India ought to highlight the need for removal of non-tariff barriers including those in China

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Petrol, diesel cars face ban in U.K.

In news

- Britain will join other European nations in plans to ban diesel and petrol-fuelled cars in the coming decades.
- commendable governments move to deal with high levels of air pollution and climate change.
- New diesel and petrol cars will be banned by 2040, as part of a package of measures designed to improve air quality in Britain, and meet tough EU rules on emissions, particularly around nitrogen dioxide emissions.
- Britain’s high levels of air pollution, estimated to cause 40,000 deaths a year, has come under close scrutiny in recent years, with London breaching its annual air pollution limits under EU rules just 117 hours into 2017.
- The government says 4% of Britain’s major roads are in breach of air pollution limits.
- Last year, Norway announced plans to phase out new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2025, via a green tax system, while France will end the sales of these vehicles by 2040. Germany’s Bundesrat called for petrol vehicles to be phased out by 2030.

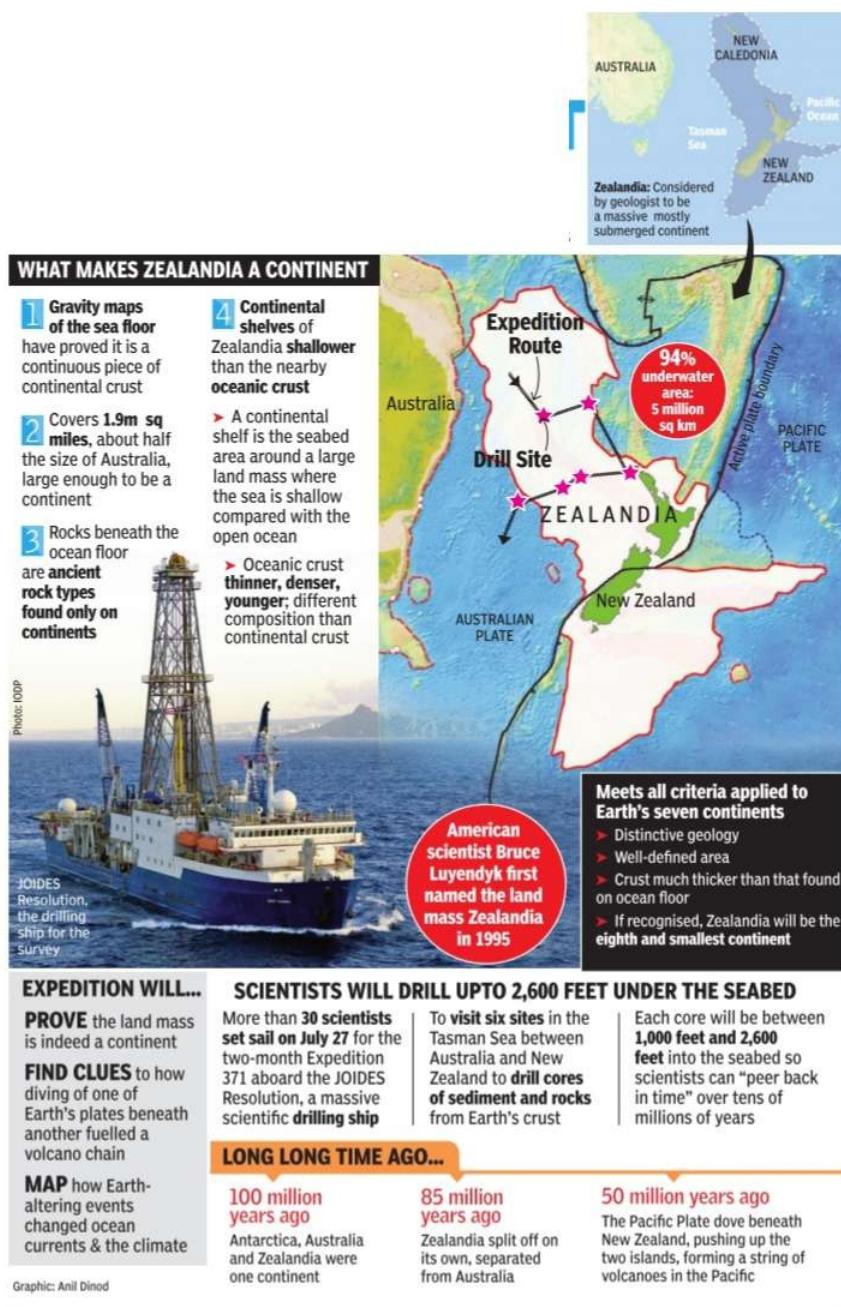
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PRELIMS WORTHY FACTUAL INFORMATION



IN SEARCH OF THE 8TH CONTINENT

Earth's hidden eighth continent should be shown on maps, scientists have argued. Now, an expedition will dive into a plate that lies beneath another deep under the Pacific Ocean to find the contours of the 94% submerged continent -Zealandia, all we see of which is New Zealand and a few islands.

F. Bills/Acts/Schemes/Orgs in News

- Article
75: Other
provisions
as to
Ministers*
1. The Prime Minister shall be appointed by the President and the other Ministers shall be appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister.
 - [(1A) The total number of Ministers, including the Prime Minister, in the Council of Ministers shall not exceed fifteen per cent. of the total number of members of the House of the People.
 - 1B) A member of either House of Parliament belonging to any political party who is disqualified for being a member of that House under paragraph 2 of the Tenth Schedule shall also be disqualified to be appointed as a Minister under clause (1) for duration of the period commencing from the date of his disqualification till the date on which the term of his office as such member would expire or where he contests any election to either House of Parliament before the expiry of such period, till the date on which he is declared elected, whichever is earlier.]
 2. The Ministers shall hold office during the pleasure of the President.
 3. The Council of Ministers shall be collectively responsible to the House of the People.
 4. Before a Minister enters upon his office, the President shall administer to him the oaths of office and of secrecy according to the forms set out for the purpose in the Third Schedule.
 5. A Minister who for any period of six consecutive months is not a member of either House of Parliament shall at the expiration of that period cease to be a Minister.
 6. The salaries and allowances of Ministers shall be such as Parliament may from time to time by law determine and, until Parliament so determines, shall be as specified in the Second Schedule.

- Article
164:
Other
provisions
as to
Ministers*
1. The Chief Minister shall be appointed by the Governor and the other Ministers shall be appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Chief Minister, and the Ministers shall hold office during the pleasure of the Governor:
Provided that in the States of [Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand], Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, there shall be a Minister in charge of tribal welfare who may in addition be in charge of the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and backward classes or any other work.
 - [(1A) The total number of Ministers, including the Chief Minister, in the Council of Ministers in a State shall not exceed fifteen per cent. of the total number of members of the Legislative Assembly of that State:
Provided that the number of Ministers, including the Chief Minister in a State shall not be less than twelve: Provided further that where the total number of Ministers including the Chief Minister in the Council of Ministers in any State at the commencement of the Constitution (Ninety-first Amendment) Act, 2003 exceeds the said fifteen per cent. or the number specified in the first proviso, as the case may be, then the total number of Ministers in that State shall be brought in conformity with the provisions of this clause within six months from such date* as the President may by public notification appoint.
 - (1B) A member of the Legislative Assembly of a State or either House of the Legislature of a State having Legislative Council belonging to any political party who is disqualified for being a member of that House under paragraph 2 of the Tenth Schedule shall also be disqualified to be appointed as a Minister under clause (1) for duration of the period commencing from the date of his disqualification till the date on which the term of his office as such member would expire or where he contests any election to the Legislative Assembly of a State or either House of the Legislature of a State having Legislative Council, as the case may be, before the expiry of such period, till the date on which he is declared elected, whichever is earlier.]
 2. The Council of Ministers shall be collectively responsible to the Legislative Assembly of the State.
 3. Before a Minister enters upon his office, the Governor shall administer to him the oaths of office and of secrecy according to the forms set out for the purpose in the Third Schedule.
 4. A Minister who for any period of six consecutive months is not a member of the Legislature of the State shall at the expiration of that period cease to be a Minister.
 5. The salaries and allowances of Ministers shall be such as the Legislature of the State may from time to time by law determine and, until the Legislature of the State so determines, shall be as specified in the Second Schedule.

G. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. “India must calibrate both its message and military moves to keep Bhutan on track with the special bilateral ties.” Discuss.

2. "Abortion Laws in India has not kept up with changes in science and society. It must be urgently amended" Comment?

GS Paper IV

1. Discuss the various ethical issues involved in the recent new draft bill- the DNA Based Technology (Use and Regulation) Bill, 2017 proposed by the Law commission?
2. Suppose one of your close friends, who is also aspiring for civil services, comes to you for discussing some of the issues related to ethical conduct in public service. He raises the following points:
 1. In the present times, when unethical environment is quite prevalent, individual attempts to stick to ethical principles may cause a lot of problems in one's career. It may also cause hardship to the family members as well as risk to one's life. Why should we not be pragmatic and follow the path of least resistance, and be happy with doing whatever good we can?
 2. When so many people are adopting wrong means and are grossly harming the system, what difference would it make if only a small minority tries to be ethical? They are going to be rather ineffective and are bound to get frustrated.
 3. If we become fussy about ethical considerations, will it not hamper the economic progress of our country? After all, in the present age of high competition, we cannot afford to be left behind in the race of development.
 4. It is understandable that we should not get involved in grossly unethical practices, but giving and accepting small gratifications and doing small favours increases everybody's motivation. It also makes the system more efficient. What is wrong in adopting such practices?

Critically analyze the above viewpoints. On the basis of this analysis, what will be your advice to your friend?

Also, check previous [**Daily News Analysis**](#).

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A. GS1 Related

Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. [Govt launches two apps to send alerts on earthquake parameters and oceanic disturbances](#)

In news:

- The government launched two Mobile apps –
 - ‘**India Quake**’ for dissemination of earthquake parameters.
 - ‘**Sagar Vani**’ to disseminate ocean related information and alerts (like high waves and Tsunami early warnings) to the user community in timely manner for their safety.
- Developed by the **National Centre for Seismology** (NCS), the ‘**India Quake**’ will automatically disseminate relevant parameter (location, time and magnitude) after the occurrence of earthquakes.
- Other than scientific and administrative benefits of the App, it will help in reducing panic amongst people during

an earthquake.

B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. No arrest in dowry cases till charges are verified, says Supreme Court

Context: Concern over disgruntled wives misusing the anti-dowry law against their husbands and in-laws

In news

- The Supreme Court directed that no arrest or coercive action should be taken on such complaints without ascertaining the veracity of allegations.
- Supreme Court acknowledged a growing trend among women involved in marital discord to abuse **Section 498A of IPC** to rope in their husbands' relatives — including parents, minor children, siblings and grandparents — in criminal cases and said it was high time such frivolous cases which violated the human rights of innocent was checked.

Paradigm shift

- The above observation is a shift from the dominant judicial conception of women as victims who would silently suffer injustice rather than bring disrepute to their family by taking domestic conflict outside the four walls of the home.

Family welfare committee (FWC) and other mechanism recommended

- The Supreme Court directed all states to set up **family welfare committee (FWC)** in each district and tasked them with testing the veracity of every complaint.
- The bench ruled that all such complaints received by the police or the magistrate must be referred to the family welfare committee and no action should be taken against the husband and the in-laws till the committee gave its report after interacting with the parties.
- Report of such committee be given to the authority by whom the complaint is referred to, latest within one month from the date of receipt of complaint
- The court also said bail applications of husband and in-laws should be decided expeditiously by trial courts, preferably the same day it is filed.
- The court further said impounding of passports or issuance of Red Corner Notice against person living abroad should be avoided and personal appearance of husband's family members should not be insisted upon by trial courts in dowry harassment cases.
- It also directed that a designated police officer should be appointed to deal with complaints under Section 498A.

Basic Information

Section 498A in The Indian Penal Code

[498A. Husband or relative of husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty.—Whoever, being the husband or the relative of the husband of a woman, subjects such woman to cruelty shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine. Explanation.—For the purpose of this section, “cruelty” means—

1. any wilful conduct which is of such a nature as is likely to drive the woman to commit suicide or to cause grave injury or danger to life, limb or health (whether mental or physical) of the woman; or
2. harassment of the woman where such harassment is with a view to coercing her or any person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for any property or valuable security or is on account of failure by her or any person related to her to meet such demand.

2. Privacy is a fundamental right with qualifications, Centre tells apex court

Union Government's stand on the issue

- Government told the SC that right to privacy is a fundamental right but it is a “wholly qualified right”

- Government stand means ‘right to privacy’ could be subject to reasonable restrictions

Change in stance

- This is contrary to the government’s earlier stand that citizens cannot invoke privacy as a fundamental right as the Constitution does not provide for it

Does this covers the issue related to Aadhar?

- Government also made it clear that the submission was not intended to cover the challenge to Aadhaar
- It means that those challenging it cannot claim that it violates right to privacy

3. Don’t slap unreasonable maintenance burden on husbands, Madras HC tells family courts

In news:

- The Madras high court has advised family courts not to treat husbands like “**armless soldiers**” and not to order them to pay maintenance to wives in a “**mechanical manner.**”
- A man is a son to his parents and is liable to maintain his aged parents as well, the high court said, adding that family courts should not brush this aspect aside lightly and go to the extent of paying even two-thirds of his income to his estranged wife.

Section 125 in The Code Of Criminal Procedure, 1973

125. Order for maintenance of wives, children and parents.

(1) If any person having sufficient means neglects or refuses to maintain-

(a) his wife, unable to maintain herself, or

(b) his legitimate or illegitimate minor child, whether married or not, unable to maintain itself, or

1. Subs. by Act 45 of 1978, s. 12, for” Chief Judicial Magistrate” (w. e. f, 18- 12- 1978).

(c) his legitimate or illegitimate child (not being a married daughter) who has attained majority, where such child is, by reason of any physical or mental abnormality or injury unable to maintain itself, or

(d) his father or mother, unable to maintain himself or herself, a Magistrate of the first class may, upon proof of such neglect or refusal, order such person to make a monthly allowance for the maintenance of his wife or such child, father or mother, at such monthly rate not exceeding five hundred rupees in the whole, as such Magistrate thinks fit, and to pay the same to such person as the Magistrate may from time to time direct: Provided that the Magistrate may order the father of a minor female child referred to in clause (b) to make such allowance, until she attains her majority, if the Magistrate is satisfied that the husband of such minor female child, if married, is not possessed of sufficient means. Explanation.- For the purposes of this Chapter,-

(a) ” minor” means a person who, under the provisions of the Indian Majority Act, 1875 (9 of 1875); is deemed not to have attained his majority;

(b) ” wife” includes a woman who has been divorced by, or has obtained a divorce from, her husband and has not remarried.

(2) Such allowance shall be payable from the date of the order, or, if so ordered, from the date of the application for maintenance.

(3) If any person so ordered fails without sufficient cause to comply with the order, any such Magistrate may, for every breach of the order, issue a warrant for levying the amount due in the manner provided for levying fines, and may sentence such person, for the whole or any part of each month’ s allowances remaining unpaid after the execution of the warrant, to imprisonment for a term which may extend to one month or until payment if sooner made: Provided that no warrant shall be issued for the recovery of any amount due under this section unless application be made to the Court to levy such amount within a period of one year from the date on which it became due: Provided further that if such person offers to maintain his wife on condition of her living with him, and she refuses to live with him, such

Magistrate may consider any grounds of refusal stated by her, and may make an order under this section notwithstanding such offer, if he is satisfied that there is just ground for so doing. Explanation.- If a husband has contracted marriage with another woman or keeps a mistress, it shall be considered to be just ground for his wife's refusal to live with him.

(4) No Wife shall be entitled to receive an allowance from her husband under this section if she is living in adultery, or if, without any sufficient reason, she refuses to live with her husband, or if they are living separately by mutual consent.

(5) On proof that any wife in whose favour an order has been made under this section is living in adultery, or that without sufficient reason she refuses to live with her husband, or that they are living separately by mutual consent, the Magistrate shall cancel the order.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Donald Trump administration urges NSG members to support India's application

In news

- The US has reaffirmed its support to India's membership bid to the Nuclear Suppliers Group and said it has called on other members of the elite grouping to back New Delhi's application.
- India has applied for the membership of the 48-member Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) which controls international nuclear trade.
- The Department of Defence and Department of State in its report submitted to Congress as required under National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA) 2017 also re-affirmed its support for India's membership in the Australia Group and Wassenaar Arrangement as soon as India meets each group's membership criteria.

Highlights of the report

- The US and India share a commitment to preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.
- Since 2010, the US has supported India's membership in the four multilateral export control regimes — Wassenaar Arrangement, NSG, Australia Group, and the Missile Technology Control Regime — as India prepared to take the steps required for membership in each one
- The US, the report said, welcomed India as a member of the Missile Technology Control Regime and its subscription to the Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation in June 2016.
- The report notes that the future leadership of **Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI)** will consist of an individual with experience in defence acquisition and technology to reinforce and ensure the success of the US-India Defence Relationship.

Defence partnership

- Since 2008, the US and India have concluded more than USD 15 billion in defence trade, including the transfer from the US to India of C-130J and C-17 transport aircraft, P-8I maritime patrol aircraft, Harpoon missiles, Apache and Chinook helicopters, and M777 light-weight Howitzers.
- India operates the second largest C-17 and P-8 fleets in the world, recently using its C-17s to deliver humanitarian assistance to Nepal and evacuate civilians from Yemen.
- The US had designated India a "Major Defence Partner" in June 2016 intending to elevate defence trade and technology sharing with India to a level commensurate with that of its closest allies and partners.
- In 2012, the US Department of Defence and India's Ministry of Defence established the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) as a means of strengthening industrial cooperation and moving away from the traditional "buyer-seller" approach.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. Address this blockage

Context:

- In February, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority slashed prices of stents by up to 85 per cent
- Thousands of patients who couldn't afford stents can now afford the devices at a fraction of the cost

What are Stents?

- Stents are tiny metal tubes coated with medication, which are inserted into clogged arteries to keep them flowing well.

When it is used?

- Emergency angioplasty is the treatment of choice during an acute heart attack, wherein the clot is crushed with a balloon and a stent is placed.
- It improves the chance of the patient surviving by almost 30 per cent when compared to clot dissolving medication (thrombolysis).
- However, in India, emergency angioplasty was carried out in less than 10 per cent of patients because of the cost involved in the procedure and the lack of access to stents.

Capping the prices- unintended ramifications on different sectors

Health sector

- Preference for stenting even in cases when it is not the best treatment and disturbing increase in multi-vessel stenting.
- With cheaper stents and a fall in procedure costs, many more patients are opting for angioplasty.
- Patients with multiple blocks in all three vessels, open heart surgery is a better than the use of multiple stents. However, with lower stent prices, patients often choose multi-vessel angioplasty as it is cheaper than open heart surgery
- Even the latest drug-eluting stents get clogged in about 5 per cent of cases.
- With the increasing use of the tiny metal tubes, the chances of a stent blocking with consequent damage to the heart muscle will only increase.

Indigenous development of stents

- Stent manufacturers typically spend millions of dollars on research before they can make the device and commercialise it.
- Abruptly reducing stent prices will have adverse effects on the development of improved stents.
- International companies may be able to offset their losses with profits in other markets, and from profits from other products
- Even before the price control move was instituted, only 40 per cent of the stents used in the country were indigenously manufactured; the rest were imported.
- With prices of imported stents and Indian stents now being the same, doctors and patients could prefer the imported devices
- All these will have a bearing on their capacity to do quality research.
- Lack of government funding for clinical research in India only aggravates the issue.

Internationally

- Lack of indigenous research and development will make the country dependent on imported stents
- Multinational companies may choose not to release their latest products in India because of the country's price control regime
- Such an alarming scenario might pertain not only to stent technology but also to research and marketing of other implantable devices.
- It ends up with a situation where hospitals in the country would have older generation stents.
- Patients hoping to have advanced stents may have to travel abroad

Medical tourism sector

- It will become apparent that Indian hospitals do not have the latest generation stents.
- With time, paradoxically, patients who were the intended benefactors of this price control measure may actually turn out to be losers.

Way forward

- Encourage and support Indian stent manufacturers and medical device research so that we do not need to depend

on imported stents.

- All aspects involving medical device development (clinical research, animal testing, and human trials) must be fast-tracked and should be as transparent as possible.
- There must be a system to make sure that the latest medical devices, including stents, are priced differently.
- Once such a level of competency is achieved, India could actually export stents, making “Make in India” viable for medical devices.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Union Cabinet clears minimum wage code bill

Context:

- The Union Cabinet approved the new wage code bill which will ensure a minimum wage across all sectors by integrating four labour related laws.

The new wage code

- The Labour Code on Wages Bill will consolidate the Minimum Wages Act, 1948; the Payment of Wages Act, 1936; the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965; and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.
- The bill seeks to empower the Centre to set a minimum wage across all sectors in the country and states will have to maintain that.
- However, states will be able to provide for higher minimum wage in their jurisdiction than fixed by the central government
- The new minimum wage norms would be applicable for all workers irrespective of their pay.
- At present, the minimum wages fixed by the Centre and states are applicable to workers getting up to Rs 18,000 pay monthly.
- This would ensure a universal minimum wage for all industries and workers, including those getting monthly pay higher than Rs 18,000

Second National Commission on Labour

- It has recommended that the existing labour laws should be broadly grouped into four or five labour codes on functional basis.
- Accordingly, ministry has taken steps for drafting four Labour Codes on — Wages; Industrial Relations; Social Security & Welfare and Safety and Working Conditions, respectively.
- It will be done by simplifying, amalgamating and rationalising the relevant provisions of the existing central labour laws.

2. RCEP: Boost for India on easier visa norms

Easier Visa Norms

- India is pushing for easier norms on movement of professionals for short-term work in 16 Asia-Pacific nations, under the RCEP
- The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a proposed FTA
- The RCEP technical level talks are currently going on in Hyderabad

Possible support from ASEAN countries

- A few ASEAN countries are also supporting India’s proposal for an RCEP Travel Card
- The Travel Card will facilitate visa-free multiple short-term entry across the RCEP region for business and tourism purposes

Concerns of RCEP Members

- According to some members, Travel card would lead to migration of professionals from India and loss of jobs for locals
- But India has been saying that its demands on temporary movement of professionals and skilled workers should

not be confused with permanent movement (or immigration)

3. India pressed to open up procurement

More RCEP nations seek commitments on market access

- Members of the RCEP want India to open up its more than \$300 billion-worth public procurement market
- The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a proposed mega Free Trade Agreement (FTA)
- Many countries pushing for binding commitments to mutually liberalise government procurement markets, including themselves and India involved in the mega-FTA talks

What is Public/government procurement?

- It refers to the process by which government (at the Central, State and local levels), its agencies/departments and State-owned enterprises procure goods and/or services
- Only for their own use, and not for sale/resale commercially
- India is not a signatory to the Government Procurement Agreement within the WTO framework
- Why: because it wants to retain its policy space to meet its development needs through public procurement process

Other developments on the issue

- Currently, 19th round of the RCEP Trade Negotiating Committee meeting at the technical level is going on at the Hyderabad
- Here, the 16 countries agreed to constitute a Working Group on government procurement to take forward negotiations on the topic and include it as a separate chapter in the final agreement

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for Today!!!

PIB Articles Editorials Roundup

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F. Bills/Acts/Schemes/Orgs in News

G. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. “Any young man, who makes dowry a condition to marriage, discredits his education and his country and dishonors womanhood” Comment?

GS Paper IV

1. Do you consider the practice of dowry as unethical and immoral? Justify your answer.
2. You are a no-nonsense, honest officer. You have been transferred to a remote district to head a department that is notorious for its inefficiency and callousness. You find that the main cause of the poor state of affairs is the indiscipline of a section of employees. They do not work themselves and also disrupt the working of others. You first warned the troublemakers to mend their ways or else face disciplinary action. When the warning had little effect, you issued a show cause notice to the ringleaders. As a retaliatory measure, these troublemakers instigated a woman employee amongst them to file a complaint of sexual harassment against you with the Women’s Commission. The Commission promptly seeks your explanation. The matter is also publicized in the media to

embarrass you further. Some of the options to handle this situation could be as follows:

1. Give your explanation to the Commission and go soft on the disciplinary action.
2. Ignore the Commission and proceed firmly with the disciplinary action.
3. Brief your higher-ups, seek directions from them and act accordingly.

Suggest any other possible option(s). Evaluate all of them and suggest the best course of action, giving your reasons for it.

Also, check previous [**Daily News Analysis**](#).

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A. GS1 Related

Category: SOCIETAL ISSUE

1. Cinema & censorship

Context

- Supreme Court rejected a petition filed by a person claiming to be the daughter of the late Sanjay Gandhi to set aside the certificate granted to **Indu Sarkar**, a film directed by Madhur Bhandarkar

Freedom of expression

- **Supreme Court observation:** freedom of expression cannot be curtailed without a valid reason.
- Film is nothing but artistic expression within the parameters of law and that there is no warrant or justification to curtail it.

CBFC and its censorship role

- Recent experience suggests that the CBFC (Central Board of Film Certification) does not always see itself as a certifying authority, but rather plays the censor quite merrily. In the case of *Udta Punjab* last year, it was seeking to be the guardian of Punjab's honour against the depiction of the high prevalence of drug addiction in the State.
- The Bombay High Court had to remind the CBFC that certification, and not censorship is its primary role and that its power to order changes and cuts must be exercised in accordance with constitutional principles.
- More recently, the CBFC sought to play the moral censor with regard to *Lipstick Under My Burkha*, a film it thought was too "lady-oriented" to be given a certificate, presumably because it depicts their fantasies.
- The Film Certification Appellate Tribunal had to intervene to secure the release of the film, with an 'A' certificate.
- These instances demonstrate that challenges to freedom come from both within the systemic framework and outside.

Role of court in protecting freedom of expression

- Courts prefer to protect the right to free expression rather than entertain

excuses such as maintenance of law and order and public tranquility, or someone's sense of hurt or the fear of someone being portrayed in a bad light.

B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. SC rejects abortion plea of 10-year-old

KNOCKING ON COURT'S DOORS	
List of recent cases decided by SC on abortion plea	
July Allowed abortion plea of Kolkata-based 26-week pregnant lady as fetus was suffering from congenital disorder	old pregnant woman facing danger to her life due to pregnancy and allowed her to abort 23-week fetus
May Turned down plea of 35-year-old destitute HIV positive rape survivor from Patna to abort 26-week pregnancy, as docs said it was risky	Feb Turned down plea to abort fetus suffering from Down Syndrome saying that there was no danger to life of the mother
March Turned down plea of woman to abort 27-week-old fetus having severe physical abnormalities as docs said baby might be "born alive"	January Allowed 24-week pregnant woman from Mumbai to undergo abortion due to life-threatening abnormalities in fetus
Feb SC allowed 22-year-	April 2016 Allowed 14-year-old rape survivor from Ahmedabad to abort 24-week fetus

Context

- On July 24, a Bench led by Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar had directed doctors from P.G.I., Chandigarh, to medically examine the 10-year-old rape victim and file a report in court on whether the “health of the girl child concerned, who is stated to be of the age of 10 years, and also that of the foetus, would be adversely affected, if the pregnancy is continued for the full term”.

Termination is not possible

- Medical opinion: abortion will endanger both the girl and her 32-week-old foetus.
- Supreme Court: denied the permission to grant abortion of the foetus.

State-level MTP boards

- Supreme Court urged the government to consider setting up permanent medical boards across the States so that women, especially child rape victims, could receive expedient access to medical care.
- Why such boards? To expedite the process.**
- Presently, women are forced to undertake the cumbersome process of approaching different courts, from district courts to high courts and finally the Supreme Court, for permission to medically terminate their pregnancies

which are over 20 weeks.

- The frequent number of such cases which have come to the Supreme Court range from child rape victims to destitute women to women with substantial foetus abnormalities.

Basic Information

What is MTP Act, 1971?

- **Abortion in India is legal only up to twenty weeks of pregnancy under specific conditions and situations.**
- **One, the continuance of the pregnancy would involve a risk to the life of the pregnant woman or of grave injury of physical or mental health, or**
- **Two, there is a substantial risk that if the child were born, it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.**

What the draft MTP bill 2014 provides?

- The draft MTP increased the legal limit for abortion from 20 weeks to 24 weeks.
- It provides for abortion beyond 24 weeks under defined conditions.
- The Bill amends Section 3 of the 1971 Act to provide that “the length of pregnancy shall not apply” in a decision to abort a foetus diagnosed with “substantial foetal abnormalities” or if it is “alleged by the pregnant woman to have been caused by rape”.
- Under the 1971 Act, even pregnant rape victims cannot abort after 20 weeks, compelling them to move court.
- It allows a woman to take an independent decision in consultation with a registered health-care provider.
- It also takes into account the reality of a massive shortage of both doctors and trained midwives, and seeks to allow Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha practitioners to carry out abortions.

Why is it essential to change the MTP law?

- Foetal abnormalities show up only by 18 weeks, so just a two-week window after that is too small for the would-be parents to take the difficult call on whether to keep their baby.
- Even for the medical practitioner, this window is too small to exhaust all possible options before advising the patient.
- There is an urgent need to empower women with sexual rights, legal

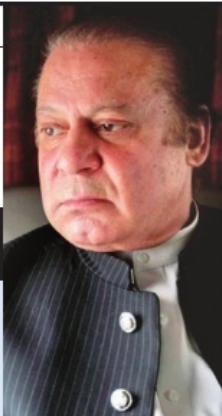
protection against sex crimes and sex choices both in their own interest and for the sake of reducing the fertility rate as a whole.

- **The lack of legal approval moves abortion to underground and they are done in unhygienic conditions by untrained, thus, putting thousands of women at risk.**

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Pakistan Supreme Court removes Sharif from office

PANAMA PAPERS TAKE A TOLL



► 3 of Nawaz Sharif's children owned offshore firms & assets not shown as part of family wealth, according to Panama Papers leaks
► Sharif's family also accused of living beyond their means, **hiding their assets, perjury and forgery**

► Sharif's daughter Maryam produced a forged trust deed about 4 London flats she owned

► AG says there is no law to file any appeal against this judgment. SC also orders a court to open references against Sharif and kin

MIAN MUHAMMAD NAWAZ SHARIF IS NOT HONEST... AND THE BENCH HAS UNANIMOUSLY DEEMED HIM UNFIT FOR HOLDING OFFICE

— PAK SC

WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IN INDIA?

An MP/MLA in India would get off lightly for a similar offence, inviting a **bare fine or/and maximum imprisonment of six months**. Besides, there exists no provision in the Representation of the People Act (RP Act) for disqualification of an elected representative convicted of filing a false affidavit

In news:

- Pakistan's Supreme Court disqualified **Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif** from office over **undclared assets** and ordered registration of corruption cases against him and his children, plunging the country into a political turmoil.
- Attorney-General said the disqualification is for life, ending any hope for the three-time Prime Minister to return to active politics.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Most private hospitals evade tax: CAG

Highlights of “A performance audit of India’s private hospitals” by CAG

- Majority of the institutions is evading tax.
- Data on ‘non-filers’ of income tax was available only in three states — West Bengal, Assam and Gujarat.
- Delhi, Kerala, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu had no process of identifying hospitals that were evading tax.
- Most private hospitals and practitioners did not submit valid Permanent

Account Numbers (PAN).

Key Fact: The private sector accounts for 80% of outpatient care and 60% of inpatient care in the country.

2. 'Regulators shouldn't restrain innovation'

In news

- Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant opinion: India's financial sector regulators should stop hindering ideas in the financial technology sector and instead opt for a **regulatory sandbox** approach to nurture innovative financial technology applications.

What is a regulatory sandbox?

- A regulatory sandbox is an experimental oversight mechanism for innovative products and services that do not fall into an existing regulatory regime or cut across traditional regulators' domains.
- For example when you make payment transfers or remittances, assess your personal finance or insurance needs, compare financial products that you are considering buying or to track the performance of your investments.
- Such innovations are permitted to operate for a limited period of time at a limited scale to understand its efficacy and implications, so that the best alternatives for regulation can be evolved based on concerns that emerge.
- The (sandbox) option can be a great way to unlock innovations for mass public adoption, because a regulatory sandbox balances the twin objectives of nurturing financial innovation and safeguarding consumer interests.

Practice elsewhere

- Globally, regulatory sandboxes have been introduced in the U.K., Singapore, Australia, Malaysia and UAE. Each country has a certain "target group" for which sandboxing is done.
- All these countries have so far created a sandboxed environment to support financial institutions (FIs) and fintech firms

Allowing the start-ups

- There are over 600 start-ups in the country in the financial technology (fintech) space
- Letting them operate in a 'live, but controlled environment with some regulations relaxed, will provide a solid evidence base' on their strengths and

weaknesses.

- More than 30 of those start-ups are focused on the peer-to-peer lending space alone and their market potential is expected to reach \$5 billion by 2020.
- Several start-ups are working in areas such as virtual currencies like Bitcoins, Blockchain-based settlements and so on.
- The total fintech market in India is estimated to be worth \$8 billion and is expected to grow to about \$14 billion by 2020. India is ranked amongst the top ten FinTech markets globally

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

3. CAG spots weaknesses in missile defence system

Highlights of the report tabled by CAG in Parliament:

- **Deficient in quality** – The **strategic missile system**, a medium range supersonic surface to air missile system to counter aerial threats were “deficient in quality,”
- Over 70 % of the under vehicle scanners (UVS) installed at Indian Air Force (IAF) bases were **non-functional**
- The IL series of aircraft, which provide vital transport support to IAF during contingencies, “has **not been upgraded**, and continue to fly with 1985 vintage avionics.” Air to air refuelling is a crucial capability both during combat as well as peace time operations. IL-78 aircraft are dedicated for this purpose. However, due to inadequate infrastructure and support facilities the air to air refuelling capability was hampered.

Importance of Strategic missile system:

- Strategic missile system is vital for the country’s air defence and deterrence capability.
- Audit found that the system delivered by Bharat Electricals Limited (BEL) was deficient in quality.
- Out of 80 missiles received up to November 2014, 20 were test fired during April-November 2014. Six of these missiles i.e., 30 % failed the test.
- Preliminary failure analysis report revealed that the missiles fell short of the target, had lower than the required velocity, and also there was malfunctioning of critical units like Servo Control Unit and Connector.
- Two missiles had failed to take off because the booster nozzle had failed. These deficiencies posed an operational risk during hostilities.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Building block of life found on Saturn's moon Titan

In news

- An important building block of life has been discovered in the hazy upper atmosphere of Saturn's largest moon, Titan.
- Using data from the Cassini mission, scientists identified negatively charged molecules **called 'carbon chain anions'** in the atmosphere of Titan.

Inference: These linear molecules are understood to be building blocks towards more complex molecules, and may have acted as the basis for the earliest forms of life on Earth.

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G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. Should there be censorship of films? Critically discuss in the light of recent moves by Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) to ban or cut scenes in movies.

GS Paper II

1. The Union Health Ministry's and NITI Aayog's recent proposal to allow the private sector to run district hospitals has its risks. Examine?

GS Paper IV

1. You are a young, aspiring and sincere employee in a Government office working as an assistant, to the director of your department. Since you've joined recently, you need to learn and progress. Luckily your superior is very kind and ready to train you for your job. He is a very intelligent and well-informed person having knowledge of various departments. In short, you respect your boss and are looking forward to learn a lot from him.

Since you've good tuning with the boss, he started depending on you. One day due to ill health he invited you at his place for finishing some urgent work. You reached his house and you heard shouting noises before you could ring the bell. You waited for a while. After entering, boss greeted you and explained the work. But you were constantly disturbed by the crying of a woman. At last, you inquired with the boss but his answer did not satisfy you. Next day, you were compelled to inquire further in the office and found out that his behavior is very bad at home with his wife. He also beats up his wife.

His wife is not well educated and is a simple woman in comparison to her husband. You see that though your boss is a nice person in the office, he is engaged in domestic violence at home. In such a situation, you are left with the following options. Analyse each option with its consequences.

- I. Just ignore thinking about it because it is their personal matter.
- II. Report the case to the appropriate authority.
- III. Your own innovative approach towards the situation. (250 words)

Also, check previous [**Daily News Analysis**](#).

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Category: POLITY

1. [Supreme Court stays Election Commission's order on MP minister Narottam Mishra](#)

In news

- The Supreme Court stayed the Election Commission's order disqualifying Madhya Pradesh minister Narottam Mishra for three years for filing **wrong account of his poll expenditure in 2008** elections by not disclosing the amount spent on paid news.
- As per **Section 7(b) of the Representation of the People Act**, Mishra, a senior minister in the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government, stands debarred from being a member of the state legislature and also from contesting polls for three years from the date of the issuance of the disqualification order.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. US lawmakers seek increased role for India in Afghanistan

In news

- American senators have sought **enhanced cooperation** with India in Afghanistan, including increasing New Delhi's role in helping the Afghan security forces
- This move could annoy Pakistan as it opposes any Indian role in neighbouring Afghanistan.
- India is one of the biggest providers of developmental assistance to war-torn Afghanistan.

National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA) – 2018

- The lawmakers have introduced a legislative amendment to the National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA) – 2018 in the Senate to support their demand.
- The amendment seeks increasing India's role in assisting the Afghan security forces through logistics support, threat analysis, intelligence, materiel, and maintenance support.
- Amendment seeks for:
 - The Pentagon and the State Department to find ways in which India can support “targeted infrastructure development” and economic investment in Afghanistan.
 - Improve the provision by India of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance to Afghanistan, including through the provision of logistics support by India, joint training between Afghanistan and India, and combined military planning by Afghanistan and India for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions in Afghanistan.
- A **tri-lateral security and civilian co-operation** between India, Afghanistan and the US,
- Establishment of priorities for investments to promote security and stability in Afghanistan that align with the “mutual interests” of Afghanistan, India, and the US.

2. Nawaz Sharif's disqualification will not affect CPEC: China

In news

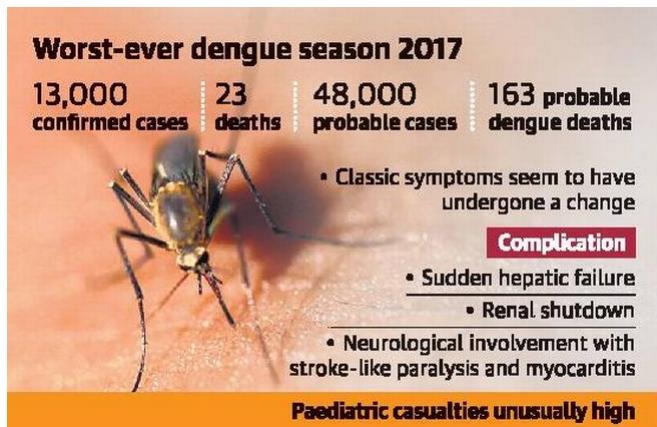
- China has said that Nawaz Sharif's disqualification from Pakistan's premiership will not affect its \$50 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.
- China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang comments:
- The all-weather friendship between China and Pakistan has withstood the test of time.
- As a friendly neighbour, China hopes that all parties and sections in Pakistan can prioritise state and national interests, properly deal with their domestic affairs, maintain unity and stability, and keep focusing on the economic and social development.

CPEC

- CPEC passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).
- India has strongly protested CPEC.
- Its protests have taken a concrete shape after Sharif came to power in 2013, the year Chinese President Xi Jinping also took over office, promising implementation of his grand multi-billion Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which included the CPEC.
- The CPEC, which involves huge investments by China to gain access to the strategic **Gwadar port in Balochistan** through rail and road connectivity, has taken shape under the Sharif-Xi leadership with firm backing from the Pakistan military.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. Expert panel to review dengue clinical norms



In news

- Kerala: The Health Department has set up an expert committee to review the clinical management guidelines of dengue fever, after doctors from all government medical college hospitals in the State reported unusual symptomatic manifestations of dengue, rapid deterioration and death in many cases.

Drastic change in Symptom

- The classic symptoms of dengue seem to have undergone a change, with doctors now reporting sudden hepatic failure, renal shut down, neurological involvement (encephalopathy) with stroke-like paralysis and myocarditis.
- Paediatric casualties too seemed unusually high this season.
- Senior virologists have ruled out any mutations in the dengue viruses which may have contributed to the aggravation in symptoms and complications.

Key figures

- The State has been going through one of the worst dengue epidemics ever, chalking up over 13,000 confirmed dengue cases and 23 deaths.
- An additional 48,000 cases have been reported as “probable dengue” cases and 163 deaths as “probable dengue deaths”.

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Category: ECONOMICS

1. NPCI gets RBI nod to operate Bharat Bill Payment System

In news:

- National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), the umbrella organisation for all retail payment systems, has said it has received a final nod from the Reserve Bank of India to function as the Bharat Bill Payment Central Unit (BBPCU) and operate the Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS).
- The final clearance from RBI comes almost a year after NPCI launched the BBPS pilot project to make payment of utility bills easier.

Basic information

BBPS

- **The Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS) is an RBI conceptualised system driven by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). It is a one-stop payment platform for all bills, providing an interoperable and accessible “Anytime Anywhere” bill payment service to customers across the country with certainty, reliability and safety of transactions.**
- **Payments through BBPS may be made using cash, transfer cheques and electronic modes. Bill aggregators and banks, who will function as operating units, will carry out these transactions for the customers.**

NPCI

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) is an umbrella organization for all retail payments system in India. It was set up with the guidance and support of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Indian Banks' Association (IBA). NPCI has ten promoter banks.

2. 'Scheme for banks not applied as envisaged'

Context

- According to a report by the CAG, the Centre's 'Indradhanush' scheme to recapitalise public sector banks (PSBs) based on their performance was not implemented in a manner envisaged.

Highlights of the report

- As per the scheme, a portion of the recapitalisation was to be based on the bank's performance. However, this was not followed during disbursal of funds.
- The parameters used to determine whether banks required capital changed from year to year and in some years the rationale for capitalising banks was not even recorded. Hence, the scheme's target of raising Rs. 1.1 lakh crore from the markets by 2018-19 was not likely to be met.
- Also, some banks that did not qualify for additional capital as per the decided norms, were infused with capital, and in some cases, banks were infused with more capital than required.

Background

- Gross NPAs with PSBs had risen sharply in recent years, from Rs. 2.27 lakh crore as of March 31, 2014 to about Rs. 5.4 lakh crore at the end of March 2016.

Mission Indradhanush

- In 2015, under the Indradhanush plan, the government had announced capital infusion of ₹70,000 crore in public sector banks for four years, starting from 2015-16. In the first two financial years, ₹25,000 crore had been earmarked per year with ₹10,000 crore to be disbursed in each of the remaining two years. However, credit rating agencies had pointed out that the sum was insufficient as banks needed to meet Basel-III norms as well as make provisions for rising bad loans.
- The mission includes the seven key reforms of appointments, board of bureau, capitalisation, de-stressing, empowerment, framework of accountability and governance reforms.

2. India among top nations with potential for digital payments': Digital Evolution Index

Context

- India has emerged strong, exhibiting a high potential in terms of digital payments and has been categorised under the "break out" segment among 60 countries, according to the Digital Evolution Index 2017.

Digital Evolution Index

- The Fletcher School at Tufts University in partnership with Mastercard, unveiled the Digital Evolution Index 2017.
- The Index is a comprehensive research that tracks the progress countries have made in developing their digital economies and integrating connectivity into the lives of billions.
- The Index measures four key drivers – supply, consumer demand, institutional environment, and innovation.
- With nearly half of the world's population online, the research maps the development of 60 countries, demonstrating their competitiveness and market potential for further digital economic growth.

What is break out segment?

- The 'break out' segment refers to countries that have relatively lower absolute levels of digital advancement, yet remain poised for growth and are attractive to investors by virtue of their potential.

Performance of India

- India has been experiencing rapid strides of progress with an evolving payments landscape, catalysed by the government's demonetisation decision.

- The government's endeavour to boost the acceptance infrastructure coupled with a host of other economic reforms have further hastened the momentum for the country's journey towards a cashless society.
- Adoption of digital payments has also witnessed a massive growth with a shift in behaviour change as more people adopt digital payments in daily life.
- With new players foraying into the market and an entire gamut of solutions for alternate payments, the India payment ecosystem is growing each day.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. [Muntra, country's first unmanned tank, rolls out from the Chennai lab](#)



In news

- India's first unmanned tank developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has been rolled out of the Chennai lab.

Key facts

- Muntra, the unmanned tank, has three variants – surveillance, mine detection and reconnaissance in areas with nuclear and bio threats. It is likely to be used in Naxal-hit areas.
- Muntra-S has been developed for unmanned surveillance missions, whereas Muntra-M is built for detecting mines. Muntra-N, on the other hand, will be deployed in areas where nuclear radiation or bio weapon risk is high.
- The vehicle has been tested. It's surveillance radar, which has an integrated camera can be used to spy on ground target 15km away.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [Glow-in-the-dark shark discovered in the Pacific](#)



In news

- Scientists have identified a new species of **glow-in-the-dark shark** that has an unusually **large nose**, weighs a little less than a kilo and measures less than a foot.
- The new species, a member of the **lanternshark** family, has been named **Etmopterus lailae**. They are not easily visible or accessible like so many other sharks
- It lives 1,000 feet below the Pacific Ocean off the coast of the northwestern Hawaiian islands.

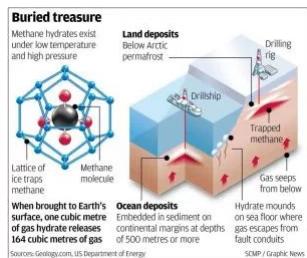
Unique features

- Strange head shape and an unusually large and bulgy snout where its nostrils and olfactory organs are located.
- These creatures are living in a deep sea environment with almost no light so they need to have a big sniffer to find food
- Flank markings goes forward and backward on their bellies and a naked patch without scales on the underside of its snout.
- Like other lanternsharks, the Etmopterus lailae is bio-luminescent and the flanks on the bottom of its belly glow in the dark.

2. [China produces gas from 'flammable ice' under South China Sea](#)

In news

- China has successfully produced natural gas from methane hydrate, also known as “flammable ice”, in an experimental project in the South China Sea. The government has promised to “actively develop” natural gas hydrate over the 2016-2020 five-year plan period.



Flammable ice

- Flammable ice consists of methane trapped within water crystals, and has been identified as a potential new gas source for China, with the South China Sea thought to contain some of the world’s most promising deposits.
- Officially known as methane clathrates or hydrates, they are formed at very low temperatures and under high pressure. They can be found in sediments under the ocean floor as well as underneath permafrost on land. Despite the low temperature, these hydrates are flammable.
- By lowering the pressure or raising the temperature, the hydrates break down into water and methane – a lot of methane. One cubic metre of the compound releases about 160 cubic metres of gas, making it a highly energy-intensive fuel.
- Many countries including the US and Japan are working on how to tap those reserves, but mining and extracting are extremely difficult.

Importance

- Methane hydrates are thought to have the potential to be a revolutionary energy source that could be key to future energy needs – likely the world’s last great source of carbon-based fuel. Vast deposits exist basically underneath all oceans around the globe, especially on the edge of continental shelves. Countries are scrambling for a way to make the extraction safe and profitable.

Accessing the power of this flammable ice has been difficult, for two reasons

- First, these reserves are often distributed over a large area rather than concentrated in one spot as oil or natural gas reserves often are.
- The bigger problem, however, is that, true to their moniker as flammable ice, methane hydrates are unstable and potentially explosive. Drilling into the seafloor could destabilize the methane ice crystals and cause explosions, spewing vast troves of methane into the atmosphere, where it is a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide (CO₂).

Future prospects

- Any exploitation of the reserves must be done with the utmost care because of environmental concerns. The potential threat is that methane can escape, which would have serious consequences for global warming. It is a gas that has a much higher potential to impact climate change than carbon dioxide.

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G. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. India is fighting war on many fronts. Analyze the basic causes of terrorism and insurgency and the effectiveness of state response in dealing with these threats.
2. Examine the implications of the disqualification of Nawaz Sharif as the Prime Minister by the Supreme Court of Pakistan on India – Pakistan relations.

GS Paper IV

1. “ Human beings should always be treated as ‘ends’ in themselves and never as merely ‘means’.” Explain the meaning and significance of this statement, giving its implications in the modern techno-economic society.
2. In our country, the migration of rural people to towns and cities is increasing drastically. This is causing serious problems both in the rural as well as in the urban areas. In fact, things are becoming really unmanageable. Can you analyze this problem in detail and indicate not only the socio-economic but also the emotional and attitudinal factors responsible for this problem? Also, distinctly bring out why—
 1. Educated rural youth are trying to shift to urban areas;
 2. Landless poor people are migrating to urban slums;
 3. Even some farmers are selling off their land and trying to settle in urban areas taking up petty jobs.
 4. What feasible steps can you suggest which will be effective in controlling this serious problem of our country?

Also, check previous [**Daily News Analysis**](#).

Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) is a specified minimum fraction of the total deposits of customers, which commercial banks have to hold as reserves either in cash or as deposits with the central bank.

Statutory liquidity ratio (SLR) is the Indian government term for reserve requirement that the commercial banks in India require to maintain in the form of gold, government approved securities before providing credit to the customers.

Statutory Liquidity Ratio is determined by Reserve Bank of India maintained by banks in order to control the expansion of bank credit.

The SLR is determined by a percentage of total demand and time liabilities. Time Liabilities refer to the liabilities which the commercial banks are liable to pay to the customers after a certain period mutually agreed upon, and demand liabilities are such deposits of the customers which are payable on demand. An example of time liability is a six month fixed deposit which is not payable on demand but only after six months. An example of demand liability is a deposit maintained in saving account or current account that is payable on demand through a withdrawal form such as a cheque.

Repo rate is the rate at which the central bank of a country (Reserve Bank of India in case of India) lends money to commercial banks in the event of any shortfall of funds.

In the event of inflation, central banks increase repo rate as this acts as a disincentive for banks to borrow from the central bank. This ultimately reduces the money supply in the economy and thus helps in arresting inflation.

The central bank takes the contrary position in the event of a fall in inflationary pressures.

Reverse repo rate is the rate at which the central bank of a country (Reserve Bank of India in case of India) borrows money from commercial banks within the country.

It is a monetary policy instrument which can be used to control the money supply in the country.

Repo and reverse repo rates form a part of the **liquidity adjustment facility**.

Marginal standing facility (MSF) is a window for banks to borrow from the Reserve Bank of India in an emergency situation when inter-bank liquidity dries up completely.

Banks borrow from the central bank by pledging government securities at a rate higher than the repo rate under liquidity adjustment facility or LAF in short. The MSF rate is pegged 100 basis points or a percentage point above the repo rate. Under MSF, banks can borrow funds up to one percentage of their net demand and time liabilities (NDTL).

Bank rate is the rate charged by the central bank for lending funds to commercial banks.

Bank rates influence lending rates of commercial banks. Higher bank rate will translate to higher lending rates by the banks. In order to curb liquidity, the central bank can resort to raising the bank rate and vice versa.

Market Stabilization scheme (MSS) is a monetary policy intervention by the RBI to withdraw excess liquidity (or money supply) by selling government securities in the economy. The MSS was introduced in April 2004. Main thing about MSS is that it is used to withdraw excess liquidity or money from the system by selling government bonds.

Open market operations (OMO) refers to the buying and selling of government securities in the open market in order to expand or contract the amount of money in the banking system, facilitated by the RBI.

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Category: POLITY

[1. Collegium moves to devise norms to pick, shift judges](#)

Context:

- Appointment of judges and transfer of high court judges.
- Transparency in the selection process

In news:

- The five-member Supreme Court collegium headed by **Chief Justice Dipak Misra** has resolved to devise a procedure to streamline the process to select judges of constitutional courts.

December 16, 2015 judgment

- The SC had asked the government to frame a new memorandum of procedure for selection of judges
- **Disagreement:** The draft is stuck over a disagreement on the Centre's insistence on including a “**national security**” clause to enable the government to reject a name recommended for appointment as judge of the SC or HCs on these grounds.
- **Tussle between Judiciary and Government:**

1. The collegium has been firm that the Centre must put in writing its objections, including on national security grounds, for rejecting a recommendation and insists that if the collegium reiterates its recommendation the appointment must go through.
2. But the Centre remains firm it will only show intelligence inputs on a person to the collegium and not put it in

writing as this could jeopardise the future of a person whose appointment was stalled because of national security apprehensions

- The collegium headed by CJI Misra will soon give effect to the **December 16, 2015 judgment** of a five-judge bench mandating establishment of secretariats in the SC and each HC.
- The secretariat will collate data on the track record of persons being considered for appointment as judges and place it before the collegium.

2. After foodgrain and LPG, direct transfer of benefits for fertilizers kicks in from Sunday

In news:

- The government will launch the much-awaited **direct benefit transfer (DBT) of fertiliser** subsidy in Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Puducherry and Goa.
- Unlike other DBTs such as cash transfer for foodgrains or subsidised gas connection where the subsidy amount is directly transferred to beneficiary accounts, in this case the subsidy will go to the manufacturer or marketing firm.
- **No-denial policy:** The government will follow the no-denial policy, which means anyone can buy any quantity of fertiliser after giving details of his Aadhaar card at the retail outlet.
- Under this scheme, the retail fertiliser outlets equipped with PoS machines will be able to read buyers' Aadhaar cards. As the farmer buys, the difference between market rate and the subsidised amount will be credited to the bank account of the manufacturer or the marketing company concerned.
- **First phase of implementation:** After assessing the success of its implementation and capturing the details of consumption, government will consider to launch phase-II, which will be transferring the subsidy to the accounts of farmers.
- **Advantages:**

1. Records of sales and purchase will bring transparency about the quantity of fertilisers that companies are selling to farmers.
2. **Experts opinion:** this move will reduce the total sale by 10-15% and thereby reduce the burden on the exchequer by about Rs 6,000 crore annually.

3. Reforms money can't buy

Context:

- The Centre recently approved Rs 25000 Cr modernisation of police force scheme which will be implemented between 2017 and 2020.

Police force modernization:

- It will strengthen the law and order apparatus, modernise state police forces and enhance their capacity to combat terrorism.
- It also has special provisions for women's security, mobility of police forces, logistical support, hiring of helicopters, upgradation of police wireless, satellite communications, **crime and criminal tracking network and systems (CCTNS)** and e-prisons.
- The idea is to assist the states to upgrade their police infrastructure, especially in respect of transport, communications and forensic support, to enable them to effectively tackle the emerging challenges.

Funding Pattern:

- Centre share 75 per cent while the states' share will be the rest.
- Under the scheme, J&K, north-eastern states and states affected by Left-Wing Extremism will get a boost of Rs 10,132 crore.
- 14th Finance Commission's recommendations increased the state's share of central taxes from 32 per cent to 42 per cent, following which Centre de-linked eight centrally sponsored schemes (CSS) from its support in 2015.
- While central funding of modernisation of police was stopped, non-plan funding for the same would continued.
- Thereafter, majority of state governments were disinclined to make any investments in police.
- But, the Centre again started its funding in internal security with modernization of police forces scheme on the recommendation of Cabinet Committee on Security.

Smart Police

- The PM in 2014 enunciated the concept of SMART police. The smartness has two dimensions external and internal.
1. **External Dimension** refers to the uniform a policeman wears, the way he carries himself, his weapons, the communication equipment on his person, his mobility, response time, et al. The scheme would enhance his capabilities to respond to and deal with the kind of challenges he is confronted with in his day to day work.
 2. **Internal Dimension** refers to the expanded acronym of SMART that is, the police should be strict and sensitive, modern and mobile, alert and accountable, reliable and responsible, tech-savvy and trained. This is far more important than the external dimension but the scheme hardly improves this aspect.

Problems:

- Today we have Ruler's police but what we need is People's police.
- Accountability has to be to the Constitution, the laws of the land and the people of the country.
- The police is being accused of being insensitive to poor and tribals.

Way Forward

- Reliability would increase only when the police are objective, fair and impartial. Gadgetry won't help here.
- It is the state of mind which matters. And to achieve that state of mind, police must be freed from the stranglehold of politicians.
- The scheme must be followed by structural reforms, institutions like the state security commission, police establishment board and complaints authority must be set up in every state in keeping with the directions of the Court.
- The GOI should bring police and public order in the Concurrent List of Schedule VII of the Constitution. Constitutional experts like Fali S. Nariman have strongly spoken in favour of such an amendment.
- Sustained economic progress needs the solid foundation of good law and order, and we cannot have good law and order in the country unless the police are reorganised, restructured and rejuvenated.

Basic Information:

Cabinet Committee on Security

- **The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) of the Central Government of India decides on India's defence expenditure, matters of National Security, and makes significant appointments.**
- **CCS is chaired by the Prime Minister of India and comprises the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Home Affairs, and the Minister of External Affairs.**

Central Sector Scheme

- **It is entirely (100%) funded by the Union Government and implemented by central agencies.**
- **These schemes are mainly related to the subjects in the Union list.**

Centrally Sponsored Schemes

- **A certain percentage of the funding is borne by the States in the ratio of 50:50, 70:30, 75:25 or 90:10 and the implementation is by the State Governments.**
- **These schemes are mainly related to the subjects in the State List.**

4. Major Swachh hiccups: Funds crunch, failure to transport and segregate waste

Context:

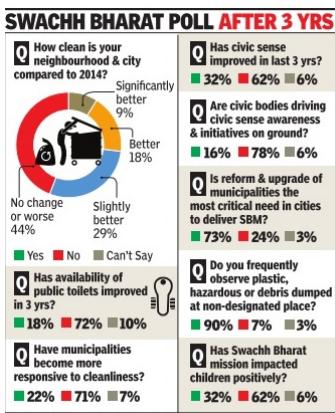
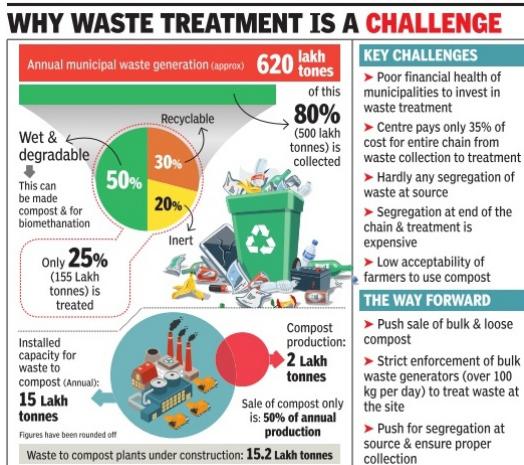
- **The inadequacy of the municipal mechanism to collect and transport garbage from urban homes to dumping yards is a significant lacuna and highlights the need for smarter integration of Swachh Bharat with urban renewal programmes like AMRUT .**
- **There is no uniform mechanism for maintenance and sweeping and lifting of garbage across urban areas.**

In news:

1. **About 75% of 1.7 lakh tonnes of municipal waste (garbage) that Indian cities and towns generate daily goes to landfill sites or dumping yards untreated**

2. Civic bodies cover only 44,650 out of 81,000 municipal wards through their door-to-door collection scheme.
3. These statistics tell the government where to concentrate funds and policy planning if Swachh Bharat is to deliver the results PM Narendra Modi has sought.

Reasons:



- Urban issues are state subject and success or failure is determined by public participation and political drive.
- Cities in southern states have done well simply because there is concerted effort in which local leaders give cleanliness priority
- Municipalities cannot spend more on collection, transportation and processing of garbage as many are hard put to pay salaries
- The challenge was of building managerial capacity as well as tapping funds.
- Financial health of municipalities is poor and it's almost impossible for small ones to fund treating waste. "Centre gives only 35% of expenses for the entire solid waste management chain. Getting the rest from state and municipality is difficult in most states except a few like Maharashtra. Small urban areas growing fast are hit hardest,"

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. [Govt's wildlife action plan to focus on e-surveillance](#)

Context:

- New National Wildlife Action Plan (2017-31).
- The action plan will be launched by environment minister Harsh Vardhan on the inaugural day of the **Global Wildlife Programme (GWP)**

In news:

- The Centre will announce its **new National Wildlife Action Plan (2017-31)** on October 2 to strengthen conservation measures.
- Use of technology, including e-surveillance through drones, and modalities to involve people living around

national parks and sanctuaries in conservation efforts will be key to this 14-year roadmap.

- The action plan spells out how India will go about handling these issues in a time-bound manner in the next 14 years.
- It covers all the issues concerning conservation, ranging from rehabilitation of threatened species to integrating climate change in wildlife planning.
- The plan has a road map to deal with poaching and illegal trade of animals and animal parts, and management of tourism in wildlife areas.
- Setting up special courts for effective implementation of the Wildlife Protection Act to ensure the speedy trial of wildlife crimes, identification and validation of **Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK)** available in various parts of the country for dealing with human-wildlife conflicts, and use of mobile technology to develop '**Digital Field Guides**' for easy identification of various wildlife goods and their derivatives are other key features of the plan.
- The plan cites as a model the Gujarat forest department's initiative to appoint local youth as 'Vanya Praani Mitra' (friends of wild animals) in high conflict zones.
- The four-day conference will give India an opportunity to get acquainted with best practices on the management of wildlife habitats and minimising human-wildlife conflict situations.

Global Wildlife Programme (GWP) :

- The GWP, initiated in 2015, is a **World-Bank** led partnership of 19 countries to promote the conservation and sustainable development by combating trafficking in wildlife.

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Electronic cash transfer system for the welfare schemes is an ambitious project to minimize corruption, eliminate wastage and facilitate reforms. Comment.

GS Paper III

1. What were the reasons for the introduction of Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2013? Discuss critically its salient features and their effectiveness.
2. What is the meaning of the term 'tax expenditure'? Taking housing sector as an example, discuss how it influences the budgetary policies of the government.

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Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. South-west monsoon: Rain deficit just 5%, but distribution uneven

In news:

- India Meteorological Department (IMD) data on Monsoon: IMD predicted that rainfall will likely be 98% of the 50-year average (long-period average or LPA) for the entire country
- But monsoon has fallen short by just 5% so far.
- Also, according to IMD, it has been uneven in terms of distribution across geographical regions of the country.

Category: POLITY

1. Govt. studying report on online abuse

Context:

- Growing menace of online abuse.

In news:

- The **Home Ministry** has said it is examining an expert committee report that has recommended measures to contain the **growing menace of online abuse , particularly against women** .
- The report also deliberates on **hate speeches** and **vitriolic messages** on online platforms.

Background information:

- The **expert committee panel** was set up after the **Supreme Court** struck down **Section 66A of the Information Technology Act in 2014** .
- The committee headed by **K. Viswanathan**, former Secretary General of the Lok Sabha, submitted its report to the Home Ministry recently.
- The panel has recommended amending **Section 78 of the Information Technology Act** , which mandates an officer not below the rank of an Inspector to investigate such cases of online misuse.

2. VVPAT to be used in Gujarat polls

In news:

- The **Election Commission of India (EC)** will use **Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)** gadgets with Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) in all 50,128 voting booths in Gujarat, which goes to the Assembly polls at the end of this year.
- **Key fact :** This is the first time an entire assembly poll will be conducted using the EVMs equipped with VVPAT
- VVPAT machines, which will be attached to the EVMs, will allow voters to verify if their vote has gone to the intended candidate. This would ensure transparency in the voting process, he said.

What is VVPAT?

- Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) or Verifiable Paper Record (VPR) is a method of providing feedback to voters using a ballotless voting system. A VVPAT is intended as an independent verification system for voting machines designed to allow voters to verify that their vote was cast correctly, to detect possible election fraud or malfunction, and to provide a means to audit the stored electronic results. It contains name of the candidate (for whom vote has been casted) and symbol of the party/ individual candidate.

3. Centre to review flexi-fares on select trains, says Goyal

In news:

- The Union government is planning to review the **flexi-fare system** introduced in premium trains last year.
- The Railways were also planning to reset its timetable by reducing the travel time for 600-700 trains through rescheduling and increasing speed
- The Railways are also in discussions with the Indian Space Research Organisation to use GPS

technology to monitor trains for punctuality.

- **Background information :** The Railways introduced the flexi-fare scheme in September last year in Rajdhani, Duronto and Shatabdi trains, under which 10% of the seats were sold at normal fare. The fare was increased thereafter by 10% for every 10% of the berths sold. The highest fare was 50% more than the normal price of the ticket.

4. UDAN flights: Govt allows airlines to use bigger planes, eases rules on connecting flights

Context:

- The civil aviation ministry has acceded to a request from some airlines that will allow them to potentially ply bigger aircraft for UDAN flights
- There will be more flexibility also in how they integrate such routes into their overall operations.

UDAN :

- **UDAN(Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik)** is a regional aviation scheme that encourages airlines to fly to underserved airports at low fares.
- The airlines have to sell a certain number of seats (between nine and 40 currently) on such flights at a maximum of Rs 2,500 per hour of flying.
- In return, they receive a subsidy from the government.

New changes:

- Airlines can now make an UDAN destination part of a connecting flight, making it easier for them to integrate regional aviation routes into their overall operations
- But airline will have to declare 70% of seats on any such flight as UDAN seats irrespective of the kind of aircraft they are using.
- They will however only be paid subsidy for a maximum of 40 seats.
- The ministry has also done away with the stipulation that requires two airports to be 150km away from each other to qualify for UDAN flights.
- It has also allowed helicopters to participate in UDAN, and, in mountainous regions, four-seater aircraft.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. India signs MoU to train Afghan police

In news:

- New memorandum of understanding signed between India and Afghanistan
- **Key points:**

1. Afghan police forces trained in India for the first time.
2. MoU on Technical Cooperation on **Police Training and Development** will see India expand its capacity building of Afghan troops to include policemen and security forces, who are facing the brunt of Taliban attacks in the country, under a United Nations Development Programme project.

2. Expanding the common ground

Context:

- The rising Indo-US strategic relationship in the Indian Sub-continent.

Greater role of India in Afghanistan:

- India has decided to take up 116 “high-impact community developmental projects” in 31 provinces of Afghanistan
- India and Afghanistan have also agreed to “strengthen security cooperation”
- India has agreed “to extend further assistance for the Afghan national defence and security forces in fighting
 - 1. The scourge of terrorism,
 - 2. Organized crime,
 - 3. Trafficking of narcotics and
 - 4. Money laundering”
- India will train Afghan police officers along with Afghan soldiers
- This is aimed at sending out a message to Pakistan, which continues to assert that India has “**zero political and military role**” in Afghanistan

Increased military role of India in Afghanistan

- India has given four attack helicopters to Afghanistan as part of its assistance package
- India is keen to expand the scope of its security cooperation with Afghanistan
- It had remained limited in the past not only due to geographical constraints, but also due to USA’s desire to limit India’s security engagement in the country

India-U.S:

- The recent visit of Gen. Mattis shows the importance of defence ties in shaping the trajectory of Indo-U.S. relations
- The USA is no longer reluctant about selling sensitive military technologies to India
- The U.S. is looking forward to share some of their most advanced defence technologies with India
- For example, the sale of 22 Sea Guardian Unmanned Aerial Systems is high on the agenda.
- With this deal, the Indian Navy will not only acquire the world’s most advanced maritime reconnaissance drone, it will also lead to greater defence technology sharing.

Role of India in International relations:

- As India and the U.S. expand military cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, new alignments are emerging.
- In the past, India had been reluctant to play an active role in East and Southeast Asia.
- Now as part of its ‘Act East’ policy, India’s engagement with the region has become more robust.
- And the USA has been encouraging India to shape the regional strategic realities more potently.

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. Climate change is going to hit the Indian economy hard

Context:

- World Economic Outlook of the IMF, highlights the damaging macroeconomic impact of weather shocks, particularly for low-income countries.
- It notes that for the median emerging market economy, growth goes down by 0.9 percentage point because of a 1-degree Celsius increase from a temperature of 22 degrees Celsius

- Climate change is a serious challenge for India where about 50% of the population directly or indirectly depends on agriculture for a livelihood

Consequences of climate change:

- Productivity will start declining strongly
- Countries located in areas with higher temperature will face a disproportionate impact of global warming.
- Loss of output and lower productivity also affects capital formation, which has a bearing on medium- to long-term growth prospects.

Present scenario:

- Consensus was attained under the **Paris Agreement** to contain the rise in global temperature to below 2 degrees Celsius from the pre-industrial levels
- But now the Trump administration in the US is not keen on continuing with the Paris Agreement.
- It is being reported that advanced economies may not meet their commitment of reducing emissions
- The lack of will among industrialized economies to contain emissions, could lead to consequences that go beyond the realm of macroeconomics.

Necessary steps that need to be taken :

- Emerging market and low-income economies have to build significant macroeconomic resilience.
- The IMF notes that right policies and institutions in place may help attenuate the effects of temperature shocks, to some extent.

Way forwards:

- Strengthen macroeconomic stability to be able to deal with such shocks.
- Work on programmes that will help improve the quality of land and reduce the risk of climate change.
 - In Ethiopia, food and cash is provided to the poor who participate in local environmental programmes.
 - This has resulted in reduction in soil loss and has increased the availability of water
- India can use employment under the MGNREGA in a better way to enhance soil and water conservation.
- Strengthen its overall capability by investing in and adopting technology as the impact of climate change is not limited to agriculture
 - For instance, better use of technology can reduce energy consumption for air conditioning. A district cooling system is being constructed in Gujarat International Finance Tec-City.
 - It can be adopted in other cities as well.

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. With a brief background of quality of urban life in India, introduce the objectives and strategy of the ‘Smart City Programme.’

GS Paper III

2. Enumerate the problems and prospects of inland water transport in India.

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1. Core sector growth slows to 0.4% in June
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1. It's Sankalp Parva on August 15: PM

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B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. SC warns of challenge to GM mustard roll out

In news

- The Supreme Court on Monday said a government decision favouring a commercial roll-out of genetically modified (GM) mustard seeds will not go unchallenged.
- The court will hear pleas highlighting the health hazards.

2. Hard act

Context

- Section 498A has been made to contain violence against women within the family.

Issues with Section 498A

- Operation of IPC was weighted against husbands and their birth families, and automatically presumed the complainant to be an innocent
- Women and Child Development Ministry have acknowledged that the law has been misused too often.
- Prevalence of misuse, is reflected in the data of the National Crime Records Bureau — less than one in five charge sheets filed has resulted in conviction.

Proposals

- Minister Maneka Gandhi has asked the National Commission for Women to be accessible to men who claim to be falsely accused.
- Apex court has issued fresh guidelines prohibiting the immediate arrest of family members, except in cases involving physical injury or death
- Maneka Gandhi has recommended a more stringent filing process which insists on identity proof, and has warned that while opening a window to the victims of false claims, the NCW should not open the door wide to false counter-claims
- The SC wants the establishment of family welfare committees in every district, to which all complaints are to be referred
- Besides, the court has prescribed that bail applications must be decided on the date of application. Since bail is a right, courts may be more inclined to grant rather than withhold, which could again increase the risk to the complainant.

Way forward?

- The law must retain its progressive bias in favour of wronged women, without inadvertently wronging men.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Indian government cuts down on US lobbying to lowest in 7 years

In News

- The Indian government has slashed its expenses towards lobbying in the US with a total payment of USD 120,000 to its registered lobbyist firm in the second quarter of 2017 — the first cut in nearly seven years.
- The disclosure has been made by **BGR Government Affairs**, which lobbied on behalf of Republic of India on issues relating to “bilateral US-India relations.

Basic Informatton

Lobbying

- **Lobbying is a communication process used by members of a pressure group for persuasion.**
- **Lobbying is used to influence governmental policy process.**
- **It also acts as an instrument that links citizens and decision-makers.**
- **Lobbying takes place when a few members of pressure groups loiter in the corridors of power with a view to securing an opportunity to interact with legislators and to influence the decisions of the**

policy makers.

Pros of lobbying

- They use a democratic process.
- Check the power of majorities.
- They have the ability to motivate legislators.
- Allow for better representation of interests.
- Provide positive solutions.
- They serve as an avenue for political involvement.
- Ensure an outspread dispersal of expenses

Cons of lobbying

- They would often seek for the minority of people.
- They only have one track in mind.
- They are only effective for themselves.
- They would commit serious crimes.
- They lead to “hyperpluralism”.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. [Core sector growth slows to 0.4% in June](#)

In news

- The year-on-year growth of the core sector has slowed to 0.4% in June from 3.6% in May and 6.92% in June 2016 — owing to a decline in output of coal, refinery products, fertilizer and cement.
- The performance in June is the lowest since the growth of 0.18% in November 2015.

Basic Informatton

Basic Information

- The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is an index for India which details out the growth of various sectors in an economy such as mineral mining, electricity and manufacturing .
- The all India IIP is a composite indicator that measures the short-term changes in the volume of production of a basket of industrial products during a given period with respect to that in a chosen base period.
- It is compiled and published monthly by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) six weeks after the reference month ends.
- The current base year is 2011-2012
- Within IIP, following 8 are core industries because they've impact on almost all other economic activities: Coal, fertilizer, electricity, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, steel, and cement.
- The eight core industries comprise 40.27% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

2. [What is NHB Residex?](#)

In news:

NHB Residex from the National Housing Bank

- It is a set of benchmarks that aims to track housing price indicators across Indian cities
- It is designed by a technical advisory committee comprising Government representatives, lenders and

property market player

Two sets of indices

- The NHB Residex currently offers two sets of quarterly Housing Price Indices (HPIs) across the cities it tracks

Basic Information

National Housing Bank (NHB)

- It is a wholly owned subsidiary of Reserve Bank of India (RBI), was set up on 9 July 1988 under the National Housing Bank Act, 1987
- NHB is an apex financial institution for housing
- NHB has been established with an objective to operate as a principal agency to promote housing finance institutions both at local and regional levels and to provide financial and other support incidental to such institutions and for matters connected therewith.
- NHB registers, regulates and supervises Housing Finance Company (HFCs), keeps surveillance through On-site & Off-site Mechanisms and co-ordinates with other Regulators.

3. From plate to plough: Everybody loves a good crop

Context

- The sums insured under National Agriculture Insurance Scheme (NAIS), modified NAIS, and Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (WBCIS) were too low, as premiums were kept low and it was not based on any robust scientific system and had its own loopholes.
- Introduction of ‘Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana’ –was a path breaking scheme for farmers’ welfare

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna (PMFBY)- a game changer

- Raised the sums insured to realistic levels, basically to cover the cost of cultivation of farmers.
- The premiums were heavily subsidised by the Centre and the states in equal proportions
- compared to kharif year 2013, the number of farmers opting for the scheme increased by 210 per cent in kharif 2016, and the area covered increased by 126 per cent
- But the effectiveness of crop insurance scheme is based on how fast it can settle the claims of farmers. It is here that the governance of the state is tested

Three critical steps in this process

- The state has to notify the crops, make clusters of districts, determine the sums to be insured based on district level committees, and invite tenders from insurance companies;
- The state and the Centre have to pay premium to the companies providing insurance; and
- In case of crop damages, quickly assess the damages and ask companies to pay the claims of farmers

Challenges in the implementation

- If states delay notifications, or payment of premiums, or crop cutting data, companies cannot pay compensation to the farmers in time.
- Similarly, most states failed to provide smartphones to revenue staff to capture and upload data of crop cutting, which continues to come with enormous delay.
- There is hardly any use of modern technology in assessing crop damages.

Way forward

- There is an urgent need to link the insurance database with Core Banking Solution (CBS) so that when premium is deducted from a farmer’s bank account, the bank sends him a message informing about the premium, sum insured and name of insurance company.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Turmeric can be used to fight cancer in children, find U.S. scientists

In news

- Scientists in the US have found yet another use for **curcumin**, the bioactive component of turmeric that is widely used in Indian cuisine, this time to treat cancer in children.
- Nanoparticles loaded with curcumin can target and destroy neuroblastoma tumour cells. Neuroblastoma is the most common cancer in children younger than five years old.

Neuroblastoma

- The cancers start in early nerve cells and commonly form in the tissue of the adrenal glands, near the kidneys.
- They are also associated with developmental delays, hearing loss, or other disabilities even after traditional treatments have ended.
- High-risk neuroblastoma can be resistant to traditional therapy, and survival can be poor.

Category: MISCELLANEOUS



1. It's Sankalp Parva on August 15: PM

PM urged to Indians

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has urged Indians to celebrate August 15 this year as Sankalp Parva, or Day of Resolve.
- Why: PM announced this day for doing something constructive for the country, with a deadline of August 2022 as the time of Siddhi (attainment of that ideal).

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for Today!!!

PIB Articles Editorials Roundup

E. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

Schemes in News About the Schemes

ELEVATE 100

- ELEVATE 100, an initiative of the Department of Information Technology and Biotechnology, Government of Karnataka aims to provide a comprehensive entrepreneurship platform for startups.
- The top 100 technology based startups chosen through a rigorous hunt across Karnataka State will tap into a whopping sum of Rs.400 Cr of Government funds. This is the largest pool of funds ever offered by any State Government to Startups.

F. Bills/Acts/Schemes/Orgs in News

Nothing here for Today!!!

G. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS PAPER II

1. To what extent Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana was able to address the farmers grievances? What are the challenges and issues involved in the implementation?
2. “While the rash of false allegations under Section 498A demand a course correction, interventions could be as problematic.” Discuss.

GS PAPER IV

1. All human beings aspire for happiness. Do you agree? What does happiness mean to you? Explain with examples.
2. Rameshwar successfully cleared the prestigious civil services examination and was excited about the opportunity that he would get through the civil services to serve the country. However, soon after joining the services, he realized that things are not as rosy as he had imagined.

He found a number of malpractices prevailing in the department assigned to him. For example, funds under various schemes and grants were being misappropriated. The official facilities were frequently being used for personal needs by the officers and staff. After some time, he noticed that the process of recruiting the staff was also not up to the mark. Prospective candidates were required to write an examination in which a lot of cheating was going on. Some candidates were provided external help in the examination. Rameshwar brought these incidents to the notice of his seniors. However, he was advised to keep his eyes, ears and mouth shut and ignore all these things which were taking place with the connivance of the higher-ups. Rameshwar felt highly disillusioned and uncomfortable. He comes to you seeking your advice.

Indicate various options that you think are available in this situation. How would you help him to evaluate these options and choose the most appropriate path to be adopted? (250 words.)

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – Aug 02

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Nothing here for Today!!!

B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. [Nod for Jharkhand religious Bill](#)

In news:

JHARKHAND POPULATION STATS
• 26% of Jharkhand population is tribal
• Of them, 39 % claim to be Hindus while 14.5 % follow Christianity
• As per 2011 census, Christian population rose by 29.7%, Muslims by 28.4% and Hindus by 21%
• Jharkhand government has identified 106 Christian affiliate NGOs that are misusing government money for religious conversion

- The Jharkhand Cabinet gave its approval to the **Jharkhand Religious Independence Bill, 2017**.
- **Main focus:** discourages conversion to another religion through force or allurement
- Section 3 of the Bill prohibits forceful conversion.
- In the event of violation of the Section, there will be up to three years imprisonment or Rs. 50,000 penalty or both.
- If the crime involved a minor, a woman or a person from the SC/ST community, the prison term would be up to four years and a penalty of Rs. 1 lakh.
- Individuals voluntarily opting to switch to another religion would have to inform the local deputy commissioner/collector about the reasons and the place of conversion, failing which he will be liable for prosecution and punishment.
- **Key Statistics:** As per the 2011 census, the Christian population in Jharkhand rose by a whopping 29.7% in the last 10 years followed by that of Muslims 28.4%, while Hindu population rose by 21%.

2. Understanding the new DNA tech Bill: All your questions answered

Context:

- Centre is about to finalise a fresh version of the DNA Fingerprinting Bill, a draft of which was ready in 2015
- Law Commission of India released a revised draft of the Bill that is now called The DNA Based Technology (Use and Regulation) Bill, 2017 with some very important changes

Provisions in news bill:

- It seeks to establish regulatory institutions and standards for DNA testing, and supervise the activities of all laboratories authorised to carry out such tests.

Significance of DNA analysis :

- It is extremely useful and accurate technology in ascertaining the identity of a person from his/her DNA sample, or establishing biological relationships between individuals.
- As a result, DNA technology is being increasingly relied upon in investigations of crime, identification of unidentified bodies, or in determining parentage.
- But information from DNA samples can reveal intrusive information like their allergies, or susceptibility to diseases. As a result, there is a greater risk of information from DNA analysis getting misused

Bill provisions

- It prohibits the collection of any “bodily substance” from an arrested individual (for the purposes of a DNA test) without his/her consent, except if the individual is arrested for certain specific offences.
- However, if the consent “is refused without good cause”, and a magistrate is satisfied of the need for a DNA test, he/she can order the arrested person to give a sample.
- The new Bill has also removed a provision that allowed DNA profiles in the databank to be used for “creation and maintenance of population statistics databank”.
- While the penalty for misuse of data remains a prison term of up to three years and a fine up to Rs 1 lakh, a reference to a minimum prison term of one month has been removed.
- The Bill seeks to set up two new institutions — a DNA Profiling Board and a DNA Data Bank.

DNA Profiling Board

- The Board, with 11 members, is supposed to be the regulatory authority that will grant accreditation to DNA laboratories and lay down guidelines, standards and procedures for their functioning.

- It will advise central and state governments on “all issues relating to DNA laboratories”.
- It will also be the authority to make recommendations on ethical and human rights, including privacy, issues related to DNA testing.

DNA Data Bank

- A national databank of DNA profiles is proposed to be set up, along with regional databanks in every state
- The new draft does not specify the location of the national databank. All regional DNA databanks will be mandated to share their information with the national databank.
- Certain DNA Profiling Board-accredited labs would be authorised to carry out DNA testing and analysis. These are the only places to which DNA samples, picked up from a crime scene can be referred for analysis
- Data from the analyses will need to be shared with the nearest regional DNA databank which will store it and share it with the national databank.
- The databanks will maintain five sets of databases — for DNA samples picked up from crime scenes, for suspects or undertrials, and for offenders, missing persons, and unidentified dead bodies.

Issues

- There are chances that a wrong match is generated.
- If the DNA result is taken as the ultimate evidence, no recourse will be available to an individual who has been wrongly matched.
- Privacy-related objections-main concerns are whose DNA can be collected and under what circumstances, who can access the database etc.
- Information like ancestry or susceptibility to a disease, or other genetic traits, is liable to be misused.
- DNA tests have not led to an improvement in conviction rates in countries where it is already being followed.

3. Don't shoot the messenger

Context:

- More than 15 whistle-blowers have been murdered in India in the past three years.
- The new amendments to Whistleblowers Protection Act, 2014. would fundamentally dilute the law

Whistleblowers Protection Act, 2014.

- It protects people who bring to the notice of the authorities concerned allegations of corruption, wilful misuse of power or commission of a criminal offence against a public servant.
- The WBP law has provisions for concealing the identity of a whistle-blower
- The law affords protection against victimisation of the complainant or anyone who renders assistance in an inquiry.
- This is critical as whistle-blowers are routinely subjected to various forms of victimisation, suspensions, withholding of promotions, threats of violence and attacks.
- The law empowers the competent authorities to accord them protection, which includes police protection and penalising those who victimise them

The Whistle Blowers Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2015

Issues

- It seeks to remove immunity provided to whistle-blowers from prosecution under the draconian Official Secrets Act (OSA) for disclosures made under the WBP law. Issues involved
- Offences under the OSA are punishable by imprisonment of up to 14 years.
- Threat of such stringent penalties would deter even genuine whistle-blowers.
- If whistle-blowers are prosecuted for disclosing information as part of their complaints and not granted immunity from the OSA, the very purpose of the law would be defeated.
- Amendment Bill says that complaints by whistle-blowers containing information which would prejudicially affect the sovereignty, integrity, security or economic interests of the state shall not be inquired into.
- Certain categories of information cannot form part of the disclosure made by a whistle-blower, unless the information has been obtained under the RTI Act.
- These exemptions have been modelled on Section 8(1) of the RTI law which lists information which cannot be disclosed to citizens.

RTI Act v/s WBP Act

- The RTI Act seeks to provide information to people.
- While the WBP Act provides a mechanism for disclosures to be made to competent authorities within the government to enable inquiry into allegations of corruption and provide protection to whistle-blowers.
- Conflating the two laws is inappropriate and would preclude genuine whistle-blowing in several scenarios.
- If the intention was to ensure that sensitive information pertaining to national security and integrity is not compromised, instead of carving out blanket exemptions, the government could have proposed additional safeguards for such disclosures such as requiring complaints to be filed using sealed envelopes to the competent authorities.

Category: Bilateral Relations

1. Somalia signs pact on convicts

In news:

- India and Somalia signed an agreement for transfer of sentenced convicts.
- The new agreement bids to open a new front for collaboration in **anti-piracy operation in Eastern Africa**.

Significance:

- The collaboration between two sides will be significant due to the incidents of piracy that have affected Indian interests in the Indian Ocean region near the Horn of Africa.
- India has in recent years extended development assistance to Somalia which has included mini buses to the war-battered country.

C. GS3 Related

Category: Economy

1. Niti Aayog's Appraisal of the Twelfth Five Year Plan: Low manufacturing growth holds back job creation

Issues with Manufacturing sector

- According to NITI Aayog's report, the sector's growth rate has remained constant for the past 25 years
- Whereas countries such as Taiwan and China recorded more than double the rate of expansion in India

Around the world:

- In Taiwan and South Korea in the 1960s and 1970s and in China in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, manufacturing grew at rates approaching or exceeding 15 per cent
- It lead to transformation of these economies from primarily agrarian and rural character to modern urban ones in around three decades

Scenario in India:

- The fast-growing sectors in India have been automobile and its parts, two-wheelers, machinery, chemicals, petroleum refining, telecommunications, software and pharmaceuticals
- None of these sectors employs low-skilled workers in large numbers
- As a result, the vast majority of Indian workers remain concentrated in agriculture, unorganised industry or low-paying services

Challenges in front of India

- To achieve rapid growth in manufacturing sector
- Ensuring healthy growth in labour-intensive sectors such as clothing, leather manufactures, food processing and electronic assembly
- Growth in these sectors would help create good jobs for workers with limited skills
- Suggestions by the Niti Aayog in its three-year action plan

Suggestions

- Easing entry barriers and reducing duties on synthetic fibres to make India's apparel industry competitive in global market
- Reducing custom duty on gold
- Increasing investment in skill training
- Expediting creation of integrated mega food parks and lower duties on key inputs of final electronics products

Category: Agriculture

1. [Farmer suicides in India may be linked to climate change, says study](#)

Context:

- The increase in temperature during the cropping season reduces crop yields, thus resulting in increased suicides, says a study published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Key Findings:

- Climate change has led to over 59,000 farmer suicides over the last 30 years in India.
- For every 1 degree C increase in temperature above 20 degrees C during the crop growing season in India, there are about 70 suicides on average.
- The increase in temperature during the cropping season reduces crop yields, thus resulting in increased suicides.
- Additional deaths reported when a single day's temperature increased by 1 degree C above 20 degree C was seen only during the crop-growing season. Similar increase in temperature during seasons when crops were not grown did not result in increased suicides among farmers.
- An increase in rainfall by 1 cm during the crop growing season leads to a decrease of about 0.8 deaths per 100,000, thus lowering the suicide rate by 7% on average, she writes.
- The effect of climate variation reveals that past growing season temperature strongly influences suicide rates in the following years up to about five years. For instance, when there is abundant rainfall during one growing season, the suicide rates dip for the next 2-3 years. Drought apparently does not seem to have any effect on suicide rates, she found.
- South India which is generally hotter has higher farmer suicide rates.
- States where the yields are more affected by high temperatures are also the States which report higher suicide rates. Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh not only show severe suicide responses to temperature but also the crop yield is more negatively affected by higher temperature.

Cautious approach:

- India's average temperature is expected to increase by 3 degree C by 2050. Without investments in adaptations, India might face increased number of lives lost due to suicides.

Category: Disaster Management

1. [Washed out: On the floods in eastern and western India](#)

Context

The recent floods in eastern and western India and some suggestions for better disaster management

Capacity-building programme:

- At least 600 people are dead and thousands of people are displaced due to recent floods in eastern and western India
- To deal with such frequent, destructive weather events we need a massive capacity-building programme
- There are many actions people need on the ground
 1. short-term housing
 2. food and safe water
 3. access to health care and protection for women, children and the elderly

Problem in using disaster relief funds

- Some States have not been able to use disaster relief funds as intended
- And the Centre has asked them to set off the unutilised portion when making fresh claims

Mitigate Damage

- A review of the deployment of National Disaster Response Force teams near waterbodies is needed
- The experience NDRF together with data compiled by the Central Water Commission can reveal the hotspots where better management can mitigate damage

The way forward

- Governments cannot expect that people with good incomes will take calamitous losses, with neither social support nor financial instruments available to rebuild lives
- A vigorous monsoon is vital for the economy, but governments should be prepared to deal with the consequences of excess rainfall

Category: Environmental Science and Ecology

1. 5 chemicals banned in firecrackers

Prohibition of toxic chemicals

- The Supreme Court has prohibited the use of five chemicals, in the manufacture of firecrackers
- These chemicals are labelled as toxic by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)
- Prohibited Chemicals: antimony, lithium, mercury, arsenic and lead

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G. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS PAPER II

- “Proposed amendments to the Whistle Blowers Act defeat the very purpose of the legislation”. Discuss?

GS PAPER III

1. “Protocols followed by State governments to deal with floods need an urgent review.” Comment.

GS PAPER IV

1. What is meant by ‘environmental ethics’? Why is it important to study? Discuss any one environmental issue from the viewpoint of environmental ethics.
2. You are recently posted as district development officer of a district. Shortly thereafter you found that there is considerable tension in the rural areas of your district on the issue of sending girls to schools.

The elders of the village feel that many problems have come up because girls are being educated and they are stepping out of the safe environment of the household. They are of the view that the girls should be quickly married off with minimum education. The girls are also competing for jobs after education, which have traditionally remained in boys' exclusive domain, adding to unemployment amongst male population. The younger generation feels that in the present era, girls should have equal opportunities for education and employment, and other means of livelihood. The entire locality is divided between the elders and the younger lot and further sub-divided between sexes in both generations. You come to know that in Panchayat or in other local bodies or even in busy crossroads, the issue is being acrimoniously debated. One day you are informed that an unpleasant incident has taken place. Some girls were molested, when they were en route to schools. The incident led to clashes between several groups and a law and order problem has arisen. The elders after heated discussion have taken a joint decision not to allow girls to go to school and to socially boycott all such families, which do not follow their dictate.

1. What steps would you take to ensure girls' safety without disrupting their education?
2. How would you manage and mould matriarchic attitude of the village elders to ensure harmony in the inter-generational relations? (250 words) (25 Marks)

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Category: POLITY

1. Government clears proxy vote move for NRIs

Changes in Electoral Laws

- The Government has approved changes in electoral laws to permit Non-Resident Indians to cast their vote in assembly and Lok Sabha elections from overseas
- If the proposal passes in Parliament, NRIs will be able to exercise their voting rights through “proxy”
- Currently, only service personnel are permitted to vote through proxy

Why is proposed facility of proxy for NRIs different from service personnel?

- The facility for NRIs will not be the same as that enjoyed by service personnel
- For example, voters in the armed forces can nominate their relatives as permanent proxy to vote on their behalf
- Facility for NRIs: Overseas electors will have to appoint a nominee afresh for each election
- One person can act as proxy for only one overseas voter

2. Rajya Sabha passes RTE amendments

Context

- The Rajya Sabha unanimously passed the **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Bill, 2017**, which aims to provide a **two-year window** to around 11 lakh private and government teachers to get prescribed minimum qualifications for appointment.

Amendments

- The Bill gives them an opportunity to acquire professional qualification by enrolling themselves in the Swayam platform, which will be an online medium.
- Those living in rural areas would be taught through Swayam Prabha television channels in 32 languages, and they would have to buy a set top box worth ₹1300

Basic Information

SWAYAM platform

- It stands for Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds.
- It is the Indian electronic e-education platform which proposes to offer courses from the high school stage to Post-Graduate stage in an interactive electronic platform.

3. How to curb ‘invisible money’

Context

- The reforms suggested by Election and Law Commission, and Government's non-compliance on them
- This non-compliance is increasing Invisible money in Elections

Power given to EC, under the RP Act

- The Election Commission (EC) works in accordance with
 - (1) Article 324 of the Constitution of India,
 - (2) the Representation of the People Act (RP Act), 1951
 - (3) the rules framed by the government thereunder, and various judgments of the Supreme Court and High Courts
- The power to frame rules under the RP Act has not been given to the EC by successive governments

Status of reforms suggested by the EC

- Most of the reform proposals by the EC have not been acted upon
- It sent 22 proposals in 2004
- In December 2016, it sent 47 proposals including those for “Election expenses and election petitions”, “Election campaign and advertisements”, and “Reforms relating to political parties”
- There are also instances where the Supreme Court has directed reforms in its decisions, with the

government and Parliament attempting to amend laws to prevent implementation of the judgments

Two proposals by the government which increase invisible money in Elections

- The other significant proposals that the **Budget made** were
 - (a) to remove the limit of 7.5% on profits that a company can donate to a political party, and
 - (b) to remove the requirement that the company making a donation to a political party disclose the name of the party and the amount donated

Suggestions by the Law commission

- A logical and simple way of introducing financial transparency and accountability in the working of the political parties is recommended by the Law Commission
- **Suggestion:** is to bring political parties under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005
- The Central Information Commission (CIC) had also said in a full bench decision in June 2013 that six national political parties were indeed ‘public authorities’ under the RTI Act
- **Why:** Because they fulfilled all conditions specified in Section 2(h) of the RTI Act which defines ‘public authority’

Reaction from Political Parties : Despite this decision, political parties, including the ruling party now, refused to accept RTI applications

4. Govt moves to check benami, Aadhaar to be made must for property deals

In News

Move to curb Benami Transactions and the use of black money in Property Deals

- The government is planning to make Aadhaar-based authentication mandatory at the time of registration of documents such as agreement for sale, power of attorney,etc.
- The government has also firmed up plans to enable electronic registration of properties, for which Aadhaar-based authentication will be a prerequisite
- For this, the government is planning to amend Sections 32 and 32A of the Registration Act, 1908
- Also, the Aadhaar law allows the Central Identities Data Repository, under the UIDAI, to offer authentication services

Expected benefits:

- This is expected to ensure foolproof property titles for the buyers
- It will also minimise the scope of fraudulent and benami transactions

Other steps taken by the Government to curb black money in real estate

- The government also enacted the **Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amended Act, 2016** last year
- This law empowers authorities to provisionally attach and eventually confiscate benami properties

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Space for a cut: On RBI repo rate cut

Context

- Reserve Bank of India did cut the policy repo rate by 25 basis points, and has opted to play safe while

nominally acceding to the clamour for softer lending rates.

Bimonthly policy statement

- It refers to the significant slowdown over the past three months in core inflation — retail price gains excluding those for food and fuel
- Monsoon has so far been normal, and the initial roll-out of GST has been “smooth”.
- Monetary policy committee chosen to retain the “neutral” stance, given that it expects the trajectory of inflation to rise from current lows amid a welter of uncertainties

Chances for Inflation

- Due to the implementation of farm loan waivers by States
- State governments will implement salary and allowance increases following the Centre’s implementation of the seventh pay panel-related hikes.
- A second successive normal monsoon that could check food costs and a stable international commodity price outlook — that could help keep the inflation trajectory favourable.

Way forward

- Impulses for growth in industry and services are weakening, so the Centre and the States to take enabling steps, through policy measures and directed fiscal actions, to give a thrust for the revival of private investment
- It will serve nobody’s interests if the rate reduction doesn’t have “the desired amplifier effects on the economy” and ends up only temporarily masking the true problems in the banking and real sectors.

2. Unhappy with MCLR, RBI may link rates to market determined benchmarks

Context:

- Reserve Bank of India is reviewing the MCLR system and exploring linking of the bank lending rates directly to market determined benchmarks to ensure a better transmission of interest rates.

The experience with the MCLR system

- It introduced in April 2016 for improving the monetary transmission but it has not been entirely satisfactory, even though it has been an advance over the Base Rate system.
- An internal Study Group has been constituted to study MCLR system from the perspective of improving the monetary transmission and exploring linking of the bank lending rates directly to market determined benchmarks.

Current problems with monetary transmission:

- Banks not doing enough to pass on the full benefit of its rate actions to the borrowers and help revive the sagging private investment for economic growth.
- Banks have been selective in their rate cuts in aggressive segments like home and auto loans, but in other segments, borrowers are still tied to the base rate.
- Ongoing resolutions on the NPA front will help in better transmission as the banks’ balance sheet stress is resolved.

RBI plan

- RBI will be coming out with final guidelines on tripartite repo to deepen the corporate bond market, which, by working as an alternative to the bank lending, will also force banks to tinker with the rates quickly.
- RBI is forming a high level task-force to help develop a “comprehensive near real-time public credit registry.

Public credit registry

- It will evaluate the existing public and private infrastructure for credit information, assess any data gaps, study the best international practices and provide a roadmap.
- It can potentially help banks in credit assessment and pricing of credit as well as in making risk-based, dynamic and countercyclical provisioning.
- The PCR can also help the RBI in understanding if transmission of monetary policy is working, and if not, where are the bottlenecks.
- It can help supervisors, regulators and banks in early intervention and effective restructuring of stressed bank credits.

Basic Information

The marginal cost of funds based lending rate (MCLR)

- It refers to the minimum interest rate of a bank below which it cannot lend, except in some cases allowed by the RBI.
- It is an internal benchmark or reference rate for the bank. MCLR actually describes the method by which the minimum interest rate for loans is determined by a bank – on the basis of marginal cost or the additional or incremental cost of arranging one more rupee to the prospective borrower.
- This new methodology replaces the base ratesystem introduced in July 2010.

Reasons for introducing MCLR

- RBI decided to shift from base rate to MCLR because the rates based on marginal cost of funds are more sensitive to changes in the policy rates.
- This is very essential for the effective implementation of monetary policy. Prior to MCLR system, different banks were following different methodology for calculation of base rate /minimum rate – that is either on the basis of average cost of funds or marginal cost of funds or blended cost of funds. Thus, MCLR aims
 - To improve the transmission of policy rates into the lending rates of banks.
 - To bring transparency in the methodology followed by banks for determining interest rates on advances.
 - To ensure availability of bank credit at interest rates which are fair to borrowers as well as banks.
 - To enable banks to become more competitive and enhance their long run value and contribution to economic growth.

3. The difficult economics of the Indian farmer

Context

- The hardships faced by Indian farmers on different fronts due to climate, price risk, Government policy problems etc.

Problems

- The risks begin with sowing. The production in the months ahead is deeply dependent on weather conditions.
- Price risk: A bumper crop can pull down prices in wholesale markets. Farmers are reported to have not been able to even recover the cost for some crops
- Recent report that the fall in inflation has increased the real debt burden of farmers, which has risen faster than real income in recent years.
- The opportunities for risk mitigation are minimal.
- MSPs was originally conceived as a way to mitigate risk through guaranteed prices. It later degenerated into a tool to buy the political support of large farmers.
- Farmers who suffered losses in the last year have not yet received compensation for 55% of the estimated claims from Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana. Crop insurance will not benefit farmers if the compensation is not paid in time

- A more robust mechanism is needed to mitigate the price risk. The lack of future prices means that farmers base their production decisions on prices at the time of sowing.
- In majority of agri-products, the policymakers used restrictive export policies to keep domestic prices low. This showed the pro-consumer bias in the policy complex

How to reduce price risk?

- Price deficiency payment, which has been advocated by NITI Aayog
- In price deficiency payment, farmers can be compensated through direct benefit transfer if prices fall below a predetermined threshold level.
- A deeper derivative market in agricultural commodities will also help farmers in hedging against price risks.
- The market regulator has done well by allowing option contracts.
- However, the government should avoid its response of banning trading whenever prices rise.

Way forward

- Strike a balance between the interests of both the producer and the consumer
- The actual impact of higher remunerative farm prices can be contained by making markets more efficient and removing middlemen from the system.
- Building a common agriculture market is also necessary.
- Government policy should focus not just on higher production but also on helping farmers manage risks

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. In a scientific first, disease gene ‘edited’ in human embryos

Repairing of Gene

- Scientists in the United States have repaired a disease-causing mutation in the DNA of early-stage human embryos
- Why Important: This is an important step in Engineering babies free of inherited disorders
- The team successfully uses the CRISPR “gene editing” tool in viable embryos
- This research is hailed by experts around the world

Basic Information

- Clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats (CRISPR) are segments of prokaryotic DNA containing short, repetitive base sequences
- These play a key role in a bacterial defence system, and form the basis of a genome editing technology known as CRISPR/Cas9 that allows permanent modification of

Schemes in news

I. National Electric Mobility Mission Plan 2020

- It was unveiled in 2013.
- This Mission Plan has been designed mainly considering the Fuel Security and Environmental Pollution in the country.

Aim

- To promote electric mobility in the country.
- NMEM aims for a cumulative fuel saving of about 9500 million litres.
- This results in reduction of pollution and greenhouse gas emission of 2 million tonnes with targeted market penetration of 6-7 million vehicles by 2020.

FAME

- As part of this mission, Department of Heavy Industry formulated a scheme namely FAME -India [Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India].
- The overall scheme is proposed to be implemented over a period of 6 years, till 2020.
- It is intended to support the hybrid/electric vehicles market development and its manufacturing eco-system to achieve self-sustenance at the end of the stipulated period.
- The scheme is one of the green initiatives of the Government of India
- It will be one of the biggest contributors in reducing pollution from road transport sector in near future.
- The scheme has 4 focus areas i.e. Technology Development, Demand Creation, Pilot Projects and Charging Infrastructure.

II. Sagar Vani

Agency: Ministry of Earth Sciences

INCOIS:

- ESSO-Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) provides ocean information services for the benefit of various user communities in the country
- The services are more fruitfully utilized when the advisories reaches the end user in timely manner and in user readable format

Sagar Vani

- An Integrated Information Dissemination System (IDS) named “SAGAR VANI” has been developed
- It is a software platform where various dissemination modes will be integrated on a single central server
- **Developer:** ESSO-INCOIS through the Industry M/s. Gaian Solutions Pvt. Ltd.
- It includes Multi Lingual SMS, Voice Call / Audio Advisory, Mobile Apps (User / Admin modules), Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), Email, GTS, Fax, Digital Display Boards, Radio / Television broadcast units, IVRS, Cloud Channels, etc.

The ‘Big thing’

- The system compares with the most advanced countries’ services in terms of speed of delivery, omni channel capabilities and diverseness of services
- With this system, the services will be disseminated in local languages using advanced artificial intelligence and machine learning capabilities
- For the first time in India, we are also using the power of television and cable network mediums for topical and alert dissemination services

Importance

- The ‘Sagar Vani’ will serve the coastal community, especially the fishermen community with the advisories and alerts towards their livelihood as well as their safety at Sea

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1. “The power to frame rules under the Representation of People Act, 1951 has not been given to the EC by successive governments.” Examine Critically.

GS Paper III

1. “Policy should focus not just on higher production but also on helping farmers manage risks” Discuss. How price deficiency payments can address price risk?

GS Paper IV

1. What do you understand by ‘values’ and ‘ethics’? In what way is it important to be ethical along with being professionally competent?
2. You are a young, aspiring and sincere employee in a Government office working as an assistant, to the director of your department. Since you’ve joined recently, you need to learn and progress. Luckily your superior is very kind and ready to train you for your job. He is a very intelligent and well-informed person having knowledge of various departments. In short, you respect your book and are looking forward to learn a lot from him.

Since you’ve good tuning with the boss, he started depending on you. One day due to ill health he invited you at his place for finishing some urgent work. You reached his house and you heard shouting noises before you could ring the bell. You waited for a while. After entering, boss greeted you and explained the work. But you were constantly disturbed by the crying of a woman. At last, you inquired with the boss but his answer did not satisfy you. Next day, you were compelled to inquire further in the office and found out that his behavior is very bad at home with his wife. He also beats up his wife.

His wife is not well educated and is a simple woman in comparison to her husband. You see that though your boss is a nice person in the office, he is engaged in domestic violence at home. In such a situation, you are left with the following options. Analyse each option with its consequences.

1. Just ignore thinking about it because it is their personal matter.
2. Report the case to the appropriate authority.
3. Your own innovative approach towards the situation. (250 words)

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Category: POLITY

1. [NOTA option to stay in Rajya Sabha polls](#)

Context

- Election Commission circular issued in January 2014 introduced NOTA in the Rajya Sabha elections.
- Gujarat Congress's plead Supreme Court to freeze the NOTA option for elections to the three Rajya Sabha seats in the State on August 8.

In News

- **Supreme Court observation:** The 'None Of The Above' (NOTA) option will remain on the ballot paper in the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections.
- **Apprehensions of Congress political party:** NOTA would be a "recipe for corruption".

2. NOTA's impact will be like abstention

In news

- The impact of the decision of MLAs to exercise the NOTA (none-of-the-above) option in elections to the Rajya Sabha will be the same as that of an abstention.
- Nor does it attract the anti-defection law, though it can be a sign that an MLA is disgruntled with his party leadership or official candidate.

Elections in Rajya Sabha and NOTA

- In the Rajya Sabha polls, a winning candidate should get a required number of votes calculated through a formula.
- The total number of votes are divided by the number of seats going to the polls from the State, adding one vote to the number. To this whole, a value of one vote is again added.
- The polls are held by means of a single, transferable vote, and the candidates reaching the requisite number are declared elected.
- If a candidate from a party exercises the NOTA option, the total votes will go down. This will bring down the number required to win.

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Post GST Launch: Manufacturing PMI slumps to the lowest since 2009

In news

- India's manufacturing activity in July slumped to its lowest level since February 2009, dragged down by disruptions to business activity following the introduction of Goods and Services Tax (GST)
- The Nikkei India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) stood at 47.9 in July, down from 50.9 in June, and highlighted the first deterioration in business conditions in 2017 so far
- July also marked the biggest month-on-month decline since November 2008, just after the collapse of Lehman Brothers triggered the global financial crisis
- This contraction is likely to put pressure on the Reserve Bank of India to lower interest rate at its policy meet.

GST Effect

- The GST launch, the survey said, affected demand.
- The reductions in output, new orders and purchasing activity were all the steepest since early 2009.
- However, foreign demand for India-manufactured goods improved in July as new export orders continued to rise.
- While some business segments have protested against the GST, many are struggling with the new compliance requirements that require them to file at least three returns every month.

Basic Information

What is the ‘Purchasing Managers’ Index – PMI’

- The Purchasing Managers’ Index (PMI) is an indicator of the economic health of the manufacturing sector.
- The PMI is based on five major indicators: new orders, inventory levels, production, supplier deliveries and the employment environment.
- The purpose of the PMI is to provide information about current business conditions to company decision makers, analysts and purchasing managers.

2. Centre mulls changing minimum wages formula

In news

- The Central government is mulling a revision in the formula to calculate minimum wages that may increase income levels of workers across the country.
- The **Central Advisory Committee on Minimum Wages**, headed by Labour and Employment Minister Bandaru Dattatreya, met here and decided to constitute a committee to deliberate the proposed changes in the calculation of minimum wages for workers.

Committees Task

- The committee would deliberate upon the following factors while recommending a new formula for minimum wages — number of units per family, inclusion of dependant parents and “treatment of women and children at par with the male family member.”

Indian Labour Conference in 1957

- The norms for fixing minimum wages today are based on recommendations of the **Indian Labour Conference in 1957**.
- Under it, the minimum wage level for industries is fixed based on spending estimates for a working class family on **2,700 calories of food per person**, 72 yards clothes, minimum housing rent and education and light and fuel.
- A standard working class family consists of three consumption units for one earner with earnings of women, children and adolescents being disregarded.

3. What is the impact of floods on India’s GDP?

Context

- From Assam in the north-east to Rajasthan and Gujarat in the west, floods are taking a heavy toll on lives and property this year.
- As per latest reports, 82 and over 100 flood-related deaths have been recorded in the states of Assam and Gujarat, respectively.

Flood –related damages

- Flood-related loss of both human and cattle lives and economic damages have come down over time.
- However, there has been a significant change in the nature of flood-related losses in India.

Changes

- **Central Water Commission (CWC)** gives detailed estimates of economic loss and loss of human and cattle lives due to floods from 1953-2016
- The 1970s was the worst decade in terms of loss human and cattle lives due to floods in India. These

losses have come down since then.

- Although absolute economic losses have been increasing, the relative economic damage has come down

Flood related losses

- Floods resulted in loss of 0.86% of the total GDP in the 1970s and 1980s.
- In the present decade, this share has come down to 0.1% of the GDP.
- Until the 1970s, damage to crops was the biggest component of economic loss due to floods. Over time, damage to public utilities has acquired the biggest share in flood-related losses.
- A 2015 World Resources Institute study had shown that expanding cities and worsening climate challenges can significantly increase flood-related risks in India.

4. [**Studying the climate of farm suicides**](#)

Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)

- According to a study by the PNAS of the US, over 1,900 farm suicides were triggered every year over the last 30 years in India by warming related to climate change
- Name of the Study: “Crop-damaging temperatures increase suicide rates in India”

Other points from study

- The study calculates that “warming a single day by 1 degree Celsius during India’s agricultural growing season leads to roughly 65 suicides across the country, whenever that day’s temperature is above 20 degrees Celsius”
- Warming a day by 5 degrees Celsius has five times that effect

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

[**1. Heat in South Asia could exceed survivable levels by 2100, says study**](#)

In news

- According to a study, **South Asia** could see humid heat rise beyond survivable levels by century’s end if nothing is done to halt global warming
- The densely populated farming regions of South Asia could fare the worst
- Why: because workers are exposed to heat with little opportunity for escape into air-conditioned environments
- The Study is published in the journal: Science Advances
- The study is to look not just at temperatures, but at the forecast of “wet-bulb temperature”, which combines temperature, humidity and the human body’s ability to cool down in response
- The survivability threshold is considered to be 35°C, or 95°F

[**2. Water conservation scheme a big success**](#)

Jal Swavalamban Abhiyan (JSA)

- It is a programme of Rajasthan Government
- It has turned out to be a success in Pratapgarh district
- In the district
 1. The groundwater table has increased
 2. Green agricultural fields have expanded and
 3. No tankers with drinking water had to be sent to as many as 94 villages this year

NGT hails efforts

- The National Green Tribunal lauded the efforts made under the programme
- The NGT's Bhopal declaration has described the JSA as a massive climate change adaptation programme
- The JSA is praised as an initiative which would make every village of the State self-reliant in water by using scientific tools for rejuvenating traditional water bodies

D. GS4 Related

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E. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

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F. Bills/Acts/Schemes/Orgs in News

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G. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. To what extent is Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, bearing marginal note “Temporary provision with respect to the State of Jammu and Kashmir”, temporary? Discuss the future prospects of this provision in the context of Indian polity.
2. Discuss each adjective attached to the word ‘Republic’ in the preamble. Are they defendable in the present circumstances stances?

GS Paper III

1. In what way could replacement of price subsidy with Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) change the scenario of subsidies in India? Discuss.
2. Discuss the advantage and security implications of cloud hosting of servers vis-a-vis in-house machine-based hosting for government businesses.

GS Paper IV

1. One of the scientists working in the R & D laboratory of a major pharmaceutical company discovers that one of the company’s bestselling veterinary drugs, B has the potential to cure a currently incurable liver disease that is prevalent in tribal areas. However, developing a variant of the drug suitable for human beings entailed a lot of research and development having a huge expenditure to the extent of 50 crores rupees. It was unlikely that the company would recover the costs as the disease was rampant only in poverty-stricken area having very little market otherwise.

If you were the CEO, then

1. Identify the various actions that you could take;
2. Evaluate the pros and cons of each of your actions.

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7. New Bill to allow States to drop no-detention policy
8. A half-done reform: On LPG subsidy

Health Issues

1. 8.8 million blind in India in 2015, says study in Lancet

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B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. It's time to enact an anti-lynching law

Context

- The data website India Spend has compiled instances of cow-linked violence from 2010 to 2017. It found that during this period, 28 people were killed in 63 such incidents.

Statistics

- An overwhelming 97% of these attacks took place after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government came to power in May 2014.
- About 86% of those killed were Muslims. In 21% of the cases, the police filed cases against the victims/survivors.
- Cow-related lynchings rose sharply in 2017. This marks a 75% increase over 2016, which had been the worst year for mob lynchings since 2010.

National Campaign Against Mob Lynching (NCAML)

- It has initiated a campaign for a law against mob lynching.
- Also known as 'Masuka', short for **Manav Suraksha Kanoon** (law to protect humans)
- A draft of the proposed legislation is currently up on the Internet, awaiting suggestions from the public.

Why anti-lynching law is necessary?

- It fills a void in our criminal jurisprudence.
- At present there is no law that criminalises mob killings. The Indian Penal Code has provisions for unlawful assembly, rioting, and murder but nothing that takes cognisance of a group of people coming together to kill (a lynch mob).
- Under **Section 223 (a) of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC)**, to prosecute together two or more people accused of the same offence committed in the course of the "same transaction".
- But the provision falls far short of an adequate legal framework for prosecuting lynch mobs

Apprehensions

- The potential for abuse
- the underlying premise that a generic anti-lynching law could address India's lynching problem.

Reason for the rise in lynchings

- Major reason for the recent rise in lynchings is impunity.
- The lynch mobs that murdered several people were confident of getting away with it. So far, the state has done little to shake that confidence.
- The problem is not mob lynching per se but the mob lynching of minorities, for that is where impunity kicks in.
- In the case of cow-linked lynchings, a lot depends on whether the incumbent in power considers it compatible with its political interests to crack down on such attacks.

Communalism

- Advocates of Masuka appear reluctant to name the problem –targeted communal lynchings.
- It actually is a minority issue, and that is why the majority needs to take it up.
- Any political mobilisation for the protection of minorities would be anxious about the bogey of minority appeasement.
- It could even mean that an anti-lynching Bill stands less chance of making it through Parliament

Protect minorities

- A truly ‘civil’ society should feel no hesitation in demanding that the state protect its minorities because protection of minorities is one of the biggest responsibilities of any democracy.
- The UN has a Special Rapporteur for minority issues precisely because it recognises that “minorities in all regions of the world continue to face serious threats”

Ways to combat the impunity enjoyed by anti-minority lynch mobs

- Prevention of Communal and Targeted Violence (Access to Justice and Reparations) Bill, 2011, or the Anti-Communal Violence Bill
- Police reforms, which are pending despite the Supreme Court ordering their implementation
- But the Anti-Communal Violence Bill was buried because it was felt that it threatened the autonomy of States by mooted a parallel structure that undermined federalism.

Anti-Communal Violence Bill

- It fixes command responsibility for communal incidents
- It recognises that targeted communal violence disproportionately victimises minorities
- It creates a mechanism to insulate investigations of communal violence from political interference

Way forward

- The draft anti-lynching law needs to be revised to incorporate key elements of the Anti-Communal Violence Bill.
- Demand for an anti-lynching law needs to be buttressed by a parallel campaign for police reforms.

2. Aadhaar will be required for death certificates

In news

- From October 1 onwards, **Aadhaar number** will be required to establish identity of a deceased person for registration of his/her death.
- **Why such a move?** Registrar General of India (RGI) said it would effectively prevent **identity-fraud**.
- Applicant is not aware of the Aadhaar No. or enrolment ID No. of the deceased: he shall have to declare that the latter did not possess Aadhaar number to the best of his knowledge.
- Any false declaration to this effect will be treated an **offence under the Aadhaar Act, 2016**

and Registration of Birth and Death Act, 1967 .

- A reading of the Aadhaar Act indicates that the **penalty** for the said offence may be imprisonment up to one year and/or fine up to **Rs 25,000** .

3. Cattle trade ban rules were not placed before Parliament

Context:

- **Prevention of Cruelty to Animal (Regulation of Livestock Market) Rules of**

The infographic is titled "Drawing flak" and features a central illustration of the Indian Parliament building. It contains several bullet points and quotes from legal experts.

Drawing flak

The fact that the rules on cattle slaughter were never placed before Parliament, as per the RTI reply, has earned the SC's censure

- Chapter 11 of the Manual of Parliament Procedure states that all new rules/laws must be effected after the approval of the Parliament
- As per Section 38A of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, it is mandatory that any new rule/law made by the concerned Ministry has to be placed before the Parliament
- The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), the nodal Ministry for the "Regulation of Livestock Market Rules", notified the draft rules on January 16, 2017, inviting suggestions within 30 days
- The final rules, "Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Regulation of Livestock Market) Rules, 2017", were notified on May 26, 2017

J.S. KHEHAR, Chief Justice of India

A simple reading of Section 38A tells us that you [government] cannot say I will not place the rules before the Parliament

D.Y. CHANDRACHUD, Supreme Court Judge

Laying a law before the Parliament is important. It is an exercise of parliamentary control over the laws of the land

2017-notified on May 23, bans the

sale of cattle in livestock markets for the purpose of slaughter or animal sacrifice.

- The rules mandate that cattle should only be sold in animal markets for farming purposes

In news

- **RTI reply by the Lok Sabha Secretariat :**
- The rules banning cattle slaughter were never placed before Parliament
- **What does the law say?**
- **Section 38A of the Prevention of Cruelty Act of 1960** mandates that any rule made by the Centre under it ought to be laid before each House of Parliament "as soon as it is made."
- The rules are to be placed before Parliament for a total of 30 days.
- Any modification agreed upon by both the Houses should be incorporated in the rules or else they would have no effect.

4. Ordinance to give quota in promotions for SC/ST staff likely

In news:

- The Karnataka State government is likely to **promulgate an ordinance** to give reservation in promotions for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe employees.
- This move comes in the backdrop of a Supreme Court order that struck down reservation in promotions for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe employees.

Key Fact: The State has had reservation in promotions for SC/ST employees since 1978 — 15% for SCs and 3% for STs — which has been struck down by the apex court.

5. Restoring Parliament's primacy

Context

- Relevance of '**Parliamentary Budget Office**' in Indian Parliamentary system

What is a Parliamentary Budget Office(PBO)?

- A PBO is an independent and impartial body linked directly to Parliament
- A PBO is comprised of independent and specialised staff, such as Budget analysts, economists, public finance experts
- It provides technical and objective analysis of Budgets and public finance to the House and its committees
- Its core functions include Budget approval, scrutiny of its implementation
- The PBO must be non-partisan, independent and mandated to serve all parliamentarians
- Its output, and the methods by which those outputs are prepared must be transparent, accessible and understandable

Why PBO?

- Some experts have argued that Parliament does not require a functioning PBO
- But this argument is flawed because Parliament is a Budget-approving body and its members must be well-informed for a legitimate approving process
- PBO is an instrument for addressing bias towards spending and deficits
- It can generate quality public debate on Budget policy and public finance, enabling parliamentarians to engage meaningfully in the Budget process

Functioning PBOs in other countries

- The functioning PBOs are in countries such as the U.S., Canada, Australia, Austria, South Korea, Italy, and Mexico
- There are PBOs established in subnational legislatures, such as California, Ontario, Scotland, and New South Wales
- Also, New York City has a well-functioning Independent Budget Office (IBO)

Core functions of PBOs

- The majority of PBOs have four core functions:
 1. Independent and objective economic forecasts
 2. Baseline estimate survey
 3. Analysing the executive's Budget proposal
 4. Providing medium- to long-term analysis

The core functions of the PBO should be codified in law.

The way forward

- Parliamentary scrutiny of public finance is an important aspect of governmental accountability
- There is a legitimate democratic need in this country to strengthen the capacity of Parliament and its members
- Parliamentarians have a role in establishing the PBO
- As representatives of the people, Parliamentarians can help improve Budget policies by providing inputs on public needs and priorities

6. SC for centralised system to select judicial officers

In news

- The Supreme Court indicated a favourable attitude towards a centralised selection mechanism for appointment of judicial officers in the subordinate judiciary.

'No breach': The Bench tried to assuage the concern of various States and High Courts, saying there would be no breach and interference in the federal structure.

7. New Bill to allow States to drop no-detention policy

In news:

- Ministry of Human Resource Development is looking to introduce a Bill to amend the **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009**, to enable States to do away with the **no-detention policy** if they wish.
- **Key Fact:** Twenty-five States had recently agreed with the idea of doing away with or tweaking the no-detention policy — wherein a child is not detained till Class 8 — to give a boost to levels of learning.
- The Bill is expected to permit States to introduce exams in Classes 5 and 8.
- Students who fail in the exams — to be held in March — will be given remedial training and offered another chance to pass in May. Those who still fail will be detained in the same class.

Why to remove no-detention policy?

- **Falling standards: no-detention policy** aimed at retaining students in school and giving a fillip to education — led to learning levels taking a dip.
- **Key Fact:** Dropout rates till Class 8 are just 4%, but they rise to above 20% after that. This is because of the no-detention policy.

8. A half-done reform: On LPG subsidy

Context:

- The government decided to completely do away with the subsidy offered to cooking gas used for household purposes
- Public sector oil companies were authorised to incrementally hike the “effective price” of LPG cylinders until the entire subsidy is wiped off by March next year.

Burden of government

- Fall in global crude oil prices, has already eased the burden on the government.
- In the latest Union budget, the government allocated about ₹25,000 crore towards oil subsidy, which is a fourth of the total oil subsidy bill (of almost ₹1 lakh crore) incurred in fiscal year 2013.
- The implementation of the direct transfer of cash benefits has already helped in the better targeting of subsidies to the poor, thus substantially reducing wasteful spending.

Subsidy Cut:

- The cut in subsidy would further strengthen **fiscal discipline**.

Way forward:

- Sustainably lower the price of cooking gas once and for all, getting the government out of the business of managing subsidies.
- Deregulating the market for cooking gas, thus opening it up to more widespread market competition, would also help.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. [8.8 million blind in India in 2015, says study in Lancet](#)

Highlights of a Study by the Lancet Global Health journal

- According to the study, **8 million people** in India were found to be blind in 2015
- And another **7 million people** had moderate and severe vision impairment

Level of Problem around the world

- According to the study, there are an estimated **36 million people** worldwide, who are blind and this is set to increase to almost **115 million people** by 2050
- This increase will be seen in developing countries in **Asia and sub-Saharan Africa**

Problem trend:

- The rates of blindness and vision impairment have decreased in recent years
- The number of cases has risen as the world population has aged

C. GS3 Related

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [ISRO to rely on CSIR for keeping satellite clocks accurate](#)

In news

A step towards self-reliance

- India's **indigenously-developed** global positioning system, called **NavIC**, will **synchronise** its clocks to time provided by the National Physical Laboratory, a Council of Scientific and Industrial Research body.
- **Until now:** the satellites on NavIC — managed by the Indian Space Research Organisation — relied on the **United State's GPS** to ensure that the clocks aboard were working at the high-precision required in satellite-based communication.
- A memorandum was signed between the CSIR and ISRO to initiate this activity that will now require NPL to upgrade its time-keeping infrastructure and ISRO to make changes that will make NPL-provided time the default time source aboard the seven-satellite constellation.

Replacement

- Atomic clocks aboard NavIC, more formally called the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), are foreign-made and ISRO's forthcoming satellite, **IRNSS-1H**, will continue using the same clocks.
- **IRNSS-1H** satellite is being launched as a replacement for one of the seven satellites, IRNSS-1A, which has had problems with the accuracy of its clocks.

About NavIC

- NAVIC is an autonomous regional satellite navigation system that provides accurate **real-time positioning and timing services**.
- NavIC is designed to provide accurate position information service to users in India as well as the region extending up to 1500 km from its boundary, which is its primary service area.
- NAVIC will provide two levels of service, the ‘standard positioning service’ will be open for civilian use, and a ‘restricted service’ (an encrypted one) for authorized users (including military).

National Physical Laboratory (NPL):

- The National Physical Laboratory (NPL), part of the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research, is host of the most accurate clocks in the country, and the only agency in India authorised to maintain Indian Standard Time (IST).
- The NPL maintains accuracy of ± 20 nanoseconds through the Primary Time Scale, an ensemble of five **caesium clocks** and one **hydrogen maser**.
- The rest of the world connects to these via tele-clocks, satellite links, and Network Time Protocol services.

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for Today!!!

E. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Bills/Acts/Schemes/Orgs in News

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G. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Direct cash transfers have the potential to improve the economic lives of the poor by transferring benefits to households quickly and directly. Achieving these benefits requires thoughtful design of schemes, and careful, rigorous analysis of ongoing programmes is an

important input to the design process. Discuss

2. "Advancing rights of women farmers can revolutionise the rural ecosystem." Discuss the relevance of this statement in the current Indian context.
3. Explain the need for Anti-lynching law in India, what are the challenges involved?

GS Paper III

1. "Multiple indicators suggest that executive-led budgetary governance has not been successful in India." Critically examine.

GS Paper IV

1. Some people feel that values keep changing with time and situation, while others strongly believe that there are certain universal and eternal human values. Give your perception in this regard with due justification.
2. You are recently posted as district development officer of a district. Shortly thereafter you found that there is considerable tension in the rural areas of your district on the issue of sending girls to schools.

The elders of the village feel that many problems have come up because girls are being educated and they are stepping out of the safe environment of the household. They are of the view that the girls should be quickly married off with minimum education. The girls are also competing for jobs after education, which have traditionally remained in boys' exclusive domain, adding to unemployment amongst male population.

The younger generation feels that in the present era, girls should have equal opportunities for education and employment, and other means of livelihood. The entire locality is divided between the elders and the younger lot and further sub-divided between sexes in both generations. You come to know that in Panchayat or in other local bodies or even in busy crossroads, the issue is being acrimoniously debated.

One day you are informed that an unpleasant incident has taken place. Some girls were molested, when they were en route to schools. The incident led to clashes between several groups and a law and order problem has arisen. The elders after heated discussion have taken a joint decision not to allow girls to go to school and to socially boycott all such families, which do not follow their dictate.

1. What steps would you take to ensure girls' safety without disrupting their education?
2. How would you manage and mould matriarchic attitude of the village elders to ensure harmony in the inter-generational relations? (250 words)

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2. Hold competitive exams in regional languages: KDA
3. Lok Sabha passes Bill for setting up petroleum institute in Andhra
4. Wages of being a legislator

C. GS3 Related

Science and Technology

1. Low-cost, sensitive CO sensor from IISc

D. GS4 Related

1. Editing ourselves: On genes and ethics

E. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

F. Bills/Acts/Schemes/Orgs in News

G. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

H. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

A. GS1 Related

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B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. Naidu sweeps V-P polls with 516 votes

In news

- Venkaiah Naidu was elected the 15th Vice-President of India on Saturday.
- The election saw the highest polling percentage at 98.12%
- Mr. Naidu polled a massive 516 votes of a total of 760 valid votes.

2. Hold competitive exams in regional languages: KDA

In news

- The Kannada Development Authority (KDA) urged the Centre to conduct competitive examinations in all official languages of States.
- KDA Chairman S.G. Siddaramaiah said the current policy has proved detrimental to the interests of people of various States and regions. He said that “the very fabric of federalism needs to be better appreciated in this selection as well as in any Central government recruitment process.”
- **Demands proposed:**
- Besides Central civil service examinations, all competitive examinations of national level, especially banking services, must be held in official languages of States.
- In the recruitment to any job of Central, semi-government and public sectors, candidates should be allowed to choose question papers and answer in languages identified in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution, he said.
- The use of English should be restricted to compulsory English paper in order to avoid unwarranted English supremacy.

3. Lok Sabha passes Bill for setting up petroleum institute in Andhra

IIPE

- The Lok Sabha has passed a Bill providing for the establishment of the **Indian Institute of Petroleum and Energy (IIPE)**
- **Where:** Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh
- The institute will cost the Centre Rs 650 crore
- It is part of a package promised by the Centre to Andhra after the creation of the separate state of Telangana
- It will have the status of an institute of national importance

4. Wages of being a legislator

Context

- The Tamil Nadu Assembly recently voted to double the salaries of its legislators
- Maharashtra's Assembly passed a Bill in 2016 that raised the monthly salary of its MLAs to above that of the President (Rs. 1.5 lakh per month)
- India paid 2.7 lakh a month, which includes salaries and expenses, to every Member of Parliament in 2015.

Global examples

- Public representatives in developing countries in Africa and Asia are routinely paid far above per capita GDP
- Nigeria, pays its lawmakers more than 100 times its per capita GDP while in Kenya, its legislators get 76 times its per capita GDP.
- Gross salary of an Italian lawmaker is the second highest among developed countries after the U.S

What's the situation in India?

- India's initial start was promising. The first cabinet meeting of Jawaharlal Nehru took a collective decision not to avail of their salaries for six months, given the enormous economic suffering in India then.
- Today, parliamentary representatives have arrogated the authority to increase their own fiscal compensation by 1,250% over the last two decades — a case of questionable moral rectitude.

Main concern?

- Allowances should be in proportion to the services that they have rendered to the nation, but in the

past two decades, Parliament has seen less than 50% of Bills being scrutinised by parliamentary committees, defeating the very purpose of a deliberative Parliament

- Money Bills, like those associated with Aadhaar, have been passed without being referred to a committee.

A survey of parliamentary salaries

- It was conducted in 2013 by the Inter-Parliamentary Union across 104 Parliaments highlighted that salaries in about 55% are linked to a structured scale, typically linked to the civil service (France, Japan) or ministerial salaries
- Mature democracies typically have separate independent bodies to establish parliamentary salaries; such as the Remuneration Tribunal in Australia or the Independent Commission for the Remuneration of Public Office Bearers in South Africa.

Way forward

- Instead of seeking pay in line with the private sector, India's public representatives should be paid a reasonable wage, which offers gratitude for their commitment to life as a public servant
- Require an external, independent body to determine parliamentary salaries.
- Salary reviews should be conducted through an institutionalised process
- Increments should be determined through a transparent and accountable process
- The issue of decline in parliamentary sittings could be partially alleviated by linking salaries to a minimum attendance of parliamentary sessions

C. GS3 Related

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Low-cost, sensitive CO sensor from IISc

In news

- Indian Institute of Science researchers have developed a highly sensitive nanometer-scale **carbon monoxide sensor** by employing an innovative fabrication technique.
- Carbon monoxide (CO) can have adverse effects on the health of people exposed to it. Hence, it becomes necessary to have good, low-cost carbon-monoxide sensors.

Working principle

- Typically, a sensor would be a thin, current carrying plate whose resistance changes on exposure to carbon monoxide. This in turn changes the value of the current flowing through it. This change when measured indicates the level of carbon monoxide in the air.
- Most available sensors are in the micrometer range, a nanometer-sized detector would have a higher sensitivity, but the cost of manufacturing it goes up as the size decreases.

Smart cities and nano-sensors

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has a vision of deploying such sensors in large scale for pollution monitoring in large cities like Delhi and Bengaluru.
- If the sensors are installed in all traffic intersections, we can do real time mapping of pollution hot-spots in a city. This would be an enabler in realizing smart cities.

D. GS4 Related

1. Editing ourselves: On genes and ethics

Context:

- Scientists have for the first time managed to edit genes in a human embryo to repair a genetic mutation.

Solution to genetic mutation

- Scientists fixed a mutation that thickens the heart muscle, a condition called hypertrophic cardiomyopathy.
- The cardiac disease causes sudden death in otherwise healthy young athletes and affects about one in 500 people overall.
- It is caused by a mutation in a particular gene and a child will suffer from the condition even if it inherits only one copy of the mutated gene.

Significance of the research:

- Correcting the mutation in the gene would not only ensure that the child is healthy but it would also prevent the mutation from being passed on to future generations

Other concerns

- Though the research marks a major milestone in genome editing of embryos, it will be a long while before it becomes available as a tool to produce healthy embryos.
- Even research on embryos using federal funding is not permitted in the U.S., where the research was carried out.
- The embryos were produced with the clear intention of using them solely for research and not for implanting them in women.

Advantages of gene editing

- Several diseases can potentially be prevented by using this technique, including some cancers.
- CRISPR-Cas9 gene-editing tool is safe for preventing certain hereditary disease-causing mutations, for which no other treatment is available.

Issue

- The main issue is the prospect of developing designer babies through gene editing.

E. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Bills/Acts/Schemes/Orgs in News

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G. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. “We need an external, independent body to determine parliamentary salaries” Examine?

GS Paper III

1. Explain CRISPR Gene editing technology its applications and concerns raised against this technology?

GS Paper IV

1. What is meant by ‘environmental ethics’? Why is it important to study? Discuss any one environmental issue from the viewpoint of environmental ethics.
2. You are working as an Executive Engineer in the construction cell of a Municipal Corporation and are presently in-charge of the construction of a flyover. There are two Junior Engineers under you who have the responsibility of day-to-day inspection of the site and are reporting to you, while you are finally reporting to the Chief Engineer who heads the cell. While the construction is heading towards completion, the Junior Engineers have been regularly reporting that all construction is taking place as per design specifications. However, in one of your surprise inspections, you have noticed some serious deviations and lacunae which, in your opinion, are likely to affect the safety of the flyover. Rectification of these lacunae at this stage would require a substantial amount of demolition and rework which will cause a tangible loss to the contractor and will also delay completion. There is a lot of public pressure on the Corporation to get this construction completed because of heavy traffic congestion in the area. When you brought this matter to the notice of the Chief Engineer, he advised you that in his opinion it is not a very serious lapse and may be ignored. He advised for further expediting the project for completion in time. However, you are convinced that this was a serious matter which might affect public safety and should not be left unaddressed.

What will you do in such a situation? Some of the options are given below. Evaluate the merits and demerits of each of these options and finally suggest what course of action you would like to take, giving reasons. (20 marks |250 words)

1. Follow the advice of the Chief Engineer and go ahead.
2. Make an exhaustive report of the situation bringing out all facts and analysis along with your own viewpoints stated clearly and seeks for written orders from the chief Engineer.
3. Call for explanation from the Junior Engineers and issue orders to the contractor for necessary correction within targeted time.
4. Highlight the issue so that it reaches superiors above the Chief Engineer.
5. Considering the rigid attitude of the Chief Engineer, seek transfer from the project or report sick.

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A. GS1 Related

Category: ART AND CULTURE

1. State gets cultural policy

In news

- The Karnataka State Cabinet approved a cultural policy for the State, perhaps the first in India to have such a comprehensive policy, aimed at promoting Kannada culture and language.

Major focus areas of policy:

- Aim at formulating measures to curb the tendency of banning Kannada books for trivial reasons
- Decentralization of the Department of Kannada and Culture
- Formation of search committees to select chairpersons to various academies and authorities to de-politicise appointments
- Establishment of art galleries in every district
- Formulation of separate programmes to help artistes in distress
- Establishment of separate Bayalata, Sugama Sangeeta and Nritya academies, and giving priority to local cinema culture.

Historical facts:

- The plan to have a cultural policy was first envisaged during the Janata Dal government in 1996.
- A Cabinet sub-committee headed by H.K. Patil, Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, studied the recommendations, including the financial implications of implementing it. After the sub-committee showed the green signal, the Cabinet approved it.

B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. Failing our children

Context

- Recent decision of Government on scrapping No-detention policy in school and its possible implication on primary education in India

What is the ‘no-detention policy’?

- The right to education act provides the guarantee of uninterrupted schooling under sections 16 and 30(1) is founded on the no-detention policy until Class 8

Why is scrapping ‘no-detention policy’ a bad decision?

- The no-detention policy to promote students automatically to higher classes every year till Class VIII was instituted to check the high number of dropouts
- The socially and economically disadvantaged sections were getting the benefits of this policy
- According to many experts, the NDP was wrongly interpreted to create an environment in which the significance of evaluating a student’s learning outcomes was undermined

Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE)

- It is aimed to assess the child's understanding of what was being taught in class at periodic intervals
- This is the reason behind the decision of scrapping NDP, as this evaluation process shows bad results of evaluations of students

CCE and its drawbacks:

- Teachers were not given adequate training to undertake this reform of CCE
- Schools are not fully compliant with the RTE's requirements on infrastructure and teacher availability
- In fact, about 8 per cent primary schools have just one teacher
- These situations made CCE, an ineffective reform

The way forward

- The RTE Act has a provision for continuous and comprehensive evaluation, the government should work on it
- But transferring the responsibility of performance to children, many of whom come from underprivileged backgrounds, can only produce a less literate citizenry
- The move to scrap the NDP will make the RTE's goal of inclusive education a very difficult one
- The government should rethink the move

2. States cold to stricter anti-racial law

Context

- The Home Ministry has proposed to amend the law to insert two stricter **anti-racial discrimination** provisions in the Indian Penal Code
- Lukewarm response from the States.

States and UT's agreed to the proposal:

- Uttar Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram
- Three Union Territories — Andaman and Nicobar, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Lakshwadeep.

What is the proposed amendment?

- The Home Ministry has proposed to amend two provisions in the IPC, that is, **Section 153A** and **Section 509A**.
- These are proposed to be inserted into the IPC sections.

Why states consent is necessary?

- The proposed matter comes under the **Concurrent List**.
- The opinion of majority of the States was required to push through the legislation.

Panel recommendations

- The proposed amendments were based on the recommendations of the Bezbarua Committee, constituted by the Centre in February 2014 in the wake of a series of racial attacks on persons belonging to the northeast.

Draft 153 C IPC says:

- Whoever promotes or attempts to promote, on the ground of race, racial features, behaviour, culture, customs or way of living, any act which is prejudicial to human dignity or dignity of members belonging to particular race and uses criminal force or violence in furtherance of such act, or, participates in such act intending to use criminal force or violence or knowing that participants in such act is likely to use criminal force or violence against the member of a race or cause or likely to cause fear or feeling of insecurity amongst the members of such race, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years and fine.

Section 509A IPC:

- 509A seeks to make any word, gesture or act intended to insult a member of a particular race with imprisonment that may extend to three years with fine.

Category: BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Dhaka to open mission in Chennai

In news:

- Bangladesh will soon open a new diplomatic mission in Chennai.
- Main aim is to focus on **medical tourism** and **educational centres** that drew thousands of Bangladesh citizens to India every year.
- The decision to open mission in Chennai was part of a bilateral agreement between India and Bangladesh.

Key Facts:

- Bangladesh emerged as the largest overseas user of India's health services sector during 2015-16.
- Out of the 4,60,000 foreign patients treated in Indian hospitals, nearly 165,000 were from Bangladesh.
- The total number of Bangladeshi patients generated \$0.34 billion in revenue for India during the period
- Bangladeshis have also emerged as the largest number of foreign tourists to India mainly due to medical tourism.

B. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. China's RCEP push veils grand plan

Context

- Community social media platform ‘LocalCircles’ survey shows Indian consumer’s perception about items imported from China.
- 52% of participants opined that quality of a ‘Made in India’ version was superior to the one from China.
- 83% said they buy Chinese products as those items were the cheapest and 98% said there should be better screening and ensure that imports meets the Indian (BIS) standards.
- The poll assumes significance as it comes amid ongoing negotiations for Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

- It is a FTA between the 10-member ASEAN bloc and its six FTA partners — India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.
- When inked, it would become the world’s biggest free trade pact
- Boost goods trade by eliminating most tariff and non-tariff barriers — and provide the region’s consumers greater choice of quality products at affordable rates.
- Liberalise investment norms and do away with services trade restrictions.

India’s concerns over RCEP

- China is keen on an agreement on a ‘high level’ of tariff liberalisation — eliminating duties on as much as 92% of traded products.
- India’s offer is to do away with duties on only 80% of the lines and that too, with a longer phase-out period for Chinese imports
- India already has separate FTAs with the 10-member ASEAN bloc, India feels that on account of the RCEP, India may not gain much on the goods side with existing FTA partners

Duty impact on India

- A highly ambitious level of tariff elimination without enough flexibility would affect India the most on the goods side.
- This is because in the RCEP group (except Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR), India has the highest average ‘Most Favoured Nation (MFN) tariff’ level at 13.5%.
- MFN tariff, as per the WTO, refers to normal, non-discriminatory tariff charged on imports, excluding preferential tariffs under FTAs and other schemes
- India is the only participant that has a high level of merchandise trade deficit

Trade deficit woes

- Even without a bilateral FTA, India was already affected by China’s overhang of excess capacity in sectors including metals, chemicals and textiles.
- Goods imports from China have been far outpacing India’s shipments to that country
- This has led to goods trade deficit with China widening from just \$1.1 billion in 2003-04 to a whopping \$52.7 billion in 2015-16
- The initiative could provide a means for Chinese industries with excess capacity to export equipment that is currently idle.

2. Let’s talk about a supplemental income

Context

- Applicability of the concept of basic income to India.

Universal Basic Income

- The primary objective is to enable every citizen to have a certain minimum income.
- The term ‘universal’ is meant to connote that the minimum or basic income will be provided to everyone irrespective of whatever their current income is.

Problem with UBI:

- Adoption of UBI can impose a burden on the fisc which is well beyond the capabilities of most developing countries, including India.

Cash v/s Services: Whether support to vulnerable sections should be in the form of goods and services or as cash?

Cash

- It gives the discretion to beneficiaries to spend it any way they like

Services

- Provision of services or goods directly to beneficiaries may be directed to achieve certain objectives in terms of nutrition or health or education.

Concerns

- In the provision of services, the concern is about leakages and quality of service
- There are a whole lot of services provided by the state, and it would be impossible to knock them off and substitute them with general income support
- Poor quality of services from government-run institutions.

Universal' or restricted?

- It is necessary to first decide whether income supplements should be ‘universal’ or limited to certain easily identifiable groups.

Universal

Pros

- Universal scheme is easy to implement

Cons

- Income to one and all are beyond the capabilities of the present Central government Budget unless the basic income is fixed at too low a level.
- It is extremely difficult to cut so-called implied subsidies or hidden subsidies in order to fund resources.

Restricted

- The attempt must be to think in terms of reducing the number of beneficiaries using easily definable criteria.

Cons

- Strict targeting will run into complex problems of identification.

Minimum increase?

- Whether the scheme should be universal or restricted depends on the level of basic income that is proposed to be provided.
- If we were to treat the cut-off used to define poverty as the minimum income, then the total fiscal burden would be enormous.
- Analysis using different poverty lines shows that poverty is concentrated around the poverty line. In fact, more than 60% of the total poor lies between 75% of the poverty line.

Way out:

- What is needed is a supplement to fill the poverty gap
- One alternative would be to determine the required income supplement from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).
- The total annual income supplement can be equivalent to 100 days of the wages that is ₹20,000 per year. This amount can be treated as the income supplement.

Feasibility :

- It is difficult to cover the entire population. Even providing one person per household with this income will mean ₹5 lakh crore per annum, which is 3% of GDP
- What is feasible is a scheme which limits the total expenditure to around 1.5 to 2% of GDP.
- One way of restricting the total cost to this amount is to limit it to all women above the age of 45.
- Restricting the beneficiaries to the elderly or widows or those with disabilities may have only a limited impact.

Financing the scheme?

- Remove all exemptions in our tax system.
- Tax experts advocate removing exemptions so that the basic tax rate can be reduced
- Phase out the MGNREGS, which will realise close to ₹40,000 crore.
- Fertilizer subsidies are another item of expenditure which can be eliminated
- Requesting higher income groups to forego supplemental income will reduce the expenditure, as has been done successfully in the case of cooking gas.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Should we fear Artificial Intelligence?

Context

Artificial Intelligence and possible dangers that can come out of it

Why one must not “fear” Artificial Intelligence?

- Such systems are actually pretty dumb
- This is because even the most intelligent systems today with artificial specific intelligence can perform one task better than any human can, but only that one task
- Any simple task that it is not specifically programmed for, such a system would find impossible to complete

Concerns related to Artificial Intelligence

(1) Jobs

- The possible negative effect of Artificial Intelligence on jobs has been a trending topic recently
- But there has been no academic or policy consensus on what the exact effect will be
- Still there can be no doubt that at least some jobs will be negatively affected by Artificial Intelligence

(2) Weapons

- The use of Artificial Intelligence in weapons leading to ‘autonomous weapons’ raises a number of difficult questions in international law
- A machine that has been given the ability to make life and death decisions on the battlefield can be dangerous

(3) Data Security

- The entire Artificial Intelligence ecosystem is built on the availability of great amounts of data and enhancing efficiency requires continued availability of such data
- This raises the question of where the required data comes from, and who owns and controls it

The way forward

- It is necessary to assess the practical benefits and risks associated with the increasing prevalence of Artificial Intelligence

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Question 1. Indian manufacturers have supplied EVMs to

Question 2. Electronic Voting Machine is manufactured in India by

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. “Less than 10 per cent of the schools in the country are fully compliant with the RTE’s requirements on infrastructure and teacher availability.” Comment.

GS Paper III

1. Examine the arguments in favour and against introduction of universal basic income.
2. “Artificial Intelligence is not going to go ‘rogue’ and turn on humans, at least in the near future, but there are other very real issues raised by AI.” Critically examine.

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B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. [Supreme Court seeks Centre's reply on validity of special status to J&K](#)

In News

- The Supreme Court sought response from the Centre on a plea against a Delhi High Court order by which it had rejected a petition **challenging validity of Article 370** of the Constitution giving **special status** to Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Petitioner contention:**
- Article 370 was a temporary provision that had lapsed with the dissolution of the state's Constituent Assembly in 1957.
- The continuance of the temporary provision of Article 370 even after dissolution of the state's Constituent Assembly and its Constitution which has never got the assent of the President of India or Parliament or the Government of India, “ **amounts to fraud on the basic structure of our Constitution** ”.
- **Previously:** In July 2014, the Supreme Court had dismissed a plea challenging the special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir and had asked the petitioner to move the High Court.

Basic Information:

Article 370

- Under the **Part XXI of the Constitution of India**, which deals with “Temporary, Transitional and Special provisions”, Article 370 is a temporary provision granting special autonomous status to Jammu and Kashmir
- Article 370 specifies that except for Defence, Foreign Affairs, Finance and Communicationsthe Indian Parliament needs the State Government’s concurrence for applying all other laws
- The Jurisdiction of the Parliament of India in relation to Jammu and Kashmir is confined to the matters enumerated in the Union List, and also the concurrent list. There is no State list for the State of Jammu and Kashmir.
- At the same time, while in relation to the other States, the residuary powerof legislation belongs to Parliament, in the case of Jammu and Kashmir, the residuary powers belong to the Legislature of the State, except certain matters to which Parliament has exclusive powers such as preventing the activities relating to cession or secession, or disrupting the sovereignty or integrity of India.
- No preventive detention law made in India extends to Jammu & Kashmir.

B. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. [Loan-pricing systems: For better transmission, RBI in search of yet another benchmark](#)

Context

- In 1994 Reserve Bank of India (RBI), announced a landmark decision to fully deregulate interest rates on advances above Rs 2 lakh.
- Since then, the RBI has introduced four benchmark lending rates for proper pricing of loans and transmission of rates. However, these rate structures have been found to be ineffective for various reasons.
- The RBI has now formed a committee to formulate market-determined benchmarks to ensure a better transmission of interest rates.

What is Monetary transmission?

- Monetary transmission refers to the process by which a central bank’s monetary policy decisions are passed on, through financial markets, to businesses and households.

Base rate system

- It included all those elements of the lending rate that are common across all categories of borrowers.
- Banks are allowed to determine their actual lending rates on loans and advances with reference to the base rate and by including such other customer-specific charges as considered appropriate.
- While all categories of loans are required to be priced only with reference to the base rate, transmission of the RBI rate cuts moved at snail’s pace
- Banks and markets also briefly experimented with the Mumbai inter-bank offer rate (Mibor) on the lines of London’s Libor

Mumbai inter-bank offer rate (Mibor)

- It is a major global interest rate indicator
- In June 1998, the National Stock Exchange had developed and launched the Mumbai inter-bank bid (Mibid) rate and Mibor for the overnight money market.
- However, banks found it difficult to use external benchmarks for pricing their loan products, as the available external market benchmarks (Mibor, G-Sec) are mainly driven by liquidity conditions in the market, and do not reflect the cost of funds of the banks
- MCLR was experiment which was kicked off when Raghuram Rajan was the RBI Governor.

MCLR System

- RBI Governor Urjit Patel said experience with the MCLR system, introduced in April 2016 for improving the monetary policy transmission, has not been entirely satisfactory

- Banks have been selective in their rate cuts in aggressive segments such as home and auto loans, but in many other segments, borrowers are still tied to the base rate, where they can ease more.
- RBI's rate cuts have not been passed on to borrowers in many segments of the economy.
- The base rate of some banks after the introduction of MCLR has moved significantly less than MCLR.
- The RBI says that the rigidity of the base rate is a matter of concern for an efficient transmission of monetary policy to the real economy
- MCLR failed to bring any cheers to old customers who were stuck with BPLR or base rate-linked rates.
- The RBI is likely to come up with another benchmark lending rate for borrowers, speeding up the transmission of rate cuts to the customers.

2. ATM expansion slows due to note ban

Expansion of ATMs

- Cash crunch following demonetisation, have led to commercial banks cutting down on the number of automated teller machines (ATMs)
- According to Reserve Bank of India (RBI), there were 98,092 off-site ATMs in June 2017 against 99,989 in the same month last year
- However, on-site (located within a branch) ATMs rose to 110,385 from 101,346 in the same period
- According to bankers, demonetisation was one of the factors that impacted ATM expansion

Category: AGRICULTURE

1. Food security: SC raps Centre, States

Implementation of Food Security Act in different states

- According to SC judgement, the State Food Commission set up under the National Food Security Act in Haryana, has been sitting “jobless” and “without proper infrastructure”
- **Reason:** Due to the state government’s dull response to the Act

Other observations

- The judgment also listed nine other States viz. Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Bihar and Chhattisgarh
- Reason: Due to their dull response to the food security law meant to help those living below the poverty line

Directions from SC

- The SC directed the government to frame rules and designate independent officials for a grievance redressal mechanism under the Act within a year
- It directed the states to set up State Food Commissions and vigilance committees in every state by the end of the year and set up a social audit machinery.

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. A gathering crisis: the need for groundwater regulation

Context

- Urgent measures are necessary to address the water crisis in India
- While the crisis is often discussed, law and policy measures to address it remain insufficient

Why?

- Primary source of domestic water and irrigation is groundwater but the media and policymakers still focussing on surface water.
- This needs to change as water tables have been falling rapidly in many parts of the country, and use exceeds replenishment.

Reasons for excessive use of groundwater

- Legal framework governing access to the resource
- Landowner have the right to access groundwater found under their land, and they see groundwater as their own and as a resource they can exploit without considering the need to protect and replenish it since there are no immediate consequences for over-exploiting it.
- Access to a source of groundwater has become a source of power and economic gain
- With the propagation of mechanical pumps, big landowners to sell water to others for economic gain

Problems with the current framework:

- Mechanical pumping led to the situation that recharge could not keep pace with use.
- 1970 model Bill focused on State-level control over new, additional uses of groundwater but did not address the iniquitous regime giving landowners unlimited control over groundwater.
- The States that have groundwater legislation based on the model Bill, 1970 failed to address the problem of falling water tables due to increasing use
- There is no provision to protect and conserve groundwater at the aquifer level.
- It fails to give gram sabhas and panchayats a prevailing say in the regulation and the framework remains mostly top-down and is incapable of addressing local situations adequately.
- Planning Commission and Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation recognised that present legal regime has failed to address the ground water crisis.
- The result is the Groundwater (Sustainable Management) Bill, 2017

Groundwater (Sustainable Management) Bill, 2017

- Proposes a different regulatory framework
- Based on the recognition of the unitary nature of water, the need for decentralised control over groundwater and the necessity to protect it at aquifer level
- Recognition that water is a public trust (groundwater is a common pool resource), the recognition of the fundamental right to water and the introduction of protection principles, including the precautionary principle, that are currently absent from water legislation.
- Builds on the decentralisation mandate that is already enshrined in general legislation but has not been implemented effectively as far as groundwater is concerned and
- Seeks to give regulatory control over groundwater to local users.

B. GS4 Related

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G. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Question 1. The Sakewa Festival was recently celebrated in which state?

Question 2. The Navegaon National Park is located in which state?

Question 3. Which of the following parts of constitution explicitly mentions the

Question 5. Mushroom rocks or Rock pedestals or Zeugen are one of the most striking manifestations of ____?

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. What is a quasi-judicial body? Explain with the help of concrete examples.
2. "Demographic Dividend in India will remain only theoretical unless our manpower becomes more educated, aware, skilled and creative." What measures have been taken by the government to enhance the capacity of our population to be more productive and employable?

GS Paper III

1. The frequency of earthquakes appears to have increased in the Indian subcontinent. However, India's preparedness for mitigating their impact has significant gaps. Discuss various aspects.

GS Paper IV

1. Human beings should always be treated as 'ends' in themselves and never as merely 'means'. Explain the meaning and significance of this statement, giving its implications in the modern techno-economic society.
2. Rameshwar successfully cleared the prestigious civil services examination and was excited about the opportunity that he would get through the civil services to serve the country. However, soon after joining the services, he realized that things are not as rosy as he had imagined. He found a number of malpractices prevailing in the department assigned to him. For example, funds under various schemes and grants were being misappropriated. The official facilities were frequently being used for personal needs by the officers and staff. After some time, he noticed that the process of recruiting the staff was also not up to the mark. Prospective candidates were required to write an examination in which a lot of cheating was going on. Some candidates were provided external help in the examination. Rameshwar brought these incidents to the notice of his seniors. However, he was advised to keep his eyes, ears and mouth shut and ignores all these things which were taking place with the connivance of the higher-ups. Rameshwar felt highly disillusioned and uncomfortable. He comes to you seeking your advice. Indicate various options that you think are available in this situation. How would you help him to evaluate these options and choose the most appropriate path to be adopted? 250 words.

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A. GS1 Related

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Unique initiative to promote small family norm

New Initiative:

- The Rajasthan government's Medical and Health Department has decided to organise "Saas-Bahu Sammelans" in over 16,200 villages of 14 districts.
- **Why:** to promote the small family norm with emphasis on development of local communities.
- And to achieve the family planning targets.

Step against high fertility rate

- The 14 districts of the State have reported a high fertility rate in the past.

A. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

[1. New system for rating bureaucrats open to bias: Anand Sharma](#)

Parliamentary Committee observations:

- According to the committee, the government's new system of rating officers on the basis of a 360-degree approach is susceptible to bias, manipulation and lacks fairness.

360 degree approach:

- The 360-degree approach is a new multi-source feedback system for performance appraisal of bureaucrats.
- It relies on feedback of juniors and other colleagues for an all-round view, other than appraisal reports written by senior officers.

Counter arguments:

- Feedback in this process is obtained informally, making the process susceptible to being manipulated.
- The report notes that the 360-degree approach does not have any statutory backing, or supported by any Act.

[2. Kerala, Haryana top sanitation survey](#)

Data from Government survey commissioned on Sanitation

- According to the survey, almost all rural households in Kerala and Haryana had access to a toilet.
- Bihar and Uttar Pradesh has least access to toilets when compared to other states.
- The survey is released by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation.
- The survey was carried out by the Quality Council of India (QCI).

Other best performers

- Northeastern States of Sikkim, Manipur and Nagaland were top performers with 95% rural households covered by toilets.
- The Himalayan States of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand with over 90% toilet coverage of the rural houses.

Worst performers

- In Bihar, only 30% of the rural households had access to toilets while Uttar Pradesh was marginally better at 37%.
- Jharkhand, too scored the same as Uttar Pradesh.

A. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

[1. Logistics Data Bank project to expand to South India](#)

Context:

- The Logistics Data Bank (LDB) project, unveiled in July 2016 to make India's logistics sector more efficient through the use of Information Technology, will soon expand to country's southern region

What is The Logistics Data Bank (LDB) project?

- The logistics Data Bank Service would bring efficiency in the current Logistics & Supply Chain through use of information technology that would be helpful for tracking and viewing the movement of containers across the port to the ICD and end users.
- Every container is attached to a Radio Frequency Identification Tag (RFID) tag and then tracked through RFID readers — aids importers and exporters in tracking their goods in transit.
- This has, in turn, cut the overall lead time of container movement as well as reduced transaction costs that consignees and shippers incur.
- It is billed as a major 'ease of doing business' initiative aimed at boosting India's foreign trade and ensuring

greater transparency.

- The project covers “the entire movement (of containers) through rail or road till the Inland Container Depot and Container Freight Station

Category: AGRICULTURE

1. Food for action: on food security in India

Context:

- National Food Security Act, 2013, has met with prolonged political indifference
- Supreme Court directed Centre to ensure that States implement key aspects of the progressive law

Key Aspects:

- Directives in the Swaraj Abhiyan case underscore that several State governments have not met key requirements in the legislation.
- Sections 14, 15 and 16, require the setting up of a grievance redress mechanism and a State Food Commission with responsibility to monitor the implementation of the law
- Article 256, which casts a responsibility on the States and the Union to ensure compliance with laws made by Parliament, also provides the remedy, as it can be invoked by the Centre to set things right.
- NFSR, which is vital for social security through the Public Distribution System and child welfare schemes, has suffered due to a lack of political will.

Way forward

- Food security through the principle of universal access, though not every citizen would need it
- An in-built mechanisms to allow for the entry of new households that suddenly find themselves in financial distress, while others can exit it based on changed circumstances.
- Full-fledged, independent machinery in the form of a Food Commission, and district-level grievance redress, besides social audits. All these are provided for under the Act, but have been ignored
- Modernisation of the PDS, could incorporate dynamic features to the supply of subsidised food to those who need it, and eliminate deficiencies and fraud.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. ISRO to develop full-fledged Earth observation satellite

‘Hyspex’ imaging:

- A new set of future satellites called **hyperspectral imaging satellites** is set to add teeth to the way India is gleaning from about 600 km in space.
- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) says it plans to launch a full-fledged niche Earth observation (EO) satellite — called the **Hyperspectral Imaging Satellite or HySIS** — using a critical chip it has developed.
- ISRO is endeavouring to enter the domain of operational hyperspectral imaging from earth orbit with a satellite that can see in 55 spectral or colour bands from 630 km above ground.
- **Application:** It can be used for a range of activities from monitoring the environment, crops, looking for oil and minerals all the way up to military surveillance — all of which need images that show a high level of differentiation of the object or scene.
- ‘Hyspex’ imaging is said to enable distinct identification of objects, materials or processes on Earth by reading the spectrum for each pixel of a scene from space.
- **Previous attempts:** About a decade ago, ISRO added another EO niche with **microwave or radar imaging satellites RISAT-1 and 2** that could ‘see’ through clouds and the dark — an important feature useful for the military and security agencies.

2. The hybrid route

Context:

- The automobile sector in India and the future of electric mobility in India

India’s performance in Automobile Sector:

- India went through a radical transformation from a minor manufacturer of automobiles to the fastest growing auto-hub within a short span
- Progressive policy has led to India emerging as the fifth largest automobile manufacturing country in the world
- How: by adopting a consistent, well thought out Automotive Mission Plan 2006-2016 (AMP)

Contribution to Employment Generation:

- The auto industry provides direct and indirect employment to 32 million people with an annual turnover of nearly Rs 6,00,000 crore

How India's policy in this sector is different from that of China?

- India's has achieved success without the adoption of coercive policies for localisation of production as is done in China
- India's success is attributed to positive engagement maintained with global giants, for establishing competitive manufacturing base in India

World is now going for non-fossil fuel vehicles

- The world is still largely dependent on fossil fuels for transportation
- But there is now an increased momentum towards alternate energy sources

India's take on non-fossil fuel vehicles

- Besides the environment, India also has strategic and economic interest in shifting away from fossil fuels
- Challenge: The challenge ahead is not only on how to encourage electric automobiles but also to take the industry forward without losing India's current competitive advantage

Different types of Electric vehicles

- Pure electric vehicles (BEVs) that use energy stored in batteries obtained from the grid
- Hybrid electric vehicles (HEVs), plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) and fuel cell vehicles (FCVs)

Global experience in Electric mobility sector

- Global experience indicates that most countries have adopted a technology-neutral approach
- And supported the full range of electric vehicle technologies till such time that they attained market acceptability

The way forward

- The government should push more aggressively for the BEV option for of two-wheelers and three-wheelers
- And support the full range of electric technologies for other vehicle segments with a clear roadmap for the evolution towards FCVs
- Hopefully, to reduce fossil fuel consumption, lower pollution and encourage electric mobility, a more holistic approach will be adopted by the government

B. GS4 Related

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G. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Question 1. Choose the correct statement with reference to Kani maranjandu which was in news recently.

Question 2. Consider the following statement with reference to Uttarayan Festival which was in news recently

Question 3. What do you mean by Masala Bond?

Question 5. Sometimes Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) in news. What are they ?

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1.

1. “Traditional bureaucratic structure and culture have hampered the process of socio-economic development in India.” Comment.
-

GS Paper III

1.

1. “An incremental, technology-neutral approach to the adoption of electric vehicles is the way forward for Automobile Sector in India” Comment.

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5. SC seeks details of convictions under Child Marriage Act

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1. UAE joins chorus of concern over Doklam

International Affairs

1. Nepal tightens laws against dowry, menstrual exile

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A. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. No more vehicle insurance without pollution certificate

In news:

- Supreme Court directed that vehicles without valid pollution under control (PUC) certificates would not be eligible for the annual insurance.
- **The Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA) recommended for** mandatory linking of PUC certificates with annual insurance. This recommendation was made by the EPCA in its report on assessment of the Pollution Under Control programme in Delhi and the National Capital Region.
- Supreme Court has now accepted this particular recommendation made by EPCA.
- The court also directed the linking of PUC centres with an online network and data centres to prevent manual tampering. It asked the State governments to audit PUC centres and set up a strong oversight system to ensure credible tests and emission results.
- **Advantages of linking:** ensure compliance with respect to emission norms and a subsequent dip in vehicular emission levels.
- **Key fact:** In Delhi, only 23% of vehicles come for PUC tests.

2. Karnataka favours centralised selection for district judiciary

In news:

- **Proposal:** Creation of a Central selection mechanism for selection to the posts of judges in the higher sub-ordinate judiciary, for which the central examination could be conducted by a recruitment body under the supervision of the apex court.
- Supreme Court had invited the views of the State governments and the High Courts on its proposal to centralise the process for selecting judges for the district judiciary across the country.
- **Karnataka Government response:** filed an affidavit before the Supreme Court stating that the government has no objection to the proposal.
- **Concerns raised by the government:** centralised selection process should ensure that knowledge of local language of the State concerned has to be made compulsory for such selection.

3. RTE's heart is in the right place—but not its head

Situation after RTE Act

- RTE was supposed to bring millions to school
- Building the foundations upon which a modern, progressive and prosperous nation was to rise
- But after 7 years, Education level is deteriorated and schools are being closed
- According to some experts, the RTE has proved to be a disastrous piece of legislation
- But Government decision to scrap the no-detention policy (NDP), is an important first step towards mitigating some of its worst consequences

Deteriorating Education standards due to NDP

- According to the “Annual Status of Education Report” (Aser), less than 48% of children in class V can read a class II-level textbook
- Only 43.2% of class VIII students in rural India can do simple divisions
- Only one out of every four students in class V could read an English sentence

Views of Other Government Authorities on NDP

- The NDP has also been found to be faulty by the comptroller and auditor general as well as the Central Advisory Board of Education
- More than 20 states and union territories have asked for the policy to be either scrapped or modified

Arguments in favor of NDP

- NDP supporters claim that the objective of the policy was to keep students in school and prevent dropouts and in that, it has succeeded
- But, What is the point of students staying in school if they are barely learning anything at all?

Other issues with RTE that worsen the effect of NDP

- One of the main issues with the RTE Act is that it heavily focus on inputs while effectively ignores outputs
- It doesn't offer any benchmarks for learning outcomes or link teacher assessment to student performance

4. There must be a common NEET question paper: SC

Context:

- **NEET(National Eligibility and Entrance Test) -2017:** questions in vernacular languages in the NEET 2017 examination were not identical translations of the questions in English or Hindi.
- But difficulty level of questions was the same.
- Besides English and Hindi, the NEET exam was conducted in eight vernacular languages.

In news:

- The Supreme Court has questioned the CBSE about the setting of different questions for students taking NEET in regional languages and said there must be a common question paper.
- **Supreme Courts observations:** identical questions should be asked for students writing their NEET in English and other regional languages. The same questions can be translated from English to the regional languages concerned.

Basic Information:

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test

- The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test or NEET-UG is an entrance examination in India, for students who wish to study any graduate medical course (MBBS/ dental course (BDS) or postgraduate course (MD / MS) in government or private medical colleges in India.

- NEET-UG (Undergraduate), for MBBS and BDS courses, are conducted by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).
- NEET-UG replaced the All India Pre Medical Test (AIPMT) and all individual MBBS exams conducted by states or colleges themselves in 2013.

5. SC seeks details of convictions under Child Marriage Act

In news:

- Centre said Parliament must have thought it ‘pragmatic’ to reduce the age of consent for sexual relations for married girls from 18 to 15 as the child marriage system still exists in the country.
- The Supreme Court asked the government to provide details of the number of child marriage prohibition officers and prosecutions initiated under the Child Marriage Act in the past three years.
- Petition filed by NGO challenging the Exception 2 to Section 375 (rape) of IPC, which permits “intrusive sexual intercourse with a girl aged between 15 and 18 only on the ground that she is married.”

Discriminatory law

- Statutory exception to rape was violative of right to life, liberty, equality and was discriminatory.
- The Exception is part of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2013 and is contrary to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act of 2012 (POCSO).
- Law “violates the health of not only the girl child concerned, but also generations to come
- A girl under 18 as a child in POCSO, but once she is married, she is no more a child under the Exception 2 to Section 375 of the IPC. This is totally inconsistent.

Basic Information:

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012: The Act is gender-neutral and defines a child as any person below the age of eighteen years.

It provides:

- Precise definitions for different types of Child abuse crimes
- Stringent punishments
- Mandatory reporting
- Child-friendly procedures
- Under Section 45 of the Act, the power to make rules rests with the Central Government
- Qualifications and experience of interpreters
- Arrangements for care and protection
- Criteria for award of compensation by the Special Court

The National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and State Commissions for the Protection of Child Rights (SCPCRs) have been made the designated authority to monitor the implementation of the Act.

Category: BILATERAL ISSUES

1. UAE joins chorus of concern over Doklam

Context:

- **United Arab Emirates response :** Any military escalation between India and China would be “potentially very disruptive” for the region, said Anwar Gargash, the visiting Minister of Foreign Affairs from the United Arab Emirates.
- **Reasons for UAE Investment delay:** The movement on proposed investment from the UAE sovereign wealth fund (SWF) into Indian infrastructure projects had been delayed over procedural negotiations, and specifically the mandate of the governing body of the National Infrastructure Investment Fund (NIIF).

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

1. Nepal tightens laws against dowry, menstrual exile

In news:

- A new Bill has been passed by Nepal’s Parliament toward making women safer by **strengthening laws against acid attacks** along with the ancient Hindu customs of **demanding dowry payments** for marriage and **exiling women** who are menstruating.
- **Stringent punishment:** violators who force women into exile facing punishments of up to three months in jail or a fine of 3,000 Nepalese rupees, or about ₹1,875.
- **Prevailing practice:** Many menstruating women are still forced to leave their homes and take shelter in insecure huts or cow sheds until their cycle ends, though the practice called **Chhaupadi** was actually outlawed a decade ago. But without any assigned penalties, the custom continued in many parts of the majority Hindu Himalayan country, especially in the western hills.

A. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. GST impact on the logistics sector

Context:

- Goods and services tax (GST), could affect profitability of the logistics sector in the short run, but operational efficiency is bound to improve in the long run.

Logistic sector:

- The logistics sector broadly comprises the road transport sector, the storage and warehousing sector and finally third-party logistics (3PL).

Logistic performance

- Two key performance measures—profit after tax (PAT) as percentage of income and profit before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (PBITDA) as percentage of income
- Between 2010 and 2015, PAT has declined for all sub sectors and shows volatility for the

logistics and the storage sector

- PBITDA is an important measure that reflects operating efficiency ranges between a low of 7% for the road transport sector to a high of 20% for the storage sector.

GST impact on Logistics

- For manufacturers, GST has now replaced the multiple state VATs and the need to have a hub across all states will cease to exist.
- Allow firms to redesign supply chains and centralize hub operations to take advantage of scale economies. It will also allow firms to employ efficient practices such as bulk-breaking and cross-docking from a central location
- For transport services, the “reverse charge mechanism” can be levied as before but the taxpayer will not be able to claim input tax credit, as the main input cost is fuel which is outside the purview of GST
- Under GST, the tax on warehouse, storage and other labour services has increased from 15% to 18%. So a third-party logistics provider will now have more incentive.
- Ease of entry across states will reduce transportation delays with measures such as the e-way bill
- GST will bring a lot of alignment of value-added services in the logistics sector. This will make way for cutting-edge investments and mergers and can see a phenomenal increase in asset utilization and increase in operational efficiency
- There will be new investment opportunities for technology-enabled mini warehouses along the highways and technology enabled start-ups.”
- This will result in uncertainties and affect the profitability of the sector in the short run. In the long run, operational efficiency is bound to improve

B. GS4 Related

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G. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Question 1. The famous biennial Thakurani Jatra festival was recently held in

Question 3. Which one of the following industry doesn't fall into the category of core industries identified by IIP?

Question 5. Probiotics are

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1.

1. A democracy is likely to degenerate into a tyranny if it does not allow opposition groups to criticize fairly, freely and frankly” Comment.
 2. “The job of chairperson of Rajya Sabha is very challenging and thankless” Examine.
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1. Discuss in detail the impact of GST on Logistic sector?

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Health Issues

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Category: POLITY

1. TN appeal on NEET quota dismissed

Context

- **Tamil Nadu State Government Notification:** provided 85% reservation for students from State Board schools in admissions to undergraduate medical courses under the State quota and 15% to students from other boards.
- **Madras High Court quashed the above order:** The HC had found the government order violative of the right to equality and discrimination.

In news

- **Supreme Court Order:**
- Merit remains the sole criterion in the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test for State Board and CBSE students.
- Upheld Madras High Court order.

2. Push for law to ensure transparency rules

In news

- The government could consider introducing a new law to ensure transparency of rules.
- **Present problems faced by citizens :** it is not easy for ordinary citizens [and businesses] in India to navigate the multitude of rules, regulations, forms, taxes and procedures imposed by various tiers of government. Moreover, these rules frequently change and sometimes contradict each other
- **Transparency of Rules Act (TORA)** – recommended by the Economic Survey, stressing that the ‘opaque mesh’ of regulations prevalent in India not only make life difficult for citizens who cannot feign ignorance of the rules as a valid defence, but also act as a magnet for corruption and endless litigation.
- The TORA is an attempt to change in some ways the relationship between the average normal citizen and the State.

3. Allow payment, live-in couples: House panel for more liberal surrogacy Bill

Recommendation of a Parliamentary Standing Committee:

- More liberal norms that will allow live-in couples, divorced women, and widows to choose surrogates is the need of the hour
- It has recommended that couples should be allowed to choose surrogates from both within and outside the family
- The Panel also favoured the decision to debar foreigners from availing of surrogacy services in India
- Committee: The committee is a 31 member Parliamentary Committee on Health and Family Welfare

Criticism of the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2016 by the panel

- It criticized the exclusion of live-in partners from the ambit of the legislation
- According to the panel, the bill talks about compensation rather than altruism as the guiding principle of surrogacy, the panel finds this anti-women

Basic Information:

The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2016

- The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2016 was introduced in Lok Sabha on November 21, 2016 and referred to the standing committee
- According to the bill, surrogacy is allowed for infertile Indian married couples where the woman is between 23-50 years and the man is between 26-55 years
- Also, couple cannot have a surviving child, either biological or adopted

4. Do not touch

Context:

- The government's reply last month to the Supreme Court, saying that the questions raised in a petition challenging Article 35A require a larger debate

What is Article 35A?

- It was added by a 1954 presidential order issued under Article 370, the constitutional provision that mediates the relationship between the Union of India and Kashmir
- Article 35A of the Indian Constitution is an article that empowers the Jammu and Kashmir state's legislature to define “permanent residents” of the state and provide special rights and privileges to those permanent residents.

Who is a permanent resident?

- The 1956 J&K Constitution defines a Permanent Resident as one who, apart from being an Indian citizen, was a state subject on May 14, 1954, or a resident of the state for 10 years, and owns immovable property in the state.

Apprehensions

- Government's new legal pro-activism against Articles 35A or 370 will lead to more alienation in the Valley.
- In the Valley, the government's reply on 35A is being seen as paving the way for moves to do away with Article 370 that excludes J&K from most laws enacted by Parliament, except through presidential orders that have the concurrence of the J&K Legislative Assembly
- Court has also asked the Centre to respond to a petition challenging Article 370.
- All this has served to strengthen suspicions that the Centre is using the legal route to bring about the changes that it wants

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. It's time to focus on the toxic air we breathe

Context:

- Niti Aayog released the draft National Energy Policy.
- Several public policy research and civil society organisations criticised the policy from various standpoints.

Public health and growth

- It ignores public health, especially in the context of the energy mix envisaged under the NITI Ambition Scenario
- Ambition Scenario is a tool to arrive at a range of possible energy futures for the energy sector till 2040.
- National Health Policy of 2017 views reducing air pollution as vital to India's health trajectory.
- However, the National Energy Policy neither reflects nor supports the commitment outlined by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Ministry

Air pollution menace

1. WHO reports that air pollution is the number one environmental health risk. In 2012, about 3 million premature deaths were attributable to ambient air pollution.
2. Children are most affected by air pollution and will be the primary beneficiaries of policies to reduce fossil fuel emissions.
3. Research has also established links between public health and a nation's economic growth.
4. Joint study by the World Bank and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation found that the aggregate cost of premature deaths due to air pollution was more than \$5 trillion worldwide in 2013 alone.
5. In East and South Asia, welfare losses related to air pollution were about 7.5% of GDP.

WHO's Health Indicators of Sustainable Energy

- It lays out a few core and expanded indicators that can help monitor the progress of a nation's energy policy.
- The core indicators address issues related to health equity where health impact assessments become an integral part of energy policy design and implementation.
- It stress on the need to develop baseline data by generating emission inventories and source apportionment of urban air pollution that can inform mitigation and intervention policies.

Way forward

- National Energy Policy have to strive to minimise the unavoidable health impacts of energy production, and their associated health costs, especially given the policy's stated objectives of sustainability and economic growth.
- It should include a health impact assessment framework to weigh the health hazards and health costs associated with the entire life cycle of existing and future energy projects and technologies
- Ensure that policies directed at energy security are compatible with public health goals.

A. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Growth likely to be in the lower range, closer to 6.5%

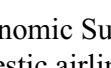
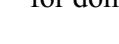
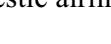
Context:

- Key highlight of Second volume of Economic Survey: Macroeconomic indicators pointing to a deceleration trend.

In News:

- The second volume of the Economic Survey was tabled in Parliament .
- The Indian economy's growth in 2017-18 is more likely to be closer to 6.5% than 7.5%, according to Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian.
- Many indicators — credit growth, index of industrial production, Gross Value Added, manufacturing, investment — all point to the same direction of deceleration in growth.
- Demonetisation impact:** demonetisation of high-value currency notes by the government last November, could be one possible reason which intensified deceleration in real activity.
- Short –term challenge ahead:** The real challenge now is short-term growth and we need to bring to bear all the policy tools that we have to revive short-term growth.
- Farm loan waivers:** waivers will act as a ‘drag on growth’ rather than have an inflationary impact.
- Growth drag reasons:**
- Rising stress in the telecom and power sectors:** new entrant in telecom reducing prices for consumers and in power, renewable (energy) shocks would help climate change in the long run. But in the short run, both are having an impact on balance sheets of companies, demand and growth.
- The appreciation in the rupee’s exchange rate and the high real interest rates, especially when inflation targets have been ‘over-achieved’ for nearly a year and are likely to stay below the 4% target on an average through 2017-18, are also dragging down growth.

2. Ease norms for airlines to fly abroad'

Speedbreakers ahead	Risks ahead
 Flaging an uncertain fiscal outlook for the current year, the Economic Survey released today said achieving the higher end of the 6.75-7.5% GDP growth will be difficult	 GDP, core GVA, IIP, credit, investment and capacity utilization point to deceleration in real activity
 Bottlenecks in supply of fruits and vegetables	 7th Pay Commission awards
 Farm loan waivers	 Recent exchange rate appreciation
 3.5 lakh new registrants on GST portal	 Structural downward shift in inflation
 In-principle decision to liberalise Air India	 Dip in cash holdings due to impact of demonetisation
 Actions taken to address stress in bank and corporate balance sheets	 Arvind Subramanian, Economic Adviser

Context:

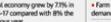
- The Economic Survey has suggested a mix of protectionism for domestic airlines and liberal norms for flying abroad to bolster their share in international air traffic.

Economic Survey report observations

- Large increase in capacity entitlements under bilateral air service agreements with foreign countries has helped the foreign carriers in gaining a large share in the international traffic to and from India as the domestic carriers have underutilised their rights.

Key fact:

- Roughly 38% people fly in and out of India through Indian carriers and the rest 62% from foreign carriers.
- UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman and the

Guarded growth forecast	The big
The survey said that fiscal tightening and dipping profits in power and telecom were weighing on the economy	 Net economy grew by 7.7% in 2016-17 compared with 8% the previous year
 Economy is set to grow at 7.5% in 2017-18	 Interest rate was 5.9% in April 16. It declined to 4.9% in FY17
 Export growth witnessed after a gap of two years	 Reserve Bank of India has raised its policy rate by 125 bps to 6.25% in March 2017

South East Asian countries – Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand as the top destination of passenger traffic to and from India.

- These countries were invariably used as stop-overs or hubs by their respective airlines to carry passengers onward to USA, Canada, Europe, among others.

- Indian domestic airlines have a very lower share in international traffic to and from India.

Factors responsible

1. Foreign airlines utilising the sixth freedom of the air
2. Expansion of capacity entitlements under bilateral air service agreements with foreign countries
3. Lower utilisation of India's own capacity entitlements
4. The 0/20 rule and fleet constraints.

What is Sixth freedom?

- Sixth freedom is the bilateral air traffic right to fly from a foreign country to another foreign country while stopping in one's own country.
- For instance, Emirates operates flight between India and the UK while stopping at Dubai, its home state.
- The Survey said this has reduced the share of direct long haul flights for Indian carriers from 25% in 2011-12 to 20.5% in 2015-16.

0/20 rule

- A domestic airline needs to deploy at least 20 planes on the domestic sector before getting the right to fly on international routes from India.
- The Economic Survey said the 0/20 rule should be further diluted.

Diluted 5/20 rule

- In its **National Civil Aviation Policy** released in 2016, the Central government had diluted the contentious '5/20 rule' that required an Indian airline to have five years of domestic flying experience and 20 aircraft in its fleet before it can fly to overseas destinations.
- According to the present norm, known as the 0/20 rule, a domestic airline needs to deploy at least 20 planes on the domestic sector before getting the right to fly on international routes from India. The Economic Survey said the 0/20 rule should be further diluted.

Air India's disinvestment plans

- According to the survey Air India's disinvestment will also help India regain international share.
- There is a need for committed action plan on privatization or disinvestment of national carrier Air India to enhance its operational and management efficiency because it is a major carrier of international traffic to and from India, accounting for 11.4 per cent of the total international travel.

3. Survey backs U.P. model on farm loan waivers

In news

- The Economic Survey assumes that other States will follow Uttar Pradesh's example and waive farm loans, taking the full waiver amount to ₹2-2.7 lakh crore.

Survey Observations

- Only a few States have the fiscal space for such waivers, and so most will have to either cut expenditure or increase taxes.
- The total impact of waivers could be to lower demand by as much as 0.7% of the GDP.
- **Increase the net wealth of farm households** : loan waivers are assumed to increase aggregate income by 28%, consumption is estimated to increase by 7% or about ₹55,000 crore.
- Andhra Pradesh, U.P., Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh have no fiscal room to waive farm loans, States such as Maharashtra, West Bengal, Karnataka and Gujarat have ample space.

Waiver and the Four effects

The Survey says the waivers will have four effects on aggregate demand:

1. On private consumption impact via increases in private sector net wealth,

2. Public sector impact via changes in government expenditure/taxes,
3. Crowding out impact via higher borrowings by State governments, and
4. Crowding in impact via higher credit availability as bank NPAs fall.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Not everything labelled ‘organic’ passes muster, finds study

Context

- Traces of new-generation chemical pesticides found in fruits and vegetables branded as ‘organic’
- Samples were tested by Kerala Agricultural University.
- Organic produce is often sold at higher prices than conventional greens at separate counter in hypermarkets

In news

- The report from Pesticide Residue Research & Analytical Laboratory (PRRAL) coming under the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) contains test results of vegetables, fruits, spices and condiments sampled from public markets, including hypermarkets, across the districts in Kerala, during the period from April to June 2017.

For Example

- A sample of ‘organic’ labelled green capsicum purchased on June 16, 2017 from a prominent supermarket in Ernakulam was found contaminated, with the presence of seven chemical pesticides including five insecticides: acetamiprid (1.12 parts per million), clothianidin (0.72 ppm), imidacloprid (0.69 ppm), buprofezin (0.12 ppm), acephate (1.78 ppm) and two fungicides, tebuconazole (0.84 ppm) and iprovalicarb (0.22 ppm).
- Baji chilli marked “pesticide-free” contained three new-generation insecticides: acetamiprid, metalaxyl and chlorantraniliprole.

New equipment used

- Detection of a number of new generation pesticides even up to trace levels of parts per billion (nanogram/Kg), which were not previously reported, has now become possible with a new **liquid Chromatograph-Mass Spectrometer (LC-MS/MS)** apparatus imported from the US.

Inference

- The results indicated regular spraying of a cocktail of new generation insecticides and fungicides at close intervals to protect the crop in farms and polyhouses in other States

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for Today!!!

E. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

F. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. “Children are most affected by air pollution and will be the primary beneficiaries of policies to reduce fossil fuel emissions” Evaluate?

GS Paper III

1. Recently, the Niti Aayog released the draft National Energy Policy. Discuss its provisions related to health and pollution.

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Polity

1. Group of Secretaries recommendation: One govt English-medium school per block, HRD Ministry advises states

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1. All you need to know about the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2017

Science and Technology

1. Scientists gene-edit piglets, bringing transplants to humans closer
2. Internet of Things-enabled ultrasound scans: IIT Hyderabad

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B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. Group of Secretaries recommendation: One govt English-medium school per block, HRD Ministry advises states

In news:

- **Human Resource development Ministry:**
- Advised all states and Union territories to have at least one **government-run English-medium school** in each block.
- English should be taught as a compulsory subject from Class VI

Key Fact

- There are a total of **6,612 blocks** in the country.
- Since establishment of schools is a matter of state policy, the HRD can issue only advice in this regards.

Why this move?

- The number of students enrolling in English–medium schools has doubled from 1.5 crore in 2008-09 to 2.9 crore

in 2013-14. As a consequence, more states have started offering the option of English as a medium of instruction in government schools

C. GS3 Related

Category: ECONOMICS

1. All you need to know about the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2017

Context

- The Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2017 passed by Rajya Sabha.
- The Bill seeks to replace **the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Ordinance**, that was passed in May 2017

Why was the ordinance passed?

- To address high levels of stress faced by the banking sector at the time.
- Previously in the month of June, The RBI had identified 12 ‘defaulters’ who account for around 25% of India’s **non-performing assets (NPA)** and informed banks to take up insolvency proceedings against them.
- Steel, Infrastructure, Power and Textiles are the sectors with the most NPAs.
- Public sector banks were hit the most as large modern and foundation programs were bolstered by them with the expectation that there would be further extension.

What does the Bill do?

- It empowers RBI to give directions to banks to act against loan defaulters.
- The Bill seeks to amend **the Banking Regulation Act, 1949** by inserting provisions for handling cases related to stressed assets.
- Stressed assets are loans on which the borrower has defaulted or it has been restructured.
- The Central Government can authorise the RBI to issue directions to banks for initiating proceedings in case of a default in loan repayment. These proceedings would be under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.
- The RBI may also form committees to advise banks on the resolution of stressed assets. The members will be appointed or approved by the RBI.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Internet of Things-enabled ultrasound scans: IIT Hyderabad

In news:

- A team of researchers from IIT Hyderabad has been working to use the **Internet of Things (IoT)** to accurately diagnose **kidney and liver disorders** with the help of **ultrasound scanning devices**.
- The technology can identify kidney stones and cysts and also grade a “fatty liver” classification. Even it can differentiate between cysts and stones in the kidney images.

Disadvantages of using Internet-enabled scanning systems:

- In the traditional way of processing data, after the patient is scanned, a radiologist usually picks out the most relevant portions or even captures screenshots and makes these available for diagnosis by the specialist.
- In the IoT-enabled remote scanning, if the scans are uploaded to the cloud without being first analysed, there is a possibility that the doctor sees a huge amount of data, which they may find difficult to interpret.
- Preliminary classification of images is a must in case of Internet enabled scanning system.

2. Scientists gene-edit piglets, bringing transplants to humans closer

In news

- Scientists have effectively altered the hereditary (genetic) code of piglets to evacuate lethargic viral contaminations.

A major Breakthrough:

- This could eventually pave the way for animal-to-human organ transplants.
- Save lives by reducing organ donor waiting lists that have risen over the years.

Key Fact

- 117,000 people on the U.S. transplant waiting list alone and according to official data, 22 people die each day waiting for an organ.
- People would already be able to get pig heart valves and pancreases.

Objective of xenotransplantation stays some way off

- Scientists still need to alter pig genes to abstain from setting off a human resistant framework response and anticipate poisonous connections in blood.

Meaning of xenotransplantation

- The process of grafting or transplanting organs or tissues between members of different species.

D. GS4 Related

Nothing here for Today!!!

E. Concepts-in-News: Related Concepts to Revise/Learn

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Bills/Acts/Schemes/Orgs in News

Nothing here for Today!!!

G. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Evaluate the economic and strategic dimensions of India's Look East Policy in the context of the post-Cold War international scenario.(Mains -2016)

GS Paper III

1. What do you know by Internet –of –things? Discuss its various applications in everyday life?

GS Paper IV

1. There is a disaster-prone State having frequent landslides, forest fires, cloudbursts, flash floods and earthquakes, etc. Some of these are seasonal and often unpredictable. The magnitude of the disaster is always unanticipated. During one of the seasons, a cloudburst caused devastating floods and landslides leading to high casualties. There was major damage to infrastructure like roads, bridges and power generating units. This led to more than 100000 pilgrims, tourists and other locals trapped across different routes and locations. The people trapped in your area of responsibility included senior citizens, patients in hospitals, women and children, hikers, tourists, ruling party's regional president along with his family, additional jail. As secretary State and prisoners in jail.
As a civil services officer of the State, what would be the order in which you would rescue these people and why?
Give justifications.

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3. Centre announces ₹85-crore children's diseases research centre at Gorakhpur
4. Tamil Nadu to get exemption from NEET for 2017

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1. In South Asia, be the Un-China

Health Issues

1. Encephalitis, its causes, prevention and prevalence in India, explained

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Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. Largest volcanic region on Earth discovered under Antarctica



- The largest volcanic region on Earth discovered by Scientists
- It consists of almost 100 volcanoes – **two kilometers** below the surface of the vast Antarctic ice sheet.
- **Height range :** 100 to 3,850 metres.
- All of them are covered in thick layers of ice.
- **Region:** concentrated in a region known as the west Antarctic rift system, which stretches 3,500 km from **Antarctica's Ross ice shelf** to the Antarctic peninsula.

Importance

- Volcanic activity in this range poses crucial implications for the rest of the planet.
- It could further destabilize west Antarctica's ice sheets.

Category: POLITY

1. SC refuses to entertain fresh plea against triple talaq

In News

- The Supreme Court has declined to engage a fresh plea challenging the constitutional validity of 'triple talaq', 'nikah halala' and polygamy practices among Muslims.
- **Why?** Since the issue is already pending consideration.
- The court, however, said the verdict rendered in pending petition will govern the outcome of the present plea as well.

Senior advocate- Soumya Chakraborty opinion about the issue

- All the three forms talaq (**Ahsan Talaq, Hasan Talaq and Talaq-ul- Biddat**) were arbitrary, capricious and violative of fundamental rights of Muslim women.
- 'Khula' and 'Mubarat' are the only two traditionally acknowledged Muslim modes of dissolution of marriage at the instance of the woman.
- Apart from the spiritual tenets engrained in the holy Quran, there being a wide variety of interpretations and divergent opinions among different scholars or schools of thought in the Muslim community, nothing is universally fundamental in the day-to-day practice of Islam.

2. Supreme Court appoints panel to frame scheme for rehabilitation, remarriage of abandoned widows

In news

- The Supreme Court appointed a committee of comprising of **social workers** and a **lawyer** .
- **Why?:** suggest measures to be taken for **rehabilitation of widows** abandoned by their family members and to deliberate on framing a policy to promote widow remarriage in the country.

Court observation

- Widow remarriage should be encouraged in society as it "might enable our society to give up the stereotype view of widows".
- The essential things, like food and drinking water, were not being provided to them.

Court directives to the committee

- To prepare a common working plan for the welfare of widows
- Examine all the prevailing schemes for widows and reports filed before the court by government and National Commission for Women.

Key fact

- The number of widows in the country has increased tremendously between 2001 and 2011.
- As per census data, the number of widows in the country was only 18.5 lakh, which was 0.7% of the total population in 2001, but in 2011, it went up to 5.6 crore, which was 4.6% of the entire population.
- India is the home of the largest number of widows in the world, followed by China with around five crore widows.
- As per census, 0.45% of the total widows are the child widows in the age group of 10-19 years. 9.0% are in the age group of 20-39 years, 32% in the age group of 40-59 years and 58% are above 60 years. Despite a law banning

child marriages, there are still 1.94 lakh child widows in the country.

3. Centre announces ₹85-crore children's diseases research centre at Gorakhpur

In news

- The Union government has approved the setting up of a **regional medical Centre** at a cost of ₹85 crore in **Gorakhpur**

Why? For in-depth research into children's diseases.

4. Tamil Nadu to get exemption from NEET for 2017

In news

- The Centre is all set to grant exemption from **NEET (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test)** for one year to Tamil Nadu in terms of government college medical admissions to help rural students.

What next? State has to pass an Ordinance seeking exemption for one year, which should specify that the exemption was being provided to help rural students to get admission in government colleges.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. In South Asia, be the Un-China

Context

- China's influence in South Asia and ways to counter it

Doklam Issue

- **Nepal:** Nepal will not get dragged into this or that side(means India and China) in the border dispute
- **Sri Lanka:** India and China are “both important” to Sri Lanka
- **Bhutan :** blaming China for violating agreements at Doklam, but not mentioning India

India's Neighborhood and China's presence

- **Maldives**
 - Chinese companies has bagged contracts to most infrastructure projects in Maldives
 - This includes development of a key new island and its link to the capital Male
 - And a 50-year lease to another island for a tourism project
- **Nepal**
 - Nepal has signed a transit trade treaty and agreement on infrastructure linkages with China in late 2015-2016
 - China is also building a railway to Nepal, opening up Lhasa-Kathmandu road links
 - And has approved a soft loan of over \$200 million to construct an airport at Pokhara
- **Sri Lanka**
 - Sri Lanka's Hambantota port construction project went to the Chinese in 2007 only after India rejected it
 - China doesn't just own 80% of the port, it has also won practically every infrastructure contract from Hambantota to Colombo
- **Bangladesh**
 - China has committed \$24 billion to Bangladesh for its infrastructure and energy projects

India's available options

- India must regain its role as a prime mover of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)
- Even after a year, there have been no steps taken to restore the SAARC process is unfortunate
- It should be remembered that despite China's repeated requests, SAARC was one club it never gained admittance to

The way forward

- India must recognise that doing better with its neighbours is not about investing more or undue favours

- It is about following a policy of mutual interests and of respect which India is more culturally attuned to than its large rival is.
- Each of India's neighbours shares more than a geographical context with India. They share history, language, tradition and even cuisine.
- When dealing with Beijing bilaterally, New Delhi must match China's aggression, and counter its moves with its own. When dealing with China in South Asia, however, India must do exactly the opposite, and not allow itself to be outpaced. In short, India must "be the Un-China".

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. Encephalitis, its causes, prevention and prevalence in India, explained

Context

- No less than 60 children have lost their lives over the most recent five-days at the state-run Baba Raghav Das Medical College Hospital in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh because of different reasons, among them diseases emerging out of encephalitis.

What is encephalitis?

- Encephalitis is a potentially life-threatening but rare disease causing "acute inflammation" of the brain.
- **Meaning of Acute:** when a disease appears abruptly and grows at a fast pace.
- A person afflicted with encephalitis requires serious medical attention.

What are the causes of encephalitis?

- The disease can occur in people of all ages, but children and the elderly are more at risk of being afflicted with the disease.
- The usual cause of the rare disease is either a **viral infection**.
- Sometimes it is caused when the brain's own immune system mistakenly attacks brain tissue.
- In rare cases, encephalitis is caused due to bacterial infection, parasites, or may be prompted from other infectious diseases.
- It is a non-communicable disease.

What is Japanese encephalitis?

- One of the most common form of viral encephalitis in Asia is the Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV), caused by mosquito-borne flavivirus.
- The disease belongs to the same genus as dengue, yellow and West Nile viruses.
- JEV primarily affects children as most adults tend to attain natural immunity from the disease, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

How can the disease be prevented?

- There are several vaccinations that are effective in preventing the disease, including vaccines for measles, mumps, rubella
- People should also use proper clothing to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes in mosquito-infested areas.

Is the disease prevalent in India? How severe is it?

- Japanese Encephalitis is recognised as the leading cause of the disease in India.
- **Region affected:** West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Manipur, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Pondicherry and Karnataka.
- Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are two states, which have seen the most number of encephalitis cases in recent years.
- The Uttar Pradesh government in May this year launched a vaccination campaign in 38 sensitive districts of the state to combat the JE virus.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. No level playing field

Context

- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code has loopholes to close down businesses.

Need for Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code

- It was enacted to improve the ease of doing business in India
- It aims to overhaul laws relating to reorganisation and insolvency resolution of corporate persons, partnership firms, and individuals
- Attempts to ease the process of recovery of money by operational and financial creditors in a timely manner.
- Places the onus on professionals to put forth resolution plans within 180 days

A quick procedure

- Code looks to wrap up the process in 180 days.
- It warrants a notice of dispute to be issued followed by a response period of 10 days for the corporate debtor, failing which the creditor is entitled to file an insolvency application before the National Company Law Tribunal.
- Upon admission of the application, the moratorium period commences.
- At this stage, the existing management of the company loses complete control and all powers vest with an interim resolution professional, who has merely 30 days to put together all the relevant information and call for a meeting of the financial creditors.
- Once the financial creditors meet, they must appoint a resolution professional who will propose a resolution plan for the company.
- All such resolution plans are placed before the financial creditors. When at least 75% of the financial creditors approve, the plan is implemented by way of an order by the NCLT. If the financial creditors fail to arrive at a consensus, the default plan is to liquidate the company.

Drawbacks

- The Code has enough loopholes to close down businesses instead of assisting entrepreneurs.
- It fails to provide adequate safeguards to protect the rights of the company before handing over the management in its entirety to the resolution professional.
- Neither does the corporate debtor have an opportunity to put forth his/her case nor is there any scope of discretion provided to the adjudicating authority itself.
- At various stages, the Code fails to provide any opportunity to the corporate debtor to make a representation
- The Code is also deficient in providing a yardstick for the qualification of insolvency resolution professionals
- It allows for any person to access the information memorandum put together by the insolvency professional. There is no law protecting confidentiality and vitiates the fundamental right to business under Article 19(1)(g).
- Code prohibits withdrawal of the application once the same has been admitted. This means that there is no scope whatsoever for settlement.

Nothing here for Today!!!

E. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

F. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Discuss the possible factors that inhibit India from enacting for its citizens a uniform civil code as provided for in the Directive Principles of State Policy.{Mains-2015}

GS Paper III

1. In what way could replacement of price subsidy with Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) change the scenario of subsidies in India? Discuss.
2. What are the impediments in marketing and supply chain management in industry in India? Can e-commerce help in overcoming these bottlenecks?

GS Paper IV

1. Suppose one of your close friends, who is also aspiring for civil services, comes to you for discussing some of the issues related to ethical conduct in public service. He raises the following points:

1. In the present times, when unethical environment is quite prevalent, individual attempts to stick to ethical principles may cause a lot of problems in one's career. It may also cause hardship to the family members as well as risk to one's life. Why should we not be pragmatic and follow the path of least resistance, and be happy with doing whatever good we can?
2. When so many people are adopting wrong means and are grossly harming the system, what difference would it make if only a small minority tries to be ethical? They are going to be rather ineffective and are bound to get frustrated.
3. If we become fussy about ethical considerations, will it not hamper the economic progress of our country? After all, in the present age of high competition, we cannot afford to be left behind in the race of development.
4. It is understandable that we should not get involved in grossly unethical practices, but giving and accepting small gratifications and doing small favours increases everybody's motivation. It also makes the system more efficient. What is wrong in adopting such practices?

Critically analyze the above viewpoints. On the basis of this analysis, what will be your advice to your friend? (250 words)

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2. [In absence of permission, Kannada film blurs tricolor](#)

C. GS3 Related

Economics

1. [From plate to plough: Plan for the agri-futures](#)

D. GS4 Related

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F. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. [Rain triggers flash floods in Bihar](#)

In news

- Heavy rain since past three days sparked flash floods in parts of Bihar.
- Large areas in Assam and North Bengal inundated, paralyzing regular life and shattering rail link to the Northeast from the rest of the country.
- Kaziranga National Park (KNP) and the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam submerged, keeping rhinos and other animals under distress.
- Guarding has been strengthened as poachers could take advantage of the situation.

Category: POLITY

1. NHRC seeks report on Gorakhpur deaths

In news

- Death toll at Uttar Pradesh hospital counts to 104.
- NHRC issued a notice to the Uttar Pradesh government seeking a detailed report within four weeks over the deaths of dozens of children and others at the Baba Raghav Das Medical College hospital in Gorakhpur.
- National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) termed the case as serious abuse of the right to life of patients.
- About 60 patients hospitalized to the intensive care unit of the government-run unit expired because of the oxygen supply being clogged due to pending payments to the supplier.
- The government had upheld that the children expired due to diverse illnesses, including Japanese encephalitis (JE)

What is encephalitis?

- Encephalitis is a potentially life-threatening but rare disease causing “acute inflammation” of the brain.
- Meaning of Acute: when a disease appears abruptly and grows at a fast pace.
- A person afflicted with encephalitis requires serious medical attention.

What are the causes of encephalitis?

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- Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are two states, which have seen the most number of encephalitis cases in recent years.
- The Uttar Pradesh government in May this year launched a vaccination campaign in 38 sensitive districts of the state to combat the JE virus.

2. [In absence of permission, Kannada film blurs tricolor](#)

In news

- It is compulsory for all films using the national flag to get clearance from the MHA. Moviemakers are to detail whether the screenplay really demands the usage of the national flag and stands by the dimensions of the flag and flagpole as approved by the law.
- The national flag is identified as an emblem in the (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950.
- National flag not be utilized for any trade or commerce, without the approval of the MHA.
- Abuse of the standard shall be illegal with detention for a duration, which may be long-drawn-out to three years, or with fine, or both.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. [From plate to plough: Plan for the agri-futures](#)

In news

- Though we celebrate 70 years of Independence, the farmers distress regarding marketing system for agri-products remains un-supportive.
- The e-NAM purposes to construct an pan-India spot market by crafting an electronic platform.

- For pan-India transactions to take place infrastructure more than installing a simple software is the need of the hour.
- The agri-futures market can be proposal to ensure farmers' decisions are forward thinking.
- India documented the first trade in futures in 1875 in cotton in the Bombay Cotton Exchange.
- The sequence of interruptions throughout the Second World War due to the scarcity of essential commodities broke down the India's futures market.
- This mind-set sustained post-Independence, and only pepper and turmeric were allowed to trade in 1977
- In 2003 three national exchanges were established and all supplies were permitted to be transacted in futures markets.
- But since 2003, 15 commodity futures were banned, leading to insecurity in the market.
- Markets are often disturbed by sudden prohibitions or deferments by the government due to deep mistrust in the functioning of these markets as very few farmers or farmer producer organizations (FPOs) trade on futures.

Chinese success on the similar platform

- China in the early 1990s started, and by 2016, it turned to be the largest player in global agri-futures contracts.
- State participation in the futures markets, No unexpected interruptions of commodities, Emphasis on choice of commodities are a few steps taken to strengthen the same.

Nothing here for Today!!!

E. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

F. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. 'Minor' sexual offences is a threat to women empowerment. Discuss it in the backdrop of increasing violence against women in India.

GS Paper III

1. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a next boon to mankind. Critically examine.
2. If futures market is one way to ensure farmers security. Examine reasons for India's poor performance in Agri-futures trading and give suggestions?

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1. [Human-avifauna conflict continues to escalate in Uppalapadu](#)

Disaster Management

1. [Living with the Deluge](#)

Science and Technology

1. [MasterCard mulls using blockchain tech](#)

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E. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

F. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. [Show collective will to build a New India, says Modi](#)

- PM asks the nation to embrace ‘Bharat jodo’ slogan and reject ‘chalta hai’ attitude
- In the Independence Day speech, Prime Minister Narendra Modi drafted out the extensive outlines of a “New India” that will be independent of communalism, casteism, terrorism, corruption and nepotism.
- The period between 1942-47 was a key one for India’s struggle for independence so should the period of 2017-22 be for creating a “New India” with the same collective will, says PM Modi.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Assam, Manipur can now decide on AFSPA

- The Union Home Ministry is to give power to impose the ‘disturbed areas’ tag on Assam and Manipur.
- States will be the deciding authority to either carry on the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act or annul it.
- The AFSPA authorizes the Army and forces positioned in “disturbed areas” to execute anyone violating the rule and detain and search any sites without warrant.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Human-avifauna conflict continues to escalate in Uppalapadu

- A non-natural haven with a diversity of waterfowl has been center of a human-wildlife conflict.
- Many promises from the state government convinced the residents of the village to admit the birds and not to shew them away. But then after two decades, residents are annoyed with the false promises from the government.
- The exotic spotbilled (or Grey) pelicans, painted storks, ibises and many other birds were seen in this region.

Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. Living with the Deluge

- PM declared Rs 2,000 crore package for post disaster management in the flood-affected Northeastern states.
- The series of flood disaster across the countries appeals for a shift in the focus from flood protection to flood governance.
- Rivers in the Northeast experience a sharp gradient along their course from Arunachal Pradesh and Bhutan to Assam’s floodplains thus carrying large amounts of sediments. When these get deposited reduces the river’s storage capacity along the channels. This in turn results in flood along the adjoining plains.

Flood protection methods

- Embankments
- Storage dams
- Dredging rivers and bank strengthening
- Diversion canals
- Floodplains and groundwater replenishment

Need of the hour

- Resilience across the affected areas through Flood governance
- Clean and safe Water and sanitation during the floods.
- Ensure access to health care and veterinary services.

- Due to the practice subsistence agriculture the land may remain swamped for a long duration in the monsoons. Hence correct irrigation services should be ensured.
- Reduce vulnerability
- Sustainable and balanced utilization of the resource
- Community-participation

Strong bodies and authorities similar to that of Brahmaputra Board and flood control departments are the need of the hour. These bodies should be staffed with scientists to incorporate scientific approach in disaster management.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. MasterCard mulls using blockchain tech

- Mastercard looks ahead for a clearance from the regulatory framework in India as it is looking forward to incorporate blockchain technology into its operations .
- Presently an inter-ministerial committee is the authority to look into the regulation of blockchain technology.

Blockchain Technology

- It is the technology behind crypto-currencies.
- Each block comprises of a hash pointer that acts as a link to a previous block. Along with those it comprises of a timestamp and transaction data.
- Blockchains are resistant technologies to modification of the data.

Nothing here for Today!!!

E. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

F. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. The repeated tabling to craft an All-India Judicial Service (AIJS) similar to that of the All India Services (AIS) is creating endless debate since the recommendation by Law Commission in the 1950s.” Examine.

GS Paper III

1. Repeated occurrences of floods bring up the question to shift the focus from relief measures to building resilience in flood-prone areas. Discuss.

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1. [Full text of Tripura CM Manik Sarkar's speech that DD, AIR refused to broadcast](#)

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E. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

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Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. SC orders NIA to probe Kerala 'love jihad' case

- The assertive conversion, radicalisation of a Hindu girl and her marriage to a Muslim man in Kerala seeks the attention of National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the Supreme Court.
- NIA to start its investigation as per the orders of the Court under the supervision of committee led by former Supreme Court judge, Justice R.V. Raveendran.

About National Investigation Agency NIA

- National Investigation Agency (NIA) is a central agency founded by the Indian Government to combat terror in India.
- A dedicated Central Counter Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency.
- The organization deals with terror related crimes across states without special permission from the states.
- The Agency came into survival with the enactment of the National Investigation Agency Act 2008 by the Parliament of India.
- Its objectives are:
 - to set the standards of excellence in counter terrorism and other national security related investigations.
 - It strives towards developing a highly trained, partnership oriented workforce to excel in its objective to set excellent standards in counter terrorism and national security investigations.
 - It also acts as deterrence for existing and potential terrorist groups/individuals.
 - It aims to develop as a storehouse of all terrorist related information

Category: POLITY

1. [No case for an all India judicial service](#)

- Suggestion to craft an **All-India Judicial Service (AIJS)** on the contours of the All India Services (AIS) has initiated the debate on a move to implement it.
- High Courts expressed their disapproval towards the suggestion.
- District judges will be enlisted centrally through an **all-India examination** and given cadre similar to that of AIS
- Objective of the move is to ensure **transparent** and **efficient** method of recruitment and appeal the talent in India's **legal profession**

2. [Flag hoisting today? Do you know the rules?](#)

Why in news?

- Naveen Jindal, Member of Parliament, Kurukshetra, was asked to remove the display of the national flag from his factory premises; he took the legal route and got the Flag Code of India amended.

About the Standards of procedure

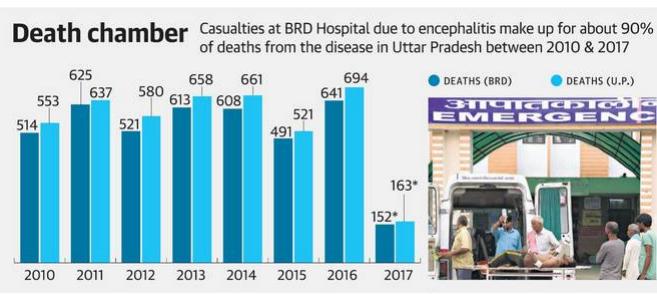
- Flag Code of India that lays down all the rules and procedures to be followed while hoisting the national flag.
- Ensure the dimension of the flag is correct and the timing is right for hoisting it.
- Never keep it on the ground in any circumstances and keep it folded after it has been lowered in a proper place.
- Stand in attention and salute, and while the last string of the anthem is being played, lower the salute.
- The national flag of India shall be made of hand spun and hand woven wool/cotton/silk khadi bunting and its length to height (width) ratio shall be 3:2.
- The flag shall not be used for commercial purposes in violation of the Emblem and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950.
- The flag shall not be intentionally allowed to touch the ground or the floor or trail in water.
- Where the flag is displayed in open, it should, as far as possible, be flown from sunrise to sunset, irrespective of weather conditions.

3. [Union Cabinet approves new metro rail policy](#)

- The Union Cabinet comes up with a new policy for magnifying and regulating metro rail services.
- The most significant move is with respect to the funding pattern.
- The policy makes private sector contribution binding for all the three funding options:
 - Public-private partnership (PPP) model with central assistance under the Viability Gap Funding scheme of the Finance Ministry,
 - Grant from the Centre under which 10% of the project cost would be given as a lump sum, or
 - 50:50 equity sharing model between the Central and State governments.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. [15%-29% AES fatality rate at BRD Hospital](#)



- Mortalities of Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) patients at Gorakhpur's region agonized by the infection have been between 15% and 29% of all cases over a period of eight years.
- The Japanese encephalitis virus, scrub typhus or other bacterial, viral or fungal infections are the reason behind the number of cases of AES.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. [Ministerial group to oversee disinvestment](#)

- A ministerial group chaired by Finance Minister would be the deciding authority on particulars of strategic disinvestment of public sector firms.
- It will be the authority responsible to state the terms of sale and also inviting financial bids from prospective buyers.
- The suggestion from Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) got a nod from the CCEA for establishing an Alternative Mechanism (AM) comprising of the Finance Minister, Minister for Road Transport & Highways and Minister of Administrative Department in order to agree on the complications, terms and conditions of the sale from the stage of welcoming to the end process of financial bid.
- The Core Group of Secretaries (CGD) to take policy judgments on procedural issues and deviations.

About DIPAM

- Union Government has renamed Department of Disinvestment as Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM).
- DIPAM is under Union Finance Ministry.
- Its function is to advise the Union with respect to the financial restructuring of PSUs and also for appealing investment through capital markets.
- It will deal with all matters relating to sale of Union Government's equity through private placement or offer for sale or any other mode in the erstwhile Central PSUs.
- Henceforth all other post disinvestment matters will continue to be handled by the Union Finance Ministry or concerned department in consultation with DIPAM on necessity.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. [Hizbul Mujahideen labelled a 'terror group'](#)

- The U.S. labelled militant group Hizbul Mujahideen as a "foreign terrorist organisation".
- This move came up two months following the move to declare the group's chief Syed Salahuddin as a global terrorist.
- This move imposes U.S. sanctions on the organization, where the entire property subject to U.S. jurisdiction are blocked, and people in the U.S. are generally forbidden from dealing in any transactions with the group.
- This move was the result of an surge in terror undertakings by the militant group in Kashmir in recent months.
- This move comes as a major setback to Pakistan, which has been projecting the militant group as a voice of the Kashmiri people.

About the FTO

"Foreign Terrorist Organization" (FTO) is a label for non-United States-based groups considered by the United States Secretary of State, in accordance with section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (INA), to be tangled in terrorist activities as per the US definition.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. India has 27,312 elephants, census shows

- The first-ever all-India Elephant Population Assessment estimates India's Asian elephant population at 27,312.
- Methods employed: sighting-based direct count mode. Further it will be confirmed from the indirect dung-count technique in three months.
- Karnataka records the maximum number of elephants (6,049), followed by Assam (5,719) and Kerala (3,054).
- Reports also discussed about the reasons behind man-animal conflict:
 - Due to habitat fragmentation, elephants are moving out to agricultural landscapes leading to an increase in man-elephant conflict.

2. Cabinet clears stalled Bihar dam project

- The Union Cabinet has stepped forward to restart the North Koel Reservoir Project.
- This project was delayed since 1993 though it was a potential lifeline for irrigating over 40,000 hectares in specific backward and drought-prone districts of Jharkhand and Bihar.
- Nevertheless now the dam will be built smaller than planned and capacity condensed by up to 85%, to inherit the environmental and forest standards.
- Threat estimated was that submergence of shares of the Betla National Park and the Palamau Tiger Reserve

Category: MISCELLANEOUS

1. Full text of Tripura CM Manik Sarkar's speech that DD, AIR refused to broadcast

- Doordarshan and All India Radio (AIR) refused to broadcast Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar's Independence Day address.
- DD AND AIR compelled him to reshape it.
- Tripura CM termed it "undemocratic, autocratic and intolerant step".
- "The values of secularism were the brahmasthra in keeping Indians together as a nation. But this spirit of secularism is under attack" says Tripura CM.

Nothing here for Today!!!

E. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

F. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. "Increasing competition among regional navies for dominance in the Indian ocean region is paving the way of global destruction" Examine.
2. Government has come up with GIS-enabled portal maps with respect to land-information. Can this be a potential tool in land reforms? Discuss.

Also, check previous [Daily News Analysis](#)

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – Aug 18

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Category: POLITY & GOVERNANCE

1. [ADR report on corporate donations](#)

- Between financial year 2012- 13 and 2015-16, the five national parties received a total of Rs.1,070.68 crore via voluntary contributions above Rs.20,000.
- Of this, 89%, or Rs.77 crore, was from corporate and business houses, according to the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR).
- The BJP received the lion's share of the corporate donations, lapping up Rs.81 crore from 2,987 corporate donors. This is nearly three times the combined corporate donations received by the remaining four parties.
- The BJP received the highest donations from all the 14 sectors, as defined by

the ADR, including real estate (Rs.20 crore); mining, construction, exports/imports (Rs.83.56 crore); and chemicals/pharmaceuticals (Rs.31.94 crore).

- In 1,933 donations involving Rs.04 crore, PAN details were not mentioned. Address details were missing for Rs.355.08 crore received through 1,546 donations.

Background:

- Every year, political parties are required to submit details of donations above Rs.20,000 to the Election Commission.
- They have to provide the donor's name, address, PAN, mode of payment and the amount contributed.

2. Rights groups urge India to honour duty to Rohingyas

News:

- Government of India plans to deport about 40,000 Rohingya immigrants from Myanmar.
- As a reaction, international human rights agencies Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch called upon India to “abide by international legal obligations” and not force them to return, which they termed an “outrageous” move.

Context/Background:

- The international organisations opine, while India is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, it is still bound by customary international law not to forcibly return any refugee to a place where they face a serious risk of persecution or threats to their life or freedom.
- The basis of this argument is the international principle of “non-refoulement” adopted by the UN.
- Indian Home Ministry issued a statement on identifying and deporting Rohingyas, including about 16,500 who have been registered by the UN High Commission for Refugees in India.
- The Rohingyas who fled to India after violence in the Western Rakhine State were mainly settled in Jammu, Hyderabad, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi-NCR and Rajasthan.
- The Home ministry has issued an advisory to the State governments to deport all foreign nationals who are staying illegally in India, citing security threats posed by them.

What is Principle of Non-refoulement?

It is a fundamental principle of international law which forbids a country receiving asylum seekers from returning them to a country in which they would be in likely danger of persecution based on “race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion”

Category: BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Redrawing the arc of influence

Background:

- A brief analysis of the outcomes of the recent visits of Prime Minister and the changing dimensions of India’s foreign policy

Indo-US:

- The visit focused mainly on counter-terrorism and security co-operation and avoided the contentious trade related issues.
- The success in these two areas can be noticed by:
- The naming of the Hizbul Mujahideen chief as a “specially designated global terrorist” and a “new consultation mechanism on domestic and international terrorist designations listing proposals”
- Confirmation of the sale of the Guardian Unmanned Aerial System to India.

Indo-Israel:

- First ever first to Israel by an Indian PM
- Elevation of the India-Israel relationship to the level of a ‘strategic partnership’.
- The main focus of the visit was on defence cooperation, joint development of defence products and transfer of technology.
- Most of the agreements signed related to transfer of technology and innovative technology-related items and India expects to benefit substantially, considering that Israeli export rules are far more flexible than those of the U.S.
- Some sticky points in Indo_Israel:
- India and Israel decided to set up a \$40 million Innovation Fund to allow Indian and Israeli enterprises to develop innovative technologies and products for commercial applications.
- However, Israel-China comprehensive innovation partnership which has an

outlay of \$300 million clearly overshadows this.

- India and Israel also have differences over China's BRI:(Belt and Road initiative) Israel is eager to participate in it, unlike India, and possibly views this as an opportunity to develop a project parallel to the Suez Canal.
- Both countries also expressed a strong commitment to combat terror. The reality, however, is that when the two countries speak of terrorism, they speak of very different things.
- Iran and Hezbollah are the main targets for Israel, which has little interest in the Afghan Taliban or Pakistan's Lashkar-e-Taiba. For India, it is the latter that matters.

Indo-China-Pak:

- China is increasingly and aggressively expanding its political and economic presence in the East and Southeast Asia, South Asia and now slowly increasing its presence into West Asia.
- For instance, China's influence in Iran is very high vis-a-vis that of India.
- Experts opine that, India, however has put up a courageous fight against China. It has not been ruffled either by BRI or Doklam standoff.
- Few other countries in Asia are, however willing to cooperate with China.
- A divided house in ASEAN with most countries in the region wanting to join China-based initiatives. Even in South Asia, despite India's commanding presence, China has been successful in winning quite a few friends among India's neighbours such as Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.
- Pakistan continues to be a rogue state and its unrelenting stand to tackle terrorism has led to a virtual diplomatic standoff between India and Pakistan.
- As a consequence, India has been left with few options and this is leading to a ***diplomatic gridlock*** which does not augur well for India.
- Pakistan's dependence on China is growing due to formers own internal stresses.
- This is contributing to a strategic imbalance in the South Asian region, which is the main context in which Indian diplomacy needs to redraw its arc of influence.

The Russia factor:

- Russia is undergoing a strategic resurgence, sustained in good measure by the close relations recently established with China. Buoyed by developments in the Ukraine and Crimea, and the uncertainties surrounding U.S. commitment to NATO, the new Russia-China 'strategic congruence' is certain to impact Asia.
- At this juncture, India-Russia relations appear less robust than at any time in the past half century. India's 'Act East and Look West' policies have given a

new dimension to Indian diplomacy in both East and West Asia. However, diminishing diplomatic influence in the West Asian region vis-a-vis increasing influence of Russia and China is a cause of concern.

- The ‘Act East’ policy has produced better results. Closer relations with countries in East and South East Asia, especially Japan and Vietnam, are a positive development. However, in the Asia-Pacific, India has to contend with an increasingly assertive China. There is little evidence to show that India’s diplomatic manoeuvres individually, or with allies like Japan, have succeeded in keeping the Chinese juggernaut at bay — or for that matter provide an alternative to China in the Asia-Pacific.
- Indian diplomacy, therefore, needs a renewed strategy and also display still higher levels of sophistication to overcome the odds.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

E. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

F. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper 2

1. Critically analyse the Changes introduced by the Government in the Finance Act 2017 with respect to Political funding by corporates.
2. The health infrastructure in India needs a thorough overhaul. In the light of recent incidents in Gorakhpur, critically examine India’s public health infrastructure. Give your suggestions for improvement.

Also, check previous [**Daily News Analysis**](#)

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Category: POLITY

1. Rajasthan govt. grants quota for Gujjars

In news:

- The present-day BJP government in Rajasthan has decided to increase reservation for the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) from the present 21% to 26%.
- The BJP government intends to provide reservation in proportion to the increase in the OBC population.
- A Bill to this effect will be tabled in the upcoming monsoon session of the State Assembly.
- **Changes made:** the revised OBC quota would be split to grant 5% reservation to the “ **Most Backward Classes** ”.
- The new “ **Most Backward Classes** ” category will include **Gujjars** and four other castes — **Banjara, Gadia-Lohar, Raika and Gadaria**.
- This decision will take the total reservation in the State to 54%, going beyond the Supreme Court mandated 50% cap.

Earlier attempts:

- The State government had earlier tried thrice to grant 5% reservation to Gujjars and four other castes.
- Rajasthan High Court struck down the legislation, observations:
 - Quota exceeded the 50% limit.
 - Lack of quantifiable data supporting the claim of Gujjars’ backwardness.

2. Bengal not for central recruitment of judiciary

Context:

- **Proposed reforms:** Central selection mechanism for appointing judicial officers in State subordinate judicial services.

West Bengal Government Response: Negative.

- **Reason given:** against the principle of federalism practised in Indian democracy.
- **Senior advocate response:** central mechanism would encroach upon the constitutional duty of the State High Courts under **Article 233** of the Constitution. This constitutional duty was the cornerstone of independence of State judiciary.

Basic Information:

Article 233: Appointment of district judges

(1) Appointments of persons to be, and the posting and promotion of, district judges in any State shall be made by the **Governor of the State** in consultation with the **High Court** exercising jurisdiction in relation to such State

(2) A person not already in the service of the Union or of the State shall only be eligible to be appointed a district judge if he has been for not less than seven years an advocate or a pleader and is recommended by the High Court for appointment

Category: BILATERAL ISSUES

1. NHRC issues notice on Rohingyas

In News:

- Union Ministry of Home Affairs plans to deport 40,000 Rohingya immigrants from Myanmar.
- **NHRC Observation regarding the deportation issue:**
- Refugees are no doubt foreign nationals but they are human beings.
- **Fear of Persecution:** Before taking a big step, the Government of India has to look into every aspect of the situation, keeping in focus the fact that the members of the Rohingya community, who have crossed into India and are residing here for long, have a fear of persecution once they are pushed back to their native country.
- Highlighted the Supreme Court's decisions: the **Right to Life and**

Personal Liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution apply to all, irrespective of their citizenship.

- **Key Fact:** India is not a signatory to the **1951 Convention on Refugees and the 1967 Protocol**

Basic Information:

- **Rohingya people**
- The Rohingya people are **Muslim Indo-Aryan peoples** from the **Rakhine State**, Myanmar.
- According to the Rohingyas and some scholars, they are indigenous to Rakhine State, while other historians claim that the group represents a **mixture of precolonial and colonial immigrations**.
- The official stance of the **Myanmar government**, however, has been that the Rohingyas are mainly **illegal immigrants** who migrated into Arakan following Burmese independence in 1948 or after the Bangladesh liberation war in 1971.
- **The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees**
- **The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees**, also known as the 1951 Refugee Convention, is a United Nations multilateral treaty that defines who is a refugee, and sets out the rights of individuals who are granted asylum and the responsibilities of nations that grant asylum.
- The Convention also sets out which people do not qualify as refugees, such as war criminals.
- The Convention also provides for some visa-free travel for holders of travel documents issued under the convention
- The Refugee Convention builds on Article 14 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognizes the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries. A refugee may enjoy rights and benefits in a state in addition to those provided for in the Convention.
- **Definition of refugee** “A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual

residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”

- **NHRC**
- The Rights Commission (NHRC) of India is an autonomous public body constituted on 12 October 1993 under the Protection of Human Rights Ordinance of 28 September 1993
- The NHRC is the National Human Rights Commission of India, responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights, defined by the Act as “rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants”.

2. No data from China on Brahmaputra this year

In news:

- India blames China for the current spate of floods across the northeastern States
- **China's responsibility:** It should share water-related data about the Himalayan Rivers. But in the current year it has not shared any data with India.

Agreement between India and China: India-China Expert-Level mechanism

- Started in 2006, China had committed to share hydrological data during the flood season for Brahmaputra and Satluj rivers.
- The hydrological data is to be shared between May 15 to October 15 every year.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. North States reel under swine flu

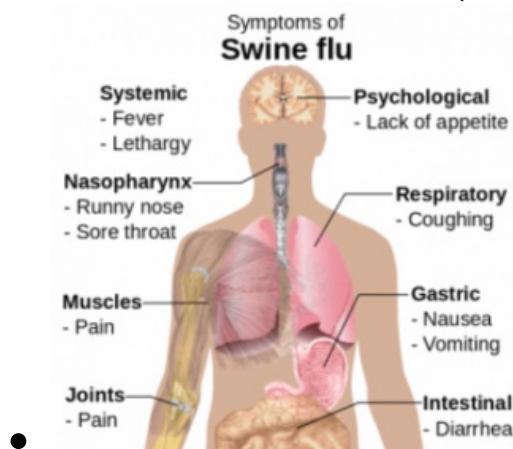
In news:

- **States worst-hit by swine flu this year:** Gujarat (highest with 242 deaths), Rajasthan, Punjab and Delhi

Basic Information:

- **Swine influenza**
- Swine influenza, also called pig influenza, swine flu, hog flu and pig flu, is an infection caused by any one of several types of swine influenza viruses. Swine influenza virus (SIV) or swine-origin influenza virus (S-OIV) is any strain of the influenza family of viruses that is endemic in pigs.

- **The swine flu virus (H1N1):**



- **Influenza A (H1N1)** virus is the subtype of influenza A virus that is the most common cause of human influenza.
- It is an **orthomyxovirus** that contains the glycoproteins haemagglutinin and neuraminidase. For this reason, they are described as H1N1, H1N2 etc. depending on the type of H or N antigens they express with metabolic synergy. **Haemagglutinin** causes red blood cells to clump together and binds the virus to the infected cell. **Neuraminidase** is a type of glycoside hydrolase enzyme which helps to move the virus particles through the infected cell and assist in budding from the host cells.
- Some strains of H1N1 are endemic in humans and cause a small fraction of all influenza-like illness and a small fraction of all seasonal influenza. Other strains of H1N1 are endemic in pigs (swine influenza) and in birds (avian influenza).

- **Orthomyxoviruses**

- The Orthomyxoviruses are a family of RNA viruses that includes seven genera: Influenza virus A, Influenza virus B, Influenza virus C, Influenza virus D, Isavirus, Thogotovirus and Quaranjavirus.

- **Endemic**

- Endemism is the ecological state of a species being unique to a defined

geographic location, such as an island, nation, country or other defined zone, or habitat type; organisms that are indigenous to a place are not endemic to it if they are also found elsewhere.

- **Pandemic:**
- A pandemic is an epidemic of infectious disease that has spread through human populations across a large region; for instance multiple continents, or even worldwide.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Draft pharma policy calls for trade margins cap

Draft Pharmaceutical Policy 2017 highlights:

- **Key objective:** to make essential drugs accessible at affordable prices to common people while providing a long-term stable policy environment for the pharmaceutical sector.
- **cap on “unreasonable trade margins”:**
- The government is planning to fix the trade margins on drugs.
- Impact: move is aimed to bring down the costs and create a level-playing field for the pharma industry.
- **Ending “unethical marketing practices”:** of pharmaceutical firms and marketing companies by luring doctors to recommend particular brands through all-expenses-paid ‘educational conventions’ and other incentives.
- **New Agency for regulation of marketing:** regulation for marketing practice which is at present voluntary will be made ‘mandatory’ and an agency for the implementation would also be assigned.

Practice at present:

- The government fixes **ceiling prices** of all drugs **under the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM)**.
- **Price fixation** of these drugs is carried out by **the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)**.

2. Cause for caution, not gloom

Context:

- Economic Survey II presents a mixed picture of the Indian economy.
- It highlights some obvious strengths but **optimism about the medium-term is moderated by a near term deflationary impulses**

Key Highlights:

Growth

- Volume 1 forecast real GDP growth of 6.75%-7.5% this year, it suggests that the balance of risk has shifted to the downward side of the range. This means a **sub-7% rate of growth**.
- Medium-Term Expenditure Framework statement in pursuance of the FRBM Act, 2003 assumes that nominal GDP growth for the current (2017-18) and subsequent two years would be 11.75%, 12.3% and 12.3%, respectively.
- Assuming inflation to be in the acceptable range of about 4%, the expected growth would be 7% plus.
- The projections also implicitly accept the fiscal deficit of 3.2% in the current year and 3% for the subsequent two years.
- Savings and investment ratio has declined in recent years. To sustain the projected rates of growth, the **savings-investment ratio would need to be increased**

Savings and investment ratio:

Structural reforms

- Reducing public dissavings through privatisations such as Air India and other measures mid-thirties.
- The demand boost inevitably comes from domestic consumption which accounted for about 96% of GDP growth in FY 2017

Inflation targets

- Economic Survey seeks to demonstrate that for sustained 14 quarters the actual inflation (WPI-CPI) has undershot the projections made by the Reserve Bank (RBI).
- It argues that India has moved to a low inflation trajectory

Reasons:

- Supply-side elasticity in agriculture
- Long-term softening of global oil prices due to alternatives such as shale and
- Increasing competitiveness of renewable fuels, particularly solar.

Measures that could be taken:

- A deeper cut in the interest rates would be warranted, given that current inflation at 1.5% is running well below the 4% target.

Exchange rate

- Real effective interest rates have appreciated significantly.
- The RBI has the challenge of managing significant inward capital flows with exchange rates.
- However, export competitiveness needs interventions which go beyond dependence on the exchange rate by way of improved logistics, infrastructure and altering the mix of commodities and destinations to meet new demand preferences.

Deflationary pressures-Causes

- Fiscal tightening by States due to Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY),
- Farm loan waivers
- Declining profitability of some key sectors like power and telecom
- Unresolved twin balance sheet problems
- Transitional issues of the GST are contributory to deflationary pressures.

Stabilise farm incomes:

- Fertilizer mix through extensive soil-testing along with the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana
- Extending assured irrigation benefits
- Better market linkages for producers to prolong the shelf life of perishable commodities

- Improving the sale of commodities deserve priority action.

Way forwards:

- Faster resolution of the twin balance sheets is critical to rekindling private investment.
- Accelerating the pace of agricultural reforms
- Targeted capital expenditure
- Improving ease of doing business and the multiple infrastructure initiatives, particularly in roads and power, are integral to any coherent action.
- Stressed sectors like telecom and power need speedier resolution

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Getting charged up

Context:

- India's 'ambitious electric vehicles target'

Government's announcements:

- The Government has recently announced that only electric vehicles (EVs) will be sold in India from 2030
- The current National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) has set a sales target of only 5-7 million EVs and hybrid electric vehicles annually by 2020

Requirements:

- The Indian automobile market is expected to increase to an annual sales figure of around 23 million by 2030
- Replacing these with EVs would require a significant push as far as vehicle-charging infrastructure and batteries are concerned
- Technical Requirement: The transition would require a battery capacity of about 400 GWh (gigawatt hours) each year
- It is equivalent to increasing the current global EV battery production by a factor of five, just to cater to the Indian EV market

Can this target be achieved by imports?

- The annual EV battery market is expected to be around \$30-55 billion
- India cannot afford to fulfil the demand solely through imports

Batteries used:

- Variants of lithium-ion batteries such as lithium-titanate, lithium-cobalt, and lithium-sulphur are predominantly used in electric vehicles

Highlights of Study by Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW)

- According to a study on India's critical non-fuel minerals by the CEEW, manufacturing lithium-ion batteries would require critical minerals
- These minerals include cobalt, graphite, lithium and phosphate
- Among them, lithium is of particular importance

Issues with lithium Prices

- 95% of global lithium production comes from Argentina, Australia, Chile and China
- The recent demand surge in the electric mobility market has already resulted in a twofold increase in lithium prices
- It is estimated by the CEEW that India would require about 40,000 tonnes of lithium to manufacture EV batteries in 2030
- It is important that India secure mineral supplies for its domestic industry by acquisition of overseas assets such as mineral reserves and the associated production

The Way forward

- There is a need to formulate policies which can encourage domestic public and private mining companies to invest in overseas lithium mining assets
- Also, India must focus on creating a vibrant battery research and development ecosystem domestically
- Research should focus on developing alternative technologies

- containing minerals with low supply risks
- And battery recycling techniques to recover associated minerals and materials
- Recycling lithium batteries will significantly reduce the burden in procuring fresh resources

Nothing here for Today!!!

E. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

F. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper 2

1.

1. Critically analyze various issues involved in the recently proposed Central selection mechanism for appointing judicial officers in State subordinate judicial services?

GS Paper 3

1.

1. “The regulator and the government would be two distinct agencies. The government shall not be the regulator and the regulator shall not be the government.” Evaluate.

Also, check previous [Daily News Analysis](#)

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4. Yawning gaps in communication and track safety

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1. India to raise visa issue in trade policy meet
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3. 'AI will have huge impact on jobs'

Internal Security

1. T-90 battle tanks to get an upgrade

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Category: POLITY

1. Union Cabinet approves new metro rail policy

The central government will approve and aid metro rail projects only if they have private participation and ensure last-mile connectivity for users, under a new policy cleared by the Union cabinet on Wednesday.

New metro rail policy

- States will get powers to make rules and regulations and set up permanent fare fixation authorities.
- In line with global best practices, metro projects will be approved on the basis of

‘Economic Internal Rate of Return of 14%’, a change from the existing ‘Financial Internal Rate of Return of 8%’.

Funding to the Metro Projects

- Metro rail projects are capital-intensive and are generally financed by central and state governments with equity and grants. The rest is raised from multilateral agencies like Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and European Investment Bank (EIB).
- Under the new policy, states need to adopt innovative mechanisms like value capture financing tools to mobilize resources for financing metro projects by capturing a share of increase in the asset values through ‘Betterment Levy’.
- States will also be required to enable low-cost debt capital by issuing corporate bonds for metro projects.

2. Foreign court can't rule on Indian couple's divorce plea: HC

- A foreign court does not have the jurisdiction to decide matrimonial matters of a couple who have Indian domicile and are governed under the Hindu Marriage Act even if the parties were at the time residing in a foreign nation, the Bombay High Court has observed.
- The High Court was hearing an appeal filed by the man’s wife challenging an order passed by a family court here that dismissed her plea seeking maintenance for herself and her two children. The family court, while dismissing her plea, observed that the Dubai court had already adjudicated the matter. However, the High Court, after perusing the case, opined that both are Indian citizens and there was no material to endorse the husband’s claim that they have domiciles in Dubai.

Rulings of the court

- Under the circumstances, we are unable to hold that the Dubai court was a court of competent jurisdiction to decide the matrimonial dispute between the petitioner [wife] and the respondent [husband].
- The HC noted that the parties in the present case are Indian nationals, are Hindus by birth, were married as per Hindu Vedic Rights and were governed in the matter of marriage and divorce by the provisions of the Hindu Marriage Act 1955.

3. SC bats for personal liberty

Context

- The apex court was hearing the plea filed by Mr. Paul after his bail pleas were rejected by the Gauhati High Court twice.
- He was arrested in November last year after an FIR was lodged against him under the Prevention of Corruption Act and a charge sheet was filed this January.
- Apex court has granted bail to former Assam Public Service Commission (APSC) chairman Rakesh Kumar Paul in a case of alleged corruption.
- Hon’ble supreme court’s stand on personal liberty v/s state’s perceived justice:
- Personal liberty cannot be compromised at the altar of what the state may perceive as justice, the Supreme Court has said while granting bail to former Assam Public Service

Commission (APSC) chairman Rakesh Kumar Paul in a case of alleged corruption.

- In matters of personal liberty, we cannot and should not be too technical and must lean in favour of personal liberty.

4. Yawning gaps in communication and track safety

In news

- While senior Railway Ministry officials suggested on Sunday that a likely reason for the derailment of Utkal Express here was the repairs taken up on the track when the train arrived, employees of different railway wings in the Khatauli-Muzaffarnagar area have started a blame game.
- Senior officials suggest derailment could have been caused by the work on the rail line; stationmaster insists he was not informed about any maintenance.
- Employees of the Railway Engineering Department in Khatauli maintain that they had informed the station officials about the repairs on Saturday evening, but stationmaster Rajendra Singh told The Hindu that he was not aware that the work had been on.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. India to raise visa issue in trade policy meet

- The Centre will, during the India-U.S. Trade Policy Forum (TPF) meeting likely in October, raise Indian industry's concerns over the U.S. visa 'curbs' and the 'delay' in inking a bilateral social security pact (or totalisation agreement).
- In the TPF meeting, the premier forum to resolve bilateral trade and investment issues, the U.S. is expected to table its worries over India's 'restrictions' on e-commerce as well as the 'challenges' faced by American innovative industries due to India's 'weak' Intellectual Property Rights regime.
- In addition, New Delhi would take up the 'non-tariff barriers' by the U.S. that are hurting Indian agriculture, pharmaceuticals and other industrial exports, while Washington is likely to raise its concerns over India's 'excessively high tariffs' on imports of many manufactured products as well as the \$24.3 billion goods trade deficit that the U.S. had with India in 2016.

2. Safeguarding the interests of farmers

Providing food to the poor or targeted groups at subsidised prices is fully WTO-compatible.

Context

The ongoing discourse, particularly in Tamil Nadu, on

- Public Distribution System (PDS),
- Procurement of grains/pulses from farmers,
- Public storage in Food Corporation of India godowns,
- Commitments made in the World Trade Organisation (WTO),
- Direct Benefit Transfer, etc.

Facts

- The PDS in Tamil Nadu is intact and continues to retain the feature of universal coverage even after implementation of the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA).
- Although the guidelines under the NFSA prescribe identification of priority households, there is no denial of any benefit under the PDS.
- There is no reduction even in the total coverage from the earlier Targeted Public Distribution System, which was effective till Tamil Nadu joined the NFSA in November 2016.
- The major part of the subsidy for the distribution of foodgrains (90.81% for rice and 91.70% for wheat) is borne by the Government of India.

Ensuring trade transparency

About Indian government stand at the WTO on the Trade Facilitation Agreement

- The Trade Facilitation Agreement was agreed on in 2013 in Bali and came into force from February 2017 after two-thirds of the WTO's 164 members ratified it.
- Several trade-related issues such as transparency, predictability and efficiency at the ports, faster clearance procedures, and improved appeal rights for traders are to be addressed by countries.
- They shall notify various provisions to bring in the facilitation, over three years or more.
- Only the basic set of provisions will be implemented within one year.
- The Trade Facilitation Agreement allows for consultations before any new trade rules are notified. A WTO study indicated that when the Trade Facilitation Agreement is fully implemented, trade costs for member countries will decrease by an average of 14.3%. It is also estimated that the time taken to export and import will come down drastically.
- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has made budgetary allocations for bringing in single-window clearance and improving customs clearance at the ports. A high-level committee chaired by the Cabinet Secretary will monitor logistics and efficiency at ports and related issues.
- Thus, it can be seen that the Trade Facilitation Agreement is not about market access but *inter alia* about facilitating and bringing trade transparency. By ratifying the Trade Facilitation Agreement, India has not forgotten the developmental agenda lying unfulfilled at the WTO.

Protecting the farmer

- The Public Stock Holding issue remains unresolved at the WTO.
- Although agreed on in Bali in 2013 and reiterated in Nairobi in 2015, that a permanent solution for Public Stock Holding be found by 2017, it is still a 'work-in-progress'.
- The existing WTO rules would have allowed a legal challenge to our Public Stock Holding and minimum support price-based procurement programme in case we breached 'the limit' on procurement.
- The 'limit' is defined as 10% of the value of production of the particular grain being procured.
- WTO rules classify procurement and holding of public stocks for food security purposes as 'Green Box' or non trade-distorting.

- However, if foodgrains for the public stocks are procured through an administered price/minimum support price and if this minimum support price is higher than the archaic fixed reference price (calculated on base period 1986-88), then it is considered as trade-distorting agriculture support.
- Such trade-distorting support should be within ‘the limit’, which is 10% of the value of production of the particular grain being procured.
- One of the first things that this government did in 2014 was to intensely engage with the WTO to obtain a ‘peace clause’ so that even if we did breach ‘the limit’, no one shall challenge our programme till such a time a permanent solution is found, agreed on, and adopted by the WTO membership.
- Providing food to the poor or targeted groups at subsidised prices is fully WTO-compatible. This does not figure at all in the WTO calculations. India has not undertaken any commitment in the WTO for any kind of limit on the food supplied under the NFSA.

3. ‘AI will have huge impact on jobs’

Context

- The emergence of Artificial Intelligence and automation is going to have a huge impact on jobs in the country.

In the tech sector

- The current model is heavily around small, added features like upgrading or software testing.
- And testing is one of those areas that is really going to be replaced by AI.
- Young professionals should prepare and train themselves for new technologies in areas such as AI, cyber security and healthcare.

Artificial Intelligence

- Stanford University describes machine learning as “the science of getting computers to act without being explicitly programmed.
- AI aims to build machines that can simulate human intelligence processes.
- Need for policy on data protection
- There is a need for policy on data protection and increasing amount of data and how it is being utilised in various platforms is actually a big risk.
- If not handled properly, it will end up with data monopoly. Experts opine that, data is going to create a new set of monopolies and whole new model of colonisation.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. T-90 battle tanks to get an upgrade

In news

- The Army is looking to upgrade the T-90 main battle tank to enhance firepower and mobility. They are going to be equipped with a new missile system and a new more powerful modular engine.

T-90

- The T-90 is a third-generation Russian battle tank that entered service in 1993. The tank is a modern variation of the T-72B and incorporates many features found on the T-80U.

Nothing here for Today!!!

E. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

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GS Paper II

1. “The broader aims and objectives of WTO are to manage and promote international trade in the era of globalization. But the Doha round of negotiations seem doomed due to differences between the developed and the developing countries.” Discuss in the Indian perspective.
2. In the light of the Satyam Scandal (2009), discuss the changes brought in corporate governance to ensure transparency, accountability.

GS Paper III

1. Discuss the role of financial regulator SEBI in improving the corporate governance of the country.

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Miscellaneous

1. [No power if you go in the open, SDO tells villagers](#)

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Category: POLITY

1. Supreme Court to deliver verdict on triple talaq today

In news:

- Today, a five-judge Supreme Court Bench , headed by Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar, will pronounce its judgment on the legality of the Islamic personal law practice of triple talaq .
- **Court to decide:** the law which allows a Muslim man to divorce his wife by saying **talaq (divorce) thrice , whether –**

- Violates the fundamental rights?
- Violates the human rights of Muslim women?

2. Triple talaq: Will SC verdict end personal laws' immunity?

In news

- The Supreme Court's judgment on the constitutionality of triple talaq may also decide the age-old debate whether **personal laws** can be brought under the ambit of **Article 13** (laws inconsistent with or in derogation of the fundamental rights) of the Constitution.
- **All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) argument :** Supreme Court does not have jurisdiction to strike down provisions of personal law.
- Organisations calling for reform and Muslim women from various walks of life across the country have urged the court to declare triple talaq and polygamy as “un-Islamic”.

What next?

- A judicial declaration from a Constitution Bench under Article 13 that personal laws are liable to comply with the fundamental rights guaranteed by Constitution would bring religious law, even uncodified practices, under judicial review.

Previous cases

- **State of Bombay versus Narasu Appa Mali , 1951:**
 - **The Bombay High Court observation :** personal law is not ‘law’ under Article 13. The judgment was never challenged in the Supreme Court.
- **Ahmedabad Women Action Group versus Union of India :**
 - The Supreme Court was asked to consider that unilateral divorce by talaq and polygamy violated Articles 14 and 15.
 - The court rejected the claim, saying it was for the legislature to determine.

3. Agency to fund higher education set to take off

In News

- The **Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA)** is set to take off soon.
- Funding from HEFA is expected to **boost infrastructure, especially state-of-the-art laboratories, in key institutions such as IITs, IIMs, and IIITs .**
- As per the funding mechanism, an institution can claim 10 times the sum it escrows in the first year. “If an institution escrows ₹10 crore, it can get approval for a ₹100-crore project

Basic Information

Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA)

- It will be formed as a **Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)** within a PSU Bank or the Government-owned-NBFC (Promoter).
- HEFA will have an authorised capital of 2,000 crore rupees and the government equity would be 1,000 crore rupees.
- The HEFA will also mobilise CSR funds from Corporates/PSUs which will in turn be released for promoting research and innovation in these institutions on grant basis.
- The principal portion of the loan will be repaid through the ‘internal accruals’ of the institutions earned through the fee receipts, research earnings etc.
- All the Centrally Funded Higher Educational Institutions will be eligible to join as members of the HEFA.
- For joining as members, the educational institution must agree to escrow a specific amount from their internal accruals for a period of 10 years to the HEFA.

4. Now, passport sans police verification

In news:

- The physical police verification for getting a passport may soon be dispensed with as the Centre plans to connect the procedure with Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems Project (CCTNS).
- **CCTNS and Passport verification:**
- Police will be given handheld devices to go to an applicant's address and his or her details will be uploaded on the network.
- It will minimise contact of an individual with police and reduce time (for getting passport)

Basic Information

CCTNS



- The Crime and Criminal Tracking Networks and Systems, abbreviated to CCTNS, is a project under Indian government for creating a comprehensive and integrated system for effective policing through e-Governance. The system includes nationwide online tracking system by integrating more than 14,000 police stations across the country. The project is implemented by National Crime Records Bureau.

National Crime Records Bureau

- The National Crime Records Bureau, abbreviated to NCRB, is an Indian government agency responsible for collecting and analysing crime data as defined by the Indian Penal Code (IPC). NCRB is headquartered in New Delhi and is part of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Government of India.

5. First-past-post: House panel asks parties if election system should change

In news

Discussions on “different systems of elections”

- An all-party Parliamentary panel is exploring “different systems of elections”, other than the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system
- FPTP is currently followed in the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls
- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice, has sent a six-page “Questionnaire on Electoral Reforms” to all parties and the Election Commission

What is ‘First Past the Post’ system?

- A first-past-the-post (abbreviated as FPTP, 1stP, 1PTP or FPP) voting method is one in which voters indicate on a ballot the candidate of their choice, and the candidate who receives most votes wins

First-past-the-post voting is one of several plurality voting methods

- It is a common, but not universal, feature of electoral systems with single-member electoral divisions; in fact, first-past-the-post voting is widely practiced in close to one third of the world’s countries
- Some notable examples include the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, India and most of the colonies and protectorates either currently or formerly belonging to these countries

Why is the PSC exploring different systems of elections?

- According to the PSC, in recent years the FPTP system is not the best suited system as is evident from the recent Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh
- Many Opposition leaders have reminded the BJP that it won the 2014 Lok Sabha polls because of the FPTP system
- As the party polled only about 31 per cent of the vote share

Other issues discussed by the panel

- The views of parties and the EC have been sought under five heads: (1) ‘Electoral Funding’, (2) ‘Systems of Elections’, (3) ‘Media/ Free Airtime’, (4) ‘Internal Democracy in Political Parties’, and (5) ‘Miscellaneous’
- On the issue of electoral funding, the panel has sought views on the electoral bonds and on the proposal regarding state funding of elections

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. China wants to go back to ‘1959 LAC’

Context:

- Last week’s scuffle between troops of the two (India and China) countries along the **Pangong lake in Ladakh**

In news:

- **China’s stand:** urged India to abide by the Line of Actual Control (LAC) position of 1959.
- **India’s stand:** India has rejected the proposal in 1959 and again in 1962.

Basic Information

Line of Actual Control:



- The Line of Actual Control (LAC) is a demarcation line that separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory.
- There are two common ways in which the term “Line of Actual Control” is used. In the narrow sense, it refers only to the line of control in the western sector of the borderland between the two countries. In that sense, the LAC forms the effective border between the two countries together with the (also disputed) McMahon Line in the east, and a small undisputed section in between. In the wider sense, it can be used to refer to both the western line of control and the MacMahon Line, in which sense it is the effective border between India and the People’s Republic of China (PRC)
- The demarcation existed as the informal cease-fire line between India and China after the 1962 conflict until 1993, when its existence was officially accepted as the ‘Line of Actual Control’ in a bilateral agreement.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Corporate governance: focus on SEBI

In News:

- Market Participants are discussing the issue of ‘corporate governance’

- This issue has become the topic of discussion due to the recent exit of Vishal Sikka from the Infosys
- Many market participants want SEBI to intervene in such matters to protect the interest of investors, especially the retail segment
- **Committee on corporate governance**
- SEBI had constituted a committee on corporate governance under the chairmanship of Uday Kotak in June this year
- The committee is expected to submit its report within four months

Basic Information

Corporate governance

- Corporate governance is the system of rules, practices and processes by which a company is directed and controlled.
- Corporate governance essentially involves balancing the interests of a company's many stakeholders, such as shareholders, management, customers, suppliers, financiers, government and the community.
- Since corporate governance also provides the framework for attaining a company's objectives, it encompasses practically every sphere of management, from action plans and internal controls to performance measurement and corporate disclosure.

2. The impact of caste on economic mobility in India

Context

- The impact of caste in economic mobility in India

Indian society

- The caste system is the most distinctive feature of Indian society.
- The Indian population is divided into four hierarchical classes, or varnas, with a large sub-population of untouchables excluded entirely from the system.
- Within each of these classes, and among the untouchables, are thousands of castes, or jatis.

How caste system supports occupational and spatial mobility?

- The exploitation, prejudice, and discrimination that are associated with the hierarchical aspect of the caste system have stifled mobility among the lower castes.
- Lower castes remained locked in unskilled, low-paying occupations for centuries in the traditional economy.
- There is also evidence of continuing discrimination in the labour market
- Convergence between upper and lower castes in education and jobs

Reasons

- **Affirmative action policy** : It has been in place since Independence, reserving seats in institutions of higher education and the central government for former untouchables and other disadvantaged groups
- **Caste-based networks**: It facilitate economic activity and support the mobility of their members in an economy where markets function imperfectly.
- **Particular castes** : They found particular niches in the urban labour market, and once networks in the city were established, they supported the movement of fresh migrants from the hinterland
- Structural change has created new economic opportunities over the past 25 years
- There is a movement of castes from agriculture and administrative occupations into business in recent decades.
- Once caste networks form, they will strengthen relatively rapidly in historically disadvantaged castes.

Caste networks can also be a hindrance to mobility? How ? The same networks that can be so effective in supporting the movement of groups of individuals across space and occupations can also restrict the mobility of individual members once they are established

- Schooling choice is a strong predictor of future occupations.
- Particular castes historically occupied niches in Mumbai's mills and factories with the support of their networks.

- When the Indian economy restructured in the early 1990s, shifted economic activity in Mumbai from manufacturing to services
- But in the schooling choices of the children, that these blue-collar networks turned out to be a hindrance in this economy, keeping their members in the traditional (now less remunerative) occupations and preventing them from taking advantage of the new opportunities that became available.
- Rural mutual insurance networks, which have smoothed consumption within castes for centuries, can restrict the migration of individual members to the city.
- When a household suffers a negative income shock, it receives monetary transfers from caste members
- In the future, it is expected to provide transfers to other households when they receive a negative shock. But a household with migrants will be less insured by its rural network
- The restriction on mobility which leads to inefficiency in the labour market, arises because formal substitutes for the rural insurance network, such as private credit or government safety nets, are unavailable

Community based networks-Features

- It is active in all developing countries where markets are functioning imperfectly.
- These networks are exceptional with respect to their size and scope in India, because of the special caste-based structure of its society.
- Caste networks thus play an unusually important role in shaping economic mobility in the Indian economy
- Whether these networks support or hinder mobility will depend on the circumstances
- Networks are effective in supporting the movement of groups, but they can restrict the mobility of individuals trying to follow a path of their own.
- The caste networks will disappear when the market economy starts to function efficiently.

Way forward

Policies aimed at fostering growth would be more effective if they took account of the underlying caste networks that continue to shape educational, occupational, and locational choices in the Indian economy.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Navy gets amphibious landing craft

- **The second Landing Craft Utility (LCU) L52 of Mk-IV class-** An amphibious ship to transport **combat equipment and troops of the Navy** was commissioned at Port Blair.
- It is capable of transporting various kinds of combat equipment such as **Arjun main battle tanks**.
- **Designed and built:** Garden Reach Ship Builders (GRSE).
- **Usability:** deployed for multi-role activities such as beaching operations, search and rescue, disaster relief operations, supply and replenishment and evacuation from distant islands.

2. BRO gets more powers for road construction along China border

Efforts to improve the functioning of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO)

- The Defence Ministry has delegated administrative and financial powers right up to the level of Chief Engineer and task force commander, of the BRO
- Why: To bring in transformational changes in the BRO

Enhanced Powers

- Now, a Chief Engineer of BRO can accord administrative approval up to Rs. 50 crore
- Additional Director-General (ADG) up to Rs. 75 crore
- Director-General (DG) up to Rs. 100 crore
- Earlier, a Chief Engineer in the BRO could give administrative approval of works up to Rs. 10 crore and ADG up to Rs. 20 crore for departmental works

Basic Information

- The BRO is engaged in road construction to provide connectivity to difficult and inaccessible regions.
- It was brought under the control of the Defence Ministry in 2015.

3. Kovind dedicates Leh trip to jawans

Efforts to improve the functioning of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO)

- The Defence Ministry has delegated administrative and financial powers right up to the level of Chief Engineer and task force commander, of the BRO
- Why: To bring in transformational changes in the BRO

Category: MISCELLANEOUS

1. No power if you go in the open, SDO tells villagers

Best administrative innovative strategy to combat open defecation:

- **Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) in Rajasthan's Bhilwara district:** issued an order to snap electricity connections to all households that failed to build toilets within 15 days.
- A strategy to meet the Open Defecation Free (ODF) targets under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA).

Nothing here for Today!!!

E. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

F. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. Critically analyze “The impact of caste on economic mobility in India”.

GS Paper II

1. Discuss the essentials of the 69th Constitutional Amendment Act and anomalies, if any, that have led to recent reported conflicts between the elected representatives and the institution of the Lieutenant Governor in the administration of Delhi. Do you think that this will give rise to a new trend in the functioning of the Indian federal politics?

GS Paper III

1. How globalization has led to the reduction of employment in the formal sector of the Indian economy? Is increased informalization detrimental to the development of the country?

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1. Huge haul of painting brushes made of mongoose hair

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Category: POLITY

1. Instant talaq: Unlawful, Unlawful, Unlawful

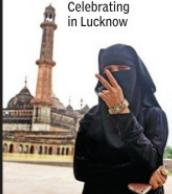
Context:

- Supreme Court verdict regarding validity of triple talaq.

In news:

• Supreme Court verdict (Main observations):

- Struck down the controversial Islamic practice of instant talaq.
- Talaq is **arbitrary** and **whimsical** mode of ending marriage violated Muslim women's fundamental right to equality.
- Talaq should be **erased** from the **1,400-year-old Sharia-dictated divorce manual**.

HOW THE JUDGES RULED		THE FIVE WOMEN WHO LED THE FIGHT	
MAJORITY JUDGMENT Justices RF Nariman & UV Lalit ► Say practice is arbitrary as "marital tie can be broken capriciously and whimsically... without any attempt at reconnection" ► Triple talaq is only one of three permissible forms of divorce in Islam; stated to be sinful by the very Hanafi school that tolerates it ► Rule that it is arbitrary and violative of Article 14 of Constitution Justice Kurian Joseph ► Says practice not dictated by Quran, hence not integral to Islam ► Cites Shamim Ara vs State of UP (2002) judgment of SC to say triple talaq lacks legal sanctity "Merely because a practice has continued for long, that by itself cannot make it valid..."		Dissenting Remarks CJ JS Khehar, Justice S A Nazeer ► Recognise triple talaq as part of Islamic personal practices; followed by Sunni Muslims of Hanafi school for 1,400 years ► Part of right to religion guaranteed under Article 25, doesn't violate Art 14, 15 & 21 ► As part of 'personal law', has stature equal to fundamental right, courts can't set it aside ► Govt should enact law banning triple talaq as it had done for sati & devadasi system among Hindus ► Till such a law is enacted, no Muslim man can use triple talaq route to get instant divorce "Unfortunately, the Union seeks at our hands what truly falls in its own"	1 Shayara Bano , mother of two, filed SC petition in 2016. A year earlier, she had been divorced via speed post 2 Gulshan Parveen , 31, received talaaqnama on a ₹10 stamp paper. Her petition was clubbed with Shayara's plea 3 Atiya Sabri , a PG in Sociology, got a scribbled divorce note from her husband Wazid Ali 4 Jahan had four children before her husband divorced her over a telephone call from Dubai in 2014. He then remarried 5 Afreen Rehman , an MBA in finance, married an Indore-based lawyer in 2014. Two years later, he sent her talaq through speed post
The 5 judges belong to 5 different faiths—Khehar (Sikh), Nazeer (Muslim), Nariman (Parsi), Lalit (Hindu) & Kurian (Christian)		“Judgment is historic. It grants equality to Muslim women and is a powerful measure for women empowerment —PM Narendra Modi	Celebrating in Lucknow My daughter will now not have to face such regressive practices when she grows up —Shayara Bano, Petitioner
			

• 3:2 majority:

- The verdict was delivered by a 3:2 majority.
- All the five judges agreed on the broad issue of the **undesirability of instant talaq, or divorce pronounced in one sitting** simply by uttering talaq thrice.

• Main Observations:

- In view of the different opinions recorded, by a majority of 3:2, the practice of '**talaq-e-biddat**' — triple talaq — is set aside.
- Triple talaq was part of Islamic religious practice for 1,400 years and hence got the protection of the Constitution under **Article 25**. But at the same time, since most Islamic countries, including Pakistan and Bangladesh, had abolished triple talaq, it was time the **legislature brought a bill** to correct the anomaly in personal law.

2. United against triple talaq, divided on legal points

CONTEXT:

- Supreme Court Verdict set the practice of triple talaq as '**manifestly arbitrary**' .

Observations:

- The Court said that triple talaq is not in the Quran. But the Sharia is not what the entire Quran is. It is a mixture of Quran, Hadees and Ijma. This is where they have faulted.
- Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar used the Supreme Court's rare and extraordinary jurisdiction under **Article 142** to injunct Muslim husbands from divorcing their wives for the next six months through the same instant talaq.
- Supreme Court issued the direction after observing that even theocratic Islamic States had corrected their Shariat to banish instant talaq.
- Supreme Court ordered the government to frame a ruling to address the issue of Muslim women under the yoke of triple talaq.
- Verdict compared triple talaq to social evils such as sati, infanticide and devadasi system, which were cast out by way of legislation and not by judicial orders.
- However, the direction under **Article 142** in the minority verdict failed to come alive as the majority of the judges on the Bench set aside instant talaq with immediate effect. This is the clear mandate of **Article 14** (equality before law) of the Constitution. India is also committed to eradicate discrimination on the ground of

sex.

Basic Information

Article 142: Enforcement of decrees and orders of Supreme Court and unless as to discovery, etc

(1) The Supreme Court in the exercise of its jurisdiction may pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it, and any decree so passed or orders so made shall be enforceable throughout the territory of India in such manner as may be prescribed by or under any law made by Parliament and, until provision in that behalf is so made, in such manner as the President may by order prescribe

(2) Subject to the provisions of any law made in this behalf by Parliament, the Supreme Court shall, as respects the whole of the territory of India, have all and every power to make any order for the purpose of securing the attendance of any person, the discovery or production of any documents, or the investigation or punishment of any contempt of itself.

3. It's good and bad, says AIMPLB

In news:

- The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) has interpreted the judgment as “vindication” of its stand that personal laws needed to be protected even as it disagreed with the court’s decision to hold triple talaq as unconstitutional.
- The AIMPLB has decided to hold internal discussions before responding in detail to the judgment, as it had affected the religious rights of minority groups. AIMPLB accused that personal laws cannot be tested by courts on the grounds of violation of fundamental rights.

4. Centre will issue advisory on talaq order compliance

Context:

- SC striking down triple talaq.

In news:

- The home ministry will soon send an advisory to all 29 states and seven Union Territories asking them to monitor the situation and ensure compliance of the Supreme Court’s order declaring triple talaq as void, illegal and unconstitutional.

What next ?

- As soon as the home ministry issues an advisory, state governments are likely to sensitise the police and other authorities on the triple talaq issue on how to deal with a Muslim woman’s complaint in case there is a violation.
- The cops can book the violator under **domestic violence charges** for now, until a proper law is brought by the government in Parliament.

5. Follow NEET for medical admission, SC tells Tamil Nadu

In news:

Supreme Court directive to T.N:

- Complete the counselling process for medical admissions in the State on the basis of the NEET merit list by September 4.
- Previously, T.N state government had passed an **ordinance** freezing the implementation of NEET in the State for this year.
- **Centre rejected the ordinance:** on the ground that it would give one particular State undue advantage over the others.

6. Salary hike for college, varsity teachers

In news:

Centre proposal:

- Hike salary of teachers in higher educational institutions.
- Benefit to about eight to nine lakh teachers in higher educational institutions.
- The hike would range from 20-25%.
- The lower level — that of assistant professors — is expected to get a hike of 20%, which will go up at the levels of associate professor and professor.
- The revision will benefit employees of the central universities, State universities and government-funded technical universities .

VS Chauhan Committee:

- The UGC had set up the pay committee under VS Chauhan.
- It had recommended that these be at par with the salaries offered to the government employees by the Seventh Pay Commission.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Rebooting India-Nepal ties

Context

- Indian interventionism in Nepal having backfired, the Nepal PM's visit is an opportunity to raise the level of bilateral ties
- India's interest to secure its own neighbourhood, and that can only be through letting national politics and governance of the smaller neighbours evolve without interference.

India's Nepal policy

- India played a valued role in ending the Maoist insurgency in 2006, but the period thereafter was marked by escalating micro-meddling in Nepal's internal affairs.
- In Constitution-writing, there were attempts to define the new provincial boundaries according to Indian dictates
- The presence of India's heavy hand contributed to the distortion of consensual governance needed in transitional times.
- India 'noted' rather than welcomed the Constitution.
- A society trying to emerge from the April 2015 Great Earthquake was slapped with the punitive Great Blockade
- While keeping silent for years on Nepal's post-conflict transitional justice process, in 2015 India's representative in Geneva cynically utilised the forum of the Human Rights Council to influence government change in Kathmandu.
- Indian interlocutors pushed the Nepali Congress to renege on its promise to continue in coalition with the mainstream left Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist)
- Indian strategists are seeking ways to get Kathmandu to allow the construction of high dams and deep reservoirs on Nepal's rivers — for flood control, navigation, urban use and irrigation in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.
- New Delhi made deep inroads into Nepal's political class, but none did it use more than the Madhesbaadi parties
- The Great Blockade, forced the Kathmandu to reach out to Beijing and sign a slew of trade, transit and infrastructural agreements with it.
- Nepal is today better connected by air to Chinese cities than to India.

Matters pending:

- Nepal and India have to concentrate on the numerous matters that need concentration and resolution

- **Open border** - While it is Nepal's Left that has traditionally demanded restrictions on the border, the call now rises from the Indian security establishment.
- **Massive floods** in Nepal plains have also affected downstream areas across the border. A permanent bilateral mechanism is required to save the plains population of Nepal from suffering
 - **The Kosi Barrage** and attendant embankments have the possibility of wreaking havoc because siltation of six decades has raised the riverbed within the levees far above the outlying tracts
 - The easy answer for the Indian politician is to demand a high dam in the hills of Nepal even as alternatives are not studied, such as redistribution of waters into various older channels of the Kosi in Bihar.
- The rights of migrant Indian labour in Nepal and Nepali labour in India is a topic that rarely comes up
- Border disputes pending between the two countries — at Susta, Kalapani and the '**tri-junction' of Lipulekh**
- Nepal has planned to sell electricity to India once it has a hydropower surplus.
- But Indian government directive that it will not allow import of electricity other than from power companies with more than 51% Indian equity.
- Neglect by the Kathmandu intelligentsia, such as regarding the impact of demonetisation and the application of Goods and Services Tax on Nepal's economy and citizenry.
- The arbitrary blockages and go-slow at Indian Customs at border points, the selective use of quarantine for the export of Nepali agricultural produce, the increasing high-handedness of the Sashastra Seema Bal in dealing with Nepalis crossing over.

2. Trump offers India a role in Afghanistan



New U.S. strategy for South Asia:

- unveiled by President Donald Trump
- S. commits troops in Afghanistan for an **open-ended period of time**.
- Policy sets stage for a new wave of U.S. offensive against **Islamist forces** in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

India's role:

- Trump urged India to play a larger role in providing economic and development assistance to the war-torn Afghanistan.
- Put forward a proposal for India playing a bigger role in the war-torn country to its trade surplus with the United States.
- **Key support:**
 - America would no longer tolerate **Pakistan's** policy of harbouring terrorists.
 - India is the **ninth** biggest trading partner of the U.S. and India had a trade surplus of around \$26 billion with the U.S. in goods trade alone last year.

3. India to raise visa issue in trade policy meet

Concerns from Indian Side

- The Centre will raise Indian industry's concerns over the U.S. visa 'curbs', during the India-U.S. Trade Policy Forum (TPF) meeting likely in October
- TPF is the premier forum to resolve bilateral trade and investment issues between India and the US

Possible topics of discussion during TFP

- From the US side: the U.S. is expected raise its worries over India's 'restrictions' on e-commerce
- And the 'challenges' faced by American innovative industries due to India's 'weak' Intellectual Property Rights regime
- From Indian Side: Indian government is likely to raise the issue of the 'non-tariff barriers' by the U.S. that are hurting Indian agriculture, pharmaceuticals and other industrial exports

Category: ECONOMICS

1. 'Uranium sale talks at advanced stage'

In news:

Australian government body's top official report:

- Discussions are at a 'well-advanced' stage for **Australia's uranium sale to India**, to fuel nuclear power plants in the **energy-starved** developing nation.
- Coal exports will not slow down any time soon from Australia for use in India's thermal power stations.

2. Pfizer gets Indian pneumonia vaccine patent in blow to aid group, Panacea

In news:

- India has granted Pfizer Inc. a patent for its powerful **pneumonia vaccine Prevenar 13**.
- Consequence of the decision:
 - Blow to some health groups that said this would put the treatment out of reach of thousands in poorer nations.
 - The decision by India's patent office bars other companies from making cheaper copies of the vaccine and allows Pfizer to exclusively sell it in India until 2026.
 - The patent grant means Indian companies won't be able to make the vaccine for domestic use, or exports.
 - The decision also has international implications, as several poorer nations rely on India's robust drugs industry to supply cheaper copies of medicines and vaccines.
- **Key Fact:**
 - Pfizer's vaccine protects children and adults from 13 types of pneumococcal bacteria, and a full vaccination course costs about \$170 on India's private market.
 - India started giving out the vaccine for free under its national immunisation program earlier this year, but the rollout like that of most vaccines in the program, is in phases, so only about 2.1 million of the 25 million eligible people in the country will get it this year.
 - India has the world's largest number of pneumonia cases, a lung disease that kills nearly a million children a year globally.

3. FDI jumps 37% to \$10.4 billion during April-June 2017

In news:

- **Foreign direct investment (FDI)** into the country grew by 37 per cent to USD 10.4 billion during the first quarter of the current fiscal
- Since the launch of '**Make in India**' initiative (October 2014 – June this year), foreign inflows jumped 64 per cent to USD 110.12 billion from USD 67.26 billion in the same period last year.
- Sectors which attracted the highest foreign inflows include services, telecom, trading, computer hardware and software and automobile.
- Bulk of the FDI came in from Singapore, Mauritius, the Netherlands and Japan.
- The government has announced several steps to attract foreign inflows. The measures include liberalisation of FDI policy and improvement in business climate.

Importance of FDI in India:

- India needs around USD 1 trillion for overhauling its infrastructure sector such as ports, airports and highways to boost growth.
- A strong inflow of foreign investments will help improve the country's balance of payments situation

- It will strengthen the rupee value against other global currencies, especially the US dollar.

4. Govt puts urad, moong dal imports under restricted category

In news:

- The government on Monday put imports of urad and moong dal under the restricted category and fixed a cap for its in-bound shipments up to three lakh tonnes.
- India is the world's largest pulse producer and importer.
- Earlier this month, the government had also put imports of pigeon peas and toor dal under the restricted category.
- This restriction will not apply to the government's import commitments under any bilateral and regional agreement.

How this restriction will help?

- The move will help in stabilising domestic prices that have fallen below the minimum support level and are hurting farmers.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. N. Bhupathi, a frog with the face of a pig

In news:



Nasikabatrachus bhupathi, a frog with the face of a pig

- Indian scientists have discovered a new species of frog that has a snout-shaped nose, just like a pig's.
- The soiled-dwelling species, discovered by scientists from the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in Hyderabad, has been named after the Indian herpetologist **Bhupathy**.
- **Location:** Bhupathy's purple frog inhabits the eastern slopes of the Western Ghats, near the **Srivilliputhur Grizzled Giant Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu**.

Evidence in favor of continental drift theory :

- The discovery is significant as it constitutes additional evidence in favour of the theory of continental drift.
- The Purple frog is an inhabitant of Seychelles, and the discovery of Bhupathy's purple frog in India suggests that the Indian subcontinent was part of the ancient landmass of **Gondwana** before splitting from Seychelles 65 million years ago.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Huge haul of painting brushes made of mongoose hair

In news:

- Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) and West Bengal Forest Department have seized 32,985 mongoose-hair painting brushes from Kolkata's Burrabazar area.
- These brushes are primarily used for water colour.
- Across the globe using animal hair for making brushes is considered a crime and there are laws to deal with it.

Protected species

- Mongoose is a protected species under Schedule II and part II of the **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**
- Any trade of Mongoose body parts involves similar punishment as is laid down for tigers and rhinoceros.
- Those convicted face a minimum three years in jail.

Basic Information

Wildlife Crime Control Bureau:

- The Government of India constituted a **statutory body**, the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) on 6 June 2007, by amending the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, a special Act to protect the wildlife in the country.
- WCCB would complement the efforts of the state governments, primary enforcers of the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** and other enforcement agencies of the country.
- **Wildlife Crime Control Bureau** is a statutory multi-disciplinary body established by the Government of India under the **Ministry of Environment and Forests**, to combat organized wildlife crime in the country.
- The Bureau has its headquarter in New Delhi and five regional offices at Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai and Jabalpur; three sub-regional offices at Guwahati, Amritsar and Cochin; and five border units at Ramanathapuram, Gorakhpur, Motihari, Nathula and Moreh.
- **Main areas of operation:**
 - Under Section 38 (Z) of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, it is mandated to collect and collate intelligence related to organized wildlife crime activities and to disseminate the same to State and other enforcement agencies for immediate action so as to apprehend the criminals; to establish a centralized wildlife crime data bank; co-ordinate actions by various agencies in connection with the enforcement of the provisions of the Act; assist foreign authorities and international organization concerned to facilitate co-ordination and universal action for wildlife crime control; capacity building of the wildlife crime enforcement agencies for scientific and professional investigation into wildlife crimes and assist State Governments to ensure success in prosecutions related to wildlife crimes; and advise the Government of India on issues relating to wildlife crimes having national and international ramifications, relevant policy and laws. It also assists and advises the Customs authorities in inspection of the consignments of flora & fauna as per the provisions of **Wild Life Protection Act, CITES and EXIM Policy** governing such an item.

Nothing here for Today!!!

E. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

F. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Social evils were cast out by way of legislation and not by judicial orders, Justify?
2. Was it right on the part of Supreme Court to ban Triple talaq, Critically analyze the issue?

GS Paper II

1. Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) is necessary for bringing unbanked to the institutional finance fold. Do you agree with this for financial inclusion of the poorer section of the Indian society? Give arguments to justify your opinion.

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2. The Trump discontinuity
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Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Understanding context of SC ruling on triple talaq: Divorce rate of Muslim women is thrice that of men

Context: Supreme Court Ruling on the issue of triple talaq, which questions the women dignity.

Key points:

- The largest percentage of divorces takes place among Muslim women. Stats say that the majority is in the age group 20-34 (43.9%), in which only 24% of the total Muslim female population lies.
- Recently the five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court verdict that struck down instant triple talaq describes the social context.

- The rate of divorce was significantly lower among men than among women, as per the Census data of India, 2011.
- But the disparity was particularly stark among Muslims where the “refined divorce rate”, or rate of divorce per 1,000 marriages, was 1.59 among Muslim men, among Muslim women, it was more than three and a half times higher — 5.63.
- Buddhists came next on the disparity scale, followed by Christians.
- On a broad view, the number of divorces per 1,000 marriages in India are 1.58 for men, and for women, double that at 3.10.
- But with respect to the duration of staying divorced as per the Census data, men tend to re-marry at a far quicker rate than women.

Analysis:

- Supreme Court verdict striking down **talaq-e-biddat or instant triple talaq** has been rightly hailed as a victory for gender justice.
- But bringing it to the notice, there are no concrete data on the prevalence of this form of divorce thus the impact of the judgment is difficult to measure.
- Muslim couples have several other ways to divorce including the intervention of religious institutions such as the Qazi and Dar-ul-Qaza.
- The definitive assessment shows that the social, educational and economic backwardness and deprivation status of Muslims women is both the reason and consequence of such social evils.

Legal provision to settle the cases of Divorce

- The Divorce Act, 1869 (4 of 1869),
- The Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936 (3 of 1936),
- The Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939 (8 of 1939),
- The Special Marriage Act, 1954 (43 of 1954), and
- The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

Category: POLITY

1. SC to rule on right to privacy today

Context:

- A bunch of petitions were filed in the Supreme Court in 2015 challenging Aadhaar as a **breach of privacy, informational self-determination and bodily integrity**.
- A **nine-judge Constitution Bench** of the Supreme Court, is all set to deliver the judgment on the question: **whether right to privacy of citizens is a fundamental right under the Constitution?**

IS PRIVACY AN INTEGRAL RIGHT OR A VAGUE NOTION?

The nine-judge Constitution bench's decision will impact everyday lives. It will define the relationship between government and the citizen and will shape the way fundamental rights are understood for decades to come

WHAT PETITIONERS SAY

1 The bench will decide whether a fundamental right to privacy exists under the Indian Constitution

2 This bench will not decide the fate of Aadhaar, only the nature and status of the right to privacy under the Constitution

3 The petitioners want SC to recognise, among other things, a fundamental right to privacy under the Constitution

WHAT RESPONDENTS SAY

Precedents

- An eight-judge bench ruled in the MP Sharma case (1954) there was no right to privacy under a specific Article, but it did not extinguish a general fundamental right to privacy
- A six-judge bench in Kharak Singh case (1962) that right to privacy is not fundamental, no longer good law
- In an unbroken chain of judgments, starting from Golind vs State of MP and leading up to NALSA vs Union of India (on the rights of transgender persons), the Supreme Court has recognised the fundamental right to privacy
- Privacy is associated with and is the bulwark of other rights. It is located in the golden trinity of Articles 14, 19, and 21 (right to liberty and equality)
- There can be no dignity without privacy, and dignity is part of the Preamble, part of the basic structure of the Constitution
- Cite Kharak Singh and MP Sharma to argue right to privacy is not fundamental
- Privacy is a vague concept, and vague concepts cannot be made fundamental rights
- Framers of Constitution debated but discarded privacy as fundamental right
- Right to life of others, including right to dignity, is more important than right to privacy

INTERNATIONALLY, IN MOST JURISDICTIONS, RIGHT TO PRIVACY HAS NOT BEEN RECOGNIZED EXPLICITLY

THE PETITIONERS
Former Karnataka HC Judge, KS Puttaswamy, now 91, filed the PIL in 2012 challenging the Aadhaar scheme, saying it violates fundamental rights to privacy and equality. SC has linked all the 20+ Aadhaar cases to this main case. Petitioners include activists Biju Dabholkar, Aruna Roy and Nikhil Dey. For Puttaswamy, this was reportedly the first time he felt the need to petition the courts in any matter

PUTTASWAMY

9 JUDGES
The high profile bench that'll decide the question of privacy

J S KHEHAR **J CHELAMESWAR** **S A BOBBE** **R K AGRAWAL**

R F HIRIMAN **A M SAPRE** **D Y CHANDRACHUD** **S K KAUL** **S ABDUL NAZEEB**

In news:

- Various dimensions of Privacy:** It includes bodily integrity, personal autonomy, informational self-determination, protection from State surveillance, dignity, confidentiality, compelled speech, freedom to dissent or move or think.
- International legal framework which speaks about Right to Privacy:**
 - Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 and Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966 , both legally protect persons against the “arbitrary interference” with one’s privacy, family, home, correspondence, honour and reputation.
- Petitioner’s argument in Aadhaar case:** Aadhaar enrollment is the means to a “Totalitarian State” and an open invitation for personal data leakage.

Apprehension expressed by the Supreme Court: collection and use of data is the risk of personal information falling in the hands of private players and service providers.

2. Liquor sale ban does not extend to municipal areas: SC

Context:

- Supreme Court has clarified its order on **500-metre limit** along National and State Highways.

In news

Clarifications:

- The nationwide ban on sale of liquor within a distance of 500 metres along National and State Highways **does not extend to municipal areas** (does not prohibit licensed establishments within municipal areas).
- Ban on liquor sale only extends along and in proximity to highways which provide connectivity between cities, towns and villages.
- Implication of the clarification:**
 - Stretches of highways running within city limits are now, by default, exempt from the liquor ban.
 - Litigation infructuous:** effectively made infructuous any pending litigation in High Courts on declassification of State or National Highways to district roads by State governments or local authorities.
 - Huge relief for bar and hotel owners who were forced to shut down operations post the ban orders.

3. OBC list to be sub-categorized

In news:

- The Union Cabinet approved a proposal to set up a commission which will examine the issue of **sub-categorization** of the **Other Backward Classes (OBC)**.
- The actual reservation will continue to be 27% and within this the committee will have to do the re-arranging.

Parity check

The panel will report on the extent of inequitable distribution of benefits, including quotas, among the OBCs and work out scientific norms of sub-categorisation

Nine States already have OBC sub-categorisation, but the Cabinet move would take the concept to the Central level too



POLITICAL MEANING

Politically, this means an outreach to more backward castes among the OBCs but it may mean that the quotas available for better-off OBC groups shrink. The Centre cannot breach the cap of 50% imposed on quotas by the SC

OBCs as a whole are estimated to number anywhere between 41%-52% of the country's total population

Committee mandate:

1. To examine the “**extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation**” among various castes and communities that comes under the Central OBC list.
2. Work out the mechanism, criteria and parameters for the actual sub-categorization.
3. To bring order to the Central list of OBCs by removing any repetitions.

Creamy layer cap enhanced:

- Increased the “**creamy layer**” ceiling for the Other Backward Classes to ₹8 lakh per annum from the existing ₹6 lakh for Central government jobs.

Key Fact:

- The Scheduled Castes have a **15%** quota and the Scheduled Tribes have **5%** quota.
- **States having sub- categorization:** Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Puducherry, Karnataka, Haryana, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Saudi job scheme favouring locals to hit Indians hard

In news:

Nitaqat (or Saudisation) Scheme

- Saudization or Saudisation of the workforce—the replacement of foreign workers with Saudi nationals in the private sector—is the official national policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- This new revised scheme is a blow to Indian migrants.
- The Nitaqat system was first introduced in mid-2011 to encourage employment of Saudi nationals.
- Employers are divided into four categories, Platinum, Green (with three sub categories of high, medium and low), Yellow and Red. Those in Platinum have a higher proportion of Saudi nationals as employees

New revised rules and its impact

- From September 2017, only a handful of organisations with high grades ('Platinum' and 'High Green' categories) — based on number of Saudi nationals employed by them and other criteria — will be able to apply for new block visas for migrant employees.
- Construction and hospitality, sectors which falls under low category have a predominantly blue collar Indian workforce, are unlikely to gain from such rules. Workers already employed in companies falling in low categories cannot be transferred from one employer to another.

Key Fact: In 2016, there were nearly 25 lakh Indians working in Saudi Arabia

2. The Trump discontinuity

Context: New South Asian policy unveiled by US President

Key points

- Trump's new Afghan strategy could be a game-changer for South Asia.
- For Delhi it is all about seizing the opportunity to raise India's profile in Afghanistan.
- There is an opportunity for India in President Donald Trump's new assertive policy but skeptics in Delhi are doubtful if Washington has the political will to carry through the promised pressure on Pakistan to stop hosting terror sanctuaries on its soil.
- India with respect to Afghanistan ought to do more despite its significant efforts in the past to promote economic reconstruction in Afghanistan.

Shift in Washington's thinking

- The Bush Administration's- was expansive towards India in the Afghan strategy but cautioned against too large a role in Afghanistan.
- It invested enormous political capital in getting the world to lift a four decades-old nuclear blockade (Pakistan) against Delhi.
- The Obama Administration began with the intention that the answer to Afghanistan is in promoting a resolution of Pakistan's Kashmir dispute with India.
- Consequently Indian diplomacy must necessarily keep its eyes open for a return of these familiar themes in the US approach to Pakistan.
- Therefore positive Indian diplomatic approach should involve economic, security and diplomatic elements.

Role of Pakistan

- Despite the China card against the US, Pakistan is highly conscious of the dangers of being treated as a rogue state by the West.
- Pakistan displays dead silence in response to the Trump speech which suggests that Rawalpindi has chosen to avoid a public argument with Washington.
- The Pakistan Army will try and find ways to counter Trump's New South Asian Policy but it will not be easy for Pakistan to abandon its investments in cross-border terror.
- Only gate presently open for Rawalpindi is to offer some cooperation in countering terror and make new promises to bring the Taliban to the table.
- But it will urge US pressure on India to start talks on Kashmir at the backend.

India- Afghan Bilateral Relationship

- India should essentially ramp up its economic diplomacy in Afghanistan to bring immediate benefits to Kabul amongst the deteriorating conditions in the country. Delhi must step up security cooperation with Afghanistan.
- India must offer training of its police and armed forces and intelligence sharing.
- On the diplomatic front, India must counter the emerging argument that Trump's new approach will intensify the "Indo-Pak rivalry" in Afghanistan and the old one that Kashmir holds the key to peace in Afghanistan.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi had articulated this vision in an address to the Afghan parliament that Delhi must remind the world of India's commitment to regional cooperation with Afghanistan and Pakistan, in an atmosphere free of terrorism.

Way forward

- Trump's new Afghan strategy could be a potential game-changer for South Asia or a brief exception to the familiar pattern of US-Pak relations.
- While comprehending the potential shadow between Trump's words and deeds, Delhi needs to activate its own activism to stimulate positive outcomes in Afghanistan.

3. Repair and recover

Context: Nepal's Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba to visit India.

Key points

- Nepal's PM Deuba's five-day visit to be seen as an opportunity for India to take a relook on the diplomatic ties between the countries.
- Nepal-India relations have been sinusoidal for decades, however the two Modi visits did not help in restoration.

- India continues to be seen in Nepal as the interfering Big Brother, who “micromanages” the country’s politics and installs puppet governments.
- If anything, anti-India sentiment was strengthened by the The 2015 Great Blockade by the Madhesis was seen to have Delhi’s tacit support and the end result was strengthening of anti India sentiment. The quest of their demand lies in greater representation in the Nepal Parliament.
- But then China poured money into Nepal for several infrastructure projects, and sewed up trade and transit deals during the same period.
- Secondly, the Mahakali Multipurpose Project Daube signed when he was PM in 1996 but no progress seen till present.
- Thirdly the consequences of the November 2016 demonetization also impacted Nepali traders and businessmen.

Way forward

- New Delhi should comfort Deuba’s first foreign visit.
- MoUs and other agreements to be signed should project that India is a friend, even in the absence of China.
- India’s challenge will be to persuade both the premier and Nepal that India can really keep out of the country’s internal affairs.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. New mechanism to spur PSB mergers

In news:

- The Cabinet has approved ‘in-principle’ the constitution of an alternative mechanism- ministerial group, that will oversee the proposals for mergers among banks.
- Why? For quicker consolidation among public sector banks.

Crisil observations

- Cabinet decision regarding constitution of an alternative mechanism is an important first step towards kick starting the consolidation process
- Such mergers would improve NPA resolution following swifter decision making and an unified strategy.
- Adds commercial strengths, prevents multiplicity of resources being spent in the same areas, and it improves the capacity of the banking system to absorb shocks that the market throws up

Key Fact

- Gross NPA (GNPA) ratio of the banking system is at 9.6% and the stressed advances ratio at 12% as of March 31, 2017.
- The Indian banking sector has been battling a surge in bad loans over the last three years with gross NPAs climbing to about ₹8 lakh crore.

2. Economy doing well on strong fundamentals, reforms: FSDC

In news:

- According to the deliberations at a meeting of the **Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)**, India’s macro-economic stability remains strong on the back of
 - Improvement in fundamentals
 - Structural reforms with the launch of the goods and services tax
 - Steps to tackle the twin balance sheet problems
- The Council, consisting mostly of regulators and secretaries of the finance ministry, also took note of investor confidence in financial markets, which is reflected in high and rising bond and stock valuations and long-term positive consequences of demonetization

Basic Information

Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)

- It is an apex-level body constituted by the government of India.
- FSDC has replaced the High Level Coordination Committee on Financial Markets (HLCCFM), which was

facilitating regulatory coordination, though informally, prior to the setting up of FSDC. It is not a statutory body.

- **Chairperson: The Union Finance Minister of India**
- Members: Heads of the financial sector regulatory authorities (i.e., RBI, SEBI, IRDA, and PFRDA), Finance Secretary and/or Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs (Union Finance Ministry), Secretary, Department of Financial Services, and Chief Economic Adviser. FSDC can invite experts to its meeting if required.

The objectives of FSDC would be to deal with issues relating to:

- Financial stability
- Financial sector development
- Inter-regulatory coordination
- Financial literacy
- Financial inclusion

3. 'RBI not for NBFCs taking deposits'

In news:

- Deputy Governor N.S. Vishwanathan of the RBI, has said that RBI is not in favour of allowing non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) to accept deposits.
- Previously, RBI has given a few NBFCs licenses to accept deposits; it would not do so in the future.
- '**No cancellation**': the licenses already given will not be revoked.
- **Key Facts** : NBFCs are one of the bright spots of the Indian economy, with the rate of growth of advances growing by **14-15%**, which is higher than banks.

Basic Information

Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC)

- A Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) is a company registered under the Companies Act, 1956 engaged in the business of loans and advances, acquisition of shares/stocks/bonds/debentures/securities issued by Government or local authority or other marketable securities of a like nature, leasing, hire-purchase, insurance business, chit business but does not include any institution whose principal business is that of agriculture activity, industrial activity, purchase or sale of any goods (other than securities) or providing any services and sale/purchase/construction of immovable property.
- A non-banking institution which is a company and has principal business of receiving deposits under any scheme or arrangement in one lump sum or in installments by way of contributions or in any other manner, is also a non-banking financial company (Residuary non-banking company).

What is difference between banks & NBFCs?

- NBFCs lend and make investments and hence their activities are akin to that of banks; however there are a few differences as given below:
 1. NBFC cannot accept demand deposits;
 2. NBFCs do not form part of the payment and settlement system and cannot issue cheques drawn on itself;
 3. deposit insurance facility of Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation is not available to depositors of NBFCs, unlike in case of banks.

4. Finance Ministry modifies cash management system to include post-GST changes

In news

- The finance ministry has modified the **cash management system** of the Central government
- Why? To incorporate the change in date of tax receipts arising out of the new indirect tax regime of the Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Direction to all Departments and Ministries

- The finance ministry has asked all financial advisers of all departments and ministries to send a monthly/quarterly expenditure plan to the Budget division of the ministry
- This has to be done in within two weeks of passage of their detailed demand for grants in Parliament

Reasons behind the move

- Monthly/quarterly expenditure plan form the basis of cash forecast and preparation of indicative calendar for government borrowing
- The monthly expenditure plan would form the basis of quarterly expenditure plan
- And departments/ministries will not be allowed to release payment beyond quarterly expenditure plan without prior consent of the Budget division

5. Tax, in the bigger picture

Context: GST avoids the challenge of shifting to a higher proportion of direct taxe

Key points

- Sustainability of taxation policy is an echo of economic policy. Thus GST has to be weighed upon a broader taxation policy perspective.
- India's tax-GDP ratio is at 18 per cent, which when compared with developed countries (between 30 per cent and 40 per cent) as well as comparable economies such as Mexico, Brazil, and South Africa (between 23 per cent and 26 per cent) the picture looks grim. Therefore India should target to reach 25 per cent.

Reasons

- Of the total taxes collected in India, almost two-thirds come from indirect taxes while taxes on income and profits contribute only a one-third share.
- But the scenario is exactly in opposite proportion when compared to other nations.
- In a country with strong economic progress as well as social policy goals, such an abysmal base of direct taxes and a excessive proportion of indirect taxes is the way for an hostile future.

GST Analysis

- Under reporting of turnover and evasion of taxes on goods and services is the first step towards evasion of taxes on profits and income.
- With the junction of direct and indirect tax departments and also owing to the conception of non-erasable automated electronic trails by GST, it is seen as an near impossible task for the business class to default on direct taxes.
- GST pushes every firm to be a registered and tax compliant business unit rather than remain an unregistered seller due to the peculiar system of tax input credit.
- Despite great potential, the choices with respect to tax rates and the segregations made by the GST council are bringing the graph down rather than promising. India's GST rate is broken down into four rates — 5, 12, 18, and 28 per cent but the reality shows that at least seven rates would be in operation.
- This would defy the objective of "one nation one tax" and also increase the possibility of corruption and falsification due to a multiple-slab, loophole-prone tax system.
- Certain items such as petroleum, electricity and taxes on liquor, which constitute a major chunk of states' income, are kept away from the purview of the GST.
- The exclusion of the petroleum sector from GST, which contributed, for a raise in tax collection by 122% over past three years is a mockery of justice.
- Due to lack of infrastructural preparedness, there could be a temporary obstruction in small and medium businesses.

Nothing here for Today!!!

NATIONAL PARKS/SANCTURIES/BIOSPHERE RESERVES

National park is an area, which is strictly reserved for the betterment of the wildlife & biodiversity, and where activities like developmental, forestry, poaching, hunting and grazing on cultivation are not permitted. Their boundaries are well marked and circumscribed. They are usually small reserves spreading in an area of 100 sq. km. to 500 sq. km. In national parks, the emphasis is on the preservation of a single floral or faunal species.

National parks in Jammu and Kashmir

1. Dachigam National Park

Location

- Dachigam National Park is located about 22 Kilometers from Srinagar District of the state of Jammu and



Kashmir.

Facts

- Total area of the park is about 141 sq.km
- This National park is well known for its unique and diverse wildlife and bird species. It habitats the endangered Hangul population in the world, which is characterized by its white rump patch and impressive spread of antlers.
- Hangul also called as Kashmiri Stag.
- Other wildlife includes Leopard, Common Palm Civet, Jackal, Red Fox, Yellow-throated Marten and Himalayan Weasel.
- Over 145 different bird species including the Lammergeier, colourful species like Monal Pheasant and Blue Magpie are seen.

2. Salim Ali National Park

Location

- Salim Ali National Park is located in Srinagar

Facts

- This National park covers an area of 9.07 sq. km.
- This park habitats various wildlife species such as Hangul, Musk Deer, Himalayan Black Bear and about seventy species of birds including Paradise flycatcher, Himalayan Snow Cock.

IUCN Red List



I. Nilgiri langur

- **Scientific Name:** *Trachypithecus johnii*
- **IUCN Classification :** Vulnerable
- **Habitat:**
 - The Nilgiri langur is a type of Old World monkey found in the Nilgiri Hills of the Western Ghats in South India.

- Its range also includes Kodagu in Karnataka, Kodayar Hills in Tamil Nadu, and many other hilly areas in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Threats: habitat destruction and poaching for its fur and flesh.



II. Lion-tailed macaque/ wanderoo

- **Scientific Name:** Macaca Silenus
- **IUCN Classification:** Threatened
- **Habitat:**
 - The Lion-tailed macaque is a type of Old World monkey endemic to the Western Ghats of South India.
 - Avoid human presence and they do not live, feed or travel through plantations.

Threat: Habitat fragmentation due to spread of agriculture and tea, coffee, teak and cinchona, construction of water reservoirs and human settlements to support such activities.

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. “State is obliged to put a robust personal data protection mechanism in place in this digital age” Evaluate?
2. Critically analyze the prospects to India from the recently unveiled “New South Asian Policy of President Donald Trump?

GS Paper III

1. How can the ‘Digital India’ programme help farmers to improve farm productivity and income? What steps has the Government taken in this regards?
2. “GST is a weapon to curb state’s financial autonomy.” Evaluate?

GS Paper IV

Topic: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Question 1. You are running a Non Governmental Organization to educate orphans, beggars and other single/lonely child. Appreciating the work, Government of India sanctions a grant of Rs. 2 lakhs/year lapsable fund. But due to your commitment towards Civil service examination, you could only spend Rs. 50,000/- this year. A friend advises you not to return the remaining amount as it would result in labeling the NGO as inefficient and reduce the grant for next year. S/he also suggests you to manipulate the accounts and use the remaining Rs.1, 50,000/- along with the next year’s grant without misusing the purpose of the grant. So what is your stand?

Answer

- NGO is a helping hand to the government for the welfare of the society. It should be a non-competitive, non-profitable organization. In this case study the personal values of Honesty versus Self Interest are tested.
- A right is always correct even if nobody is following and a wrong is always wrong even if everyone is following. Therefore a second wrong can never correct the first wrong.

Points on a stand to return the unused grant

- First mistake can be the reason behind further wrongs like corruption, inefficiency, inability, and manipulations.
- It questions the professional integrity and human values.
- Furthermore inner conscience which is a higher court of justice which supersedes all other courts (M K Gandhi) would kill the values and objectives of past achievements.
- The honest step to return the unutilized grant can increase the trust and credibility of the organization, which can result in attracting more donors.
- Keeping apart the human values, it is the duty of a citizen to follow the law of the land to keep up the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi's ideology – “means are equally important as ends”.
- On the other hand the act of manipulation is a form of corruption, which has potential to derecognize legally and defame the organization socially.

Points in favor of friend's opinion

- Intention to manipulate the accounts was not for self-benefits. Hence there is no misuse in the objective or resources.
- This move can bring about a larger outcome (Utilitarian concept- the doctrine that an action is right in so far as it promotes happiness, and that the greatest happiness of the greatest number should be the guiding principle of conduct.)

Conclusion

- Looking into the positives and negatives of the move I would decide to return the grant along with a statement of the organization's expenditure and future course of action. So that Government of India could take a call on the future grants.

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Nothing here for Today!!!

Category: POLITY

1. Privacy is a fundamental right, declares SC

Context:

- Life and liberty are intrinsic to human life and it is not an absolute right says Court in a nine-judge Constitution Bench verdict.
- It will have effectson matters ranging from collection and sharing of personal data in Aadhar cards to the cases of homosexuality (possibly)
- The SC has overruled its earlier verdictswhich held that right to privacy was not protected by the Constitution
- Natural rights like privacy exist equally in all individuals, irrespective of class, strata, gender or orientation.
- Central executive claimed against the acknowledgment of privacy as a fundamental right but assured the court that it would be safeguarded through parliamentary statutes.
- Nevertheless, the court held that privacy is not an absolute right. The government can introduce a law, which “intrudes” into privacy for public and legitimate state reasons.
- A person can challenge this law in any of the constitutional courts of the land for violation of his fundamental right to privacy.

Judgment's implication on Aadhar

- The judgment was regulated to the issue of right to privacy
- The five-judge bench hearing the petitions since 2015 will deal with whether Aadhaar violates the right to privacy

2. New Rs 200 note to be issued from today: Here is everything you need to know

Context:

- RBI will issue new Rs 200 denomination banknotes from hand-picked RBI offices.
- New Rs 200 note may not be accessible through ATMs.
- The induction of Rs.200 note is with respect to various factors like ease of transactions for the common man, replacement of soiled banknotes, inflation and the need for combating counterfeiting
- The notes will be in the Mahatma Gandhi (new) Series, bearing the signature of RBI Governor Urjit R Patel.

3. Govt tweaks RCS to attract more bidders

Context:

- Center takes steps towards Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) to make it more feasible for airlines.
- The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) to make some changes for the bidding in commercially viable existing routes under the scheme.
- The viability gap funding (VGF) for helicopter operators is also provided under the scheme by MoCA.
- Steps to increase the connectivity in priority areas, which include: J&K, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, the North-East, and Andaman, Nicobar and Lakshadweep Island through major rebuilding work.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Foreign Policy Watch: India-Nepal

Context:

- Nepalese Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba guaranteed Prime Minister Narendra Modi that Nepal would not permit any activity against its “friendly neighbour”

India-Nepal cooperation

- India talks on warmer cooperation between the security and defense forces of the two countries as this could prevent misuse of the open border.
- Deuba promised of “every support, every help and cooperationon the “defence and security” aspect.
- Deuba also acknowledged that the Constitution “encompassing” the opinions of the people from all sections and ethnicities would be a certain.
- India and Nepal together launched the Kataiya- Kusaha and Raxaul-Parwanipur cross border power transmission lines. Modi said this would give an additional 100 MW of power to Nepal, apart from the current 350 MW.
- Mutual plans to develop the Ramayana and Buddhist tourism circuits through better connectivity.
- Flood management and irrigation projects was also the focal point in the meeting.
- The two sides endorsed eight pacts, including on cooperation in countering drug trafficking and post-earthquake reconstruction in the Himalayan nation.

2. Foreign Policy Watch: India-China

Context:

- High-level official team from China is visiting India to address the issue of growing trade imbalance with India.
- This move can be seen as a breakthrough for India, which is facing goods trade deficit with China.
- Decision came while Military tension between the two countries.
- China has a goods exports to India in 2016-17 valued at an enormous \$61.3 billion.
- Whereas India’s shipments worth just \$10.2 billion to China.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. The geopolitical prowess of science and technology

Context:

- Science and technology acts as a portion of geopolitics where technological developments boost Geo-political domination of the country.
- This dominion can act as a decisive instrument to pursue a geopolitical outline and build strategic relations in international affairs.
- It can also be a potential tool in national security and opening new market opportunities
- Possession of high-class technology fetches greater power and control in International arena.
- Intermediate powers like Canada and Switzerland are best examples in the international arena because of their S&T capabilities.

Israel

- Being a small country it embraces a great geo-political importance because of its high-tech ecosystem.
- One of the cause for India's latest tilt regarding Israel is the latter's strength in S&T, especially in agriculture.
- Israel serves the triple purpose of boosting economic growth, ensuring national security, and offering international leverage.

U.S.

- Country has been the world's superpower for the past 50 years, because of their headship in S&T.
- The beginning of World War I with the establishment of the Council of National Defense and the National Research Council established the Science and technological leadership.
- World War II led to the development of the atomic weapon and Foundations of Silicon Valley.
- The diplomatically important US space program was the seed of cold war.

China

- Chinese innovation policy is a geopolitical apparatus to advance economic and military hegemony.
- China's New Industry Policy 2025 aims to make itself an "innovative country".
- Chinese moves in clean energy and space have made technology a prime pawn in the international power play.
- China aims to become a superpower in Artificial Intelligence, leading to a technology race with the US.
- The Chinese government also invests strategically in the US, particularly in Silicon Valley

India

- India's fresh works to focus on its domestic defense manufacturing industry, develop a regional satellite for South Asia, an independent GPS, as well as establish 20 world-class universities, are all seen as foot works in the S&T advancement to reach the power.
- As per the 2015 report by the OECD, the US spent 2.7% of its GDP on research and development in 2013. South Korea and Israel each spent 4% of their GDP while China is targeting 2.5% by 2020.
- India currently spends only 0.9% of GDP on R&D.

Way forward

- India needs to diagnose the geopolitical reality of S&T.
- India needs to build the infrastructure to generate new technologies and to invest in human capital, maintain a cadre of top scientists and professionals, and develop industry-lab links.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. The return of the Irrawaddy dolphin

Context:

- After 30 years of removal of illegal prawn enclosures, endangered dolphins spotted back in the Chilika.
- This move by the Chilika Development Authority's (CDA) has resulted to unhindered movement of the dolphins.
- CDA cleared almost 4,000 hectare of encroachment from a portion of the lake.
- Satellite imageries found 14,590 hectare of the lagoon under manmade gheries (enclosures) for illegal prawn cultivation.

Statistics

- The total population of these dolphins in the world is estimated to be less than 7,500. Bangladesh reports the highest count with 6400.
- The population in Chilka is considered to be the highest single lagoonal.

Nothing here for Today!!!

NATIONAL PARKS/SANCTURIES/BIOSPHERE RESERVES:

National parks in Himachal Pradesh

1. Great Himalayan National Park

Location: The Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP), is located in **Kullu region** in the state of **Himachal Pradesh**.

The park is at an altitude of between 1500 and 6000 m.

Key Fact: In June 2014, the Great Himalayan National Park was added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites. The Unesco World Heritage Site Committee granted the status to the park under the criteria of “outstanding significance for biodiversity conservation”

2. Pin Valley National Park

Location: Pin Valley National Park is a National park of India located within the **Lahaul and Spiti** district, in the state of Himachal Pradesh, in far Northern India.

The park is located in the desert habitat of the Spiti Valley, within the Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve, in the Himalayas region.

Key Fact: the Park forms a natural habitat for a number of endangered animals including the **snow leopard** and **Siberian ibex**.

IUCN Red List:



I. Asiatic cheetah

- **Scientific name:** Acinonyx jubatus venaticus
- **Habitat:**
 - Only in Iran now
 - It once occurred from the Arabian Peninsula and the Near East to the Kyzylkum Desert, Caspian region, Pakistan and India, but has been extirpated there during the 20th century
- **IUCN classification:** Critically Endangered
- **Threats:** Reduced gazelle numbers, persecution, land-use change, habitat degradation and fragmentation, and desertification contributed to the decline of the cheetah population

II. Gharial:

- **Scientific name:** Gavialis gangeticus.



Subcontinent.

- **Habitat:** native to the northern part of the Indian

The gharial once thrived in all the major river systems of the Indian Subcontinent, spanning the rivers of its northern part from the Indus River in Pakistan across the Gangetic floodplain to the Irrawaddy River in Myanmar. Today, it is extinct in the Indus River, in the Brahmaputra of Bhutan and Bangladesh, and in the Irrawaddy River. Its distribution is now limited to only 2% of its former range.

- **IUCN Classification:** critically endangered.

- **Threats:** loss of riverine habitat, depletion of fish resources, and entanglement in fishing nets.

- **Fact:** Gharials are bred in captivity in the National Chambal Sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh, and in the Gharial Breeding Centre in Nepal's Chitwan National Park.

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Right to privacy which is the core intrinsic human value that can be a potential tool to address the issues ranging from Aadhar to sexual identity. Explain.

GS Paper III

1. Can technological prowess be a weapon for India to attain global supremacy and hegemony? Discuss
2. What is Artificial Intelligence? How can it contribute to a civilizational revolution?

GS Paper IV

Topic: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Question 1. You are a district development officer, Panchayat has appointed part time teachers who are not of better quality and are accompanied on not working according to working hours. What steps would you take to resolve the issue?

Answer

The aim of education is to identify the potential in a student and helping him/her to achieve success in life. A capable teacher can better execute this. If teacher himself is incapable then it results in disastrous consequence.

Ethical issues involved

1. Violation of Right to Education
2. Violation of promise and professional ethics

Steps to be taken

1. Analyze the situation in reality.
2. Document the possible facts and consider the school management/ panchayat level considerations of the issue, taken as a move earlier.
3. If not taken, then instruct them to take initial move.
4. Look if alternate teachers are available to address the urgent needs.
5. Take all the decisions based on the available and disposable resources.

Immediate action to be taken

1. Bring changes in the schedule.
2. Recruit or replace teachers based on their location of residence and availability of transport.
3. Introduce Quality development programs.
4. Initiate move to reach the targets through motivational programs for both children and teachers.

(c)

Topic: Polity

Level: Moderate

Explanation:

Article 356. Provisions in case of failure of constitutional machinery in State

(1) If the President, on receipt of report from the Governor of the State or otherwise, is satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the government of the State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution, the President may by Proclamation

(a) assume to himself all or any of the functions of the Government of the State and all or any of the powers vested in or exercisable by the Governor or any body or authority in the State other than the Legislature of the State;

(b) declare that the powers of the Legislature of the State shall be exercisable by or under the authority of Parliament;

(c) make such incidental and consequential provisions as appear to the president to be necessary or desirable for giving effect to the objects of the Proclamation, including provisions for suspending in whole or in part the operation of any provisions of this constitution relating to any body or authority in the State Provided that nothing in this clause shall authorise the President to assume to himself any of the powers vested in or exercisable by a High Court, or to suspend in whole or in part the operation of any provision of this Constitution relating to High Courts

(2) Any such Proclamation may be revoked or varied by a subsequent Proclamation

(3) Every Proclamation issued under this article except where it is a Proclamation revoking a previous Proclamation, cease to operate at the

expiration of two months unless before the expiration of that period it has been approved by resolutions of both Houses of Parliament Provided that if any such Proclamation (not being a Proclamation revoking a previous Proclamation) is issued at a time when the House of the People is dissolved or the dissolution of the House of the People takes place during the period of two months referred to in this clause, and if a resolution approving the Proclamation has been passed by the Council of States, but no resolution with respect to such Proclamation has been passed by the House of the People before the expiration of that period, the Proclamation Shall cease to operate at the expiration of thirty days from the date on which the House of the People first sits after its reconstitution unless before the expiration of the said period of thirty days a resolution approving the Proclamation has been also passed by the House of the People

(4) A Proclamation so approved shall, unless revoked, cease to operate on the expiration of a period of six months from the date of issue of the Proclamation: Provided that if and so often as a resolution approving the continuance in force of such a Proclamation is passed by both Houses of Parliament, the Proclamation shall, unless revoked, continue in force for a further period of six months from the date on which under this clause it would otherwise have ceased to operating, but no such Proclamation shall in any case remain in force for more than three years: Provided further that if the dissolution of the House of the People takes place during any such period of six months and a resolution approving the continuance in force of such Proclamation has been passed by the Council of States, but no resolution with respect to the continuance in force of such Proclamation has been passed by the House of the People during the said period, the Proclamation shall cease to operate at the expiration of thirty days from the date on which the House of the People first sits after its reconstitution unless before the expiration of the said period of thirty days a resolution approving the continuance in force of the Proclamation has been also passed by the House of the People

(5) Notwithstanding anything contained in clause (4), a resolution with respect to the continuance in force of a Proclamation approved under clause (3) for any period beyond the expiration of one year from the

date of issue of such proclamation shall not be passed by either House of Parliament unless

- (a) a Proclamation of Emergency is in operation, in the whole of India or, as the case may be, in the whole or any part of the State, at the time of the passing of such resolution, and
- (b) the Election Commission certifies that the continuance in force of the Proclamation approved under clause (3) during the period specified in such resolution is necessary on account of difficulties in holding general elections to the Legislative Assembly of the State concerned: Provided that in the case of the Proclamation issued under clause (1) on the 6 th day of October, 1985 with respect to the State of Punjab, the reference in this clause to any period beyond the expiration of two years.

Article 365. Effect of failure to comply with, or to give effect to, directions given by the Union Where any State has failed to comply with or to give effect to any directions given in the exercise of the executive power of the Union under any directions given in the exercise of the executive power of the Union under any of the provisions of this Constitution, it shall be lawful for the President to hold that a situation has arisen in which the government of the State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution

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Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. [Storm Pakhar hits Hong Kong and Macau days after deadly Typhoon Hato](#)

Key Points

- Tropical storm Pakhar has brought high intensity winds and very heavy rain to Hong Kong and Macau; merely four days after one of the strongest typhoons on record, Hato, caused severe flooding and damage.

- Pakhar's arrival comes as the cities are still reeling from Hato.

Basic Information

Understanding Tropical Cyclones and its different names

- A **tropical cyclone** is a generic term used by meteorologists to describe a rotating, organized system of clouds and thunderstorms that originates over tropical or subtropical waters and has a closed, low-level circulation.
- Once a tropical cyclone reaches maximum sustained wind speeds of 74 miles per hour or higher, it is then classified as a **hurricane**, **typhoon**, or **cyclone** depending upon the location where the storm originates in the world.
- Hurricanes, cyclones, and typhoons are all the same weather phenomenon; we just use different names for these storms in different locations.
- In the Atlantic and Northeast Pacific, it is called as "hurricane". A similar disturbance in the Northwest Pacific is known as a "typhoon" and in the South Pacific and Indian Ocean it is referred to as "cyclones".
- The pre-requisites for these storms include a pre-existing weather disturbance, warm tropical oceans, moisture, and relatively light winds.
- If the right conditions persist long enough, then they can combine to produce violent winds, incredible waves, torrential rains, and floods which are usually associated with this phenomenon.

Category: POLITY

1. The lowdown on Article 35A

Key Points

- Article 35A in the Indian Constitution is a provision which gives the J&K Legislature a carte blanche to decide who all are ' **permanent residents**' of the State and confer on them special rights and privileges in public sector employment, purchase of property in the State, scholarships and other government aid and welfare. It mandates that no act of the legislature coming under it can be challenged for violation of the Constitution or any other law of the land.
- Article 35A was added into the Constitution in 1954 by an order of the then President Rajendra Prasad on the advice of the Union Cabinet led by Jawaharlal Nehru. The controversial Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order of 1954 followed the 1952 Delhi Agreement, which provided Indian citizenship to the citizens of J&K.
- The Presidential Order was issued under **Article 370 (1) (d)** of the Constitution. This feature allows the President to make certain "exceptions and modifications" to the Constitution for the benefit of citizens of J&K.
- So Article 35A was included in the Constitution as a mark of the special consideration the Indian government extended to the 'permanent residents' of J&K.
- The President incorporated Article 35A into the Constitution by bypassing the parliamentary route. **Article 368 (i)** of the Constitution mandates that only the Parliament can amend the Constitution. So the question is did the President act outside his jurisdiction? Is Article 35A null and void because the government did not carry out a Parliamentary discussion?
- A five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in its 1961 judgment discussed the powers of the President under Article 370 to 'amend' the Constitution, during the Puranlal Lakhanpal vs. The President of India case. The court observed that the President can modify an existing article in the Constitution under Article 370 but the SC ruling is silent over the President's power to introduce a new Article without the Parliament's knowledge. This question remains unanswered.
- Critics argue that Article 35A goes against the principles of equality and as well as the unity and integrity of India. They argue that it restricts citizens from other States from getting jobs or acquiring property in J&K and is a violation of fundamental rights enshrined under Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution.
- Article 35A has also been challenged for protecting certain provisions of the J&K Constitution, which limits the basic right to property if a native woman marries a man who does not possess a certificate of permanent residence.
- Recently, a Supreme Court Bench has indicated that the validity of Articles 35A and 370 may ultimately be decided by a Constitution Bench.

2. Rajiv Kumar appointed as the second Vice-Chairman of the NITI Aayog

Key Points

- Rajiv Kumar has been picked as the 2nd Vice-Chairman of the NITI Aayog, the think tank which replaced the Planning Commission.
- He is an Oxford-educated economist with extensive experience – both in and outside the government – in shaping the contours of public policy.
- The Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog reports directly to the Prime Minister and wields a powerful influence on the management of the economy and the Centre's policy priorities.
- Reviving the formal economy, spurring private investment and creating jobs is likely to be the focus of Mr. Kumar and he feels all other economic priorities must make way for employment creation.
- Mr. Kumar believes higher employment will automatically push the Indian economy close to double digit growth. He holds strong views about India's foreign trade policy and could prioritise the overhaul of the export incentives system.
- He could bring some relief for citizens as he believes the government could lower the high taxes on petroleum products to encourage consumption and investment demand.
- He is also a firm supporter for a voluntary two-year social service scheme for the youth to ensure unemployment doesn't lead them astray. This programme would have to be run by the armed forces and national integration has to be its principal objective.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [3.8 million displaced by DR Congo violence: UN](#)

Key Points

- The number of people displaced by conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, mainly in the volatile Kasai region, has nearly doubled in the last six months to 3.8 million
- UNHCR has said that food and clothing was required for the 1.4 million refugees in Kasai who have fled their homes due to violence that has killed more than 3,000 people.
- In the south eastern province of Tanganyika, clashes between Bantus and Pygmies have also forced thousands to seek refuge, as has the long-running conflict in the Kivu region
- In Kasai, clashes began last September after the killing of a tribal chieftain, known as the Kamwina Nsapu, who rebelled against the authority of President Joseph Kabila's regime in Kinshasa and its local authorities.
- The murder sparked large scale violence that has escalated and has led to alleged human rights violations such as extrajudicial killings, rapes, torture and the use of child soldiers, all of which constitute violation of international law.
- At the same time, the country is also coping with the arrival of about 500,000 refugees fleeing conflict in neighbouring Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan and the Central African Republic where about 60,000 people have fled to DRC this year.

Basic Information

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

- The UNHCR , also known as the **UN Refugee Agency** , is a UN programme mandated to protect and support refugees at the request of a government or the UN itself and assists in their voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to a third country.
- Its headquarters is located in Geneva, Switzerland, and it is a member of the United Nations Development Group.
- The UNHCR has won two Nobel Peace Prizes (in 1954 and again in 1981).
- The **1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees** and the **1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees** , provide the mandate to UNHCR.

2. [India, Qatar discuss citizens' welfare](#)

Key Points

- India and Qatar discussed the welfare of Indian citizens in Qatar in the wake of its lingering disputes with other Aran nations – Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE and Bahrain.

- The two sides also discussed ways to expand co-operation in energy, trade and investment including the welfare of the more than six lakh Indian workers.
- In June this year the four Arab countries had announced breaking off diplomatic ties and shutting all connectivity links with Qatar over allegations that it supported terrorism and Qatar had rejected these charges.
- India had impressed upon the countries in the region to resolve the crisis via constructive dialogue and well-established international principles of mutual respect.
- India's ties with Qatar have intensified in the last few years and India has expressed keen interest in investing in Qatar's hydrocarbon projects.
- PM Modi during the recent visit of his Qatari counterpart had also discussed enhancing cooperation in defence and security and both agreed on joint action to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Using satellite imagery, Internet to arrive at farm insurance solution

Key Points

- Space entrepreneurs plan to improve the livelihood of farmers without directly working with them by deploying a combination of satellite imagery, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), and big data analytics.
- This technology can help farmers to acquire bank loans, timely and correct insurance claims and may be even ensure a good MSP (minimum support price) for their crop.
- This can be done by syncing satellite imagery-based information with ground level data and this in turn can be used to improve the livelihood of farmers
- By reducing the risks associated with India's weather dependent, subsistence farming; this idea should make it easier for the farmer to increase his income; and get agricultural loans and insurance and its timely settlement. In return the government can spend less on insurance premium subsidies and agriculture insurance companies will have less pay-out to make and it can also serve as a scientific basis for fixing MSPs.
- Researchers are pulling data from Indian and European satellites and old imageries from the U.S. Landsat and keyed in latitudes and longitudes of remote places across the country to match them up with local socio-economic data. To this the 'mandi'-level commodity prices, potential prices, and historical rates have been synced.
- They began their pilot project in Andhra Pradesh's Srikakulam district. They randomly chose different crops with different mixes of fertilizer and water. At the end of the 2016 cropping seasons — the summer Kharif and the winter Rabi — they could predict crop yields that were 85-90% accurate and this has been now fine-tuned to 95%. Conventional or manual estimate methods are said to be less than 80% accurate.

Forecasting crop yields

- An accurate forecast of crop yields are crucial and will help the farmer and as well as all the stakeholders: the bank that lends him credit; the government that pays premiums on crop insurance and fixes MSPs; and the insurance agency that must compensate the farmer if crops fail.
- In July, the CAG identified gaps in the implementation of agricultural insurance scheme during the 2011–16 period and pointed out delays in settling claims. The CAG report also said that the farmers did not get the full benefit of the ₹36,000 crore-plus subsidies that the Union and State governments had declared towards crop insurance premium.
- The tool being developed has a Google Earth-like navigable online dashboard and will be customised to be offered to end users such as district collectors, decision makers, crop insurance companies, banks, and large single farmers.
- The new **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana** mandates all stakeholders to deploy technologies such as satellite remote sensing, ICT, and mobile phones to identify risks and settle farmers' claims quickly.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Researchers from NIT-Karnataka and US develop cheaper plastics

Key Points

- A team of researchers from the National Institute of Technology, Karnataka, and the New York University,

U.S., have developed composite plastics that are up to 36% lighter than those currently being used.

- The team focussed on embedding hollow microspheres into high density polyethylene, which is the most commonly moulded plastic product.
- Through a method of trial and error spanning two years, researchers have managed to shed plastic usage by nearly 20%. They have replaced it with glass microballoons and fly ash cenospheres.
- The challenge with composite materials is that it is developed in controlled conditions in the lab which cannot be replicated in the industry. But with the new technique that has been developed, low-cost, light-weight composites can be manufactured at any industry using the regular compression moulding machines
- While hollow microspheres and composites are lighter and cheaper, the challenge facing the team was to ensure the microspheres remained intact despite the processes of industrial moulding.
- By successfully imbibing hollow spheres into otherwise solid plastic base, the density of the material has been brought down by nearly 50%. The end material was found to have a significantly greater ability to absorb energy.
- The researchers believe that this could help in the production of more light-weight material and the reduced usage of plastics. For instance, the reduction in weight will significantly improve fuel efficiency in cars and planes.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Jaish-e-Mohammed carries out a deadly attack in J&K

Key Points:

- 8 security personnel and 3 militants were killed when militants of the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) stormed the highly secure District Police Lines premises in Pulwama.
- The terrorists stormed the Special Operation Group building which houses the police arm that handles counter-insurgency operations.

Basic Information

- Jaish-e-Mohammed is viewed by Indian security agencies as the “deadliest” and “the principal terrorist group operating in Jammu and Kashmir”
- Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence(ISI) is said to have created Jaish-e-Mohammed by working with several Deobandi terrorists and it is known to have long-standing ties with the Taliban and Al Qaeda.
- JeM was founded by **Maulana Masood Azhar**, who was in Indian custody prior to 1999 and had to be released as part of the negotiations to end the hostage crisis when an Indian Airlines flight IC-814 was hijacked by terrorists.
- JeM became a part of the ISI-sponsored **United Jihad Council**, an umbrella organisation of around 13–16 militant organisations that carry out attacks in Indian-administered Kashmir.
- India is pushing the UNSC to designate Masood Azhar as a global terrorist but the efforts are being blocked by China.

Major attacks attributed to JeM

- Attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001.
- Murder of Daniel Pearl, an American journalist in Karachi.
- Pathankot Air base attack in 2016.
- Uri Attack in 2016 which prompted India to retaliate with surgical strikes on terror camps operating beyond the LoC.

2. Defence Minister dedicates upgraded jet trainer Hawk-i to the nation

Key Points

- Defence Minister Arun Jaitley launched several new schemes and infrastructure projects across three of the country’s biggest defence public sector undertakings
- At HAL, he launched the production of the twin-engine light combat helicopter (LCH) and also dedicated the weaponised and upgraded Hawk-i (India), jet trainer aircraft, to the nation.
- The Hawk-I has been upgraded indigenously with newly designed avionics and other features to make it a

combat-ready platform and it marks a departure for HAL from the traditional process of developing platforms based on the needs of the Indian armed forces. The Hawk-i has been developed without any confirmed buyers. It will now be put on offer to the Armed Forces.

Hawk-i



- The Hawk is an advanced jet trainer aircraft developed by BAE Systems of UK. It was imported by India under a technology transfer agreement to replace the ageing fleet of IAF trainers with modern trainer jets.
- The aircraft has been upgraded indigenously with newly designed avionics hardware, software and system architecture which enhances its operational role from being just a trainer aircraft into a Combat-ready platform with enhanced quality and depth of training via Large Force Engagement (LFE) tactics through the Electronic Virtual Training System (EVTS).
- Hawk-i is capable of delivering precision munitions including Air to Ground and close combat weapons, self-defence capabilities through Electronic Warfare (EW) systems, digital map generator and operational reliability through new Dual Hot stand-by Mission Computer Avionics architecture supported by indigenous high accuracy and high Altitude Radio Altimeter, Data Transfer system.

HAL Light Combat Helicopter (LCH)



- The **LCH** is a multirole combat helicopter being developed indigenously by HAL for the Indian Air Force and the Indian Army.
- It's mainly being developed to meet the demands of the IAF and the Army to have an indigenously developed combat helicopter for high-altitude operations in the Himalayas.
- The LCH is being designed to take on anti-infantry and anti-armour roles and will be capable of high-altitude operations.
- Its design features a narrow fuselage with stealth profiling, armour protection, and it will be equipped to carry out day-and-night combat operations. The LCH also features a digital camouflage system and it has a two-crew cockpit.
- LCH will have a glass cockpit with multifunction displays, a target acquisition and designation system with FLIR, Laser rangefinder and laser designator. Weapons will be aimed with a helmet mounted sight and it

has an electronic warfare suite with radar warning receiver, laser warning receiver and a missile approach warning system.

- LCH is intended for use primarily in air defence against slow moving aerial targets (like aircraft and UAVs), Counter Surface Force Operation (CSFO), destruction of enemy air defence operations, escort to special Heli borne operations (SHBO), Counter-insurgency operations (COIN), offensive Employment in Urban Warfare, support of combat search and rescue operations (SAR) operations, anti-tank role and scout duties.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. A new score in waste management

Key Points

- Scientists from CSIR have been able to produce ethanol from discarded cotton-stalks by a combination of chemical and biological techniques. India has about 9.4 million hectares under cotton cultivation and each hectare generates around 2 million tonnes of cotton stalk wastes.
- The cotton stalks were first treated with an acid, alkali and different enzymes to help breakdown the complex organic polymers. Agro-residues are generally tough in nature and it requires chemical pre-treatment to help break down the complex structure of the stalk.
- The acid aids in removal of hemicellulose which is a polymer of the cell wall and the alkali extracts lignin which is a binding matrix in the cell wall made up of complex phenolic. These treatments expose cellulose to the action of enzymes. By using enzymes, the cellulose was further treated to convert it into glucose.

Fermentation

- To convert the glucose into ethanol, fermentation using a novel yeast strain was carried out. Researchers isolated the yeast-Saccharomycescerevisiae-RRP-03N, from a rotting wild fruit found in the **Silent Valley National Park in Palakkad, Kerala**.
- The yeast displayed a glucose conversion efficiency of 76% and the entire glucose was consumed by the yeast in just 24 hours and was converted into alcohol. This performance is superior to any other organism reported for fermentation of cotton stalk.
- The final alcohol thus obtained can be converted to **fuel grade bioethanol (>99% purity)** after distillation and dehydration using molecular sieves.

Bioethanol

- Bioethanol has many advantages over conventional fuels as it comes from a renewable source. It is now mandatory to blend 10% ethanol with petrol.
- Bioethanol that is presently in use is obtained via fermentation of molasses which is a by-product of sugar production and it has food value.
- Most of this first generation ethanol finds its way into consumer applications, primarily as liquor/alcohol. By converting such agro-residues to ethanol we can reduce the food vs fuel competition.

Nothing here for Today!!!

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. Discuss the phenomena of tropical cyclones in the Indian Ocean by drawing a comparison between the frequency of cyclones in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal.

GS Paper III

1. Indian agriculture is plagued by subsistence practice of farming with poor inputs and lack of institutional support from the government, banks and insurance companies in providing a safety net for crop failures.

Critically Evaluate.

2. Solid waste management has emerged as a major challenge in urban governance in India. But if implemented well, it can bring in not just environmental benefits but also financial benefits. Discuss.

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Category: URBANIZATION

1. Mysuru's public transport system smart, people-friendly: World Bank

The country's first technology-driven Mysuru public transport system has become "smart, safe, efficient" and beneficial to lakhs of people across the city, the World Bank has said in its latest newsletter.

What World Bank report said ?

Mysuru has become the first Indian city to transform its bus services into a safe, efficient and smart system across its entire territory, benefiting both the people and the city.

Project :

The World bank-aided project (Rs. 19 crore) launched in 2012 helped the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) to install GPS enabled mini-computers above the driver's seat in each of the city's 430 buses.

In addition, each bus and bus stop was geo-mapped and tagged, and the details fed into an IT-enabled intelligent system.

How it works :

Now, at the central control room in the heart of the city, a giant screen displays the speed and location of each bus – blinking green, yellow or orange depending on whether a bus is on time, late or early. Moreover, lights splash whenever a driver speeds, accelerates sharply, slams the brakes, or stalls for more than 20 minutes.

The intelligent transport system has not only resulted in a more people-friendly bus service but has also led to smoother operations and considerable savings for the operator

With drivers being more careful, incidents of rash and dangerous driving have also dropped considerably. Besides, women now feel safer using public transport system, even after dark, the World Bank claimed.

KSRTC now saves Rs. 1 crore a year on its city bus operations. Now, the Centre has proposed these projects under the Smart City concept.

Now, the project is worth being emulated in other cities across the country.

Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. Two killed as Hurricane Harvey wreaks havoc in Texas

In news :

Hurricane Harvey, the most powerful to hit the United States in 13 years, left a trail of destruction as it swept across Texas on Sunday, pummelling the region with heavy rains and claiming at least two lives since making landfall on the US' Gulf Coast.

Harvey continued to batter Texas as rescuers grappled with heavy rains to reach out to people stranded due to the hurricane.

With winds topping 130 mph, Harvey is the first **Category 4 storm** to make landfall in the US since

Hurricane Charley struck Florida in 2004, and the first to hit Texas since Hurricane Carla in 1961.

Harvey bombarded the stretch of the Gulf Coast in Texas with home-ripping winds and torrential rains.

Category: POLITY

1. Haryana on alert as Dera chief is set to be sentenced

In news :

Curfew has been imposed in Sirsa, where the headquarters of the Dera Sacha Sauda sect is located as a CBI court is set to pronounce on Monday the quantum of sentence against godman Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh convicted on August 25 for raping two women.

Internet lease lines on the premises of Dera Sacha Sauda, Sirsa had been suspended till August 29. Any person found guilty of violation of these orders would be liable for legal action.

Besides, the government has extended the suspension of mobile internet, SMS and data services till August 29.

Since the environment is tense, rumours of different kinds may be spread through broadband and Internet lease lines on the premises of the Dera Sacha Sauda.

The administration in Fatehabad has imposed Section 144 in the district, prohibiting assembly of five or more persons and carrying of firearms and other weapons, till September 18, 2017. It has also warned the people not to gather in Dera Sacha Sauda and ‘naam charchha ghar’ established in the district.

Central Government Act

Section 144 in The Indian Penal Code

144. Joining unlawful assembly armed with deadly weapon.—Whoever, being armed with any deadly weapon, or with anything which, used as a weapon of offence, is likely to cause death, is a member of an unlawful assembly, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Issues related to H-1B a challenge: Jayapal

In news :

Indian-American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal said though India-U.S. relations had improved, there were many challenges ahead, including issues related to immigration, the H-1B visa programme and foreign policy.

Excerpts of her interview :

Just reacting against H-1Bs and shutting down the programme or restricting the programme would do tremendous harm to the U.S. economy.

As do most Americans, believed immigration was a good thing for the U.S. Unfortunately, the current administration had been putting out a lot of anti-immigration messages, which make it difficult to move a good policy forward.

There was a need to have a system that caters to different needs of the economy but also makes sense to American workers.

India is a big trading partner to the U.S. and is a big potential market. The world's largest democracy and the world's oldest democracy are good partners to have together.

Commenting on the democratic processes in the U.S. and France, which faced cyberattacks and where fake news was propagated on social media to impact elections, Ms. Jaypal said that countries such as India should be concerned about cybersecurity and fake news.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. India facing problem of severe under-employment, says Niti Aayog

Context:

Making a case for promoting highly productive and well paid jobs, Niti Aayog has said that not unemployment but a “severe under-employment” is the main problem facing the country.

In news :

The government think-tank in its three-year action plan, released last week, has said that a focus on the domestic market through an import-substitution strategy would give rise to a group of relatively small firms behind a high wall of protection.

Contrary to some assertions that India's growth has been 'jobless', the Employment Unemployment Surveys (EUS) of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) has consistently reported low and stable rates of unemployment over more than three decades.

Indeed, unemployment is the lesser of India's problems. The more serious problem, instead, is severe underemployment.

Need of the hour :

What is needed is the creation of high-productivity, high-wage jobs.

Citing examples of top manufacturing countries like South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and China, it said, “The ‘Make in India’ campaign needs to succeed by manufacturing for global markets.

Noting that with Chinese wages rising due to an ageing workforce and many large-scale firms in labour-intensive sectors currently manufacturing in that country are looking for lower-wage locations, the Aayog said, “with its large workforce and competitive wages, India would be a natural home for these firms.

Therefore, the time for adopting a manufactures- and exports-based strategy could not be more opportune.

Solutions :

The Aayog in its ‘Three Year Action Agenda’ also recommended for the creation of a handful of Coastal Employment Zones (CEZ), which may attract multinational firms in labour-intensive sectors from China to India.

The presence of these firms will give rise to an ecosystem in which local small and medium firms will also be induced to become highly productive thereby multiplying the number of well-paid jobs.

Making a case for reforming labour laws, the Niti Aayog also noted that recently fixed-term employment has been introduced in the textiles and apparel industry.

This option may be extended to all sectors. The change will encourage employers to rely on regular fixed-term employment instead of contract workers, especially when hiring workers for specific projects or for meeting seasonal demand.

Besides, the Aayog pointed out that unifying the existing large number of labour laws into four codes without reform of the laws themselves will serve little purpose.

Unless we bring about substantive change either by amending the existing laws or rewriting them afresh, we cannot expect to change the current situation where low-productivity and low-wage jobs dominate the landscape.

2. ‘Centre ready to provide capital support for PSU banks’ merger’

In news:

The Finance Ministry is open to providing capital support for facilitating consolidation among state-owned banks, which are reeling under mounting bad loans.

The Union Cabinet has approved the setting up of an alternative mechanism, or a panel of ministers, to decide on consolidation proposals for state-run banks.

The government is keen that at least one merger proposal reaches a logical conclusion by the end of the current fiscal.

There are now 20 public sector banks (PSBs) other than SBI. These state-owned banks are grappling with Rs.6 lakh crore worth of non-performing assets (NPAs) or bad loans, which is about 75% of the total distress.

3. New tax regime to give manufacturing a boost

Advantages of GST:

GST will free the common man from tax terrorism and inspector raj. Besides being a transparent and fair system that will end generation of black money and corruption, GST will promote a new governance culture that will end harassment at the hand of tax officials.

By replacing the old regime of 17-odd indirect levies fragmented at state lines by a single tax; the Indian economy stands to benefit tremendously with a simplified, transparent tax structure that will help reduce discretion, lower litigation and improve ease of doing business thus helping attract foreign direct investment and improving industry competitiveness.

It is estimated that GST may contribute an 80 basis point rise in GDP growth over 3-5 years.

Automobiles

For automobiles, the shift to GST has largely been to the benefit of the industry and the consumer except for certain issues.

The higher GST rate for hybrid vehicles will make them unviable for consumers and will result in petrol and diesel variants being sold instead.

This is not be desirable as hybrids are much more fuel-efficient and environment-friendly vehicles.

Also, levy of tax on used cars at the same rate as for new cars is likely to push this business in the informal sector.

This would negate the Centre's aim of bringing the unregulated part of this business under the regulated mainstream and also lead to the state losing tax revenue in the process.

As we are still in the early phase of the regime, it is hoped that these and other important issues will be addressed soon.

Destination based tax :

Another important change in the indirect tax system is the shift in the taxable event from the sale, manufacture, provision of service or import in the past, to the supply of goods and/or services under GST.

Further, as the GSTN system matches the details of tax paid by a supplier to the details of credit claimed by the recipient, excess credit claim by the recipient will be disallowed automatically till the time the return is rectified. Thus, the new system motivates recipients to keep a check on suppliers.

Also, the GST-compliance rating system for suppliers has shifted part of the burden of ensuring compliance to the recipient. This, along with technology enablement, will surely improve compliance significantly.

The GST structure has been criticised owing to multiple slabs and high effective peak rate of GST. It has been argued by many that the true spirit of GST has been lost and that a high GST rate will fuel inflation. However, the Government has done well to be pragmatic, remain in touch with ground realities and not get carried away by ambitious expectations. In the present socio-economic context, it is unrealistic to expect a single or a two-tax slab structure.

4. 'JAM' will end exclusion: Jaitley

In news:

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on Sunday wrote an article highlighting the benefits of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, which has completed three years, saying the combination of the scheme with Aadhaar and the mobile revolution would bring all Indians into the mainstream and would end economic and social exclusion.

JAM, a term coined, and a vision conceptualized, by our Chief Economic Adviser, is nothing short of a social revolution because it has brought together financial inclusion (PMJDY), biometric identification (Aadhaar) and mobile telecommunications.

Today, about 52.4 crore unique Aadhaar numbers are linked to 73.62 crore accounts in India.

The poor will have access to financial services and be cushioned against life's major shocks. Government finances will be improved because of the reduced subsidy burden; at the same time, government will also be strengthened because it can transfer resources to citizens faster and more reliably and with less leakage.

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. Cloud seeding project hits hurdle

In news :

Running a few weeks behind schedule, cloud seeding has hit an unexpected hurdle: Permissions from numerous Air Traffic Control (ATC) towers that dot the Bengaluru city.

Basic Information:

Cloud Seeding: Cloud seeding is a form of weather modification, a way of changing the amount or type of precipitation that falls from clouds, by dispersing substances into the air that serve as cloud condensation or ice nuclei, which alter the microphysical processes within the cloud. The most common chemicals used for cloud seeding include silver iodide, potassium iodide and dry ice (solid carbon dioxide). Liquid propane, which expands into a gas, has also been used.

2. ‘Bonnet monkey may soon be endangered’



Researchers have found that the common bonnet monkey of South India may soon become an ‘endangered’ species.

They say the distributional range of this monkey is shrinking in eastern Maharashtra, northern parts of Karnataka, and western Telangana because of the slow incursion of the larger, more aggressive rhesus monkey from the northern region.

3. Lantana removal under MNREGA from next week

In news:

A project envisaging the conversion of the invasive weed, lantana camara, in the **BRT wildlife sanctuary** into fuel briquette and generating employment and profit for local community is poised for launch early next week in Chamarajanagar.

The project aims to generate jobs under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA).

4. Greater flamingos paint a pretty picture in Ballari

In news:

The ancient Kamalapur tank built by the Vijayanagar kings near Hampi and also at Hallikere, a tank adjacent to Kannada University, is a visual treat for passers-by.

They have been lucky to get a glimpse of the greater flamingos, which have flocked, albeit in small numbers, from a close vicinity.

Ballari district and the surrounding areas, particularly the backwaters of Tungabhadra dam, are a haven for quite a few migratory birds.

The greater flamingos :



The greater flamingos, known for their majestic looks, migrate from Rann of Kutch in Gujarat during winter.

They are known to congregate at Pulicat lake in Tamil Nadu and migrate back to Gujarat after winter. Since Ballari district has many waterbodies, it has become a transit point for the birds.

5. Ocean forecasting system unveiled

The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) of the Ministry of Earth Sciences inaugurated the Ocean Forecasting System for Comoros, Madagascar, and Mozambique at the third Ministerial Meeting of Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Asia and Africa (RIMES), held at Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, on Friday.

The ocean forecast and early warming information on high wave, currents, winds, tides, sub-surface ocean conditions cater to users like fishermen, coastal population, tourism sector, coastal defence officials, marine police, port authorities, research institutions and offshore industries of these countries.

Applications :

These ocean services are aimed towards safety at the sea.

The system would offer oil spill advisory services, high wave alerts, port warnings, forecast along the ship routes in addition to tsunami and storm surge warnings and help in search and rescue operations.

The INCOIS has already been providing these operational services to the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Seychelles.

The ocean forecast and early warning services were most essential for safe navigation and operations at sea and the blue economic growth of many of these Indian Ocean rim countries and island nations.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. “Smart, Safe, Efficient” public transport system is at the core of Smart City concept. Discuss.

GS Paper III

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2. GST will free the common man from tax terrorism and inspector raj. Critically comment.

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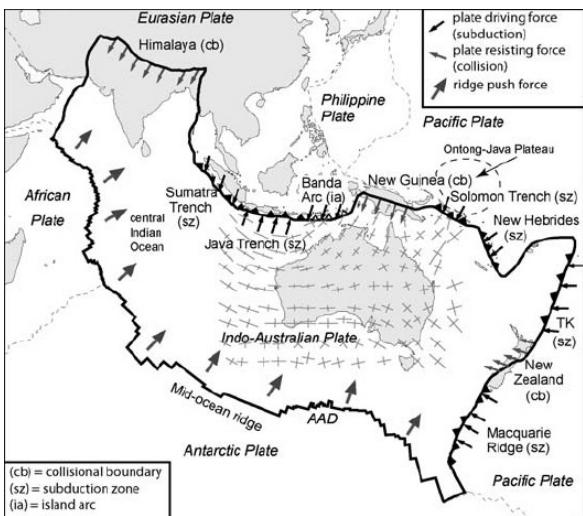
F. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. Geological stresses seen in Indian Ocean

Fifth national conference of the Ocean Society of India (OSI)



- Purnachandra Rao, Director, National Centre for Earth Science Studies in his speech said, geological stresses building along the Indo-Australian tectonic plate boundary in the Southern Indian Ocean have the potential to cause a powerful earthquake up to a magnitude of 8, triggering a tsunami across much of South India.
- The largest **strike-slip earthquake** on record had happened along the **Indo-Australian plate boundary** in 2012. The phenomenon occurred when tectonic plates slipped horizontally along a fault line, unlike most large earthquakes which were caused when two plates collided at their boundaries and one plate slid beneath the other.

Key Facts

- **Burmese Arc**, north of the **Andaman islands**, had been identified as another region with the potential to generate a quake triggered tsunami that could affect Bangladesh and devastate the northern Bay of Bengal.
- The **Andaman subduction zone** in the **Bay of Bengal** and the **Makaran subduction zone** in the **Arabian Sea** were the other tsunamigenic zones in the Indian plate region.

Category: POLITY

[**1. Justice Dipak Misra takes oath as the 45th Chief Justice of India**](#)



In news

- **Justice Dipak Misra** took oath as the **45th Chief Justice of India**, succeeding Chief Justice J S Khehar in India's top court.

Basic Information

Appointment

Article 124 of the Constitution of India provides for the manner of appointing judges to the Supreme Court. Though **no specific provision exists in the Constitution** for appointing the Chief Justice, who, as a result, is appointed like the other judges conventionally, the outgoing CJI recommends the name of the senior-most judge (i.e. by date of appointment to the Supreme Court) for appointment by the President of India, as his successor.

Seniority at the apex court is determined not by age, but by:

1. The date a judge was appointed to the Supreme Court.
2. If two judges are elevated to the Supreme Court on the same day,
 1. The one who was sworn in first as a judge would trump another;
 2. If both were sworn in as judges on the same day, the one with more years of high court service would ‘win’ in the seniority stakes;
 3. An appointment from the bench would ‘trump’ in seniority an appointee from the bar.

Removal

- **Article 124(4)** of Constitution of India lays down the procedure for removal of a Judge of Supreme Court which is applicable to Chief Justice as well. Once appointed, the Chief Justice remains in office until the age of 65 years. He can be removed only through a process of **impeachment by Parliament** as follows:
- A Judge of the Supreme Court shall not be removed from his office except by an order of the President passed after an address by each House of Parliament supported by a majority of the total membership of that House and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of that House present and voting has been presented to the President in the same session for such removal on the ground of proved **misbehavior or incapacity**.

2. Over the years, major questions on institutions of minority education

Context

- Government decided that it does not agree Jamia as a ‘minority’ institution.
- Center replied Delhi High Court that it does not back an order by the National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI) that had declared Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) as a religious minority institution (six years ago).

Background

- “Jamia was established by the Muslims for the advantage of Muslims and it never lost its identity as a Muslim minority educational institution” says NCMEI.
- An order in the past led JMI to scrap reservations for SC/ST and OBC students and set aside half the seats in each course for Muslims.
- After the order was challenged in court, the previous UPA government submitted an affidavit saying it “respects the declaration made by NCMEI”.
- On the advise of then Attorney General Mukul Rohatgi, the NDA government, under HRD Ministry under Smriti Irani entitled to change the government’s view and took a stance that JMI is not a minority institution.

What is a minority educational institution?

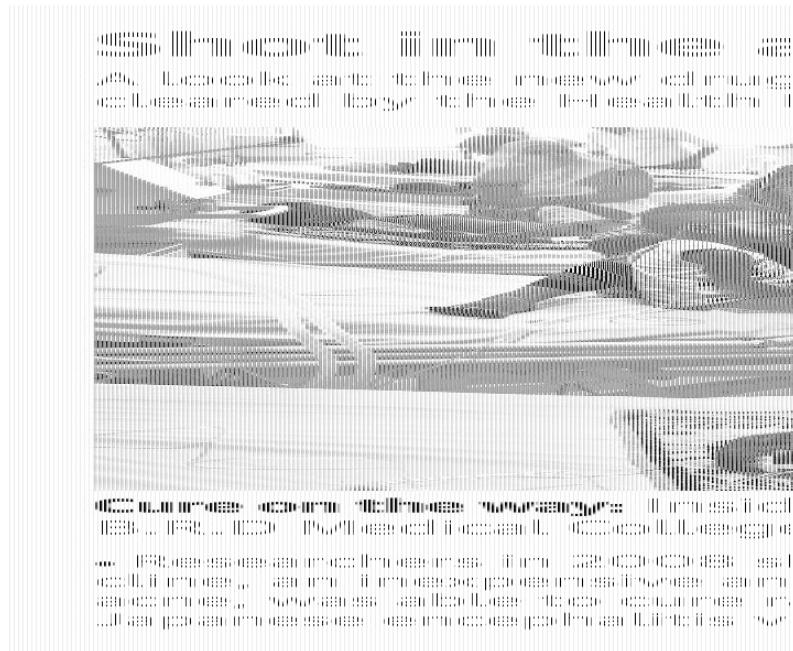
- A minority educational institution is one that has been set up by either a linguistic or a religious minority group.
- Objective: To keep alive and foster what it considers its unique and special features.

Does the Constitution provide for minority educational institutions?

- Fundamental Rights, Part III, openly provides for the right.
- Article 30, titled “Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions”, says:
 - “(1) All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice
 - (1A) In making any law providing for the compulsory acquisition of any property of an educational institution established and administered by a minority, referred to in clause (1), the State shall ensure that the amount fixed by or determined under such law for the acquisition of such property is such as would not restrict or abrogate the right guaranteed under that clause

- (2) The state shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language.”
- Article 29, “Protection of interests of minorities”, says:
 - “(1) Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.”
 - But isn’t there a conflict between the fundamental principle of equality and the special rights conferred on these groups by the Constitution?
- Article 30(1) could seem to be in contradiction to Article 29(2), which says, “No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them.”
- Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), also has been in the courts for decades over the same issue.
- The university contends that it was set up by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan principally for minority uplift, and therefore, it has to be seen to have a minority personality.
- JMI, ironically, was created almost as the anti-thesis to Aligarh, when a group of scholars “walked out” of the AMU campus to set up Jamia in Delhi in the nationalist tradition, under Mahatma Gandhi’s influence and patronage.

3. Centre set to roll out new treatment for encephalitis



Context

- **Gorakhpur incident:** several children died of encephalitis-related complications at the Baba Raghav Das (BRD) Medical College.

In news

- The Centre is looking to introduce a new drug, traditionally used for acne, to deal with the seasonal outbreaks of acute encephalitis.
- Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) recommended the drug as a standard treatment for treating patients afflicted with the Japanese encephalitis (JE) virus.
- In 2008, researchers at the National Brain Research Centre (NBRC), Manesar found that **Minocycline — an antibiotic typically used to treat severe acne — surprisingly seemed to cure rats infected with the JE virus.**
- Drawback: medicine use reduced hospital stay but didn’t significantly improve overall mortality.

Basic Information

What is encephalitis?

- Encephalitis is a potentially life-threatening but rare disease causing “acute inflammation” of the brain.
- Meaning of Acute: when a disease appears abruptly and grows at a fast pace.
- A person afflicted with encephalitis requires serious medical attention.

What are the causes of encephalitis?

- The disease can occur in people of all ages, but children and the elderly are more at risk of being afflicted with the disease.
- The usual cause of the rare disease is either a viral infection.
- Sometimes it is caused when the brain’s own immune system mistakenly attacks brain tissue.
- In rare cases, encephalitis is caused due to bacterial infection, parasites, or may be prompted from other infectious diseases.
- It is a non-communicable disease.

What is Japanese encephalitis?

- One of the most common form of viral encephalitis in Asia is the Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV), caused by mosquito-borne flavivirus.
- The disease belongs to the same genus as dengue, yellow and West Nile viruses.
- JEV primarily affects children as most adults tend to attain natural immunity from the disease, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

How can the disease be prevented?

- There are several vaccinations that are effective in preventing the disease, including vaccines for measles, mumps, and rubella.
- People should also use proper clothing to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes in mosquito-infested areas.

Is the disease prevalent in India? How severe is it?

- Japanese Encephalitis is recognised as the leading cause of the disease in India.
- Region affected: West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Manipur, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Pondicherry and Karnataka.
- Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are two states, which have seen the most number of encephalitis cases in recent years.
- The Uttar Pradesh government in May this year launched a vaccination campaign in 38 sensitive districts of the state to combat the JE virus.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [Doklam standoff ends as India, China step back](#)

CONFRONTATION TO COMPROMISE IN 70 DAYS

1 WHAT CAUSED THE STAND-OFF?	2 WHAT'S THE AGREEMENT?	3 WHAT DID CHINA SAY?	4 WHAT LED TO THE RESOLUTION?
China's road building in Doklam, Bhutan, violated pact between India and China; posed threat to India's strategic interests	<p>► Indian troops withdraw to post at Doka La. They continue to occupy vantage point on top of ridge and can keep an eye on the Doklam bowl, less than 500 metres away</p> <p>► "Mutual disengagement of troops" to restore status quo</p>	<p>Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said India had "pulled back all the trespassing personnel and equipment to the Indian side of the boundary...Chinese troops continue to exercise sovereignty and territorial integrity"</p> <p>She also said, "China will make adjustments with the situation on the ground" and "will continue to develop friendly relations with India"</p>	<p>► Indian troops closer to the border</p> <p>► Armed conflict could have resulted in high casualties without clear winners</p> <p>► Chinese leadership keen to resolve row ahead of crucial party conference later this year, where Xi Jinping is expected to get another 5 years as China's leader.</p> <p>► China was keen on a smooth BRICS summit and India also keen to iron out glitches before Modi visits Beijing early next month</p> <p>► The wording of the Chinese statement appears to be a bid to placate hawks within China, who were insistent that nothing short of an Indian withdrawal would be acceptable to Beijing</p>



Context

- India-China-Bhutan Doklam Plateau standoff.

Inn News

- After prolonged diplomatic negotiations, India and China finally agreed to disengage from the standoff on the Doklam plateau.
- Indian government sources confirmed that India had agreed to withdraw troops first as a "goodwill gesture"
- China promised to make "necessary adjustments" to their troop deployments, after Indian troops withdrew back to their posts in Sikkim.

Way forward

- More robust border management mechanism is put in place.
- Expanding the confidence-building measures.
- Add more border personal meeting points beyond the six.
- DGMO-level hotline should be in place.
- More visits from both the sides and tactical-level exchanges
- Political establishment needs to wake up to engage in a more intense bilateral exchange with China.

2. Agreeing to disagree

Context

- The pronouncements by India and China that the Doklam military stand-off has come to an end signifies a comfortable sign over the diplomacy that prevailed over the harsh rhetoric of the past.

Key Points

- The "expeditious disengagement of border personnel" shows the India's policy of pursuing diplomatic measures in the face of China's heated rhetoric was prudent.
- Both New Delhi and Beijing have appreciated the aspirations of the Bhutanese government, which sought an immediate end to the crisis before the bitter winter set in.
- Chinese proclamations during the stand-off signify that it no longer appreciates the advances made in the Special Representative talks in 2012.
- China does not respect the India-Bhutan-China tri-junction near Batang-La to have been stable.
- India also made it clear that it does not believe that the Sikkim boundary is settled either.
- Both the countries should take a step back to the essence of the Border Defence Cooperation Agreement of 2013 and the specific guidelines laid down on handling any future developments along

the 3,488-km boundary the two countries.

3. Trump's Pakistan test

Context

- As the Iraqi war of 1991 began to descend, the spirit of history positioned the son of a small village near Azamgarh at the helm of the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi.
- The big new idea was called “strategic defiance”. When the United States turn inevitable, Pakistan would lead a battle on mid-sized powers like Iraq and Iran, helped by China.
- Presently President Donald Trump’s new South Asia doctrine is frightening Pakistan with severe effects. Henceforth should it fail to turn on its jihadist proxies, has made strategic defiance relevant again.
- The pillars of the new South Asia strategy:
 1. Open-ended guarantee to the Afghan war with the use of all the instruments of American power,
 2. A greater role for New Delhi and strategic partnership with India
 3. Annihilating terror safe-havens in Pakistan to destroy jihadism, and with it, growing Iranian, Chinese and Russian influence.
- General Pervez Musharraf was communicated that Pakistan would be bombed “back into the stone age” if the country did not desert its al Qaeda and Taliban proxies.
- Past records depict that each time the United States has slashed aid to Pakistan, geopolitical coincidence compelled it to reverse course.
- Aid dropped to near-zero levels after Pakistan’s nuclear-weapons programme in 1980.
- The 1990s saw a sharp reduction in aid after the anti-Soviet jihad ended and President George Bush refused to certify Pakistan did not possess nuclear weapons. Then, it surged after 9/11, rising to historic levels of \$4.5 billion in 2010.
- The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute estimates that over 68 per cent of Pakistan’s arms imports in 2012-2016 came from China.
- The United States has the capacity to target jihadist infrastructure and individuals deep inside Pakistan to unleash its Afghan allies’ covert assets to execute retaliatory terrorism in Pakistan.
- The end state of the Afghan war involves degrading the jihadist movement, not just a defined group of terrorists, thus denying space for great-power competitors to assert influence in a strategically-important region.
- Strategic defiance shows the defensive game well.
- Trump must beware the fact that a foul or two can go a long way in leveling the odds against superior opposition.

Category: ECONOMICS

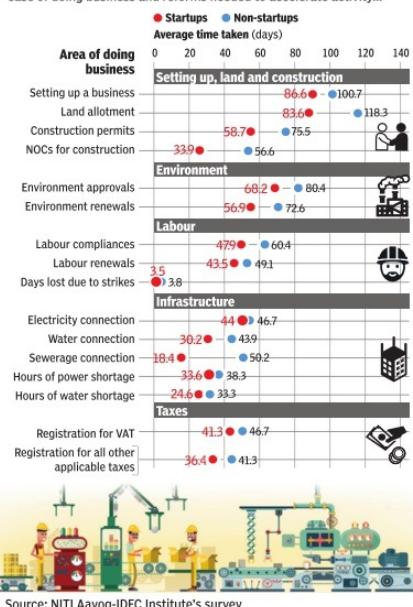
1. Reform labour laws to ease compliance'

It Takes 100 Days To Start A Business

EASE OF DOING BUSINESS
The fine print

AVERAGE TIME TAKEN FOR ALL APPROVALS

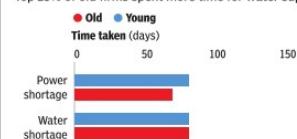
Survey of 3,276 manufacturing firms reveals the changes taking place in ease of doing business and reforms needed to accelerate activity...



Source: NITI Aayog-IDFC Institute's survey

HOURS OF POWER AND WATER SHORTAGE

... Young firms faced 7 more hours of power shortage. Top 25% of old firms spent more time for water supply...



HIGH-GROWTH AND LOW-GROWTH STATES

Companies in high growth states report fewer regulatory hurdles, establishing link between superior regulation, higher growth

High-Growth states (2,066 Enterprises)

Tamil Nadu 471

Maharashtra 405

Gujarat 365

Telangana 223

Rajasthan 140

Haryana 84

Delhi 69

Union Territories 57

Bihar 50

Madhya Pradesh 44

Uttarakhand 41

Goa 30

Meghalaya 30

Tripura 30

Sikkim 27

Low-Growth states (1,210 Enterprises)

Andhra Pradesh 202

Uttar Pradesh 185

Punjab 165

Karnataka 159

West Bengal 116

Kerala 89

Assam 46

J&K 44

Himachal Pradesh 40

Odisha 36

Chhattisgarh 34

Jharkhand 34

Manipur 30

Nagaland 30

NITI Aayog: Ease of Doing Business report.

Highlights

- The government should reform labour laws and make them more flexible to make it easier to do business in the country.
- More enterprises in labour-intensive sectors reported that finding skilled workers, hiring contract labour and terminating employees was a major or a severe obstacle.
- Pitched for accelerating power sector reforms to ensure that power-intensive enterprises have access to steady and uninterrupted power without undue delays or regulatory burden.
- Half of the enterprises do not borrow from financial institutions and about a third consider lack of access to finance as a major source of obstacles for business in the country

Recommendation

- More flexible labour laws will allow enterprises to grow larger and reap economies of scale, generating productivity improvements, jobs creation and higher growth.
- If India is to enter the ‘double digit’ economic growth club, it will need to continually streamline and improve the business environment.

2. Under-employment severe in India: NITI

In news:

- NITI Aayog : not unemployment but a “severe under-employment ” is the main problem facing the country
- NITI Aayog’s goal: promoting highly productive and well-paid jobs.

NITI Aayog’s recommendations:

- Creation of a handful of **Coastal Employment Zones** , which may attract multinational firms in labour-intensive sectors from China to India

Basic Information

What is Underemployment?

- Underemployment, or disguised unemployment, refers to a job that is insufficient in some important

way for a worker, relative to a standard, which results in the under-utilization of the worker.

- Examples include holding a part-time job despite desiring full-time work, and overqualification, where the employee has education, experience, or skills beyond the requirements of the job.

3. New norms for solar power bids to enhance transparency: MNRE

In news:

- The Ministry of **New & Renewable Energy (MNRE)** had issued the new guidelines for tariff based competitive bidding process for procuring solar power
- The guidelines have been issued under the provisions of Section 63 of the Electricity Act, 2003 for long term procurement from grid-connected Solar PV Power Projects of 5 MW and above, through competitive bidding.

Salient features of the guidelines issued

- Generation compensation for offtake constraints for reducing offtake risks
- The ‘must-run’ status for solar projects has been stressed upon.
- Besides, to ensure lower tariffs, minimum PPA (power purchase agreement) tenure has been kept at 25 years. Moreover unilateral termination or amendment of PPA is not allowed.
- Provides for termination compensation to increase bankability of projects by securing the investment by the generator and the lenders against any arbitrary termination of PPA.
- The risk of generator’s revenue getting blocked due to delayed payment/non-payment by the procurers has been addressed through provision of Payment Security Mechanism through instruments like Letter of Credit (LC), Payment Security Fund and State Guarantee.
- It also provides for change in law provision to provide clarity and certainty to generators, procurers, and investors/lenders.
- The penalties have been rationalised so as to reduce the overall cost to the generator, while at the same time, ensuring compliance with the Commissioning Schedule/Scheme Guidelines.
- The norms provide that generators are free to repower their plants.

Significance of this move

- New Guidelines for Tariff Based Competitive Bidding Process to reduce risk, enhance transparency and increase affordability of Solar Power
- It will also provide standardisation and uniformity in processes and a risk-sharing framework between various stakeholders involved in the solar PV power procurement
- This will also help reduce off-taker risk and encourage investments, enhance bankability of the Projects and improve profitability for the investors.
- The guidelines also streamline the provision for project preparedness to expedite and facilitate the setting up of projects.

4. Forex reserves: The problem of plenty

Context:

- India’s forex reserve is reaching the \$400 billion mark on the back of a stronger rupee against the US dollar.

Key points:

- In 2013, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was struggling to save the rupee from a free fall and was compelled to raise emergency foreign currency deposits from non-resident Indians.
- Today’s concerns are with respect to appreciating currency and the problems the central bank is facing in managing the strong rupee.
- Strong foreign inflows contributed to a rise by over \$23 billion so far in the current financial year.

- A recent report by Edelweiss Securities Ltd stated that continuous interference by the RBI brought India close to getting in the currency maneuvering watch list of the US.
- The accommodative monetary policy in the developed world and the global financial system is flush with cheap money and investors are in a desperate search for yield.
- For example, \$1 billion worth of bonds issued by the government of Iraq were oversubscribed and sold at a lower than expected yield.
- Rupee has been appreciated by about 6% since the beginning of this year, despite persistent intervention by the RBI
- Non-intervention or insufficient intervention would result in further appreciation of the rupee and affect India's competitiveness.
- The external competitiveness is not exclusively dependent on the exchange rate. Therefore, there is no harm in suppressing volatility if possible, and giving businesses a more stable economic environment.
- The present liquidity situation is making things more difficult for the RBI.
- The banking system has excess liquidity of around Rs3 trillion and currency market intervention will increase this.
- Even though there is no imminent threat of high inflation, persistent surplus liquidity can affect monetary policy operations.
- The yields on foreign assets are much lower than government bonds and sterilized intervention is in effect a switch in central bank holdings from rupee to dollar securities.

So how can the central bank deal with this problem of plenty?

- Work on government instrument like market stabilization scheme bonds and continue to build reserves.
- But, the cost would keep rising, as higher reserves would attract more flows, which will reduce the currency risk for foreign investors.
- The other option is to reassesses the kind of foreign funds it wants.
- India's external debt is at about 20% of gross domestic product, and about 37% of this is commercial borrowing.
- Policy rationalization on this front can ease the pressure on both the RBI and the rupee.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Ocean forecasting system for Madagascar and Mozambique

In news:

- The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) of the Ministry of Earth Sciences has inaugurated the **Ocean Forecasting System for Comoros, Madagascar, and Mozambique**
- It was done at the third Ministerial Meeting of Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Asia and Africa (RIMES)
- The meeting was held at Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
- The Ministerial council and the WMO lauded and placed on record the initiatives of INCOIS/India in providing the ocean forecast and early warning services to the Indian Ocean countries

Sharing the benefits:

- The ocean forecast and early warming information on high wave, currents, winds, tides, sub-surface ocean conditions cater to users like
 - Fishermen,
 - Coastal population,
 - Tourism sector,
 - Coastal defense officials,
 - Marine police,
 - Port authorities,

- Research institutions and offshore industries of these countries

The system would offer **oil spill advisory services , high wave alerts, port warnings, forecast along the ship routes** in addition to **tsunami and storm surge** warnings and help in search and rescue operations.

Nothing here for Today!!!

NATIONAL PARKS/SANCTURIES/BIOSPHERE RESERVES:

1. Jim Corbett National Park

Location: Nainital district of Uttarakhand

Key features:

- Jim Corbett National Park is the oldest national park in India and was established in 1936 as Hailey National Park to protect the endangered Bengal tiger
- The park was the first to come under the Project Tiger initiative.

2. Gangotri National Park

Location: Uttarkashi District, Uttarakhand

Key features: It was third largest National park of India. The park provides majestic beauty of coniferous forests and grandeur of glacial world combined with lush green meadows.

IUCN Red List:



1. Bengal Florican

- **Scientific Name:** *Houbaropsis bengalensis*
- **Habitation:** The Bengal florican, also called Bengal bustard, is a bustard species native to the Indian subcontinent, Cambodia and Vietnam.
- **IUCN Classification:** Critically Endangered.

2. Pink-headed Duck



- **Scientific Name:** *Rhodonessa caryophyllacea*
- **Habitation:** Gangetic plains of India, Bangladesh and in the riverine swamps of Myanmar
- **IUCN Classification:** Critically Endangered.

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. “Geological stresses building along **the Indo-Australian tectonic** plate boundary in the Southern Indian Ocean have the potential to cause a powerful earthquake, triggering a tsunami across much of South India” Explain?

GS Paper II

1. The recent decision with respect to the Doklam stand-off is taking the bilateral relationship to new heights. Examine.

GS Paper III

1. Given the vulnerability of Indian agriculture to vagaries of nature, discuss the need for crop insurance and bring out the salient features of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY).

GS Paper IV

Topic: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Question 1.

Prime Minister of a country “A” have border dispute with country “B” and also have infrastructural problem within the country.

Country B is called for resolving both border issue and invest in infrastructural development.

But a day before meeting Country B attacks A at border and kills 20 soldiers. What is the dilemma in this situation? What is your future course of action?

Answer

Neighbours are not chosen; friendly relationship among them is of prime importance. PM has the responsibility to defend his/her country’s all round interests.

The conflict is about the democratic opinion and national interest in long run.

Positives to invite the PM of country B

- Provides a platform a scope for talks on both issues.
- Persuade for investment in infrastructure.
- Could stress on accountability of soldier killing

Negatives to avoid the PM of country B

- It can hurt the democratic sentiments of the citizens.
- Could act as a strong message to the condemnation of the act.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. GS1 Related

Social Issues

1. Talaq to be a part of madrasa curriculum

B. GS2 Related

Polity

1. Top court sets aside HC order on riot recompense
2. Centre argues against making marital rape a crime in Delhi high court

International Relations

1. With Doklam standoff resolved, PM to visit China
2. Agreeing to disagree
3. Govt to ease norms for organ donors

C. GS3 Related

Economics

1. Consolidated FDI policy document released
2. Unease of doing business
3. Centre to unveil 'future-ready' industrial policy in October
4. Forex reserves: The problem of plenty
5. Minimum wage to vary across states

Internal Security and Disaster Management

1. Only Indian phones for defense officials?
2. Eastern turbulence
3. Behind Mumbai flood, cruel August

Environment and Ecology

1. Lakes of fire

D. GS4 Related

E. Prelims Fact

F. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Talaq to be a part of madrasa curriculum

In news:

- To educate Muslims about the practice of talaq after the recent Supreme Court ruling on the matter, a leading dargah of the Sunni sect has decided to include it in the curriculum of the madrasas.
- The dargah has also issued a helpline number for such cases.

Category: POLITY

1. Top court sets aside HC order on riot recompense

In news:

- Gujarat High Court: directed the State to pay compensation to shrines destroyed in the 2002 communal riots.
- The Supreme Court set aside this particular order of Gujarat High Court.
- **State governments view accepted by the court:** taxpayers' money cannot be spent to promote a particular religion.
- **Gujarat government scheme :** pay up to ₹50,000 as ex-gratia assistance to authorised religious places damaged, destroyed or desecrated during the riots.

Other cases:

Prafull Goradia judgment:

- **Supreme Court observation:** using "substantial part" of the tax-payers' money for paying damages to destroyed religious structures would violate Article 27 of the Constitution.
- **Article 27. Freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion:** No person shall be compelled to pay any taxes, the proceeds of which are specifically appropriated in payment of expenses for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion or religious denomination

2. Centre argues against making marital rape a crime in Delhi high court

Context:

- **NGO, RTI Foundation filed a plea before Delhi High Court:**
- Strike down the exception under **Section 375 (rape)** of the IPC, which does not penalize sexual intercourse between a man and his wife if she is over 15 years of age.
- Such an exception would be against the interest of married women as it is violative of Article 14 (equality under law) and 21 (right to life) of the Constitution.

In news:

Center's response:

- If marital rape is recognized as a crime then it would-
- Destabilize the institution of marriage, apart from being an easy tool for harassing husbands.
- The courts too would find it difficult to rely upon evidence in such circumstances as there could be "no lasting evidence in case of sexual acts between a man and his own wife".

Section 375 in The Indian Penal Code

375. Rape .—A man is said to commit “rape” who, except in the case hereinafter excepted, has sexual intercourse with a woman under circumstances falling under any of the six following descriptions:—

(First) — Against her will.

(Secondly) —Without her consent.

(Thirdly) — With her consent, when her consent has been obtained by putting her or any person in whom she is interested in fear of death or of hurt.

(Fourthly) —With her consent, when the man knows that he is not her husband, and that her consent is given because she believes that he is another man to whom she is or believes herself to be lawfully married.

(Fifthly) — With her consent, when, at the time of giving such consent, by reason of unsoundness of mind or intoxication or the administration by him personally or through another of any stupefying or unwholesome substance, she is unable to understand the nature and consequences of that to which she gives consent.

(Sixthly) — With or without her consent, when she is under sixteen years of age. Explanation.— Penetration is sufficient to constitute the sexual intercourse necessary to the offence of rape.

(Exception) —Sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under fifteen years of age, is not rape.] STATE AMENDMENT

(Manipur) —(a) in clause sixthly, for the word “sixteen” substitute the word “fourteen”;

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. With Doklam standoff resolved, PM to visit China

Context:

- Narendra Modi is all set to visit China for the BRICS summit.

9th BRICS summit:

- **Location:** Xiamen, China’s Fujian province.
- **Date:** September 3-5, 2017.

Basic Information

BRICS:

- BRICS is the acronym for an association of five major emerging national economies: **Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa** .
- Originally the first four were grouped as “BRIC” (or “the BRICs”), before the induction of South Africa in 2010.
- The BRICS members are all leading **developing or newly industrialized countries** , but they are distinguished by their large, sometimes fast-growing economies and significant influence on regional affairs; all five are G-20 members.
- The term does not include countries such as South Korea, Mexico and Turkey for which other acronyms and group associations were later created.

Financial structure: Currently, there are two components that make up the financial architecture of BRICS, namely, the **New Development Bank (NDB)** and the **Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)**. Both of these components were signed into treaty in 2014 and became active in 2015.

a. New Development Bank:

- The New Development Bank (NDB) is based in Shanghai.
- The New Development Bank (NDB), formerly referred to as the BRICS Development Bank, is a **multilateral development bank** operated by the BRICS states.
- The bank's primary focus of lending will be **infrastructure projects** with authorized lending of up to \$34 billion annually.
- South Africa will be the African Headquarters of the Bank named the "New Development Bank Africa Regional Centre".
- The bank will have starting capital of \$50 billion, with capital increased to \$100 billion over time.
- Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa will initially contribute \$10 billion each to bring the total to \$50 billion.

b. BRICS CRA:

- The BRICS **Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)** is a framework for providing protection against **global liquidity pressures**.
- This includes currency issues where members' national currencies are being adversely affected by global financial pressures.
- It is found that emerging economies that experienced rapid economic liberalization went through increased economic volatility, bringing uncertain macroeconomic environment.
- The CRA is generally seen as a competitor to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and along with the New Development Bank is viewed as an example of increasing South-South cooperation.
- It was established in 2015 by the BRICS countries Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- The legal basis is formed by the Treaty for the Establishment of a BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement, signed at **Fortaleza**, Brazil on 15 July 2014.

2. Govt to ease norms for organ donors

Possible amendment to the Human Organs and Tissues Transplantation Act, 1994 (as amended in 2011)

- The government plans to include **step-parents, step-siblings and extended family members** in the definition of '**near relatives**' allowed to donate critical organs
- This move is likely to benefit patients awaiting transplants.

Present scenario:

Near relatives include: spouses, children, parents, siblings, grandparents and grandchildren.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Consolidated FDI policy document released

Context

- The government has come out with the latest edition of its **consolidated FDI policy document** – a compilation of the changes made in the past one year in a single document.

Importance:

- It is an initiative aimed at ensuring greater ease of doing business in India and an investor-friendly

climate to foreign investors so that the country attracts more FDI.

Consolidated FDI policy:

- For the first time, the document has included start-ups.
- As per the norms, start-ups can raise up to 100 per cent of funds from Foreign Venture Capital Investor (FVCI).
- The document said the start-ups can issue equity or equity linked instruments or debt instruments to FVCI against receipt of foreign remittance.
- Person residing outside India (other than citizens/entities of Pakistan and Bangladesh) will be permitted to purchase convertible notes issued by an Indian start-up company for an amount of Rs 25 lakh or more in a single tranche.
- Non Resident Indians can also acquire convertible notes on non- repatriation basis.
- The start-up issuing convertible notes would be required to furnish reports as prescribed by the RBI

2. Unease of doing business

Context:

- Niti Aayog survey shows starting a business remains a difficult task.

Keypoints:

- World Bank's Ease of Doing Business (2016) Ranking positioned India at a abysmal 130 out of 150 countries.
- A survey by the Niti Aayog and the Mumbai-based think tank, IDFC Institute, post a year disclose that the determinations of the Centre and state governments to ease the system of permits and clearances could not satisfy the interests of most entrepreneurs who are discomfited with the country's regulatory environment.
- The survey across the country demonstrates that most firms do not use the single-window systems for business and regulatory clearances.
- Survey claims Tamil Nadu, the best performing states where the process takes more than 60 days and on average four months to set up a business in India.
- Persistent drawbacks with governance in India are seen as the reason behind the gap between the claims and realities.
- The difficulty of cutting the red tape of the lower bureaucracy is one of the major hurdles in the process.
- The World Bank's report (2016), highlighted that delays in issuing construction permits affected the ease of doing business in India.
- A key worry to the administrators come in as entrepreneurs from employment-intensive sectors are more likely to face problems and securing construction and other permits, compared to the capital-intensive ones.
- The survey should serve as a wake-up call to government and a reminder that over two decades after economic reforms the Indian state is still flailing when it comes to easing the path for entrepreneurs.

3. Centre to unveil 'future-ready' industrial policy in October

In news:

- The government is all set to announce the **new 'future-ready' Industrial Policy** in October
- **Policy aim:**
 - To facilitate the use of smart technologies such as the **internet of things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics for advanced manufacturing**.
 - To make India a manufacturing hub by promoting 'Make in India'
 - To subsume the National Manufacturing Policy.

- **Six thematic focus groups:** manufacturing and MSME; technology and innovation; ease of doing business; infrastructure, investment, trade and fiscal policy; and skills and employability for the future, would facilitate inputs.
- **Constraints to Industrial growth:**
 - Inadequate infrastructure
 - Restrictive labour laws
 - Complicated business environment
 - Slow technology adoption
 - Low productivity
 - Challenges for trade including the Indian MSME sector facing tough competition from cheap imports from China and FTA countries,
 - Inadequate expenditure on R&D and Innovation.

4. Minimum wage to vary across states

Context:

- **The Code on Wages Bill** proposed by the Union government.

In news:

- Proposed bill will not fix a single national level minimum wage for the whole country, but will vary across states and geographies.
- Code on Wages Bill 2017: “It provides for national minimum wage for different geographical areas so as to ensure that no State Government fixes the minimum wage below the national minimum wage, notified for that area by the Central Government,”
- The Centre will fix different wages through a notification after consulting the Central Advisory Board.
- As per the new provisions of the bill- if the minimum wages fixed by the states are **already higher** than the ‘national minimum wage’, the states will **not be allowed to lower their wage levels** .
- The Code on Wages Bill combines four labour laws — Payment of Wages Act, 1936, Minimum Wages Act, 1948, Payment of Bonus Act, 1965 and Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. Only Indian phones for defense officials?

Context:

In news:

- The Centre is considering the creation of a **secure communications ecosystem** for its officials, especially those working in the **defence sector** .
- **Proposals:**
 - Mandating the use of mobile phones manufactured by Indian companies for official communication.
 - Secure email service to its officials. The email will offer enhanced security authentication mechanisms such as **geo-fencing** and **device mapping** .

Basic Information

- **Geo-fencing** is a feature in a software program that uses the **global positioning system (GPS)** or **radio frequency identification (RFID)** to define geographical boundaries. Geo-fencing allow an administrator to set up triggers so when a device enters (or exits) the boundaries defined by the administrator, an alert is issued. Many geo-fencing applications incorporate Google Earth, allowing administrators to define boundaries on top of a satellite view of a specific geographical area. Other applications define boundaries by longitude and latitude or through user-created and Web-based maps.

2. Eastern turbulence

Context:

- Calls for Gorkhaland and Bodoland are churning the region afresh.
- An exceptionally sizeable attendance of women blocked the national highway to Assam demanding Bodoland.

Keypoints:

- The blockade impact can be on the disruption of trade and transport links between the Northeast and the rest of India.
- This region is already facing the burnt of the seasonal floods in the Brahmaputra basin.
- Both these instances together can result in severe economic costs to this region.
- Tea and tourism, which are lifelines of the local economy, have almost crumpled.
- Well-timed state involvement handled with patience and wisdom may prevent these agitations from spreading, and becoming violent.

Reason behind the demand:

- At the roots of these protests lies in the communal identity and their representation. The Gorkhas in the Darjeeling hills and the Bodos in upper Assam believe that a separate state is necessary to protect their collective social, cultural and political identities including language and ethnicity.
- The seeds of separatist politics now churning the region are the result of the constitution of states like Bengal and Assam.
- The majority or dominant groups established their linguistic and ethnic identity without giving much attention towards the minorities, who were then in the margins of the region's politics.

Way forward:

- The run of identity politics needs to be destroyed, where the autonomous bodies can play a prominent role.
- Gorkhaland Territorial Administration and Bodo Autonomous Council are valuable tools in delivering the public goods and build physical and social infrastructure. However, the unfinished and unsatisfying work of politics in these states may not fully satisfy the aspirations of these groups.

3. Behind Mumbai flood, cruel August

Context:

- Ceaseless shower in the financial capital of India over the last two days has

RAINFALL HIGHS	
944 mm	315 mm
Rainfall in Mumbai on July 26, 2005, its highest ever; that day, hundreds of people and countless animals were killed, and several thousand houses and vehicles damaged. The rainfall happened overnight; the amount of 914 mm is for the 12 hours ending 8:30 am on July 27	Mumbai on August 29, 2017, the city's highest rainfall since July 26, 2005.
575.6 mm	232.6mm
Mumbai on July 5, 1974, the second highest on record	Highest in Mumbai between the 2005 and 2017 dates; this was recorded on August 29, 2011
	1,825 mm
	World's highest ever rainfall in one day – January 6, 1966, in Fac Fac, on La Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean

- paralyzed the city.

Keypoints:

- Mumbai recorded **315.8 mm of rainfall between 8:30 am and 8:30 pm** Tuesday.
- Had so much rainfall occurred in May or June, the condition in Mumbai might have been less severe, says meteorological office.
- Despite these rains being forecast well in advance, **no mitigative/preventive steps** were taken.
- Mumbai has **received about 2,000 mm of rainfall this monsoon season** (since June), which is more than normal.
- Larger impact of the rains on city life could be due to the moisture saturated soil whose ability to absorb water is diminished.

Reason behind Intense rainfall

- The strong low-pressure area that had developed over southern Madhya Pradesh, is one of the several reasons behind the intense monsoon this year.
- The regional distribution of monsoon rainfall has been quite even.
- Only Kerala, south-interior Karnataka, Vidarbha, eastern Madhya Pradesh, western Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi, and Punjab have had deficient rainfall this season.
- Bengaluru had received massive rains previous week, about 180 mm in a single day, and was faced with similar flooding and resultant chaos.
- Earlier, huge parts of Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha have also faced floods this season.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Lakes of fire

Context:

- Lakes froth spilling in Bengaluru is a symptom of a pervasive urban problem.

Keypoints:

- Bellandur lake in Bengaluru has been much in the news for the outpouring foam and froth and the rise of smoke and flames from the area surrounding it.
- City's heaviest rains in a century, rose the froth and foam as high as 10 to 12 feet from Bellandur and spread onto the streets, endangering traffic and entering shops and homes across the road, causing huge inconvenience to those living in the area.
- In May 2015, the Bellandur lake itself was on fire, creating enormous fear and anxiety in the minds of the people living in the area.
- The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) submitted a report to the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, which resulted in setting up an expert committee by the state government.
- The report highlights the sustained inflow of untreated sewage and industrial effluents as the principal forces behind the phenomena of froth and fire.
- The Silicon Valley of India, which has been known for its hundreds of lakes originally built in the 16th century by damming the natural valley systems is threatened with pollution today.
- The National Green Tribunal has issued a number of directions emphasising the need for removal of silt from the lake, treatment of municipal sewage which is going into the water body, closure of polluting industries, ban on dumping of municipal solid waste around the lake, penalty on apartment buildings in the area which are sending untreated sewage to the lake and an environmental fine of Rs 5 lakh on anyone found dumping waste in and around the lake.
- The untreated wastewater or sewage of local waterbodies feeds the growth of water-weeds, which blankets surface water.
- Apparently, the huge roots of water hyacinth absorb impurities and can lock up pollutants in the water.
- The microbes feeding on the rotting organic matter consume all the oxygen in the water, disturbing the ecology for the survival of fish life.
- When such organic matter naturally breaks down, it releases fatty acids that float to the surface. This is

how foam is formed and turns into froth.

- The phosphorus content in the detergents in India is much higher than 2.2 per cent, which contributes to the formation of these weeds.
- Urban planning in India must ensure that wetlands which are natural recharge zones are typically not disturbed

Facts:

- Out of 480 million litres per day (MLD) of wastewater discharged to the lake, only 308 MLD is treated.
- According to the CPCB, 75 per cent of the measured pollution in our rivers from point sources is from municipal sewage and 25 per cent is from industrial effluents.

Nothing here for Today!!!

NATIONAL PARKS/SANCTURIES/BIOSPHERE RESERVES:

Nanda Devi National Park

- **Location:** National park situated around the peak of Nanda Devi (7816 m) in the state of Uttarakhand in northern India.
- **Key Features:** The National Park was inscribed a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

Rajaji National Park

- **Location:** Shivaliks, near the foothills of the Himalayas. The park is spread over 820 sq.km in the state of Uttarakhand.
- **Key Features :** Indian national park and tiger reserve. The park is most renowned for its elephants.

IUCN Red List:

Rameshwaram ornamental, or Rameshwaram parachute spider



- **Scientific Name:** *Poecilotheria hanumavilasumica*
- **IUCN Classification:** Critically endangered species
- **Distribution:** Endemic to the Ramanathapuram district in the state of Tamil Nadu, India, but also been identified outside India in the Mannar District of Northern Sri Lanka.

Peacock tarantula



- **Scientific name:** *Poecilotheria metallica*
- **IUCN Classification:** critically endangered species
- **Distribution:** This is an Old World species of tarantula. The species natural habitat is deciduous forest in Andhra Pradesh, in central southern India.

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. Lake froth spilling in Urban localities are being a major concern in urban ambience. What steps can be taken to address the issue?

GS Paper II

1. What are the essentials of a true federalism? Analyze the nature of the Indian federation?
2. Examine the need for the review of Indian Constitution?
3. Claims for separate statehood are seen repeatedly in news. Can the grant for separate state address the regional problems? What are the problems behind demanding a separate statehood in India?

GS Paper III

1. Considering the threats cyberspace poses for the country, India needs a “Digital Armed Force” to prevent crimes. Critically evaluate the National Cyber Security Policy, 2013 outlining the challenges perceived in its effective implementation.
2. Are urban floods a cause of concern? What are the measures taken in pre and post disaster management as per the NDMA,2005 guidelines with respect to the urban floods?
3. Despite many guidelines the ease of doing business lies abysmal in the country as per the recent NITI aayog survey. What are the hurdles inhibiting the growth in this area despite a significant progress post the economic reforms?What measures can be taken to address the issue?

GS Paper IV

Topic: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Question 1.

You are stranded in traffic in your car. You are driving the car. A poor girl looking very frail approaches you and start begging for money. Looking at her frail appearance, out of compassion, you take out your wallet to search for a ten Rupees note. The girl who is standing very near to you snatches the wallet and starts running. A man on a motorbike who see this act, catches the girl and starts beating her in full view of public. Now the traffic is moving and your car is in the middle of the road.

What will you do in such a situation? Explain the course of action and reason?

Answer

Action should be as follow:

- Park Car- so that no disturbance to the traffic
- Call to destination where I was heading about the emergency so that they will not wait for me.
- Reach the spot where the man is beating girl and immediately stop him and ask him not to beat or take law in his hand. Thank him for taking notice of the theft and taking action, but remind him that the girl is very young and could have acted out of hunger too. Remind him gently that it is a public space and such act physical violence could land him in legal trouble. This should lower his anger.
- If girl is injured- carry out first aid from the box available in the car. Get her something to eat and drink.
- Try to know her history and then informing to NGO or child care centre and personally taking to there will be my choice since leaving her just like that will make her to repeat the act since it's the poverty and poor care made her to act. If these are given girl will desist from such acts.
- Make an occasional follow up of the girl with the agency to whom she had been handed over to.

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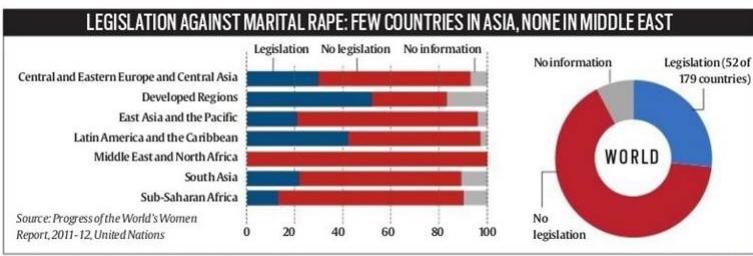
F. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Marital rape a crime in many countries, an exception in many more

Context:



- **Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code**, which defines rapes, makes an exception for marital rape by stating, “**Sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under fifteen years of age, is not rape.**”
- Central government had filed an affidavit in Delhi High Court, arguing against the decriminalization of marital rape on the ground that it may “**destabilise the institution of marriage**”.
- The grounds for “marital immunity” for rape prosecution were laid by Chief Justice Sir Matthew Hale in The History of the Pleas of the Crown, published in 1736, which is called as ‘**Implied Consent Theory of Sir Hale**’ .
- This theory found its way into the legal system of all former British colonies.
- Australia in 1970’s, was the first common law country to pass reforms criminalizing rape in marriage.
- In 1950’s, several Scandinavian countries and countries in the Communist bloc passed laws criminalizing spousal rape including Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and the former Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. (**Poland in 1932 was the first**)
- Since the 1980s, many common law countries (include South Africa, Ireland, Canada, the United States, New Zealand, Malaysia, Ghana, and Israel) have legislatively abolished the marital rape immunity.
- In the US all 50 states made marital rape a crime.
- UK repealed its common law code that a marriage contract implied a woman’s consent to all sexual activity.
- In **2002, Nepal got rid of the marital rape exception** after its Supreme Court held that it went **against the constitutional right of equal protection and the right to privacy**.
- According to the **UN Women’s 2011 report**, out of 179 countries for which data was available, **52 had amended their legislation to explicitly make marital rape a criminal offence**.

Category: POLITY

1. Consumer is king if new law gets nod

In news:

The new Consumer Protection Bill 2016:

- It seeks to replace a 31-year-old archaic law, **the Consumer Protection Act, 1986**.

Highlights of the Bill

- It provides a mechanism for redressal of complaints regarding defect in goods and deficiency in services.
- **Consumer Dispute Redressal Commissions** will be set up at the district, state and national levels for adjudicating consumer complaints.
- The Bill establishes a **Consumer Protection Authority** to investigate into consumer complaints, issue safety notices for goods and services, and pass orders for recall of goods and against misleading advertisements.
- If a consumer suffers an injury from a defect in a good, he may file a claim of **product liability** against the manufacturer.
- The Bill classifies six contract terms as ‘unfair’. These cover terms such as (i) payment of excessive security deposits; (ii) disproportionate penalty for a breach ; (iii) unilateral termination without cause; (iv) one which puts the consumer at a disadvantage.

Product liability: If defects in the manufacture, construction, design, testing, service marketing etc. of a product results in any personal injury or property damage to a consumer, the manufacturer is liable in a product liability action.

Rights of consumers: The rights of consumers include the right to: (i) be protected against marketing of goods and services which are hazardous to life and property, (ii) be informed of the quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods or services, (iii) be assured of access to a variety of goods or services at competitive prices, and (iv) to seek redressal against unfair or restrictive trade practices.

Consumer Mediation Cell : The Bill introduces mediation as a mode of consumer dispute resolution. Consumer

Mediation Cells will be established and attached to the redressal commissions at the district, state and national levels.

Penalties: Any person who fails to comply with an order of either of the Commissions would be liable for imprisonment from one month to three years, or with a fine from 10,000 rupees to 50,000 rupees.

2. Religion At State Expense

Context:

- SC judgment in the **Gujarat shrines compensation case** raises important questions.
- **Article 32 is the “soul of the Constitution”** as it guarantees the citizens of their fundamental rights under it.

The questions at the wake of the judgement are:

- Should the court give relief in writ jurisdiction only when one's right to life or personal liberty under Article 21 is violated?
- Or can the state be held liable even with respect to violation of other fundamental rights such as the freedom of religion?
- Will an order for the payment of compensation for the repair of religious places be contrary to Article 27 of the Constitution?
- Article 27 prohibits the state from imposing any religious tax and the imposition of any tax whose proceeds are used for the maintenance of any particular religion.

Keypoints:

- In the 2002 communal riots in Gujarat, as many as 567 religious places were either desecrated, damaged or destroyed.
- On February 8, 2012, the Gujarat High Court ordered the state government to get these religious places repaired and reimburse their owners/managers if they had already got them repaired.
- The Gujarat government appealed to the Supreme Court stating that for any loss of property, the remedy is in civil law and in its writ jurisdiction under Article 226, cannot pass such an order as the right to property after the 44th Amendment is not a fundamental right but simply a constitutional right.
- The state government admitted that for the violation of the right to life and personal liberty, writ jurisdiction of high courts could be invoked. But it argued that since India is a secular state it couldn't spend government money for any religious purpose due to Article 27.
- But the writ jurisdiction of high courts is wider than the apex court's powers as while the SC can issue writs just for the violation of fundamental rights, the HCs can do it additionally for the violation of other rights.
- The respondents claimed that the right to equality and right to personal liberty was at stake during the riots.
- The maintenance of law and order is the primary duty of the state government and the compensation is not being sought for the maintenance of any particular religion but for the **failure of the government in fulfilling its basic duty**.

3. All seven parliamentary secretaries of Mizoram resign in deference to SC ruling which held their appointment unconstitutional

Context:

- **Supreme Court observations:**
 - Struck down the practice of appointing parliamentary secretaries.
 - State assemblies do not have the power to enact a law that enables them to appoint parliamentary secretaries
- **All seven parliamentary secretaries of Mizoram** resigned from their posts.
- Mizoram became the first state in the Northeast to implement the SC ruling.

Basic Information

Parliamentary secretaries:

- Secretaries is **ultra vires** the 91st Amendment of the Indian Constitution which introduced **Article 164 (1A)** to the Constitution.
- Article 164 (1A) provides for limiting the number of ministers in the state cabinets. The total number of ministers including the Chief Minister, has to be within 15 per cent of the total number of members of the legislative

assembly of the state.

- Article 164 (1A) was inserted in the Constitution on the recommendation of the National Commission for Review of the Working of the Constitution headed by former Chief Justice of India, **M.N. Venkatachaliah** on misuse and drainage of public money to put a ban on over-sized cabinet.

4. Delhi HC no to order granting SCs, STs quota in promotion

In news:

- The Delhi High Court has **quashed a Central notification** granting reservation in promotion for SCs and STs beyond the five-year period
- It was stipulated in the **Indira Sawhney case**, by the Supreme Court

Court's observation:

- Court said such a move made under **Article 16 (4A)** was not permissible without adequate data to prove inadequacy of representation and backwardness
- It made the observation while quashing Department of Personnel and Training's Office Memorandum dated August 13, 1997

Indra Sawhney Case 1992

The opinion of the Supreme Court in the Indra Sawhney case is summarized as:

- (1) Backward Classes of the Citizens of in Article 16(4) can be identified on the basis of caste and not only on the economic basis.
- (2) Article 16(4) is not an exception to Article 16(1)
- (3) The backward classes in Article 16(4) are not similar to as socially backward classes in Article 15(4) i.e. SC and ST
- (3) Creamy layer can be and must be eliminated from the Backward Classes
- (4) Article 16(4) permits the classification of backwards classes into more backward classes.
- (5) Reservation shall not exceed 50%. The court said that this rule should be applied every year. However, it may be relaxed in favour of people from far flung and remote areas because of their peculiar conditions. However, extreme caution should be exercised in doing so
- (6) Carry forward rule is valid but it is subject to 50%
- (7) There should be NO reservation in the Promotions

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Switzerland President on 3-day visit

In news:

- Swiss President Doris Leuthard began his three-day visit to India.
- **Why the visit is significant?**: Switzerland is the chair of the Nuclear Suppliers Group where India has been seeking membership. The visit is likely to help closer consultation on NSG membership.

Basic Information

Nuclear Suppliers Group:

- Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is a group of nuclear supplier countries that seek to prevent nuclear proliferation by controlling the export of materials, equipment and technology that can be used to manufacture nuclear weapons.
- As of 2017 the NSG has 48 participating government.
- The NSG Chair for 2017-2018 is Switzerland.

2. Giving Bhutan its due

Context:

- Bhutan rescues India's interests at its own cost in the Doklam stand-off.
- In the Doklam stand-off, it was India's security that was at stake, its "chicken neck" on the line.

Keypoints:

- China came up with a "**package deal**" in 1990's , where in return for the smaller disputed Doklam area, it was willing to give bigger territorial concessions in disputed territories in central Bhutan.
- It was an occasion for Bhutan to **resolve its border dispute with China** and also **benefit Chinese "goodwill"**.
- Importance of Doklam, from the Bhutanese point of geography, is **neither strategically important nor does it hold any economic value**, as the stand-off area is frozen for most of the year and nothing can grow up there.
- Bhutan in 1996 turned down the package deal offer mainly on the basis of Indian security concerns over Doklam.
- As a result **China was building six roads towards Bhutan** with four roads already intruding well into Bhutanese territory. Bhutan protested against this move and it resulted in agreement to freeze the construction of roads.
- China, over the decades, has applied pressure on Bhutan, using various tactics so that Bhutan lets go of the Doklam area.
- India never raised its voice in the past, about numerous Chinese incursions into the Bhutanese side, including the more serious road-building activities. This is because they did not affect Indian security, unlike Doklam.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. 99% of demonetised notes returned, says RBI report

Context: Demonetization of high-value Currency

In black and white

RBI reveals that only 1.04% of the demonetised cash was not deposited or exchanged for new notes.

Extract from RBI Annual Report:

₹ Subject to future corrections based on verification process when completed, the estimated value of SBNs received on June 30, 2017 is ₹15.28 lakh crore

Prior to demonetisation, the total number of ₹500 notes and ₹1000 notes were 17,165 mn and 6,858 mn pieces respectively, amounting to ₹15.44 lakh crore*.

Thus cash not deposited or exchanged, amounted to ₹16,000 crore or 1.04% of the value of the old notes



*Rajya Sabha Q & A

In News:

- RBI's revelation in its final annual report: approximately, ₹ 28 lakh crore of the high-value currency that was demonetised in November returned to the central bank.
- **Stats :** 98.96% of the withdrawn currency — at the time of demonetization, the value of old ₹500 and ₹1,000 notes in circulation was ₹44 lakh crore — was deposited with the banks.
- **Key fact :** Demonetization which involved withdrawal of high-value banknotes was a means to combat counterfeiting, black money and the financing of terrorist activities.

2. First GST data in: 65 per cent pay Rs 92,000 crore

Context

- The Centre and states have collected Rs **92,283 crore** as Goods and Services Tax (GST) in July, the first month of the implementation of the indirect tax regime.
- The amount is marginally higher than the projected target

- **42 per cent** of the total registered taxpayers, excluding composition dealers and registrants in August, filed GST returns for July.
- The tax collection number would “somewhat increase” with more compliance
- For those who haven’t yet paid the GST, a late filing penalty of Rs 100 per day for CGST and SGST each will be levied

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Govt. approves plan to deploy more troops on the frontline

In news:

- **B. Shekatkar committee** : appointed by then Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar in May last year and the report was submitted to the Defence Ministry in December 2016.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Increase **teeth-to-tail ratio** for enhancing combat capability and rebalancing defence expenditure of the Armed Forces.
 - **Areas of reform:** optimisation of signal establishments, restructuring of repair echelons including base workshops, redeployment of ordnance depots, better utilisation of supply and transport echelons and animal transport units, closure of military farms and Army postal establishments in peace locations, and improving efficiency of the National Cadet Corps (NCC).
- **Impact:** if recommendations are implemented over the next five years, the recommendations can result in savings of up to ₹25,000 crore in defence expenditure.
- **Governments move:** increased soldiers available for active combat in the Indian Army by over 57,000. This restructure by the Indian Army is aimed at enhancing combat capability in a manner that personnel will be used for improving operational preparedness and civilians will be redeployed in different wings of the Armed Forces for improving efficiency.

2. When it pours

Context:

- The total rainfall (2017) in the country, is beyond the IMD’s forecast of a “normal” monsoon.
- The flood governance in India is still about ad hoc relief measures. It’s time to change.

Key Points:

- Parts of Assam, Bihar and Gujarat are submerged in historic levels of floodwater.
- Urban areas like Mumbai and Bengaluru were lashed with heavy rainfall.
- Mount Abu, got over 50% of its annual rainfall in two days.
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- Chandigarh received nearly 15 per cent of its annual rainfall in a few hours.
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Governance efforts

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1. IRNSS-1H set to launch on Thursday

In news:

- **Background Information:**
 - **2013 – 2016:** ISRO put up seven **IRNSS satellites** to form the **Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System**, since called **NavIC or Navigation with Indian Constellation**.
 - **NavIC** is the Indian regional version similar to the US Global Positioning System GPS. It will drive all position-based activities on ground, sea and air by giving near-accurate location details of persons or objects. It will be put to military, commercial and common everyday uses.
 - **Mid-2016:** all three rubidium atomic clocks on IRNSS-1A failed.
- **Now, ISRO is all set to launch country's eighth regional navigation satellite-IRNSS-1H.**
- IRNSS-1H is being sent to space to back-up — and mostly replace — the functions of India's first navigation satellite IRNSS-1A.

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In news:

- The United States approved the first **gene therapy** in the nation—a treatment that uses a patient's own immune cells to fight childhood **leukaemia**.
- The treatment is made by **Novartis** and is called **Kymriah** (tisagenlecleucel).
- This type of immunotherapy, known as a **CAR-T cell therapy**.
- It was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for children and young adult patients up to age 25 with a form of acute lymphoblastic leukaemia.

How the treatment works?

- It uses a patient's own immune cells, called T-cells, along with white blood cells.
- These cells are removed from a patient, sent to a lab, and encoded with a viral vector, reprogrammed, and returned to the patient.

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What is Gene Therapy?

- Gene therapy is an experimental technique that uses genes to treat or prevent disease.
- In the future, this technique may allow doctors to treat a disorder by inserting a gene into a patient's cells instead of using drugs or surgery.
- Researchers are testing several approaches to gene therapy, including:
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Location: Located in West Himalaya, in the state of Uttarakhand

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- **Distribution:** Keibul Lamjao National Park (KLPN), Manipur.
- **Threats:** Overgrazing, loss of grassland habitat .

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He was appointed on sympathy grounds after his father’s untimely death. His mother is ill and always bedridden. His income is the only source for his family now. He got the job after lobbying by a group representing his caste. He was appointed by your predecessor after he was pressurized by local MP. Some moves to remove him by your predecessor were met with public protests by a group representing his caste.

You are very strict and disciplined in your office. You are being respected in your district for your integrity and honesty. You come to know about the peon few days after you assume power. You have observed his behavior and found him to be unfit to continue in his job. The peon has no other relatives except his mother.

Identify your moral and professional responsibilities in this case study and explain how will you deal with the peon.

Answer

Since the peon is unfit for the job, the option of continuing him is ruled out. So protection to his family should remain the priority of DM.

Responsibilities of DM:

1. social security and health care to peon and his mother
2. removing the peon peacefully after pacifying all parties involved

Course of action to be followed:

1. Certain actions of peon in the office should be video-recorded such as not heeding to the officers, disturbing others in office etc.
2. On priority, DM should make an arrangement for social security benefits along with health insurance to peon and his mother. A request for pension should also be made to higher authorities on exceptional grounds.
3. There after a meeting should be arranged with his caste members to explain the real problem being faced in the office and why he should be removed from the office by showing them video-clips.
4. At the same time DM should take own responsibility for peon’s pension and other benefits before the members.
5. Once they agree, his removal would be done in a smooth manner without any controversy.
6. In case they do not agree immediately, steps should be taken to constantly persuade the key members of his caste group one-by-one through constant consultations and that would surely resolve the problem.
7. In doing the above, work culture and discipline in the organisation will be protected but at the same time solved the problems of most vulnerable people i.e. peon and his mother empathetically.

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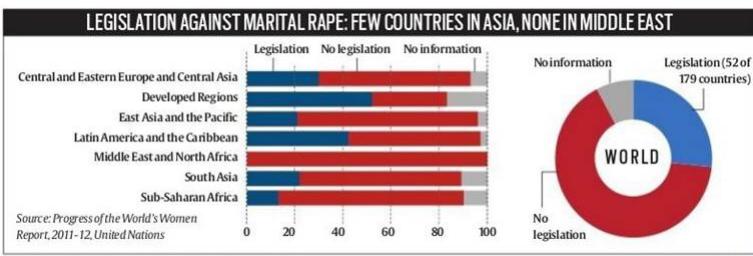
F. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. [Marital rape a crime in many countries, an exception in many more](#)

Context:



- **Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code**, which defines rapes, makes an exception for marital rape by stating, “**Sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under fifteen years of age, is not rape.**”
- Central government had filed an affidavit in Delhi High Court, arguing against the decriminalization of marital rape on the ground that it may “**destabilise the institution of marriage**”.
- The grounds for “marital immunity” for rape prosecution were laid by Chief Justice Sir Matthew Hale in The History of the Pleas of the Crown, published in 1736, which is called as ‘**Implied Consent Theory of Sir Hale**’ .
- This theory found its way into the legal system of all former British colonies.
- Australia in 1970’s, was the first common law country to pass reforms criminalizing rape in marriage.
- In 1950’s, several Scandinavian countries and countries in the Communist bloc passed laws criminalizing spousal rape including Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and the former Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. (**Poland in 1932 was the first**)
- Since the 1980s, many common law countries (include South Africa, Ireland, Canada, the United States, New Zealand, Malaysia, Ghana, and Israel) have legislatively abolished the marital rape immunity.
- In the US all 50 states made marital rape a crime.
- UK repealed its common law code that a marriage contract implied a woman’s consent to all sexual activity.
- In **2002, Nepal got rid of the marital rape exception** after its Supreme Court held that it went **against the constitutional right of equal protection and the right to privacy**.
- According to the **UN Women’s 2011 report**, out of 179 countries for which data was available, **52 had amended their legislation to explicitly make marital rape a criminal offence**.

Category: POLITY

1. Consumer is king if new law gets nod

In news:

The new Consumer Protection Bill 2016:

- It seeks to replace a 31-year-old archaic law, **the Consumer Protection Act, 1986**.

Highlights of the Bill

- It provides a mechanism for redressal of complaints regarding defect in goods and deficiency in services.
- **Consumer Dispute Redressal Commissions** will be set up at the district, state and national levels for adjudicating consumer complaints.
- The Bill establishes a **Consumer Protection Authority** to investigate into consumer complaints, issue safety notices for goods and services, and pass orders for recall of goods and against misleading advertisements.
- If a consumer suffers an injury from a defect in a good, he may file a claim of **product liability** against the manufacturer.
- The Bill classifies six contract terms as ‘unfair’. These cover terms such as (i) payment of excessive security deposits; (ii) disproportionate penalty for a breach ; (iii) unilateral termination without cause; (iv) one which puts the consumer at a disadvantage.

Product liability: If defects in the manufacture, construction, design, testing, service marketing etc. of a product results in any personal injury or property damage to a consumer, the manufacturer is liable in a product liability action.

Rights of consumers: The rights of consumers include the right to: (i) be protected against marketing of goods and services which are hazardous to life and property, (ii) be informed of the quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods or services, (iii) be assured of access to a variety of goods or services at competitive prices, and (iv) to seek redressal against unfair or restrictive trade practices.

Consumer Mediation Cell : The Bill introduces mediation as a mode of consumer dispute resolution. Consumer

Mediation Cells will be established and attached to the redressal commissions at the district, state and national levels.

Penalties: Any person who fails to comply with an order of either of the Commissions would be liable for imprisonment from one month to three years, or with a fine from 10,000 rupees to 50,000 rupees.

2. Religion At State Expense

Context:

- SC judgment in the **Gujarat shrines compensation case** raises important questions.
- **Article 32 is the “soul of the Constitution”** as it guarantees the citizens of their fundamental rights under it.

The questions at the wake of the judgement are:

- Should the court give relief in writ jurisdiction only when one's right to life or personal liberty under Article 21 is violated?
- Or can the state be held liable even with respect to violation of other fundamental rights such as the freedom of religion?
- Will an order for the payment of compensation for the repair of religious places be contrary to Article 27 of the Constitution?
- Article 27 prohibits the state from imposing any religious tax and the imposition of any tax whose proceeds are used for the maintenance of any particular religion.

Keypoints:

- In the 2002 communal riots in Gujarat, as many as 567 religious places were either desecrated, damaged or destroyed.
- On February 8, 2012, the Gujarat High Court ordered the state government to get these religious places repaired and reimburse their owners/managers if they had already got them repaired.
- The Gujarat government appealed to the Supreme Court stating that for any loss of property, the remedy is in civil law and in its writ jurisdiction under Article 226, cannot pass such an order as the right to property after the 44th Amendment is not a fundamental right but simply a constitutional right.
- The state government admitted that for the violation of the right to life and personal liberty, writ jurisdiction of high courts could be invoked. But it argued that since India is a secular state it couldn't spend government money for any religious purpose due to Article 27.
- But the writ jurisdiction of high courts is wider than the apex court's powers as while the SC can issue writs just for the violation of fundamental rights, the HCs can do it additionally for the violation of other rights.
- The respondents claimed that the right to equality and right to personal liberty was at stake during the riots.
- The maintenance of law and order is the primary duty of the state government and the compensation is not being sought for the maintenance of any particular religion but for the **failure of the government in fulfilling its basic duty**.

3. All seven parliamentary secretaries of Mizoram resign in deference to SC ruling which held their appointment unconstitutional

Context:

- **Supreme Court observations:**
 - Struck down the practice of appointing parliamentary secretaries.
 - State assemblies do not have the power to enact a law that enables them to appoint parliamentary secretaries
- **All seven parliamentary secretaries of Mizoram** resigned from their posts.
- Mizoram became the first state in the Northeast to implement the SC ruling.

Basic Information

Parliamentary secretaries:

- Secretaries is **ultra vires** the 91st Amendment of the Indian Constitution which introduced **Article 164 (1A)** to the Constitution.
- Article 164 (1A) provides for limiting the number of ministers in the state cabinets. The total number of ministers including the Chief Minister, has to be within 15 per cent of the total number of members of the legislative

assembly of the state.

- Article 164 (1A) was inserted in the Constitution on the recommendation of the National Commission for Review of the Working of the Constitution headed by former Chief Justice of India, **M.N. Venkatachaliah** on misuse and drainage of public money to put a ban on over-sized cabinet.

4. Delhi HC no to order granting SCs, STs quota in promotion

In news:

- The Delhi High Court has **quashed a Central notification** granting reservation in promotion for SCs and STs beyond the five-year period
- It was stipulated in the **Indira Sawhney case**, by the Supreme Court

Court's observation:

- Court said such a move made under **Article 16 (4A)** was not permissible without adequate data to prove inadequacy of representation and backwardness
- It made the observation while quashing Department of Personnel and Training's Office Memorandum dated August 13, 1997

Indra Sawhney Case 1992

The opinion of the Supreme Court in the Indra Sawhney case is summarized as:

- (1) Backward Classes of the Citizens of in Article 16(4) can be identified on the basis of caste and not only on the economic basis.
- (2) Article 16(4) is not an exception to Article 16(1)
- (3) The backward classes in Article 16(4) are not similar to as socially backward classes in Article 15(4) i.e. SC and ST
- (3) Creamy layer can be and must be eliminated from the Backward Classes
- (4) Article 16(4) permits the classification of backwards classes into more backward classes.
- (5) Reservation shall not exceed 50%. The court said that this rule should be applied every year. However, it may be relaxed in favour of people from far flung and remote areas because of their peculiar conditions. However, extreme caution should be exercised in doing so
- (6) Carry forward rule is valid but it is subject to 50%
- (7) There should be NO reservation in the Promotions

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Switzerland President on 3-day visit

In news:

- Swiss President Doris Leuthard began his three-day visit to India.
- **Why the visit is significant?**: Switzerland is the chair of the Nuclear Suppliers Group where India has been seeking membership. The visit is likely to help closer consultation on NSG membership.

Basic Information

Nuclear Suppliers Group:

- Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is a group of nuclear supplier countries that seek to prevent nuclear proliferation by controlling the export of materials, equipment and technology that can be used to manufacture nuclear weapons.
- As of 2017 the NSG has 48 participating government.
- The NSG Chair for 2017-2018 is Switzerland.

2. Giving Bhutan its due

Context:

- Bhutan rescues India's interests at its own cost in the Doklam stand-off.
- In the Doklam stand-off, it was India's security that was at stake, its "chicken neck" on the line.

Keypoints:

- China came up with a "**package deal**" in 1990's , where in return for the smaller disputed Doklam area, it was willing to give bigger territorial concessions in disputed territories in central Bhutan.
- It was an occasion for Bhutan to **resolve its border dispute with China** and also **benefit Chinese "goodwill"**.
- Importance of Doklam, from the Bhutanese point of geography, is **neither strategically important nor does it hold any economic value**, as the stand-off area is frozen for most of the year and nothing can grow up there.
- Bhutan in 1996 turned down the package deal offer mainly on the basis of Indian security concerns over Doklam.
- As a result **China was building six roads towards Bhutan** with four roads already intruding well into Bhutanese territory. Bhutan protested against this move and it resulted in agreement to freeze the construction of roads.
- China, over the decades, has applied pressure on Bhutan, using various tactics so that Bhutan lets go of the Doklam area.
- India never raised its voice in the past, about numerous Chinese incursions into the Bhutanese side, including the more serious road-building activities. This is because they did not affect Indian security, unlike Doklam.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. 99% of demonetised notes returned, says RBI report

Context: Demonetization of high-value Currency

In black and white

RBI reveals that only 1.04% of the demonetised cash was not deposited or exchanged for new notes.

Extract from RBI Annual Report:

₹ Subject to future corrections based on verification process when completed, the estimated value of SBNs received on June 30, 2017 is ₹15.28 lakh crore

Prior to demonetisation, the total number of ₹500 notes and ₹1000 notes were 17,165 mn and 6,858 mn pieces respectively, amounting to ₹15.44 lakh crore*.

Thus cash not deposited or exchanged, amounted to ₹16,000 crore or 1.04% of the value of the old notes



*Rajya Sabha Q & A

In News:

- RBI's revelation in its final annual report: approximately, ₹ 28 lakh crore of the high-value currency that was demonetised in November returned to the central bank.
- **Stats :** 98.96% of the withdrawn currency — at the time of demonetization, the value of old ₹500 and ₹1,000 notes in circulation was ₹44 lakh crore — was deposited with the banks.
- **Key fact :** Demonetization which involved withdrawal of high-value banknotes was a means to combat counterfeiting, black money and the financing of terrorist activities.

2. First GST data in: 65 per cent pay Rs 92,000 crore

Context

- The Centre and states have collected Rs **92,283 crore** as Goods and Services Tax (GST) in July, the first month of the implementation of the indirect tax regime.
- The amount is marginally higher than the projected target

- **42 per cent** of the total registered taxpayers, excluding composition dealers and registrants in August, filed GST returns for July.
- The tax collection number would “somewhat increase” with more compliance
- For those who haven’t yet paid the GST, a late filing penalty of Rs 100 per day for CGST and SGST each will be levied

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Govt. approves plan to deploy more troops on the frontline

In news:

- **B. Shekatkar committee** : appointed by then Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar in May last year and the report was submitted to the Defence Ministry in December 2016.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Increase **teeth-to-tail ratio** for enhancing combat capability and rebalancing defence expenditure of the Armed Forces.
 - **Areas of reform:** optimisation of signal establishments, restructuring of repair echelons including base workshops, redeployment of ordnance depots, better utilisation of supply and transport echelons and animal transport units, closure of military farms and Army postal establishments in peace locations, and improving efficiency of the National Cadet Corps (NCC).
- **Impact:** if recommendations are implemented over the next five years, the recommendations can result in savings of up to ₹25,000 crore in defence expenditure.
- **Governments move:** increased soldiers available for active combat in the Indian Army by over 57,000. This restructure by the Indian Army is aimed at enhancing combat capability in a manner that personnel will be used for improving operational preparedness and civilians will be redeployed in different wings of the Armed Forces for improving efficiency.

2. When it pours

Context:

- The total rainfall (2017) in the country, is beyond the IMD’s forecast of a “normal” monsoon.
- The flood governance in India is still about ad hoc relief measures. It’s time to change.

Key Points:

- Parts of Assam, Bihar and Gujarat are submerged in historic levels of floodwater.
- Urban areas like Mumbai and Bengaluru were lashed with heavy rainfall.
- Mount Abu, got over 50% of its annual rainfall in two days.
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Course of action to be followed:

1. Certain actions of peon in the office should be video-recorded such as not heeding to the officers, disturbing others in office etc.
2. On priority, DM should make an arrangement for social security benefits along with health insurance to peon and his mother. A request for pension should also be made to higher authorities on exceptional grounds.
3. There after a meeting should be arranged with his caste members to explain the real problem being faced in the office and why he should be removed from the office by showing them video-clips.
4. At the same time DM should take own responsibility for peon’s pension and other benefits before the members.
5. Once they agree, his removal would be done in a smooth manner without any controversy.
6. In case they do not agree immediately, steps should be taken to constantly persuade the key members of his caste group one-by-one through constant consultations and that would surely resolve the problem.
7. In doing the above, work culture and discipline in the organisation will be protected but at the same time solved the problems of most vulnerable people i.e. peon and his mother empathetically.

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Category: POLITY

1. Five-judge statute Bench to decide on Aadhaar validity

Context:

- Validity of the Aadhaar scheme.

In news:

- The Supreme Court decided to constitute a **five-judge Constitution Bench** to hear petitions from November against the **validity of the Aadhaar scheme**.
- The decision to set up a five-judge Bench comes despite Justice Rohinton Nariman's separate judgment in the nine-judge Bench declaring **privacy as a fundamental right**.

Historic judgment

- The nine-judge Bench of the Supreme Court came out with the historic judgment in favour of the common man's fundamental right to privacy against state intrusions.
- The nine-judge Bench verdict has a crucial bearing in the Aadhaar petitions, which have argued that Aadhaar's use of biometric details like fingerprints and iris scans violate bodily and informational privacy.

Petitioner's contentions:

- The petitioners argue that mandatory requirement of Aadhaar for these schemes "constrict rights and freedoms which a citizen has long been enjoying unless and until they part with their personal biometric information to the government".
- The petitions have termed the **Aadhaar Act of 2016** as **unconstitutional** and contrary to concept of limited and accountable governance.

Basic Information:

Justice K. S. Puttaswamy vs Union Of India case:

- A landmark case by the Supreme Court of India which holds that the right to privacy is protected under Article 21 and Part 3 of the Constitution. It also mentioned that it won't be an Absolute right and will have some reasonable restrictions in matters of national security and mutual interest of the citizens and the state.
- India is the only country with Right to Privacy as a Fundamental right under its Constitution

P. Shah panel- Nine point code:

- The group led by former Delhi High Court chief justice A P Shah was set up by the Planning Commission to identify privacy issues and prepare a document to facilitate the proposed Privacy Act.
- The group was set after concerns were raised about the impact on privacy of individuals with the emergence of several national programmes such as Aadhar, NATGRID, DNA profiling, Reproductive Rights of Women, privileged communications and brain mapping, most of which will be implemented through information and communication technology (ICT) platforms.

Nine National Privacy Principles:

- A data controller should give prior notice of collection and information to all individuals before taking consent.
- Individuals should be given choice to opt in/out with regard to providing personal information.
- Data collectors should only collect personal information necessary for the purpose identified.
- If there is change of purpose, it must be notified to the individual. After use in identified purpose, data should be destroyed.
- Individuals should have access to personal information for seeking correction, changes, deletion, etc.
- Personal information to third parties should only be disclosed or made public after giving notice and seeking informed consent.
- Data collectors should ensure security safeguards against loss, unauthorized access, destruction, use, etc.
- For openness, information should be made in an intelligible form, using clear and plain language, available to all individuals.
- Data controller should be accountable for complying with privacy measures such as external, internal audits and extending necessary support to privacy commissioners.

2. Centre gets SC to freeze hearing on Article 35A

Context:

- The Supreme Court hearing on the petitions against **Article 35A** of the Constitution.
- A writ petition filed by NGO, **We the Citizens**, which challenged the validity of both Article 35A and Article 370.

In News:

- The Centre convinced the Supreme Court to defer hearing on petitions challenging the special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir.

- **Centre's response:** it has appointed an interlocutor to commence talks with stakeholders in the State.. The interlocutor has started talks with stakeholders. If the court hears this case, it will affect dialogue process
- The government has appointed Dineshwar Sharma, a former Intelligence Bureau director, as interlocutor.

Article 35A:

- Article 35A is a provision incorporated in the Indian Constitution giving the Jammu and Kashmir State Legislature unlimited discretionary power to decide who are the ‘**permanent residents’ of the State** and grant them **special right and privileges** in State public sector jobs, acquisition of property within the State, scholarships and other public aid and welfare programmes.
- The provision mandates that no act of the State legislature coming under the ambit of Article 35A can be challenged for violating the Constitution or any other law of the land.
- Article 35A was incorporated into the Constitution in 1954 by an order of President Rajendra Prasad on the advice of the Jawaharlal Nehru Cabinet.
- The Presidential Order was issued under Article 370 (1) (d) of the Constitution. This provision allows the President to make certain “**exceptions and modifications** ” to the Constitution for the benefit of ‘State subjects’ of Jammu and Kashmir.
- So Article 35A was added to the Constitution as a testimony of the special consideration the Indian government accorded the ‘permanent residents’ of Jammu and Kashmir.

Contention:

- Parliament was not consulted when the President incorporated Article 35A into the Constitution through a Presidential Order issued under Article 370.
- **Article 368 (i)** of the Constitution mandates that only Parliament can amend the Constitution by introducing a new Article.

Basic Information:

Article 368. Power of Parliament to amend the Constitution and procedure therefor:

- (1) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, Parliament may in exercise of its constituent power amend by way of addition, variation or repeal any provision of this Constitution in accordance with the procedure laid down in this article
- (2) An amendment of this Constitution may be initiated only by the introduction of a Bill for the purpose in either House of Parliament, and when the Bill is passed in

each House by a majority of the total membership of that House present and voting, it shall be presented to the President who shall give his assent to the Bill and thereupon the Constitution shall stand amended in accordance with the terms of the Bill: Provided that if such amendment seeks to make any change in

- (a) Article 54, Article 55, Article 73, Article 162 or Article 241, or
 - (b) Chapter IV of Part V, Chapter V of Part VI, or Chapter I of Part XI, or
 - (c) any of the Lists in the Seventh Schedule, or
 - (d) the representation of States in Parliament, or
 - (e) the provisions of this article, the amendment shall also require to be ratified by the Legislature of not less than one half of the States by resolution to that effect passed by those Legislatures before the Bill making provision for such amendment is presented to the President for assent
- (3) Nothing in Article 13 shall apply to any amendment made under this article
- (4) No amendment of this Constitution (including the provisions of Part III) made or purporting to have been made under this article whether before or after the commencement of Section 55 of the Constitution (Forty second Amendment) Act, 1976 shall be called in question in any court on any ground
- (5) For the removal of doubts, it is hereby declared that there shall be no limitation whatever on the constituent power of Parliament to amend by way of addition, variation or repeal the provisions of this Constitution under this article.

3. Law panel moots life term for torture

IN news:

- Law Commission of India in its 273rd Report recommended the implementation of '**United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment**' through Legislation.
- The Commission also submitted a draft **Prevention of Torture Bill** for the consideration of the Government.
- The Commission submitted that there has to be some effective mechanism to protect the interests of the victims of torture, the complainants and the witnesses against ill-treatment, threats or physical and mental violence.
- **Highlight:** "Torture has been a contentious issue having a direct bearing on the **right to life and liberty of an individual**. The Commission is of the opinion that such heinous acts must be curbed through strong legislation providing

stringent punishment, will act as a deterrent”.

- Based on the analysis of various aspects of torture, the Commission has prepared a draft Bill titled “ **The Prevention of Torture Bill, 2017** ” .
- The Commission made the following recommendations to the Government;

While deciding on as to what amounts to torture by a public servant, the

Commission has suggested **definition of ‘torture’** wide enough to include inflicting injury, either intentionally or involuntarily, or even an attempt to cause such an injury, which will include physical, mental or psychological injury.

(i) Ratification of Convention against Torture

In order to tide over the difficulties faced by the Country in getting criminals

extradited, in the absence of an anti-torture law; and to secure an individual’s right to life and liberty, the Commission recommends consideration of the Convention Against Torture for ratification and in the event, the Central Government decides to ratify the Convention, then the Prevention Of Torture Bill 2017 may be considered.

(ii) Amendment to Existing Statutes

The commission has come to the conclusion that the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872 require amendments to accommodate provisions regarding compensation and burden of proof, respectively.

Criminal Procedure Code, 1973

The Commission recommends amendment to section 357B to incorporate payment of compensation, in addition to payment or fine, as provided under section 326A or section 376D of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

Indian Evidence Act, 1872

Requires insertion of section 114B : this will ensure that in case a person in police custody sustains injuries, it is presumed that those injuries have been inflicted by the police, and the burden of proof shall lie on the authority concerned to explain such injury.

(iii). Punishment for acts of torture: In order to curb the menace of torture and to have a deterrent effects on acts of torture , the Commission recommends stringent punishment to the perpetrators of such acts. The draft Bills provides for punishment extending up to life imprisonment and fine.

(iv) Compensation to victims

The Courts will decide upon a justiciable compensation after taking into account various facets of an individual case, such as nature, purpose, extent and manner of injury, including mental agony caused to the victim. The Courts will bear in mind the socio-economic background of the victim and will ensure that the compensation so decided will suffice the victim to bear the expenses on medical treatment and rehabilitation.

(v) Protection of Victims, Complainants and witnesses

The Commission recommends that an effective mechanism must be put in place in order to protect the victims of torture, the complainants and the witnesses against possible threats, violence or ill treatment.

4. Of bureaucracy and emotions

Context:

- Recently, a woman died of starvation in Jharkhand's Simdega district
- Her ration card was not Aadhaar card-linked, preventing her from receiving any food ration from the Public Distribution System (PDS) for several weeks

Main Reason behind the issue: Insensitive bureaucracy.

Evolution of bureaucracy: Our society runs on paperwork . Bureaucracy came into being after the birth of scripts in ancient civilization . When a large amount of administrative data was created, a system was needed to retrieve the stored knowledge . And this gave rise to archiving, cataloguing and classifying. More than writing, it was this method of retrieval that led to efficiency

People's connection with bureaucracy: Bureaucracy is new in developing countries.

And we must realise that institutionally, people are not “bureaucracy-receptive”

Bureaucracy and India:

- The Indian villager accesses the state through a local leader.Everyone knows everyone else and independent bureaucracy cannot be executed in the web of interdependent informal relationships among the stakeholders
- When the state creates a new bureaucratic framework that trumps local networks (on which informal societies such as India are built), citizens become confused and find themselves at a loss to negotiate their space

Customs and norms in India:

- Societies carry a historical burden of norms and customs
- Mostly informal in nature, these institutions cannot be changed overnight
- New laws and regulations introduced in any society must recognise the informal social norms society is predicated upon
- In societies such as India, citizen-state interaction is historically built on patronage and personal relations; bureaucratic forms of engagement are recent
- Western societies that are individualised, are prepared to function bureaucratically, and can successfully build independent regulatory bodies
- But collectivist societies like India cannot, and may be should not, try this

The way forward

- In diverse societies, bureaucracies have to be contextual, and therefore emotional
- They must be designed for everyone, and not just for the urban elites
- Regulations force people to change their behaviour and dynamics instantly
- If the bureaucracy is not empathetic to those who are slow in responding, it will be hugely damaging to society as a whole
- It will leave so many of us distressed, some of us dead, and even worse, most of us devoid of compassion

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. India, Italy vow to fight terror

Context:

Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni visit to India.

Major highlights of the talks:

- India and Italy agreed to coordinate efforts at the **multilateral level** to counter global terrorism.
- Italian Prime Minister described India as an “**Asian superpower**” and said Italy was in favour of an **EU-India free trade agreement**.
- Six agreements between Italy and India, covering **energy cooperation, diplomatic training and railways**.
- Italy supported India’s quest to bring Pakistan-based terror masterminds Masood Azhar, Dawood Ibrahim and others to justice.
- The leaders agreed to strengthen cooperation to take decisive and concerted actions against Al Qaeda, ISIS (Da’esh) and their affiliates and all other UN-designated globally proscribed terrorists and terror entities

2. China to block UN ban on Masood Azhar, yet again

on Masood Azhar, yet again

In news:

- **Citing a lack of “consensus,”** China has said that it is once again not designating Masood Azhar, head of Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammad, as an international terrorist.
- The Chinese position, expressed by its Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying, came ahead of Thursday’s meeting of the **1267 committee of the United Nations Security Council**, where Azhar’s status would be discussed.

Background Information:

- China had repeatedly imposed a “technical hold” on India’s application for banning Azhar, who has been accused of masterminding last year’s attack on an Indian Air Force base.
- In January, the United States filed a fresh application, backed by Britain and France after India’s filing on Azhar’s listing had lapsed last year.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. Fewer TB deaths in India: WHO

In news:

- Death from tuberculosis in India saw a 12% decline from last year.
- The number of new cases saw a 5% increase.
- With 1.7 million new cases in 2016, **India continued to be the largest contributor to the global burden with up to a quarter of the 6.3 million new cases of TB** (up from 6.1 million in 2015).
- In spite of this year’s dip, India accounts for about 32% of the number of people worldwide who succumbed to the disease.
- **Key fact:**
- Rise in cases was due to greater surveillance and the dip in mortality from 480,000 to 423,000 in 2016, due to improved drug management.
- Globally, the TB mortality rate is falling at about 3% per year.
- TB incidence is falling at about 2% per year and 16% of TB cases die from the disease.

Key Inference: “Overall, the latest picture is one of a still high burden of disease, and progress that is not fast enough to reach targets or to make major headway in closing persistent gaps.”.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Climate change taking a toll on global health: Lancet

Key highlights of the New research paper-

- “**The Lancet Countdown: Tracking Progress on Health and Climate Change**” published by The Lancet:
- The Lancet report talks of the various ways climate change has started affecting the health of people across the planet.
- On an average there has been a 5.3% fall in productivity for rural labour estimated globally since 2000, as a result of rising temperatures around the world.
- In 2016, this took more than 9,20,000 people globally out of the workforce, with 4,18,000 of them in India alone.
- China, Bangladesh, India and Indonesia are the countries that have registered the highest number of deaths linked to air pollution.

Anthropogenic effect

- The research builds on the work of the 2015 Lancet Commission on Health and Climate Change, which concluded that anthropogenic climate change threatens to undermine the last 50 years of gains in public health.
- The report said that over one billion people globally will be faced with a need to migrate within 90 years, due to a rise in sea level caused by ice shelf collapse, unless action is taken.
- The research found that 87% of a random sample of global cities are in breach of WHO air pollution guidelines.
- The world has seen a 46% global increase in weather related disasters since 2000, the reported pointed out. The total value of economic losses resulting from climate-related extreme weather events was estimated at \$129 billion in 2016.

Key Findings: “ The findings show that climate change is affecting the health of all populations, today. These impacts are disproportionately felt by communities least responsible for climate change and those who are the most vulnerable in society.”

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

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GS Paper IV

1. Examine the scope of Fundamental Rights in the light of the latest judgment of the Supreme Court on Right to Privacy.

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Category: POLITY

1. Parents are behind child marriages: SC

In news:

Supreme Court observations:

- It was unfortunate to note that parents drive their minor children into marriage
- At least one in three marriages in rural areas involves girl children below the age of 18.

Petition filed by NGO Independent Thought:

- Contention: Petition challenges the Exception 2 to **Section 375 (rape)** of the Indian Penal Code, which permits “intrusive sexual intercourse with a girl child aged between 15 and 18 only on the ground that she is married.”
- The Exception is part of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2013 and is contrary to the anti-child sex abuse law, **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act of 2012 (POCSO)**.

Key stats: As per the **Fourth National Family Health Survey** of 2015-16, there are 26.8% of brides in the country who were married below the age of 18.

2. ‘Medical boards proposed to hear abortion pleas’

Context:

- **Supreme Court directive:** appoint **permanent medical boards** to provide women, especially rape survivors, urgent access to medical care and to consider their requests for abortion.

In news:

- **Government informed Supreme Court :** that it has written to States and Union Territories about the court’s suggestion.

Basic Information

What is MTP Act, 1971?

- Abortion in India is legal only up to twenty weeks of pregnancy under specific conditions and situations.
- One, the continuance of the pregnancy would involve a risk to the life of the pregnant woman or of grave injury of physical or mental health, or
- Two, there is a substantial risk that if the child were born, it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.

What the draft MTP bill 2014 provides?

- The draft MTP increased the legal limit for abortion from 20 weeks to 24 weeks.
- It provides for abortion beyond 24 weeks under defined conditions.
- The Bill amends Section 3 of the 1971 Act to provide that “the length of pregnancy shall not apply” in a decision to abort a foetus diagnosed with “substantial foetal abnormalities” or if it is “alleged by the pregnant woman to have been caused by rape”.
- Under the 1971 Act, even pregnant rape victims cannot abort after 20 weeks, compelling them to move court.
- It allows a woman to take an independent decision in consultation with a registered health-care provider.
- It also takes into account the reality of a massive shortage of both doctors and trained midwives, and seeks to allow Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha practitioners to carry out abortions.

Why is it essential to change the MTP law?

- Foetal abnormalities show up only by 18 weeks, so just a two-week window after that is too small for the would-be parents to take the difficult call on whether to keep their baby.
- Even for the medical practitioner, this window is too small to exhaust all possible options before advising the patient.
- There is an urgent need to empower women with sexual rights, legal protection against sex crimes and sex choices both in their own interest and for the sake of reducing the fertility rate as a whole.
- The lack of legal approval moves abortion to underground and they are done in unhygienic conditions by untrained, thus, putting thousands of women at risk.

3. Making the Doklam standoff useful for India

Context

- After more than two months, the India-China standoff in Doklam, came to an end.
- Chinese accepted to cease the construction of road, which in fact was the trigger behind the scenes. Meanwhile Indian troops retreated as a concession to the decision.

Key Points:

- Chinese escalations along the Sikkim sector that is an advantageous military zone for India could have been costlier.
- The forthcoming Brics summit, which they will be hosting in Xiamen, must have also played a role in Chinese concern.
- India should not believe the Chinese tactical move and get into a conclusion that former would stop its incursions into disputed and other's territories.
- India brilliantly utilized the denial tactics to prevent China from adjusting the facts on the ground.
- China's rise is a challenge to India's supremacy in South Asia.
- Looks like despite being aware of its disadvantages in Chumbi Valley, Chinese played the card to trigger a rift between New Delhi and Thimphu.
- But Thimphu upheld its calm endorsed India's position by calling for a return to the status quo ante.
- But on the other the relationship of India with its other neighbours is unlike with that of Bhutan. For example, In Pakistan, China has assisted the establishment of a nuclear-armed state which deploys terrorists against India to achieve its territorially revisionist goals.
- Chinese presence in the Indian ocean region is also a threat to Indian supremacy.

Way forward

- India should be prepared with its diplomatic and military apparatus to prevent Doklam-type unilateral adventurism again.
- India should also exploit its advantages of geography
- Initiate closer military partnership with the US and Japan.

4. Plea to re-start tonga race in Nagaur rejected

Context:

- **Rajasthan High Court:** In January 2016, had banned the controversial tonga race.
- The HC had outlawed the race citing cruelty to animals

In news:

- State government filed a petition before the court, seeking the modification of its earlier order.
- The Rajasthan High Court has dismissed the State government's petition
- **Jat leaders opinion :** the race is a matter of people's faith and religious tradition and it does not have any trait of cruelty to animals.
- **Tonga race tradition:**
 - Every year, on the 9th of Shukla day of Bhadrapada month as per the Hindu calendar, horse-carts run for 36 km on hard concrete or tarred road on the Mundiad-Kharnal-Nagaur route in Nagaur district.
 - The race forms part of fairs dedicated to Lord Ganesha and Lord Tejaji, with the tongas running amid the

chaos of heavy traffic and with thousands of spectators shouting on the roadside.

5. Order on net neutrality in a month

In news:

- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India is likely to come out with its recommendations on the long-pending controversial issue of net neutrality in a month's time.
- The issue has been debated since early 2015 in India.
- **What is net neutrality?** Net Neutrality is the principle that service providers should treat all data on the Internet equally, and not discriminate or charge differently by user, content, site, platform, or application.
- Demanding that the same rule should apply for the same services, telecom operators have reasoned that operators are required to ensure service quality and pay levies to the government, while no such rules are applicable on Internet-based calling applications such as WhatsApp and Skype.
- After a series of consultation papers on related topics such as over-the-top service providers and differential pricing of data services, TRAI had released a consultation paper on 'Net neutrality'.
- The regulator had last year barred telecom service providers from charging differential rates for data services, effectively prohibiting Facebook's Free Basics and Airtel Zero platform.

6. Nationwide programme to test all TB patients

In news:

- Health authorities plan to commence a nationwide programme to test every tuberculosis (TB) patient for signs of **resistance to first-line drugs**.
- This new plan could reveal a large number of hidden tuberculosis patients, as well greater numbers of those with multiple infections of TB and HIV (human immunodeficiency virus).
- **WTO estimates:** as many as a million Indians with TB could be outside government scrutiny.
- **Key stat:**
 - In 2015, nine million Indians were tested for suspected tuberculosis and about 900,000 were confirmed to be ailing from it.
 - Nearly 3% of new TB cases and 18% of prevalent cases are believed to be drug resistant.
 - The WHO's TB statistics for India for 2015, gives an estimated incidence figure of **2.2 million cases of TB** for India out of a global incidence of 9.6 million.
- **Universal Drug Sensitivity Test :**
 - The new policy, called the Universal Drug Sensitivity Test, will be implemented using a molecular diagnostic test called
 - **GeneXpert** is a US-developed technology tool being used worldwide since 2010. It can detect the TB bacterium as well check for resistance to **rifampicin**, one of the standard key TB drugs, within 90 minutes.
 - Conventional tests take at least a day or more and require well-trained personnel for similar results.
- **Why are we unable to eliminate TB?**
 - Inability to rapidly diagnose multi-drug resistant tuberculosis has long been identified as among the chinks in India's strategy to eliminate tuberculosis.
 - **Lack of logistics** : There are only around 600 GeneXpert devices now in use — roughly one for each district — and this posed a stumbling block to deploying the WHO-recommended kits earlier.
- **Alternative for GeneXpert:**
 - GeneXpert kits are very expensive.
 - It requires air-conditioned settings and reliable electricity access for optimal output.
 - The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is in the process of testing a cheaper alternative to GeneXpert called **Truenat MTB**, which is reportedly more portable, battery-operated, and performs as well at lower costs.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. An article of faith

Context:

- Repeal of Article 35A that protects the unique identity of Dogras will test the relationship between J&K and the rest of the country.

Key Points:

- The cultural identity and very existence of Jammu and Kashmir, which was recognized as an example of cultural assimilation and co-existence is at, peril now.
- Article 35A of the Constitution is more relevant for the Duggar region of Jammu than Kashmir and Ladakh for a variety of reasons.
- Repeal of this article will lead to the economic deprivation and erosion of cultural identity of the Dogras.
- The last Dogra ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh introduced these laws in 1927 to safeguard the interests of his subjects and to shield them from domination by elite and affluent non-state subjects.
- Those wanting to trample the unique identity of the Duggar land are spreading the rumor that repealing Article 35A will give a boost to development in Jammu.

Why should the scrapping of 35A, therefore, be wrongly linked to the lack of industrial growth in Jammu and Kashmir?

- A misguiding move initiated that Article 35A will lead to the integration of Jammu and Kashmir with the rest of India.
- But Jammu and Kashmir is a part of India and the relationship with the nation was inked on October 26, 1947 through the Instrument of Accession signed by Maharaja Hari Singh, then ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, and Lord Mountbatten, the Viceroy of India, which were incorporated into the Indian Constitution as Article 370.
- But the real fact is that removing Article 35A could lead to a squeeze in opportunities for the Dogra youth.
- Where they will have to compete with youth from other states for jobs, Professional academic courses, recruitment in the security forces and denied scholarships and other financial assistance.
- The marginal and medium-level traders will face increased competition.
- The influx of “non-subjects”, in the absence of the repeal of Article 35A, will put immense pressure on landholdings.
- Thus the fight to protect Article 35 A is the fight to protect Dogra Dugar land.

2. India thanks Switzerland for support in global fora

Context:

Swiss President Doris Leuthard, on a three day visit to India.

In news:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi sought greater cooperation to ensure bilateral financial transparency.
- Swiss government was thanked by Modi, for its support to India's membership bid for the **Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)**.
- **Joint statement:**
- Switzerland has supported India's continued quest for membership in the **Australia Group** and the **Wassenaar Arrangement**.
- **Agreements signed:** signed two major agreements on railways.

Basic Information

The Australia Group:

- **The Australia Group** is an informal group of countries (now joined by the European Commission) established in 1985 (after the use of chemical weapons by Iraq in 1984) to help member countries to identify those exports which need to be controlled so as not to contribute to the spread of chemical and biological weapons.
- It now has 42 members, including the European Commission, all 28 member states of the European Union, Ukraine, and Argentina.
- The name comes from Australia's initiative to create the group. Australia manages the secretariat.

The Wassenaar Arrangement

- **The Wassenaar Arrangement** on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies, commonly known as the Wassenaar Arrangement, is a multilateral export control regime (MECR) with 41 participating states.
- The Wassenaar Arrangement was established to contribute to regional and international security and stability by promoting transparency and greater responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies, thus preventing destabilizing accumulations. Participating states seek, through their national policies, to ensure that transfers of these items do not contribute to the development or enhancement of military capabilities which undermine these goals, and are not diverted to support such capabilities.

The Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR):

- **The Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)** is a multilateral export control regime. It is an informal and voluntary partnership among 35 countries to prevent the **proliferation of missile** and **unmanned aerial vehicle** technology capable of carrying above 500 kg payload for more than 300 km.
- India formally applied for membership to the group in June 2015, with active support from France and the United States, and officially became a member on 27 June 2016 with the consensus of the 34 member nations.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. [Powering aspirational India](#)

Context

More investment required to step up the use of low-carbon energy sources to meet the growing energy needs of the country.

Keypoints:

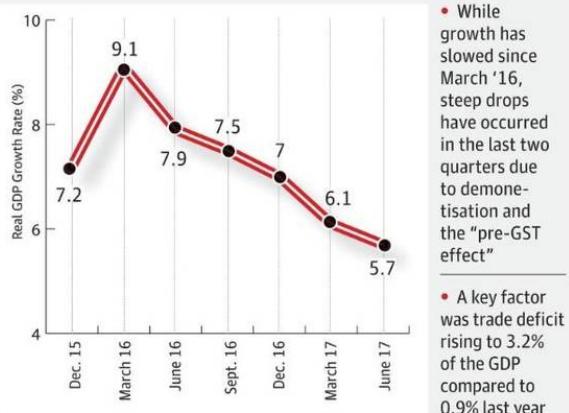
- Country's energy requirements are assessed by two ways:
 1. Top-down econometric model: This model studies growth in the economy, analyses the affiliation between economic growth and energy requirements, and integrates required technological and policy changes.
 2. On the other hand, demand centered equipment capacities, competences and usage is assessed through Bottom-up approach.
- International Energy Agency Report (2014) says average global per capita electricity consumption is 3030 kWh and for India it is at 805 units and for industrialized countries of the OECD, it is 8,028 units
- Looking at the growing rate of population it is estimated that India's population would touch 6 billion count by the middle of 21st century Transmission and distribution losses will come down to the lowest technically feasible value of about 7%.
- Electricity generation projected for 2050 is six times the total generation in 2016-17 and in terms of per capita generation, it is about 4.5 times.
- Energy conservation and efficiency in utilization can help in decreasing electricity consumption.
- India's solar and wind energy potential is greater than 750 GW and 302 GW respectively hence it is a brilliant move to maximize the use of low carbon energy sources.

Steps taken by the Government of India

1. 10 indigenous pressurised heavy water reactors are being constructed including units 3-6 at Kudankulam.
2. nuclear cooperation agreement with Japan

Slowdown persists

The 5.7% growth in GDP registered in April-June 2017 was the lowest since March 2014. The growth of eight core infrastructure sectors also came down to 2.4%.



2. GDP growth slips to 5.7% in April-June

In news:

- **April- June, 2017: India's GDP growth rate is 5.7%**
- The slowest pace recorded in 13 quarters.
- **Gross fixed capital formation** : reflects the investments into the country, stood at a four-quarter high of **29.8% of GDP**, but was still lower than the 31% clocked in the same quarter of 2016-17.

3. Fiscal deficit touches 92.4% of budget estimates at July-end

In news:

- India's fiscal deficit at July- end touched **92.4 %** of the budget.
- **Reason** : because of front loading of expenditure by various government departments.
- **Target:**
 - **2017-18:** fiscal deficit to 3.2 % of the GDP.
 - **2016-17:** Government had met the deficit target of 3.5 % of the GDP.

Basic Information

Fiscal Deficit:

- The difference between total revenue and total expenditure of the government is termed as fiscal deficit. It is an indication of the total borrowings needed by the government.
- A deficit is usually financed through borrowing from either the central bank of the country or raising money from capital markets by issuing different instruments like treasury bills and bonds.

4. Core sector output growth quickens to 2.4% in July

In news:

- Core sector output grew 2.4% year-on-year basis in July, 2017-18.
- **Reasons:** favorable base effect for steel, cement, fertilizers and electricity.

Basic Information

Base Effect:

- The base effect refers to the impact of the rise in price level (i.e. last year's inflation) in the previous year over the corresponding rise in price levels in the current year (i.e., current inflation): if the price index had risen at a high rate in the corresponding period of the previous year leading to a high inflation rate, some of the potential rise is already factored in, therefore a similar absolute increase in the Price index in the current year will lead to a relatively lower inflation rates. On the other hand, if the inflation rate was too low in the

corresponding period of the previous year, even a relatively smaller rise in the Price Index will arithmetically give a high rate of current inflation.

IIP:

- The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is an index for India which details out the growth of various sectors in an economy such as mineral mining, electricity and manufacturing.
- The all India IIP is a composite indicator that measures the short-term changes in the volume of production of a basket of industrial products during a given period with respect to that in a chosen base period.
- It is compiled and published monthly by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) six weeks after the reference month ends.
- The level of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is an abstract number, the magnitude of which represents the status of production in the industrial sector for a given period of time as compared to a reference period of time.
- The base year was at one time fixed at 1993–94 so that year was assigned an index level of 100. The current base year is 2011-2012.[1].
- The Eight Core Industries comprise nearly 40.27% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP). These are Electricity , steel, refinery products, crude oil, coal, cement, natural gas and fertilisers.

5. Trade-distorting farm subsidies must go

Context:

- Joint proposal submitted by India and China to the World Trade Organization.
- Upcoming 11th Ministerial Conference (MC) of the WTO to be held in Buenos Aires in December 2017

In news:

What is the proposal?

- Proposal called for the **develelimination** — by developed countries — of the most trade-distorting form of farm subsidies, as a prerequisite for consideration of other reforms in domestic support negotiations.
- **Contention** : Developed countries, including the US, the EU and Canada, have been consistently providing trade-distorting subsidies to their farmers at levels much higher than the ceiling applicable to developing countries.

Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS) and developing countries:

- **Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS)** or ‘ **Amber Box**’ support: The most trade-distorting form of farm subsidies
- Developed countries have more than 90% of global AMS entitlements amounting to nearly \$160 billion.
- Most of the developing countries, including India and China, do not have AMS entitlements.
- **China and India says:** Elimination of AMS should be the starting point of reforms rather than seeking reduction of subsidies by developing countries.

6. Odisha rated as low-growth State

The NITI Aayog’s ‘Ease of Doing Business Report: An Enterprise Survey of Indian States’

- It points at issues in setting up new businesses in Odisha compared to other States
- The 15-high growth States include Bihar, Uttarakhand, Tripura, Sikkim and Meghalaya
- **Basis of the report:** The NITI Aayog and IDFC Institute, its knowledge partner, have classified States on the basis of their average annual real growth rate
- By using State GDP from 2004-05 to 2013-14

7. Domestic sugar production may increase 18-20% in October-September: ICRA

In news:

- **ICRA predication of domestic sugar availability:**
- Domestic sugar production is likely to increase by 18-20% to around **24-24.5 million MT** in sugar year (SY) 2018.
- **How?**
 1. Recovery in cane availability in Maharashtra and north Karnataka supported by monsoons.
 2. Expected increase in sugar production in Uttar Pradesh.
- **For the sugar year 2017:**
 - ICRA estimate: stock to end between 4-4.5 million MT.
 - Stock is expected to be sufficient for around two months of domestic consumption despite the possibility of a **localised sugar deficit condition** in the southern and western states during the forthcoming festival season.
- **Analysis:**
 - Low closing stock levels of sugar in the domestic market are likely to support the sugar prices in the near term.
 - UP-based mills are likely to benefit from healthy sugar prices along with continued healthy volumes and recovery rates, although that impact could be partly offset by higher cane prices.
 - Mills in Maharashtra and north Karnataka are expected to be negatively impacted by higher costs and reap benefits of higher production.

Basic Information

ICRA Limited (ICRA)

- ICRA Limited (ICRA) is an Indian independent and professional investment information and credit rating agency.
- It was established in 1991, and was originally named Investment Information and Credit Rating Agency of India Limited (IICRA India).
- It was a joint-venture between Moody's and various Indian commercial banks and financial services companies. The company changed its name to ICRA Limited, and went public on 13 April 2007, with a listing on the Bombay Stock Exchange and the National Stock Exchange.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Despite big reforms in Army, no clarity on sahayak system

In news:

- **Cabinet approved military reforms:**
 - Enhances the combat capability and rebalances defence expenditure of the Army.
 - Increase the teeth-to-tail ratio, by which 57,000 soldiers would be redeployed to operational duties.
- **Neglected reformative measure:** no immediate end to the **sahayak system** that is actually holding up thousands of combat soldiers from active duty.
- **Sahayaks:**
 - There are over **30,000 soldiers** employed as sahayaks or orderlies both in peacetime and forward locations.
 - There have been recommendations, time and again, to end the practice and replace the sahayaks in peacetime locations with civilians freeing up the soldiers for combat roles.
- **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence** in the year 2010, had asked the Army to emulate the Navy and Air Force and abolish the “demeaning and humiliating” practice, a colonial legacy.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. 39 successes later, PSLV launch fails

In news:

- **Failed attempt:** the **PSLV-C39** mission carrying the replacement navigation satellite IRNSS-1H failed.
- This was the PSLV's first failure, after 39 continuously successful launches and only the second such instance since 1993.

- **Reason for the failure:** spacecraft was stuck in the heat shield in the last and fourth stage; it did not release into space as planned.
- **Impact:**
 - Dent the image that the PSLV commands in the global small-to-medium launchers market. It has been the most-sought-after vehicle for small satellites of up to 600-700 kg.

Nothing here for Today!!!

NATIONAL PARKS/SANCTURIES/BIOSPHERE RESERVES:

1. Great Himalayan National Park

Location: located in Kullu region in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

Features: Park is at an altitude of between 1500 and 6000 m. The Great Himalayan National Park is a habitat to numerous flora and more than 375 fauna species, including approximately 31 mammals, 181 birds, 3 reptiles, 9 amphibians, 11 annelids, 17 mollusks and 127 insects.

In June 2014, the Great Himalayan National Park was added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites

2. Inderkilla National Park

Location: Inderkilla National Park



IUCN Red List:

1. Forest owlet

IUCN Classification: Critically endangered

Habitat and distribution: Endemic to the forests of central India (northern Maharashtra, and south-east Madhya Pradesh or western Orissa).



2. Baer's pochard

IUCN Classification: Critically endangered

Habitat and distribution: It breeds in southeast Russia and northeast China, migrating in winter to southern China, Vietnam, Japan, and India.

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. Should India as a whole or the diverse states individually fight for preserving its race, language, history, legends and tradition in the multi-religious, multi-lingual and multi-racial canvas?

GS Paper II

1. "Traditional bureaucratic structure and culture have hampered the process of socio-economic development in India." Comment.
2. Why does the state of Jammu and Kashmir in general, and Jammu in particular, feel compelled to fight for the rights bestowed by the Indian Constitution, 70 years after Independence?
3. What has gone wrong that the peaceful, compassionate and tolerant Dogras, ingrained with secular ethos, feel challenged by the overt and covert attempts to remove Article 35A of the Constitution?

GS Paper III

1. Rehabilitation of human settlements is one of the important environmental impacts which always attracts controversy while planning major projects. Discuss the measures suggested for mitigation of this impact while proposing major developmental projects.

GS Paper IV

Topic: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Question 1. You are working as Junior Engineer in a Tehsil. You have been given responsibility to measure MGNREGA works undertaken by 3 Gram Panchayats.

You have authority to give technical sanctions to all MGNREGA works. In one of these Panchayats you notice that your predecessor had wrongly measured many works, and in many cases he had approved works that never existed. One day few elected members of that Panchayat with bundle of job cards come to you to seek 'sanction' for the works done by them. When enquired, they reveal that they were contractors who had completed works under MGNREGA. When you reject their demand, they threaten you and tell you that the previous Junior Engineer was made to quit his job because he didn't listen to them. This is your first job and is very important to sustain your family. There have been precedents in the past that some junior officials were beaten to death in some parts of the Tehsil.

What will you do in this situation? Explain in detail citing rules from MGNREGA Act.

Answer

- I would tell contractor that there is provision of social audit for MGNREGA and in future it is most likely that they would get caught in future. Also the provision of DBT and biometric authentication will reveal all their wrong doings.
- Subsequently i will report such incidence to my higher authorities and seek police protection in case my life is at risk. A report of bogus as well as valid JOB card shall be separately prepared by me which shall lie as a proof for all past irregularities.
- My courage and uprightness will deter me from succumbing to their demands. In any case if i comply as directed by contractors, my job would be in peril. Truth can't be hidden for long and its better to be courageous than to hide facts and face future actions.

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Nothing here for Today!!!

Category: POLITY

[1. HC puts Haryana quota law in abeyance till March](#)

In news:

- The Punjab and Haryana High Court stayed the implementation of a Haryana law providing reservation to **Jats** and five other communities, till March next year.
- Court also directed the **State Backward Classes Commission** to determine the **quota in government jobs and education institutions** to be given to these communities after studying relevant data and submit a report by March 2018.

Basic Information

National Commission for Backward Classes:

- National Commission for Backward Classes is under the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.
- It was constituted pursuant to the provisions of the **National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993**.
 - **Constitutional status:** In 2017, a bill seeking to grant **constitutional status** to the National Commission for Backward Classes is scheduled to be passed in Parliament. **The bill has been passed by both the houses of Parliament and is awaiting the President's assent. The NCBC Bill, will insert Article 338B.**
 - **Indra Sawhney & Ors. Vs. Union of India:** The commission was the outcome of **Indra Sawhney & Ors. Vs. Union of India**. The Supreme Court of India in its Judgement-directed the Government of India, State Governments and Union Territory Administrations to constitute a permanent body in the nature of a Commission or Tribunal for entertaining, examining and recommending upon requests for inclusion and complaints of over-inclusion and under-inclusion in the list of OBCs. **The Supreme Court held that the Constitution recognised only social and educational — and not economic — backwardness.**
 - **Composition:** The Act provides that the Commission shall consist of five Members: a Chairperson who is or has been a judge of the Supreme Court or of a High Court; a social scientist; two persons who have special knowledge in matters relating to backward classes; and a Member-Secretary, who is or has been an officer of the Central Government in the rank of a Secretary to the Government of India. Their term is of Three years.
- **Fucntions:**
 - The commission considers inclusions in and exclusions from the lists of communities notified as backward for the purpose of job reservations and tenders the needful advice to the Central Government
 - National Commission for Backward Classes has not yet been empowered to look into the grievances of persons of Other Backward Classes.

2. [Expedite trial in gang rape case, says SC](#)

In News:

- **The Supreme Court order :** trial against **Greyhound police force** personnel allegedly involved in the gang rape of 11 women belonging to a vulnerable Adivasi tribe in Visakhapatnam be expedited and concluded in six months.
- **Fact:** the criminal trial had not moved in the past one decade (the victims have been waiting for justice since 2007).

Basic Information

- **Greyhound police force:** GreyHounds is a special force of the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states which undertakes high risk operations against Naxalite terrorists.

3. [Central panel says states don't need to hike NREG pay to match minimum wage](#)

In news:

- The panel for revision of wages under the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)** has recommended that there is no need to ensure parity with minimum wages paid by various states
- It states that wages under the rural employment guarantee scheme were last aligned to minimum wages in 2009, and that “there is no compelling reason to align MGNREGA and states minimum wages again”.
- The panel had earlier found that MGNREGA wages were lower than the minimum agricultural wages paid in 17 states and Union Territories
- In 2014, a seven-member expert committee, headed by Professor Mahendra Dev, had held that MGNREGA workers should be paid at least the minimum wages paid to agricultural workers in the states, if not more, to meet basic needs.
- The report, was accepted by MoRD but rejected by the Finance Ministry citing the fiscal burden involved.
- The ministry panel has agreed to the 2nd recommendation of the Mahendra Dev committee, that the Consumer Price Index for Rural (CPI-R), which reflects the present consumption pattern, should be the basis for annual revision of MGNREGA wage rates, and not CPI- Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL), which is based on the consumption pattern of 1983

Divergence in pay:

- There has been a divergence because several states have arbitrarily increased their minimum wages without following any scientific principles.
- There is no reason why the Centre should go by that

MGNREGA budget and Wage revision

- Union government had claimed that this year's MGNREGA budget of Rs 48,000 crore is the highest ever
- But the wage revision this year was at a mere 2.7 percent, the lowest in the scheme's ten-year legacy leading to a mere Rs 1-3 per day hike in several states.
- The MGNREGA wages are far lower than minimum wages in states such as Karnataka, Punjab, West Bengal, Haryana, and Jharkhand

4. SC to hear Rohingya plea for help

Context:

- Indian government's proposal to deport 40,000-strong Rohingya Muslim refugee community back to their native Myanmar, where discrimination and possibly summary executions await them.
- An urgent plea was made by two Rohingya Muslim immigrants against the government's proposed move.

In news:

- The Supreme Court has agreed to hear the plea.

Petitioners contention:

- The Centre's move to deport them **violated the constitutional guarantee** that the Indian state should “**protect the life and liberty of every human being, whether citizen or not .**”
- The proposed deportation is contrary to the constitutional protections of Article 14 (equality), Article 21 (right to life) and Article 51(c) (respect for international law and treaty obligations) of the Constitution.

Basic Information

Article 14: Equality before law

- The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India .

Article 21: Protection of life and personal liberty

- No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law

Article 51: Promotion of international peace and security

The State shall endeavour to

1. Promote international peace and security;
2. Maintain just and honourable relations between nations;
3. **Foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organized peoples with one another; and encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration.**

4. U.S. court rules in favour of Dr. Reddy's in patent litigation

In news:

- **Indivior assertion:** the proposed generic version of Suboxone. Inte (buprenorphine and naloxone) sublingual film by Dr. Reddy's Laboratories infringes the patent.
- **S. District Court ruling:**
 - Ruled in favor of Reddy's laboratory- does not infringe any patents.
 - **Dr. Reddy's Laboratories statement:** The judgment reiterates our commitment to providing affordable and innovative medicines that address the unmet and under-met needs of patients around the world.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India to sign 4 pacts at BRICS summit

- **BRICS summit discussion:** focus on global economic issues, national security, and development-related issues
- **Plenary session discussion focus:** practical cooperation and cultural exchange.
- **Guests at Xiamen summit:** Thailand, Mexico, Egypt, Guinea and Tajikistan

2. Sushma Swaraj meets Sirisena, discusses progress on Indian projects

Context:

- External Affairs Minister visit to Sri Lanka, to participate in the Indian Ocean Conference organised by the India Foundation.

In news:

Discussed Issues:

- **The delay in the Constitution making process:** Sri Lanka urged New Delhi to use its good offices to support the government see the process through.
- Delay in implementing India-backed projects in the island.
- India assured continued and fullest support to the Sri Lankan government: The **national unity government** led by President Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe — from the rival parties SLFP and UNP — is under pressure. It faces large scale **corruption allegations** in addition to a challenge from the SLFP faction led by former strongman Mahinda Rajapaksa, who has vowed to topple the government.

India's project:

- Joint development of a **World War-era** oil tank in the strategically located eastern port town of **Trincomalee**.
- India has expressed its interest to operate Sri Lanka's second international airport in Mattala.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Centre tells PSBs to begin merger process ‘immediately’

2. Switzerland for early India-EFTA pact

In news:

- **Visiting President of Switzerland Doris Leuthard said:** early conclusion of the proposed **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** between **India** and **European Free Trade Association (EFTA)** as well as an investment protection framework would boost economic ties between the two sides.
- Negotiations have been running since 2008.
- **European Free Trade Association (EFTA) members:** Switzerland, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein.

Basic Information

Internet Grievance Forum:

- The IGF is a forum for multi-stakeholder dialogue on public policy issues related to key elements of Internet governance issues, such as the Internet's sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development.
- The United Nations Secretary-General formally announced the establishment of the IGF in July 2006 and the first meeting was convened in October/November 2006.
- **Purpose:**
 - The purpose of the IGF is to maximize the opportunity for open and inclusive dialogue and the exchange of ideas on Internet governance (IG) related issues; create opportunities to share best practices and experiences; identify emerging issues and bring them to the attention of the relevant bodies and the general public; contribute to capacity building for Internet governance.
 - The main aim of the IGF is to facilitate inclusive, productive discussions on Internet related public policy issues from a general perspective, while keeping all stakeholders involved. This includes having a harmonized and consistent approach when covering IG issues. To further this aim, the IGF adheres to the generally used UN principle of discouraging ad hominem attacks. As such, participants should refrain from singling out individual persons, companies, countries or entities during their interventions and throughout the general

discussions and debates in main sessions, workshops and other events at IGF meetings. Concrete examples can be highlighted in the overall coverage of IG issues as long as it is not done in a blatantly inflammatory or potentially libelous way. Singling out one entity without broader context could not only discourage further participation of this entity, but endanger inclusive and productive discussion at the IGF.

Free Trade Agreement: A free-trade area is the region encompassing a trade bloc whose member countries have signed a free-trade agreement (FTA). Such agreements involve cooperation between at least two countries to reduce trade barriers – import quotas and tariffs – and to increase trade of goods and services with each other.

The degree of economic integration can be categorized into seven stages:

- Preferential trading area
- Free trade area
- Customs union
- Common market
- Economic union
- Economic and monetary union
- Complete economic integration

3. Shifting goal posts: Demonetisation has totally failed to curb black money

Context: demonetisation was failure because RBI's annual report showed that 98.96% of the demonetised currency had returned to the central bank.

Aims & Objectives:

- November 8, 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced to the nation that ₹500 and ₹1,000 currency notes would cease to be legal tender.
- It was aimed at breaking the grip of corruption and black money
- The notes hoarded by anti-national and anti-social elements will become just worthless pieces of paper.
- Sizeable part of the ₹15.44 lakh crore of the two high-value banknotes would remain in the hands of the holders.
- This demonetised money would not be tendered back into the banking system due to fear of punitive government action

Result:

- RBI's annual report, showed that as much as 98.96% of the demonetised currency had returned to the central bank as of June 30
- RBI circular setting a ₹5,000 limit on deposits of withdrawn notes unless done under the government's amnesty scheme, was a measure intended to dissuade bank customers from returning the demonetised currency.
- Finance Minister to now claim that the "confiscation of money" had not been an objective, and the government had expected all the SBNs [specified bank notes] to come back to the banking system to become effectively usable currency
- Despite the large amounts that were deposited in banks post-demonetisation, it is doubtful whether the Income Tax authorities have the necessary resources to track down and penalise the corrupt.

Demonetisation –Some benefits

- Fostering greater compliance with the tax laws
- Reducing the economy's reliance on cash through increased adoption of digital payments.
- But such gains could have been achieved by other and less self-defeating ways.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Volcanic carbon dioxide drove ancient global warming: study

In news:

Study revelations:

- Extreme global warming event **56 million years ago** was driven by massive carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from volcanoes, during the formation of the North Atlantic Ocean.

- **Palaeocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum (PETM)** was associated with a geologically rapid doubling of atmospheric CO₂ in less than 25 thousand years — with **volcanoes squarely to blame**.
- **Palaeocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum (PETM) event:** is the most rapid and extreme natural global warming event of the last 66 million years. It lasted for around 150 thousand years and global temperatures increased by at least five degrees Celsius. PETM roughly coincided with the formation of massive ‘flood basalts’ — large stretches of ocean floor coated in lava, resulting from a series of huge eruptions.
- **Believed till now:** PETM event was caused by the injection of carbon into the ocean and atmosphere; the ultimate trigger, the source of this carbon, and the total amount released, have up to now all remained elusive.

Land drifts:

- Greenland first started separating from north-western Europe, thereby creating the North Atlantic Ocean.
- There was a total input of more than **10,000 petagrammes of carbon** from a predominantly volcanic source.
- This is a vast amount of carbon — some 30 times larger than all the fossil fuels burned to date and equivalent to all current conventional and unconventional fossil fuel reserves.

2. Marine diversity in Antarctica under threat

In news:

- **New research findings :** An increase of just 1-2 degrees Celsius in shallow waters on the **West Antarctic Peninsula** has radically reduced marine diversity.
- In an area like Australia, differences in ocean temperatures are likely to change around 10-20 degrees throughout the year; however, species in Antarctica have evolved in an environment where there is very little variation in temperature. It's certainly a concern, when the temperature changes just by one or two degree Celsius here in the Antarctic region.

Nothing here for Today!!!

NATIONAL PARKS/SANCTURIES/BIOSPHERE RESERVES:

1. Pin Valley National Park

- **Location:** Lahaul and Spiti district, in the state of Himachal Pradesh, in far Northern India.
- **Features:** With its snow laden unexplored higher reaches and slopes, the Park forms a natural habitat for a number of endangered animals including the snow leopard and Siberian ibex.

2. Simbalbara National Park

Location: Himachal Pradesh, India

IUCN Red List:

Spoon-billed sandpiper

IUCN Classification : Critically endangered

Habitat and distribution : breeds in north-eastern Russia and winters in Southeast Asia. The spoon-billed sandpiper’s breeding habitat is sea coasts and adjacent hinterland on the Chukchi Peninsula and southwards along the isthmus of the Kamchatka peninsula. It migrates down the Pacific coast through Japan, North Korea, South Korea and China, to its main wintering grounds in South and South-East Asia, where it has been recorded from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore.

Siberian crane

IUCN Classification : Critically endangered

Habitat and distribution : The western area in the river basins of the Ob, Konda and Sossva and to the east a much larger population in Yakutia between the Yana and the Alazeya rivers. The western population winters in Iran and some individuals formerly wintered in India south to Nagpur and east to Bihar. The eastern populations winter mainly in the Poyang Lake area in China

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. In 2013, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court upheld Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which discriminates against a section of individuals in society on the basis of their sexual orientation, so is it against the essence of Article 15 of the constitution? Examine.
2. Is Chinese plan of “BRICS PLUS” a major challenge to India? Discuss.

GS Paper IV

Topic: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Question 1.

As a DM of a home district of serving Chief Minister, you find out that a huge land scam has taken place in which close relatives of the Chief Minister are involved. The scam which you have unearthed has caused lots of financial loss to the state's exchequer. You have been recently married to a daughter of an MLA who is known as staunch political enemy of the CM.

While you are investigating the matter for further proofs, before you make this issue public, the CM comes to know about this. He threatens you with dire consequences if you do not close the file and bury the matter silently. He threatens you with false criminal cases and CBI investigation in case you do not budge. Unfortunately, a case is pending against you regarding misuse of treasury funds, in which you haven't done anything wrong. This case can be reopened and used against you. However, if you stop investigation, he has assured you that you will be given a plum post in the capital.

Identify which course of action are available to you. Examine each action's merits and demerits. Finally, explain which course of action would you follow and why?

Answer:

In this situation, the following options are available:

1. Acting as per the directions of the CM and close the file in return for the plum job and to avoid investigation
2. Carry on with the investigation to find substantiate proofs to the issue which caused loss to the exchequer.
Upholding the law and constitution to which i owe my allegiance.
3. Use my father-in-law's position to expose the current CM and share the gain of this expose with my father-in-law.
4. Report the matter in media anonymously.

Option 1

Merits:

1. Plum post will be rewarded 2. Will be freed from the threat of CM and career will be safe

Demerits:

1. Loss to the state exchequer and ultimate sufferer would be public
2. Subversion of constitutionally mandated duty for the personal benefit
3. public image and trust will be lost

Option 2

Merits:

1. upholding personal integrity,objectivity, honesty, spirit of civil service
2. unearthing such act would cause deleterious effect on others who may be indulged in similar other activities
3. bringing such issue before the public will improve trust and confidence between state machinery and public.
4. Send a strong message to the political class that honest civil servant would not succumb to their pressure tactics.

Demerits:

1. Lot of personal hardship caused in the process including false CBI inquiry.
2. Putting life and family in jeopardy.

Course of action to be followed:

I would choose option 2. Investigation would be carried out as usual. Meanwhile

CM should be told politely but firmly that I am performing my constitutionally mandated duties and I have no option to Go.

There is a possibility that CM's party workers would spread message that MLA is playing vendetta politics through his in-law. So sound proofs before the public are necessary to avoid any backfire.

If CM, in the meanwhile starts any CBI investigation on my any past acts, I would welcome that as I have not done anything wrong. Even Government suspends, I would cooperate with the enquiry to prove my innocence. If necessary I would move to court for protection against harassment.

But in no case, I would close the file to avoid any personal hardship to my career and my family as it would amount to compromising on my values and ethics which civil service holds.

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Category: POLITY

1. [Haryana targets 2 lakh jobs for youth under 'Saksham Yojana'](#)

In news:

- The Haryana State government has set a target to provide employment to two lakh youth in the State under the '**Saksham Yojana**' .
- Officials to recruit youth under the Yojana for various departments where there was shortage of employees.
- **Other areas of opportunity:**
 - The youth should also be provided job opportunities in industrial units.
 - There was a new plan to establish a trauma centre at every 60 km to provide instant medical facilities to those injured in road accidents on national highways.

Basic Information

'Saksham Yojana':

- **Target group:** Educated unemployed youth.
- Under this scheme Rs.9000 per month will be offered for working 100hours a month. It is mandatory to register online to start taking the benefits.
- **Eligible criteria**

- Applicant should be domicile of Haryana
- Applicant should be registered in the Employment Exchange
- Applicant should be post graduate
- Age: between 21 to 35years
- Annual family income: less than Rs. 3 lakh per annum.
- The benefit of the scheme will be given for max of 3 years
- Applicant should register online for this scheme

2. Bengal mulling English medium sections in government schools

In news:

- The West Bengal government is considering a proposal to introduce separate **English medium sections** at the **primary level to class VIII** in government-run schools.
- **Why such a move?**
Introducing separate English medium sections in **government-run schools** had become all the more important as such schools were lagging behind private English medium schools.

3. To clear the path ahead

Context

- For the first time in Indian history **talaq-e-bid'awas** specifically debated and set aside by the Supreme Court
- Latest ruling completely and unconditionally invalidates **talaq-e-bid'** and renders it bad in law.
- The **Koranic procedure** of talaq is the only way by which a Muslim husband will be able to divorce his wife from now on

Talaq-e-bidat

- Talaq-e-bidat has allowed men to pronounce talaq thrice in one sitting, sometimes scrawled in a written talaqnama, or even by phone or text message.
- Thereafter, even if the man himself perceives his decision to have been hasty in hindsight, the divorce remains irrevocable

The majority judgment

- Talaq-e-bid'a cannot be excluded from the definition of "talaq" mentioned in Section 2 of the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937.
- As the Shariat Act was a law made before the Constitution came in force, it would fall within the expression "laws in force" in Article 13(3)(b), and would be hit by Article 13(1) if found to be inconsistent with Part III of the Constitution, to the extent of the inconsistency.
- The two judges chose not to examine if the Narasu Appa Maliruling. This judgment had held that personal laws cannot be tested against the provisions of Part III of the Constitution.
- Biggest achievement was harmonisation of constitutional equality with Koranic egalitarianism.
- This was done by endorsing the Koranic law of talaq mentioned in Shamim Ara and declaring talaq-e-bid'a to be "manifestly arbitrary" and violative of Article 14
- Because it allows a Muslim man to break the marriage "capriciously and whimsically" without attempting to save it through reconciliation.
- On these grounds, Section 2 of the 1937 Act was struck down as being void to the extent that it recognises and enforces instant talaq.
- Talaq-e-bid'a falls outside the Shariah because it goes against its primary source, the Koran

The minority opinion

- Declared talaq-e-bid'a to be an essential part of the Hanafi faith and gave it protection under Article 25(1).
- Given weight to the overwhelming evidence in the Koran and authentic hadeeses against instant talaq they could have avoided the problematic invocation of Article 142 to direct the state to enact an "appropriate legislation" on talaq-e-bid'a.
- Article 13(2) clearly states that the "State shall not make any law which takes away or abridges the rights conferred by this Part and any law made in contravention of this clause shall, to the extent of the contravention, be void."

- The AIMPLB cited just one report from Sihah Sitta in which instant talaq is mentioned. But this hadees does not show any Prophetic support for talaq-e-bid'a.
- It clearly states that the man who pronounced “triple talaq” did so “without the Prophet’s command.

Implications of verdict

- Biggest achievement for Muslim women, that talaq-e-bid'ain any of his manifestations will not dissolve the marriage.
- This renders redundant not just halala but the incorporation of a plitudinous advisory against instant talaq in the **nikahnama**
- There is also scope now to amend the 1937 Act, to exclude talaq-e-bid'a from the definition of the word “talaq” mentioned in Section 2, and make the Koranic procedure of talaq gender-neutral.
- This judgment will also encourage Muslim intellectuals to establish mediation centres across India under **the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)** mechanism to help Muslim couples amicably resolve their marital disputes

4. [Madras HC issues notice to Union law secretary on PIL against mandatory death penalty](#)

In news:

- The Madras High Court has issued notice to the Union law secretary and the secretary of the social justice and empowerment ministry on a PIL, urging for a section of the **SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities Act)**, providing for a “**mandatory death penalty**”, to be declared as null and void.
- The petitioner, alleged that section 3(2)(I) of the said act, providing for the punishment, was **violative of the Constitution**.
- Section provided for the punishment if any person, not being a member of the Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe community, gave or fabricated false evidence, with an intention to cause a member of the SC/ST community to be convicted for an offence, resulting in the imposition of capital punishment.
- The section added that if such a person was executed on account of the false evidence, the person responsible for the same should also be punished with death
- A mandatory death punishment had been held to be opposed to human dignity and struck down by constitutional courts across the world

Category: ECONOMICS

1. [PM tells tax authorities to bring all traders in GST net](#)

In news:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's directive to tax officials: make every effort to bring all traders, including smaller businesses with turnover of less than ₹20 lakh, into the Goods and Services Tax (GST) net.
- Currently, traders with less than ₹20 lakh annual turnover have to register under GST only if they are supplying goods to other States.
- PM said he was dismayed at the huge pendency of tax-related cases where huge sums of money that could have been used for the welfare of the poor were locked up.
- He also asked the officers to use data analytical tools to pro-actively track and determine undeclared income and wealth
- Mooting a time-bound solution for ‘tax raised and not realised,’ the PM said that human interface must be kept to a minimum in the tax administration’s dealings by pushing “e-assessment” and anonymity of proceedings using technology.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. [Adani, SAAB tie up to build fighter jets](#)

Collaboration with SAAB

- The Adani group has announced a collaboration with Swedish defence major SAAB to manufacture Gripen fighter jets in India, if selected
- However, the partnership would be possible if Adani being shortlisted in the evaluation process
- Why this collaboration: Indian Government is going to issue a multibillion dollar tender for over a 100 single

engine fighter jets

Particulars of the Tender

- IAF is expected to begin the process in the next few months for a single engine fighter aircraft to replace the Russian Mig-21s and Mig-27s in service
- The procurement would be under the recently promulgated Strategic Partnership (SP) model of the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP)
- The deal for 100 plus fighter aircraft is estimated to be worth over Rs. 60,000 crore

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

2. [**Novel compounds destroy biofilm-forming bacteria**](#)

In news:

- Scientists at the **Bengaluru-based Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR)** , have developed **two new molecules** capable of **destroying bio-film forming bacteria** .
- The molecules performed better than conventional antibiotics in killing the bacteria during the dormant phase
- When used in combination with existing antibiotics, the molecules reduced the microbial burden in the case of burns and surgical wounds.
- **What are Bio-films?**
Biofilms are communities of microorganisms that attach to each other and to surfaces and are able to act as barriers to antibiotics

Nothing here for Today!!!

NATIONAL PARKS/SANCTURIES/BIOSPHERE RESERVES:

Kali Tiger Reserve

Location: Kali Tiger Reserve is a protected area and tiger reserve. It is located in Uttara Kannada district, in Karnataka, India.

Features:

- The park is a habitat of Bengal tigers, black panthers and Indian elephants, amongst other distinctive fauna.
- The Kali River flows through the tiger reserve and is the lifeline of the ecosystem and hence the name. The Tiger reserve is spread over an area of 1300 square kilometers.

Bandipur National Park

Location: Bandipur National Park established in 1974 as a tiger reserve under Project Tiger, is a national park located in the **south Indian state of Karnataka**. Bandipur is located in Gundlupet taluk of Chamarajanagar district

Features:

- Bandipur is known for its wildlife and has many types of biomes, but dry deciduous forest is dominant.
- The park spans an area of 874 square kilometers (337 sq mi), protecting several species of India's endangered wildlife.
- Together with the adjoining Nagarhole National Park, Mudumalai National Park and Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, it is part of the **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve** making it the largest protected area in southern India and largest habitat of wild elephants in south Asia.

IUCN Red List:

Himalayan quail

- **Scientific name:** Ophrysia superciliosa
- **Habitat:** The Himalayan quail or mountain quail is a medium-sized quail belonging to the pheasant family. This species was known from only 2 locations (and 12 specimens) in the western Himalayas in Uttarakhand, north-west India. The last verifiable record was in 1876 near the hill station of Mussoorie.
- **IUCN Classification :** Critically endangered.

Jerdon's courser

- **Scientific name:** Rhinoptilus bitorquatus
- **Habitat:** Jerdon's courser is a nocturnal bird belonging to the pratincole and courser family Glareolidae endemic to India. This courser is a restricted-range endemic found locally in India in the Eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh. It is currently known only from the Sri Lankamalleswara Wildlife Sanctuary, where it inhabits sparse scrub forest with patches of bare ground.
- **IUCN Classification:** Critically endangered

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Discuss each adjective attached to the word 'Republic' in the 'Preamble'. Are they defendable in the present circumstances?

GS Paper III

1. The frequency of urban floods due to high intensity rainfall is increasing over the years. Discussing the reasons for urban floods. highlight the mechanisms for preparedness to reduce the risk during such events.
2. "Terrorism is emerging as a competitive industry over the last few decades." Analyse the above statement.

Topic: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Question 1.

Anand is the inspector in charge of Rampur Police station. The police station building is in dire need of repairs, but hasn't received any grants for years. One day, a cyclone hits a nearby area, damaging most of the houses and shops. Although Anand's police station gets partially damaged, but most of the building remain intact. Government sends a disaster assessment team to ascertain the level of damage and pay relief money. The DSP Mr. Prem, orders Anand to do following:

Hire some laborers and destroy the remaining parts of your police station building. When disaster assessment team comes, you tell them building collapsed by the cyclone, and ask them to give priority in funding after all police stations is one of the most important public offices in a town.

Should Anand obey his boss's order?

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Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. National grid to curb water deficit on Gadkari's agenda

In news:

- India is planning to have a water grid with the aim of ensuring no area of the country faces any water deficit.
- The concept of water grid in India mainly centres around the **existing inter-linking of rivers (ILR) plan** which was conceived in order to **transfer water from surplus zones to deficit zones via inter-connected rivers**.
- **Present focus:** linking three ILR projects – **Ken-Betwa link (Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh), Par-Tapi-Narmada and Damanganga-Pinjal links (Gujarat and Maharashtra)**.

Category: POLITY

1. SC poses to online giants on offensive content

In news:

- The Supreme Court has asked Google, Microsoft, Facebook and WhatsApp to provide the number of complaints received from India of any objectionable material posted online on their sites between the period of January 1, 2016 and August 31, 2017.
- **Why?** The court wanted to know whether the online giants had taken any action on the complaints received from India on materials like videos or pictures of child pornography, rape and gangrape, uploaded on their sites.
- Supreme Court further asked **the Ministry of Home Affairs** to respond to whether any prosecutions were initiated under the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act of 2012**. The court wanted to know the number of prosecutions initiated under Sections 19 and 21 of the Act between January 1, 2016 to August 31, 2017.

Basic Information

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Act 2012

- The Act seeks to protect children from offences such as sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography. India is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child since 1992. The parties to the Convention are required to take measures to prevent children from being coerced into any unlawful sexual activity.
- Any person below the age of 18 years is defined as a “child”. The Act seeks to penalise any person who commits offences such as “sexual harassment”, “sexual assault”, “penetrative sexual assault”, and “aggravated penetrative sexual assault”.
- A person commits “sexual harassment” if he uses words or shows body parts to a child with sexual intent, shows pornography to a child or threatens to depict a child involved in sexual act through the media. The penalty is imprisonment for upto three years and a fine.
- A person commits “penetrative sexual assault” if he penetrates his penis into the vagina, mouth, urethra or anus of a child or makes a child do the same or inserts any other object into the child’s body or applies his mouth to a child’s body parts. If however the child is between 16 and 18 years, it shall be considered whether consent for the act was taken against his will or was taken by drugs, impersonation, fraud, undue influence and when the child was sleeping or unconscious. The penalty is imprisonment between seven years and life and a fine.
- The Act penalises “aggravated penetrative sexual assault.” Such an offence is committed when a police officer, a member of the armed forces or a public servant commits penetrative sexual assault on a child. It also includes gang penetrative sexual assault and assault using deadly weapons, fire or corrosive substance. The Act also covers assault by staff of private hospital and staff of an educational institution if the child is in that institution.
- Penetrative sexual assault shall be considered aggravated if it injures the sexual organs of the child or takes place during communal violence or the child becomes pregnant or gets any other threatening disease or is below 12 years. It also covers cases where the offender is a relative of the child through blood or adoption or marriage or foster care or is living in the same household.
- A person commits “sexual assault” if he touches the vagina, penis, anus or breast of a child with sexual

intent without penetration. If the child is between 16 and 18 years, it shall be considered whether the consent was taken against the child's will or by threat or deceit. The penalty is imprisonment between three to five years and a fine.

- The offence of "aggravated sexual assault" is committed under similar conditions as for "aggravated penetrative sexual assault". The penalty for the offence is
- Imprisonment between five to seven years and a fine.
- A person shall be guilty of using a child for pornographic purposes if he uses a child in any form of media for the purpose of sexual gratification through representation of sexual organs of a child or using a child in sexual acts or other types of obscene representation. The penalty is rigorous imprisonment for upto five years and a fine. On
- subsequent convictions, the term of imprisonment is upto 7 years and fine.
- The Act also includes penalties for storage of pornographic material and abetment of an offence.
- An offence committed under this Act shall be reported to either the local police or the Special Juvenile Police Unit who has to report the matter to the Special Court within 24 hours. The police also have to make special arrangement for the care of the child. In case a person fails to report a case, he shall be penalised. Also, the Act includes penalties for making false complaints.
- Each district shall designate a Sessions Court to be a Special Court. It shall be established by the state government in consultation with the Chief Justice of the High Court. The state government shall appoint a Special Public Prosecutor for every Special Court. The Court shall, as far as possible, complete the trial within one year.
- The trial shall be held in camera and in the presence of the child's parents or any person trusted by the child. The guardian of the child has the right to take assistance from a legal counsel of his choice, subject to the provisions of Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.
- If an offence has been committed by a child, it shall be dealt with under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000.

2. It's lonely on the ground

Context:

- In April, the government of India proposed **amendments to the RTI Act**
- The most controversial amendment pertained to **Rule 12**.

Amendment to Rule 12 and controversy:

- It would allow the **withdrawal of an application** in case of the applicant's death, making the job of those who file RTIs even more risky.
- The RTI activists are already exposed to violence, all the more so as the Whistle Blowers Protection Act (2011) is not implemented.
- 69 activists have been killed, according to the National Campaign for People's Right to Information

Violence against RTI Activists

- The states which have largest number of casualties are rich states such as **Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka**
- Rich states are the most dangerous ones for RTI activists because they fight against the appropriation of public goods by predatory and vested interests, which are comparatively stronger in affluent provinces.
- Problems pertaining to land, illegal construction and property disputes are the root cause of most of the cases.
- Then come conflicts due to government schemes (including MGNREGA), either because those who should have benefitted from them have not, or because of embezzlement at the local level.
- The third category that is also well represented is made of illegal mining, including the sand mafia's activities.
- The RTI activists fight for their rights and/or those of others, but they are hardly protected by the police and judiciary.

RTI Activists – Importance

- RTI applications cover a wide range of issues and even if no action is taken, the media often publicize the cases and give bad publicity to the offending bureaucrats, industrialists or politicians.
- The RTI activists not only expose corrupt practices and crimes, but also provide alternative leadership at the local level.
- Some of them have become community mobilisers and have been elected sarpanch.
- The RTI Act has offered space to young Dalits, Adivasis and members of the minorities who would have been helpless otherwise.
- The role of “RTI clinics”, often in the form of itinerant vans and helplines, has been key.

Challenges faced by RTI Activists:

- **Information Commissions** are burdened with huge pendencies
- The number of applications filed could easily decrease: If the frequently asked questions were identified and proactively disclose information for those questions
- But delays and backlogs are also due to the fact that the job of Information Commissioner has become a post-retirement sinecure for former bureaucrats who do not necessarily feel the urge of idealism.
- The attitude of the government of India is another big challenge. Some of its agencies refuse to disclose the required information.
- In PMO, the rejection rate is very high. The Commission does not have enough power for getting responses to its questions
- It does not have the mechanisms for following up on whether its orders have been complied with.
- The Information Officers do not necessarily get the right training
- Universities could include the RTI Act in their curriculum and offer not only degrees, but also continuing training for helping this major achievement to remain relevant.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. BRICS declares Lashkar, Jaish as global terror groups

Context:

- Ninth annual BRICS summit.
- Venue: Xiamen, China.

In news:

- **Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) declared as terror organization:** The Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) grouping unequivocally named Pakistan-based groups — Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) — as terror organizations.
- **Minutes of the joint communiqué released at the BRICS summit:**
 - Expressed concern about the regional security situation.
 - Listed the Taliban, IS/Daesh, Al-Qaeda and its affiliates, including the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Haqqani network, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, TTP and Hizb-ut-Tahrir as sources of violence.
 - Expressed strong condemnation of “all terrorist attacks worldwide,”
- **Declaration and its impact on India-China ties:**
 - **Beijing’s earlier position:** repeatedly asked for a “technical hold” in designating the head of the Pakistan-based JeM as an international terrorist in the United Nations Security Council 1267 committee.
 - **9th BRICS summit declaration:** underscores a shift in China’s position, in mending its ties with India.
- **Meet on radicalization:**
 - India is now planning to hold a global conference on countering radicalization.

- India in the context of the Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean) and the BRICS offered to organise a global conference on countering radicalisation.

2. India pitches for a credit rating agency

In news:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi strongly pitched for the setting up of a **BRICS credit rating agency** to **counter western rating institutions** and cater to the financial needs of sovereign and corporate entities of developing nations.
- **Key Fact:** western rating institutions hold over 90% of the sovereign ratings market.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Don't know how much black money was wiped out by demonetisation: RBI

In news:

- The RBI has told a **parliamentary panel** that it has “no information” on how much **black money** has been extinguished as a result of demonetisation of **500/1,000 notes** or **about unaccounted cash** legitimised through exchange of currency post note ban.
- **Key estimate:** about Rs 15,280 crore in junked notes has come back

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Top babus given secure mobiles

Context:

- Concerns over security of handsets.
- The **Computer Emergency Response System- India (CERT-IN)**, the cyber security arm of the government, sought details of the security process followed by over 30 handset firms selling mobile phones in the country.



In news:

- **Secure communication** : Government has given nearly 500 customised **Google Pixel 1** phones with Reliance Jio SIM cards to senior bureaucrats for secure communication.
- The phones, which run on Android OS, have a pre-stored directory that contains the number of all officials above the rank of joint secretary.
- **RAX lines** : The government already uses RAX, a fixed landline secure communication network. The numbers of RAX lines were increased from 1,300 to 5,000.
- **CERT-In recommendations:** security measures must be developed and applied to smart phones from security in multiple layers of hardware/ firmware/ software to the dissemination of information to users.
- **Future move:** The Ministry of Electronics and IT is working on a framework to secure email as well, which are used by government officials.
- **Kryptowire raised the alarm bell:**
 - Kryptowire is a security firm.

- It has raised concerns over a Chinese firm transmitting phones, including contacts and text, to servers in China.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Poor sleep? You may be at ADHD risk

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD):

- **Symptoms:**
 - Lack of regular circadian sleep
 - Struggling to concentrate
 - Having too much energy and being unable to control behavior.
 - ADHD sufferers often show greater alertness in the evening, which is the opposite of what is found in the general population.
- **Fact:** 75% of children and adults suffer from ADHD.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. In fact: Hard to ban, harder to dispose

Context:

- National Green Tribunal called for a **complete ban on “plastic carry bags”** smaller than 50 microns in Delhi’s markets.
- Maximum usage of plastic bags was to carry vegetables, fruit, meat and fish because they were convenient, easily available and cost-effective.

Problems associated with plastic bags:

- Serious environmental degradation
- Harm to public health, animals in the city
- Ability to choke up drains and sewer lines, causing floods during the rainy season.
- Plastic was inherently not a public health hazard, but the inability to collect plastic waste leads to health hazards

Government Initiative to clean up the menace:

- In 2016, the government notified **Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016**, which regulate manufacture, sale, distribution and use of plastic carry bags

Disposal problem

- Within a fortnight after the NGT ban, authorities in Delhi had seized 9,000 kg of plastic carry bags but have since struggled to find effective ways to dispose of it.

Effective disposal:

- **Himachal Pradesh**, the first state in the country to impose a ban on the use of plastic bags in 2003, effectively managed the seized plastic bags.
- The state sought the help of rag pickers to collect the plastic bags and mixed it with other materials and then used it for road construction.
- The plastic waste of Shimla and Chandigarh were reportedly processed together and the refuse drive fuel (RDF) is sent to power plants in Patiala and Nakodar in Punjab.
- The confiscated bags should be returned to the manufacturers or mixed with other materials and recycled.

- Delhi has waste-to-energy plants, it could also be sent there

Way forwards:

- With last month's order, the NGT was reiterating an earlier ban on use of disposable plastic in Delhi from January 1, 2017.
- Ban driven as a government programme will head nowhere. It must be made as a '**people's movement**'.
- **Best example:** In 2016, Kannur district in Kerala launched a campaign with the slogan 'Nalla Nadu, Nalla Mannu' — good village, good soil — which culminated in a complete ban on plastic carry bags five months later
- Just imposing a ban is not enough. We have to first give users alternatives to plastic bags, then impose the ban and only after that penalise violators with fines.
- There has to be at least six months of aggressive campaigning before such a ban is imposed.
- This has also been the strategy in countries like Kenya and Rwanda.
- Banning plastic should be targeted towards behaviour change

2. In Nicaragua, a fight to save endangered tapirs



In news:

- **Tapir:** The largest land mammals in Central America, the brown, pig-like animals with sloping snouts.
- **International Union for Conservation of Nature classification:** considered at risk of **extinction** and is the "**most threatened**" quadruped in Nicaragua.
- **Threats:** Human encroachment and climate change have decimated the woodland habitat of the Baird's tapir, one of five species left in the world, and, along with human and feline predators, have helped wipe out 16 other tapir species.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. "RTI Act needs to be protected against attempts to dilute it." Discuss it in the backdrop of proposed amendment pertained to Rule 12 of the RTI.

GS Paper III

1. Women empowerment in India needs gender budgeting. What are the requirements and status of gender budgeting in the Indian context?

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Category: POLITY

1. Government drops plan to protect transgender labour rights

In news:

- The Union government has dropped plans to **recognise transgender** persons as the '**third gender**' in the country's labour law framework.
- The Wages Code Bill was drafted under an exercise to rationalise the country's 44 labour laws into four codes covering all the regulations pertaining to wages, industrial relations, social security and safety, and health and working conditions.

Background:

- In 2014, the Supreme Court had for the first time recognised transgender persons as the ‘third gender’ and asked the Centre and the States to give them **equal opportunities in education and employment**.

Objections raised:

- **Labour Ministry’s proposal:** proposed inserting clauses for recognising the rights of transgender workers in all the four labour codes.
- **Law Ministry’s objection:** the Law Ministry objected, citing the **General Clauses Act of 1897**, according to which ‘transgenders’ fall within the definition of ‘person’. It was then decided that there was no need to add a separate clause for them.

Transgender rights activist opinion:

- Dropping the separate clauses protecting transgender persons is a hypocritical move by the Union government, as it is well known that we face discrimination at the workplace.
- The dignity of our body needs to be protected at the workplace as well, with basic facilities such as restrooms and equal wages,”

Factories Act and Government proposal:

Proposal:

- The government’s proposed amendments to the Factories Act, 1948 in 2015 had also proposed special protections for transgender workers.
- **Proposal:** “Every transgender worker shall have equal right to work opportunities in a factory. The state government may make rules providing to secure the rights of transgender workers to ensure respect for inherent dignity, non-discrimination, full and effective participation and inclusion in society, respect for difference and acceptance of transgender persons as part of human diversity and humanity.”.

Dropped: in the case of the Factories Act, too, the clause pertaining to transgenders has been dropped in the latest draft amendments.

Key Satatistics:

- **Fifth Annual Employment-Unemployment Survey** conducted by the **Labour Bureau in 2015-16**: 48% of transgender were either working or were available for work, as against 23.7% females, and 75% males.

2. India a major stakeholder in global peace, says Vice-President

In news:

- 78th session of the International Institute of Law
- **Location:** Nalsar University of Law, Hyderabad.
- **Objective:** The week-long session would create greater awareness on the importance of the international law and encourage young lawyers and students to develop an aptitude for it.
- **Note:** first time, India is hosting this global legal meeting.

Topic for discussions:

- Judicial review of the decisions of the U.N. Security Council
- The legal issues concerning international migration
- Provisional measures in connection with the private international law and
- International investment disputes.

Basic Information:

- The International Institute of Law or Institute De Droit International was founded in 1873 in the Ghent Town Hall in Belgium by 11 international lawyers.
- It was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1904 for its efforts to promote settlement of disputes among States through peaceful means.
- The institute selects 132 lawyers from different countries to act independently towards international legal measures.

Category: BILATERAL ISSUES

1. N. Korea tests ‘hydrogen’ bomb, sparks outrage

In news:

- **North Korea:** tested a ‘hydrogen’ bomb .This bomb can be mounted on a missile, declaring its **biggest-ever nuclear detonation a “perfect success.”**
- **S. President Donald Trump response:** termed it as a very dangerous act.
- **China an ally of N. Korea, response:** expressed sharp disapproval and began emergency monitoring for radiation at its border with the North.
- **Japan’s response:** Prime Minister Shinzo Abe described it as “absolutely unacceptable”
- **Russia’s Foreign Ministry** expressed the “strongest condemnation”.
- **Korea:** President Moon Jae-in called for new United Nations sanctions to “completely isolate North Korea”, and said the South would discuss deploying “the strongest strategic assets of the U.S. military.”

Basic Information:

Difference between a Hydrogen bomb and Atom bomb:

- The hydrogen bomb, also called a thermonuclear bomb, uses fusion – or atomic nuclei coming together – to produce explosive energy. Stars also produce energy through Atomic fusion.
- Atomic bombs rely on fission, or atom-splitting, just as nuclear power plants do.
- The technology of the hydrogen bomb is more sophisticated, and once attained, it is a greater threat. It can also be made small enough to fit on a head of an ICBM.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Banks’ cuppa to brew with mergers

Issues with Bank Merger:

- Various governments has highlighted the need for large-sized banks to fund the huge

infrastructure requirements of the country as well as compete with global lenders

- **But a serious question arises:** ‘Which chief executive will propose to merge his bank with another and lose his job?’

Move by the current government

- Present government has no intention to make it ‘voluntary’ for the board of a bank to decide on a merger
- It is evident from the fact that government has wrote letters to banks to kick start the process of mergers and get their respective boards’ approval
- This may be the first time in recent history that an official communication has been made by the government to the banks asking them to act on mergers

Alternative Mechanism

- The government has also set up an ‘Alternative Mechanism’
- It would comprise a ministerial group, to oversee proposals for mergers among banks
- A framework had been conceived in which a bank’s board would first clear the decision to merge
- And then send the proposal to the ‘Alternative Mechanism’ for its in-principle approval
- After the in-principle approval comes through, the bank will take steps in accordance with law and SEBI’s requirements
- The final scheme will be notified by the government in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

No need of CCI permission, now

- Some hurdles have been removed to expedite the process
- For example, approval requirement from the Competition Commission of India(CCI) has been done away with

Post Merger Issues

- The merger would create a lot of complexities in terms of branch rationalisation and reduction in human resources productivity for the merged entity
- At present, we’ve an example of the merger of SBI with associate banks
- Bhartiya Mahila Bank; post merger, the merged entity fundamentals have weakened significantly
- Also, after its merger, SBI has seen NPAs rising significantly, from Rs. 1.01 lakh crore (6.94%) to Rs. 1.88 lakh crore (9.97%)

2. Investing in the ecosystem

Context: the natural capital and how it can maximize the benefits of economic growth and development.

Natural Capital:

- Natural capital can be defined as the world’s stocks of natural assets which include geology, soil, air, water and all living things

- It is from this natural capital that humans derive a wide range of services, often called ecosystem services, which make human life possible

Value of the Indian Natural Capital:

- With 11% of the world's floral and faunal species, India is one of the 17 most ecologically diverse countries
- India is blessed with every major ecosystem, these biomes directly contribute billions of dollars to the Indian economy, annually
- The financial value of India's forests, for example, which encompass economic services such as timber and fuel wood, and ecological services such as carbon sequestration, is estimated to be \$1.7 trillion

Boundaries:

- Scientists have identified nine earth system processes to have boundaries
- These boundaries mark the safe zones, beyond which there is a risk of 'irreversible and abrupt environmental change'
- Four of these boundaries have now been crossed

(1) climate change

(2) loss of biosphere integrity

(3) land system change

(4) biogeochemical cycles, such as phosphorus and nitrogen cycles

- This means that human activity has already altered the balance of a few delicate equilibriums
- The effects of these alterations are reflected by changing weather patterns, accelerated extinction events for both flora and fauna, and global warming
- This stresses the need for a comprehensive evaluation system that takes these undesirable side-effects of economic activities into account

Way forward

- Unlike the economic value of goods and services, the intangible nature of natural assets is mostly invisible and hence remains unaccounted for
- While it may be difficult to put a price tag on nature, unchecked exploitation of scarce natural resources and an inadequate response to India's unique climate challenges can be a very costly mistake
- Integrating natural capital assessment and valuation into our economic system is critical to usher in a truly sustainable future for India

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. 'Give proof of incentivising farmers'

Context:

NGT's earlier directives:

- The National Green tribunal had earlier rapped the four northern States- **Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan** , for not submitting action plans to prevent pollution emanating from crop burning after the harvest season.
- It had directed the governments of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan to show how the field staff of the departments concerned and the State pollution control boards were going to control pollution caused by crop residue burning.
- **Penalty** : The NGT had earlier fixed the environment penalty amounts per incident of crop burning to be paid by **small land owners** having less than two acres of land at Rs. **2,500** , **medium land owners** holding over two acres and less than five acres at **5,000** and those **owning over five acres** at Rs. **15,000** .
- **Punitive action:** It had also directed the State governments to take coercive and punitive action against persistent defaulters and asked them to withdraw the assistance provided to such farmers.

In news:

- The National Green Tribunal has directed the governments of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan to submit before it specific cases of small farmers being given incentives to desist them from burning crop residue in a bid to prevent air pollution.

2. Air pollution throws shade on India's solar success

In news:

- **Expert opinion:** Air pollution is diminishing India's capacity to harness power from the sun.
- **New study by Scientists:** S. and Indian scientists measured how man-made particles floating in the air and deposited as grime on solar panels combined to seriously impair sunlight from converting to energy.
- **Findings:**
- Sand and dust that sickens millions across India every year is also sapping solar power generation by more than 25 percent.
- This interference causes steep drops in power generation
- At present levels in India, it could amount to roughly 3,900 MW of lost energy — six times the capacity of its largest solar farm, a gigantic field of 2.5 million panels.

Nothing here for Today!!!

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. “Prescription of generic drugs would bring down out of pocket expenditure.” Evaluate? What other steps need to be taken in order to bring down out of pocket expenditure?

GS Paper III

- 1.

1. Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee recently approved the GM mustard seeds for commercial production. In light of this analyze the various issues raised by the opponents of GM crops and DO you think passing of Biotechnology Regulator Bill, 2008 would take care of the issues raised by the opponents?

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4. ['Undersea line from Iran to port cheap gas'](#)

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Category: POLITY

1. [Government backs varying ages for girls' marriage](#)

In news:

- **NGO's (Independent thought), petition before Supreme Court:**
- **Challenged Exception 2 to Section 375 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code**, which permits "sexual intercourse with a girl child aged between 15 and 18 only on the ground that she is married".
- The statutory exception to rape was violative of right to life, personal liberty, equality and is discriminatory.
- The Exception is part of the **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2013** and is contrary to the anti-child sex abuse law, **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act of 2012 (POCSO)**.
- **Supreme court's question to government:**
- What is the logic behind keeping different minimum ages for marriage under different laws?
- **Basis Information:** The age of consent varies from the Indian Penal Code to the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act to the Hindu Marriage Act
- **Government response:** The legislature may have taken a conscious decision to retain the minimum age range for marriage **between 15 and 18** for girls considering the **socio-economic** conditions of the country.

Basic Information

Section 375 in The Indian Penal Code

375.Rape.—A man is said to commit “rape” who, except in the case hereinafter excepted, has sexual intercourse with a woman under circumstances falling under any of the six following de-scriptions:—

(First) — Against her will.

(Secondly) —Without her consent.

(Thirdly) — With her consent, when her consent has been obtained by putting her or any person in whom she is interested in fear of death or of hurt.

(Fourthly) —With her consent, when the man knows that he is not her husband, and that her consent is given because she believes that he is another man to whom she is or believes herself to be lawfully married.

(Fifthly) — With her consent, when, at the time of giving such consent, by reason of unsoundness of mind or intoxication or the administration by him personally or through another of any stupefying or unwholesome substance, she is unable to understand the nature and consequences of that to which she gives consent.

(Sixthly) — With or without her consent, when she is under sixteen years of age. Explanation.—Penetration is sufficient to constitute the sexual intercourse necessary to the offence of rape.

(Exception) —Sexual intercourse by a man with his wife, the wife not being under fifteen years of age, is not rape.]

2. SC likely to hear curative pleas against Sec 377 on September 8

Context:

- **Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code:** a colonial era provision criminalising consensual sexual acts of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) adults in private.
- The Supreme Court is likely to hear **curative petitions** against Section 377.
- The fight against Section 377 got a major boost when a **nine-judge Bench of the Supreme Court**, while upholding the right to privacy as a fundamental right intrinsic to life and liberty, ripped apart a 2014 judgment dismissing the case against Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalises consensual sexual acts of adults in private.

What is section 377?

- **Section 377. Unnatural offences:** Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.

Petitioner’s contention: The petitioners have contended that homosexuality was not a mental disorder, but a normal and natural variant of human sexuality

List of Cases and their verdict:

- **Naz Foundation v. Govt. of NCT of Delhi** – is a landmark Indian case decided by a two-judge bench of the Delhi High Court, which held that treating consensual homosexual sex between adults as a crime is a violation of fundamental rights protected by India’s Constitution. The verdict resulted in the decriminalization of homosexual acts involving consenting adults, in the jurisdiction of the Delhi High court. This was later challenged in the Supreme Court of India.
- **Suresh Kumar Koushal (2013) Case Observations:**
 - Supreme Court has upheld the validity of Section 377 of Indian Penal Code.
 - LGBT “**minuscule minority**”: no need to challenge Section 377 because the LGBT community constitutes only a minuscule minority.
- **National Legal Services Authority (2014) Case observations:**
 - Transgenders, even though insignificant in numbers, are entitled to human rights.
 - Section 377 had been an instrument of harassment and abuse.

- Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity must end. Sexual orientation is not only a freedom flowing from the right to privacy, but also a demanding of non-discriminatory treatment
- **Adoption of the Yogyakarta Principles** — norms on gender identity and sexual orientation adopted by human rights experts in 2006 in Indonesia.
- **Latest: In the Aadhaar case the Supreme Court Observations are as follows:**
 - It has upheld the right to privacy as a fundamental right and an inherent component of human liberty and dignity.
 - The nine-judge Bench has observed that the rationale behind the Koushal judgment is flawed and unsustainable.
 - Rights of LGBT persons are real rights founded on sound constitutional doctrine and not “so-called rights” as the earlier Bench had described.
 - Sexual orientation is an aspect of the right to privacy and an inalienable part of human dignity, freedom, and personal liberty.

Basic Information

Curative petition:

- The concept of Curative petition was evolved by the Supreme Court of India in the matter of **Rupa Ashok Hurra vs. Ashok Hurra and Anr. (2002)** where the question was whether an aggrieved person is entitled to any relief against the final judgement/order of the Supreme Court, after dismissal of a **review petition**.
- The Supreme Court in the said case held that in order to prevent abuse of its process and to cure gross miscarriage of justice, it may reconsider its judgements in exercise of its inherent powers.
- For this purpose the Court has devised what has been termed as a “curative” petition. In the Curative petition, the petitioner is required to aver specifically that the grounds mentioned therein had been taken in the review petition filed earlier and that it was dismissed by circulation. This has to be certified by a senior advocate. The Curative petition is then circulated to the three senior most judges and the judges who delivered the impugned judgement, if available. No time limit is given for filing Curative petition.

Requirements:

To entertain the curative petitions, the court has laid down certain specific condition:

- The petitioner will have to establish that there was a genuine violation of principles of natural justice and fear of the bias of the judge and judgement that adversely affected him.
- The petition shall state specifically that the grounds mentioned had been taken in the review petition and that it was dismissed by circulation.
- The curative petition must accompany certification by a senior lawyer relating to the fulfillment of the above requirements.
- The petition is to be sent to the three senior most judges and judges of the bench who passed the judgement affecting the petition, if available.
- If the majority of the judges on the above bench agree that the matter needs hearing, then it would be sent to the same bench (as far as possible).
- The court could impose “exemplary costs” to the petitioner if his plea lacks merit.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Modi and Xi flag ‘forward looking’ ties after the close of the Doklam crisis

Context:

- **9th BRICS summit**
- **Venue: Xiamen , China**
- **India – China bilateral talks.**

In news:

Highlights of the discussions held between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of BRICS summit:

- India and China decided to open a new “**forward looking**” round of engagement, anchored by fresh mechanisms

- to ensure calm at the borders.
- **Main focus:** more on **border Confidence Building Measures (CBMs)**, rather than on fresh ideas to resolve the festering boundary dispute between the two countries.
- Two leaders agreed that efforts should be made to ensure that “defence and security (personnel) must maintain strong contact and cooperation” at the borders.

Basic Information

BRICS:

- BRICS is the acronym for an association of five major emerging national economies: **Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa**.
- Originally the first four were grouped as “BRIC” (or “the BRICs”), before the induction of South Africa in 2010.
- The BRICS members are all leading **developing or newly industrialized countries**, but they are distinguished by their large, sometimes fast-growing economies and significant influence on regional affairs; all five are G-20 members.
- The term does not include countries such as South Korea, Mexico and Turkey for which other acronyms and group associations were later created.

Financial structure: Currently, there are two components that make up the financial architecture of BRICS, namely, the **New Development Bank (NDB)** and the **Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)**. Both of these components were signed into treaty in 2014 and became active in 2015.

a) New Development Bank:

- The New Development Bank (NDB) is based in Shanghai.
- The New Development Bank (NDB), formerly referred to as the BRICS Development Bank, is a **multilateral development bank** operated by the BRICS states.
- The bank’s primary focus of lending will be **infrastructure projects** with authorized lending of up to \$34 billion annually.
- South Africa will be the African Headquarters of the Bank named the “New Development Bank Africa Regional Centre”.
- The bank will have starting capital of \$50 billion, with capital increased to \$100 billion over time.
- Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa will initially contribute \$10 billion each to bring the total to \$50 billion.

b) BRICS CRA:

- The BRICS **Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)** is a framework for providing protection against **global liquidity pressures**.
- This includes currency issues where members’ national currencies are being adversely affected by global financial pressures.
- It is found that emerging economies that experienced rapid economic liberalization went through increased economic volatility, bringing uncertain macroeconomic environment.
- The CRA is generally seen as a competitor to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and along with the New Development Bank is viewed as an example of increasing South-South cooperation.
- It was established in 2015 by the BRICS countries Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- The legal basis is formed by the Treaty for the Establishment of a BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement, signed at **Fortaleza**, Brazil on 15 July 2014.

2. PM's '10 Noble Commitments' for BRICS members to achieve global transformation

In news:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi suggested **10 commitments** to be made by the five-member bloc for their role in global transformation. These are as follows:

1. **Creating a Safer World** – By organised and coordinated action on three issues: Counter-terrorism, Cyber-security and Disaster Management
2. **Creating a Greener World** – By taking concerted action on countering climate change through initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance

3. **Creating an Enabled World** – By sharing and deploying suitable technologies to enhance efficiency, economy and effectiveness
4. **Creating an Inclusive World** – By economic mainstreaming of our people including in the banking and financial system
5. **Creating a Digital World** – By bridging the digital divide within and outside our economies
6. **Creating a Skilled World** – By giving future-ready skills to millions of our youth
7. **Creating a Healthier World** – By cooperating in research and development to eradicate diseases, and enabling affordable healthcare for all
8. **Creating an Equitable World** – By providing equity of opportunity to all, particularly through gender equality
9. **Creating a Connected World** – By enabling free flow of goods, people and services
10. **Creating a Harmonious World** – by promoting ideologies, practices and heritage that are centred on peaceful coexistence and living in harmony with nature

3. PM Modi reaches Myanmar for first bilateral visit, to meet Suu Kyi tomorrow

Context:

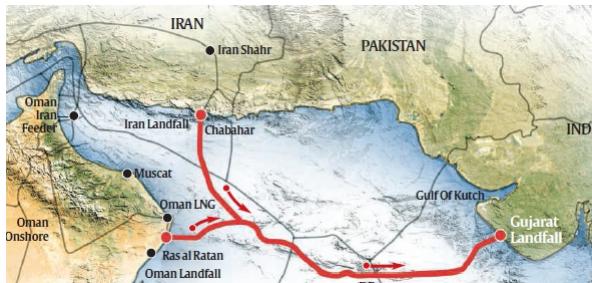
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Myanmar.

In news:

- First bilateral visit to Myanmar.
- **Aim:** to chart out a roadmap for closer cooperation between the two countries in areas like **security and counter-terrorism**, trade and investment, infrastructure and energy, and culture.
- **Key fact:**
 - **Strategic importance:** Myanmar shares a 1,640-km-long border with a number of northeastern states.

4. ‘Undersea line from Iran to port cheap gas’

In news:



Iran-India gas pipeline study:

- A 1,300-km undersea pipeline from Iran, avoiding Pakistani waters, can bring natural gas from the Persian Gulf to India at rates less than the price of LNG available in the spot market.
- **Cheaper fuel:** Natural gas imported through the more than \$4-billion pipeline would cost \$5-5.50 per million British thermal unit at the Indian coast, cheaper than the rate at which some of the domestic fields supply gas.
- **Cheaper than the ones which are shipped:** Liquefied natural gas, or LNG, imported through ships costs about \$7.50 per million British thermal unit.
- The cost of landed gas through an undersea pipeline will be at least \$2 cheaper than importing LNG, saving about \$1 billion annually.
- The pipeline is planned to carry 31.5 million standard cubic meters gas per day. The pipeline can first travel to **Oman**, and then onwards to Porbandar in the state of **Gujarat**.
- **Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline:**
 - The subsea pipeline is being seen as an alternative to the on-land, Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline
 - New Delhi has not been participating in talks on the 1,036-km Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline since 2007 citing security and commercial concerns. But, it has never officially pulled out of the \$7.6 billion project.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Policy soon to develop agri-clusters and boost farm exports: Prabhu

In news:

- **New policy on the anvil:** The government will soon bring out a policy to develop **agricultural clusters** and **boost farm exports**.

Basic Information

ICFA (Indian Council of Food and Agriculture):

- ICFA is a national level platform in India with a mandate for policy research, advocacy and enterprise development in food and agriculture sector.
- Besides, ICFA is engaged in business and trade facilitation, farm services and providing a platform for global partnerships.
- ICFA emerged out of the long felt need for a comprehensive approach to address issues in food and agriculture sector and tapping of emerging global business opportunities overcoming compartmentalized approach and absence of coordination and dialogue among various stake-holders.
- Currently in India, various stakeholders in the food and agriculture sector like the national and state governments, policy makers, research and academic bodies, extension agencies, value addition industry, NGOs, financial bodies, developmental institutions and farmers groups think in silos, often with contradictory approaches for the same ultimate cause.
- ICFA aims to foster convergence and greater communication between different stakeholders and work towards bringing India aggressively into the loop of global trade and commerce.
- Headquartered in New Delhi, India, ICFA has drawn in the vast experience and expertise of a number of professionals cutting across various subsectors in the food and agriculture sector and has constituted a number of working groups and national councils to represent the interests of various stakeholders. It has also incorporated several state specific working groups.

2. RBI includes HDFC Bank in the ‘too big to fail’ list

In news:

- RBI has added HDFC Bank, the second largest private sector lender of the country – in the list of Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs).
- State Bank of India and ICICI Bank continue to be in that category.

Basic Information

Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs)

- Following the global financial crisis of 2008, it was observed that problems faced by certain large and highly interconnected financial institutions hampered the orderly functioning of the financial system, which in turn, negatively impacted the real economy.
- It was decided to identify such institutions and prescribe them higher capital requirements.
- The RBI has adopted a system by which banks are plotted into four buckets based on a lender's systemic importance scores in ascending order.
- The banking regulator prescribes higher capital requirements — in terms of additional **Common Equity Tier 1 (CET 1) capital** — for such entities.
- RBI had started listing D-SIBs from August 2015. SBI and ICICI Bank were identified as D-SIB both in 2015 and 2016.

3. India to flag worry on pace of services talks at RCEP

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP):

- Proposed **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** involving 16 Asia-Pacific nations.
- 10-member **ASEAN bloc** (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) and its **six FTA partners** including India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.
- **RCEP ‘Guiding Principles and Objectives’** : negotiations on trade in goods, trade in services, investment and other areas will be conducted in parallel to ensure a comprehensive and balanced outcome.
- **India to raise the following issues at the forth-coming ministerial-level meeting:**
 - Slow pace of negotiations on services trade liberalization as opposed to ‘higher priority’ being accorded to commitments to open up goods trade in the region.

- **No much progress:** issues such as **Intellectual Property Rights** and **investment liberalization** .

‘RCEP Travel Card’: Idea mooted by India

- India is seeking support for its proposal on an ‘RCEP Travel Card’
- India is relatively strong in services with its vast pool of professionals including from sectors such as Information Technology, as well as in activities such as installation, trouble shooting, training, maintenance, investment management.
- **Issues raised by other members:** easing norms on temporary movement of people could lead to immigration of professionals from India and in turn loss of jobs for locals.

Basic Information

Free Trade Agreement: A free-trade area is the region encompassing a trade bloc whose member countries have signed a free-trade agreement (FTA). Such agreements involve cooperation between at least two countries to reduce trade barriers – import quotas and tariffs – and to increase trade of goods and services with each other.

The degree of economic integration can be categorized into seven stages:

- Preferential trading area
- Free trade area
- Customs union
- Common market
- Economic union
- Economic and monetary union
- Complete economic integration

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. It is argued that the concept of marital rape is not suitable in the Indian context due to illiteracy, poverty, social customs, values, religious beliefs, and other factors. Do you agree with this view? Comment.
2. “Sections 377 reflect prominent way in which the British left their stamp upon India’s criminal law, in a manner that is entirely inconsistent with a democratic, constitutional republic.” Analyze.

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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



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:

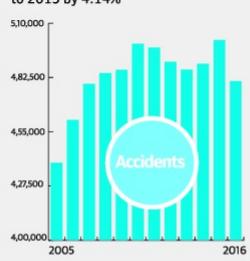
‘Road Accidents in India 2016’ reports:

When roads turn death traps

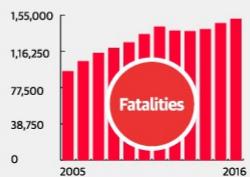
Compared to 2015, the number of road accidents have decreased while the number of fatalities have gone up last year. Most of those who died belonged to the 18-35 age group and more than 35% of them took place at traffic junctions



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

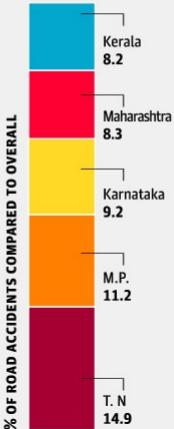


The total number of road accident related deaths rose by over 3% last year as compared to 2015



T.N. tops list

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



Cross country comparison

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



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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GS Paper II

1. Regulation of user data sharing is a complex issue and it should balance both private and public interests”. Evaluate?
2. “India and China must address bilateral issues in a sustainable way, pursuing the BRICS spirit” Discuss.

GS Paper III

1. Define Smart City? Do you think India’s Smart City mission initiative will be successful? Critically comment.

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Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

[1. U.S. backs sale of fighters to India](#)

In news:

- The Trump administration has told the U.S. Congress that it “ **strongly supports** ” the **sale of F-18 and F-16 fighter planes to India** .
- President Donald Trump is in principle against companies relocating facilities abroad.
- Fighter planes built by American companies **Boeing and Lockheed Martin**
- Both companies have offered to assemble these planes in India.
- **Move to reduce Trade deficit:**
 - The deals could reduce America’s trade deficit with India and create more jobs in America than they relocate
- **Strategic significance:** Defense cooperation with India is so vital to U.S. interests because U.S. need India to be a net security provider in the **Indo-Pacific region**.
- **Key Fact:**
 - **Single engine fighter acquisition:** F-16 and Gripen, built by Swedish company Saab, are competing.

- **Twin engine fleet for aircraft carriers:** French Rafale and Boeing's F/A-18 are competing
- Lockheed Martin and Tata have formed a joint venture to make F-16, while Saab announced a JV with the Adani group last week for Gripen.

2. India refuses to join declaration against Myanmar at international meet

'World Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development':

- **Venue:** Indonesia
- **Bali Declaration and reference to violence in Rakhine State:** "Call on all parties to contribute to the restoration of stability and security, exercise maximum self-restraint from using violent means, respect the human rights of all people in Rakhine State regardless of their faith and ethnicity, as well as facilitate and guarantee safe access for humanitarian assistance."
- **India's Stance:**
- An Indian parliamentary delegation, led by Speaker Lok Sabha Sumitra Mahajan, dissociated itself from the '**Bali Declaration**' .
- The declaration adopted at the conclusion of the Forum, was not in line with the agreed global principles of 'sustainable development'
- India reiterated its stance that the purpose of convening the Parliamentary forum was to arrive at mutual consensus for implementation of SDGs (**Sustainable Development Goals**) which requires inclusive and broad-based development processes
- India said, "Never before 'country-specific' issues have been included in the declaration as these dilute the objective of these Forums which require unity and focused efforts of all the countries,".

Basic Information

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), officially known as **Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** is a set of 17 "Global Goals" with 169 targets between them.
- Spearheaded by the United Nations through a deliberative process involving its 193 Member States.



Category: ECONOMICS

1. State laws repugnant to IBC are void: SC

In news:

Supreme Court ruling: "Entrenched managements are no longer allowed to continue in management if they cannot pay their debts,"

- Provisions of State enactments which hinder the country's **new bankruptcy law**, the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)**, meant to protect the interests of shareholders, creditors and workmen against entrenched managements unable to dig their way out of their debts, will be declared void.
- Erstwhile management of a company cannot represent it in court once insolvency resolution process has been admitted in the **National Company Law Tribunal** and the management transferred to insolvency professional.

2. Govt blacklists 300,000 directors of shell companies

In news:

- The government decided to bar as many as **300,000** directors of companies that have defaulted on statutory compliances from serving on the boards of other firms to improve corporate governance and check financial irregularities through the use of shell companies.
- The ministry of corporate affairs, which regulates unlisted companies, also decided to track down the beneficial owners of suspected shell companies
- It will take penal action against those who divert funds from companies that are struck off the records of the **Registrar of Companies (RoC)**.
- The ministry said it is also monitoring the action being taken by regulatory bodies against professionals such as chartered accountants, company secretaries and cost accountants who have been found to have colluded with the shell companies in committing financial irregularities.

Impact:

- Weeding out shell companies would not only help in checking the menace of black money but also would promote an ecosystem of ‘ease of doing business’ and enhancing investors’ confidence
- Filing annual reports on time will minimize the possibility of fraud and tax evasion and it will also protect stakeholder interest and improve India’s image globally

Basic Information

Shell corporations:

- A shell corporation is a corporation without active business operations or significant assets.
- These types of corporations are not all necessarily illegal, but they are sometimes used illegitimately, such as to disguise business ownership from law enforcement or the public.
- Legitimate reasons for a shell corporation include such things as a startup using the business entity as a vehicle to raise funds, conduct a hostile takeover or to go public.

Reasons to legitimately set up a Shell Corporation

- The number one reason for a domestic company to set up a shell company is to realize a tax haven abroad.
- Large corporations, like in the Apple example, have decided to move jobs and profits offshore, taking advantage of looser tax codes. This is the process of “off shoring” or “outsourcing” work that was once conducted domestically.
- To remain within legal bounds internationally, corporations will set up shell companies in the foreign countries in which they are offshoring work.

3. Govt starts direct transfer of subsidized fertilizers to check diversion, smuggling

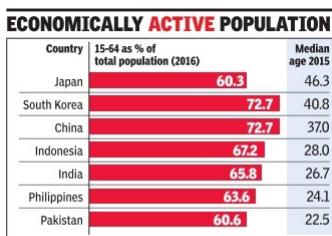
In news:

- With a view to preventing **diversion of subsidized fertilizers** for industrial use and their smuggling across the border, the government soft-launched the **direct benefits transfer (DBT) scheme** for the commodity in the national capital.
- Nationwide rollout of the scheme that could help prevent the leakage of subsidies meant for farmers.
- However, unlike in the case of liquified petroleum gas, subsidy on fertilizers will not be passed on to farmers directly as the latter cannot be forced to shell out large sums upfront for fertilizers and get bank transfers later.
- Instead, companies will sell the product at state-set prices and the government will settle the subsidy involved in every individual sale to farmers with the companies within a week of the transaction.
- The **point-of-sale machines** will capture sales data including the identity of the farmer, quantity of purchase, soil health details and land details where possible.
- Using this data, the government intends to limit diversion of subsidised fertilizers to other sectors such as plywood manufacture.

4. Aging population to hit Asia growth: IMF

In news:

- **The International Monetary Fund chief raised a red alert:** aging populations in **key Asian economies** would drag on their growth, urging policymakers to step up their response to shifting demographics.
- **Revealed by various studies:**



Population in the 15-64 age group is economically most active. At present 60.3% of Japan's population is in this category. But the median age is 46.3 years – which is above the global median age of 31.8 years. By 2030 – indicating that in the coming years, more people will cross the economically active age group. With the median age of 26.7 years, more people will join the workforce in India.

Source: UN, World Bank

- Asia's population is aging faster than anywhere else in the world
 - Japan forecast : to become the first “ultra-aged” country, meaning 28% of the population is 65 or over
 - South Korea: while a fifth of the people are expected to be 65 by 2030.
 - Rapidly aging countries, including China, Japan, Korea and Thailand, “will have smaller workforces in the future and potentially lower productivity growth”.
- In emerging countries such as India — where population is still growing — better education for girls and wider access to finance for women should be prioritised.
- Gender gap and GDP: closing the gender gap in the employment market could raise Japanese GDP by 9%, South Korea’s by 10%, and India’s by 27%.

Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. Development must be climate-smart

Context

- Issues related to Extreme Weather Events.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report

- Climate models have indicated with high confidence that climate change will lead to an increase in extreme rainfall events
- According to the IPCC Special Report on Extreme Events, global warming leads to “changes in the frequency, intensity, spatial extent, duration, and timing of extreme weather and climate events, and can result in unprecedented extreme weather and climate events”

Understanding the extreme events:

- The main reason for understanding extreme events is to help policymakers, emergency responders and local communities to plan and prepare for them
- Cities could be laid out to reduce flooding by following natural contours, drainage and tank systems
- Emergency responders should be well prepared to transport and care for people who may become stranded during disasters

The concept of ‘attribution’

- Research that tries to understand this relationship between anthropogenic climate change and extreme events in particular locations is called “attribution”

Rainfall in Chennai and Climate Change:

- According to experts, the 494 mm rain in Chennai was a rare event, with less than a 0.2% chance of occurring in any given year
- The Chennai flood of 2015 did not have a clear climate signature to show that it was due to warming of the earth

Possible reasons behind the actual patterns of flooding in Chennai, Mumbai and Houston

- These were due to several human-induced activities
 - rampant increase in built-up area across natural drainage channels
 - the diversion or damming of rivers upstream leading to sediment transport and siltation
 - coastal subsidence and other effects of development

Urbanization behind the scene

- The spread of infrastructure such as roads, highways, buildings, residential complexes, tiled or asphalt-covered land obstructs rainwater from percolating(drain) into the soil
- Often there are further barriers that block movement of water and increase flooding

Issues with the Infrastructure Development and Urbanization

- In many parts of the world, construction in cities or in urbanising areas does not take into consideration the existing topography, surface water bodies, stream flows, etc.
- In much of India, urban growth over the past few decades has ignored the hydrology of the land
- For decades, urbanisation has ignored ecological principles associated with water bodies, vegetation, biodiversity and topography

The Way Forward

- Development needs to be climate-smart, but also avoid social and institutional challenges such as moral hazard
- Construction on existing lake beds and other waterbodies needs to be removed or redesigned to allow flood drainage along natural water channels
- As the frequency of extreme weather events increases around the world, losses in rich countries are higher in terms of GDP
- But in terms of the number of people at risk, it is the poor countries that suffer the most
- Those who are the most vulnerable and the poorest end up bearing the brunt of the burdens of climate change and mal-development, which together operate to worsen impacts

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [NASA captures images of strong solar flares](#)

In news:

- Two high-intensity solar flares were emitted, the second of which was the **most intense recorded** since the start of this sun cycle in December 2008, NASA said.
- These radiation flares, which can disrupt communications satellites, GPS and power grids by reaching the upper earth atmosphere, were detected and captured by the US Space Agency's Solar Dynamics Observatory.
- The current cycle of the sun, which began in December 2008, saw the intensity of solar activity decline sharply, opening the way to the “ **solar minimum**”.
- **Solar Cycles:**
 - Solar cycles last on average eleven years.
 - At the end of the active phase, these eruptions become increasingly rare but still can be powerful.
 - Solar storms result from an accumulation of magnetic energy in some places.
 - These jets of ionized matter are projected — at high speed into and beyond the crown of the sun —hundreds of thousands of kilometres outward.

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

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GS Paper III

1. “Parts of Asia risk becoming old before becoming rich.” Comment?

Basic Information:

Countries trade with one another to buy goods not produced in domestic economy. With the advent of globalization, investment to and fro have also increased many fold. A country's trade and other economic exchanges with the world are recorded on its external account in the form of balance of payment (BoP) transactions.

There are two components of BoP

Current Account

Capital Account

Current Account – It deals with current, ongoing, short term transactions like trade in goods, services (invisible) etc. It reflects the nation's net income. For instance, if you buy a laptop from US, it will be a current account transaction and it will be debit on current account as you have to pay to US. There are 4 components of Current Account-

Goods – trade in goods

Services (invisible) – trade in services eg. tourism

Income – investment income

Current unilateral transfers – donations, gifts, grants, remittances Note that grants might appear as component of capital account but are included in current account as they are unilateral, create no liability. Recipient does not have to give anything back in return.

Capital Account – It deal with capital transactions i.e. those transactions which create assets or liabilities. It reflects the net changes in the ownership of national assets.

For instance, if you buy a stocks or property in US, it will be a capital account transaction and it will be debit on capital account as you have to pay to US to buy the asset.

Components of Capital Account

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI)

External Borrowings such as ECB

Reserve Account with the Central Bank

Note here that foreign investment is under capital account but dividends and income from investment comes under current account in the category income from abroad as dividend is transferred periodically, does not result in creation of asset or liability.

Balance of Payment (BoP) = Current Account + Capital Account = 0

Why?

Current Account and Capital Account always balance each other because a country always has to pay for its imports. It does so by exports or other two components of current account. If it cannot, it runs deficit on current account and has to pay off by drawing off on its assets i.e. running capital account surplus.

What is Current Account Deficit?

It's simply deficit on all 4 components of current account.

$(\text{Export} - \text{Import}) + \text{Net income from abroad} + \text{Net Transfers}$

$(\text{Export} - \text{Import})$ is trade deficit

$\text{CAD} = \text{Trade Deficit} + \text{Net Income From Abroad} + \text{Net transfers}$

Note that Trade Deficit and CAD are not one and the same. Trade deficit is only a component of CAD.

What does deficit on Current Account imply?

If we forget income and transfers for a moment, what it means is that we import more than what we export.

How do we pay for that extra import?

Either we get more foreign investment (FDI & FII) and pay via that or we borrow from foreign banks (ECB) or we will have to dip into our external reserves to pay for that amount and in the process our forex reserves come down. When forex reserves come down below a critical level, country appears on the brink of BoP crisis.

So, is CAD such a bad thing?

Depends on what you do with those extra imports and how you finance the deficit!

CAD is bad because –

If a CAD is financed through borrowing, it is unsustainable because borrowing lead to high interest payments in the future.

Attracting capital flows (hot money, FII) to finance the deficit is risky as when confidence falls, hot money flows dry up, leading to a rapid devaluation and crisis of confidence. Eg. East Asian Crisis.

Run a CAD necessarily means running a surplus on the capital account. This means foreigners have an increasing claim on your assets, which they could redeem any time.

However a current account deficit is not necessarily harmful

CAD during a period of inward investment particularly stable long term FDI may not be a bad things as investment can create jobs. Investments will lead to higher growth will be able to pay debts back.

Developing countries may use CAD to buy Capital goods and later export consumer goods and thus repay the debt.

Moderate current account deficit (2% of GDP) financed mainly by stable

foreign investments which creates jobs and infrastructure in the economy can be helpful in the long run as it improves productivity.

What is this twin deficit?

Current Account Deficit and Fiscal Deficit together are known as twin deficits and often both reinforce each other i.e. High fiscal deficit leads to higher CAD and vice versa.

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – Sept 10

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Category: POLITY

1. SC to lay down law on LG's power

Context:

- Prolonged Centre-Arvind Kejriwal turf war over who controls Delhi as an “extraordinary matter”.

In news:

- **Supreme Court observations:**

- The Supreme Court has agreed to lay down the law on whether the Lieutenant Governor (LG) of Delhi can unilaterally administer the National Capital without being bound by the “aid and advice” of the elected government.
- The Supreme Court has refused to stay the HC judgment, despite submissions by Delhi government that the verdict “affects all future governments and all future relationships between the Centre and the State”
- **HC observations:** The HC had upheld the LG’s power not only over the police, land and public order but also in “services”. The judgment had effectively shrunk the Delhi Cabinet’s girth.

Background:

- The 1996 judgment by the Supreme Court in North Delhi Municipal Corporation versus State of Punjab clearly

terms Delhi as a Union Territory in a class by itself.

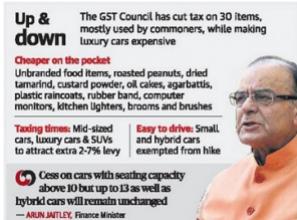
- The judgment observed that “the Union Territory of Delhi is in a class by itself but is certainly not a State”. Union territories are in different stages of evolution.

Category: ECONOMY

1. 7% extra cess on SUVs; small cars exempt

Context:

- GST council meets.
- GST Council lowers some rates, extends filing deadlines



In news:

- Deadline has been extended for filing returns.
- The Council also decided to set up a ministerial group to assess and fix the IT challenges.
- The GST rate on about 30 items of common use including idli and dosa batter, oilcakes, raincoats, rubber bands, roasted peanuts, ‘dhoop agarbattis’ and dried tamarind has been reduced.
- A panel of officers under Revenue Secretary has also been tasked to examine GST-related issues faced by exporters.

2. SEBI moots tighter norms for credit rating agencies

In news:

- SEBI proposed **10 per cent cross-shareholding cap** in credit rating agencies along with a slew of measures for tightening the financial and operational eligibility of their promoters.
- Besides, the regulator has suggested greater disclosure requirements by **credit rating agencies (CRAs)** as well as by companies getting their services
- The proposed norms are likely to have an impact on global rating agencies such as S&P, Moody’s and Fitch which have significant holdings in domestic agencies besides their direct presence.
- Further, SEBI’s prior approval would be needed for acquisition of shares or voting rights in a CRA that results in change in control.
- The requirement would not be applicable for holdings by broad-based domestic financial institutions.

Basic Information:

About Credit Rating:

- Credit Rating is determined by Credit Rating agencies and is an evaluation of the debt issuers likelihood of default
- Evaluates the credit worthiness of an issuer of specific types of debt

3. ‘Microfinance sector could treble in 4 years’

In news:

- **Estimate by ICRA:** the country’s microfinance sector will grow nearly three-fold to reach up to Rs 4.3 trillion over the next three years on account of expansion into newer segments and enhanced average loan sizes.
- The estimate includes micro credit across self-help groups, microfinance institutions and banks.

Important observations made:

- If the ticket sizes were to double from the current levels over the next 3-4 years and MFIs were to increase their presence in under-penetrated areas, the microfinance market could reach Rs 3.3-4.3 trillion over the next 3 to 4

- years. The assumption on the doubling of ticket sizes is based on improving income levels, inflation, higher eligibility of borrowers moving to higher loan cycles.
- The MFI sector, excluding Bandhan Bank and other SFBs, will need external capital of Rs 16-47 billion over the next three to four years.
 - While the business opportunity is exciting, there is a need for establishing a credit culture in the new geographies and strengthening the credit appraisal processes.
 - The two operational credit bureaus have helped the sector maintain its asset quality. But there are a few issues yet to be addressed like limited coverage of SHG bank linkage programme data, issues related to multiple identity cards being used by borrowers for availing loans from more than two MFIs and interlinking of retail credit.
 - The overall stress of credit which is due for more than a day stood at 0.35% as of March 31, 2016, helped by regulatory decisions like data sharing through credit bureaus, cap of Rs 1 lakh for overall borrowing and the stipulation for not more than two MFIs to lend to a single borrower. However, “communal and political” incidents in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Karnataka did lead to some pressure on asset quality.
 - However, the sector remains vulnerable to asset quality shocks owing to the risks associated with unsecured lending business, political risks, and operational risks arising out of cash handling.

Background:

- The Indian microfinance institution (MFI) sector grew 40% in 2015-16 to Rs 1.4 trillion as against a 38% growth in the previous fiscal, while the average ticket sizes were Rs 20-25,000.

Category: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

1. NASA successfully launches OSIRIS-REx spacecraft

In News:

- NASA has launched **OSIRIS-REx spacecraft** to collect samples from an asteroid 101955 Bennu and return to Earth.
- OSIRIS-Rex stands for Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, and Security-Regolith Explorer.
- **Mission objective:**
 - OSIRIS-REx is the third mission in NASA's New Frontiers program, which previously sent the New Horizons spacecraft zooming by Pluto and the Juno spacecraft into orbit around Jupiter.
- **Function of OSIRIS-REx:**
 - OSIRIS-REx will spend two years travelling towards Bennu, arriving at the asteroid in August 2018.
 - The probe will orbit the asteroid for 3 years, conducting several scientific experiments, before returning to Earth, with the sample capsule expected to land in Utah, USA in September 2023.
- **Scientific Mission Goals:**
 - During its three year orbit of Bennu, OSIRIS-REx will be conducting a range of scientific experiments in order to better understand the asteroid.
 - Asteroid will be mapped using instruments on the probe, in order to select a suitable site for samples to be collected from.
 - The aim of the mission is to collect a sample of regolith- the loose, soil-like material which covers the surface of the asteroid.
- **Facts about Bennu:**
 - **Proximity to Earth :** In order for OSIRIS-REx to reach its destination in a reasonable timeframe, NASA needed to find an asteroid which had a similar orbit to Earth. Around 7000 asteroids are ‘Near-Earth Objects’ (NEOs), meaning they travel within around ~30 million miles of the Earth. Out of these, just under 200 have orbits similar to Earth, with Bennu being one of these.
 - **Size:** Small asteroids, those less than 200m in diameter, typically spin much faster than larger asteroids, meaning the regolith material can be ejected into space. Bennu is around 500m in diameter, so rotates slowly enough to ensure that the regolith stays on its surface.
 - **Composition:** Bennu is a primitive asteroid, meaning it hasn't significantly changed since the beginning of the Solar System (over 4 billion years ago). It is also very carbon-rich, meaning it may contain organic molecules, which could have been precursors to life on Earth.
 - Additionally, Bennu is of interest as it is a Potentially Hazardous Asteroid (PHA). Every 6 years, Bennu's orbit brings it within 200,000 miles of the Earth, which means it has a high probability of impacting Earth in the late 22nd Century.

2. Road clear for Chandrayaan-2

Context:

- ISRO has signalled the country's readiness for **Chandrayaan II mission**, which will be India's second mission to the moon.

In news:

- Chandrayaan II is an advanced version of the previous Chandrayaan-1 mission. It consists of an orbiter, lander and rover configuration.
- It is planned to be launched as a composite stack into the earth parking orbit (EPO) of 170 X 18,500 km by GSLV-Mk II.
- The wheeled rover will move on the lunar surface and will pick up soil or rock samples for on-site chemical analysis. The data will be relayed to Earth through the Chandrayaan-2 orbiter.

3. Pollution watchdog issues guidelines to manage odour at urban solid waste landfills

Context:

- Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) issues detailed guidelines for proper monitoring and management of odour at urban municipal solid waste landfills

Solid waste management

- As per official estimates, at present around 62 million tonnes of solid waste is generated every year and it is expected to reach 165 million tonnes in 2030.
- Of the 62 million, only 43 million tonnes is collected and only 12 millions tonnes is treated
- The Solid waste Management Rules 2016, identified odour as a public nuisance.
- “Odour regulation” is still in nascent stage in India. Odorous compounds may have a direct effect on human health. It generally leads to vomiting, headaches, nausea etc

Guidelines :

- It suggested a green belt around landfill sites and advocated for selection of “appropriate plant species for vegetation cover” to assist in reducing odours.
- MSW Landfill system be designed for tapping LFG (landfill gases) efficiently to mitigate fugitive odorous emissions
- The guidelines also battted for initiating legislative norms for creating baseline data on odour
- Need for gradual shift for installation of Continuous Odour Measurement Systems (sensor based) for getting real-time data.
- It also outlined challenges to odour monitoring like lack of source-based database on odour levels, low awareness on odour (public nuisance) and lack of legislative obligations
- It stated that the selection and number of landfill sites for a city should be based on factors like requirement of land for the disposal site by considering the present population and projected growth over the next 20 years at least.
- Other factors include whether the selected site is free from the influence of other odorous sources and the topography of the site (slope, proximity to water sources like river and natural springs).
- Selection of landfill site should be integrated with the urban development planning so that even expansions of city in next two or three decades are not encompassing the selected MSW site
- Guidelines have been prepared keeping in view the various mandatory and statutory provisions and the climatic conditions that accelerate biodegradation of organic wastes

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. “Traditional bureaucratic structure and culture have hampered the process of socio-economic development in

India.” Comment.

GS Paper III

1. Use of Internet and social media by non-state actors for subversive activities is a major concern. How have these have misused in the recent past? Suggest effective guidelines to curb the above threat.

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – Sept 11

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Category: POLITY

[1. West Pakistan refugees in J&K move SC challenging Article 35A](#)

In news:

- Refugees of West Pakistan, who had migrated to India during the 1947 partition, have moved the Supreme Court challenging **Article 35A** of the Constitution.
- **Article 35A:**
- Provision relates to special rights and privileges of permanent residents of Jammu and

Kashmir.

- Added to the Constitution by a Presidential Order in 1954
- It also empowers the state's legislature to frame any law without attracting a challenge on grounds of violating the Right to Equality of people from other states or any other right under the Indian Constitution.
- **Petition:**
- There were around 3 lakh refugees from West Pakistan but those settled in Jammu and Kashmir have been denied the rights guaranteed under Article 35A which are given to the original residents of the state.
- The plea claimed that the refugees and their children are not allowed to hold any position higher than sweeper and the children are not entitled to gain education in government universities or avail any scholarship to gain education.

Basic Information:

Basic Information:

Article 35A: “Saving of laws with respect to permanent residents and their rights. — Notwithstanding anything contained in this Constitution, no existing law in force in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, and no law hereafter enacted by the Legislature of the State:

- (a) defining the classes of persons who are, or shall be, permanent residents of the State of Jammu and Kashmir; or
- (b) conferring on such permanent residents any special rights and privileges or imposing upon other persons any restrictions as respects—
 - (i) employment under the State Government;
 - (ii) acquisition of immovable property in the State;
 - (iii) settlement in the State; or
 - (iv) right to scholarships and such other forms of aid as the State Government may provide, shall be void on the ground that it is inconsistent with or takes away or abridges any rights conferred on the other citizens of India by any provision of this part.”

2. Uttarakhand to bring special heritage law

In news:

- Uttarakhand government is planning to bring a special legislation to cover unprotected heritage in the state.
- **Aim:** preserve buildings and sites of historic, aesthetic, cultural or environmental value which are not protected by the central law of the Archaeological Survey of India or any other existing government policies.
- The Uttarakhand Heritage Act seeks to conserve landmarks such as the Almora Jail, where Pt Jawaharlal Nehru was imprisoned, the colonial-era Raj Bhawan in Nainital, historic precincts and trees, groves and natural fields of environmental significance.
- The statute would also cover natural features of environmental significance and sites of

scenic beauty and provide for conservation and protection of areas which are environmentally sensitive.

- **Key fact:**

1. Around 71 monuments in Uttarakhand are protected by the State government under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act.
2. Another 40 archaeological sites are covered by the Central government, through the ASI, under the same

3. Brahmin federation for quota based on economic status

In news:

- **All India Brahmin Federation (AIBF) demands:**

1. Abolition of caste-based reservation and implementation of a new reservation policy based on economic status for admissions, employment and promotions.
- **Key Fact:** The AIBF is the apex body of Brahmin organisations in the country.

4. All that data that Aadhaar captures

Context:

- After denying the right to privacy for years, the government welcomed the judgement
- CEO of the UIDAI, asserted, “The Aadhaar Act is based on the premise that privacy is a fundamental right and the judgement would not affect Aadhaar as the required safeguards were already in place.

Aadhaar and Right to Privacy

- Aadhaar, in its current form, is a major threat to the fundamental right to privacy
- Common perception that the main privacy concern with Aadhaar is the confidentiality of the Central Identities Data Repository (CIDR). This is misleading for two reasons.
- One is that the CIDR is not supposed to be inaccessible.
- On the contrary, the Aadhaar Act 2016 puts in place a framework for sharing most of the CIDR information.
- It collects biometric information, identity information and personal information.
- The first two are formally defined in the Aadhaar Act, and protected to some extent. The biggest threat to privacy, relates to the third type of information.
- In the Aadhaar Act, biometric information essentially refers to photograph, fingerprints and iris scan, though it may also extend to “other biological attributes of an individual” specified by the UIDAI.
- The term “core biometric information” basically means biometric information minus photograph, but it can be modified once again at the discretion of the UIDAI.
- One concern is the confidentiality of personal information an individual may not wish to be public or accessible to others. The Aadhaar Act puts in place some safeguards in this respect, but they are restricted to biometric and identity information.

Sharing identity details

- The strongest safeguards in the Act relate to core biometric information.
- That part of the CIDR, is supposed to be inaccessible except for the purpose of biometric authentication.
- There is a view that, in practice, the biometric database is likely to be hacked sooner or later.
- Aadhaar Act puts in place a framework to share it with “requesting entities”. The core of this framework lies in Section 8 of the Act, which deals with authentication
- Aadhaar Act includes a blanket exemption from the safeguards applicable to biometric and identity information on “national security” grounds.
- This effectively makes identity information accessible to the government without major restrictions.

Mining personal information

- Aadhaar is a tool of unprecedented power for mining and collating personal information.
 - For example, suppose Aadhaar number becomes mandatory for buying a railway ticket. With computerised railway counters, government will have all the details of your railway journeys, from birth onwards. The government can do exactly what it likes with this personal information
 - By the same reasoning, if Aadhaar is made mandatory for SIM cards, the government will have access to your lifetime call records, and it will also be able to link your call records with your travel records.
 - Nothing in the Aadhaar Act prevents the government from using Aadhaar to link different databases, or from extracting personal information from these databases.
 - Indeed, many State governments under the State Resident Data Hub (SRDH) project, which “integrates all the departmental databases and links them with Aadhaar number”
 - Some of the private agencies do have access to a fair amount of personal information from their own databases.
1. Reliance Jio is in possession of identity information for more than 100 million Indians, harvested from the CIDR when they authenticate themselves to buy a Jio SIM card.

Category: : INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Rohingya refugee issue: Dhaka plea made MEA shift stand

Context:

- Rohingya’s deportation issue.

India’s shift in position on the Myanmar issue:

- **India-Myanmar joint statement during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit:** didn’t include any reference to the refugee situation.
- India has now expressed deep concerns about the outflow of Rohingya refugees for the first time in recent month. It was prompted by a series of requests from the Bangladesh government at the highest levels.

2. India, U.S. in talks for C-17 deal

In news:

- India is in talks with the U.S. for buying another Boeing C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft to be added to its fleet of 10.
- Since induction in 2013, the aircraft has become the mainstay of India's humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts.
- **Importance:**

1. The proposed sale will improve India's capability to meet the current and future strategic airlift requirements.
2. India lies in a region prone to natural disasters and will use the additional capability [aircraft] for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE

1. [Around the world in seven months](#)

In news:

- Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman , hailed the global circumnavigation being attempted by an all-women Indian Navy crew of 'Navika Sagar Parikrama.'
 - **'Navika Sagar Parikrama,'**
1. The first-ever attempt by an all-women crew to circumnavigate the globe, will have stopovers at four ports — Fremantle (Australia), Lyttleton (New Zealand), Port Stanley (Falklands) and Cape Town (South Africa) — for replenishments and repairs.
 2. It will return to Goa in April next year.
 3. The crew will collate and update Meteorological/ Ocean/ Wave data on a daily basis for subsequent analysis by research and development organisations. They will also monitor and report marine pollution on the high seas.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. Critically analyse urban transport challenges in Indian cities and policy responses needed to address these challenges.

GS Paper II

1. Critically evaluate the focus and performance of Centre's Swachh Bharat Mission.

GS Paper III

1. Discuss the practical solutions that can plug loopholes in Public Distribution System.

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Category: POLITY

1. [Parties call for hybrid electoral system](#)

Context:

- **Electoral Reforms.**
- The Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice, headed by Congress leader Anand Sharma is deliberating on electoral reforms

In News:

- **Reforms suggested by:** The Congress, the Nationalist Congress Party, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Communist Party of India.
- **What?** The above said parties have told a **Parliamentary panel** that the existing **first-past-the-post-system** needs to be replaced with a **hybrid format** where elections for a small number of seats are through **proportional representation**.
- **Hybrid format:** to include both first-past-the-post-system and proportional representation system .
- **Argument in favour for proportional representation system :**

1. Majority aspirations and the actual will of the people is not getting reflected in election results.
Example : Recent Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections held in March this year where the BJP which got 39 per cent of the vote share but won 312 seats, while the Samajwadi Party with 21.8 per cent votes got 47 seats and the Bahujan Samaj Party with 22.2 per cent got 19 seats.
2. A party with even 20% share does not get a single seat, while a party with 28% can get disproportionately large number of seats.

Basic Information:

- **First-past-the-post system:** A first-past-the-post (abbreviated as FPTP, 1stP, 1PTP or FPP) voting method is one in which voters indicate on a ballot the candidate of their choice, and the candidate who receives most votes wins.
- **Proportional representation system:** Proportional representation is the idea that seats in parliament should be allocated so that they are in proportion to the votes cast.

2. SC to hear plea for ban on Blue Whale game

In news:

- The Supreme Court agreed to hear a petition for an immediate judicial direction to the government to ban an online game '**Blue Whale**', which may be behind the deaths or attempted suicides of teenagers and young adults hooked to it.

Basic Information:

- The Blue Whale Game also known as "Blue Whale Challenge", is an Internet "game" that is claimed to exist in several countries. The game allegedly consists of a series of tasks assigned to players by administrators during a 50-day period, with the final challenge requiring the player to commit suicide.
- The term "Blue Whale" comes from the phenomenon of beached whales, which is linked to suicide.

3. Scrutiny of performance: Centre begins evaluation of judges for HC

Evaluation of Performance:

- The Union Government has initiated a process to "evaluate" the performance of Judges recommended by the High Court collegium for appointment as judges of the court

Other officials:

- In the case of advocates, their reported judgements and in case of judicial officers, their case disposal time and number of adjournments are being evaluated
- These evaluations will be done by an in house team having legal background

Reason behind this step

- This is an internal effort by the government towards greater appraisal and scrutiny for better candidates
- This decision is in light of the SC's own observations in the NJAC(National Judicial Appointment commission)matter and Justice C S Karnan case
- The current mechanism for appointment of judges of the higher judiciary follows the collegium system
- There are many instances of alleged corruption and irregularities which have brought the system under the scanner

What now?

- The final decision on the appointments(of HC judges) is taken by the SC collegium (as done before).
- And the inputs provided by the government, including the result of the evaluation, will assist in the process.

4. Fake Aadhaar card network busted in Kanpur

In news:

- A Special Task Force (STF) of the police busted a State-wide network of hackers who allegedly bypassed the set standards of the biometric system of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) and created fake Aadhaar cards through cloning of fingerprints.

Modus operandi:

- The accused would bypass the biometric norms of the UIDAI with fingerprint copies and tamper with the source code of the UIDAI application client (software used by Aadhaar enrolment agencies) to create a fake application client.
- They would then bypass the operator authentication process to create fake Aadhaar cards.
- The hackers would send the client application to unauthorised operators for a sum of ₹5, 000 each.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Firm signal on bullet train project

Context:

- **Annual summit meeting:** between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.
- **Venue:** Gandhinagar, State of Gujarat.
- Fourth annual summit

Focus:

- The high point of the visit was likely to be the joint **inauguration of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad**

high-speed rail project and bilateral security dialogue.

- Review the recent progress in the **multifaceted cooperation** between India and Japan under the framework of their ‘**Special Strategic and Global Partnership**’ and will set its future direction.

Defence and security:

- India-Japan ties are at a crucial phase in a range of areas, including defence and security.
- **Annual defence dialogue:** the two countries had resolved to collaborate closely in defence production, including on dual-use technologies.

2. India to further aid Afghan troops

Context:

- **India- Afghanistan Partnership Council meeting.**
- Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) was signed in 2011.
- **Second meeting since 2011.**

In News:

- India agreed to enhance existing assistance to Afghan security forces, including in capacity building and training of Afghan soldiers in India
- Afghanistan’s Foreign Minister suggested a larger role for India in regional diplomacy.
- **New scholarships:** External Affairs Minister of India announced 500 new scholarships for children and kin of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) to honour their sacrifices for the cause of entire humanity and ensuring the safety of Indians working in Afghanistan.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Search for quality: on credit rating agencies

Context:

- SEBI has released a consultation paper seeking feedback on a new set of rules drafted to improve “market efficiency” and enhance “the governance, accountability and functioning of credit rating agencies

New Rules:

- Provisions to restrict cross-shareholding between rating agencies without regulatory approval to 10%
- Increase the minimum net worth requirement for existing and new agencies from ₹5 crore to ₹50 crore
- There should be at least five years’ experience for promoters of rating agencies
- SEBI has proposed disclosure norms to improve investor awareness about the operations of rating agencies
- It is to prevent rating agencies from resorting to collusion in reaching decisions.

Criticism

- The present business model of rating agencies allow considerable room for issuers of securities to shop for a favourable rating or avoid negative ratings by severing their ties with these agencies.
- Prudential regulation is thus justified to tackle this problem. This criticism, however, ignores the

reputational damage these agencies suffer after each corporate default

- But repeated failures have not affected the business of rating agencies, primarily due to the lack of alternative service providers who can help out investors.
- Individual creditors have thus had to trust the ratings of the existing rating agencies at their own peril, even after repeated crises
- Indian credit rating market is an oligopolistic one due to the high barriers to entry.
- SEBI's proposed move to impose further quality requirements on rating agencies is unlikely to change things for the better, or raise further barriers.

Way forward

- Make it easier for new players to enter the credit rating space and compete against incumbents.
- This will make credit rating agencies actually serve creditors rather than borrowers.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [**IIT-Roorkee to deploy earthquake warning system across N India**](#)

In news:

- IIT Roorkee is planning to deploy **early earthquake warning system**, the first-of-its-kind system across all seismic-prone major cities of the north India.
- Predicting earthquakes is impossible, but it is possible to save people living in distant cities through a simple warning system, which will give them enough lead time to reach a safe open place in case of an impending earthquake.
- The early earthquake warning system works on the **principle of propagation of various waves** with different velocities starting together from the same point and reaching the target at different times.
- The **Electromagnetic (EM) waves** travel much faster and will reach the target much ahead of the damaging seismic waves giving what we call a lead time
- **About the project:**
- This project in India is part of the overall research being conducted by the IIT Roorkee, in the field of earthquake engineering and is an extension of the pilot project undertaken in the Himalayan region.
- IIT Roorkee was the first institute to deploy 84 sensors in seismic gap region of the **Garhwal Himalayas in Uttarakhand** with the help of the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- These on-site sensors stream data in real-time to a computer server at the institute using network of the Uttarakhand government which is being processed for issuing warning for magnitude 6 and above earthquakes.

Central seismic gap:

- Recent data sets compiled over the last 2 centuries reveal that large magnitude earthquakes have occurred around various regions of the Himalayas, but one segment of the central Himalaya, known as the **central seismic gap**, has potential to generate a major earthquake and researchers tend to believe that such an earthquake is overdue.
- The seismic sources with such potential in proximity to cities like Delhi has made this region a perfect case for the use of early earthquake warning system as one of the key disaster mitigation strategies.

2. [**Ultra-thin craft to wrap space debris**](#)

In news:

- **The Brane Craft** : an **ultra-thin spacecraft** that can remove space debris — which potentially threatens satellites or astronauts — by enveloping junk in the Earth's orbit and dragging it through the atmosphere, causing it to burn up.
- **Developers:** S.-based Aerospace Corporation, is flexible and measures less than half the thickness of a human hair.
- The spacecraft's microprocessor and digital electronics are fabricated in such a way that if one component gets damaged, the others will continue to work.

Category: MISCELLANEOUS

1. Facebook fined 1.2 million euros by Spanish data watchdog

In news:

- Facebook has been fined 1.2 million euros (\$1.4 million) for allegedly collecting personal information from users in Spain that could then be used for advertising.
- The fine stemmed from an investigation into the social network company conducted alongside similar probes in Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands.
- Facebook had collected details such as the gender, religious beliefs, personal tastes and browsing history of its millions of Spanish users without informing them how such information would be used.
- Using cookies, Facebook also collects data from people who do not have an account on the social network but navigate other pages containing a “like” button

Nothing here for Today!!!

Deogarh named Odisha's first open defecation free district.

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. “A true democracy cannot exist without reflection of a majority aspirations” Comment.

GS Paper III

1. Considering the threats cyberspace poses for the country, India needs a “Digital Armed Force” to prevent crimes. Critically evaluate the National Cyber Security Policy, 2013 outlining the challenges perceived in its effective implementation.(Mains 2015).
2. What are the reasons for introduction of Fiscal responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) act, 2003? Discuss critically its salient features and their effectiveness.

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F. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Nothing here for Today!!!

Category: POLITY

1. Six-month cooling period for granting divorce can be waived: SC

Context:

- **The 1955 Hindu Marriage Act :** It provides for a **statutory cooling** period of **six months** between the **first** and the **last motion** for seeking divorce by **mutual consent**.

In news:

Supreme Court observation:

- Minimum cooling period of six months for granting the decree of divorce under the Hindu law can be **waived** by a trial court if there was no possibility of **cohabitation between an estranged couple**, who are seeking divorce with mutual consent, can file waiver application after a week of filing the first motion.

- **Period mentioned in Section 13B (2):**
- Is not mandatory but directory.
- It will be open to the court to exercise its discretion in the facts and circumstances of each case where there is no possibility of parties resuming cohabitation and there are chances of alternative rehabilitation.
- **Trails conducted using video conferencing:** the trial court “can also use the medium of video conferencing and permit genuine representation of the parties through close relations, such as parents or siblings, where the parties are unable to appear in person for any just and valid reason as may satisfy the court, to advance the interest of justice

Basic Information:

The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955

Section 13B: Divorce by mutual consent.

(1) Subject to the provisions of this Act a petition for dissolution of marriage by a decree of divorce may be presented to the district court by both the parties to a marriage together, whether such marriage was solemnised before or after the commencement of the Marriage Laws (Amendment) Act, 1976 (68 of 1976)*, on the ground that they have been living separately for a period of one year or more, that they have not been able to live together and that they have mutually agreed that the marriage should be dissolved.

(2) On the motion of both the parties made not earlier than six months after the date of the presentation of the petition referred to in sub-section (1) and not later than eighteen months after the said date, if the petition is not withdrawn in the meantime, the court shall, on being satisfied, after hearing the parties and after making such inquiry as it thinks fit, that a marriage has been solemnised and that the averments in the petition are true, pass a decree of divorce declaring the marriage to be dissolved with effect from the date of the decree.]

(i) The period of 6 to 18 months provided in section 13B is a period of interregnum which is intended to give time and opportunity to the parties to reflect on their move. In this transitional period the parties or either of them may have second thoughts;

(ii) The period of living separately for one year must be immediately preceding the presentation of petition. The expression living separately' connotes not living like husband and wife. It has no reference to the place of living. The parties may live under the same roof and yet they may not be living as husband and wife. The parties should have no desire to perform marital obligations;

(iii) The period of six to eighteen months time is given in divorce by mutual consent as to give time and opportunity to the parties to reflect on their move and seek advice from relations and friends. Mutual consent should continue till the divorce decree is passed. The court should be satisfied about the bona fides and consent of the parties. If there is no consent at the time of enquiry the court gets no jurisdiction to make a decree for divorce. If the court is held to have the power to make a decree solely based on the initial petition, it negates the whole idea of mutuality. There can be unilateral withdrawal of consent. Held, that since consent of the wife was obtained by fraud and wife was not willing to consent, there could be unilateral withdrawal, of consent.

2. Corrupt politicians always bounce back to power, observes SC

Context:

In news:

Supreme Court observations:

- **Phenomenon seen in the past 25 to 30 years:** MLAs and MPs, who face investigation for possessing wealth disproportionate to their known sources of income, always tend to bounce back to power.
 - The court said the disproportionate assets cases against MPs and MLAs ought to be fast-tracked.
 - **Court questioned:**
1. Whether this phenomenon, coupled with the mercurial rise in the assets of politicians just within a span of five years between two successive elections, was a product of **ineffective investigation or of some “immunity” provided to them.**

2. Why the disproportionate wealth details of MLAs and MPs, who are representatives of the people, should not be disclosed to the public. There is no reason why the law should provide these public servants any immunity.
3. Even information with respect to their (MPs and MLAs) income tax details should be open for disclosure... Why should information relating to the representatives of the people, who are public servants, get immunity?

- **Directive given to the government:** “If an MLA’s or MP’s assets have seen a 10X rise in 2019 from what he revealed in 2014, should you not conduct an enquiry into the very propriety of a person holding public office enjoying such phenomenal rise in his assets... The moment a candidate has shown 1000% increase in his income in the past five years, please have a mechanism to conduct an enquiry,”
- **1993 N.N. Vohra Committee Report** highlighted the criminalisation of politics and the nexus among politicians, criminals and bureaucrats.

3. Chakmas to be made citizens

In News:

- Government of India is all set to give citizenship to over one lakh **Chakma-Hajongs, Buddhists and Hindus** who fled to India in the 1960s to escape religious persecution in the **Chittagong Hill area of Bangladesh** (undivided Pakistan then).
- Home Minister Rajnath Singh will chair a meeting where a final decision to grant citizenship to the Chakma-Hajongs will be taken.
- **No landownership rights:**
- Chakmas would be granted citizenship but will not have any land ownership rights in Arunachal Pradesh, a predominantly tribal State.
- The Arunachalis have opposed giving any rights to Chakma-Hajongs.
- They would be free to buy land anywhere else in India but not in Arunachal Pradesh.

Basic Information:

- The Chakmas, also known as the Changma, Daingnet people, are an ethnic group scattered in Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Assam, Mizoram, Meghalaya and West Bengal of India and in Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh.
- Today, the geographic distribution of Chakmas is spread across Bangladesh and parts of northeastern India, western Burma, and diaspora communities in Yunnan Province, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, South Korea, Japan and Australia.
- Within the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the Chakmas are the largest ethnic group and make up half of the region’s population. The Chakmas are divided into 46 clans or Gozas.
- They have their own language, customs and culture, and profess Theravada Buddhism. The community is headed by the Chakma Raja.

4. IIT Director unhappy with scrapping of new funding scheme

Vishwajeet Scheme:

- The scheme entailed the provision of Rs. 1,250 crore to each of the top seven IITs over a period of five years to upgrade infrastructure, hire foreign faculty, and collaborate with foreign institutions to break into the top league in global rankings

Higher Education Finance Agency (HEFA):

- Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) is a proposed not-for-profit agency with initial capital base of Rs. 1000 Crore.
- It was announced in Union Budget 2016-17.

Organization

- The HEFA will be set up with joint participation by the government and philanthropic donors.
- It would be set up under Companies Act and will be registered with RBI as Non-banking Finance Company (NBFC).
- It will be headed by a banker and will have a board with five donors and five institutions selected on rotation

basis.

- All centrally funded higher educational institutions will automatically be added as members.

Objective and Proposed Functions

- The major objective of the HEFA is to leverage funds from the market and supplement them with donations and CSR funds.
- These funds will be used to finance improvement in infrastructure in top educational institutions. The monies of the fund will be used to finance capital expenditure for building quality infrastructure in IITs, NITs, IIITs and IISERs and central universities. It will also be used to fund state-of-the-art research labs and other infrastructure.

Funding and Finances

- Total corpus of the body is Rs. 2,000 crore. Out of this, the initial government contribution will be Rs. 1,000 crore. Remaining Rs. 1000 Crore would be collected from 5 other corporate donors {Rs. 200 Crore Each} of which the sponsoring bank would be one. Further, the body will be allowed to raise debt funding of up to Rs. 10,000 crore from the financial markets, including pension and insurance funds.

Uchchatar Avishkar Yojana:

- There are some specified guidelines issued by the Central Govt.'s Ministry of Human Resource and Development for the Uchchatar Avishkar Yojana (UAY) for the prime educational institutions (IIT's) of the country.
- These guidelines are to be followed to bring the new scheme of Govt. implemented in the premier institutions of India
- The main aim of launching the UAY scheme is to make students more accustomed with the outer world and give them a market oriented mindset.
- Implemented by Department of Higher Education.

Govt. funds for the UAY projects

- The Govt. is willing to spend around Rs. 25 crore per financial year in this Uchchatar Avishkar Yojana. However there is no limit as such on the size of the industrial project under this scheme. The entire funding will be generated from different areas. Half of the project cost will be on the Ministry of Resource Development. Then 25 % will be borne by the participating department and the rest 25 % by the industry associated in the project.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. 'America wants growing trade with India'

Context:

- **India – America:** rising imbalance in trade with India is a concern for America.

In news:

U.S. Commerce Secretary Observations :

- India must open its market to more American companies.
- India must also take more effective measures to protect innovation by improving its intellectual property protections.

New 2+2 format:

- India and the U.S have decided to move to the 2+2 format of engagement involving the Secretaries of Defence and State Departments from the American side and Ministers for Defence and External Affairs Ministers from the Indian side.

Key Facts:

- Annual bilateral trade between the U.S. and India has doubled over the last decade and was \$114 billion in 2016. Unfortunately, over the same period, trade deficit tripled, now at \$27 billion
- India's investors invested \$12.1 billion in the U.S. last year, U.S. investors invested \$32.9 billion in India.
- 5 % of U.S. exports were to India, while only 6.3 % of Indian exports goes to America.

2. India steps up development partnership with Afghanistan

Context:

- US President Donald Trump urged India to do more in Afghanistan on “economic assistance and development”

India – Afghanistan development partnership

- India stepped up its development partnership and committed to 116 new projects in Afghanistan
- The projects will be in the areas of education, health, agriculture, irrigation, drinking water, renewable energy, flood control, micro-hydropower, sports infrastructure and administrative infrastructure.
- New Delhi also agreed to strengthen security cooperation and pointed out that the countries must stay united in dealing with the challenge posed by “**cross-border terrorism**” – an oblique reference to Pakistan.
- India agreed to extend further assistance for the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces in fighting the scourge of terrorism, organized crime, trafficking of narcotics and money laundering
- The two sides also signed four pacts, including one on vehicular movement to boost overland transit and another on a fresh batch of development projects by India in Afghanistan.
- Afghanistan strongly supports India’s membership of the UN Security Council and other groupings and hoped that it would back Kabul’s entry into the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

Category: ECONOMY

1. Inflation quickens in August, even as industrial growth sees mild recovery

Key Macro-economic stats:

- Data released by the Central Statistics Office showed Index of Industrial Production (IIP) grew at 1.2% in **July** from a contraction of 0.2% a month ago.
- Consumer price index based inflation continued to rise for the second consecutive month, by 3.36% from 2.36% a month ago as food inflation turned positive after three months of contraction.
- **Inference:** India’s industrial production recovered to grow only mildly as growth in manufacturing output remained flat with introduction of goods and services tax (GST) which continued to disrupt production networks while retail inflation quickened in August ruling out any rate cut by the central bank in the near future.

2. Why India needs a bullet train

Context:

- Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Shinzo Abe will be laying the foundation stone of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) project, popularly known as the bullet train

Advantages

- **Attractive low-cost long-term financing.**

1. Government of Japan will provide a soft loan of about Rs 90,000 crore at an interest rate of 0.1 per cent over 50 years.
2. Such loan, from other multilateral or bilateral development financing institutions, would cost between 3-7 per cent with a repayment period of 20-30 years.
3. Stimulus for advanced components’ manufacture and construction
4. One of the stated objectives of the project is “Make in India”

5. As per the agreement the MAHSR Project has “localised manufacture” and “transfer of technology” as objectives.
1. This project is likely to generate employment for about 20,000 workers, who will then be equipped to take up construction of more such projects in India.
 2. The new areas where construction skills would be developed are ballast-less track, under sea tunneling et al.
- **Professional capacity-building.**
1. A dedicated High Speed Rail Training Institute is being developed at Vadodara.
 2. This institute will be fully equipped with equipment and facilities, such as a simulator, as exist in the training institute at Japan.
1. There are two types of services proposed. A “rapid train” service with only two stops — at Surat and Vadodara — and a slower service that halts at 10 stations en route.
 2. The “rapid train” would complete the journey in 2 hours and 7 minutes, while the slower service would take 2 hours and 58 minutes.
- **Cutting edge operational technology.**
1. The Shinkansen technology is renowned for its reliability and safety.
 2. The train delay record of Shinkansen is less than a minute with zero fatalities.
 3. The technology regarding disaster predictions and preventions will also be acquired as part of the project.
- Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY**
- 1. [A fragile ark that shelters 2,626 creatures](#)**
- In news:**
- Home of fauna**
A look at the diversity in the mangrove ecosystem of the Sundarbans

Major phylum under Kingdom Animalia	Number of species
Nematoda	480 species
Arthropoda	74 species
Mollusca	173 species
Chordata	823 species
Total	1,326 species

Protected animal species	Number of species
Four species found in Sundarbans are included in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972	22 species
50 species of fish found in the Sundarbans are included in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972	50 species
22 species of birds found in the Sundarbans are included in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972	22 species
Under different categories of the IUCN Red List	11 species
Under different categories of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and the IUCN Red List	11 species
Total	2,626 species
- Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) has come out with a compendium of animal species in the Indian Sundarbans, estimating that there are 2,626 of them in the fragile island ecosystem.
 - First edition : **“Fauna of Sundarban Biosphere Reserve ”** is the first consolidated and updated information of the faunal diversity of the Sundarbans. It lists over 2,600 species, including the new species described from the mangrove ecosystem as well as threats faced by them due to climate change
 - The listing includes a diverse 25 phyla, as they are biologically classified.
 - The Indian segment of the Sundarbans, part of a UNESCO World Heritage site, forms part of the Ganga-Brahmaputra delta across 9,630 sq. km, distributed among 104 islands.
 - Due to pressure on habitat from people and natural threats that have shrunk the mangrove swamp habitat, mammal numbers are declining.
 - **Key Species :**
 - The fortunes of 50 mammalian species including the Asian small-clawed Otter, Gangetic Dolphin, Grey and Marsh Mongoose and the wild Rhesus Monkey, the only primate here, are also documented.
 - Rhinos, Swamp deer, Barking deer and Hog deer and Asiatic Wild Water Buffalo are not found in Sundarbans anymore.
 - There are 356 species of birds, the most spectacular being raptors, or birds of prey, that occupy the highest canopies of the forest. Osprey, Brahminy Kite and White-Bellied Sea Eagle are dominant, while Rose-ringed parakeets, flycatchers and warblers are also found in the middle tier, while in the lower tier, kingfishers abound — and the Sundarbans has nine of them.
 - There are 11 turtles, including the famous Olive Ridley and Hawksbill sea turtles and the most threatened freshwater species, the River Terrapin.
 - A crocodile, 13 lizards including three species of Monitor Lizards and five Geckos are found here. The rivers,

creeks channels and the islands together harbour about 30 snake species, led by the King Cobra, considered vulnerable by IUCN.

- Others documented are the Monocellate or monocled cobra, Russell's viper, common and banded kraits. Besides, ten species of frogs and toads are found.
- **Cartilaginous fish :** The mangrove ecosystem covers about 350 species of fish. Cartilaginous fish, which have skeletons of cartilage rather than bone, make up 10.3%. The IUCN conservation status shows 6.3% fish are near-threatened and 4.85% are threatened. Also, there are 173 molluscs.
- In another indication of its richness, 753 insect species are encountered in the Sundarban Biosphere Reserve. Of these, 210 are butterflies and moths. Moreover, Crustaceans — crabs, shrimp and prawns — constitute 334 species

Nothing here for Today!!!

UNAIDS '90-90-90' target by 2020: As per the '90-90-90' target

1. 90% of all HIV infected persons should get diagnosed and know their HIV positive status.
2. Ninety per cent of these diagnosed HIV positive persons are to be provided regular Antiretroviral Therapy (ART), and
3. 90% of people taking ART should show signs of viral suppression, which reduces their scope of infection.

This would result in controlling HIV infection to sustainable limits by **2030**.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)

- PETA is an American animal rights organization based in Norfolk, Virginia, and led by Ingrid Newkirk, its international president.
- Its slogan is "Animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, use for entertainment, or abuse in any other way".

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Artificial Intelligence can become an effective tool for good governance. Discuss.

GS Paper III

1. Discuss the role of land reforms in agricultural development. Identify the factors that were responsible for the success of land reforms in India.

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – Sept 14

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Nothing here for Today!!!

Category: POLITY

1. OBC creamy layer income limit raised to ₹8 lakh per annum

In news:

- The ‘creamy layer’ ceiling for OBC reservation has been raised to ₹8 lakh per year.
- These measures are part of the government’s efforts to ensure greater social justice and inclusion for members of the Other Backward Classes.

2. Chakma-Hajong issue still open

Background information:

- Chakmas and Hajongs were originally residents of the **Chittagong Hill Tracts** in erstwhile East Pakistan who left their homeland when it was submerged by the **Kaptai dam project** in the 1960s.
- The Chakmas, who are Buddhists, and Hajongs, who are Hindus, also allegedly faced religious persecution and entered India through the then Lushai Hills district of Assam (now Mizoram).

Government decision to grant citizenship:

- As per the Supreme Court’s order, the government would grant citizenship to over one lakh **Chakma-Hajongs , Buddhists and Hindu refugees** who came to India from the **Chittagong Hill Area** in undivided Pakistan in the 1960s.
- **Middle path:** the refugees will not be given rights, including land ownership, enjoyed by the Scheduled Tribes in Arunachal Pradesh.
- They may be given **Inner Line permits** required for non-local people in Arunachal Pradesh to travel and work.

Basic Information:

Inner Line Permit

- Inner Line Permit (ILP) is an official travel document issued by the Government of India to allow inward travel of an Indian citizen into a protected area for a limited period.
- It is obligatory for Indian citizens from outside those states to obtain a permit for entering into the protected state.
- The document is an effort by the government to regulate movement to certain areas located near the international border of India.
- There are different kinds of ILP’s, one for tourists and others for people who intend to stay for long-term periods, often for employment purposes.
- The states which require the permit are:

1. Arunachal Pradesh — issued by the secretary (political) of the Government of Arunachal Pradesh. It is required for entering Arunachal Pradesh through any of the check gates across the interstate border with Assam or Nagaland.
2. Mizoram — Issued by the Government of Mizoram. It is required for entering Mizoram through any of the check gates across the inter-State borders.
3. Nagaland — Issued by the Government of Nagaland. It is mandatory for Indian citizens of other states entering Nagaland through any of the check gates across the interstate borders. Dimapur, Nagaland’s largest city and porthead, is the only place in the state which does not require an ILP, and Indians arriving by air at Dimapur Airport can arrive and stay in the city without one.

4. Indian citizens also need a Nagaland-issued ILP if entering Manipur by road via Dimapur or Kohima. However, demands by the Government of Manipur for the introduction of the provision of an Inner Line Permit system to restrict entry of outsiders into the state were refused.

- An ILP was previously required for certain parts of the Leh district in Jammu and Kashmir.
- There are also ongoing demands for the introduction of ILP in Assam, Meghalaya and Manipur to regulate entry of outsiders into the state.

3. Maharashtra's employment-linked scheme to increase mangrove cover

In news:

- Maharashtra state cabinet approved the Mangrove Protection and Employment Generation Scheme for 2017-18 and has made Rs 15 crore budgetary provision for it.
- This special scheme to preserve mangroves on public and private land and to provide employment opportunities — linked to mangrove cover — to people of the selected areas. The decision will help in protecting mangroves on around 30,000 hectares.
- Employment would be generated by setting up businesses such as crab farming, bee keeping, rice farming, fish farming and tourism. The businesses can be run through a committee or by an individual
- It will help in many people coming forward voluntarily for preserving mangroves.
- Committees would be set up in villages having mangrove cover to ensure group benefits by forming organisational structure.

The committee will also prepare a micro plan for mangrove preservation, protection, setting up protection fences and improving quality of mangroves.

4. We need to talk about rural distress

Context:

- Farmers are under siege — a policy upgrade is essential
- India's agricultural policy has historically disincentivised the creation of a formal credit culture among farmers.

Exploitation during colonial rule:

- **Tinkathia system :**
- Farmers in Bihar's Champaran district were forced to set aside 15% of their land to cultivate indigo under this system.
- The farmers were subjected to a variety of extortionist cesses, or **abwabs** .

Reality of Indian Farming:

- Marginal farming in India is a **highly complex and decision-intensive process** .
- Decisions to be made by farmers considering various facts:
- Choice of crops (annual or short term) and their time of tillage.
- Rising prices of agricultural inputs, availability of water, soil suitability and pest management.
- All these factors create a narrow window of economic benefit for the marginal farmer.
- Cautious approach need to be followed by the farmer because a wrong decision can wreak havoc.

Punjab University Study highlights the Debt levels among the farming community:

- **Land holdings:** average landholding size decreased from 2.3 ha in 1971 to 1.16 ha in 2011.

Land – Holdings	Debt-to-income ratio
§ Greater than 10 hectares	§ 0.26
§ Medium: 4-10 ha and semi-medium: 2-4 ha	§ 0.34
§ Small :1-2 ha and marginal(less than a hectare)	§ 0.94 and 1.42 (greater debt burden)
	§ Over 50% of their loans are from non- banking sector

Key stats:

- Level of earnings:
- A farmer now typically earns ₹2,400 a month per hectare of paddy and about ₹2,600 a month per hectare of wheat.
- Farm labourers earn less than ₹5,000 a
- About 30.5 million left farming between 2004-05 and 2010-11, seeking employment in the secondary and tertiary sectors.
- In 2011, the Planning Commission estimated that the size of this agricultural workforce would shrink to less than 200 million by 2020.
- Farmer's suicide: Farmer suicides have also grown primarily in States with limited irrigation and variable rainfall, comprising 87.5% of all farmer suicides in 2015. Over 3,21,428 farmers committed suicide in the last 20 years.

Institutional support:

- The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development: established in 1982, has sought to provide financing support for tube-well irrigation, farm mechanisation and other ancillary activities.
- 2004-05 Union Budget sought to double agricultural credit.
- In 2006, a 2% interest subvention was provided. Allowing farmers to avail of kisan credit card (KCC) loans at 7% per annum (up to ₹3 lakh)
- In 2011, the government provided a further 3% interest subvention for farmers making immediate payments on their KCC loans.
- **Farm loan waivers politics :**
- **1990:** nationwide agriculture loan waiver.
- **2009:** Another agricultural loan waiver was sanctioned, just before the Lok Sabha election.
- More recently, the Uttar Pradesh government's farm loan waiver scheme has been replicated in Maharashtra, Punjab and Karnataka and estimated to total up to 0.5% of India's GDP.

Loan waivers impacts:

- Deleterious impact on the provision of rural credit
- Breeds credit indiscipline among farmers and leads to a shortfall in rural credit growth.
- When the next election is likely to bring about another farm loan waiver, why would any farmer seek to pay off his loans early?

Way forward:

- Greater subsidies could be extended for the purchase of agricultural equipment, fertilizers and pesticides

- Expansion of medical insurance coverage through the **Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna**.
- The scope of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act could be increased. Allowing marginal farmers to be paid for tilling their own fields could reduce their input costs.
- Need of the hour is a **national conversation on rural distress**.

5. Subnationalism not a threat

Context:

- India is witnessing the re-emergence of **subnationalism** as a political idea.
- The key issue of contention is regarding a separate State flag for Karnataka.

Politics in Karnataka:

- Karnataka is neither ruled by a regional party nor has shown any significant separatist or secessionist tendencies in the past.
- Karnataka has had an unofficial **yellow-and-red flag** for almost 50 years, the government is now considering adopting an official State flag.
- Protest against the imposition of Hindi, most notably on the signboards of Namma Metro stations in Bengaluru.
- Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has strongly come out in support of the State flag and against the use of Hindi signboards in the Metro.

Accommodating multiple identities:

- The nationalist movement had furthered a pluralistic idea of India.
- The following key legislative moves ensured that Indian national identity is not homogeneous.
- **States Reorganisation Act, 1956:** green signal for formation of states based on linguistic criteria.
- The Official Languages Act of 1963 prevented the planned transition of India's official language from English to Hindi. These key legislative moves ensured that Indian national identity is not homogeneous.
- **India does not follow a classical majoritarian form of democracy.**
- The first-past-the-post electoral system tends to favour ethnocultural majorities, but there are also certain group-based fundamental rights provided in the Constitution, such as in Articles 29 and 30.
- Part XXI of the Constitution has a set of special provisions for certain States and sub-State regions, while the Fifth and Sixth Schedules give special institutional measures for the administration of areas with high Scheduled Tribe populations.
- **Consociational system:**
- Providing for formal power-sharing arrangements between different social groups.
- Concept given by political scientist Arend Lijphart's.
- India does not neatly fit here also.
- India may be classified as a “state-nation” which respects “multiple but complementary” sociocultural identities and provides constitutional mechanisms to accommodate political claims arising out of these identities as argued by Alfred Stepan, Juan Linz and Yogendra Yadav.

Furthering a plural democracy

- The accommodation of linguistic and cultural diversities does not merely help maintain the integrity of India's national boundaries, but also promotes **positive social outcomes**.

- **Prerna Singh's work:** “ **How Solidarity Works for Welfare** ” , has argued that subnationalism is positively linked to social development.
- Greater the level of subnational solidarity, higher will be the State’s commitment to social welfare.
- Kerala’s success is the most striking example.
- She contrasts Kerala and Tamil Nadu with Uttar Pradesh, a development laggard with little subnational solidarity, to argue her point.

Sub nationalism to be viewed as a constructive element:

- India’s pluralistic nationalism celebrates the coexistence of multiple identities.
- The assertion of subnational pride in States like Karnataka counters attempts at advancing the homogenising narrative of Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan.
- As long as subnationalism is not secessionist, or aimed at othering sections of the population, it should not be viewed as a threat, but rather as a constitutive element of India’s plural democracy.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Indo-Russian war games in Oct.

In news:

- **The Indra Exercise:** India and Russia have begun discussions to work out the modalities for their first **tri-service military exercise** to be held in October.
- **Key fact:** It will also be India’s first bilateral military exercise with any country involving all three services.
- **Main objective:** to carry out joint exercises for suppression of international terrorist activities under the United Nations mandate.

2. A push for cooperation in S&T and medical research

Context:

- Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s visit to India.

In news:

- **Agreements signed:** cooperation in science and technology, including research into stem-cells for making bone-marrow transplants more accessible.
- The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) already has an **India-Japan cooperative programme** that has Christian Medical College & Hospital, Vellore, and Kyoto University, Japan, as participants.
- The aim of the programme is to develop infrastructure and expertise for India to be a competitive force in regenerative medicine and induced pluripotent stem cell biology.
- The focus of the collaboration is on developing treatments for sickle-cell anaemia, Beta thalassemia and brain disorders, and creating a haplobank relevant to Indian populations said .
- What is a haplobank? – Haplobank refers to a specially maintained collection of embryonic cells that can, in theory, be directed to become any kind of cell and thus progenitor of replacement organs.

3. Open to talks on reopening Nathu La for Kailash pilgrims: China

Reopening of Nathu La

- China indicated that it is ready to continue communication with India over reopening **Nathu La in Sikkim** to facilitate the **Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage**
- The route was closed in June following tension over the Doklam standoff.
- According to the agreement reached between the two leaders and based on the fact that the western section of the India-China boundary has been recognised by the two sides, China opened the pass to the Indian pilgrims.
- The Sikkim route to Mansarovar was opened in 2015.

Hydrological data

- In August, the Ministry of External Affairs had stated that India had not received hydrological data from China this year.
- Regarding sharing hydrological data with India on the **Brahmaputra and Sutlej rivers**, China said that it was not possible as data stations in Tibet were being upgraded.
- Under a bilateral mechanism established in 2006, China is expected to share hydrological data on the two rivers during the flood season between May 15 and June 15.
- China will start providing data again depending on the progress of the ongoing work.
- The hydrological data is used to anticipate the flow of water from the upper riparian states into India and Bangladesh and deal with flooding.
- China has been building major dams on the Brahmaputra river to generate hydel power. It operationalised Zangmu hydroelectric project in October 2015 and three more are under construction.

4. The case for alliance

Context:

- Rise of China and uncertainty over America's role in Asia has brought Japan and India closer

India-Japan

- Japan was the only nation extended public support to India during the Doklam confrontation with China
- In the aftermath of India's nuclear tests, Tokyo was at the forefront of the international condemnation and the imposition of collective economic measures against Delhi.
- But now Japan has come closest to being India's natural ally in Asia.

Factors that are threatening to unravel the post-war order in Asia .

- Rapid rise of China: Purposeful military modernisation over the last few decades has given Beijing levers to contest US military dominance over Asia.
- Growing uncertainty over America's future role in Asia

Rising China

- Rising China has dethroned Japan as the number one economic power in Asia.
- China's GDP is now five times larger than that of India.
- Beijing outspends Delhi and Tokyo on defence by more than four times. According to the London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies, China's defence budget (\$216 billion) is more than twice that of India (\$56 billion) and Japan (\$46 billion) put together

Uncertainty over America's role in Asia

- President Donald Trump is challenging the two foundations of America's post-war primacy in Asia —
 - The willingness to act as the market for Asian goods
 - Defending its allies in the region, including Japan.
- As they cope with China's assertiveness, India and Japan also worry about the consequences of a potential American retrenchment or a deliberate decision in Washington to cede more space to Beijing in Asia.
- Delhi and Tokyo also need to insure against wild oscillations in US policy. One way of doing that is to move towards a genuine alliance between India and Japan.

Alliance between India and Japan

- It can neither replace the American might nor contain China.
- As Beijing's neighbours, they have a big stake in a cooperative relationship with Beijing and also a strong incentive to temper some of China's unilateralism through a regional balance of power system
- The cooperation between India-Japan is increasing through civil nuclear agreement, high speed railway development, and modernisation of transport infrastructure in the Northeast.
- Tokyo and Delhi have expanded their maritime security cooperation, agreed to work together in promoting connectivity and infrastructure in third countries in India's neighbourhood.

Defence partnership?

- Without a significant defence relationship, the talk of an alliance between India and Japan remains meaningless.
- Although military exchanges expanded over the last few years, the two sides are far from a credible defence partnership that can shape the regional security architecture in the coming decades.
- That negotiations on India's purchase of Japanese amphibious aircraft, US-2i, have been stuck for years underlines part of the problem.
- It is necessary to overcome the bureaucratic inertia that limits the defence possibilities between India and Japan.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Corporate debt, a drag on economy

Context:

- **Corporate debt and its impact on Indian Economy.**

In news:

Thomson Reuters data highlights:

- Study based on the latest annual earnings report
- India's corporate debt rose to a seven-year high at the end of March.
- More than a fifth of large companies did not earn enough to pay interest on their loans and the pace of new loans fell to the lowest in more than six decades.
- The Indian government reported that annual GDP growth in the quarter ended June dropped to 5.7. It was blamed on attempts by the government to flush out money hidden from the tax man, which caused a cash crunch, and the introduction of a general sales tax (GST), which prompted businesses and consumers to hit the pause button.

- **Key Stats:**

1. Net debt for 288 companies with a **market capitalisation** of more than \$500 million, covering most big firms in India, has hit at least a seven-year high of ₹18 trillion (\$281 billion).
2. **Soured debt** was 12% of total loans held by lenders at the end of March.
3. More than a fifth of 513 Indian companies had interest cover of less than 1%.
4. **Gross capital formation**, a gauge of private investment, fell to less than 30% of GDP in the June quarter, from 31% a year earlier and 38% a decade ago.

Basic Information:

- **Sour debt:** Non-performing loan on which interest is overdue and full collection of principal is uncertain. According to typical banking regulations, if interest has not been paid for 90 days the loan is put on a cash basis. Thus, its interest cannot be credited to the bank's revenue account until it has actually been received. Loans which have adequate collateral (such as home mortgages), and some types of consumer loans, are generally exempt from this requirement. Also called doubtful loan, sour loan, troubled loan.
- **Capital formation** is a term used to describe the net capital accumulation during an accounting period for a particular country, and the term refers to additions of capital stock, such as equipment, tools, transportation assets and electricity. Countries need capital goods to replace the current assets that are used to produce goods and services, and if a country cannot replace capital goods, production declines. Generally, the higher the capital formation of an economy, the faster an economy can grow its aggregate income.
- **Market Capitalization:** the value of a company that is traded on the stock market, calculated by multiplying the total number of shares by the present share price.

2. Slow creep

Context:

- **Daily pricing of petrol and diesel policy**
- Since the introduction of daily pricing of petrol, the price of petrol in Delhi has cumulatively increased by almost ₹

Reason for implementation:

- To ensure the benefit of lower international crude oil prices is passed on to domestic consumers.
- **Real picture:** comparison of crude oil prices with domestic petrol and diesel prices, suggests that this argument is far from convincing.
- In 2012, barrel of crude: \$120, a litre of petrol: ₹65 in retail fuel stations.
- Today, crude basket price has dropped to around \$50, the retail price of petrol is well over the ₹70 mark.

Earlier practice:

- 2010-2014:
- Deregulation of petrol and diesel pricing.
- Fuel prices to be determined primarily by the forces of supply and demand.

Reasons for the current price mismatching:

- Heavy taxes imposed on domestic fuels.
- Excise duty and value added tax are the main culprits.

- **True fact:** About half the price paid by the Indian end-consumer for petrol goes towards paying these taxes.
- The government's excise duty collection, for instance, has more than doubled during the period 2014-17, from ₹99,184 crore to ₹2,42,691 crore. This suggests quite clearly that the government, not the consumer, has been the biggest beneficiary of lower crude oil prices since 2014.

Can GST be the possible solution?

- Alternative tax such as the goods and services tax (GST), even at its highest slab of 28%, would substantially lower the current tax burden on fuels.
- Apart from making petrol and diesel more affordable to many more people in the lower rungs of the economy, it will also decrease the economic distortions caused by extraordinarily high taxes imposed on automobile fuels that are widely used.

Way forward

Along with lower taxes, greater competition in the fuel retailing market will allow further cost efficiencies to kick in and lead to lower prices for consumers.

3. Petrol, diesel should come under GST, says Pradhan

Context:

- Daily revision in petrol and diesel prices.
- ₹3 per litre spike since July

In news:

- Many States have drastically increased **value-added tax**.
- GST Council should consider bringing the petroleum products in the ambit of GST.
- **Key Fact:**

1. India relies on imports to meet 80% of its needs and so domestic fuel rates have been aligned to the movement of equivalent product prices in the international market since April 2002.
2. Previously, the rates were changed every fortnight but since June 16 they are being revised daily.

4. Workers to get unique number

In news:

New Labor reforms on the anvil: Every worker in the **unorganised and organised sector** will get a unique identification number that will make it easier for them to get benefits under different social schemes.

5. 'India needs data safety reforms'

In news:

- United Nations' Resident Coordinator in India Yuri Afanasiev said :India needs **regulatory reforms** to protect people against fraud and misuse of data by unscrupulous elements.
- Current protocols for encrypted data transfer, from money to medical records, to be shared between many companies, people and institutions have raised questions on how this data will be stored and accessed.

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. Examine critically the various economical policies of British in India from mid-eighteenth century till Independence.

GS Paper II

1. The penetration of Self Help Groups in rural areas in promoting participation in development programmes is facing socio-cultural hurdles. Examine.

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Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. [N. Korea: Japan draws in India](#)

Context:

Japan's Prime Minister visit to India

In News:

Strategic Convergence:

- India and Japan asked North Korea to shut down its nuclear and missile programmes.
- India and Japan, both hinted at Pakistan's past involvement with North Korean nuclear and missile programmes and sought accountability of "all parties" who helped Pyongyang acquire nuclear technology.

Cross-border terrorism:

- Japan promised to help India deal with cross-border terrorism: support can be provided both indirectly in international platforms or directly to deal with organisations like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed and the Islamic State
- A joint statement issued after the summit sought the implementation of **Resolution 1267 of the UN Security Council** to counter cross-border terrorism.

Japan's focus on Northeast States:

- Japan, at present, has two infrastructure projects in Meghalaya and Mizoram and more projects are likely to be

added to the list after feasibility studies.

Expanded Maritime cooperation:

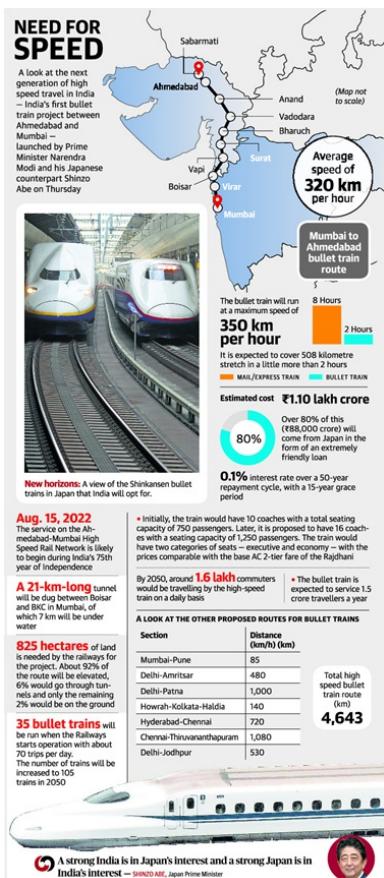
- Maritime cooperation between the **Japan Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF)** and **the Indian Navy** had expanded to include ‘anti-submarine aspects’.
- India and Japan, both agreed to support small islands in the region as part of their common strategy.

Joint Exercise:

- Expansion of joint exercises in areas of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR), peacekeeping operations and counter-terrorism, which will also include joint field exercises between the Japanese and Indian land forces next year.

2. 'Fly' on train from Mumbai by 2022

In news:



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe laid the foundation stone in Ahmedabad for the country’s first Rs. 1,10,000 crore, **508 km** high-speed rail project between Mumbai and Ahmedabad.
- **The ambitious project is being implemented with nearly 90% financial support and technology from Japan.**
- **Key Fact:** To be built on elevated corridor with a seven-km undersea tunnel in Mumbai, the project will be based on the famed Japanese **Shinkansen high-speed railway** system with a record of zero casualties in its 50 years of operation.
- **Dead line for completion:** August 15, 2022, the day when India marks 75 years of Independence.
- The project will be executed through a special purpose vehicle, the National High Speed Rail Corporation Ltd.
- India’s Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd and Japan’s Kawasaki Heavy Industries Ltd will tie up for manufacturing the rolling stock for bullet train project.
- A training centre in Vadodara is being set up to train over 4,000 employees who will be responsible for execution, operation and maintenance of the bullet train.
- The project will cover 12 stations — Mumbai, Thane, Virar, Boisar, Vapi, Bilimora, Surat, Bharuch, Vadodara, Anand, Ahmedabad and Sabarmati — and once operational, the train is expected to service 1.5 crore travellers a year.

year.

3. Five challenges in the Ahmedabad-Mumbai bullet train project

Context:

- Construction of the first bullet train between Ahmedabad and Mumbai is happening on 14 September at a function attended by Narendra Modi and Shinzo Abe
- It is a major leap in infrastructure development in India, this project signifies the friendship and collaboration between India and Japan

Specialties:

- The 534-km Rs1 trillion high-speed rail project will operate trains with average speeds of 200-250kmph
- It will be a game-changer in terms of inter-urban connectivity and establish India as a market for such technologies
- Japan is providing a loan that would cover 80% of the estimated project cost at 5% interest, with a 15-year moratorium followed by a 35-year payback period.

Challenges

Route design which would include questions like :

- Detailed alignment choice, especially when it is over ground, keeping in view land acquisition challenges versus providing access to the population along the corridor.
- Generate urban growth around the station, and even shift the centre of gravity of the urban area.
- Number of stations: Demand for more stations would increase the catchment and reduce the average speed due to higher number of stops. One option is to have different service categories like fast (stopping at all stations) and super-fast (only at major cities).

Evacuation facilitation:

- Efficient bus services as well as accessible parking lots for private vehicles should be provided.
- At major stations, where passengers could move to other trains, th transfer must be seamless.

Land acquisition:

- This will be a critical issue, especially where the alignment would veer off from existing railway lands.
- It would be best addressed by the line ging over ground, where the actual acquisition would be limited

Human resource development:

- It would be important to train a large number of Indian engineers and managers for design, construction and operations at standards that would be essential for high speed rail, including for stringent safety standards

Future expansion:

- It would be useful to have a perspective on how the expansion of this line would happen.

4. Japan calls for ‘Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy’

Context:

- Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s visit to India.
- Announcement of Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy.

In news:

- During the visit Shinzo Abe highlighted the country’s intensifying focus on the Indo-Pacific region and Tokyo’s evolving foreign policy.
- Japan’s new concept- “**Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy**”:

- Aims to prepare Japan to deal with the fast changing global and regional order and threats from China and North Korea.
- Strategy aims to create a “free and open” Asia-Pacific region which connects parts of eastern Africa, south Asia and southeast Asia with the western Pacific Ocean region and Japan.
- The ‘Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy’ rests on “two oceans” — Indian and Pacific — and “two continents” — Africa and Asia.
- Connectivity between Asia and Africa through a free and open Indo-Pacific, is expected to support stability and prosperity of the region.
- **Inference:** by connecting “two oceans” and “two continents”, Japan is quietly challenging China’s aggressive plans in the South China Sea that pose a threat to the energy lane that sustains Japanese economy.

5. Asia Africa Growth Corridor aims for people-centric growth strategy

Context:

- Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC)
- **Emergence of Idea:** during the joint declaration issued by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in November 2016

Asia Africa Growth Corridor:

- The AAGC envisages a people-centric sustainable growth strategy
- The AAGC is an economic cooperation agreement between the governments of India and Japan
- It engages various stakeholders- governments, firms, think tanks and civil society
- It would be based on the four pillars of
- Development and cooperation projects,
- Quality infrastructure and institutional connectivity,
- Enhancing capacities and skills, and
- People-to-people partnership
- The strengths of AAGC will be aligned with the development priorities of different countries and sub-regions of Asia and Africa
- AAGC-led growth in Africa and Asia will be responsive to the collective commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Trade Facilitation:

- In a study conducted by the European Commission, it is found that the time taken for export and import activities is among the highest in Africa (excluding the northern region)
- Moreover, the documents required to export and import are also on the higher side in Africa
- According to OECD trade facilitation indicators, Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa are below the best practices
- However, achieving the desired level of trade facilitation is a challenging task for Africa and Asia because of lack of technical know-how and skills

India's role:

- India has already made efforts through various initiatives to develop capabilities in other countries in Asia and Africa in the past
- Although many of them are not fully developed due to paucity of resources
- But we can re-energize such projects/initiatives through AAGC funding that could lead to promotion of imports and exports
- India must evolve appropriate strategy to meet import and export requirements of partner countries in the medium term

Reasons for low level growth in Africa:

- The low level of private investment in Africa is withholding high growth
- Owing to risky projects on long gestation projects, there has been lukewarm response from investors
- Possible Solution: Private investors may be attracted by using limited state funding using the European Investment Fund (EIF) Model
- The EIF consists of subsidizing investment, loss protection, capital relief, reduced interest rate, low collateral

requirements, lease and guarantee

Way forward:

- Working closely with the international community, the Asia Africa Growth Corridor will be instrumental in realizing a free and open Indo-Pacific region
- As a unique process, AAGC takes a multi-stakeholder as well as participatory approach towards development

Category: ECONOMY

1. [**India at 103 rank on Global Human Capital Index, lowest among BRICS nations**](#)

Global Human Capital Index

- India has been placed at a low 103 rank, the lowest among BRICS economies, on the World Economic Forum's (WEF's) Global Human Capital Index
- India is ranked lower than its BRICS peers
- Among the South Asian countries also, India was ranked lower than Sri Lanka and Nepal
- The index has been topped by Norway

Criterion adopted for Ranking

- The list takes into account “**the knowledge and skills** people possess that enable them to create value in the global economic system” to measure the ‘human capital’ rank of a country

Other Rankings by the WEF's survey

- India also ranks “among the **lowest in the world** ” when it comes to the employment gender gap
- But has fared well when it comes to development of skills needed for the future with a rank of 65 out of total 130 countries
- India ranks 118 for labour force participation among the key 35-54 year old demographic, it shows too many Indians are engaged in informal or subsistence employment

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. In many ways, Lord Dalhousie was the founder of modern India”. Elaborate

GS Paper II

1. “Asia Africa Growth Corridor will help in developing institutional mechanisms and models for connecting people, think tanks and businesses” Discuss.
2. “While it is of great value that India has Japan’s support for building the Ahmedabad-Mumbai bullet train, there are multiple challenges that need to be overcome.” Dicsuss.

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Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. 'Recurving' cyclones dried August rains

Context:

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) had predicted normal monsoon rains in August.
- Re-curving of Western Pacific tropical cyclones may have played a role in reducing the August rainfall

In news:

- Reason for drying up of monsoon rains in August across India: A strange pattern of tropical cyclones (TC) noticed in the Western Pacific.
- Typically August will be the second most bountiful monsoon month after July.
- **Process:**
 - **Normal:** During the monsoon months, cyclones in the Western Pacific move westwards towards India and aid rain-bearing systems over the sub-continent.
 - **Present scenario:**
 - But during some years they 'recurve', or start to swing north-east, and do not give as much of a push to the rains as they do in the good monsoon years.
 - **This re-curving frequently happens during the El Nino years but this time it inexplicably occurred when an El Nino hasn't yet taken shape.**
 - **What is El Nino?** El Nino years are those when sea surface temperatures in the east equatorial Pacific rise, and often dampen the monsoon.

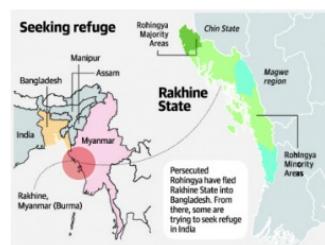
Category: POLITY

1. BJP States tell police to push back Rohingya

Context:

- Rohingya's issue.
- The union government has not yet taken any stance regarding the undocumented Rohingya refugees in India.

In news:



- BJP-led State governments in Assam and Manipur directed their police, especially in the border districts, to push back anyone who tries to cross the border.
- **Key Fact:**
 - Assam shares a 262 km border with Bangladesh.
 - Northeastern States — Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland, are also front-line States.
 - **Intelligence inputs:**

- Decision by state government based on Intelligence inputs from the center.
- **What does the intelligence report say?** terror groups could use the refugee crisis to sneak in their members and pose a security challenge to the country

2. Court suggests audit of NULM funds

In news:

- The SC has suggested an audit by the CAG of the funds disbursed under the National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM) scheme
- The SC has questioned whether the money meant to build shelter homes for the urban homeless and poor across the country is was actually lying unspent or had been diverted for other purposes
- Questions posed by Supreme Court:
- The SC has asked, “How can Government ensure that the money is spent?”
- Court has said that the funds for NULM should not be diverted as the money has been given for a specific purpose

Basic Information:

National Urban Livelihoods Mission

- National Urban Livelihoods Mission has been restructured and launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (HUPA) which replaces earlier poverty alleviation programme for the urban poor titled Swarna Jayanti
- Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY) The main reason is that urban poor have a strong desire to come out of their poverty and improve their quality of life which they are unable to do
- Social mobilization and strong institutional help are critical for them to come out ,they lack access to livelihood opportunities and capital
- It has also expanded the beneficiaries of urban poor to include the homeless and street vendors who are invariably ignored in government programmes
- A special provision has been made for the funding of all-weather 24/7 shelters with all essential facilities for the urban homeless. In addition, up to five per cent of the NULM budget has been earmarked to provide support to urban street vendors which will include skill upgradation and development of vendor markets.

3. How to make Indian courts more efficient

Context:

- Problem of ‘Pendency’ in Indian Judicial System

Clearing out of Long Pending Cases

- Lower courts in Kerala, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, and Chandigarh have disposed of almost all cases that had been pending for a decade or more
- **Key Fact:**
- A total of 11,000 cases pending for over 10 years in these four states and the Union territory of Chandigarh
- National pendency count is at around 2.3 million cases
- Delhi, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Karnataka are also close to clearing out long-pending cases

Lessons to be learnt from lower Courts:

- The high court of Punjab and Haryana has jurisdiction over the lower courts of Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh
- **Case management system** —i.e. a mechanism to monitor every case from filing to disposal, setup a decade ago.
- It also began to categorize writ petitions based on their urgency
- In addition, it set annual targets and action plans for judicial officers to dispose of old cases.

- And began a **quarterly performance review** to ensure that cases were not disposed of with undue haste
- All these measures ushered in a degree of **transparency and accountability** in the system, the results of which are now apparent

Judicial Case Management:

- In this system, the court sets a timetable for the case and the judge actively monitors progress
- This marks a fundamental shift in the management of cases—the responsibility for which moves from the litigants and their lawyers to the court

Law Commission of India's Report suggestions :

- The Law Commission of India in its 230th report has also offered a long list of measures to deal with the pendency of cases
- These include
 - (1) Providing strict guidelines for the grant of adjournments
 - (2) Curtailing vacation time in the higher judiciary
 - (3) Reducing the time for oral arguments unless the case involves a complicated question of law
 - (4) And framing clear and decisive judgements to avoid further litigation

Way Forwards:

- The courts should also seriously consider incorporating technology into the system
- Digitizing courts records has been a good start in this context
- Just like automation powered by Artificial Intelligence is already helping doctors, it can also be leveraged to assist judges and lawyers

4. Provide relief in cases of unnatural jail death, SC tells Centre, States

Context:

- Unnatural Jail deaths.
- The judgment came on a letter addressed to the apex court in 2013 by its former Chief Justice R.C. Lahoti on the deplorable conditions of 1382 prisons across the country.

In news:

- **Supreme Court directive:**
- Directed the Chief Justices of all High Courts to **suo motu** register petitions to identify the kin of prisoners who died unnatural deaths from 2012 and order the States to award them compensation.
- This judgment is significant as the high court will now directly award compensation and ensure compliance by the States.
- **For first time offenders:** Appoint counselors and support persons for counselling prisoners.
- Extend family visits of prisoners and use phones and video-conferencing not only between a prisoner and family, but also his lawyers.
- **Supreme Court quotes:** Nelson Mandela Rules passed by the UN General Assembly says “ **merely because a person is in prison, it does not mean that he or she should be cut off from the outside world**”.
- **State Legal Services Authorities (SLSAs)** to conduct a study and performance audit of prisons.
- **Constitute a Board of Visitors** which includes eminent members of society to initiate prison reforms.
- **Encourage open prisons** . Semi-open prison in Delhi are extremely successful.
- **Key Facts:**
- **CAG in 2014:** Hospital in Tihar Jail has a shortage of doctors and other medical staff ranging from 18% to 62%.

- **NHRC monograph:** From 2007–2011, prisoners' suicides formed 71% of the total number of unnatural deaths.
- **Present Scenario:**
- The National and States Human Rights Commissions decide and award compensations in cases of custodial torture, deaths, etc.
- However, compliance by State governments is low as these commissions do not exercise any power of contempt.
- Besides, the States go for a long-drawn appeal in the high courts and later on in the Supreme Court, if necessary.
- **Why from 2012?** National Crimes Records Bureau has records of unnatural deaths from that year.

5. Reservation charts on trains set to disappear

In news:

- The Ministry of Railways has decided to discontinue pasting of reservation charts on reserved coaches of all trains originating from some railway stations on an experimental basis for three months.
- The stations are New Delhi, Hazrat Nizamuddin, Mumbai Central, Mumbai Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Chennai Central, Howrah and Sealdah.
- **Why such a move?**
- This follows a green initiative by South Western Railway's Bengauru Division (SBC) that is saving about ₹60 lakh on papers.
- The measure is expected to save substantial money to the national exchequer.

6. SC notice to Centre on plea to ban Blue Whale

In news:

- The Supreme Court asked the government to respond to a petition for an immediate direction to ban online game '**Blue Whale**' .
- Blue Whale is suspected to be behind the deaths or attempted suicides of teenagers and young adults hooked to it.
- **Petition filed by:** advocate C.R. Jaya Sukin, representing another lawyer N.S. Ponnaiah, who wanted the government to take immediate steps to spread awareness about the dangers of playing the game and end its availability online.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. 'Gift from India' sent in coordinated action

In News:

- India dispatched one of the largest relief consignments to southeast Bangladesh for the refugees streaming in from violence-hit Myanmar.
- **Family packs:** Food grains, pulses, sugar, salt, cooking oil, tea, milk powder, biscuits and noodles were put together in jute bags, with '**Gift from People of India**' stitched on it. Each small jute pack contains food grains, besides soaps and a mosquito net.

2. Three isn't a crowd

Context:

- India-Japan Special Strategic and Global partnership summit, and the highlights of the Joint statement between India and Japan

Concerns about China

- Even though the Doklam issue is resolved, it can happen again on the long unsettled border between the two

countries, at a place and time of China's choosing.

- Japan, which has its own troubles with China over territory, was the only country that openly articulated its support for India during those two troubled months
- Shinzo Abe recalled Japan's own experience with China's claims over the Senkaku (Diaoyu) islands as "very challenging"
- BRICS summit in Xiamen, China, where two Pakistan-based terror groups with animus toward India, Lashkar and Jaish, were named in the resolution

Highlights of the joint-statement:

- It calls for a "rules-based order" in the Indo-Pacific region where "sovereignty and international law are respected, and differences resolved through dialogue"
- And all countries, large or small, enjoy freedom of navigation and overflight, sustainable development, and a free, fair and open trade and investment system
- It took a swipe at China's OBOR initiative by calling for transparency in the development of connectivity and infrastructure development in the region
- It reaffirmed the India-Japan project to connect Africa and Asia
- The statement condemns North Korea, but for the first time, includes "the importance of holding accountable all parties" that helped that country develop its nuclear programme.

The defence and security co-operation

- Malabar joint exercise the most high-profile representation of this.
- A new chapter of co-operation in relations in all spheres, from terrorism, defence, the bullet train, infrastructure development to nuclear co-operation

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. Under-five mortality rate highest in India: Report

In News:

- **Global Burden of Disease Study 2016 :** In 2016, 9 million children under the age of five died in India — the highest globally
- **National Family Health Survey-4 :**
- The under-five mortality rate in India stands at 50 per 1000 live births down from 74 in the 10 years between 2005-06 and 2015-16.
- It ranges from 78 in Uttar Pradesh to 7 in Kerala, one of the best states in the country when it comes to effective health systems.
- **Globally, mortality rates have decreased across all age groups over the past five decades, with the largest improvements occurring among children younger than five years**
- At the national level, heterogeneity remains in terms of both level and rate of changes in age-specific mortality; increases in mortality for certain age groups occurred in some locations.
- GBD 2016 has shown that, non communicable diseases constitute seven of the top ten causes of death in India. The leading cause of mortality was ischemic heart disease.

2. India's pharmaceutical research problem

Context:

- Issues which are halting the progress of Pharmaceutical Sector in India

Biggest Challenge

- Lack of sufficient funding and inadequate allocations by the government
- At 0.83% of GDP, India is among the countries with **the lowest investment** in scientific research

An industry study of 2016

- It examined the extent to which public investment, IPRs and drug pricing policies in 56 countries actively contribute to or detract from innovation in global life-sciences.
- India ranked among the **lowest** (in the bottom five) due to weak IP protection, lack of data protection for biologics, low investment in R&D and price regulations
- All of these contribute to reduced revenue and therefore reduced future investment in biopharmaceuticals

Investment Attractiveness:

- India ranked No.19 in this 28-nation survey
- Five metrics were used to determine these rankings

- (1) scientific capabilities and infrastructure
- (2) clinical research conditions and framework
- (3) regulatory system
- (4) market access and financing
- (5) effective intellectual property protections

- India scored low on almost all metrics except for partial step-ups on scientific capabilities and infrastructure, and clinical research conditions and framework

Chances ahead:

- Rising cardiovascular problems and other chronic diseases, make India a strong candidate to become a future powerhouse of R&D and manufacturing in pharmaceuticals
- In addition, clean water, rising incomes and better health infrastructure for the nation are contributing to an ageing population
- This population will cause a greater demand for different types of pharmaceutical drugs

Low R&D investment:

- The R&D investment as a percentage of sales has been rising for several years and now stands at 6% for some Indian companies
- But it is still well short of the 20% typical of Western pharma companies
- Moreover, innovation in chronic diseases and rare diseases has not yet taken off

Issues with Indian Education System

- The education system is to blame as well, imparting theoretical knowledge with no emphasis on product development and application of theory
- This leads to the deterioration of the knack(capability) for problem-solving and innovation
- Those who manage to keep their enthusiasm alive for research have to deal with the lack of facilities or face delayed funding issues
- Educational and academic institutions should be encouraged to participate in research programmes with funding from both the government as well as the private sector

Need of the hour:

- Four pillars for strengthening the innovation environment in the biopharmaceutical industry

- (1) human resources
- (2) finances
- (3) infrastructure

(4) legal and regulatory framework

- Each of these pillars needs a concerted focus and a long-term commitment from industry as well as the government
- The environment to support the development of these verticals could emerge through our various government-led initiatives such as Skill India, Make in India, Atal Innovation Mission, etc.

Way Forward:

- In order to support consistent innovation, investment has to increase substantially before any tangible outcomes can be envisioned
- A strong patent system and robust IPRs environment is required to encourage research and to enable foreign pharma companies to bring new products to the market
- Without the requisite investment and enabling policy environment, patients in India will continue to suffer due to lack of access to cutting-edge medicines and new diagnostics

Category: ECONOMY

1. Economy has to grow at 8-9% to get more people out of poverty'

In news:

- Rangarajan, former chairman, Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council and former Governor, Reserve Bank of India in his speech at the **International Conference on Finance and Economics** organised by Loyola Institute of Business Administration on the topic 'Current Trends in Finance and Economics highlights':
 - If economy can grow up to 8-9% for a decade or so, the number of people below the poverty line will come down.
 - The vulnerable and poor do need to be given special treatment, we need two-fold approaches: letting the economy grow fast and directly addressing the problems of the poor.
 - The rural employment guarantee scheme, extension of food security were all done when the economy was strong.
 - A policy intervention is needed to divert the surpluses that are generated to development.
 - Growth cannot be sustained for a long time unless the population is healthy and educated. For sustained development, you need an educated population
 - The challenges ahead is to maintain a tolerable level of inflation

2. Centre plans to borrow for infra development

In news:

- The Urban Affairs Ministry is planning to go for market borrowings to incentivise good performance by the States.
- This move is a bid to break the vicious cycle of low performance leading to low budgetary allocation.

3. Exports climb 10.3% reversing 5-month slowdown

In news:

- India's merchandise exports grew 10.3% year-on-year to \$23.8 billion in August, reversing a declining trend witnessed for five straight months.
- Data released by Commerce Ministry
- The jump in shipments was driven mainly by engineering goods, petroleum products and chemicals as well as an improvement in demand in overseas markets.

4. Rupee, gold widen current account gap

In news:

- April-June period: Current account deficit (CAD) widened to \$14.3 billion, 2.4% of GDP.
- In the year earlier period, the CAD was \$0.4 billion, which was 0.1% of GDP.
- **Reasons:**
- Stronger Rupee, one of the best-performing Asian currencies in 2017 encouraged imports and
- Gold imports prior to the introduction of GST.
- Data released by the Reserve Bank of India.
- The widening of the CAD on a year-on-year basis was primarily on account of a higher **trade deficit** (\$41.2 billion) brought about by a **larger increase in merchandise imports relative to exports**.

Basic Information:

What is a ‘Current Account Deficit’?

- Current account deficit is a measurement of a country’s trade where the value of the goods and services it imports exceeds the value of the goods and services it exports.
- The current account also includes net income, such as interest and dividends, as well as transfers, such as foreign aid, though these components make up only a small percentage of the current account when compared to exports and imports.
- The current account is essentially a calculation of a country’s foreign transactions and, along with the capital account, is a component of a country’s balance of payment

5. [In a first, reserves hit \\$400 billion](#)

In news:

- The country’s foreign exchange reserves have touched **\$400 billion** for the first time.
- **Usage of reserve:** The reserves act as a buffer to be used in challenging times (assets to boost the import cover).

Basic Information:

FOREX :

- **Definition :** Forex reserves are foreign currency assets held by the central banks of countries.
- **Description :** These assets include foreign marketable securities, monetary gold, special drawing rights (SDRs) and reserve position in the IMF. The main purpose of holding foreign exchange reserves is to make international payments and hedge against exchange rate risks.

6. [External debt dips 2.7% to \\$471.9 bn as NRI deposits fall](#)

Key Stats:

- India’s total external debt for the financial year 2016-17 stood at \$471.9 billion, declining 2.7% from the previous year’s level.
- The decline in external debt was due to the decrease in long-term debt particularly NRI deposits and commercial borrowings.
- International Debt Statistics 2017: An inter-country comparison by the World Bank, , which presents the debt data for 2015, shows that India continues to be among the less vulnerable countries with its external debt indicators comparing well with other indebted developing countries

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE

1. [Indigenous artillery gun sets new record in range](#)

In news:

- **Setting up World record:** The advanced towed **artillery gun system (ATAGS)** has set a world record in range by hitting targets at a distance of 48 km

- ATAGS is being jointly developed by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation and the private sector**
- During trial firings, ATAGS registered the longest ever distance of 48.074 km, surpassing the maximum ranges of 35-40 km fired by any artillery gun system in this category

Development of the Gun

- The development is being done through a consortium based model
- It was designed by DRDO's Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE)
- In addition, Bharat Forge Limited of Kalyani Group, Tata Power Strategic Engineering Division and Mahindra Defence Naval System are involved in a big way, along with the Ordnance Factory Board

Nothing here for Today!!!

Astra missile: Indigenously developed beyond visual range air to air missile, successfully completed developmental trials over the Bay of Bengal.

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. “Merely because a person is in prison, it does not mean that he or she should be cut off from the outside world”. Evaluate.

GS Paper II

1. Discuss the major irritant in Indo-China relations and highlight the latest move to overcome these.

GS Paper III

1. Adaptation of PPP model for infrastructure development of the country has not been free from criticism. Critically discuss the pros and cons of the model.

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1. [Bird malaria in the Himalayan foothills](#)

Internal Security and Defense

1. [Scorpene submarines to get Indian AIP modules](#)

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Category: POLITY

1. As complaints mount, CAG starts audit of GST Network

In news:

- The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) to audit GST Network's technical capabilities to assess if it is ready to handle the massive amounts of transactions.
- **Issues to be audited :** bandwidth capabilities of the network, robustness of the software, security aspects, and the architecture of the entire system.
- The CAG is empowered under the Constitution to audit various aspects of the GST, and it would have a clear picture by the end of the financial year after taxes are filed through the new system.
- **Complaints:** Several traders and tax consultants have been complaining about the cumbersome navigation and the extra work they have to do to meet with GST requirements.

2. Government asks companies to allocate 7% of CSR funds to Swachhta Hi Seva

In news:

- The government has asked companies to devote a portion of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds to **Swachhta Hi Seva** campaign
- Government has sent a note to the heads of more than 1.1 million companies, urging them to devote around 7% of their CSR spending on the Swachh Bharat Kosh (SBK) to the Swachhta Hi Seva campaign

Swachhta Hi Seva Campaign

- The Swachhta Hi Seva campaign will comprise a range of activities including
- A nationwide drive to mobilize people to participate in shramdaan (voluntary work) on improving sanitation
- Construction of toilets and making their surroundings free of open defecation

CSR Rules

- The CSR rules came into effect on 1 April 2014
- These rules state that companies with a net worth of Rs500 crore or revenue of Rs1,000 crore or net profit of Rs5 crore should spend 2% of their average profit in the last three years on social development-related activities
- These activities include such as sanitation, education, healthcare and poverty alleviation, among others, which are listed in Schedule VII of the rules

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. India rejects OIC comment on Kashmir

In news:

- India has rejected Organisation of the Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) statement on Jammu and Kashmir, saying it "contains factually incorrect and misleading references."
- India also said the group has no locus standi on India's internal affairs.
- India, in its response to the statement made by Pakistan on behalf of OIC, India said J&K is its integral and inseparable part.
- The Permanent Mission of India at Geneva tweeted: "OIC has no locus standi on our internal affairs. Strongly advise refrain from making such references in future," the Permanent Mission of India at Geneva tweeted.

Basic Information:

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation:

- The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation is an international organization founded in 1969, consisting of 57 member states, with a collective population of over 1.6 billion as of 2008.
- The organisation states that it is "the collective voice of the Muslim world" and works to "safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony".
- The OIC has permanent delegations to the United Nations and the European Union. The official languages of the OIC are Arabic, English, and French.

2. Indus water talks make no headway

Context:

- **Indus Water Treaty.**
- Second round of discussions between India and Pakistan on the **Ratle and Kishanganga hydroelectric projects** took place at the World Bank headquarters

In News:

- **World Bank:** The latest round of talks between India and Pakistan on the Indus Waters Treaty has ended without any agreement.
- World Bank said it will continue to work with complete impartiality to resolve the issues in an amicable manner.

- **Islamabad's objection:**
- Ratle and Kishanganga hydroelectric projects: Islamabad has raised objections.
- **World Banks response:**
- World Bank will continue to work with both countries to resolve the issues in an amicable manner and in line with the Treaty provisions.
- The World Bank remains committed to act in good faith and with “complete impartiality and transparency” in fulfilling its responsibilities under the Treaty, while continuing to assist the countries

Basic Information:

The Indus Waters Treaty

- The Indus Waters Treaty is a water-distribution treaty between India and Pakistan, brokered by the World Bank (then the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development).
- The treaty was signed in Karachi on September 19, 1960 by Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru and President of Pakistan Ayub Khan.
- According to this agreement, control over the three “eastern” rivers — the Beas, the Ravi and the Sutlej — was given to India, while control over the three “western” rivers — the Indus, the Chenab and the Jhelum — to Pakistan.
- More controversial, however, were the provisions on how the waters were to be shared. Since Pakistan’s rivers flow through India first, the treaty allowed India to use them for irrigation, transport and power generation, while laying down precise regulations for Indian building projects along the way.
- The treaty was a result of Pakistani fear that, since the source rivers of the Indus basin were in India, it could potentially create droughts and famines in Pakistan, especially at times of war.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Bird malaria in the Himalayan foothills

In news:

- Bird or avian malaria caused by parasites **Plasmodium and Haemoproteus** is one of the most common and widespread diseases in birds.
- Avian malaria leads to decrease in reproductive success, anaemia, changes in body condition and even mortality in extreme cases.
- Mosquitoes transmit Plasmodium, while biting midges (Culicoides sp.) are responsible for Haemoproteus transmission in birds.
- Human malaria follows a seasonal pattern in the Himalayan foothills with peak transmission from July to October, whereas the avian malaria parasites showed no peak and were found to stay in blood throughout the year

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE

1. Scorpene submarines to get Indian AIP modules

In news:

- Navy gets ready to induct its first conventional submarine.
- Decisions have been reached on an expensive and time consuming process to install **Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) modules** on the six new Scorpene submarines to be inducted over the next few years.
- It will be installed by the Original Equipment Manufacturer, Naval Group.
- An AIP module is under development by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- **Advantages:** AIP modules give stealth and extended endurance to diesel-electric submarines by allowing them to stay submerged longer.
- **Key Fact:**

1. The first Scorpene submarine Kulvari has completed all trials and is ready for induction either by this month-end or early next month.
2. The second submarine Khanderi has begun trials, and is likely to be inducted early next year.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. How do the Indian debates on Secularism differ from the debates in the West?

GS Paper II

1. Why does Constitution of India provide different forms of Oaths for the President, the Ministers, the legislators and the member of the judiciary? Discuss their significance.

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – Sept 18

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Category: POLITY

[1. Narmada dam built despite attempts to stop it, says PM](#)

In news:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Narmada Dam project.
- The foundation for the project was laid by the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.
- **Key Fact:**

- **Second biggest:** The dam is the second biggest concrete gravity dam by volume in the world after the **Grand Coulee Dam** in the United States.
- **Hurdles faced:** World Bank refused to fund it on grounds of environmental damage and displacement of tribal people in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat.
- **Benefits:** farmers in the parched north Gujarat and Saurashtra regions would get irrigation benefits.

Basic Information:

- Grand Coulee Dam is a concrete gravity dam on the Columbia River in the U.S. state of Washington, built to produce hydroelectric power and provide irrigation water.

2. PDS digitisation moving at snail's pace

Context:

- End-to-end digitisation of the Public Distribution System (PDS): To track the movement of foodgrains so that they reached the right beneficiaries.

In news:

- The project was launched in 2012 at a cost of ₹884 crore to ensure that, at every step from field to fork, the government would be able to track the movement of foodgrains so that they reached the right beneficiaries. As part of the effort, all fair price or ration shops were to be digitised.
- The project also calls for automation of the supply chain — online monitoring of stock positions in godowns, tracking the movement of the food grains from the godowns to the fair price shops, SMS alerts to beneficiaries, etc.
- **No progress made in ensuring end to end digitization:**
- 11 States have not taken the elementary step of digitising fair price shops and nine other States, including Uttar Pradesh, have hardly made any progress.
- But out of 5.26 lakh ration shops, only 51% have been digitised in three years.
- Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland have cited connectivity issues for their inability to commence the process of digitisation.
- **Non – starters:** Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala, Punjab and West Bengal

3. Ministry gets notice over National Library extension

In news:

- The **Central Information Commission (CIC)** has served a show-cause notice to the Ministry of Culture for not replying to a RTI
- The Commission has directed the respondent authority to provide point-wise information to the applicant
- The Commission also directed the Central Public Information Officer (CPIO) to show-cause why maximum penalty should not be imposed for not replying properly

RTI:

- Sought complete information and each copy of relevant documents relating to present and final/ultimate/long term plan of action and policy and programme in future regarding the establishment of Regional Centre/Extension Centre of National Library at New Delhi
- The document, titled Proposal for Establishment of National Library Extension Centre/Regional Centre at New Delhi, says that the regional centre should be established at New Delhi(instead of Kolkata) for “better coordination and liaison with publishers
- Currently, the sole campus of the National Library is located in South Kolkata

4. A fairer test: Alternative to NEET must be sensitive to concerns of inequality and exclusion

Context:

- The National Eligibility Entrance Test (NEET) failed to harmonise the qualifying exam, making it fair while rewarding the brightest.
- NEET is seen as elitist, favouring the rich, urban families.

Reasons for getting NEET pattern of examination:

- Extortionist policies of private medical colleges
- Students are admitted on their ability to pay rather than commitment to the profession
- Weakening standards of high school education
- Over 30 entrance tests for students to gain admission, making it highly iniquitous and stressful.

Reasons for huge protest against NEET:

- Wide variance in standards between the CBSE and the SSC
- CBSE syllabus focuses on science and math and encourages thinking
- State boards focus on the rote method of learning and liberal arts, worsened by the non-availability of science, english and math teachers in rural areas.
- The gap has widened further with most competitive exams based on CBSE
- It implicitly denying students from rural areas and poor families access to professional education.
- NEET was based on a CBSE plus standard, compelling even the bright CBSE students to take recourse to expensive tutorials for cracking the exam
- Tamil Nadu has more government colleges and in recruiting students from rural and ensure availability of doctors at peripheral facilities.
- In pursuing “high standards”, it is apprehended that the IIT phenomenon may be getting repeated.
- Under the highly competitive IIT system, the majority are in the US or multinational companies and a handful in rural areas or government.

Way forward:

- Enforce an acceptable standard of school education, making entrance examinations unnecessary.
- Till that happens, the NEET must harmonise the test keeping in mind the syllabus of what is taught in state high schools and the CBSE in order to provide a level playing field to all aspirants.
- Revive the old system of pre medical course
- Medical students can be taught for one or two years basic sciences and brought on par with the knowledge levels required for medical education.
- Given our commitment to cooperative federalism, allow states to have their own admission policies
- But make an All India Licence Examination for registration with the MCI mandatory for those wanting to study or practise in other states or go abroad , alongside instituting the National Exit Examination.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. India under U.S. pressure to scale down ties with North Korea

In news:

- S. officials have asked India to cut down ties with Pyongyang (North Korea).
- The American insistence that India reduce ties with North Korea is an important move as it aims to draw New Delhi more strongly into the East Asian crisis
- **India- Japan joint statement:**

- Described North Korea as a common threat.
- Called upon North Korea to roll back its nuclear and missile programmes.
- India and Japan called on the international community to rigorously and fully implement relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions to maximise pressure on North Korea.
- Also discussed the role of Pakistan's A.Q. Khan network in supporting the clandestine nuclear programme of North Korea.
- **India and North Korea:**
- India has repeatedly deplored the recent missile and nuclear tests by Pyongyang though bilateral ties with the government of Kim Jong-un have remained more or less undisturbed.
- India played a key role in the resolution of the Korean War during the early 1950s and has maintained diplomatic ties with Pyongyang.
- India supported the U.N. in banning trade with North Korea though the Ministry of External Affairs has maintained that Indian trade has consisted of humanitarian ingredients like food items and medicines.

2. Tweaks to pact with South Korea mooted

In news:

- India is looking to plug loopholes in its Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with South Korea following concerns over a recent sudden surge in imports of gold and related articles from that country.
- Authorities are also learnt to be probing a possible "criminal angle" behind the recent rapid rise in imports of the yellow metal from South Korea.
- Certain firms, "**owned and operated by some Indians**", allegedly misusing the India-South Korea FTA — officially called the **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** — that allows duty-free imports of the precious metal and its articles.
- The authorities are examining a possible criminal angle in such transactions as those entities were allegedly sending gold medallion directly from Dubai to South Korea and then exporting to India, in violation of the FTA norms.
- Currently, under the FTA, duty-free import of gold medallion is allowed only if it has met the norm of 'Change in Tariff Heading' under the Harmonised System (HS) Code — which means one could send gold bars and rods from a third country to South Korea, convert them into medallion (thereby changing the tariff line due to some transformation) there, then export to India and avail the zero-duty benefit.

Key Fact:

- Gold imports from South Korea had shot up to around \$340 million during July 1-August 3, 2017, while the same for the entire 2016-17 was just about \$71 million
- India in the bilateral meeting to be held soon with South Korea on trade issues, will come up with a long-lasting measure, push for inclusion of tighter norms in the FTA on imports of gold and its items, to prevent misuse.
- India will insist on incorporating a clause in the FTA specifying the criteria of (at least 35%) 'value addition' as well as 'Change in Tariff Sub-Heading' (under the Harmonised System Code) to ensure that the item has undergone substantial transformation in South Korea, and not just routed through that country to take advantage of the duty-free norms under the FTA.
- Simultaneously, there are also plans to impose safeguard duty (of around 12.5%) on gold imports from South Korea.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Gold imports rise three-fold to \$15 bn

In news:

- **Commerce Ministry data:** The country's gold imports recorded a three-fold jump to \$15.24 billion during the April-August period of the current fiscal.
- Gold imports, which has a bearing on the country's current account deficit (CAD), stood at ₹08 billion in April-August 2016-17.
- Surge in gold imports last month contributed to the widening of trade deficit to \$11.64 billion as against \$7.7 billion in August 2016.
- CAD rose sharply to \$14.3 billion — or 2.4% of GDP — at the end of first quarter of 2017-18. In general terms, CAD refers to the difference between inflow and outflow of foreign exchange that has an impact on exchange rate.
- Worried over surge in gold imports from South Korea, with which India has a free trade agreement, the government has restricted inbound shipments of the precious metal.

2. A powerful move

Context:

- **Catch-22:** India is the third largest coal producer in the world. But it is also its third largest importer.
- The government has decided to offer 10 coal mines for auction

Impact:

- It will break the 41-year old domination of the state-owned Coal India Limited (CIL) over commercial mining
- It will improve supply of the fuel, and its quality

Present scenario:

- Current regulation restricts commercial operations to CIL — and Singareni Collieries Limited
- It is the major reasons for the energy-strapped country not being able to tap the full potential of its coal reserves

Monopoly of CIL

- Competition Commission of India (CCI) said that monopoly exercised by CIL is “patently unfair”.
- It is found that CIL and its subsidiaries is “in contravention of the provisions of Section 4(2)(a)(i) of the Competition Act, 2002, for imposing unfair/discriminatory conditions in fuel supply agreements with power producers”

Issues:

- Indian coal has about 45 per cent ash, much higher than the 25-30 per cent ideally required for the efficient burning of the fuel in thermal power stations
- Geological factors are the primary reason for this lacuna
- CIL's overwhelming dominance of commercial mining has made the outfit stingy in investing in technology
- Coal washing, for example — that increases the efficiency of coal. Less than 20 per cent of the coal produced by CIL undergoes coal washing.
- Thermal power plants also have to reckon with stones in the coal they procure, which adds to their production costs and contributes to the wear and tear of their equipment

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. Growing feeling of regionalism is an important factor in the generation of demand for a separate state. Discuss.

GS Paper II

1. ‘The Supreme Court of India keeps a check on arbitrary power of the Parliament in amending the Constitution.’ Discuss critically.

GS Paper III

1. Many food items contain “trans fats”. What do you understand by this term? Which Indian food items contain “trans fat”? What are the implications of trans fats on human health?

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G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Category: INDIAN SOCIETY

1. Liberalization's impact on gender discrimination

Context:

- Conventional wisdom suggests that economic reforms succeeding liberalization policy of government in early 1990s should have reduced gender discrimination—but that hasn't really been the case.
- India's gender balance in entrepreneurship and jobs remains among the lowest in the world.
- Globalization and trade policy have made a limited contribution towards India's convergence in gender segmentation.

Liberalization and gender Discrimination:

- Increased market competition, forces firms to eliminate inefficient discriminatory practices, including gender discrimination
- Market competition works in favour of women, as women are more competitive, and offer cheaper and more flexible labour vis-à-vis men.

Present trends:

- The share of females in manufacturing employment has barely increased over the last two decades. Female activity is largely concentrated in the unorganized sector.
- Women entrepreneurs are more dominant in industries that pay lower average wages.
- Despite many competitive reforms that India has undertaken, this pattern of gender-based segmentation has been accentuated over the years.

Manufacturing Sector

- The female ownership shares are highest and typically exceed 50% in industries related to chemicals and chemical products, tobacco products, and paper and paper products.
- At the opposite end, female ownership shares are 2% or less in industries related to computers, motor vehicles, fabricated metal products, and machinery and equipment.

Service sector

- Among service industries, female ownership shares exceed 30% in industries related to sanitation and education. Industries related to research and development, water transport, and land transport have the lowest female ownership rates, at 1% or less.
- The female ownership rates in major cities tend to be higher than overall state averages.
- The states with the highest female service sector ownership rates are Kerala,

Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh, with average female ownership shares exceeding 12%.

- The lowest female ownership rates are in Rajasthan, Bihar, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh, each with 6% or less. It is surprising that the nation's capital, Delhi, has the lowest share of female-owned establishments in manufacturing. Its position in the services sector is only slightly above the national average.

Factors Affecting Female Entry into various Industries

- Empirical results suggest that a district/industry with more incumbent female employment has a greater female entry share. Among district-level traits, a higher female-to-male ratio, an age profile emphasizing working age population, and better quality infrastructure appear important.
- Inadequate infrastructure also affects women more than men, because women are often responsible for a larger share of, and often more time-consuming, household activities.
- In particular, transport infrastructure and paved roads within villages play an important role. Travel in India can be restrictive and unpredictable, and women face greater constraints in geographic mobility imposed by safety concerns and social norms.
- Better electricity and water access may reduce the burden of women in providing essential household inputs for their families, and allow for more time to be directed toward entrepreneurial activities.

Way forward:

- India's 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, passed in 1992, instituted one-third seat reservations for women in local governance bodies. The political empowerment of women had huge beneficial effects. The political reservation for women has gained India global recognition.
- India's economic liberalization and increased market competition has not eliminated gender segmentation. However, improved physical and human infrastructure, and domestic pro-competitive reforms have reduced gender segmentation.
- Gender will play a bigger and more strategic role in India's future growth.
- This growth will come in many forms: increased female labour force participation, improvements in productivity, elimination of gender discrimination in access to bank loans, and increased voice and political representation.
- Simply put, empowering half of the potential workforce has significant economic benefits beyond promoting gender equality.

Category: POLITY

1. Y.C. Modi, CBI special director case, named NIA chief

In news:

- The appointments committee of the cabinet (ACC) named senior IPS officer Y.C. Modi to head the **National Investigation Agency (NIA)**, according to an order issued by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).
- Modi, a 1984 batch IPS officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre, was part of the Supreme Court-appointed special investigation team that probed the 2002 Gujarat riot cases.
- Modi currently works as special director in the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Basic Information:

National Investigation Agency:

- National Investigation Agency (NIA) is a central agency established by the Indian Government to combat terror in India.
- It acts as the Central Counter Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency.
- **The agency is empowered to deal with terror related crimes across states without special permission from the states.**
- The Agency came into existence with the enactment of the National Investigation Agency Act 2008 by the Parliament of India on 31 December 2008.
- NIA was created after the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks as need for a central agency to combat terrorism was realised.

Jurisdiction:

- The Agency has been empowered to conduct investigation and prosecution of offences under the Acts specified in the Schedule of the NIA Act.
- A State Government may request the Central Government to hand over the investigation of a case to the NIA, provided the case has been registered for the offenses as contained in the schedule to the NIA Act.

Central Government can also order NIA to take over investigation of any scheduled offense anywhere in the India. Officers of the NIA who are drawn from the Indian Revenue Service, Indian Police Service, state police, Income Tax as well as officers from the Central Armed Police Forces, have all powers, privileges and liabilities which the police officers have in connection with investigation of any offence.

2. Rethinking police reform

Context:

- State police forces in India are among the least trusted public institutions
- “Can anything be done?”

Background

- According to the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD), there are 15,268 police stations in India
- These stations are organized under various administrative units like circles, subdivisions, districts, ranges and zones
- The median ratio of police officers to constabulary is 5%

Key stats:

- There are a total of about 1.8 million police personnel employed by Indian state police organizations today and there are also 300,000 vacancies
- This results in a median 200 policemen for every 100,000 people, though it ranges widely from 76 in Bihar to 700 in Delhi

Solutions:

- Dealing with 21st century challenges with the (currently applicable) Police Act of 1861 creates lots of issues
- The politicization of the police is a tough problem to solve in an environment in which money, votes, and instruments of intimidation (misuse of the police) mix
- According to a Takshashila Institution survey of public trust, state police organizations rank last among government organizations and agencies
- Numerous committees and commissions have opined on the issue of police reform
- Most of them have approached the problem from a quantity, capacity, capability, training, compensation and benefits point of view
- The solutions may generally be grouped into the idea of “if you make the policeman’s conditions better, then everything will improve”

Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) and police reforms:

- The ARC recommended that the investigative functions of police be separated from the day-to-day law and order functions
- And the superintendence of the government over police be restricted in such a

- manner that the force retains operational autonomy
- It suggested a State Accountability Commission made up of five members of government, including the home minister and chief secretary and five non-partisan eminent citizens
 - The ARC recommendation resolved the politicization dilemma by delegating operational control to the force and democratizing governance to a commission

Way forward:

- Codifying checks and balances in respective police Acts will bring assurance against illegal orders by the political establishment to the police
- Currently, politicians use the power of the police for their purposes, but sidestep any responsibility for their failures
- Only by giving full accountability to the politicians can society hold the politicians responsible for their actions
- Only when full political accountability joints with the betterment in capacity, capability and equipment can we begin true police reform

Category: ECONOMY

1. Shell shock: Govt. ‘names and shames’ directors

Context:

- Ministry of Corporate Affairs has identified 1.06 lakh directors of ‘shell companies’ for disqualification under the relevant provisions of the Companies Act, 2013.
- The move is part of actions to break the network of ‘shell companies’ and further the fight against **black money/money laundering**

In news:

- **‘Name and shame’ exercise:** Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MoCA) has begun making public the lists of disqualified directors across the nation as well as those associated with struck-off companies.
- The disqualified in the lists are those who are, or had been a director, in a company that has not filed financial statements or annual returns for any continuous period of three financial years. Such directors will not be eligible for re-appointment as a director in that company or for appointment in other companies for five years from the date of non-compliance.
- Several Keralite businessmen, leading politicians, top civil servants and police officers figured in the lists.

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. Giant sea snail plan to rescue Barrier Reef

Context:

- Great Barrier Reef: Saving the corals.

In news:

- A giant starfish-eating snail (Pacific triton sea snail — also known as the giant triton) could be unleashed to help save the Great Barrier Reef.
- Predatory crown-of-thorns starfish, which munch coral, are naturally-occurring but have proliferated due to pollution and run-off at the struggling World Heritage-listed ecosystem
- A major study of the 2,300-km long reef's health in 2012 shows coral cover halved over the past 27 years, with 42% of the damage attributed to the crown-of-thorns starfish.
- The snails, which can grow to half a metre, have a well developed sense of smell and can hunt their prey by scent alone.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Category: ARTICLES AND CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS IN NEWS

Article 191. Disqualifications for membership

(1) A person shall be disqualified for being chosen as, and for being, a member of the Legislative Assembly or Legislative Council of a State

(a) if he holds any office of profit under the Government of India or the Government of any State specified in the First Schedule, other than an office declared by the Legislature of the State by law not to disqualify its holder;

(b) if he is of unsound mind and stands so declared by a competent court;

(c) if he is an undischarged insolvent;

(d) if he is not a citizen of India, or has voluntarily acquired the citizenship of a foreign State, or is under any acknowledgement of allegiance or adherence to a foreign State;

(e) if he is so disqualified by or under any law made by Parliament Explanation For the purposes of this clause, a person shall not be deemed to hold an office of

profit under the Government of India or the Government of any State specified in the First Schedule by reason only that he is a Minister either for the Union or for such State

(2) A person shall be disqualified for being a member of the Legislative Assembly or Legislative Council of a State if he is so disqualified under the Tenth Schedule

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. “Conventional wisdom suggests that economic reforms succeeding liberalization policy of government in early 1990s should have reduced gender discrimination—but that hasn’t really been the case”. Discuss?

GS Paper II

1. “Codifying checks and balances in respective police Acts will bring assurance against illegal orders by the political establishment to the police”. Discuss.

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International Affairs/Bilateral Relations

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2. India, Japan and U.S. present common front
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Nothing here for Today!!!

Category: POLITY

1. Nutrient packets may replace food: Maneka Gandhi

In news:

- Women and Child Development ministry is planning to revamp of its supplementary nutrition programme.
- **Direct to beneficiaries:** States should provide nutrient packages directly to beneficiaries instead of providing food through anganwadis.
- **Present scenario:** the supplementary nutrition is in the form of take-home rations or hot-cooked meals

New Policy:

- Under the new policy, instead of food, the focus would be on nutrient packets that will provide 1,000 calories to pregnant and lactating mothers and 600 calories to children
- The packets(mentioned above) would have a dry mixture of peanuts, millets and micro-nutrients which can be consumed with milk, lassi, juice, or water

Ministry's suggestion:

- Nutrient packages should be delivered through post offices
- Thirty packages can be delivered through the post office to every family that has a baby and a pregnant mother. Since it is not vegetable or rice, it cannot be misused or sold in the market

2. Rijiju now says Chakmas can't be given citizenship

In news:

- **Supreme Court order, 2015:** directed the center to grant citizenship to the Chakma-Hajongs, Buddhists and Hindus from undivided Pakistan.
- **Union government:** decided to honor the Supreme Court's decision.
- **Union Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijiju response:**

1. The Supreme Court order was not implementable.
2. The two persecuted communities who came from Chittagong (now Bangladesh, then undivided Pakistan) were settled in Arunachal Pradesh between 1964-69 and any citizenship to them will disturb the “demography” of the tribal State.

3. Reimagining the OBC quota

Context:

- Sub-categorization of the Other Backward Classes (OBC)

Creation of committee

- Recently, the government has announced the creation of a committee to look into sub-categorisation of OBC
- This decision provides an opening to ensure social justice in an efficient manner

Key Stats:

- The National Sample Survey (NSS) data from 2011-12 show that about 19% of the sample claims to be Dalit, 9% Adivasi, and 44% OBC
- Among the population aged 25-49, less than 7% have a college degree
- By most estimates, less than 3% of the whole population is employed in government and public-sector jobs
- Since reservations cover only half the college seats and public-sector jobs, the mismatch is obvious
- A vast proportion of the population eligible for reservations must still compete for a tiny number of reserved and non-reserved category jobs
- It is not surprising that there is tremendous internal competition within groups

Yardstick to determine marginalization within a particular caste:

- At the moment, the only reputable nationwide data on caste comes from the 1931 colonial Census and some of the ad hoc surveys conducted for specific castes
- The Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) of 2011 was supposed to provide up-to-date comprehensive data
- In the SECC in 2015, it was found that about 4.6 million distinct caste names, including names of gotra, surname and phonetic variations were returned, making the results almost impossible to interpret
- For nearly 80 million individuals, caste data were believed to be erroneous
- Since then we have heard little about the quality of caste data in SECC and even less about its results
- Preparations for Census 2021 are ongoing
- There is still time to create an expert group to evaluate the methodology for collecting caste data and include it in the Census forms
- Losing this opportunity would leave us hanging for another 10 years without good data for undertaking sub-categorisation of OBC quota

Addressing caste based inequalities:

- A two-pronged approach that focusses on eliminating discrimination and expanding the proportion of population among the disadvantaged groups could be a solution

(1) Late Benefits

- The present policies focus on preferential admission to colleges and coveted institutions like IITs and IIMs
- But these benefits may come too late in the life of a Kurmi or Gujar child
- Their disadvantage begins in early childhood and grows progressively at higher levels of education
- We know little about what goes on in schools to create these disadvantages but improving quality of education for all must be a first step in addressing caste-based inequalities

(2) Benefits of reservations should be widely spread

- Use of the OBC quota must be limited to once in a person's lifetime, allowing for a churn in the population benefitting from reservations
- Linking the Aadhaar card to use of benefits makes it possible that individuals use their caste certificates only once
- It will help in spreading the benefits of reservations over a wider population

The way forward

- The present move by the government to rethink OBC quota could potentially be used to ensure that we have better data on caste-based disadvantages for future discourse
- It also indicates a mood that wants to ensure that the benefits of reservation are widely spread
- Increased attempts at linking benefits to Aadhaar allow us with an option to ensure that reservation benefits are not captured by a few.

4. Business Of Cleanliness

Context:

- The Swachh Bharat Mission plans to achieve safe sanitation for all by 2019
- There is also a well-defined process, for the different phases of the mission, across the sanitation value chain — build, use, maintain and treat (BUMT)
- So a national policy is in place; cities, state governments must operationalise it.

Waste Management problem

- Nationally, we generate 7 million tonnes of fecal waste every day but there no systems in place to safely dispose this waste
- It bears disease-carrying bacteria and pathogens posing a serious threat to safe and healthy living.
- The truck operators can be monitored through GPS tracking process in order to ensure that they dump the waste at treatment plants/pre-determined sites.

Fecal sludge management system (FSM)

- It involves collecting, transporting and treating fecal sludge and septage from pit latrines, septic tanks or other onsite sanitation systems.
- This waste is then treated at septage treatment plants.
- The FSM ecosystem requires its stakeholders to collaborate closely.
- Citizens need to be aware about the importance of a regular schedule for desludging septic tanks.
- They must also be ready to pay part of the cost of running FS treatment plants through service charges.
- Sanitation workers are key to an effective FSM system. But with no proper disposal

system or safety regulations in place, they face serious health hazards.

Advantages:

- The sludge is nutrient-rich. After treatment, it can be given to farmers for use as organic compost.
- It can even be treated and used for biogas, or to manufacture fuel pellets or ethanol.
- Once pathogens and bacteria are removed, the water can be used for irrigation, construction, by industry in cooling plants etc
- With appropriate training, sanitation workers can be empowered to own and run FSM businesses — much like the producer cooperatives of the agriculture sector.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Suu Kyi promises to resettle ‘verified’ Rohingya refugees

Context:

- **Rohingya’s crisis.**
- UN Secretary-General demanded an end to the military campaign and a better deal for the Muslim minority.

In News:

- Myanmar’s de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi pledged to hold rights violators to account over the Rohingya crisis but refused to blame the country’s army.
- Suu Kyi called for patience and understanding of the crisis which has driven some 4,21,000 Rohingya out of Myanmar.
- Suu Kyi vowed to resettle some refugees but offered no solutions to halt what the UN calls army-led “**ethnic cleansing**” in Rakhine state, where soldiers are accused of burning Rohingya out of their homes.

2. India, Japan and U.S. present common front

In news:

- **Trilateral meeting in U.S:** At a trilateral meeting of Foreign Ministers of India, Japan and the U.S. endorsed one another’s position on key strategic issues in Asia
- India stood with the U.S. and Japan on the question of North Korea’s nuclear posture
- And India received support from the two on its position on the **China-led One Belt, One Road project**.
- The Ministers emphasised the need for ensuring freedom of navigation, respect for international law and peaceful resolution of disputes(possibly in South China sea context)

Focus areas for India

- Climate change, terrorism, people-centric migration and peacekeeping.

3. India calls for a representative UN

Context:

In news:

- India has extended support to efforts of U.S. President Donald Trump to reform the UN, saying it should include the expansion of the number of permanent and non-permanent members of the world body to keep pace with the changed times
- During a discussion on UN reform, Mr. Trump insisted that he had always seen the “great potential” of the organisation, but warned that “bureaucracy” was stopping it from realising its potential.
- India’s stance: world body should be reformed to keep pace with the changed times, including the expansion of its permanent or non-permanent members.

4. Centre rethinks joining Hague child custody pact

In news:

1. Deals with international child custody cases.
2. Passed in 1980, the Hague Convention on International Child Abduction, which came into force in 1983, rules that in any child custody case, the court of the country where the child is a “habitual resident” will adjudicate who will get custody.
3. A total of ninety four countries, mostly developed nations in the Americas, Europe and Australia, are signatories to the Hague Convention

- **India-U.S. Consular dialogue:**

1. Between officials from the Ministries of External Affairs, Women and Child Development and Home and their counterparts in Washington.
2. The U.S. might push India to join the “Hague Convention” in this dialogue session.

- **Legal provisions:** The Hague Convention is circumventing the Indian system, and India can’t abdicate its responsibility to Indian parents, mostly mothers, and their young children.
- **Separated parents:** American officials say the problem arises when one parent is in the U.S., while the other brings the child to India (their home country) to avoid an adverse decision in the U.S. court.
- **‘Women worst hit’:** the worst affected in the cases covered by the convention are women, who form 68% of the parents that take or “abduct” their children to their home countries, and must be protected.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE

1. Rajnath reviews steps for cybersecurity

Context:

- Growing number of financial frauds using cards and e-wallets.

In news:

- Home Minister Rajnath Singh reviewed the preparedness of agencies to check financial cybercrimes.
- Singh asked agencies to strengthen surveillance and legal frameworks to check the menace.
- The agencies concerned and representatives of certain States highlighted the steps being taken to arrest the growing trend of cybercrime in the financial sector.
- An **inter-ministerial committee** may be set up to identify action points and monitor their implementation.
- **Key areas identified to be strengthened:** Capacity building of various stakeholders such as police officers, judicial officers, forensic scientists as well as officials in the banking sector.
- **Key Fact:**

1. As per the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), a total number of 44,679, 49,455 and 50,362 cybersecurity incidents were observed during 2014, 2015 and 2016, respectively.
2. The types of cybersecurity incidents included phishing, scanning/probing, website intrusions and defacements, virus/malicious code and denial of service attacks.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

(c)

Topic: Science and Technology

Level: Moderate

Explanation

- **Gasification** is a process that converts organic or fossil fuel based carbonaceous materials into carbon monoxide, hydrogen and carbon dioxide. This is achieved by reacting the material at high temperatures ($>700^{\circ}\text{C}$), **without combustion , with a controlled amount of oxygen and/or steam** . The resulting gas mixture is called syngas (from synthesis gas) or producer gas and is itself a fuel./su_spoiler]

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. Critically examine the effects of globalization on the aged population in India.

GS Paper II

1. What do you understand by “The String of Pearls”? How does it impact India? Briefly outline the steps taken by India to counter this.

GS Paper III

1. Write a note on India’s green energy corridor to alleviate the problems of conventional energy.

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – Sept 21

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E. Prelims Fact

F. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Category: WOMEN AND ASSOCIATED ISSUES

1. Women employment rate in India sees dramatic drop in last 20 years

In news:

- A team of economists from the **World Bank** released a report on the labour force **participation of women in India**
- Using data from the NSSO, this report shows that labour force participation rate of women in India has slipped dramatically in the last 20 years

Key highlights of the report:

- The drop has been most dramatic among women in rural India
- Research shows that while nearly half the rural women aged 15 years and above were “in the labour force” in 1993-94, the number dropped to less than 36% in 2011-12.
- Labour force participation rate of urban women has also dropped in the same period.

Category: POLITY

1. Death penalty for hooch deaths in UP; government may issue ordinance

In news:

- The Uttar Pradesh government has decided to add a section in the **Excise Act** providing for death penalty or life imprisonment to those responsible for hooch deaths.
- The state government will issue an ordinance in this regard soon.
- After Delhi and Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh would become the third state where bootleggers could be sent to the gallows if consumption of spurious liquor leads to loss of life or permanent disability.
- The amendment will also make the offence non-bailable.
- The new section seeks to provide that those convicted may be punished with life imprisonment, or Rs 10 lakh penalty, or both, or death penalty, in case of death or permanent disability caused to a person or persons due to consumption of illicit liquor.

2. Behaviour change needed to stop open defecation: Experts

In news:

- **Sanitation experts' opinion:**
- Emphasis on bringing about a sustained behavior change in the local communities to achieve the target of making the villages, towns and districts Open Defecation Free (ODF) in Rajasthan.
- The harmful impacts of open defecation on people's health and children's nutrition should be brought to their notice.
- **Open defecation and women dignity:** Stopping open defecation will restore women's dignity and protect them against harassment and sexual offences.

3. CJI bars senior advocates from out-of-turn hearing of cases

In news:

1. Every morning, the Bench, led by the Chief Justice of India, gives leeway to lawyers who appear in cases that require an urgent hearing.
2. Lawyers must convince the top judge, very briefly, that without an urgent hearing, the rights, even the fundamental rights, of their clients may suffer a grievous harm.
3. The Chief Justices have allowed lawyers to “mention” cases for an early or out-of-turn hearing.
4. The court uses its discretion to allow or dismiss the plea.

- Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra barred senior advocates from making any such urgent mention before his Bench.
- Chief Justice Misra, declared in a crowded courtroom that only advocates-on-record would henceforth make urgent mentions. This was aimed at providing a level playing field, and assuring the legal community that the case in question, and not the advocate, would guide the court's discretion to grant an early hearing.

Who is an advocate-on-record?

- Under the Supreme Court Rules, an advocate-on-record can plead for a party.
- The Rules mandate that only advocates-on-record file an appearance or act for a party.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Bound by Paris climate deal, says India

In news:

U.N. ‘Leadership Summit on Environment Pact’

- India reaffirmed its commitment to the landmark Paris climate change agreement, saying it is willing to “work above and beyond” the pact to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- India was at the forefront of the debate on environment and development.

Background Information:

- The United States' President Donald Trump, in June, 2017 announced that his country was withdrawing from the Paris deal, arguing that it gives undue advantage to countries like India and China.
- **Paris Pact** : India, which is the world's third-largest carbon polluter, along with more than 190 nations, reached a pact in **December 2015** with an aim to prevent an increase in the global average temperature and keep it well below 2 degrees Celsius. The deal, which replaced the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, was ratified in October 2016.

2. India collaborating with Russia for nuclear power plant in Bangladesh

Context:

- India is collaborating with Russia to build the **Roppur nuclear power** plant in **Bangladesh**

In news:

- **Key Fact:** It is the **first initiative** under a **Indo-Russia** deal to undertake atomic energy projects in third countries.
- This will also be India's first atomic energy venture abroad.

Significance:

- Indian nuclear establishment for years has not been able to grow, internationally, due to sanctions imposed on New Delhi post the **1974 Pokhran tests**.
- The Roppur project, which is being built by the Russians near Dhaka, will be Bangladesh's first atomic energy project.
- After commissioning of two units, each with a capacity of 1200 MWs, Bangladesh will be the third South Asian country after India and Pakistan to harness energy from atomic fission.
- India signed a civil nuclear cooperation deal with Bangladesh under which the two sides can supply and manufacture equipment, material for the atomic power plant.
- **Concerns** : It is not clear what kind of “collaboration” India was doing since it is not a member of the

Nuclear Suppliers Group

Basic Information:

Nuclear Suppliers Group:

- The NSG is a **multi-national body** which aims at reduction of proliferation of nuclear weapons.
- It is a **48-member** body which was established to stop civilian nuclear trade from being used for military purpose.
- The NSG was set up in response to India's first nuclear test in May 1974.
- India hasn't signed the NPT or CTBT and hence there has been aversion from China to accept it in the NSG bloc.

3. A time of strategic partnerships

Context:

- The India-Japan “Special Strategic and Global Partnership” has reached new heights.

Key Points:

- The rise of China and questions about America's commitment in Asia are the main reasons behind deepening security-cum-economic relationship.
- Japan is investing heavily in strengthening its critical infrastructure to enhance its economic and potential defence capabilities.
- The two countries have begun working on a joint infrastructure development and connectivity drive. It traverses the Indian Ocean, from Myanmar to Sri Lanka to Iran and encompasses the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor
- On defence matters, Japan and India have agreed to establish regular consultations in the “2+2” format of their defence and foreign ministries.
- Their navies exercise regularly together with the U.S. Navy.
- Negotiations on arms sales ,the ShinMaywa US-2i amphibious aircraft are on
- Japanese investment in strategically placed Andaman and Nicobar Islands will help New Delhi establish a major security sentinel in the eastern Indian Ocean.

Strategic partnership versus Alliances:

- Unlike alliances, it do not demand commitments to a partner's disputes with other countries. Eg: New Delhi does not take a strong position on Japan's territorial disputes with China and Russia
- In Strategic partnership, both retain the flexibility to continue political engagement and economic cooperation with their common adversary.
- They avoid “entrapment”, or being dragged into a partner's disputes and potentially into conflict
- Collaborative approach to strategic policies over a range of economic and military activities.
 - India and Japan, for instance, are not only moving forward on economic and defence cooperation but are also cooperating on other issues such as civil nuclear energy and Security Council reform.
- The aim of major strategic partnerships is to
 - Strengthen defences against marginal conflict
 - Convey a determination to stand up to a strategic adversary
 - Generate a persuasive environment that discourages potential intimidation

Category: ECONOMY

1. RBI to regulate peer-to-peer lending firms

In news:

- As per the new notification issued by Government of India, all peer-to-peer lending (P2P) platforms will be regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- All the P2P loan platforms will be treated as non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and will be brought under the ambit of the banking regulator.
- **P2P lending:**
 1. Although nascent in India and not significant in value yet, the potential benefits that P2P lending promises to various stakeholders (borrowers, lenders, agencies etc.) and its associated risks to the financial system are too important to be ignored.
 2. P2P lending promotes alternative forms of finance, where formal finance is unable to reach and also has the potential to soften the lending rates as a result of lower operational costs and enhanced competition with the traditional lending channels. If properly regulated, P2P lending platforms can do this more effectively
 3. According to RBI, P2P lending is a form of crowd funding used to raise loans which are paid back with interest. It can be defined as the use of an online platform that matches lenders with borrowers in order to provide unsecured loans.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. India joins quantum computing race

In news:

- The Department of Science and Technology (DST) is planning to fund a project to develop quantum computers.

What is a quantum computer:

- A quantum computer, still largely a **theoretical entity**, employs the principles of quantum mechanics to store information in ‘**qubits**’ instead of the typical ‘bits’ of 1 and 0.
- **Advantages :** Qubits work faster because of the way such circuits are designed, and their promise is that they can do intensive number-crunching tasks much more efficiently than the fastest comparable computers.
- **For Example:** to sort a billion numbers, a quantum computer would require **5 million** fewer steps than a traditional machine, and would find the solution in only **31,623 steps**.

Key Fact:

- Internationally, Canada’s D-Wave Systems, is a pioneer in developing quantum computers and has sold machines to Lockheed Martin and Google.
- Existing systems use principles of quantum computing to solve very limited problems.

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. A ‘Boat Lab’ to study Brahmaputra

In news:

Brahmaputra Biodiversity Biology Boat (B4):

- The Department of Biotechnology is planning to commission a **two-tiered barge** that will roughly be the size of two large conference rooms and host scientists and a full-fledged lab.
- Barge to allow those on board to collect samples from various stretches of the river, perform tests on water quality and biodiversity of the wider ecosystem.
- The proposed vessel would also be linked to smaller boats and research labs.
- The “B4” will also have a teaching laboratory for school and college children.

2. A case for continued support for green energy

Context:

- Going by recent reports, it appears that the Union government is contemplating withdrawing all kind of incentives that are being provided to renewable-based electricity by 2022.
- It is said that there will not be any targeting of renewable energy after 2020 (presumably no renewable purchase obligations, or RPOs, after 2022).
- Moreover, the draft National Energy Policy 2017 proposes gradual withdrawal of the provision of “must run” status and other support such as non-levy of interstate transmission charges.
- The sharp reduction in bids for solar and wind power forms the basis of the argument that now these technologies are ready to face markets.

Solar Energy:

- While the record low prices of solar power in the recent past have been on account of very low global prices of solar photovoltaic modules and accessories.
- Payment Security Mechanism with guaranteed uptake of electricity- Example-Rewa solar park. This in turn helped bring down the cost of capital that constitutes about 70% of renewable electricity prices.
- The Solar Energy Corp. of India wind power auction contained three very crucial elements-
- Power purchase agreement with PTC (India) Ltd and not the distribution utility, thereby providing security of payment against the sale of electricity as well as assured offtake of electricity.
- Waiver of inter-state transmission charges

Compensation for system losses

- Therefore, these low prices are the result of several facilitating measures.
- So, doing away with such provisions appears to be totally counter-productive to India's ambitions in this field.
- The recent outcomes of the solar and wind auctions may have made officials to take for granted that the things will continue to move in a certain way but at the same time ignoring the key parameters that helped chart out that direction in the first place.
- Undoubtedly, a good policy framework has to have sunset clauses for incentives but withdrawals must also be nuanced and gradual, arrived at after taking into account their long-term implications on the sector.

Economic survey Volume-2 and Renewable Energy:

- The survey talks about the “social cost” of renewable energy in comparison to that of coal-based power generation.
- Besides other cost parameters, including health and environmental costs, the survey includes “the opportunity cost of stranded conventional power assets” as one of the components of the social cost.
- The losses incurred by investors and lenders due to the underutilization of coal power plants becomes the most significant contributor to renewable energy’s social cost, making it three times more expensive than conventional power.

Counter View points

- According to Central Electricity Authority, the share of renewable electricity in India's total electricity generation was around 7.6% between April 2016 and March 2017. So how can this be the reason for below-par plant load factors of coal power plants?
- By the same logic, no disruptive transition to better and more efficient technologies would ever be possible because during the transition stage, the older assets are bound to be underutilized or in a sense, financially stranded. Examples- UJALA, or Unnat Jyoti by Affordable Lighting for All, scheme that aims to promote efficient use of energy. This whole UJALA campaign must also be rendering

manufacturers of incandescent lamps in a state of financial stress, so is that being factored in while estimating the social cost of LED lamps? The same also goes for electrical vehicles that surely would result in the supply chain of conventional automobile components becoming stranded assets?

- And how transparently does this “social cost” dispensation take into account the cost of longer term impacts of different alternatives?
- How accurate are the cost-components and how close are the assumptions to Indian realities?
- Public health in any case is always heavily discounted in all such calculations.

Way Forward

- A good policy regime tries to balance these seemingly divergent viewpoints and provides direction for long-term and sustainable solutions for larger public good. This is particularly critical when the decisions made today could have far-reaching implications for generations to come.
- Besides, basing such decisions on anecdotal premise rather than on sound analytical evidence could very well jeopardize the momentum that renewable energy sector in the country has gained.
- It appears as if there is a lack of cohesion within different arms of the government, leading to conflicting signals.
- This, however, needs to be managed quickly to avoid the serious implications such mixed signals could have on our commitment to achieve about 40% of installed power capacity from non-fossil fuels by 2030.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE RELATED

1. [Govt plans Bill with more teeth to tackle cyber crimes](#)

Context:

- Post-demonetization a spurt in number of cyber crimes has been observed

Key Figures:

- In 2016-17, 998 crore digital transaction were reported as compared to 552 crore in 2015-16 and 369 crore in 2014-15.
- As many as 1,44,496 cyber security attacks have been observed in the country in the past three years.
- CBI in December last year registered multiple FIRs after e-wallet company, Paytm filed a complaint, alleging that its customers were cheated to the tune of Rs 9.41 lakh soon after demonetisation.
- According to RBI data made available to the MHA, as many as 16,468 complaints related to ATM fraud, debit and credit card misuse and net banking hacking were filed with them in 2015-16 as compared to 13,083 in 2014-15.

Key Points:

- So, in order to tackle these problems, the government plans to bring a digital payment Bill to strengthen legal framework and enhance surveillance to check cyber crimes in the financial sector, including frauds targeting cards and e-wallets.
- An inter-ministerial committee headed by the home minister will be setup to first study existing laws to deal with cyber crimes and then propose new legislation.
- The inter-ministerial panel will have representatives from the RBI, financial services, ministry of electronics and information technology, Delhi police and the National Cyber Security Coordinator.
- The proposed legislation will not only deal with punishment and fine but it will also have measures to fix responsibility in cases where digital transactions land in any dispute.
- The Home Minister directed all agencies concerned to take required measures in a time-bound manner and emphasized on the coordination of all agencies in this regard.

Way Forward

- To contain the rising number of cyber attacks- Capacity building of various stakeholders — such as police, judicial officers, forensic scientists as well as officials in the banking sector should be focused upon and both legal and technological steps needs to be taken to address the problem.

Nothing here for Today!!!

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Discuss the impediments India is facing in its pursuit of a permanent seat in UN Security Council.

GS Paper III

1. How can Digital India programme help farmers to improve farm productivity and income? What steps has the government taken in this regard?

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B. GS2 Related

Category: POLITY

1. Pass Women's Reservation Bill in LS: Sonia

In news:

- Congress President Sonia Gandhi has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging him to get the long-pending Women's Reservation Bill passed in the Lok Sabha.

Basic Information:

Women's Reservation Bill [The Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill, 2008]

- Commonly known as the Women's Reservation Bill, it seeks to reserve one-third of all seats for women in the Lok Sabha and the state legislative assemblies. Introduced by the UPA-I government in May 2008, it also provides that one third of the total number of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes shall be reserved for

women of those groups. Similar Bills have been introduced thrice before in the late 90's but lapsed with the dissolution of their respective Lok Sabhas.

Highlights of the Bill

- The Constitution (One Hundred and Eighth Amendment) Bill, 2008 seeks to reserve one-third of all seats for women in the Lok Sabha and the state legislative assemblies. The allocation of reserved seats shall be determined by such authority as prescribed by Parliament.
- One third of the total number of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes shall be reserved for women of those groups in the Lok Sabha and the legislative assemblies.
- Reserved seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in the state or union territory.
- Reservation of seats for women shall cease to exist 15 years after the commencement of this Amendment Act.

Key Issues and Analysis

- There are divergent views on the reservation policy. Proponents stress the necessity of affirmative action to improve the condition of women. Some recent studies on panchayats have shown the positive effect of reservation on empowerment of women and on allocation of resources.
- Opponents argue that it would perpetuate the unequal status of women since they would not be perceived to be competing on merit. They also contend that this policy diverts attention from the larger issues of electoral reform such as criminalisation of politics and inner party democracy.
- Reservation of seats in Parliament restricts choice of voters to women candidates. Therefore, some experts have suggested alternate methods such as reservation in political parties and dual member constituencies.
- Rotation of reserved constituencies in every election may reduce the incentive for an MP to work for his constituency as he may be ineligible to seek re-election from that constituency.
- The report examining the 1996 women's reservation Bill recommended that reservation be provided for women of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) once the Constitution was amended to allow for reservation for OBCs. It also recommended that reservation be extended to the Rajya Sabha and the Legislative Councils. Neither of these recommendations has been incorporated in the Bill.

2. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana flounders: 30 lakh trained in skills, less than 3 lakh get job offers

Context:

- The government's flagship skilling scheme, the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), is struggling to achieve end-results
- Data reveals that out of a total 30.67 lakh candidates who had been trained, less than a tenth — 2.9 lakh candidates — had received placement offers.

Reasons:

Lack of quality training: Information asymmetry regarding the demand-supply dynamics of skilled candidates

Plans ahead:

- Centre is now planning to shift focus to district-level schemes to yield better results in the short-term for its skilling initiative.
- Under the relaunched PMKVY, which started October 2, 2016 placement tracking has been made mandatory
- Now, the focus is going to be on greater participation of states
- And bringing district collectors into the picture to ensure delivery at the district level and monitoring of skilling schemes at the ministry level.

Basic Information:

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana:

- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE). The objective of this Skill Certification Scheme is to enable a large number of Indian youth to take up industry-relevant skill training that will help them in securing a better livelihood. Individuals with prior learning experience or skills will also be assessed and certified under Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. 50 nations ink UN nuclear ban treaty opposed by big powers

In news:

- Fifty countries signed a **treaty to ban nuclear weapons**, a pact that the world's nuclear powers spurned but supporters hailed as a historic agreement nonetheless.
- **Brazil** was the first country to sign onto the ban, followed by nations from Algeria to Venezuela.
- It needs 50 ratifications to take effect among the nations that back it.
- This treaty is an important step towards the universally held goal of a world free of nuclear weapons
- The U.S., Britain and France said the prohibition wouldn't work and would end up disarming their nations while emboldening "bad actors"
- Supporters of the pact say it's time to push harder toward eliminating atomic weapons than nations have done through the nearly 50-year-old Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.'

Modus operandi:

- The members would be barred from developing, testing, producing, manufacturing, otherwise acquiring, possessing or stockpiling nuclear weapons "under any circumstances."

Basic Information:

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

The objectives of the NPT are as follows:

- Prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology.
- Promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.
- Nuclear disarmament.
- The three objectives viz. non-proliferation, disarmament, and the right to peacefully use nuclear technology, are sometimes called three pillars of NPT.

Parties

- The treaty entered into force in 1970 and in 1995 it was extended indefinitely. It has 190 parties.
- All the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council are among its members.
- India, Pakistan & Israel have not signed the treaty.
- North Korea acceded to the NPT in 1985, then withdrew in 2003

2. Sushma slams Pakistan over terror funding

In news:

BRICS Ministerial Meeting

- Held on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly
- External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said militants continue to find shelter in countries using terrorism as an "instrument of state policy". Terror groups draw sustenance from support systems in South Asia
- The Minister called on her counterparts from BRICS to condemn efforts to sponsor the menace.
- Swaraj also called for terrorists' funding, their weapons supply, training and political support to be systematically cut off.
- Swaraj also called for early conclusion of the CCIT while urging all the BRICS countries — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — to condemn efforts, including by states, to use religion to justify, sustain and sponsor terrorism against other countries.

Projects in Afghanistan

- India has announced to take up 116 "high impact community developmental projects" in 31 provinces of Afghanistan
- The decision was taken during a meeting between Ms. Swaraj and Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani
- Over and above these high impact projects, India has also offered assistance for six new projects under granting aid assistance from India. One of them is low-cost housing for returning Afghan refugees, road connectivity, national Park and economic development

Basic Information:

Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism

The CCIT provides a legal framework which makes it binding on all signatories to deny funds and safe havens to terrorist groups. The original draft that was tabled in 1996 and discussed until April 2013, as, included following major objectives:

- To have a universal definition of terrorism that all 193-members of the UNGA will adopt into their own criminal law
- To ban all terror groups and shut down terror camps
- To prosecute all terrorists under special laws
- To make cross-border terrorism an extraditable offence worldwide.

3. US Senate passes \$700 billion defence spending bill

Context:

- The US Senate has overwhelmingly approved the nearly **\$700 billion defence** spending bill for 2018.
- Bill seeks to develop a strategy for **Indo-US defence cooperation** and adopts a tough approach on Pakistan's action against terror outfits like the Haqqani network and the LeT.
- As part of the **National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) 2018**, the legislation also approved several India-centric amendments aimed at increasing the defence relationship between the two countries and thus enhancing the strategic partnership between the two countries.

Provisions relating to India:

- An amendment that calls on the Department of Defense to reassess its approach to partnering with India and to appoint an individual to oversee this process.
- Another amendment which asks the Pentagon to develop a strategy of defence cooperation between the US and India.

Provisions relating to Pakistan

- The bill approves \$700 million in coalition support fund to Pakistan as a reimbursement to the services rendered by Islamabad towards America's fight against terrorism.
- However, \$350 million of this amount cannot be released unless the Defense Secretary certifies to the Congress that Pakistan has taken satisfactory steps against terrorist organizations like the Haqqani network and the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)
- Pakistan is required not provide military, financial or logistical support to specially designated global terrorists operating in Afghanistan or Pakistan.
- Along with this Pakistan must show that is not using its military or any funds or equipment provided by the US to persecute minority groups seeking political or religious freedom, including the Balochi, Sindhi and Hazara ethnic groups and minority religious groups, including Christian, Hindu and Ahmadiyya Muslims, it said.

4. Solving the Afghanistan riddle

Context:

- Recent announcement of US Afghan Policy. The policy envisages more pressure on Pakistan, no early U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, robust military action on counterterrorism and a greater role for India.
- The US has never been so critical of Pakistan publicly.
- The issue today is how the U.S. strategy differs from the past in terms of addressing concerns regarding Pakistan's role in Afghanistan, particularly in view of a shift in Pakistan's strategic priority towards China.
- Present Situation in Afghanistan continues to be fragile, though Taliban has made some gains but at the same it is not a cohesive movement and has several divisions in it.
- Also, since 1747, Afghanistan's territorial borders have remain unchanged unlike those of Pakistan and Central Asian Republics.

India-Afghanistan ties

- On January 4, 1950, India signed a Treaty of Friendship with Afghanistan which also permitted opening of

- consulates in each other's country.
- Afghanistan signed its first strategic partnership agreement with India in 2011.
 - India's assistance to Afghanistan amounts to \$2 billion and it covers broad spectrum of areas like political, security, trade and economic cooperation and capacity development.
 - India has always wanted a democratic, stable and strong Afghanistan able to decide its own future and it supports its quest for reconciliation.
 - Various surveys show that the Afghan people ranked Indian assistance as the most suitable because of the positive role India played in the development programme of Afghanistan and they appreciate that India has never interfered in their internal affairs.
 - India can assist Afghanistan in training and supplying them much-needed spare parts.
 - Asia is a region of energy and it needs to be exploited for the benefit of Afghanistan and surrounding areas , TAPI(Turkmenistan Afghanistan Pakistan India) pipeline is an example.
 - SAARC and SCO should encourage regional economic cooperation and completion of Cahbahar will help Afghanistan in trade with other countries.
 - It is essential to take action against terrorism and insurgency and treating Taliban's Quetta Shura and the Haqqani network as one.
1. Efforts relating to counter narcotics needs to be redoubled because Afghanistan remains the world's largest producer of opium accounting for 90% of the world's supply.
 2. Regional powers must work closely without interfering internally for a stable Afghanistan. India needs to coordinate with Russia and Iran.

India-Pakistan relations and its impact on Afghanistan

- Unfair attempts have been made to link the Afghan issue with India-Pakistan relations. There is no connection.
- Pakistan-Afghanistan relations since 1947 have always been thorny and replete with problems except during the brief Taliban era.
- India and Afghanistan have never exploited their friendly bilateral relations to harm Pakistan. This is clear from-
- In both the 1965 and 1971 wars, Afghanistan was non-committal and did not support India.
- On the Kashmir issue, Afghanistan has not publicly supported India.
- India has not entered the debate on the Durand Line.
- Neither India nor India-Pakistan relations were responsible for the situation which prevailed in Afghanistan following the departure of the Soviet troops.
- The U.S. operation to kill Osama bin Laden and the recourse to drone attacks in Afghanistan were due to the situation prevailing there, which had nothing to do with India or India-Pakistan relations.
- When in 2010 Pakistan shifted over 100,000 of its security forces from its eastern border to its western border with Afghanistan, India did not exploit the situation.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Cabinet to soon take up \$5 bn convention centre project

In news:

Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre (ECC):

- The Union Cabinet will soon take up the proposal for a “\$5 billion-worth world-class and state-of-the-art” ECC in the national capital.
- It will be the largest such facility in Asia when completed by 2021.
- According to the officials, the Cabinet will consider for discussion a “note on approval of the project and formation of a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to implement the same”.
- The SPV will be a 100% subsidiary of Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor(DMIC) Development Corporation.

2. A big broom-On crackdown on shell companies

Context:

- The decision by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs to crack down on so-called shell companies, disqualify select directors in these entities and debar them from taking board positions for a specified period.
- According to the ministry, this would help in clean up of many firms set up in many cases with less than bona fide intent and having virtually no business operations.

Key Points:

- Naming and Shaming decision of the Union government has a real danger of tainting genuine firms and individuals.
- For example, SEBI also implemented similar decision and in a way it hastily imposed trading curbs on some entities which were given relief by Securities Appellate Tribunal recently.
- The sheer scale of the task at hand, with the ministry identifying more than 1.06 lakh directors for disqualification, it is imperative that there be great care and diligence to ensure that the authorities do not penalise anyone who for non-mala fide reasons failed to comply with the relevant provisions of the Companies Act.
- Many entrepreneurs find it easier to register a firm than it is to dissolve or wind it up.
- In public limited companies, a major portion of the extralegal activities including price rigging of shares, insider trading and other questionable practices have been found to occur in the large mass of smaller companies
- Various problems like illiquidity, weak governance and regulatory oversight have combined with the difficulty in delisting to make these firms prime targets for money launderers.
- The Centre and the regulatory arms need to address the underlying systemic shortcomings that have allowed so many companies, to become vehicles of malfeasance.
- Making the process to dissolve or delist online will improve governance and ensure that all stakeholders have an enabling atmosphere to operate freely.
- The government's move to address banking sector stress by adopting the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code is a step in the right direction.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

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- 1. Explain how the Uprising of 1857 constitutes an important watershed in the evolution of British policies towards colonial India.
- 2. The effective management of land and water resources will drastically reduce the human miseries. Explain

GS Paper II

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-
- 1. Exercise of CAG's powers in relation to the accounts of the Union and the States is derived from Article 149 of the Indian Constitution. Discuss whether audit of the Government's policy implementation could amount to overstepping its own (CAG) jurisdiction.

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – Sept 23

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Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. 'It is for States to crack down on cow vigilantes'

Keypoints:

- It is the state governments prime responsibility to crack down on cow vigilante groups.
- Chief Secretaries of 22 States to file their compliance reports on steps taken and also appoint a nodal police officer in the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police, to prevent cow vigilantes, or ‘gau rakshaks’ as they call themselves, from “taking the law or becoming a law unto themselves.”

Who are Cow Vigilantes?

- Vigilante is a form of the word “vigilant,” which means keeping a watchful or close eye on events and people.
- If you’re a **vigilante**, you might take the law into your own hands by trying to catch or punish someone in your own way.

Category: GOVERNANCE

1. Nirbhaya scheme in disarray: SC

Context:

- A 10-year-old rape survivor from Chandigarh who recently gave birth, has not received the Rs.9 lakh due to her from the Central Victim Compensation Fund under the Nirbhaya scheme.

Keypoints:

- Money is provided as a fixed deposit to tackle the psychological well-being, medical treatment and education of the victim.
- It was part of the total Rs.10 lakh the Supreme Court had awarded her while denying her an abortion. So far, her family has received only Rs.1 lakh.

- The disbursal of compensation to sexual assault victims under the Nirbhaya scheme, started in 2013 following the brutal gang-rape and death of a 23-year-old student in Delhi.
- The Centre has disbursed Rs.200 crore each to the States to compensate sexual assault victims under the Nirbhaya fund. Yet the disbursal to the victims is delayed.
- Few States have spent the money on CCTV cameras and other “paraphernalia” rather than using it to pay compensation to the human victims of sexual assault and abuse.

About the Nirbhaya Fund

- Nirbhaya Fund is an Indian rupee 10 billion corpus announced by Government of India in its 2013 Union Budget.
- This fund is expected to support initiatives by the government and NGOs working towards protecting the dignity and ensuring safety of women in India.
- Nirbhaya (fearless) was the pseudonym given to the 2012 Delhi gang rape victim to hide her actual identity.
- The Ministry of Women and Child Development, along with several other concerned ministries, will work out details of the structure, scope and the application of this fund.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Strident Pakistan presses for UN envoy on Kashmir

Keypoints:

- Pakistan blames India and Afghanistan for the volatile security situation in the region.
- Pakistan denies that it is harbouring terrorists who target both the countries and also denies any role for Pakistan in supporting the Taliban.
- Islamabad has diverted international military and development aid towards creating “a dangerous infrastructure of terror on its own territory,”
- Pakistani Prime Minister sought the appointment of a special UN envoy on Kashmir, and accused India of human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir.
- The Pakistan PM told the UNGA that “...if India does venture across the LoC or acts upon its doctrine of “limited” war against Pakistan, it will evoke a strong and matching response,” he said, adding that his country

- had “faced unremitting hostility” from India.
- Abbasi sought an international investigation into “India’s crimes in Kashmir.”

2. India plans to train Afghan police officers

Context:

- MoU supported by UNDP, could be signed next week to train the Afghan Police.

Objective:

- Ultimately enhancing the security partnership between India and Afghanistan by providing top grades security and defense capabilities to the Afghan government.

Keypoints:

- India had earlier trained the Afghan National Army officers and soldiers for four years.
- India is now planning to train Afghan police officers.
- Indian knowledge and experience is going to be very useful especially in counter-terror, and counter-narcotic moves.
- Afghan expects to shape the outlines of the U.S.’s newly announced Afghanistan policy, in which U.S. President Donald Trump called for greater Indian involvement in development projects in Afghanistan.
- US envoy for bilateral talks on the Indo-U.S. defence partnership is expected to discuss the security situation in Afghanistan, as well as the U.S.’s declared policy to shut down “safe havens for terror” in Pakistan.

Trilateral meet

- Looking at it as a good opportunity for India, Afghanistan and the U.S. to develop their partnerships in Afghanistan, the focus will be on further enhancing our cooperation in the economic and development field.
- Afghan representative hopes that Indian businessmen would see that investing in Afghanistan would “pay them back” in the region as well, once India completes the Chabahar port in Iran.

India’s response:

- The External Affairs Ministry did not respond to requests on the plan to train police officers.
- Reason being the brunt of a spike in attacks by Taliban since 2016, when about 6,300 members of Afghan security and defence forces were killed.
- At present about 200 Afghan soldiers are trained at a time at the Indian Military Academy, including 130 cadets and 30 to 40 officers.
- The training of police officers, which India had first offered to Afghanistan in 2011, will be a significant step in security ties, which are a small part of the relationship, compared with India's \$3 billion investment in civilian projects since 2002, with 116 new projects announced this month.
- In 2016, India sent Afghanistan four Russian-made Mi-25 helicopters, but has yet to concede to Afghan requests for more equipment, transport vehicles, while an agreement for Indian engineers to repair the helicopters and to refurbish old aircraft that is non-functional, has still not been finalised.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Next PSLV launch in November-December

Keypoints:

- Aerospace Technologies, AseT 2017, was organized by the Aeronautical Society of India (AeSI) and the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre.
- ISRO Chairman said the next launch of the PSLV will be in November-December.
- Certifying a system or a technology for actual usage is a problem which was similar among the developing countries, says Chairman of ISRO.
- Government agencies and industry partners could design, build, and realise products.
- Technology needs to be consistently upgraded so that India was globally competitive in the sector.
- There was a need to accelerate commercialization of technologies we developed. The nation faced a major lacuna in terms of design capabilities.

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. From ocean to ozone, the limits of our planet

Keypoints:

- The population of vertebrate species on Earth in the wild saw a dramatic fall of about 30% between 1970 and 2006.
- Reason being the worst effects being in the tropics and in freshwater ecosystems.
- Habitats destruction by pollutants and land-use change are destroying flora and fauna at unprecedented rates.
- The natural habitats, such as water and land, transformed or destroyed as a result of human activity that in fact far exceeds the biological capacity of the earth.
- According to the Stockholm Environment Institute, the elements of the biophysical world that link us together are often regarded as a “safe operating space for humanity”.
- These planetary boundaries include loss of biodiversity, land-use change, changes to nitrogen and phosphorus cycles, ocean acidification, atmospheric aerosols loading, ozone depletion, chemical production, freshwater use and, of course, climate change.
- Since the last ice age, the Holocene epoch has offered a stable climate, a period of grace for humanity to grow and to flourish, with settlements, agriculture, economic and population expansion.
- Today the Anthropocene epoch, whose exact beginnings are debated, but which has led to over-reliance on fossil fuels, industrial agriculture, pollution in water, soils and air, loss of species and so on, have been devastating for many life forms and connected ecosystems throughout the planet.
- The ecosystems that are stressed by their exposure to pollutants may not recover once the pollutants are removed.
- These boundaries interact with one another and cause changes across scales, crossing a threshold in one domain can speed up or undermine processes in another subsystem.
- For instance, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions increase ocean acidification, land-use change often increases GHG emissions, and increasing nitrogen and phosphorus deplete species biodiversity and freshwater resources and increase warming from climate change.
- Considering the stats today earth is already about a degree Celsius warmer than average pre-industrial temperatures.
- Thus planetary boundaries as support systems for life on Earth should be viewed as expressing “carrying capacity” and defining “limits to growth”.

On sustainability

- The idea of sustainability is embedded in the human imagination and is expressed through our ideas of nature, society, economy, environment and future generations. But it became formally a part of international agreements and discourse at the Earth Summit of 1992 in Rio de Janeiro.
- The safety of the future generations lies on the view and the recognition of interlinkages among the social, environmental, and economic pillars of sustainability, and between biophysical planetary boundaries and social conditions.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Tax trauma

Context:

- Anomalies in the GST management are increasing the anxiety among Indian businesses

Keypoints:

- The GST Network (online backbone), is struggling to keep pace with the millions of invoices and returns being filed electronically by businesses across the country.
- A ministerial group formed by the GST Council to resolve the GSTN's glitches gave an assurance that 80% of the problems would be fixed by the end of October.
- Critically, for an economy that is slowing down for multiple reasons, even more troublesome is the implication of these implementation stumbles for 85 lakh taxpayers now registered for GST.
- Exporters have already alerted the Centre that the delayed timelines for filing GST returns will mean that no refunds can be expected before mid-November on input taxes paid in advance and the integrated GST levied on goods they imported.
- This will result in working capital getting blocked, cramping their ability to ramp up capacity and raw material procurement in time for festive season orders from around the world.
- Government has asserted that many exporters' funds were blocked for five-six months even before the GST, even as it said a solution to speed up refunds is being worked out.
- Moreover, in contrast to the ₹95,000-crore GST collections recorded so far for July, about ₹65,000 crore has been claimed as transitional credit (that

- is, taxes paid on stock purchased before the GST).
- Several revisions in deadlines, tax and cess rates, rules, clarifications and tweaks later, the GST regime is turning out to be neither simple nor friendly for taxpayers.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. Is policy implementation a hurdle in the path of minority progress?
Critically analyse with respect to the recent Nirbhaya victim compensation.

GS Paper III

1. The thin boundary between the elements of the biophysical world that provides the safe operating space for humanity is misused. Comment.

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – Sept 24

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1. 'Flavours of Bengal in Durga Puja celebrations at Indirapuram Prantic Cultural Society organising five-day event showcasing Bengali pride and heritage; musical performances, cooking competitions and other activities scheduled'

B. GS2 Related

Health and Human Resource

1. Child mortality on the decline, says study

C. GS3 Related

Infrastructure

1. Japan to fund mass rapid transit systems in Gujarat, Haryana

Internal Security

1. Manipur tightens security over possible Rohingya influx

Energy Security

1. India third in nuclear power installations: study

Science and Technology

1. Drug-resistant bacteria emerge from drug companies' untreated effluents

D. GS4 Related

E. Prelims Fact

F. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

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Category: CULTURE

1. **'Flavours of Bengal in Durga Puja celebrations at Indirapuram Prantic Cultural Society organising five-day event showcasing Bengali pride and heritage; musical performances, cooking competitions and other activities scheduled'**

Context:

- A Bengal-like setting of Durga puja can be seen in Indirapuram, Ghaziabad, where Prantic Cultural Society is organising a five-day cultural celebration starting Sunday. The event will continue till navami, September 29.

Theme:

- 'Our Heritage, Our Pride', with an aim to showcase the Bengali pride and traditions associated with the festival.

Keypoints:

- Prantic Cultural society is a socio-cultural forum consisting of groups of people who are passionate to preserve and promote Bengali art and culture.
- It's a five-day celebration, including musical performances, cooking competitions and theatre by children.
- No artificial colours will be used in the making of the idol.

Category: HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCE

1. Child mortality on the decline, says study

Context:

- India's child mortality rate per thousand live births has fallen by 62% from 125 per thousand live births in 1990 to 47 per thousand live births in 2015.
- This is slightly less than the 2015 Millennium Development Goal of a 66% reduction.

Keypoints:

- 'Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra have shown remarkable progress between 2000 and 2015'
- The study shows a significant decline in cause-specific child mortality rates between 2000 and 2015 in the country.
- The faster declines in child mortality after 2005 (average annual decline of 3.4% for neonatal mortality and 5.9% for 1 to 59-month mortality) suggest that the country has avoided about one million more child deaths compared to the rates of progress in 2000–2005.

Premature births

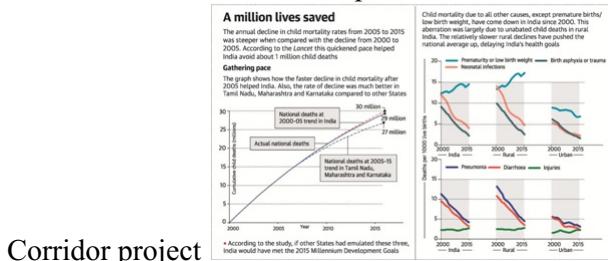
- Deaths due to premature births or low birth weight rose from 12.3 per 1000 live births in 2000 to 14.3 per 1000 live births in 2015.
- The low birth weight in poorer States and rural areas was the prime reason behind the increase in the past.
- The Million Death Study titled "**Changes in cause-specific neonatal and 1–59 month child mortality in India from 2000 to 2015: a nationally representative survey**" was published online by the Lancet.
- It surveyed the progress in three States during this period, the study says that "if all States of India had achieved the declines seen in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Maharashtra, nearly all States of India would have met the 2015 Millennium Development Goals."

Category: INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Japan to fund mass rapid transit systems in Gujarat, Haryana

Context:

- \$4.5 billion soft loan from Japan International Cooperation Agency to boost \$100 bn Delhi-Mumbai Industrial



Corridor project

Keypoints:

- The DMIC spans six States (Uttar Pradesh, Delhi National Capital Region, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra).
- It uses 'the 1,500-km-long, high-capacity western Dedicated Railway Freight Corridor (DFC) as the backbone' and aims to be 'a global manufacturing and investment destination'.
- A soft loan will be utilised to improve two Mass Rapid Transit Systems (MRTS) — one each in Gujarat and Haryana that will be part of the DMIC.
- The JICA is the Japanese governmental agency in charge of implementation of Japan's Official Development

Assistance (ODA).

- Its prime objective is promoting economic development and welfare in developing countries.
- The interest rate of the loan will be kept ‘very low’ (at 0.1%) and have a ‘long’ repayment period (at 40 years, including a 10-year grace period).

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Manipur tightens security over possible Rohingya influx

Context:

- Manipur has taken stringent security measures at the border areas of Manipur, sensing the possibility of a mass influx in the backdrop of the recent large-scale violence in Rakhine province of neighbouring Myanmar.

Keypoints:

- Assam-Jiribam is the most vulnerable point with respect to the influx of Bangladeshi immigrant, hence additional forces have been stationed at the border.
- Similarly, the drive against illegal immigrants have been strengthened at the Indo-Myanmar border at Moreh by deputing officers.
- The Indo-Myanmar border at Beihang in Churachandpur district would be developed as second corridor in the wake of the Act East Policy adding that a permanent police station would soon be established at Beihang.
- A total ban on use of agriculture land for commercial purpose, “State government is going to effectively implement the Manipur Conservation of Paddy Land and Wetland Act, 2014 by putting a total ban on sale, purchase and use of agricultural land for commercial purposes.”
- Manipuri government reaffirming to effectively implement the Conservation Act 2014,” to keep the records of paddy lands by conducting proper identification of the status of the existing paddy land through digitised cadastral maps on the basis of satellite images to conserve the wetlands.

Category: ENERGY SECURITY

1. India third in nuclear power installations: study

Context:

- India is third in the world in the number of nuclear reactors being installed, while China is leading at 20, as per the World Nuclear Industry Status Report 2017
- But share of energy generation stagnates globally, and several countries shut down nuclear reactors in 2017

Keypoints:

- Most nuclear reactor constructions are behind schedule, with delays resulting in increase in project costs and delay



in power generation.

Nuclear Power vs Renewable Energy Development.

- Since 1997, worldwide renewable energy has produced four times as many new kilowatt-hours of electricity than nuclear power
- The world no longer needs to build nuclear power plants to avoid climate change and certainly not to save money.
- The global nuclear power generation increased by 1.4% in 2016 due to a 23% increase in China, though the share of nuclear energy in electricity generation stagnated at 10.5%.
- By comparison, globally, wind power output grew by 16% and solar power by 30%. Renewables represented 62% of global power generating capacity additions.

Financial crisis

- Massive losses over its nuclear construction projects, Toshiba filed for bankruptcy of its U.S. subsidiary Westinghouse, the largest nuclear power builder in history. AREVA has accumulated \$12.3 billion in losses over the past six years.
- French bailout
- The French government has provided a \$5.3 billion bailout and continues its break-up strategy.
- Fukushima nuclear power project in Japan, six years after the disaster began, the report notes how the total official cost estimate for the catastrophe doubled to \$200 billion.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Drug-resistant bacteria emerge from drug companies' untreated effluents

Context:

- Discharge of untreated effluents from pharmaceutical companies in and around water bodies is contaminated with antibiotics and antifungal agents leading to the emergence of multidrug-resistant bacteria.

Keypoints:

- The bacteria have been found to produce enzymes such as extended spectrum beta-lactamases and carbapenemases which can protect them from antibiotics such as penicillin, cephalosporins, cephemycins, and carbapenems.
- The other antiinfectives found in the waters included antifungal medicine voriconazole, medications for bacterial infections such as moxifloxacin, linezolid, levofloxacin, clarithromycin, ciprofloxacin, ampicillin, doxycycline, trimethoprim and sulfamethoxazole.
- The samples of bacteria tested contain drug-resistant genes.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. The characteristic secrecy in governance is a threat to the objective of “Minimum government and Maximum governance”. Discuss. What effective measures can be taken to set right the path?
2. The reducing child mortality rates indicate the commitment towards the Sustainable Development goals. But the study indicates selective performances by the states like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. What measures are required by the Central and State governments to achieve parity in development?

GS Paper III

1. It is seen that the untreated effluents are the reason behind drug resistance and also health related effects. What possible amendments need to be incorporated in our laws to tackle the same? Comment.

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – Sept 25

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Security and Economy

1. [Govt. plans Made-in-India body armour for soldiers](#)

D. GS4 Related

E. Prelims Fact

F. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. A fight against prejudice

Context:

- Britain to incorporate measures against caste discrimination in equality law

Keypoints:

- British government completed a conference on whether measures against caste discrimination should be included in equality law.
- This was done to ensure there is “appropriate and proportionate legal protection” against unlawful discrimination because of a person’s origins.

World Conference on Untouchability

- The first World Conference on Untouchability (June 2009) took place in London.
- This conference explored versions of untouchability bringing together experts and activists from across the globe.
- Conference concluded with the **“Conway Hall Declaration on Untouchability”**, which urged all states where such practices were prevalent to introduce legislation to outlaw the practice and undertake programs of education.

Facts :

- Moreover a comprehensive study in 2010 by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research identified evidence of caste discrimination in the workplace, in the provision of services and in education.
- “Hindu organisations’ answer to an international conscription of Dalits rights activism has brought the Indian Hindu nationalist agenda into U.K. politics.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Afghan overture

Context:

- India's decision to expand security assistance to Kabul has a nuanced geopolitical message

Keypoints:

- India's plans to expand its security assistance to Afghanistan by training police officers in India as part of a UNDP project.
- By training police officers and hundreds of army cadets and officers, India is taking an important role in capacity building for Afghan security.
- **The second message**, to Pakistan and other countries in the region that deal with the Taliban, is that India will not be deterred from assisting Afghanistan for its security. This is a clear counter to Pakistan Prime Minister S.K. Abbasi's recent statement that India has "zero political and military role" in Afghanistan.
- New Delhi's decision to send Indian engineers to refurbish several non-functional Soviet-era planes and to repair the helicopters India donated to Afghanistan last year also comes in the wake of this commitment.
- **Third**, there is a message to the U.S. and NATO forces, India will play a part in putting Afghanistan back on its feet in India's own way and not necessarily, as the U.S. may prefer, with 'boots on the ground' or by sending large numbers of trainers into Afghanistan, where they would become marked targets.

2. Japan keen on friendship with northeast

Context:

- Tokyo will invest in infrastructure, education and people-to-people sectors, apart from inviting 25 youth from region to the country this year

Keypoints:

- Decision was taken in the fourth Northeast Connectivity Summit in Kohima.
- The next edition of the summit will be held in Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh, which borders China.
- Japan had undertaken works on road connectivity, energy projects, water supply and sanitation, forest resources management, Japanese language education and post-war reconciliation, which aimed to build a deeper

understanding of the actions of Japanese forces in the region during the Second World War.

- Tokyo was committed to undertaking two major road and infrastructure building projects in Mizoram and Meghalaya.
- The summit included diplomatic participation from Bhutan, Russia, Bangladesh, Laos and Thailand.

Reason behind Japanese cooperation in the development of the region:

- Northeastern region is located at a strategically and economically important juncture between India and Southeast Asia as well as within the Bimstec (Bay of Bengal) community.

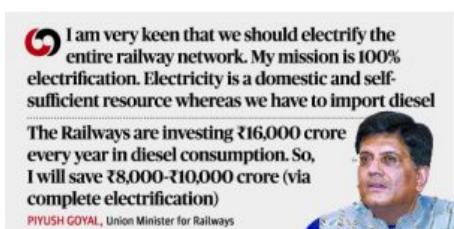
Myanmar's interest

- Myanmar's Minister of Cultural Affairs urged people from Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur to forge closer ties with Myanmar as the country shared long borders with all four States.
- Indian side urged improved connectivity with Myanmar for unlocking the regional trade potential.

Category: INVESTMENT

1. Private players may run rail lines

Context:



- The Union government comes up with an idea of giving operations of railway lines to private players for enhancing competition.
- Union government has decided that Railways will move from diesel to electric locomotives.

Benefits:

- Generate competition in the process and improve customer satisfaction.

Keypoints:

- Railways have decided to discard the ‘**Swiss Challenge**’ model of awarding railway stations to private players.
- Now it has taken measures to lease out at least 100 stations.
- The lease tenure presently is increased from 45 years to 99 years, allowing private players to sub-lease stations for increasing their investment value and mortgaging assets to allow banks to give low-cost funds.
- Mission behind the privatization of the railway operations also looks into 100% electrification.
- The Railways are investing Rs.16,000 crore every year in diesel consumption. So, This move will save Rs.8,000-10,000 crore
- Railways decided to abandon plans to set up a diesel locomotive plant in Marhowrah district of Bihar.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Tech boost for soil quality scheme

Context:

- Government takes a move to bring in technological boost to analyze the soil quality of farms across the country.

Keypoints:

- The Department of Science and Technology (DST) to link the program with a research project at the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay that uses sophisticated imaging techniques and can picture the nutrient balance of a patch of land without necessarily collecting soil sample.
- Hyper spectral imaging analyses extremely detailed images of an object frequently to the scale of nanometers and then reconstructing its constituent elements.
- To gauge the health of the soil this technology utilizes the custom-developed algorithms, satellite-images, or those taken from low flying planes or drones, to calculate the proportion of nitrogen, potassium and phosphorous the three most vital nutrients as well as other minerals in the soil.

Category: ECONOMY

1. The faltering economy

Context:

- Central government to take measures in the rise of weak and faltering economic numbers.

Keypoints:

- Capitalisation on stable macros to push through tough structural reforms is the need of the hour.
- Finance ministry to boost the fiscal spending to the tune of ₹50,000 crore or more to make up for lack of private investment.

Facts and Figures:

- The gross domestic product slowed to a multi-year low of 5.7% in the first quarter of 2017-18, and industrial output growth dropped to 1.2% in July, compared to 4.5% a year earlier.
- The retail price inflation jumped to a five-month high of 3.36% in August from 2.36% in July.

Causes behind the sluggish figures:

- The demonetisation of high-value rupee notes in November and
- The implementation of the Goods and Services Tax

Situational Analysis:

- Increased fiscal spending to provide short-term relief to this problem, as it will not address any of the production bottlenecks in the economy.
- Any relaxing of the fiscal deficit target will affect India's standing among global investors.

Reasons to the current slowdown

- Investors capital on large-scale projects needed to boost growth was held back due to the rigidities in land and labour.
- The unease involved in doing business in the country and the even larger uncertainty looming around the rules that govern the conduct of business have seriously held back growth.

- The private investment has failed to make sufficient use of the country's relatively high private savings rate.

Category: SECURITY AND ECONOMY

1. Govt. plans Made-in-India body armour for soldiers

Context:

- NITI Aayog to set up an inter-ministerial committee to prepare a road map to encourage domestic manufacturing of lightweight body armour for the Army and paramilitary forces.

Keypoints:

- Though India is a major producer and exporter of body armour, its own security forces are often deprived of such equipment, particularly the lightweight ones.
- Making lightweight armour in India will ensure low-cost supplies.
- Presently there is a requirement of over 50,000 bulletproof kits for the police force in the country.
- Indian companies such as the Kanpur-based MKU and Tata Advanced Materials export body armour to armed forces around the world.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. Is the recent “Conway Hall Declaration” a panacea to the social issues and new demands in the country? Discuss.

GS Paper II

1. North East India development and progress is the key to tackle threats from East Asia and also the path to emerge as an Asian leader. Comment.

GS Paper III

1. Analyse the pros and cons of privatization of the railway operations? Is it a progressive move to shift from the Swiss Model?

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – Sept 26

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1. [NHRC notice to TN, AP over Devadasi-like system](#)

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Polity

1. [Government launches Saubhagya scheme for household electrification](#)

International Affairs/Bilateral Relations

1. [Mattis may push for Indian troops in Afghanistan](#)
2. [Raja Mandala: New foray into the great game](#)

C. GS3 Related

Economy

1. [Govt's 1st estimate sees kharif food output dropping 2.8% to 134.67 mt](#)
2. [Database of savings schemes linked with Aadhaar in offing](#)

D. GS4 Related

E. Prelims Fact

F. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. [NHRC notice to TN, AP over Devadasi-like system](#)

In news:

- The NHRC has issued notices to the governments and police chiefs of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh over the alleged inhuman treatment being meted out to girls and women who are forcibly taken to temples as part of an old ritual that resembles the banned Devadasi system.
- The girls and women are taken to temples of Goddess Mathamma for “offering” in Thiruvallur district of Tamil Nadu and adjoining places.

• Practice:

1. As a part of the ritual, the girls are dressed up as a bride and once the ceremony is over, their dresses are removed by five boys, virtually leaving them naked.
2. They are denied to live with their families and have education.
3. They are forced to live in Mathamma temple deemed to be like a public property and face sexual exploitation
4. This practice is allegedly “another form of Devadasi system”, which is still practiced in some parts of

Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh

- **NHRC observations:** The rights panel has observed that if the allegations are true, these amount to violation of human rights, including the right to education, rights to life and dignity besides the childrens rights.
- **Key Fact:**

1. **Devadasi system** is a banned religious practice in some parts of India whereby parents marry a daughter to a deity or a temple.
2. The marriage usually occurs before the girl reaches puberty.
3. The Union Home Ministry in December 2015 had asked all states to take strong action against those involved in the heinous practice which is against the dignity of women.

Category: POLITY

1. Government launches Saubhagya scheme for household electrification

In news:

- Government has launched a Rs 16,320-crore scheme to supply electricity to all households by December 2018,
- This scheme will provide free connections to the poor and at very low cost to others
- Scheme: The Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojna, named ‘Saubhagya’
- Rural Electrification Corp will be the nodal agency for the scheme
- While public institutions and panchayats will be authorised to collect applications forms, distribute bills and collect payments

Modalities of the scheme:

- It aims to improve the environment, public health, education and connectivity with the help of last-mile power connections across India
- It will help reduce the use of kerosene lamps in non-electrified households
- States that complete the scheme by December next year would be given an additional 15% grant by the Centre as incentive
- The scheme is being funded to the extent of 60% by central grants, 30% by bank loans and 10% by states
- Under the scheme, electricity connections will be given free to people identified by the **Socio Economic and Caste Census** of 2011
- The scheme promises on-the-spot registration of applications

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Mattis may push for Indian troops in Afghanistan

In news:

- S. Defence Secretary Jim Mattis landed in India, for his maiden three-day visit
- **Key fact:** the first visit by a Cabinet member of the Trump administration.
- **Key areas of focus:**

1. Deepening the defence partnership and expand the high technology cooperation under the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTI)..
2. Afghanistan situation discussions.
3. Push for Indian troops in Afghanistan.
4. The two sides could also discuss the new Chinese posturing in the region and terrorism originating from Pakistan.
5. The two sides are expected to conclude the formal agreement for holding a bilateral maritime exercise, focused on providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

Indian aid to Afghanistan:

- India has already extended a **\$3-billion** aid to Afghanistan and also provides training to its military and other assistance.

2. Raja Mandala: New foray into the great game

Context:

- The question of a larger Indian role in securing Afghanistan is expected to figure in the talks between the US Defense Secretary James Mattis and the Indian leadership.

Background

- The developments in Afghanistan in the 1970s and 1980s saw the United States deepen its partnership with Pakistan to the dismay of India.
- Since the early 2000s, when the US warmed up to India, Afghanistan remained an area of disagreement.

New south Asian policy:

- In a major speech on the new administration's policy towards South Asia, Donald Trump demanded that Pakistan end its destabilisation of Afghanistan by providing safe havens to the Taliban and other terror networks.
- Trump's emphasis in the speech was indeed on India stepping up its economic and development assistance to Afghanistan.
- India and the US are fully aware that without stronger external military support to Kabul, the talk of development could become increasingly futile
- The 2011 Strategic Partnership Agreement between Delhi and Kabul explicitly called for security cooperation, including the transfer of military equipment.

Key points:

- Delhi did not want deeper security cooperation with Afghanistan that could cast a shadow over its ties with Pakistan.
- A second constraint has been geography. The lack of physical access has imposed substantial limitations on Delhi's military role in Afghanistan
- US resistance to a larger Indian security footprint in Afghanistan
- The US was convinced that any Indian military role in Afghanistan would grate Pakistan's political sensitivities.
- But Trump has now actively encouraging India to take greater responsibilities in Afghanistan.
- Trump's Indo-Pak inversion may or may not be sustainable over the long-term.
- Many in Washington would want to go back to the default option of avoiding confrontation with Pakistan in Afghanistan.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Govt's 1st estimate sees kharif food output dropping 2.8% to 134.67 mt

In news:

Lagging behind		in million tonnes
Crop	Kharif 2016-17 (on Advance estimate)	Kharif 2017-18 (1st advance estimate)
Rice	96.39	94.48
Coarse cereals	32.71	31.49
Pulses	9.42	8.71
Oilssees	22.40	20.68
Sugarcane	306.72	337.70
Cotton*	33.09	32.27

*million bales of 170 kg each Source: Ministry of Agriculture

- The 2017 kharif foodgrain output may come down to 134.67 million tonnes (mt) from a record harvest of 138.52 mt during the previous kharif season

- **Reasons:** Floods and erratic rainfall in different parts of the country
- The drop in output was seen across all major rain-fed crops except sugarcane
- Sugarcane registered a nearly 10 per cent increase in cropping area and a corresponding increase in output

Impacts:

- It may have an impact on farm incomes, which will be lower because of lower output
- This would mean that the demand for other goods in rural areas will not recover the way the government was hoping it would
- In other words, despite having two good monsoon in a row, private consumption expenditure will not go up and thus may have an impact on the overall economy

2. Database of savings schemes linked with Aadhaar in offing

In news:

- The Cabinet Secretariat is keen on a central database of government and private sector employees who have subscribed to the general provident fund (GPF), public provident fund (PPF) and employees' provident fund (EPF) with Aadhaar as the primary identifier.
- It has directed the various departments monitoring such savings schemes to ensure that 100% Aadhaar seeding of all salaried accounts takes place by December 31.
- **Key Fact:**

1. EPF is the savings scheme for private sector employees
2. The GPF is meant for government employees and
3. PPF can be subscribed to by all workers.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. Major cities of India are becoming vulnerable to flood conditions. Discuss.

GS Paper II

1. Has the formation of linguistic states strengthened the cause of Indian unity?

GS Paper III

1. What is water-use efficiency? Describe the role of micro-irrigation in increasing the water-use efficiency.

(a)

Topic: Polity

Level: Easy

Application: Factual Based

Explanation

Article 148:- Comptroller and Auditor General of India

(1) There shall be a Comptroller and Auditor General of India who shall be appointed by the **President** by warrant under his hand and seal and shall **only be removed from office in like manner and on the like grounds as a Judge of the Supreme Court**

(2) Every person appointed to be the Comptroller and Auditor General of India shall, before he enters upon his office, make and subscribe before the President, or some person appointed in that behalf by him, an oath or affirmation according to the form set out for the purpose in the **Third Schedule**

(3) The salary and other conditions of service of the Comptroller and Auditor General shall be such as may be determined **by Parliament** by law and, until they are so determined, shall be as specified in the Second Schedule: Provided that neither the salary of a Comptroller and Auditor General nor his rights in respect of leave of absence, pension or age of retirement shall be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment

(4) The Comptroller and Auditor General shall not be eligible for further office either under the Government of India or under the Government of any State after he has ceased to hold his office

(5) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution and of any law made by Parliament, the conditions of service of persons serving in the Indian Audit and Accounts Department and the administrative powers of the Comptroller and Auditor General shall be such as may be prescribed by rules made by the President after consultation with the Comptroller and

Auditor General

(6) The Administrative expenses of the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, including all salaries, allowances and pensions payable to or in respect of pensions serving in that office, shall be **charged upon the Consolidated Fund of India.**

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – Sept 28

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1. Soon, you will be able to order diesel online
2. Cabinet approves anti-superstition Bill
3. SC against last-minute litigation
4. 'Children born of void marriage are legitimate'

Health Issues

1. Falling off the health-care radar

International Affairs/Bilateral Relations

1. Army hits ultras on Myanmar border
2. India assures support to Syria in the fight against terrorism

C. GS3 Related

Economy

1. New tax, rule may 'aid' gold smuggling
2. 'Panel to review industrial policy hurdles'
3. India Ratings cuts GDP estimate citing demonetisation, GST

Internal Security and Defense related

1. CCS clears internal security scheme

Environmental Science and Ecology

1. Western Ghats throw up a new snake

D. GS4 Related

E. Prelims Fact

F. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Nothing here for Today!!!

Category: POLITY

1. Soon, you will be able to order diesel online

In news:

- **The Ministry of Petroleum** is working towards creating an **e-commerce platform** in which customers can order diesel online and get delivery at their doorstep.
- **Reason behind this move?** doorstep delivery of fuel is a viable model to increase digital transactions as well as shorten queues at petrol pumps.
- **Key challenge ahead:**
 1. Petrol delivery: since it is highly inflammable.
 2. Indian Oil Corporation has come up with diesel as the fuel for this model. It is not as flammable, and takes a lot of effort to catch fire.

2. Cabinet approves anti-superstition Bill

In news:

- The Karnataka State Cabinet approved the **Karnataka Prevention and Eradication of Inhuman Evil Practices and Black Magic Bill, 2017** — better known as the **anti-superstition Bill**
- The bill seeks to ban among other practices the controversial ‘**made snana**’ ritual (devotees rolling over plantain leaves having food leftovers) in public/religious places.
- ‘**Made snana**’ is practised at Kukke Subrahmanya temple in Dakshina Kannada district, in violation of human dignity.
- Bill proposes to ban evil practices such as killing an animal by biting its neck (gaavu).

Bill seeks to ban:

- The Bill also encompasses ban on human sacrifice; coercing a person to perform fire-walk at religious festivals; piercing jaw with rods, baibeega practice; pelting stones in the name of banamathi, mata-mantra; creating panic in the minds of the people by invoking ghost or mantras; claiming to perform surgery with fingers, or claiming to change the sex of foetus in the womb.
- It also seeks to ban practices against women: forcing them to stay in isolation; subjecting them to inhuman and humiliating practices such as parading them naked in the name of worship (betthale save); and sexual exploitation by invoking supernatural powers.

Bill fails to cover:

- Regulations for astrology and vaastu practice, piercing of ears and nose of children in

accordance with certain rituals, and performance of religious rituals such as ‘Keshlochan’ by the Jains.

Vigilance officers:

- The Bill proposes appointment of a vigilance officer to monitor violations of the provisions of the law and its rules.
- Violators of the law will be penalised, with imprisonment of not less than one year and a fine of not less than ₹5,000.

3. SC against last-minute litigation

In news:

- The Supreme Court has decided to lay down **deterrent measures** against “last-minute” litigation in medical admission matters.
- **Supreme Court observations:** approaching courts in the eleventh hour upsets the mental equilibrium of thousands of students and leaves admission procedures in colleges across the country in a tizzy.

4. ‘Children born of void marriage are legitimate’

In news:

- The Supreme Court has upheld a Madras High Court decision that children born of an invalid or void marriage are legitimate and eligible for appointment in the government sector **on compassionate grounds**.

Case:

- The case dealt with the application filed by a man in the Southern Railway, following the death of his father while in harness.

Railway circular

- The Railways rejected his application on the ground that he was born out of the second marriage of his father.
- **Railway Board circular, 1992:** bars the appointment of children born of void marriages, especially children out of a second marriage when the first marriage is still subsisting.

Supreme Court judgment in Rameshwari Devi versus State of Bihar, 2000:

- The apex court, in this judgment, had ruled on the legitimacy of children of void and voidable marriages.
- It held that even though the marriage was void, the children would be legitimate and would be entitled to claim share benefits, including family pension and death-cum-retirement gratuity.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. Falling off the health-care radar

Context:

- Care for the elderly needs to be better targeted by the health system and social networks

National Health Policy (NHP), 2017:

- It overlooks the rapid rise in the share of the old (60 years or more), and associated morbidities, especially sharply rising non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and disabilities.
- With rising age, numerous physiological changes occur and the risk of chronic diseases rises.
- It fails to make a distinction between the aged in general and those suffering from chronic conditions
- Based on the India Human Development Survey (IHDS) 2015, among aged males and females, those suffering from NCDs nearly doubled during 2005-12

Non-communicable diseases:

- The health system is ill-equipped to deal with surging NCDs
- Staffs are not well trained to treat/advise the aged suffering from dementia or frailty
- The quality of medical care is abysmal
- Hospitalization costs are exorbitant and impoverishing.
- Health insurance covers a fraction of medical expenses incurred.
- A vast majority of those with NCDs had access to medical advice and treatment but the proportion remained unchanged during 2005-12 ,because
- Heterogeneity in providers of medical help — from qualified doctors to faith healers and quacks
- Sharp deterioration in the quality of medical services

Immunity and Loneliness:

- The link between loneliness and mortality is mediated by unhealthy behaviours and morbidity
- Loneliness alters physiology at a more fundamental level.
- Research shows that loneliness increases vascular resistance and diminishes immunity.

Networking as support

- Today, ‘women are increasingly filling other roles, which limits the capacity of women and families to provide care for older people
- Children often play an important role in elderly support
- If social networks are instrumental in bonding together in periods of personal crises, this could compensate for a lack of family support
- But lack of social harmony induces helplessness, disruption of medical supplies and network support.

Way forward

- Health systems have to be configured to deal with not one NCD but multiple NCDs to

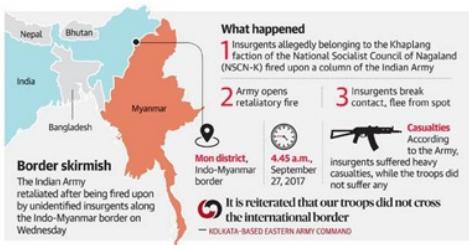
manage them better.

- The reconfigured medical system must be complemented by stronger family ties and social networks.
- Ageing in place can be further enhanced by creating age-friendly environments that enable mobility and allow them to engage in basic activities.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Army hits ultras on Myanmar border

In news:



- The Army has inflicted heavy casualties on NSCN(K) militants in an operation close to the **Myanmar border**.
- NSCN(K): the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K), a key rebel group that had pulled out of the 14-year-old ceasefire in March 2015 and has been on the warpath with security agencies ever since.
- The operation was limited to the Indian border.
- **June 2015 operation:** Indian troops crossed over to Myanmar to carry out a surgical strike against NSCN(K) militants.

2. India assures support to Syria in the fight against terrorism

Context:

- Grand mufti of Syrian Republic Ahmad Badr Eddine Mohammad Abid Hassoun visit to India.

In news:

- India assures support to Syria in the fight against terrorism, a major theatre of dreaded terror group ISIS.
- The Home Minister, Rajnath Singh welcomed the grand mufti and discussion was held on wide-ranging issues including terrorism and security.

Category: ECONOMY

1. New tax, rule may ‘aid’ gold smuggling

Context:

- Gold smuggling in India
- India is the world's second-biggest consumer of the metal.

- Gold import is likely to rise during the country's peak holiday season as buyers try to avoid paying a new sales tax and to dodge new transparency rules
- Unaccounted sale will rise in the festive season as some customers are trying to buy without bills

In news:

Background information:

- In August, India moved to include gold sales under the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)**.
- The law makes it mandatory for jewellers to keep records of customers' personal identification numbers or tax code number for transactions above ₹50,000.

Key Fact:

- Indian gold demand typically rises in the last three months of the year as consumers buy more for the wedding season as well as for festivals such as Diwali and Dussehra.
- **The World Gold Council estimate:** India imported 120 tonnes of gold in 2016.
- In India, less than 4% of the people pay income tax. Many tax evaders choose to park their illicit wealth in gold as it is nearly as liquid as currency in the country.

Present scenario:

- The sales tax on gold rose to 3% from 1.2 % as part of a new nationwide sales tax regime that started on July 1.
- Jewellers are buying smuggled gold at discount in cash, then making jewellery and selling it to consumers without receipts.

2. Panel to review industrial policy hurdles'

In news:

- The Centre will soon set up a '**regulatory review committee**'.
- **Reason :** to address policy-related roadblocks and other factors inhibiting the country's industrial growth.
- It will also address issues halting '**ease of doing business**' and private investments.
- The government is also thinking about a new mechanism to monitor domestic and foreign investment proposals.
- The idea is to fast-track decisions on such proposals, in coordination with State governments and the Centre's investment facilitation and promotion arm, '**Invest India**'.

Industry's unutilized capacity:

- The Centre is looking at ways to ensure use of the industry's unutilised capacity.
- Currently, the country-wide average unutilised capacity is about 26% (In other words, average utilisation of industrial capacity is only 74%).
- Measures will soon be taken soon to increase domestic demand as well as boost exports to ensure the entire capacity is utilized.

3. India Ratings cuts GDP estimate citing demonetisation, GST

In news:

- India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) an arm of global rating agency Fitch has cut India's GDP growth forecast to 6.7% from earlier expected 7.4% in the current fiscal.

Reasons:

- Because of the disruptive impact of demonetisation and the new GST
- After demonetisation, failing to remonetise the economy quickly has proved fatal for the unorganised sector/small and medium enterprise where business transactions are heavily cash dependent
- India's GDP growth has been in a free fall since the first quarter of the last fiscal year.

Basic Information:

India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra)

- It is India's Most Respected credit rating agency committed to providing the India's credit markets with accurate, timely and prospective credit opinions.
- Ind-Ra currently maintains coverage of corporate issuers, financial institutions, which includes banks and insurance companies. Finance & leasing companies and managed funds, Urban Local Bodies, Structured Finance and Project Finance.
- Ind-Ra is headquartered in Mumbai and, it is a 100% owned subsidiary of the Fitch Group

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE RELATED

1. CCS clears internal security scheme

In news:

- The Union Cabinet has approved a **₹ 25,000-crore** internal security scheme to strengthen the country's law and order mechanism and modernise the police forces.
- The **Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS)**, headed by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**, gave its approval for the implementation of the umbrella scheme, **Modernisation of Police Forces (MPF)**, for 2017-18 to 2019-20.
- The new initiatives were being introduced to provide assistance to States for upgradation of police infrastructure, forensic science laboratories, institutions and the equipment available with them to plug critical gaps in the criminal justice system.
- Police stations would be integrated to set up a national database of crime and criminal records. It would be linked with other criminal justice system such as prisons, forensic laboratories and prosecution offices.

Key facts:

- Country's biggest ever internal security scheme.
- The financial outlay over the three-year period is ₹25,060 crore, out of which the Central government's share will be ₹18,636 crore and the States' ₹6,424 crore
- Special provisions had been made under the scheme for internal security, law and order,

women's security, availability of modern weapons, mobility of police forces, logistical support, hiring of helicopters and e-prison among others.

Various other initiatives:

- Central budget outlay of ₹10,132 crore had been earmarked for internal security-related expenditure for Jammu and Kashmir, northeastern States and those affected by left wing extremism (LWE).
- A scheme for special Central assistance (SCA) for 35 districts worst hit by LWE had been introduced with an outlay of ₹3,000 crore to tackle the issue of underdevelopment.
- An outlay of ₹100 crore had been earmarked for police infrastructure upgradation, training institutes, investigation facilities, etc. in the northeastern States.

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. Western Ghats throw up a new snake

In news:

- Scientists have described a new species of non-venomous endemic snake, **Aquatic Rhabdops**.
- **Location:** Northern Western Ghats.
- **Features:**
 1. The three-foot-long
 2. Nocturnal snake hunts for prey underwater.
- 1. All Rhabdops snakes are endemic to India.
- 2. The Olive Forest Snake Rhabdops olivaceus is found only in the Western Ghats while the bi-coloured Forest Snake Rhabdops bicolor lives in a few localities in the northeast.
- 3. The Aquatic Rhabdops too is found only in the laterite plateaus of the northern Western Ghats in Goa, southern Maharashtra and northern Karnataka, in areas facing severe human pressures.
- 4. Endemicity, the phenomenon of being present only in a specific geographical area.

Nothing here for Today!!!

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. What is Two Round Election system? Should India move towards two round first past the post system? Examine the pros and cons of such a move.

GS Paper III

2. What are the various Export control regimes? What does India stand to gain from the membership of these regimes?

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4. [UDAN flights: Govt allows airlines to use bigger planes, eases rules on connecting flights](#)

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1. [India signs MoU to train Afghan police](#)

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E. Prelims Fact

F. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

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Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. South-west monsoon: Rain deficit just 5%, but distribution uneven

In news:

- India Meteorological Department (IMD) data on Monsoon: IMD predicted that rainfall will likely be 98% of the 50-year average (long-period average or LPA) for the entire country
- But monsoon has fallen short by just 5% so far.
- Also, according to IMD, it has been uneven in terms of distribution across geographical regions of the country.

Category: POLITY

1. Govt. studying report on online abuse

Context:

- Growing menace of online abuse.

In news:

- The **Home Ministry** has said it is examining an expert committee report that has recommended measures to contain the **growing menace of online abuse , particularly against women** .
- The report also deliberates on **hate speeches** and **vitriolic messages** on online platforms.

Background information:

- The **expert committee panel** was set up after the **Supreme Court** struck down **Section 66A of the Information Technology Act in 2014** .
- The committee headed by **K. Viswanathan**, former Secretary General of the Lok Sabha, submitted its report to the Home Ministry recently.
- The panel has recommended amending **Section 78 of the Information Technology Act** , which mandates an officer not below the rank of an Inspector to investigate such cases of online misuse.

2. VVPAT to be used in Gujarat polls

In news:

- The **Election Commission of India (EC)** will use **Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)** gadgets with Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) in all 50,128 voting booths in Gujarat, which goes to the Assembly polls at the end of this year.
- **Key fact :** This is the first time an entire assembly poll will be conducted using the EVMs equipped with VVPAT
- VVPAT machines, which will be attached to the EVMs, will allow voters to verify if their vote has gone to the intended candidate. This would ensure transparency in the voting process, he said.

What is VVPAT?

- Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) or Verifiable Paper Record (VPR) is a method of providing feedback to voters using a ballotless voting system. A VVPAT is intended as an independent verification system for voting machines designed to allow voters to verify that their vote was cast correctly, to detect possible election fraud or malfunction, and to provide a means to audit the stored electronic results. It contains name of the candidate (for whom vote has been casted) and symbol of the party/ individual candidate.

3. Centre to review flexi-fares on select trains, says Goyal

In news:

- The Union government is planning to review the **flexi-fare system** introduced in premium trains last year.
- The Railways were also planning to reset its timetable by reducing the travel time for 600-700 trains through rescheduling and increasing speed
- The Railways are also in discussions with the Indian Space Research Organisation to use GPS

technology to monitor trains for punctuality.

- **Background information :** The Railways introduced the flexi-fare scheme in September last year in Rajdhani, Duronto and Shatabdi trains, under which 10% of the seats were sold at normal fare. The fare was increased thereafter by 10% for every 10% of the berths sold. The highest fare was 50% more than the normal price of the ticket.

4. UDAN flights: Govt allows airlines to use bigger planes, eases rules on connecting flights

Context:

- The civil aviation ministry has acceded to a request from some airlines that will allow them to potentially ply bigger aircraft for UDAN flights
- There will be more flexibility also in how they integrate such routes into their overall operations.

UDAN :

- **UDAN(Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik)** is a regional aviation scheme that encourages airlines to fly to underserved airports at low fares.
- The airlines have to sell a certain number of seats (between nine and 40 currently) on such flights at a maximum of Rs 2,500 per hour of flying.
- In return, they receive a subsidy from the government.

New changes:

- Airlines can now make an UDAN destination part of a connecting flight, making it easier for them to integrate regional aviation routes into their overall operations
- But airline will have to declare 70% of seats on any such flight as UDAN seats irrespective of the kind of aircraft they are using.
- They will however only be paid subsidy for a maximum of 40 seats.
- The ministry has also done away with the stipulation that requires two airports to be 150km away from each other to qualify for UDAN flights.
- It has also allowed helicopters to participate in UDAN, and, in mountainous regions, four-seater aircraft.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. India signs MoU to train Afghan police

In news:

- New memorandum of understanding signed between India and Afghanistan
- **Key points:**

1. Afghan police forces trained in India for the first time.
2. MoU on Technical Cooperation on **Police Training and Development** will see India expand its capacity building of Afghan troops to include policemen and security forces, who are facing the brunt of Taliban attacks in the country, under a United Nations Development Programme project.

2. Expanding the common ground

Context:

- The rising Indo-US strategic relationship in the Indian Sub-continent.

Greater role of India in Afghanistan:

- India has decided to take up 116 “high-impact community developmental projects” in 31 provinces of Afghanistan
- India and Afghanistan have also agreed to “strengthen security cooperation”
- India has agreed “to extend further assistance for the Afghan national defence and security forces in fighting
 - 1. The scourge of terrorism,
 - 2. Organized crime,
 - 3. Trafficking of narcotics and
 - 4. Money laundering”
- India will train Afghan police officers along with Afghan soldiers
- This is aimed at sending out a message to Pakistan, which continues to assert that India has “**zero political and military role**” in Afghanistan

Increased military role of India in Afghanistan

- India has given four attack helicopters to Afghanistan as part of its assistance package
- India is keen to expand the scope of its security cooperation with Afghanistan
- It had remained limited in the past not only due to geographical constraints, but also due to USA’s desire to limit India’s security engagement in the country

India-U.S:

- The recent visit of Gen. Mattis shows the importance of defence ties in shaping the trajectory of Indo-U.S. relations
- The USA is no longer reluctant about selling sensitive military technologies to India
- The U.S. is looking forward to share some of their most advanced defence technologies with India
- For example, the sale of 22 Sea Guardian Unmanned Aerial Systems is high on the agenda.
- With this deal, the Indian Navy will not only acquire the world’s most advanced maritime reconnaissance drone, it will also lead to greater defence technology sharing.

Role of India in International relations:

- As India and the U.S. expand military cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, new alignments are emerging.
- In the past, India had been reluctant to play an active role in East and Southeast Asia.
- Now as part of its ‘Act East’ policy, India’s engagement with the region has become more robust.
- And the USA has been encouraging India to shape the regional strategic realities more potently.

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. Climate change is going to hit the Indian economy hard

Context:

- World Economic Outlook of the IMF, highlights the damaging macroeconomic impact of weather shocks, particularly for low-income countries.
- It notes that for the median emerging market economy, growth goes down by 0.9 percentage point because of a 1-degree Celsius increase from a temperature of 22 degrees Celsius

- Climate change is a serious challenge for India where about 50% of the population directly or indirectly depends on agriculture for a livelihood

Consequences of climate change:

- Productivity will start declining strongly
- Countries located in areas with higher temperature will face a disproportionate impact of global warming.
- Loss of output and lower productivity also affects capital formation, which has a bearing on medium- to long-term growth prospects.

Present scenario:

- Consensus was attained under the **Paris Agreement** to contain the rise in global temperature to below 2 degrees Celsius from the pre-industrial levels
- But now the Trump administration in the US is not keen on continuing with the Paris Agreement.
- It is being reported that advanced economies may not meet their commitment of reducing emissions
- The lack of will among industrialized economies to contain emissions, could lead to consequences that go beyond the realm of macroeconomics.

Necessary steps that need to be taken :

- Emerging market and low-income economies have to build significant macroeconomic resilience.
- The IMF notes that right policies and institutions in place may help attenuate the effects of temperature shocks, to some extent.

Way forwards:

- Strengthen macroeconomic stability to be able to deal with such shocks.
- Work on programmes that will help improve the quality of land and reduce the risk of climate change.
 - In Ethiopia, food and cash is provided to the poor who participate in local environmental programmes.
 - This has resulted in reduction in soil loss and has increased the availability of water
- India can use employment under the MGNREGA in a better way to enhance soil and water conservation.
- Strengthen its overall capability by investing in and adopting technology as the impact of climate change is not limited to agriculture
 - For instance, better use of technology can reduce energy consumption for air conditioning. A district cooling system is being constructed in Gujarat International Finance Tec-City.
 - It can be adopted in other cities as well.

Nothing here for Today!!!

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. With a brief background of quality of urban life in India, introduce the objectives and strategy of the ‘Smart City Programme.’

GS Paper III

2. Enumerate the problems and prospects of inland water transport in India.

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – Sept 30

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Category: POLITY

[1. Collegium moves to devise norms to pick, shift judges](#)

Context:

- Appointment of judges and transfer of high court judges.
- Transparency in the selection process

In news:

- The five-member Supreme Court collegium headed by **Chief Justice Dipak Misra** has resolved to devise a procedure to streamline the process to select judges of constitutional courts.

December 16, 2015 judgment

- The SC had asked the government to frame a new memorandum of procedure for selection of judges
- **Disagreement:** The draft is stuck over a disagreement on the Centre's insistence on including a “**national security**” clause to enable the government to reject a name recommended for appointment as judge of the SC or HCs on these grounds.
- **Tussle between Judiciary and Government:**

1. The collegium has been firm that the Centre must put in writing its objections, including on national security grounds, for rejecting a recommendation and insists that if the collegium reiterates its recommendation the appointment must go through.
2. But the Centre remains firm it will only show intelligence inputs on a person to the collegium and not put it in

writing as this could jeopardise the future of a person whose appointment was stalled because of national security apprehensions

- The collegium headed by CJI Misra will soon give effect to the **December 16, 2015 judgment** of a five-judge bench mandating establishment of secretariats in the SC and each HC.
- The secretariat will collate data on the track record of persons being considered for appointment as judges and place it before the collegium.

2. After foodgrain and LPG, direct transfer of benefits for fertilizers kicks in from Sunday

In news:

- The government will launch the much-awaited **direct benefit transfer (DBT) of fertiliser** subsidy in Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Puducherry and Goa.
- Unlike other DBTs such as cash transfer for foodgrains or subsidised gas connection where the subsidy amount is directly transferred to beneficiary accounts, in this case the subsidy will go to the manufacturer or marketing firm.
- **No-denial policy:** The government will follow the no-denial policy, which means anyone can buy any quantity of fertiliser after giving details of his Aadhaar card at the retail outlet.
- Under this scheme, the retail fertiliser outlets equipped with PoS machines will be able to read buyers' Aadhaar cards. As the farmer buys, the difference between market rate and the subsidised amount will be credited to the bank account of the manufacturer or the marketing company concerned.
- **First phase of implementation:** After assessing the success of its implementation and capturing the details of consumption, government will consider to launch phase-II, which will be transferring the subsidy to the accounts of farmers.
- **Advantages:**

1. Records of sales and purchase will bring transparency about the quantity of fertilisers that companies are selling to farmers.
2. **Experts opinion:** this move will reduce the total sale by 10-15% and thereby reduce the burden on the exchequer by about Rs 6,000 crore annually.

3. Reforms money can't buy

Context:

- The Centre recently approved Rs 25000 Cr modernisation of police force scheme which will be implemented between 2017 and 2020.

Police force modernization:

- It will strengthen the law and order apparatus, modernise state police forces and enhance their capacity to combat terrorism.
- It also has special provisions for women's security, mobility of police forces, logistical support, hiring of helicopters, upgradation of police wireless, satellite communications, **crime and criminal tracking network and systems (CCTNS)** and e-prisons.
- The idea is to assist the states to upgrade their police infrastructure, especially in respect of transport, communications and forensic support, to enable them to effectively tackle the emerging challenges.

Funding Pattern:

- Centre share 75 per cent while the states' share will be the rest.
- Under the scheme, J&K, north-eastern states and states affected by Left-Wing Extremism will get a boost of Rs 10,132 crore.
- 14th Finance Commission's recommendations increased the state's share of central taxes from 32 per cent to 42 per cent, following which Centre de-linked eight centrally sponsored schemes (CSS) from its support in 2015.
- While central funding of modernisation of police was stopped, non-plan funding for the same would continued.
- Thereafter, majority of state governments were disinclined to make any investments in police.
- But, the Centre again started its funding in internal security with modernization of police forces scheme on the recommendation of Cabinet Committee on Security.

Smart Police

- The PM in 2014 enunciated the concept of SMART police. The smartness has two dimensions external and internal.
1. **External Dimension** refers to the uniform a policeman wears, the way he carries himself, his weapons, the communication equipment on his person, his mobility, response time, et al. The scheme would enhance his capabilities to respond to and deal with the kind of challenges he is confronted with in his day to day work.
 2. **Internal Dimension** refers to the expanded acronym of SMART that is, the police should be strict and sensitive, modern and mobile, alert and accountable, reliable and responsible, tech-savvy and trained. This is far more important than the external dimension but the scheme hardly improves this aspect.

Problems:

- Today we have Ruler's police but what we need is People's police.
- Accountability has to be to the Constitution, the laws of the land and the people of the country.
- The police is being accused of being insensitive to poor and tribals.

Way Forward

- Reliability would increase only when the police are objective, fair and impartial. Gadgetry won't help here.
- It is the state of mind which matters. And to achieve that state of mind, police must be freed from the stranglehold of politicians.
- The scheme must be followed by structural reforms, institutions like the state security commission, police establishment board and complaints authority must be set up in every state in keeping with the directions of the Court.
- The GOI should bring police and public order in the Concurrent List of Schedule VII of the Constitution. Constitutional experts like Fali S. Nariman have strongly spoken in favour of such an amendment.
- Sustained economic progress needs the solid foundation of good law and order, and we cannot have good law and order in the country unless the police are reorganised, restructured and rejuvenated.

Basic Information:

Cabinet Committee on Security

- **The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) of the Central Government of India decides on India's defence expenditure, matters of National Security, and makes significant appointments.**
- **CCS is chaired by the Prime Minister of India and comprises the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Home Affairs, and the Minister of External Affairs.**

Central Sector Scheme

- **It is entirely (100%) funded by the Union Government and implemented by central agencies.**
- **These schemes are mainly related to the subjects in the Union list.**

Centrally Sponsored Schemes

- **A certain percentage of the funding is borne by the States in the ratio of 50:50, 70:30, 75:25 or 90:10 and the implementation is by the State Governments.**
- **These schemes are mainly related to the subjects in the State List.**

4. Major Swachh hiccups: Funds crunch, failure to transport and segregate waste

Context:

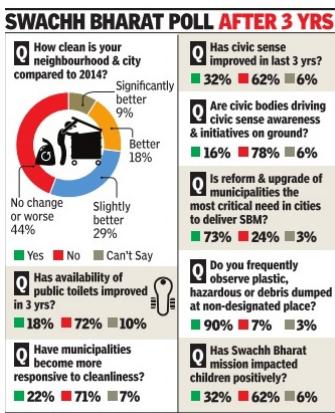
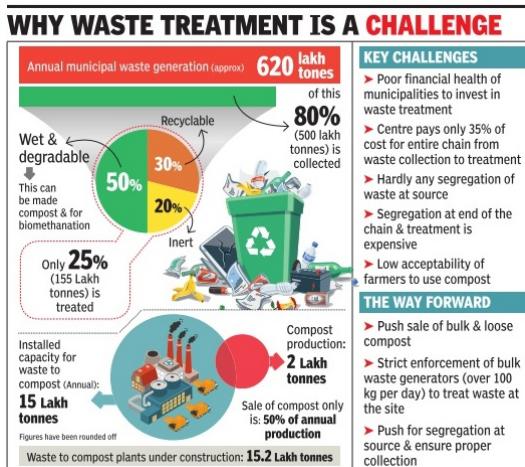
- **The inadequacy of the municipal mechanism to collect and transport garbage from urban homes to dumping yards is a significant lacuna and highlights the need for smarter integration of Swachh Bharat with urban renewal programmes like AMRUT .**
- **There is no uniform mechanism for maintenance and sweeping and lifting of garbage across urban areas.**

In news:

1. **About 75% of 1.7 lakh tonnes of municipal waste (garbage) that Indian cities and towns generate daily goes to landfill sites or dumping yards untreated**

2. Civic bodies cover only 44,650 out of 81,000 municipal wards through their door-to-door collection scheme.
3. These statistics tell the government where to concentrate funds and policy planning if Swachh Bharat is to deliver the results PM Narendra Modi has sought.

Reasons:



- Urban issues are state subject and success or failure is determined by public participation and political drive.
- Cities in southern states have done well simply because there is concerted effort in which local leaders give cleanliness priority
- Municipalities cannot spend more on collection, transportation and processing of garbage as many are hard put to pay salaries
- The challenge was of building managerial capacity as well as tapping funds.
- Financial health of municipalities is poor and it's almost impossible for small ones to fund treating waste. "Centre gives only 35% of expenses for the entire solid waste management chain. Getting the rest from state and municipality is difficult in most states except a few like Maharashtra. Small urban areas growing fast are hit hardest,"

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. [Govt's wildlife action plan to focus on e-surveillance](#)

Context:

- New National Wildlife Action Plan (2017-31).
- The action plan will be launched by environment minister Harsh Vardhan on the inaugural day of the **Global Wildlife Programme (GWP)**

In news:

- The Centre will announce its **new National Wildlife Action Plan (2017-31)** on October 2 to strengthen conservation measures.
- Use of technology, including e-surveillance through drones, and modalities to involve people living around

national parks and sanctuaries in conservation efforts will be key to this 14-year roadmap.

- The action plan spells out how India will go about handling these issues in a time-bound manner in the next 14 years.
- It covers all the issues concerning conservation, ranging from rehabilitation of threatened species to integrating climate change in wildlife planning.
- The plan has a road map to deal with poaching and illegal trade of animals and animal parts, and management of tourism in wildlife areas.
- Setting up special courts for effective implementation of the Wildlife Protection Act to ensure the speedy trial of wildlife crimes, identification and validation of **Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK)** available in various parts of the country for dealing with human-wildlife conflicts, and use of mobile technology to develop '**Digital Field Guides**' for easy identification of various wildlife goods and their derivatives are other key features of the plan.
- The plan cites as a model the Gujarat forest department's initiative to appoint local youth as 'Vanya Praani Mitra' (friends of wild animals) in high conflict zones.
- The four-day conference will give India an opportunity to get acquainted with best practices on the management of wildlife habitats and minimising human-wildlife conflict situations.

Global Wildlife Programme (GWP) :

- The GWP, initiated in 2015, is a **World-Bank** led partnership of 19 countries to promote the conservation and sustainable development by combating trafficking in wildlife.

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GS Paper III

1. What were the reasons for the introduction of Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2013? Discuss critically its salient features and their effectiveness.
2. What is the meaning of the term 'tax expenditure'? Taking housing sector as an example, discuss how it influences the budgetary policies of the government.

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Category: POLITY

1. [Collegium moves to devise norms to pick, shift judges](#)

Context:

- Appointment of judges and transfer of high court judges.
- Transparency in the selection process

In news:

- The five-member Supreme Court collegium headed by **Chief Justice Dipak Misra** has resolved to devise a procedure to streamline the process to select judges of constitutional courts.

December 16, 2015 judgment

- The SC had asked the government to frame a new memorandum of procedure for selection of judges
- **Disagreement:** The draft is stuck over a disagreement on the Centre's insistence on including a “**national security**” clause to enable the government to reject a name recommended for appointment as judge of the SC or HCs on these grounds.
- **Tussle between Judiciary and Government:**

1. The collegium has been firm that the Centre must put in writing its objections, including on national security grounds, for rejecting a recommendation and insists that if the collegium reiterates its recommendation the appointment must go through.
2. But the Centre remains firm it will only show intelligence inputs on a person to the collegium and not put it in

writing as this could jeopardise the future of a person whose appointment was stalled because of national security apprehensions

- The collegium headed by CJI Misra will soon give effect to the **December 16, 2015 judgment** of a five-judge bench mandating establishment of secretariats in the SC and each HC.
- The secretariat will collate data on the track record of persons being considered for appointment as judges and place it before the collegium.

2. After foodgrain and LPG, direct transfer of benefits for fertilizers kicks in from Sunday

In news:

- The government will launch the much-awaited **direct benefit transfer (DBT) of fertiliser** subsidy in Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Puducherry and Goa.
- Unlike other DBTs such as cash transfer for foodgrains or subsidised gas connection where the subsidy amount is directly transferred to beneficiary accounts, in this case the subsidy will go to the manufacturer or marketing firm.
- **No-denial policy:** The government will follow the no-denial policy, which means anyone can buy any quantity of fertiliser after giving details of his Aadhaar card at the retail outlet.
- Under this scheme, the retail fertiliser outlets equipped with PoS machines will be able to read buyers' Aadhaar cards. As the farmer buys, the difference between market rate and the subsidised amount will be credited to the bank account of the manufacturer or the marketing company concerned.
- **First phase of implementation:** After assessing the success of its implementation and capturing the details of consumption, government will consider to launch phase-II, which will be transferring the subsidy to the accounts of farmers.
- **Advantages:**

1. Records of sales and purchase will bring transparency about the quantity of fertilisers that companies are selling to farmers.
2. **Experts opinion:** this move will reduce the total sale by 10-15% and thereby reduce the burden on the exchequer by about Rs 6,000 crore annually.

3. Reforms money can't buy

Context:

- The Centre recently approved Rs 25000 Cr modernisation of police force scheme which will be implemented between 2017 and 2020.

Police force modernization:

- It will strengthen the law and order apparatus, modernise state police forces and enhance their capacity to combat terrorism.
- It also has special provisions for women's security, mobility of police forces, logistical support, hiring of helicopters, upgradation of police wireless, satellite communications, **crime and criminal tracking network and systems (CCTNS)** and e-prisons.
- The idea is to assist the states to upgrade their police infrastructure, especially in respect of transport, communications and forensic support, to enable them to effectively tackle the emerging challenges.

Funding Pattern:

- Centre share 75 per cent while the states' share will be the rest.
- Under the scheme, J&K, north-eastern states and states affected by Left-Wing Extremism will get a boost of Rs 10,132 crore.
- 14th Finance Commission's recommendations increased the state's share of central taxes from 32 per cent to 42 per cent, following which Centre de-linked eight centrally sponsored schemes (CSS) from its support in 2015.
- While central funding of modernisation of police was stopped, non-plan funding for the same would continued.
- Thereafter, majority of state governments were disinclined to make any investments in police.
- But, the Centre again started its funding in internal security with modernization of police forces scheme on the recommendation of Cabinet Committee on Security.

Smart Police

- The PM in 2014 enunciated the concept of SMART police. The smartness has two dimensions external and internal.
1. **External Dimension** refers to the uniform a policeman wears, the way he carries himself, his weapons, the communication equipment on his person, his mobility, response time, et al. The scheme would enhance his capabilities to respond to and deal with the kind of challenges he is confronted with in his day to day work.
 2. **Internal Dimension** refers to the expanded acronym of SMART that is, the police should be strict and sensitive, modern and mobile, alert and accountable, reliable and responsible, tech-savvy and trained. This is far more important than the external dimension but the scheme hardly improves this aspect.

Problems:

- Today we have Ruler's police but what we need is People's police.
- Accountability has to be to the Constitution, the laws of the land and the people of the country.
- The police is being accused of being insensitive to poor and tribals.

Way Forward

- Reliability would increase only when the police are objective, fair and impartial. Gadgetry won't help here.
- It is the state of mind which matters. And to achieve that state of mind, police must be freed from the stranglehold of politicians.
- The scheme must be followed by structural reforms, institutions like the state security commission, police establishment board and complaints authority must be set up in every state in keeping with the directions of the Court.
- The GOI should bring police and public order in the Concurrent List of Schedule VII of the Constitution. Constitutional experts like Fali S. Nariman have strongly spoken in favour of such an amendment.
- Sustained economic progress needs the solid foundation of good law and order, and we cannot have good law and order in the country unless the police are reorganised, restructured and rejuvenated.

Basic Information:

Cabinet Committee on Security

- **The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) of the Central Government of India decides on India's defence expenditure, matters of National Security, and makes significant appointments.**
- **CCS is chaired by the Prime Minister of India and comprises the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Home Affairs, and the Minister of External Affairs.**

Central Sector Scheme

- **It is entirely (100%) funded by the Union Government and implemented by central agencies.**
- **These schemes are mainly related to the subjects in the Union list.**

Centrally Sponsored Schemes

- **A certain percentage of the funding is borne by the States in the ratio of 50:50, 70:30, 75:25 or 90:10 and the implementation is by the State Governments.**
- **These schemes are mainly related to the subjects in the State List.**

4. Major Swachh hiccups: Funds crunch, failure to transport and segregate waste

Context:

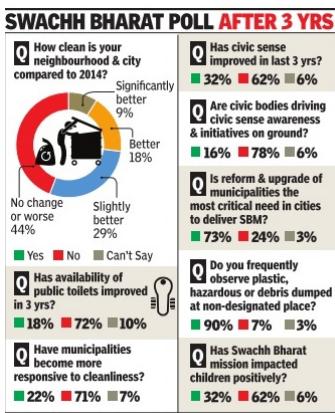
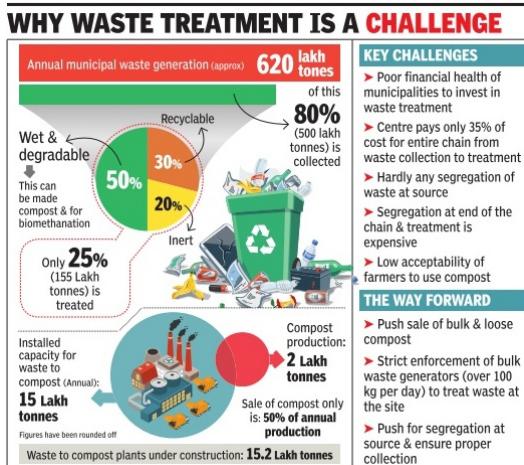
- **The inadequacy of the municipal mechanism to collect and transport garbage from urban homes to dumping yards is a significant lacuna and highlights the need for smarter integration of Swachh Bharat with urban renewal programmes like AMRUT .**
- **There is no uniform mechanism for maintenance and sweeping and lifting of garbage across urban areas.**

In news:

1. **About 75% of 1.7 lakh tonnes of municipal waste (garbage) that Indian cities and towns generate daily goes to landfill sites or dumping yards untreated**

2. Civic bodies cover only 44,650 out of 81,000 municipal wards through their door-to-door collection scheme.
3. These statistics tell the government where to concentrate funds and policy planning if Swachh Bharat is to deliver the results PM Narendra Modi has sought.

Reasons:



- Urban issues are state subject and success or failure is determined by public participation and political drive.
- Cities in southern states have done well simply because there is concerted effort in which local leaders give cleanliness priority
- Municipalities cannot spend more on collection, transportation and processing of garbage as many are hard put to pay salaries
- The challenge was of building managerial capacity as well as tapping funds.
- Financial health of municipalities is poor and it's almost impossible for small ones to fund treating waste. "Centre gives only 35% of expenses for the entire solid waste management chain. Getting the rest from state and municipality is difficult in most states except a few like Maharashtra. Small urban areas growing fast are hit hardest,"

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Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. South-west monsoon: Rain deficit just 5%, but distribution uneven

In news:

- India Meteorological Department (IMD) data on Monsoon: IMD predicted that rainfall will likely be 98% of the 50-year average (long-period average or LPA) for the entire country
- But monsoon has fallen short by just 5% so far.
- Also, according to IMD, it has been uneven in terms of distribution across geographical regions of the country.

Category: POLITY

1. Govt. studying report on online abuse

Context:

- Growing menace of online abuse.

In news:

- The **Home Ministry** has said it is examining an expert committee report that has recommended measures to contain the **growing menace of online abuse , particularly against women** .
- The report also deliberates on **hate speeches** and **vitriolic messages** on online platforms.

Background information:

- The **expert committee panel** was set up after the **Supreme Court** struck down **Section 66A of the Information Technology Act in 2014** .
- The committee headed by **K. Viswanathan**, former Secretary General of the Lok Sabha, submitted its report to the Home Ministry recently.
- The panel has recommended amending **Section 78 of the Information Technology Act** , which mandates an officer not below the rank of an Inspector to investigate such cases of online misuse.

2. VVPAT to be used in Gujarat polls

In news:

- The **Election Commission of India (EC)** will use **Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)** gadgets with Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) in all 50,128 voting booths in Gujarat, which goes to the Assembly polls at the end of this year.
- **Key fact :** This is the first time an entire assembly poll will be conducted using the EVMs equipped with VVPAT
- VVPAT machines, which will be attached to the EVMs, will allow voters to verify if their vote has gone to the intended candidate. This would ensure transparency in the voting process, he said.

What is VVPAT?

- Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) or Verifiable Paper Record (VPR) is a method of providing feedback to voters using a ballotless voting system. A VVPAT is intended as an independent verification system for voting machines designed to allow voters to verify that their vote was cast correctly, to detect possible election fraud or malfunction, and to provide a means to audit the stored electronic results. It contains name of the candidate (for whom vote has been casted) and symbol of the party/ individual candidate.

3. Centre to review flexi-fares on select trains, says Goyal

In news:

- The Union government is planning to review the **flexi-fare system** introduced in premium trains last year.
- The Railways were also planning to reset its timetable by reducing the travel time for 600-700 trains through rescheduling and increasing speed
- The Railways are also in discussions with the Indian Space Research Organisation to use GPS

technology to monitor trains for punctuality.

- **Background information :** The Railways introduced the flexi-fare scheme in September last year in Rajdhani, Duronto and Shatabdi trains, under which 10% of the seats were sold at normal fare. The fare was increased thereafter by 10% for every 10% of the berths sold. The highest fare was 50% more than the normal price of the ticket.

4. UDAN flights: Govt allows airlines to use bigger planes, eases rules on connecting flights

Context:

- The civil aviation ministry has acceded to a request from some airlines that will allow them to potentially ply bigger aircraft for UDAN flights
- There will be more flexibility also in how they integrate such routes into their overall operations.

UDAN :

- **UDAN(Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik)** is a regional aviation scheme that encourages airlines to fly to underserved airports at low fares.
- The airlines have to sell a certain number of seats (between nine and 40 currently) on such flights at a maximum of Rs 2,500 per hour of flying.
- In return, they receive a subsidy from the government.

New changes:

- Airlines can now make an UDAN destination part of a connecting flight, making it easier for them to integrate regional aviation routes into their overall operations
- But airline will have to declare 70% of seats on any such flight as UDAN seats irrespective of the kind of aircraft they are using.
- They will however only be paid subsidy for a maximum of 40 seats.
- The ministry has also done away with the stipulation that requires two airports to be 150km away from each other to qualify for UDAN flights.
- It has also allowed helicopters to participate in UDAN, and, in mountainous regions, four-seater aircraft.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. India signs MoU to train Afghan police

In news:

- New memorandum of understanding signed between India and Afghanistan
- **Key points:**

1. Afghan police forces trained in India for the first time.
2. MoU on Technical Cooperation on **Police Training and Development** will see India expand its capacity building of Afghan troops to include policemen and security forces, who are facing the brunt of Taliban attacks in the country, under a United Nations Development Programme project.

2. Expanding the common ground

Context:

- The rising Indo-US strategic relationship in the Indian Sub-continent.

Greater role of India in Afghanistan:

- India has decided to take up 116 “high-impact community developmental projects” in 31 provinces of Afghanistan
- India and Afghanistan have also agreed to “strengthen security cooperation”
- India has agreed “to extend further assistance for the Afghan national defence and security forces in fighting
 - 1. The scourge of terrorism,
 - 2. Organized crime,
 - 3. Trafficking of narcotics and
 - 4. Money laundering”
- India will train Afghan police officers along with Afghan soldiers
- This is aimed at sending out a message to Pakistan, which continues to assert that India has “**zero political and military role**” in Afghanistan

Increased military role of India in Afghanistan

- India has given four attack helicopters to Afghanistan as part of its assistance package
- India is keen to expand the scope of its security cooperation with Afghanistan
- It had remained limited in the past not only due to geographical constraints, but also due to USA’s desire to limit India’s security engagement in the country

India-U.S:

- The recent visit of Gen. Mattis shows the importance of defence ties in shaping the trajectory of Indo-U.S. relations
- The USA is no longer reluctant about selling sensitive military technologies to India
- The U.S. is looking forward to share some of their most advanced defence technologies with India
- For example, the sale of 22 Sea Guardian Unmanned Aerial Systems is high on the agenda.
- With this deal, the Indian Navy will not only acquire the world’s most advanced maritime reconnaissance drone, it will also lead to greater defence technology sharing.

Role of India in International relations:

- As India and the U.S. expand military cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, new alignments are emerging.
- In the past, India had been reluctant to play an active role in East and Southeast Asia.
- Now as part of its ‘Act East’ policy, India’s engagement with the region has become more robust.
- And the USA has been encouraging India to shape the regional strategic realities more potently.

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. Climate change is going to hit the Indian economy hard

Context:

- World Economic Outlook of the IMF, highlights the damaging macroeconomic impact of weather shocks, particularly for low-income countries.
- It notes that for the median emerging market economy, growth goes down by 0.9 percentage point because of a 1-degree Celsius increase from a temperature of 22 degrees Celsius

- Climate change is a serious challenge for India where about 50% of the population directly or indirectly depends on agriculture for a livelihood

Consequences of climate change:

- Productivity will start declining strongly
- Countries located in areas with higher temperature will face a disproportionate impact of global warming.
- Loss of output and lower productivity also affects capital formation, which has a bearing on medium- to long-term growth prospects.

Present scenario:

- Consensus was attained under the **Paris Agreement** to contain the rise in global temperature to below 2 degrees Celsius from the pre-industrial levels
- But now the Trump administration in the US is not keen on continuing with the Paris Agreement.
- It is being reported that advanced economies may not meet their commitment of reducing emissions
- The lack of will among industrialized economies to contain emissions, could lead to consequences that go beyond the realm of macroeconomics.

Necessary steps that need to be taken :

- Emerging market and low-income economies have to build significant macroeconomic resilience.
- The IMF notes that right policies and institutions in place may help attenuate the effects of temperature shocks, to some extent.

Way forwards:

- Strengthen macroeconomic stability to be able to deal with such shocks.
- Work on programmes that will help improve the quality of land and reduce the risk of climate change.
 - In Ethiopia, food and cash is provided to the poor who participate in local environmental programmes.
 - This has resulted in reduction in soil loss and has increased the availability of water
- India can use employment under the MGNREGA in a better way to enhance soil and water conservation.
- Strengthen its overall capability by investing in and adopting technology as the impact of climate change is not limited to agriculture
 - For instance, better use of technology can reduce energy consumption for air conditioning. A district cooling system is being constructed in Gujarat International Finance Tec-City.
 - It can be adopted in other cities as well.

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

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1. With a brief background of quality of urban life in India, introduce the objectives and strategy of the ‘Smart City Programme.’

GS Paper III

2. Enumerate the problems and prospects of inland water transport in India.

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Category: POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1. A neutral Internet

- The struggle to keep the Internet freely accessible to all got a welcome shot in the arm.
- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) finally came out with clear guidelines in favour of Net neutrality that are consistent with its earlier stand on Facebook's Free Basics proposal.
- After consultation papers issued in May 2016 and this January, the regulator reiterated that there cannot be discriminatory treatment of websites on the Internet by service providers.
- In particular, TRAI warned providers against the practice of blocking certain websites and tinkering with content speeds.
- This, in a nutshell, means that service providers such as telecom companies cannot stand in the way of a consumer's access to content that would otherwise be provided to her without any undue hindrance.
- They cannot, for instance, charge consumers for access to certain content, or receive payment from websites promising greater promotion of their product over the rest.
- Quite notably, TRAI's decision comes in the wake of international focus on the U.S. Federal Communications Commission's decision to scrap regulations on service providers imposed during the Obama administration.
- While batting for the right to an open Internet, however, TRAI has been careful to allow some exceptions that allow companies to discriminate between content if it helps them regulate the flow of traffic or offer "specialised services".
- While TRAI's new guidelines will help the cause of building the Internet as a public platform with open access to all, the concerns of service providers should not be dismissed altogether.
- The Internet has spread all over the world, so widely that many believe it is now an essential good. But the infrastructure that serves as the backbone of the Internet has not come without huge investments by private service providers.
- So any regulation that severely restricts the ability of companies to earn sufficient returns on investment will only come at the cost of the welfare of the public.
- In this connection, TRAI has been open to adopting a nuanced view that differentiates between various forms of content instead of imposing a blanket ban on all forms of price differentiation.
- The new policy, for instance, will still allow companies to justify the costs incurred in providing niche content to consumers.
- At the same time, TRAI's measured response is likely to effectively address the problem of anti-competitive practices adopted by certain providers.
- Interestingly, it has left it, with important caveats, to the government to decide on services that count as "specialised" and deserve exceptional treatment by regulators.
- To this end, a proper mechanism needs to be instituted to make sure that the exceptions are not used as loopholes by the big Internet players.
- Policymakers will also need to think hard about creating an appropriate legal framework to

prevent the capture of regulation by special interests.

2. The road to an open Internet

- Net neutrality creates rules of the road for a free and open Internet. It requires that barriers should not be created by telecom and Internet service providers for user choice by limiting their power to discriminate between content providers and different classes of content.
- Through binding rules and regulations, the power of access providers to selectively price or create technical imbalances is corrected. Such an argument immediately appeals to our sense of fairness, for it based on maintaining a level of equality in the use of a common resource.
- This finds express acknowledgement in the precedent of the Supreme Court where it has stated that the power to license spectrum and telegraphs is held by the government as a trustee of public interest.
- In one of the more recent judgments which arose from a presidential reference on the allocation of natural resources, the Supreme Court observed that, “*as natural resources are public goods, the doctrine of equality, which emerges from concepts of justice and fairness, must guide the state in determining the actual mechanism for distribution of material resources.*”
- Taking this forward, TRAI in its recommendations on Net neutrality has suggested amendments to the various classes of telecom and Internet licences to have an express recognition of *a non-discriminatory principle for Internet content*. Such recommendations set a broad rule with tailored exceptions that are conditioned on touchstones of reasonableness.
- Beyond equality and reasonableness, which may seem evocative though fuzzy principles, a more tangible appreciation of Net neutrality is immediately felt on our liberty.
- The Internet today affords millions of Indians with an immediate audience without the traditional costs of distribution.
- Tinkering with its character, or carving it up in slices as would happen in the absence of Net neutrality, would fragment its community and the diversity of choice offered by it.
- This would impact both the right to speak and the ability to receive knowledge, hence impacting our right to freedom of speech and expression.
- Again, such realisation is found in the Differential Pricing Regulation issued on February 8, 2016, which prevented telecom companies from pricing access to Internet websites and content differently.
- In the explanatory memorandum to this regulation, TRAI states, “As observed by the Supreme Court, allowing citizens the benefit of plurality of views and a range of opinions on all public issues is an essential component of the right to free speech. This includes the right to express oneself as well as the right to receive.”

Constitutional guarantees

- The concepts of equality, reasonableness and liberty which underpin the social contract which gives rise to the Indian Constitution are not mere black letters of the law.
- They are more than mere limitations on state power in favour of individuals. By themselves, they are at their very best when they are put into motion by positive actions by regulators and governments.
- To achieve these objectives, there is a necessity to popularise the constitutional doctrine in ways and methods which seem immediate and cater to the daily problems of the modern world.
- The debates around Net neutrality in India have shown how a stand-up comedy video can spark a spontaneous campaign, spur more than a million people to send e-mails to a telecom regulation consultation when the stakes are clearly explained and there is a broad coalition of civil society voices.
- The Net neutrality campaign has not been without criticism and growing public disappointment.

While such sentiments may arise from legitimate concerns, they are disproportionate to the greater benefit of raising public debate.

- To restrict any public policy measure, especially something as important as Net neutrality, to a restricted group of experts without a chance of public engagement betrays elitism.
- Further, the repeated rounds of public consultation which have brought on some amount of fatigue are due to the inherent complexity of the regulatory exercise.
- This also provides us a lesson that the enjoyment of Net neutrality will require constant, hard work — no victories are permanent.
- But for a moment we can pause to celebrate how TRAI's recommendations on Net neutrality provide hope that modern technologies can refresh constitutional doctrine and also deepen participatory democracy.

3. TRAI backs free data in a non-discriminatory way

- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has stuck to its recommendation of allowing free data to consumers in a non-discriminatory manner by third-party aggregators while agreeing with the telecom department's views that government money can be used for connectivity rather than supporting free data scheme to rural subscribers.
- The regulator noted that data had become affordable due to a tariff war in the telecom sector, and that "concern with regard to availability of affordable data services has been mitigated."
- The authority tends to agree with the views of DoT (Department of Telecom) that a larger focus is required on connectivity, content availability in local language and digital literacy. The resources could therefore be effectively utilised to address the said issues.
- In December last year, Trai had recommended that a "reasonable" amount of free data access — say a 100 MB per month — be provided to rural subscribers and the scheme could be funded from the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF).
- However, the DoT subsequently pointed out that cost of an Internet enabled mobile handset was a bigger "obstacle" than the tariff of Internet access, and that the latter had already been addressed to an extent through market competition.
- DoT questioned whether it would be worthwhile to provide a subsidy to those rural subscribers who already owned smartphones. It opined that the applicability of the proposed scheme was "limited", thus undermining its tenability.

4. Against gender rights

- The transgender community and its allies have erupted in anger over the decision of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to re-introduce the original Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016 in the winter session of Parliament.

Journey of the Bill

- The transgender community saw the Supreme Court's landmark decision in NALSA v. Union of India as a victory, as it recognised that transgender persons have fundamental rights.
- The judgment was followed by a private member's Bill, the Rights of Transgender Persons Bill, 2014, which was unanimously passed in the Rajya Sabha.
- Instead of introducing it in the Lok Sabha, the Ministry uploaded its own Bill, the Rights of Transgender Persons Bill, 2015, on its website in December for public comments.
- The 2015 Bill, which was largely based on the 2014 Bill, did away with the national and State commissions for transgender persons and transgender rights courts.
- The Bill was fairly progressive since it granted a transgender person the right to be identified as a 'man', 'woman' or 'transgender'.

- However, the 2016 Bill, that was finally introduced in the Lok Sabha, came as a shock.
- A highly diluted version, it also pathologised transgender persons by defining them as “partly female or male; or a combination of female and male; or neither female nor male”.
- Met with backlash, the Ministry set up an expert standing committee on social justice and empowerment to examine the Bill.

The committee report

- The standing committee invited public comments and thereafter held multiple rounds of consultations.
- Its report criticised the 2016 Bill for its stark deficiencies and recommended re-drafting the definition of a ‘transgender person’ to make it inclusive and accurate; providing for the definition of discrimination and setting up a grievance redress mechanism to address cases of discrimination; and granting reservations to transgender persons.
- However, its substance lay in its insistence that the law must grant equal civil rights to transgender persons (marriage, divorce and adoption), thus opening the door for the legal system to take steps to undo its oppressive heteronormative (the presumption that heterosexuality is the norm) and cisgendered (the presumption that people’s gender identity is aligned with their anatomical sex) foundation.
- The Ministry’s decision to re-introduce the 2016 Bill disregards the pre-legislative consultative policy which requires Ministries to grant a minimum of 30 days for public comments and to place a summary of feedback/comments received from the public/other stakeholders on their website.

5. Eliminate torture

- Enacting a law prohibiting torture is both a moral imperative and a pragmatic necessity.
- The Union government has informed the Supreme Court that it is seriously considering the 273rd Report of the Law Commission, which has recommended that India ratify the United Nations Convention against Torture and pass a law to prevent torture and punish its perpetrators.
- A few months ago, the court had sought the Centre’s response to a petition filed in public interest by former Union Law Minister Ashwani Kumar, who complained about the delay in India ratifying the UN Convention, which it had signed in 1997.
- The petition had also favoured a standalone legislation to prohibit torture. The court disposed of the matter without any direction after being informed that the matter was under serious consideration.
- The Centre should now act on its own with a sense of urgency. There can be no reason to further delay legislative measures to eliminate all forms of torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading forms of treatment.
- At an earlier hearing, the court had itself highlighted why a standalone law is needed.
- India has made many requests for extradition of offenders from other countries, and the absence of an anti-torture law may prevent these countries from acceding to India’s requests.
- Earlier this month, extradition courts in the United Kingdom refused to send two persons to India to face trial, one of them on the ground that there was “no effective system of protection from torture in the receiving state”.
- Conditions in India’s prisons, especially the chronic problem of over-crowding, are a reason for the country’s extradition requests failing.
- Few would disagree that ratifying the UN Convention and following it up with a domestic law against torture will not only be in the national interest but also have positive implications for the protection of human rights.

- Custodial violence continues to be prevalent in the country. The recent example of a bus conductor being forced to confess to murdering a schoolchild is a pointer to the use of torture as an investigative tool among policemen.
- The Prevention of Torture Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha in 2010 to address the problem, but it lapsed after it was referred to a Select Committee in the Rajya Sabha.
- The Law Commission, to which the question was referred in July this year, produced a report within three months. It also submitted a draft Bill for the government's consideration.
- The government should accept the recommendations without delay as it not only provides a penal framework for punishing public servants who inflict torture, but also lays down that just compensation be paid to victims.

6. Follow law in dowry cases: SC

- The Supreme Court said it did not intend to frame guidelines for the police regarding registration of FIRs on subjecting a married woman to cruelty for dowry, as the process had to be governed by statutory provisions.
- The top court was hearing pleas filed by NGOs Social Action Forum and 'Nyayadhar' alleging that such guidelines had created roadblocks in the registration of FIRs and the penal provision be allowed to operate as per the statute.
- On July 27, the two-judge Bench had voiced concern over 'abuse' of the anti-dowry law and directed that no arrest should 'normally be effected' without verifying charges as violation of human rights could not be brushed aside.
- It passed a slew of directions to deal with complaints under Section 498A of the IPC and observed that many such complaints were not bona fide.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. One in 10 medicines fake; diseases becoming untreatable: WHO

- An estimated one in 10 medical products circulating in low- and middle-income countries like India is either "substandard or falsified", says a new research report from the World Health Organisation (WHO).
- According to WHO, these medicines not only fail to treat or prevent diseases but can also cause serious illness or even death.
- Substandard and falsified medicines particularly affect the most vulnerable communities.
- The report highlighted that since 2013, the WHO has received 1,500 reports of cases of substandard or falsified products. Of these, *antimalarials and antibiotics are the most commonly*
- Most of such reports (42 per cent) come from the WHO African Region, 21 per cent from the WHO Region of the Americas, and 21 per cent from the WHO European Region.

The report further says that substandard or falsified medicines promote *antimicrobial resistance in people.*

2. India unlikely to cut malaria burden by half in 2020: WHO

- India accounted for 6% of global malaria cases and 7% of deaths caused by it in 2016, according to a report released by the World Health Organisation (WHO).
- This is in the same ballpark as last year, though the WHO figures also suggest that India is unlikely to reduce its case burden beyond 40% by 2020.
- In contrast, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Kyrgyzstan achieved malaria-free status in 2015 and 2016 respectively.

- There were an estimated 4,45,000 deaths from malaria globally in 2016, compared with 4,46,000 estimated deaths in 2015. About 80% of the deaths were accounted for by 15 countries, namely India and 14 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Challenges

- A key impediment to eliminating malaria is a weak surveillance system. India and Nigeria, two major contributors to the global burden of malaria, were able to detect only 8% and 16% of cases respectively via the system.
- Moreover, 51% of *Plasmodium vivax* cases — the milder cousin of the *falciparum* — were traced in India. This could at least be partially explained by resistance to chloroquine, the first line treatment to *P. vivax* infections that has been detected in pockets of the country earlier this decade.
- For a long time, *falciparum* dominated India's case burden and, though its share has decreased, there is a slight increase in malaria cases by other parasites.

Low funding

- Bhutan, Nepal, Thailand, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Indonesia, says the WHO, are among the countries poised to reduce malaria incidence by over 40% by 2020.
- India — due to low funding per person at risk and resistance to certain frontline insecticides — is only expected to achieve a 20%-40% reduction.
- In 2016, an estimated Rs. 13,000 crore was invested in malaria control and elimination efforts globally by governments of malaria endemic countries and their international partners.
- The majority (74%) of investments in 2016 was spent in the WHO's Africa region, followed by the WHO regions of Southeast Asia (7%), the Eastern Mediterranean and the Americas (each 6%), and the Western Pacific (4%).
- “India has reduced its new malaria cases by one third, and even crossed the malaria mortality targets of 2020,” said Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare J.P. Nadda at a high-level round table on ‘Accelerating the Elimination of Malaria in the Southeast Asia Region’.
- He further added that with nearly three-fourths of the share of the regional burden, India’s successes had significantly contributed to the reduction of the burden of malaria for the entire Southeast Asia region.
- The Union Minister noted that a majority of malaria cases in the country occurred in its bordering districts, forests and tribal areas.

3. India has the highest malaria burden in the world outside Africa.

- India recorded 6% of the world’s new malaria cases in 2016 which stood at 216 million, according to the World Malaria Report 2017 by World Health Organization (WHO).
- According to the global health body, 15 countries accounted for 80% of all malaria cases globally in 2016.
 1. Nigeria accounted for the highest proportion of cases globally at 27 per cent.
 2. Democratic Republic of Congo had 10% ,
 3. India 6% and
 4. Mozambique recorded 4% of the global malaria cases.
- India had also witnessed a total of 331 malaria deaths in 2016, making it the highest in the entire Southeast Asia region. The malaria deaths in India were only less to WHO’s Africa region where the figure soared as high as 33,997 for the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- Odisha, the highest endemic state of India, reported an increase in cases in 2016 (to double the number in 2013). The other countries had no major outbreaks reported.

- Between 2014 and 2016, substantial increases in case incidence occurred in the WHO Region of the Americas, and marginally in the WHO Southeast Asia, Western Pacific and African regions.
- In 2016, 85% of estimated vivax malaria cases occurred in just five countries (Afghanistan, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia and Pakistan. In 2016, there were an estimated 445,000 deaths from malaria globally, compared to 446,000 estimated deaths in 2015.

Causes for the spread of Malaria

- Plasmodium falciparum is the most prevalent malaria parasite in sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for 99% of estimated malaria cases in 2016. Outside of Africa, P. vivax is the predominant parasite in the WHO Region of the Americas, representing 64% of malaria cases, and is above 30% in the WHO South East Asia and 40% in the Eastern Mediterranean regions.
- The report also mentions between 2014 and 2016, a total of 582 million insecticide-treated mosquito nets (ITNs) were reported by manufacturers as having been delivered globally.
- The report states some of the challenges impeding countries' abilities to stay on track and advance towards elimination include lack of sustainable and predictable international and domestic funding, risks posed by conflict in malaria endemic zones among many others.
- Among the 41 high-burden countries, overall, funding per person at risk of malaria remains below \$2.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Singapore offers India logistical base

- India and Singapore agreed on greater cooperation and activity in the Strait of Malacca and the Andaman Sea even as the two countries concluded a wide ranging naval agreement for maritime cooperation including logistical support.
- Strait of Malacca and Indian Ocean are key sea lanes of communication
- The two countries concluded a bilateral agreement for naval cooperation, which includes maritime security, joint exercises and temporary deployments from the naval facilities of each other and mutual logistical support.
- Early this year, the Indian Navy permanently deployed a frontline warship at the mouth of the strait to keep an eye on the increasing Chinese movements in the Indian Ocean as part of its mission-based deployment.
- The agreement would give the Navy the ability for extended deployments in the region.
- Ng said it made sense for countries to cooperate not only to establish maritime security but also to maintain freedom of navigation because “we know it is a lifeline for economies”.
- “We will conduct exercises and patrols in your waters as you do in ours. We try to economise and support each other,” he said.
- The comments assume significance as the strait is considered a critical choke point for global commerce and is seen by China as a vulnerability for its energy security. The development is likely to be followed closely by Beijing.
- Sitharaman said Singapore had accepted India’s proposal to institutionalise naval engagements in the shared maritime space, including setting up maritime exercises with like-minded countries and other ASEAN partners.
- The two countries also agreed to explore joint projects in research and development.

2. Beijing calls for dialogue

- China has reiterated its “double freeze” call to ease tensions on the Korean peninsula, frayed by launch of a powerful new ballistic by North Korea.

- China and Russia have proposed the “double freeze” or “double suspension” proposal. It calls for North Korea halting its nuclear and missile programme in return for the U.S. and South Korea suspending their major military exercises.

3. Staring at an Irish challenge

- Well ahead of the Brexit referendum last year, politicians across the political spectrum in Britain highlighted the importance of dealing with the impact that leaving the European Union (EU) would have on the island of Ireland.
- In a joint effort shortly before the referendum, former Prime Ministers Tony Blair and John Major came together to warn that the stability of Northern Ireland and the long-fought-for peace was at stake.
- The Troubles — the period of deep civil and political unrest in Northern Ireland, from the 1960s to the 1990s that pitted largely Protestant Unionists against largely Catholic separatists — are in the past, thanks to rapprochement that culminated in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, though the political situation remains sensitive.
- Membership of the EU has played a significant role in maintaining that environment with strong economic ties between Northern Ireland and the EU state of Ireland, as well as close personal links. Over 35,000 people cross the border between the two each day, while 1,77,000 lorries and 1.85 million cars cross each month.
- With Britain set to leave the EU — and the single market and customs union — the future relationship between Ireland and Northern Ireland was always going to present a challenge.

How could the open border remain while Northern Ireland, as part of the U.K., exited the customs union?

- Unsurprisingly, the issue was put forward as the priority area from Europe along with resolving the issue of citizen’s rights (those of EU citizens in Britain and vice-versa) and the so-called divorce bill.
- However, while progress has been made on the other issues, including Britain stepping up its offer of what it is willing to pay the bloc, the Irish question remains as intractable as ever, with the intensity of the debate heating up over the past month.
- Last week, Irish Taoiseach (or Prime Minister) Leo Varadkar issued a strong ultimatum to Britain, insisting that Ireland needed written assurances that there would be no hard border — including no physical infrastructure on the border — in Ireland before Brexit negotiations with the remaining 27 member states could move to the so-called second phase, when the crucial future shape of the trade relationship is to be discussed.
- Some sections of the British media have highlighted divisions within Europe, suggesting, for example, that German Chancellor Angela Merkel was pushing a tough line, and that the uncertainty over her political future could be to Britain’s advantage.
- Europe, however, has maintained a remarkably unified line on Brexit, including on issues relating to individual nations.
- All signs point to this being the case on Ireland too, including comments by Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney who this week pointed out that Ireland would not have to exercise a veto to block a Brexit deal if its concerns about Brexit were not addressed, because other EU nations were committed to standing by it.

The way forward

- The ratcheting up of tensions over Ireland has overshadowed progress on other issues, particularly around Britain’s divorce bill, on which this week significant process appeared to

have been made following British concessions.

- While some have suggested that movement on those issues that once seemed intractable suggest that concerns about Ireland are being overblown, that argument misses a crucial difference — the huge political sensitivity around the Irish question.
- As one spokesperson for the Irish government highlighted this week, failure to resolve the issue could lead to a resurgence of violence, and warned that there was a true threat of paramilitary action should a controlled border be reinstated.
- The controversy comes amid yet further blows to Britain. Last week Australia, a country with which a free trade deal was touted as one aspect of the bright future that awaited Brexit Britain, expressed strong objections to plans to share quotas for low-tariff food imports currently imposed by the EU between Britain and the EU.
- This would disadvantage the country by placing greater restrictions on what could be exported.
- India too has been stepping up on the importance it places on the freer movement of professionals in any negotiations on a future trading agreement, a highly political sensitive issue in Britain.
- The issues highlight one of the problems at the heart of Brexit: while the Leave side has from the outset sought to position the process as a U.K.-centric one of taking back control, it has proved anything but that with the collective and individual concerns of other member-states taking centrestage.

Category: ECONOMY

1. IRFC to raise \$500 million via bond sale

- The Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) has hit the international debt market with a \$500 million bond sale as part of its fund raising plans.
- The IRFC is in the dollar bond market with a benchmark issue, planning to raise about \$500 million.

2. Govt. may meld Make in India with Invest India, says Prabhu

- The Centre is mulling a new approach that institutionalises the combined strengths of its ‘Make In India’ (MII) and ‘Invest India’ initiatives with an aim to streamline them for attracting more investments, including from overseas, in the manufacturing sector.
- The MII was unveiled in September 2014 to “transform India into a global design and manufacturing hub” while ‘Invest India’ is the government’s investment promotion and facilitation agency.
- The government was also trying to improve the Start-up India policy by studying why only 74 start-ups had qualified for tax benefits since the policy was unveiled in January 2016.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Electric cars and us

- Over the next 15 years, however, Indian driving is likely to be disrupted by electric vehicles that the Indian government seems keen on introducing, without transitioning to hybrids.
- Far less polluting and carbon-emitting, the electric car, however, poses a challenge to Indian driving practices. The motor is much quieter than the engine and the transmission system has fewer parts too.

Electric mobility

- Another crucial, efficiency-boosting attribute of the electric car will be regenerative braking. The electric motor powering the car can reverse its role, becoming a generator and charging the battery.
- The generator load is the resistance that provides braking torque and it can be varied if you want to just bring down the speed, not stop the car altogether.
- Electric cars present a unique opportunity for Indian drivers. Instead of tamping down the technology, we can instead change our habits — be mindful of lanes, wait our turn, be polite and respectful of others and their needs, and make our driving smoother, as well as make best use of regenerative braking.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Even low air pollution levels can up asthma risk: study

- Air pollution can increase the risk of asthma in adults, even at low levels, a study has warned.
- Researchers found that Australians aged 45-50 who lived less than 200 metres from a major road had a 50 per cent higher risk of asthma, wheeze and lower lung function over a five-year period than those who lived more than 200 metres from a major road.
- They noted that the increase in these health issues was despite *Australia's relatively low safe nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) limit of 30 parts per billion per year*. Australia has relatively low air pollution levels compared with developing South East Asian countries.
- However, the study found that even these are associated with increased risk of asthma and poor lung function in adults. Governments need to investigate ways of reducing emissions on these roads, particularly trucks using diesel.
- Diesel is much more harmful than petrol because of the composition of the fuel. When it burns, diesel produces more pollutants.
- The study found the rapidly increasing prevalence of asthma after the second half of the 20th century strongly suggested environmental exposures played a major role.
- In particular, the role of traffic-related air pollution (TRAP) exposures in exacerbating or causing asthma has attracted substantial interest.

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

- Net Neutrality is important in the current era of digital world. Explain the constitutional dimensions of Net neutrality.

GS Paper III

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Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. [New U.S. policy can boost Indo-Afghan security ties: Abdullah Abdullah](#)

In news:

Key Points:

- The new U.S. policy in Afghanistan is an “opportunity” for India-U.S.-Afghanistan cooperation on security as well as development issues.

MoU on technical and training cooperation

- The MoU is an important step in the security sector.
- India's support has been comprehensive here and has always looked at the priorities and the wishes of the Afghan government and people.

India-Afghanistan-U.S. trilateral emerges as an axis:

- India has been helping Afghanistan for the past 16 years in many ways.
- The United States has been helping Afghanistan for the past 16 years.
- Cooperation had a security element throughout, like the helicopters India transferred, or training Afghan troops.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. India's infant mortality rate declines 8% in 2016

In news:

- **Decline in infant mortality rate (IMR)**

1. India has attained an 8% decline in the IMR in 2016 from a year ago
2. According to the Sample Registration System (SRS) bulletin, IMR has declined to 34 per 1,000 live births last year from 37 per 1,000 live births in 2015
3. The Bulletin is released by the Office of the Registrar General
4. It attributed the improvement to countrywide efforts to expand health services coverage, including reproductive, maternal and newborn health services.

1. IMR declined in 29 states and Union territories, was stable in two states and increased in five states and Union territories.
2. The highest decline of 7 points was reported by Chandigarh and the highest increase of 6 points was reported by Arunachal Pradesh.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Reducing food waste top priority for India: Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal

In news:

- India has made it a huge priority to reduce its massive food waste, Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal has told American industry leaders, seeking their investment and technology in this regard.
- India aims to partner with U.S. industry by borrowing best practices, technology and innovation, in exchange for providing U.S. companies with untapped investment opportunities in India.
- **Key fact:**

1. India, one of the world's largest producers of food, is also the largest producer of milk and the second largest producer of fruits and vegetables.
2. India is currently only processing 10% of its food, resulting in enormous food waste.

2. National Telecom Policy: ‘Guiding principles prepared’; Cabinet note likely by January

In news:

- Telecom Commission, has defined the guiding principles for the **National Telecom Policy (NTP)** which include
 - Focus on the telecommunications sector as an enabler of economic growth
 - Protection of consumer interest by ensuring affordability
 - Quality of services
 - Protection of data and privacy
- The policy will look to ensure financial stability and sustainable growth of the sector so that adequate investments can come for all the new technologies
- DoT's apex decision making body also cleared the recommendations of raising the deferred spectrum payment period from 10 years to 16 years
- The telecom commission also approved replacement of the PLR with MCLR for the delay in payments by operators on licence fee and spectrum usage charges.
- The DoT has sought legal opinion on amending the spectrum trading guidelines which could be of huge advantage to smaller operators

Basic Information:

Marginal Cost of funds based Lending rate (MCLR)

- It refers to the minimum interest rate of a bank below which it cannot lend, except in some cases allowed by the RBI. It is an internal benchmark or reference rate for the bank.
- MCLR actually describes the method by which the minimum interest rate for loans is determined by a bank – on the basis of marginal cost or the additional or incremental cost of arranging one more rupee to the prospective borrower.

3. India's external debt rises 3% to \$485.8 billion

In news:

- India's external debt has increased three per cent to \$ 485.8 billion at June-end over the previous quarter.
- It is mainly due to increase in inflow of foreign portfolio investment into domestic capital market's debt segment.
- It was partly due to valuation loss resulting from the depreciation of the US dollar vis-a-vis the rupee and other major currencies.
- According to the RBI, commercial borrowings continued to be the largest component of external debt with a share of 37.8 per cent, followed by NRI deposits and short-term trade credit.
- US dollar denominated debt continued to be the largest component of India's external debt followed by the Indian rupee , SDR , Japanese yen and Euro.

Basic Information:

External Debt

- External debt is owed to creditors outside the country. The outsider creditors can be foreign governments, International Financial Institutions such as World Bank, Asian Development Bank etc., corporate and foreign private households.
- External debt may be of several kinds such as multilateral, bilateral, IMF loans, Trade credits, External commercial borrowings etc.
- When the non-resident Indians park their funds in India, it is also a type of external debt and is called NRI deposits. If the external debt is denominated in Indian Rupee, it is called Rupee Debt.

Special Drawing Rights

- The SDR is an international reserve asset, created by the IMF in 1969 to supplement its member countries' official reserves.
- Its value is based on a basket of 4 key international currencies, and SDRs can be exchanged for freely usable currencies.
- SDRs are the IMF's unit of account restricted to its members. Today the SDR basket consists of the euro, Japanese yen, pound sterling, and U.S. dollar.

4. World Bank warns of learning crisis in education in countries like India

In news:

World Bank group report:

- It has warned of a learning crisis in global education particularly in low and middle-income countries like India.
- The report underlines that schooling without learning is not just a wasted development opportunity, but also a great injustice to children worldwide.
- Report: World Development Report 2018: 'Learning to Realise Education's Promise.'

The report:

- According to the report, India ranks second after Malawi in a list of 12 countries wherein a grade two student could not read a single word of a short text.
- India also tops the list of seven countries in which a grade two student could not perform two-digit subtraction..
- This learning crisis is widening social gaps instead of narrowing them

Recommendations:

- The report recommends concrete policy steps to help developing countries resolve this learning crisis in the areas of stronger learning assessments.

- How? using evidence of what works and what doesn't to guide education decision-making.
- And mobilising a strong social movement to push for education changes that champion 'learning for all'.

5. Fiscal deficit hits 96.1% but Modi govt confident of meeting target

In news:

- India's fiscal deficit touched **1% of the Budget estimate** for FY18 at the end of August
- Possible reason : The fiscal deficit has been higher than in the previous years because of the quick start to spending facilitated by the early presentation of Budget on February 1
- According the data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) , April-August fiscal deficit is substantially higher than 76.4% for the year-earlier period

Government's opinion:

- According to government, it will meet the fiscal deficit target for the year
- The target is 3.2% of GDP, or Rs 5.47 lakh crore
- In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit for April-August was Rs 5.25 lakh crore

Targets achievement:

- The government is considering ways of reviving growth, which slumped to its lowest in three years in the June quarter
- The government has already allocated large sums to a few of its key schemes to ensure there was no delay due to funds
- The revenue deficit was 133.9% of budget estimate against 91.7% last fiscal
- With this big spending(allocations) done, the fiscal situation should start to improve as revenues pick up pace in the second half of the financial year

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Blame it on the genes

In news:

- **New study revelations:** about 35 to 40% of Indians carry a set of genetic variations which puts them at a higher risk of heart disease.
- Carriers of a set of genetic variants in the chromogranin A (CHGA) gene called 'CHGA promoter haplotype2' may be at higher risk for cardiovascular and metabolic disorders.
- The study is based on analysis of genomic DNA samples from over 750 individuals in the Indian population.
- Though the CHGA promoter haplotype is present in other ethnic populations, it occurs more frequently in populations of South Asian ancestry.

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GS Paper II

1. Did the Government of India Act, 1935 lay down a federal constitution? Discuss.(Mains 2016)
2. Discuss the possible factors that inhibit India from enacting for its citizens a uniform civil code as provided for in the Directive Principles of State Policy.

GS Paper III

1. The nature of economic growth in India is described as jobless growth. Do you agree with this view? Give arguments in favour of your answer.(Mains 2015)

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Category: POLITY

1. 'Govt. to shame those defecating in the open'

Context:

- Open Defecation free (ODF).

In news:

- New novel approach to tackle open defecation.
- The Maharashtra government has put in place a mechanism called ‘ODF Watch’, where people will be “shamed” if they defecate in the open.
- If people defecate in the open, a whistle will be blown and people will be shamed for not using a toilet.
- **Three-tier validation process:** A three-tier validation process had been adopted where the cities, which became ODF were first inspected by the local administration, then by the State government and lastly a Central agency gave its nod.

2. Banks asked to enable core banking in Hindi

In News:

- The Home Ministry has asked all banks, private and public sector, to enable their core banking facility in Hindi.
- **Directives given:** banks have been asked to update databases in Hindi and customers should not be compelled to fill forms only in English.
- **Key fact:** As per **Official Languages Act, 1963** there was no provision of punitive action for not using Hindi in official communication but the language could only be promoted through “**persuasion and encouragement.**”
- States are free to choose their language; Hindi-speaking States should also learn other regional languages like Tamil.

Category: ECONOMY

1. The way forward for the electric vehicle push

Shift to electric vehicles:

- Global weather disasters and the pollution levels of major Indian cities are clear indications that the costs of pollution are beginning to spiral out of control for citizens and economies alike.
- The climate change disruption holds both-
- Positive-There is a need to drastically reduce CO2 footprint per capita and this calls for forward-thinking nations to develop new technologies in energy-efficient products and services.
- Negative— Those nations not able to develop new technologies will not only harm us all but be ultimately left behind from a technology and business perspective.

Indian Scenario

- India’s announcement to move from fossil fuel-driven vehicles to electric vehicles is positive.
- Over the last 30-40 years, India has developed the capability to engineer and build globally competitive vehicles based on internal combustion engines (ICEs). Via joint ventures, technology licences and technology transfer, Indian manufacturers and suppliers have built full-fledged capabilities in ICEs.
- This ensured personal mobility for the Indian middle class at price points that are unmatched globally.
- Investment in ICEs has helped to increase exports, create highly skilled and well paid jobs.

Risks involved:

- Technology transfer and joint ventures have to be encouraged to ensure indigenization of technology. Industry must play as much a leading role in electric vehicles as it does today in ICEs to ensure employment, capability building and tax revenue.
- Localization is crucial to avoid replacement of an oil import bill with a battery import bill or rather dependency on Gulf states to China.
- The government needs to support relevant volumes in chosen segments, e.g., via public tenders, incentives or access restrictions. Without a reasonable visibility of volumes, businesses will not invest.
- Policy clarity -While a number of green technologies can be pursued, the practical reality of the Indian automotive industry is that resources for investment are limited
- Policy consistency— Long-term investments are required; sudden policy changes that alter business case assumptions can drive companies into ruin.
- Technology risks such as liability issues around battery swapping, unstable battery technology, recycling of batteries and infrastructure requirements need to be assessed in detail.
- Life-cycle greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have to be considered when comparing battery electric vehicles with fossil fuel vehicles.
- GHG emissions during battery production and recycling must be
- The cases such as rural vs metro needs, 2-/3-wheeler vs 4-wheeler applications—will have to be studied in detail.

Way Forward

- The case studies of the US, Germany, France, Japan, Korea and China show, a strong automotive industry creates disproportionate benefits in technology, capability, taxes and employment for the country of origin of manufacturers and suppliers.
- In an environment, where job creation is falling far short of population growth, active development of a high-paying sector is paramount.
- The need for a transition to electric vehicles in India is undeniable but it has to gradual rather than binary.
- The Indian industry need to rework their strategies and re-allocate investments.
- The full force of India's engineering and entrepreneurial talent will only be brought to bear with consistent cooperation between industry and government.

2. A ‘Sudarshan Chakra’ solution for PSU banks

Context:

- The scale of the NPA problem at PSU banks is much larger than was thought, and the downturn in the Indian economy has also made the need for corrective measures more urgent
- Issues related to NPAs in Public Sector Banks

How to solve the problems?

- Four “R”s which are said to be the key to solving the problems of the banks

1. Recognition

- The RBI's asset quality review has revealed that the gross NPA ratio of both public and private sector banks is higher than was earlier thought
- But in the PSU banks, it is alarming at about 12%
- And this is an underestimate, because it does not include assets that are "stressed" but not yet NPAs

2. Resolution of problem loans

- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) is a major reform
- Once an account is referred by a creditor under the IBC to the National Company Law Tribunal
- And if admitted, the powers of the management and the board are transferred to an independent insolvency professional (IP)
- The IP then looks for someone willing to take over the project on suitable terms
- If no one is willing to take over, or the banks don't accept the debt reduction implied by the package, the company is simply liquidated
- The process changes the incentive structure facing bank managements by giving them a legally sanctified method of determining what is a reasonable haircut(haircut means cut in actual price of the project)
- Since the alternative is liquidation, they(bank) should be willing to accept any haircut that gives them more than they would get from liquidation
- The process will certainly clean up the books of the banks over the next 12 months or so
- But it will also mean acceptance of large losses and a corresponding depletion of capital

3. Recapitalization

- In 2015, the finance ministry had estimated that the PSU banks needed Rs2.4 trillion of capital
- Of this capital Rs1.1 trillion was to come from the market, Rs60,000 crore from retained profits, and the remaining Rs 70,000 crore from the budget
- But this is clearly insufficient because the NPA situation has turned out to be much worse than expected
- Fitch Ratings has estimated that Indian PSU banks will need as much as Rs4 trillion of capital by end of March 2019 to meet the capital requirements under Basel III
- The scope for using public funds to recapitalize the PSU banks can only be judged on the basis of a holistic view of the many other demands for government expenditure
- We cannot keep stimulate the economy through increased government expenditure
- And without without a clear view of how much of the capital requirement of the PSU banks has to be met from the budget

4. Reforms

- Reforms in PSU banks are expected to make the banks more efficient
- The idea of merging PSBs, is not reform at all
- Merging strong banks with other banks will do nothing to improve the average balance sheet
- The most important reform will be to reduce the government's equity to 33% in selected PSU banks
- This would allow the stronger PSU banks to raise additional capital from the market, including from possible strategic investors(who could be offered seats on the board)
- The inclusion of strategic investors, with representation on the board, may make it easier to

raise capital without burdening the budget

Way forward:

- If the budget is under stress, all PSBs need not be recapitalized to ensure targeted growth in lending
- Weak banks that have eroded their capital very substantially should be subjected to the RBI's "prompt corrective action" discipline
- This will allow healthier banks to expand and occupy the lending space created

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [**'Unexpectedly' strong solar storm sparks global aurora on Mars**](#)

In news:

- An unexpectedly strong solar storm hit Mars this month, sparking a global aurora and doubling radiation levels on the red planet.
- The solar event on September 11 sparked an aurora more than 25 times brighter than any previously seen by the MAVEN orbiter, which has been studying the Martian atmosphere's interaction with the solar wind since 2014.
- It produced radiation levels on the surface more than double any previously measured by the Curiosity rover's Radiation Assessment Detector (RAD) since that mission's landing in 2012. The high readings lasted more than two days.

Category: MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

1. [**Centennial pride: Patna University turns 100**](#)

In news:

- Patna University completed 100 glorious years.
- It was established at a time when not a single girl student was studying in any college of the newly created province of Bihar.
- **Long-cherished dream:** It was on October 1, 1917, that the Patna University Act passed by the then Imperial Legislative Council, came into effect, turning the long-cherished dream of the province into a reality.

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. With suitable examples, discuss how droughts impact socio-economic life of people in India's hinterlands.

GS Paper II

1. Discuss the functions and importance of departmentally related parliamentary standing committees to India's parliamentary democracy.

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Category: POLITY

1. Justice Rohini to head sub-categorisation panel

In news:

- President Ram Nath Kovind appointed a commission to examine the sub -categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) to ensure that the more backward among the communities can access

the benefits of reservation.

- **Key Fact:**
- The five-member panel will be headed by retired Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court G. Rohini.
- **Reason:**
- Government's efforts to achieve greater social justice and inclusion for all.
- Sub-categorisation of the OBCs will ensure that the more backward among the OBC communities can also access the benefits of reservation for educational institutions and government jobs.
- **Terms of reference:**
- To examine the extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation among the castes or communities included in the broad category of OBC with reference to such classes included in the Central list
- To work out the mechanism for sub- categorization.

2. Powerful challenge

Context:

- Current government promised that 18,500 villages would receive electricity in the next 1,000 days.
- Now nearly 14,500 of these villages have been “electrified”. But more than a fourth of the households in the “electrified villages” do not have a power connection.
- Saubhagya scheme, launched by the PM last week should be seen in this context.

Features of Saubhagya scheme:

- The scheme changes the metric for measuring progress in electrification from the village to the household-level.
- Beneficiaries under the Saubhagya scheme would be identified using the Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 data
- Unelectrified households not covered under the SECC 2011 would also be provided electricity connections under the scheme on a payment of Rs 500, which shall be recovered by discoms in 10 installments through electricity bills
- Free or subsidised connections will ensure last-mile connectivity, often seen as among the biggest stumbling blocks to electricity access in the country.
- By roping in panchayats and other village-level institutions, it ensures that Saubhagya does not remain a top-down endeavour

Challenges ahead:

- Many parts of the country, people face outages for several hours.
- Ensuring reliable supply requires improving the health of discoms.
- The UDAY scheme, launched in 2015, has made some headway in improving the finances of the state discoms
- Saubhagya grants them the freedom to lower tariffs to people covered under the scheme. But at the same time, UDAY makes it incumbent on the states to pay for all the future losses of discoms

Conclusion

- Taking electricity to every household is a great idea. It will need to be done without imperiling the health of discoms

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Raja Mandala: India and Djibouti's geopolitical scrum

Context:

- Recent visit of President to the ‘Horn of Africa’ region and diplomatic issues related to it.

Horn of Africa

- The four different states constituting the Horn Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti along with Yemen across the Red Sea have long been described as one of the world’s pivotal regions

In news:

- Due to President Ram Nath Kovind’s recent visit to Djibouti and Ethiopia
- It is President’s first visit abroad
- The visit suggests India is finally giving importance to the extraordinary geopolitical significance of the region
- Kovind is India’s first president to visit Djibouti

Djibouti:

- Its population is less than a million and its land is largely barren
- Djibouti’s location at the confluence of the Red Sea with the Indian Ocean and the crossroads connecting Africa, the Middle East and Asia
- The geographical position made it a very attractive piece of geopolitical real estate
- India’s Diplomatic relations with Djibouti

India & Djibouti:

- The president’s visit suggests Delhi is now ready to end its prolonged neglect of Djibouti and re-engage the region strategically
- Like in so many areas, China’s strategic advances in the Horn have helped put Djibouti back on India’s political radar

India’s relations with the African countries :

- Things began to change in the 1990s as Delhi turned to economic globalisation
- Growing commerce resulted in intensifying India’s focus on Africa as a major economic partner
- India had declared that its national interests were no longer limited to the Subcontinent but stretched from the “Aden to Malacca”
- Also, at the Africa summit in India during 2015, most participating leaders wanted an expansion of security and defence cooperation with India

China’s influence in the region

- China’s infrastructure development in the Horn preceded the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative
- One of the biggest infrastructure projects in the region has been the 750 km-long rail link between landlocked Ethiopia and Djibouti
- Military influence: China has secured the rights to a base in Djibouti that can host up to 10,000 soldiers until 2026
- This is the first ever foreign military base for China

The way forward

- Many regional powers are now trying to shape the strategic landscape of the Horn through military bases and armed interventions
- India is somewhat late in joining the scramble for political influence in this critical corner of the

Indian Ocean

- The President's visit will hopefully lay the foundations for a comprehensive engagement with Djibouti and the Horn of Africa

Category: ECONOMY

1. [India GDP to hit \\$6 trillion by 2027: Morgan Stanley report](#)

In news:

- **Morgan Stanley report prediction:**
- India is likely to be the world's fastest-growing large economy in the next 10 years, driven by digitisation, favourable demographics, globalisation and reforms.
- According to the global financial services major, the trend line in India's annual GDP growth has been accelerating to 6.9% in 2000s, from 5.8% in the 1990s, and this momentum is likely to continue in the next decade as well.
- Morgan Stanley expects digitisation will provide a boost of 50-75 bps to GDP growth and forecast that India will grow to a \$6-trillion economy by 2026-27.

2. [Extra capital into PSBs: Recapitalisation bonds being considered](#)

In news:

- The government is discussing infusion of an additional capital in public sector banks (PSBs)
- **Reasons:** to provide capital (to PSBs) without disturbing the **fiscal deficit**
- Government's proposal: Discussions are underway to raise capital support by another 20,000-25,000 crore for the PSBs
- This addition will be in addition of the Rs 10,000 crore provided in the current financial year's Budget for PSBs' capitalization
- The extra capital is expected to be generated through sale of **non-core assets** of the banks and **equity infusion** by the government via the recapitalisation bond
- With enough liquidity in the banking system post-demonetisation, lenders are expected to buy these bonds
- And the money so raised can be used to provide capital to government banks

Proposed Bond:

- The annual interest on these bonds and the principal on redemption will be paid by the Central government
- And the funds so raised are to be used to capitalize the PSBs

3. [India gets first-ever U.S. crude shipment](#)

Context:

In news:

- The first ever shipment of U.S. crude oil of 1.6 million barrels, purchased by state-run Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), was received at Paradip Port
- The shipment is a part of recent commitments to purchase U.S. oil by IOC, Bharat Petroleum (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum (HPCL).
- The inclusion of the U.S. as a source for crude oil imports by India's largest refiner will go a long way in mitigating the risks arising out of geo-political disruptions.
- The new arrangement will also usher in price stability and energy security for India, which is

witnessing robust growth in demand for petroleum products.

Bilateral trade boost

- S. crude oil shipments to India have the potential to boost bilateral trade by up to \$2 billion

4. **Small firms with poor financials in vulnerable position: RBI report**

Context:

- RBI study has said liquidity starved small and medium-sized firms with poor financials are in a “vulnerable situation” and they need funding sources in arresting the non-performing assets (NPAs).

In news:

RBI Study Highlights:

- Small company's profits got a big beating in the wake of demonetisation and implementation of GST
- In response to the banking stress, Small and medium-scale firms with sound financial health have shifted to non-bank funding through bonds and CP (commercial paper)
- Corporate bond, ECB and CP market have allowed firms to diversify their funding sources
- The ability to substitute the sources of financing is important to shield the economy from adverse real effects of a financial crisis
- Bolstering the funding sources is also likely to be important in arresting the next wave of NPA
- It is found that small and medium-scale firms with good financial health are more likely to substitute bank credit with non-bank credit in response to the banking stress.
- Rising NPA levels have curtailed the supply of bank credit as banks are rebuilding capital or keeping aside larger share of loanable funds against future possible losses

Basic Information:

External commercial borrowing

- Any money that has been borrowed from foreign sources for financing the commercial activities in India are called External Commercial Borrowings.
- The Government of India permits ECBs as a source of finance for Indian Corporates for expansion of existing capacity as well as for fresh investment.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE RELATED

1. **Maoists raising new group: official**

In news:

- A senior Home Ministry official said that there were reports, that Maoists were attempting to raise a new armed group-‘ **Vistara platoon**,’ along the **Madhya Pradesh-Maharashtra-Chhattisgarh trijunction** as they continue to face the heat at their stronghold in
- The new unit, ‘Vistara platoon,’ was trying to gain a foothold at the trijunction, which has less deployment of security forces than the seven districts in the Bastar division of Chhattisgarh.
- **Motive:** This is possibly a strategy, so that security forces lower their guard in Bastar and concentrate on this area instead.

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. How different would have been the achievement of Indian independence without Mahatma Gandhi? Discuss.

GS Paper II

1. Discuss the possible factors that inhibit India from enacting for its citizens a uniform civil code as provided for in the Directive Principles of State Policy.

Article 226: Power of High Courts to issue certain writs

(1) Notwithstanding anything in Article 32 every High Court shall have powers, throughout the territories in relation to which it exercises jurisdiction, to issue to any person or authority, including in appropriate cases, any Government, within those territories directions, orders or writs, including writs in the nature of habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibitions, quo warranto and certiorari, or any of them, for the enforcement of any of the rights conferred by Part III and for any other purpose

(2) The power conferred by clause (1) to issue directions, orders or writs to any Government, authority or person may also be exercised by any High Court exercising jurisdiction in relation to the territories within which the cause of action, wholly or in part, arises for the exercise of such power, notwithstanding that the seat of such Government or authority or the residence of such person is not within those territories

(3) Where any party against whom an interim order, whether by way of injunction or stay or in any other manner, is made on, or in any proceedings relating to, a petition under clause (1), without

1. furnishing to such party copies of such petition and all documents in support of the plea for such interim order; and
2. giving such party an opportunity of being heard, makes an application to the High Court for the vacation of such order and furnishes a copy of such application to the party in whose favour such order has been made or the counsel of such party, the High Court shall dispose of the application within a period of two weeks from the date on which it is received or from the date on which the copy of such application is so furnished, whichever is later, or where the High Court is closed on the last day of that period, before the expiry of the next day afterwards on which the High Court is open; and if the application is not so disposed of, the interim order shall, on the expiry of that period, or, as the case may be, the expiry of the aid next day, stand vacated

(4) The power conferred on a High Court by this article shall not be in

derogation of the power conferred on the Supreme court by clause (2) of Article 32.

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – October 05

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Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. India extends \$4.5 billion loan to Bangladesh

Context:

- Finance minister Arun Jaitley's two-day visit to Dhaka.

In news:

- **India operationalized a \$4.5 billion line of credit—its third and largest ever—to Bangladesh.**
 - The announcement of the line of credit was made during the visit of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India in April.
 - It is seen as part of India's larger strategic move to wean Dhaka away from China, the biggest supplier of defence equipment to Bangladesh for many years now.
 - The signing of the third line of credit agreement will enable the implementation of 17 pre-identified projects of developmental priority to Bangladesh in key sectors such as power, railways, roads, shipping, ports, etc.
 - Like the earlier ones extended by India to Bangladesh, this line of credit will also be provided at a concessional interest rate of 1% per annum, with repayment over a period of 20 years including a five-year moratorium.
 - India also signed a Joint Interpretive Note with Bangladesh to update the Bilateral Investment Promotion Agreement to the new investment framework.

Key Points:

- China has been making inroads into countries in India's neighbourhood—with major infrastructure projects, development aid and financial assistance.
- India's ties with Bangladesh have improved dramatically in recent years after India signed the land boundary agreement in June 2015—hanging fire since 1974. The conclusion of the pact was seen as a major confidence-building measure between the two neighbours.
- India sees Bangladesh and Myanmar as important neighbours, sharing borders with both countries. Insurgents operating in India's northeast have taken shelter in both countries in the past, using bases there for hit-and-run operations. India has viewed with concern increasing Chinese aid and infrastructure assistance to both countries—fearing a heightening of Beijing's profile and a waning of its own influence in its periphery.

2. Gathering clouds over West Asia

Context:

Present scenario in West Asia:

- In the Levant, regional powers are scrambling to fill the vacuum created by the steady dismantling of the Islamic State's caliphate across Syria and Iraq.
- Kurds have held an independence referendum which has drawn ire of their Iraqi,

Turkish and Iranian neighbors.

- Turkey's relations with Europe are growing sourer every day.
- **Qatar crisis**— A crisis within the **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)**, pitting Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates against Qatar, has entered its sixth month, with no sign of resolution.
- UK, France, Germany and the EU all have expressed their categorical support to the nuclear deal.

The EU and Iran:

- EU-Iran trade is 30 times larger than **US-Iran trade** and it has increased by 95% the first half of this year itself.
- European banks, manufacturers and energy companies have also signed dozens of major agreements with Iran over the past year.
- EU has jurisdiction over the SWIFT network for cross-border banking transactions of which Iran is also a member.

Certification:

- Under U.S. law, the president must certify to Congress every 90 days that Iran is complying with the terms of the nuclear agreement. The next deadline is October 15. On this day the US must certify Iran's compliance.
- If it refuses to do so then it might pave the way for the US Congress to re-impose sanctions on Iran.

Reactions from around the world:

- Europe would most likely take legal and diplomatic steps to protect its substantial commerce with Iran, even at the cost of a transatlantic crisis.
- China, Iran's main trading partner, and Russia, Iran's military ally in Syria, would defy U.S. sanctions with even greater enthusiasm.

Reactions from Iran :

- Even if the deal collapses Iran is unlikely to expel inspectors (inspecting its nuclear reactors) entirely, as it did in 1997, or pull out of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This is because such actions would undercut Iran's profession of peaceful intent and it stands to lose the moral high ground.
- **The bargaining chip** : Iran would try to restart accumulating centrifuges and nuclear fissile material that it had halted owing to an interim deal in 2013.
- It is difficult to gauge the future path of Iran's segmented leadership which is divided between an elected president and an autocratic supreme leader.
- The erratic and impulsive behaviour of the US President makes things more unpredictable.
- Iran's Shia militia could unleash war against US troops in Iraq and expand support to Afghan insurgents.
- Saudi Arabia-Iran tensions and the probability of US-Russia confrontation in the West

Asia would increase dramatically.

- Pulling out of the Iran-US nuclear deal would be detrimental to the credibility of future US diplomacy.

Implications for India—

1. India's ambitious Chabahar project, scheduled for completion next year, could face fresh obstacles.
2. Iran-Pakistan relations may shift unpredictably.

Conclusion:

- Tehran would have to balance the support it has garnered from Europe while bargaining with the US, such that it would not provoke Europeans into siding, reluctantly, with Washington, and that it may push the U.S., Israel, or both, into a preventive war.
- In short, it would be virtually impossible to rebuild today the broad, multinational sanctions regime that helped push Iran to the negotiating table during 2013-15. Hence, it is better to persuade Iran that its economic integration into the world economy could continue regardless and therefore it should abide by the deal.
- The US must not risk its diplomatic credibility and push the West Asian region into a spate of war which is still trying to recover from the gradual fall of the ISIS.

3. US resumes premium processing of all H1B visa categories

H1B Visa:

- It is a visa which allows US employers to employ foreign workers in specialised areas of work that require theoretical and technical expertise.
- As mandated by the US Congress (part of Parliament of the US) every year USCIS (United States Citizen & Immigration Service) can issue a maximum of 65,000 H1B visas and 20,000 to those who have earned higher education in STEM subjects (Science, Tech, Engg. and Maths) from a US higher educational institution.
- H1B visas for academic and research institutes are exempted from the Congressional mandated limit.

Issue:

- The premium processing or expedited processing (processed within 15 days) of H1B visas was suspended in April to handle huge rush in applications.
- The Trump administration believes that the H1B visas have been misused by companies to replace American workers.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. RBI holds interest rates, warns against fiscal laxity

In news:

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) kept **interest rates unchanged** citing concerns about upward risks to inflation and cautioned the government against steps to relax **fiscal discipline** to spur growth as such a move could potentially adversely impact the deficit and add to inflationary pressure.
- Repo rate fixed at 6%.
- **Forecast by the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC):** current fiscal year in gross value added (GVA) terms to 6.7% and also raised its projected range for CPI inflation in the second half to 4.2-4.6%.
- The MPC also observed that headline inflation rose by two percentage points since the August policy review.

2. RBI flays banks for keeping rates high

Context:

- An internal RBI group also suggested switching over to an external benchmark in a time-bound manner so that better rates are available to borrowers.
- The group was constituted by RBI to study various aspects of the MCLR system from the perspective of improving the policy transmission.

In news:

- The Reserve Bank flayed lenders for keeping **interest rates high** and flagged concerns over **base rate and marginal cost of fund-based lending rate (MCLR)**, saying these have not improved monetary transmission.
- **The RBI study group observations:**
 1. Internal benchmarks such as the base rate/MCLR have not delivered effective transmission of the monetary policy.
 2. Arbitrariness in calculating the base rate/MCLR and spreads charged over them has undermined the integrity of the interest rate setting process.
 3. The base rate/MCLR regime is also not in sync with global practices on pricing of bank loans.
 4. Proposed three possible external benchmarks to which such lending could be tied to going forward.
 5. Suggestion: the interest rate resets, which are right now at an annual frequency, creating potentially a one-year lag in transmission, can be changed on all floating rate loans to quarterly resets so that transmission would be much faster once the monetary policy changes

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- RBI introduced MCLR on April 1, 2016 after finding that the then prevailing base rate had failed to achieve the objectives of easier and faster policy transmission.
- The MCLR was introduced to calculate the benchmark lending rate in another attempt to make banks pass on policy rate cut benefits to borrowers quickly and in a more transparent manner
- MCLR is calculated after factoring in banks' marginal cost of funds (largely, the interest at which they borrow money), return on equity (a measure of banks' profitability), and negative carry on account of cash reserve ratio.
- Before the MCLR was rolled out, the banks were following a more rigid base rate system, which came into force on July 1, 2010 replacing the banks' prime lending rate.
- Under the base rate and BPLR, banks were following individual methodologies for computing the minimum rate at which they could lend. Under the MCLR, RBI asked all banks to follow the marginal cost of funds method to arrive at their benchmark lending rate

3. A normal but good-in-parts monsoon

Context:

In news:

- A second normal southwest monsoon in a row, is a good thing in today's rather gloomy economic environment

Key Fact:

- But the rains this time have not been as good as last year
- Rainfall during the 4-month season turned out 5.2 per cent below its long period average (LPA)
- This was unlike in 2016, when the overall gap vis-à-vis the LPA was only 2.6 per cent and the rains were more evenly distributed across the monsoon
- This year's output of kharif foodgrains at 134.67 mt, to be marginally lower than the record 138.52 mt for 2016-17
- Kharif oilseeds output may also fall from 22.40 mt to 20.68 mt, as per the ministry's first advance estimates released last week

4. Coal fired projections: on the draft energy policy

Key Points:

- Niti Aayog's **Draft Energy Policy** (DNEP) predicts that between 2017 and 2040, there will be a quantum leap in the uptake of renewable energy together with a drastic reduction in fossil fuel energy intensity.
- With economic and population growth, India's annual per-capita electricity

consumption is expected to triple, from 1075 kWh in 2015-16 to over 2900 kWh in 2040.

- The DNEP assumes 100% electrification throughout India in the near term
- The government will invest \$2.5 billion to provide electricity connections to every home in India by the end of 2018.
- But the DNEP fails to consider several critical issues involved in the ongoing energy transition.

Drawback of DNEP

- Despite the fact that existing coal plants are running at low efficiencies (at merely 60% plant load capacity utilization) because of weak industrial growth in last 3 years, the DNEP relies on coal power to sustain the nation's base load requirement to meet rising energy demand.
- It proposes that coal will fuel 67% of India's power generation in 2022.
- It is contrary to the India's claim that it will make a big push for renewables, it will continue to rely on coal for its baseload generation. While renewables grow, coal power grows too.
- This duality is possible because India did not commit to any actual reductions in its greenhouse gas emissions at the Paris climate meeting in 2015.
- Even this target India will need only 741 million tonnes of coal by 2022 however the Ministry of Coal has ambitious target of 1.5 billion tonnes by 2020.
- The DNEP is silent on the fate of the new allottees of coal mines. The concern is what would they do with their coal if they can't generate power with it.
- Generation of power is licence free under the Electricity Act of 2003, so private miners do not need any licence to set up generating plants. All they need is a connection to the grid. Since the grid is State-owned, the Central government has adequate leverage to defer or delay connections.
- The DNEP acknowledges increased oil and gas consumption in India decreased refining of oil and production of gas. Thus, India's energy security does require a large strategic storage of oil to contain any vagaries in international supply chain.
- But this strategic storage of oil does not tackle the systemic causes of this high dependence on oil.
- The peaking of India's oil demand could have been envisaged but has not been identified in the DNEP. But it recognises that by 2040, India's oil import dependence may reach 55% from the current level of 33%. To curtail this import dependence DNEP promotes use of public transportation and railways to reduce oil consumption.
- Unless electric transport is carefully planned, India's dependence on imported oil is likely to continue.

Way Forward

- The drafting committees need to examine the paradigm shifts occurring in storage and electric vehicles to promote new technologies in renewable energy, such as smart grids, smart homes, battery storage and concentrated solar heat and power.
- New institutions, organisations and funding mechanisms for promoting renewable

technologies need to be created not later than this year's end.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. [**Ganga Mission plans turtle sanctuary in Allahabad**](#)

In News:

- The marquee **National Mission for Clean Ganga** (NMCG) will establish a **turtle sanctuary in Allahabad**, as part of efforts to protect the **rich aquatic biodiversity** of river **Ganga** from “**escalating anthropogenic pressures**,”

Key Fact:

- The project at an estimated cost **₹1. 34 crore** would contribute to the sustenance of more than 2,000 aquatic species, including **threatened gharials, dolphins and turtles** in the Ganga.
- The Ganga and Yamuna at Allahabad are home to some of the most endangered fauna like **turtles** (Batagur kachuga, Batagur dhongoka, Nilssonia gangetica, Chitra indica, Hardella thurjii etc.), the National Aquatic Animal — Gangetic dolphin (Platanista gangetica), the Gharial (Gavialis gangeticus) and numerous migratory and resident birds.
- The government had planned such a sanctuary in Varanasi in 1989 under the Ganga Action Plan-I.

Category: MISCELLANEOUS

1. [**8 out of 10 Indians have faced online harassment**](#)

In news:

- Highlights of a new survey commissioned by cybersecurity solutions firm, **Norton by Symantec** :
- The online survey was conducted in the summer of 2017 with a sample size of 1,035 respondents drawn mainly from Tier 1 cities
- **Objective:** understanding Indian exposure to online harassment.
- **Eight out of 10 people** in India have experienced some form of online harassment, with 41% of women having faced sexual harassment on the web.
- **Forms of online harassment**
 1. Abuse and insults (63% of respondents).
 2. Malicious gossip and rumours (59%),
 3. Malicious comments/threats on a social media site (54%),
 4. Trolling (50%), and attacks/abuse from a coordinated group (49%).
 5. The occurrence of more serious forms of online harassment were quite high, with 45% having experienced threats of physical violence, and 44% at the receiving end of cyberbullying.
- The study also found that of the four countries from the Asia-Pacific region which

were surveyed (India, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan), **India recorded the highest level of online harassment**, with 45% of the respondents having experienced cyberstalking.

- In 42% of the cyberbullying cases and in nearly half of all instances of cyberstalking where the victim was a woman, the perpetrator was a stranger.

Key Point:

- With Indians spending more time on social media platforms and mobile applications, it is important that online users take basic precautions to protect their safety and security to avoid unwanted contact
- While the survey revealed that men and women reported similar experiences of online harrassment, people with disabilities and poor mental health were more susceptible to some of the more serious threats.
- Seventy-one per cent of people with disabilities or poor mental health reported receiving threats of physical violence, while 67% people were cyberbullied.
- Threats of physical violence experienced by the respondents was highest in Mumbai (51%), followed by Delhi (47%), and Hyderabad (46%). Similarly, online sexual harrassment was reported to be highest in Delhi and Mumbai (43%), followed by Kolkata (37%) and Bengaluru (36%).

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper III

1. Is India undergoing a structural shift in the inflationary process towards low inflation? Discuss.
2. Cyber attacks and cyber crime are a big business nowadays. What are the types of cyber attacks which are used by these cyber criminals?
3. Critically analyze the National telecom policy-2017, with respect to up gradation of technologies (5g) and penetration of connectivity into rural areas.

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Category: POLITY

1. [Prescription post Section 66A: 'Change law to punish hate speech online'](#)

Context:

- Recommendations of the expert committee constituted by the centre after the Supreme Court struck down the controversial section **66A of the Information Technology Act, 2000**.

Committee:

- The committee was headed by former Law Secretary T K Vishwanathan.
- The report was submitted to the Union Home Ministry.
- **Mandate:** Study domestic and international cyber laws and propose a legal framework in order to deal with online hate speech and incitement of violence
- **Recommendations:** The Indian Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code and the Information Technology Act should be amended to include stringent provisions

Recommendations of the committee:

- No need to re-introduce Section 66A but strengthen IPC instead.
- Indian Penal Code, 1860; Prohibiting incitement to hatred: Amend IPC section 153 C to include in communication “spoken or written words, signs, visible representation, information, audio, video, or combination of both, transmitted, retransmitted through any telecommunication service, communication device or computer resource”.
Punishment: up to 2 years or fine of Rs 5000 or both.
- Causing fear alarm or provocation of violence in certain cases: Amend IPC section 505A, punishment of any person or group of persons who intentionally, on grounds of religion, race, caste or community, gender, sexual orientation, place of birth, residence, language, disability or tribe, uses any means of communication to communicate.
Punishment: up to 1 year or fine of Rs 5000 or both.
- Amendment in Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973: create a post of State Cyber-Crime Coordinator (not below rank of Inspector General of Police) and District Cyber-Crime Cell
- Amending the Information Technology Act, 2000: Amending section 78 allows a police officer not below the rank of Sub-Inspector to investigate any offence under this Act as young SIs are better equipped and trained in dealing with these crimes.
- A renovated section 66A has not been recommended in the IT Act, 2000. This is because the IT Act is basically commercial in nature and hence punishments have been recommended in the IPC.
- **Important observations:** In recommending specific changes the committee said
 1. Only that speech should be accounted as relevant which relates to “religion, race, caste, community, sex, gender, place of birth, residence and language.”
 2. Online speech would be criminalised “only both, when it advocates hatred and causes the incitement of an offence”.

Way forward:

- Section 66A was struck down as unconstitutional by the Supreme Court on the ground that it violated the basic freedom of expression of the citizens. There is need to balance the liberty of citizens while tackling the issues of hate speech, online harassment-hatred and national security.
- The real purpose of the committee would be served only when the Parliament takes actions on these recommendations by keeping in mind the spirit of the 2015 Supreme Court judgement.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Partners, naturally

Context:

- The Indo-Europe relationship.

India-EU relations:

- Work of both go from **fighting climate change** and **terrorism** to cooperating on cyber security and digital

14th EU-India Summit:

- India and EU will work to strengthen their excellent partnership
- EU message to India will be that Europe is open for business and will continue to remain so

EU and India:

- The EU is the world’s biggest open market and the world’s second largest economy
- EU is the largest trading partner for 80 countries, including India
- EU’s economy is growing faster than that of the United States and eight million new jobs have been created
- EU already trade more than 100 billion euro worth of goods and services every year with India

European Investment Bank in India:

- The European Investment Bank has now set up an office in New Delhi
- European loans have helped to finance the construction of the Lucknow Metro and solar power schemes across the country

Way forward:

- EU-India Free Trade Agreement should resume
- Europe will support India's ambitious goals through investment and expertise in green buildings, renewable energy, waste management and air pollution
- Indian scientists have received research grants to work with their European counterparts on medical breakthroughs or cutting-edge technologies and will continue in future

2. Doklam hangover? China deploys almost 1,000 PLA troops at standoff site, indicates tension not over yet

Context:

- More than five weeks after India and China stepped back from a standoff at Doklam on the Sikkim border, Indian soldiers remain on high alert with around 1,000 Chinese troops still present on the plateau, a few hundred metres from the faceoff site.,
- But, India does not expect another “flashpoint” at the same site between the two countries.

Key Points:

- The presence of People's Liberation Army (PLA) was also acknowledged by Air Chief Marshal B S Dhanoa recently and it has subsequently thinned in the area after the process of “disengagement” began but one PLA battalion remains on the plateau.
- The deployment is expected to be reduced by two-thirds to brigade-level in the coming weeks.
- The Chinese have not dismantled any of their tents, temporary construction in the vicinity and they still have road construction equipment and other stores.
- But everything is under surveillance by the Indian Army.
- Indian soldiers returned to their posts at Doka La but their numbers have since been strengthened.
- The tracks leading to Doka La were improved during the faceoff, leading to enhanced logistics supply lines.
- Road construction equipment, such as bulldozers and JCBs, have also been kept on location.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Kotak-led panel wants MD, CEO roles split; 6 independent directors on board

Context:

- The SEBI panel on corporate governance led by Uday Kotak has proposed some important changes

In news:

- These changes include splitting the posts of chairman and managing director and amending rules on independent directors, disclosures, and accounting and auditing practices
- Currently, of the 50 companies on the benchmark Nifty, at least 12, including Reliance Industries, ONGC and Wipro, have the same person occupying both posts

Date of implementation:

- Listed companies with more than 40% public shareholding should separate the roles of chairperson and MD or CEO from April 1, 2020
- SEBI may consider extending the requirement to all listed entities by April 1, 2022

Concerns expressed:

- Some experts said splitting the two roles shouldn't be made a legal requirement
- **Reason:** Splitting of CMD role would mean two power centres instead of one but if enforced into a law, the chairman can just appoint a person who agrees with them as MD
- According to some experts, such a thing cannot be forced and should be recommended as best practice rather than be made into a legal provision

Other recommendations:

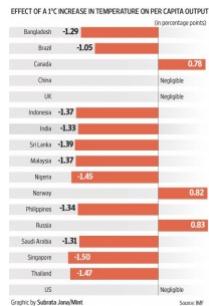
- The panel has also made several recommendations to strengthen the role of directors
- Companies would need to induct at least six directors, up from the current minimum of three under the

Companies Act, with at least one **independent woman director**

- The panel has also recommended increasing the number of board meetings held every year
- And an age limit for non-executive directors and capped the number of directorships that an individual can hold

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. India among the worst affected by climate change: IMF study



In news:

- According to a study of the IMF, countries in the tropics will be the worst affected as a result of global warming
- The report says, for the median emerging market economy, a 1°C increase from a temperature of 22°C lowers growth in the same year by 0.9 percentage point (see figure given below)

Affect on India and its neighbors

- India is one of the worst affected, with its per capita output expected to fall
- Other countries in the region, such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia will be similarly affected

Affects on Developed Nations

- The impact of most developed nations, located in the temperate zone, is negligible
- The overall impact on China's growth, too, is estimated to be negligible
- On the other hand, some northern nations such as Russia, Norway and Canada will see their growth improve

Category: MISCELLANEOUS

1. Gauri Lankesh Posthumously Honoured With Anna Politkovskaya Award

In news:

- Gauri Lankesh, journalist and editor of Kannada tabloid Gauri Lankesh Patrike, has been posthumously honoured with the annual **Anna Politkovskaya Award**
- Award was given out by Reach All Women in WAR.
- **Basic information:** Politkovskaya, a Russian investigative reporter who wrote about state corruption and rights abuses, was shot dead in the lobby of her Moscow apartment block at the age of 48 on October 7, 2006. The London-based organisation RAW in WAR established the award in her honour.

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Examine how Aadhaar's design protects individual's identity and privacy?

GS Paper III

1. Discuss the effects of minimum wages on employment?
2. What do you mean by Hyper-globalisation? Discuss how hyper-globalisation has led to a "virtuous cycle of economic expansion"?

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Category: POLITY

1. Now, SC Collegium to make judges' appointments transparent

Context:

In news:

- **SC's move to ensure transparency**
- According to the SC's decisions, recommendations on judicial appointments, elevations and transfers will be posted on the court website
- As a start, the Supreme Court has posted online detailed reasons for its October 3, 2017 recommendations for judicial appointments to the Madras HC and the Kerala HC
- Details are now available online under the tag “ **Collegium Resolutions**”
- **Transparency:**
- The information posted online will “indicate” reasons for the recommendation or rejection of a name for judicial appointment, transfer and elevation to HCs and the SC

Background

- Collegium system was being criticised for its opaque mode of functioning while recommending judicial appointments
- Recently, a controversy came after the public uproar over the resignation of Karnataka HC judge shortly after his transfer to the Allahabad HC
- The mode of functioning of the Collegium had seen criticism, for the first time, from within the Collegium itself in the form of Justice Chelameswar

Judges opinion :

- Proposal to upload the Collegium recommendations indicating reasons had to face strong objections from within the judicial community itself
- One of the objections include that posting such information online would cause judicial candidates acute embarrassment and loss of face in case of rejection of their names by the Collegium

2. 'Why can't hanging be stopped?'

Context:

- Supreme Court questions the government: Why can't hanging as a means of causing death to condemned prisoners stop?

In news:

Supreme Court's observation:

- The condemned should die in peace and not in pain.
- A human being is entitled to dignity even in death.
- The government should look to the “dynamic progress” made in modern science to adopt painless methods of causing death.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Trump set to decertify Iran nuclear agreement

Context:

- The Iran nuclear deal between Tehran and six world powers reached in 2015 appears to be in jeopardy as President Donald Trump is unlikely to issue a certification mandated by a U.S law for the country's continuing participation in the agreement.

In news:

- The President of U.S. is expected to give a speech explaining his position and a new, tougher policy towards Iran next week.
- The President's view that Iran is not in compliance with the deal, also called the the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), is at odds with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the other five signatories to the deal — Russia, China, France, Germany and U.K.
- The IAEA and these five countries maintain that Iran is in full compliance.
- Trump appears to be going by the advice of a segment of the Republican Party and two key American allies in region, Israel and Saudi Arabia, both bitter opponents of the deal negotiated by the Barack Obama administration.
- The deal has provisions to deal with an Iranian breach, but does not foresee an American non-compliance.

Four points:

- Under the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015, the President is required to issue a certification to Congress every 90 days that makes a determination on four points — that
- Iran is fully implementing the JCPOA
- Iran has not committed a material breach
- Iran has not taken any action that could significantly advance a nuclear weapons programme, and
- Suspension of sanctions is appropriate and proportionate to the measures taken by Iran and vital to U.S. national security interests.

What next if the President denies the certification?

- When the President refuses to certify, the onus is on the U.S Congress to decide the course of action.
- The Congress will get 60 days to decide whether or not to reimpose the sanctions on Iran, lifted as part of the nuclear deal.
- For now, supporters of decertification argue that this move could open the path for a stronger deal that could be negotiated.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Noose tightens around 5,800 shell firms

Context:

- Shell companies and the menace of black money generation

In news:

- The government has collected startling data on multiple accounts of 5,800 shell companies
- These 5,800 companies are from those 200,000 companies which were struck off by the registrar of companies (RoC)
- The government had asked for data from banks about over 200,000 companies whose accounts

were frozen

- The data from 13 banks reveals that 5,800 companies have more than 12,000 accounts
- The companies deposited and withdrew huge amounts from banks post-demonetisation, while they had meagre deposits before November 8, 2016
- According to an official statement these companies, deposited more than Rs 4,570 crore in their accounts and withdrew Rs 4,552 crore, post-demonetisation
- Before demonetisation, these companies had a balance of Rs 22.05 crore, in banks

Steps taken by government:

- The investigative agencies have been asked(by the government) to complete necessary investigation in a time-bound manner
- The government also disqualified a number of directors associated with these companies. There are around 100,000 directors

2. GST relief for small firms, rates cut for many groups

Context:

In news:

Key Decisions:

- The Goods and Services Tax Council allowed small companies to file quarterly returns instead of monthly submissions.
- Council also expanded the scope of the Composition Scheme for paying GST and making it easier for exporters to claim tax refund.
- The government also allowed small service providers to operate across multiple states without registering with the GST Network.
- To ease transportation problems of small unregistered businesses, the Council exempted Goods Transport Agencies from paying GST on services provided to an unregistered person.

Possible impact :

- The decisions announced will ease compliance burden on nearly 90 percent of the tax assesses.

Composition Scheme

- The Composition Scheme has been made available to taxpayers having annual aggregate turnover of up to Rs 1 crore (previously 75 lakhs)
- This scheme is currently available to traders, manufacturers, and restaurants
- Traders have to pay tax at the rate of 1 percent of the turnover, manufacturers at the rate of 2 percent and restaurants at the rate of 5 percent
- Under the scheme, the assesses are not allowed to avail input tax credit

3. The need for doing digital

Context:

- How digital leadership and digital transformation can be beneficial for companies and also in other fields like agriculture.

Digital Technologies and its importance for India :

- Digital Technology has the potential to add economic value of \$550 billion to \$1 trillion per year by 2025, and create millions of well-paying, productive jobs
- Digital leadership is effective for companies only when it creates value—for their customers, partners and employees

Issues:

- The business process improvement strategy was often overlooked as the technology teams typically jumped into operations deploying a set of digital tools
- This mindset is precisely what led to failed implementation and reduced business value in the past
- What is going wrong in solving this issue: Organisations, in their attempt to solve their problems, have rushed to adopt various isolated technology components before defining the problem they were trying to solve

Present Scenario:

- Today, the entire thought process has been changed
- Addressing design is now the first port of call in the new-age digital businesses that intelligently connect people, things and business, to create a good experience for their customers
- The result is simultaneous growth in revenue and reduction in costs
- Retail chains are experiencing the impact when they turned its online sales platform into a unique mobile experience
- And moved its infrastructure to the cloud, leveraging a digital platform that combined several digital tools, including the Internet of Things (IoT), machine learning, blockchain and big data analytics to create a better experience for its users

Digital technologies and other areas:

- Production at an agriculture farm can be monitored digitally, thereby allowing informed, intelligent decisions that can prevent crop spoilage, increase efficiency with sustainability
- For large manufacturing companies, digital technology can empower the workforce to fix critical problems in real time

Key Fact:

- By using IoT, machine learning, artificial intelligence (AI), block chain and big data analytics
- All these technologies provide tremendous value

The way forward:

- Technology is core to digital transformation
- Digital leaders realise that digital transformation needs to be viewed in a holistic manner
- In a manner that impacts end-to-end business processes, creating delight at every user interface, and delivering real business value

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. India's greenhouse gas emissions up by 4.7% in 2016

Context:

- Report by PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency
- The report's data is based on the Emission Database for Global Atmospheric Research (EDGAR) produced by the European Union

In news:

- **Highlights of the report:**
- Trends in global CO₂ and total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions show that India's emissions have gone up by 4.7% in 2016
- For most major GHG emitters in the world, the emission figures have gone down, barring India and Indonesia

Other GHG emitters :

- The report shows that emissions in the U.S. saw a fall of 2%, the Russian Federation 2.1%, Brazil 6.1%, China 0.3%, and, the United Kingdom 6.4%

Non-CO₂ emissions

- In 2016, the five largest emitting countries and the European Union accounted for 68% of total global CO₂ emissions and about 63% of total global GHG emissions
- Most of the emissions consist of CO₂, about 72%
- But methane , nitrous oxide and fluorinated gases also make up substantial shares of 19%, 6% and 3%, respectively
- The combined share of non-CO₂ greenhouse gas emissions is about 28% in total GHG emissions, but it varies for the largest countries:
 - 11% for Japan
 - 31% for India
 - 20% for China
 - 23% for the US
 - 25% for Russia

Basic Information:

Greenhouse gas

- A greenhouse gas is a gas in an atmosphere that absorbs and emits radiation within the thermal infrared range. This process is the fundamental cause of the greenhouse effect.
- The primary greenhouse gases in Earth's atmosphere are water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and ozone.
- Without greenhouse gases, the average temperature of Earth's surface would be about –18 °C (0 °F), rather than the present average of 15 °C (59 °F).
- In the Solar System, the atmospheres of Venus, Mars and Titan also contain gases that cause a greenhouse effect.

2. Toxic sulphur dioxide norms: 90% coal power plants not compliant

In news:

- Nearly 90 percent of the country's coal-fired power generation capacity is in violation of

Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂) emission limits notified two years ago.

Power ministry directive:

- Power Ministry has asked the Environment Ministry to defer implementing the NOX emission limits by three years (for coal-based units installed before December 2003).
- For units installed after December 2003, it has requested that it be allowed to operate them at higher NOX emission limit of 600 mg/Nm³ (milligrams per cubic metre) for three years.
- This is because the state-run NTPC Ltd is currently conducting a “pilot study” to test if “NOX control technology” will work for “Indian coal” that has “high ash content”.
- The Power Ministry stated that it will take seven years to “retro-fit” Flue Gas Desulphurisation (FGD) systems — which remove SO₂ from exhaust flue gases — in the existing capacity.

Effect of SO₂ and NOX emissions

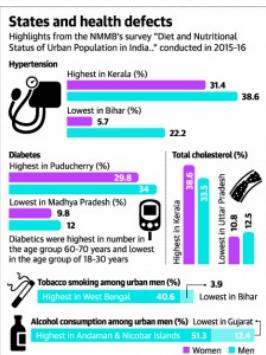
- Short-term exposures to SO₂ can harm the human respiratory system and make breathing difficult.
- Children, the elderly, and those who suffer from asthma are particularly sensitive to effects of SO₂.
- NOX, too, can trigger “serious respiratory problems”.
- Both SO₂ and NOX can be easily oxidised within airborne water droplets to form acid precipitation or ‘acid rain’.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Hypertension high in Kerala, low in Bihar

Context:

- Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) have become a growing threat to global health.



- A recent study done to assess the diet and nutritional status of urban population has pointed out that the increase in incidence of NCDs can be attributed to change in food habits, sedentary behaviour and unhealthy lifestyles, among other risk factors.
- The survey was carried out by National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau during 2015-16 by researchers from the National Institute of Nutrition.

In news:

- Study: ‘ Diet and Nutritional Status of Urban Population in India and Prevalence of Obesity, Hypertension, Diabetes and Hyperlipidaemia in Urban Men and Women ’ ,
- Highlights:
- The prevalence rates for non-communicable diseases as well as stunting, under-nutrition and obesity in children under 5 years in the 16 States surveyed are as below:

1. Hypertension:

- Kerala has the highest prevalence of hypertension (31.4% women and 38.6% men) as well as high cholesterol in urban men and women.
- Lowest level of hypertension in Bihar (22.2% men and 15.7% women).

2. Diabetic:

- Puducherry tops the list of States with the highest prevalence of diabetic men and women (42%), followed by Delhi (36%), Karnataka and Kerala (33% each). Diabetics were the highest in the age group of 60-70 and lowest in the age group of 18-30.

3. Obesity:

- The Southern States were among the 10 with the highest prevalence of obesity among urban adults. Puducherry topped with almost 60% women and 42% men being overweight.
- Tamil Nadu was close behind with 54% men and 38% women recorded as obese. Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh recorded high levels of obesity among its urban men and women.

4. Lifestyle practices:

- Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala were among the top six States which had the most tobacco smokers among urban men.

5. Underweight Children:

- While U.P. had the highest (43.6%) proportion of underweight children followed by Madhya Pradesh (32.3%), Puducherry had the lowest (14.2%).

2. Many Indians skip nutritious food

Context:

- A nation-wide study carried out by the National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (NNMB) to assess urban nutrition.

In news:

Highlights:

- A great diversity in food consumption in 16 States in the country
- Indians consume far less than the recommended quantum of several micro-nutrients and vital vitamins.
- Andaman and Nicobar Islands reported the highest intake of flesh foods, including meat and fish, Odisha has the highest consumption of green leafy vegetables (GLV). On an average, while the recommended dietary intake of GLV is 40g/CU/day, the consumption in the country is 24g/CU/day
- Madhya Pradesh has the lowest intake of flesh foods and Kerala consumes the least green leafy vegetables.
- If Madhya Pradesh has a sweet tooth with the highest intake of sugar and jaggery, Odisha and Assam have the highest intake of salt. Rajasthan is high on the intake of fats and oils as well

and milk and milk products.

- **Disturbing trends:** While the average intake of cereals and millets was found to be 320g/CU/day, which is lower than the recommended dietary intake (RDI), the intake of pulses and legumes were about 42g/CU/day. This is on par with the suggested level of the Indian

Council of Medical Research (ICMR)



Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Has the formation of linguistic states strengthened the cause of Indian unity?

GS Paper III

1. What is water-use efficiency? Describe the role of micro-irrigation in increasing the water-use efficiency.

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Category: POLITY

1. [No rash of conversions in Kerala, State govt. tells SC](#)

Context:

- **The Hadiya case:** involving the alleged conversion of a Hindu woman to Islam and her marriage to a Muslim man

In news:

- Centre's **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** claims in the Supreme Court that the **Hadiya case**, involving the alleged conversion of a Hindu woman to Islam and her marriage to a Muslim man, is part of a '**pattern**' of **religious conversions and radicalisation in the southern State**.
- The Pinarayi Vijayan government in Kerala rejected the claims made by the NIA.
- In an affidavit filed in the Supreme Court, the Kerala government said the investigation conducted by the State police had not revealed any offences which warranted an NIA probe.
- The State also questioned the sudden transfer of the case to the NIA, saying the State Police Chief had already entrusted the investigation to the Additional Director General of Police (Crimes) and directed to constitute a Special Investigation Team.
- **Supreme Court's present stand :** "We will hear logical and legal arguments on two issues —can the HC nullify a marriage exercising jurisdiction under Article 226 and was an NIA probe necessary,"

Basic Information:

Article 226. Power of High Courts to issue certain writs

(1) Notwithstanding anything in Article 32 every High Court shall have powers, throughout the territories in

relation to which it exercise jurisdiction, to issue to any person or authority, including in appropriate cases, any Government, within those territories directions, orders or writs, including writs in the nature of habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibitions, quo warranto and certiorari, or any of them, for the enforcement of any of the rights conferred by Part III and for any other purpose

(2) The power conferred by clause (1) to issue directions, orders or writs to any Government, authority or person may also be exercised by any High Court exercising jurisdiction in relation to the territories within which the cause of action, wholly or in part, arises for the exercise of such power, notwithstanding that the seat of such Government or authority or the residence of such person is not within those territories

(3) Where any party against whom an interim order, whether by way of injunction or stay or in any other manner, is made on, or in any proceedings relating to, a petition under clause (1), without

1. (a) furnishing to such party copies of such petition and all documents in support of the plea for such interim order; and
2. (b) giving such party an opportunity of being heard, makes an application to the High Court for the vacation of such order and furnishes a copy of such application to the party in whose favour such order has been made or the counsel of such party, the High Court shall dispose of the application within a period of two weeks from the date on which it is received or from the date on which the copy of such application is so furnished, whichever is later, or where the High Court is closed on the last day of that period, before the expiry of the next day afterwards on which the High Court is open; and if the application is not so disposed of, the interim order shall, on the expiry of that period, or, as the case may be, the expiry of the aid next day, stand vacated

(4) The power conferred on a High Court by this article shall not be in derogation of the power conferred on the Supreme court by clause (2) of Article 32

2. Insurer can't deny claim on grounds of delayed filing, says Supreme Court

In news:

- The Supreme Court has ruled that insurance claims cannot be denied to a person merely on the grounds of delay in filing the claim, holding that “mechanical” denials on technical bases will cause people to lose confidence in the industry.
- The Supreme Court set aside the verdicts of various consumer courts, including the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC), which had ruled that insurance companies could deny the benefit of cover for delay in filing the claims.
- **Judgment:** “It is true that the owner has to intimate the insurer immediately after the theft of the vehicle. However, this condition should not bar settlement of genuine claims, particularly when the delay in intimation or submission of documents is due to unavoidable circumstances. The decision of the insurer to reject the claim has to be based on valid grounds. Rejection of the claims on purely technical grounds in a mechanical manner will result in loss of confidence of policyholders in the insurance industry.”.
- The verdict would bring big relief to people who fail to file insurance claims immediately after their vehicles are damaged in accidents or stolen.

3. Draft policy for abolishing Haj subsidy

In news:

Key highlights of a proposed Haj policy drafted by a committee appointed by the Centre:

- Abolishing subsidy for Haj pilgrims and
- Allow muslim women devotees above 45 to travel in a group of at least four without a male.
- Women below 45, however, will have to be accompanied by male Mehrams, according to the policy.
- It also proposes to increase the quota for Mehrams from 200 to 500.

Key Points:

- The proposed Haj Policy 2018-22, by a panel headed by former secretary Afzal Amanullah, also recommends bringing down the number of embarkation points (EPs) from which pilgrims can take flights to Saudi Arabia from the present 21 to nine.

- The policy has been drafted in light of a 2012 Supreme Court order asking the Centre to abolish the subsidy gradually by 2022
- India has an annual Haj quota of 1.7 lakh devotees

Practice at present: Till now, women devotees could not travel without a male Mehram. The term Mehram refers to a male a woman cannot marry at anytime in her life (i.e. father, brother or son, etc). The cut in funds meant for subsidy will be used for educational empowerment and welfare of Muslims.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Ukraine seeks Indian peacekeepers

In news:

- Ukraine has asked for Indian peacekeepers to help contain the conflict with Russia in the eastern part of the country.
- Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin said he expects India to “definitely” play a role in the peacekeeping mission which will soon come up for discussion at the **UN Security Council (UNSC)**.

Key points:

- India’s role in peacekeeping commended
- Klimkin, is on a three-day visit to India, held extensive discussions with his counterpart, Sushma Swaraj, for the **upcoming inter-governmental commission dialogue between two sides**.
- Klimkin said discussion on India’s participation in the peacekeeping mission was at a preliminary level and further consultations were needed to fine-tune the composition of the mission.

Differing views with respect to location of troops:

- Ukraine insists that the troops should be stationed at the original Ukraine-Russia border, Russian sources indicated that Moscow would prefer the troops to be placed at the ‘**Line of Contact**’ between Ukraine and the rebel held territory.

2. India plans to lessen its drug reliance on China

In news:

- The recent tension between India and China has prompted the government here to think of measures to reduce its dependence on China for pharmaceutical products.
- The health ministry along with drug regulators is planning to take a series of measures to limit reliance on China as well as tighten the regulatory checks and balances to ensure only **good quality supplies** are entering the Indian market.

Key Points:

- Currently, India gets 70-80% of its medicines and medical devices supplies, including raw material for pharmaceuticals (Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient) from China. **This poses a major risk of severe drug shortage if India’s diplomatic relations with China worsen.**
- The landed price of API from China in India is 15-20% less than its production cost here, making it more viable for companies to import.
- **In fact, in 2014, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval had also warned the government about India’s over-dependence on China for API and how tension between the two countries can cause a crisis in the public health system of India.**
- Following Doval’s alert, the government had formed a committee of experts to formulate a specific policy to boost API manufacturing in India.
- India was once a favoured destination for sourcing low-cost, good quality raw material for manufacturing medicines. Gradually, China has taken over this bulk drug market globally in the past few years by creating huge capacities.

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. There is no necessary connection between religion and personal laws on the one hand and Civil Laws and Personal Laws are different on the other. In this context discuss the need for Uniform Civil Code and the different challenges associated with this.
2. “Currently, India gets 70-80% of its medicines and medical devices supplies, including raw material for pharmaceuticals (Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient) from China. This poses a major risk of severe drug shortage if India’s diplomatic relations with China worsen” Examine.

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – October 09

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Category: POLITY

1. [Ex-SC judges could soon be appointed NHRC chiefs](#)

Context:

- Appointment of National Human Rights Commission chiefs.

In news:

- The Home Ministry has moved the Cabinet to amend the recruitment process of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).
- **Key Changes:**
- Retired Supreme Court judge could also be considered for the Chairperson's position, currently reserved for former Chief Justices of the Supreme Court.

- Similarly an amendment for appointment of members is also being considered. The members could be picked from a pool of retired Chief Justices of High Courts. Currently, a serving or retired SC judge is considered.
- The State Human Rights Commissions are also expected to see a change in the appointment procedure. Retired High Court judges could also be considered for the post of State Human Rights Commission chairperson, which is currently held by retired Chief Justices of High Courts.
- **Key Fact:**
- The NHRC was constituted under the **Protection of Human Rights Act in 1993**. The Act was last amended in 2006.
- The Commission consists of a chairperson, one member who is or has been a Judge of the Supreme Court, one member who is or has been the Chief Justice of a High Court and two members to be appointed from among persons having knowledge of, or practical experience in, matters relating to human rights.
- The chairperson and members are appointed by the President on recommendations from a six-member committee chaired by the Prime Minister.
- **What next?**
- Once the Cabinet approves them, an amendment to the Protection of Human Rights Act would have to be ratified by Parliament.

2. All parties need to be on board for simultaneous polls: Election Commission

Context:

- Simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly polls.

In news:

- **The Election Commission opinion:**
- All political parties need to be brought on board before such an exercise is carried out.
- Simultaneous elections will give enough time for incumbent government to formulate policies and implement programmes continuously for a longer time without interruptions caused by imposition of model code of conduct.
- Conducting the polls together would be possible only when necessary changes in the Constitution and Representation of the People Act are carried out.
- **Situation at present:**
- Existing legal and constitutional provisions mandates that elections are to be held within six months ahead of the end of the term of a State Assembly or the Lok Sabha.
- **Requirements to hold simultaneous polls:**
- Requirement of 24 lakh each Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) Machines.
- Two sets of EVMs — one for Lok Sabha and another for the Assembly polls.
- **The Niti Aayog's "Three Year Action Agenda, 2017-18 to 2019-20" report:**
- The Niti Aayog has also favoured conducting synchronised two-phase Lok Sabha and Assembly elections from 2024 in "national interest".
- All elections in India should happen in a free, fair and synchronised manner to ensure minimum "campaign mode" disruption to governance.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Rex Tillerson may club India, Pak for visit

Context:

- U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is expected to visit India "later in October".

Key Points:

- Tillerson will become the fourth senior U.S. official to visit New Delhi after the Trump Administration took over.
- Tillerson is expected to travel to both India and Pakistan on the same visit, indicating a sharp shift from precedent.
- **Previously:** During the Bush and Obama administrations, U.S. officials had avoided clubbing visits to New

Delhi and Islamabad because of India's sensitivities over a “**hyphenation** ” of the U.S.’s relations with India and Pakistan.

New Afghan policy:

- The U.S. Secretary of State’s visit to India is likely to highlight growing ties between New Delhi and Washington, and growing cooperation between them on Afghanistan.

2. [Navigating a Changing World](#)

Context:

- Obstacles in the trade pact between India and the EU.

Change in global dynamics :

- Brexit
- Elections in Germany and France
- Visible rifts between eastern and western countries on what constitute core EU values
- Election in the US and consequent retreat of the US from its leadership of the west

Key Points:

- The reference to India and EU as “ **world’s largest democracies** ”- Such a statement is generally made with reference to sovereign countries. Interestingly, EU per se is not a sovereign country but a group of sovereign countries. Such a mention is more notable this time in light of the U.S.’s uncertain position on the international stage and EU’s need for a stronger union post Brexit.
- The countries have reiterated their commitment for a “ **Rules based** ” and “ **Multipolar** ” world–
- **Rules based world:** This term assumes significance on the backdrop of the US going back on its promises on Paris climate agreement and the probability of the same on the Iran Nuclear deal
- **Multipolar world:** The reference to multipolarity is a recognition that there is more than just one chair at the top table, not just with the U.S.’s shifting position but also due to Russia and China’s ascent.
- The India-EU joint statement on terrorism this year called for “decisive and concerted actions” against Hafiz Saeed, Dawood Ibrahim, Lashkar-e-Taiba and other purveyors of terror; this will further bolster India’s efforts to call out Pakistan on the issue of sponsoring terror.

Roadblocks in talks on BTIA:

- Recent summits have been conspicuous by the absence of talks on the BTIA (Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement). There is disagreement on whether the protection of foreign investments will be part of the BTIA or dealt with in a stand-alone treaty
- Indian demand for liberalising the access to natural persons- India wanting a greater ease of movement of temporary skilled workers to provide services in the EU and the EU wanting greater market access for its automobiles and its wines and spirits. Wanting an open market for automobiles and liquor but unduly restricting the movement of natural persons (with barriers in terms of salary thresholds, recognition of qualifications, visa fees, social security and so forth) seems to be a case of double standards.
- EU not granting “data secure” certification to India – a condition that facilitates the cross-border transfer of personal data. India does not have a stand-alone law on data privacy and this could be acting as a barrier too as EU is very seriously taking steps to secure digital data privacy of its citizens.

Way forward:

Convergence of values and interests:

- EU is India’s largest trade partner (over 100 billion Euros in bilateral trade of goods and services last year). EU, like India, is also wary of China’s political and economic dominance.
- Uncertainty over EU’s future in the next decade: With Brexit and other important developments, there is no clarity about what presence will EU have in the next decade. Hence, cementing trade ties with India will help strengthen EU’s economic future.
- “Data secure” certification: India needs to enact a strong Data Privacy Law which protects the digital data

privacy of its citizens. This is necessary to protect the economic interests of the Indian IT industry.

- India is right to strike a hard bargain as far as the temporary movement of skilled workers is concerned. The EU and other developed countries have been historically reluctant about moving forward on this and the issue has become more challenging with the rise of populism and protectionism in Europe.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. [Health ministry approves new tuberculosis drug](#)

Context:

- New Drug against Tuberculosis

In news:

- The technical group on tuberculosis in the ministry of health has given approval to ‘**Delamanid**’
- The ‘Delamanid’ is in its phase 3 clinical trials
- Health Ministry will initially conduct a trial with this drug on over 400 patients in a controlled manner
- New Drug will be included in the **Revised National TB Control Program (RNTCP)** from this month in parallel to **Bedaquiline**

Key Fact: increasing number of multi-drug resistant (MDR) and extensive drug resistant (XDR) tuberculosis cases in India

Government’s expectations from the ‘Delamanid’

- Delamanid has proved effective in many clinical trials in South Africa and Japan
- Taking a cue from this, government are expecting that over 70-80% patients will respond to tuberculosis treatment

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. [16 balsam species found in 5 years in Arunachal](#)

Key Points:

- *Impatiens walongensis*, a new species of balsam was discovered from Arunachal Pradesh’s Anjaw district, one of India’s easternmost.
- Since 2013, at least 16 new species of plants under the genus *Impatiens*, commonly referred to as balsam, have been discovered from Arunachal Pradesh.
- Balsam varieties are facing a threat to their habitat from fast-changing landscape of the region.
- *Impatiens* shows high endemism.

2. [Odisha hikes compensation for deaths caused by wild animals](#)

In news:

- The State government has decided to increase the ex-gratia compensation for human deaths caused by wild animals to Rs. 4 lakh from the existing Rs. 3 lakh
- ‘Ex gratia’ means ‘done from a sense of moral obligation rather than because of any legal requirement’
- Reason: Because the man-animal conflict is on rise in Odisha

Key Points:

- According to the State Forest and Environment Department, increasing biotic and anthropogenic pressure on forests are affecting the biodiversity and the habitat as a whole
- As a result animals stray out of the forest towards human habitation in search of food, water or use these areas as routes to access other wilderness area to meet their ends

Category: AGRICULTURE

1. From Plate to Plough: What Gujarat did yesterday

Context:

- Gujarat agricultural model from 2003 to 2014

Agriculture Growth of Gujarat from 2003 to 2014

- Gujarat's agri-GDP registered an unprecedented growth of 8 per cent per annum during 2002-03 to 2013-14, way more than the all-India figure of 3.3 per cent per annum
- Gujarat's agri-growth was even higher than that achieved by Punjab during the Green Revolution's

Expectations from the Gujarat model

- When Modi became the prime minister in May 2014, one was expecting that the "Gujarat model" would be extended to many states, with the fine-tuning to suit each state's requirements
- But the growth of all-India agri-GDP in the first three years of NDA rule has come down to 1.8 per cent

Is deficient rain the reason behind this situation?

- Deficient rain in 2014-15 and 2015-16 is of course one factor behind this poor performance
- But there were bumper harvests in 2016-17, yet farmers suffered due to a collapse in agri-prices
- The advance estimates of 2017-18 do not indicate much recovery
- Reasons behind Gujarat's excellent agri-performance during 2003 to 2014

First

- The Atal Bihari Vajpayee government's bold decision to allow the commercial use of Bt cotton became a catalyst for change, from which Gujarat benefited the most
- From nowhere in 2002, Bt cotton spread to more than 90 per cent of the area under cotton in Gujarat by 2014

Second

- China is taking over Syngenta for \$43 billion to access the best technologies for its farmers
- While the Centre is creating conditions that may force companies like Monsanto to quit
- This government is literally reversing the benefits that the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government bestowed to farmers

Third

- Gujarat government at that time provided basic infrastructure to farmers — irrigation, power and roads enabled the easy adoption of Bt cotton, and benefited other crops and the livestock sector as well
- Currently, Gujarat has one of the best road-network in the country, of which 89 per cent are pucca/surfaced roads

Fourth

- Good marketing institutions propelled Gujarat agriculture, especially its dairy industry
- The AMUL model of directly buying milk from farmers' cooperatives and processing and distributing it through millions of outlets ensures that farmers receive 75-80 per cent of the consumers' price
- This model is worth extending to other commodities, especially fruits and vegetables, bypassing the mandi system

The way forward

- Enable farmers to access best technologies and best markets at home or abroad
- Invest in basic infrastructure that can give access to water for irrigation, power and rural roads
- Create AMUL type institutions for other commodities to enable farmers to access high share of consumers' price
- Export bans or high minimum export prices for agri-products are anti-farmer

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. Why are the tribals in India referred to as ‘the Scheduled Tribes’? Indicate the major provisions enshrined in the Constitution of India for their upliftment.
2. What is the basis of regionalism? Is it that unequal distribution of benefits of development on regional basis eventually promotes regionalism? Substantiate your answer.

GS Paper II

1. “Increasing cross-border terrorist attacks in India and growing interference in the internal affairs of member-states by Pakistan are not conducive for the future of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation).” Explain with suitable examples.

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Category: INDIAN SOCIETY

1. [Chanting mantras, breaking barriers: Kerala's first Dalit priest takes charge](#)

In news:

- Yedu Krishnan scripted history by becoming the **first Dalit priest** in Kerala to assume duties at the sanctum sanctorum of the Manappuram Lord Shiva Temple at nearby Thiruvalla.
- Yedu Krishnan is among six Dalits out of the 36 non-Brahmins recommended for appointment as priests by the Kerala Devaswom Recruitment Board.
- 36 non-brahmins were recently recommended for appointment in various temples under the Travancore Devaswom Board, which manages at least 1,248 shrines in the State, including the famous Lord Ayyappa temple at Sabarimala.

Category: POLITY

1. [SC brings back ban on firecrackers in Delhi-NCR region](#)

In news:

- The Supreme Court suspended the sale of firecrackers in Delhi and NCR till November 1, 2017 in a bid to test whether a Deepavali without firecrackers this year will have a “**positive effect**” on the health of citizens and a

steadily deteriorating air quality.

- **November 2016 decision:** suspend sales of firecrackers “to test itself to find out whether there would be a positive effect of this suspension, particularly during Deepavali period.”
- **Key Points:**
 - Adverse effects of burning of crackers during Deepavali have been witnessed year after year.
 - The air quality deteriorates abysmally and the city chokes.
 - It leads to closing the schools and the authorities are compelled to take various measures on emergent basis, when faced with a “health emergency”.
- **Sulphur in fireworks should not be permitted:** Sulphur on combustion produces **sulphur-dioxide** and the same is extremely harmful to health. The CPCB has stated that between 9 p.m. to midnight on Deepavali day, the levels of sulphur-dioxide content in the air is dangerously high.

2. [MP govt announces Rs 2 lakh aid for widow remarriage](#)

In news:

- Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has announced a slew of measures for women in the state, including a financial assistance of Rs two lakh for remarriage of widows.
- The Below Poverty Line (BPL) status would no longer be required for availing the widow pension in the state.
- Chouhan also announced a relaxation in the physical fitness parameters for female candidates appearing for a police constable recruitment test.
- Sanitary napkins would be made available at 50 per cent rates in the predominantly tribal blocks of the state.
- Seeking to ensure the safety and security of girls: school buses in the state would be equipped with CCTV cameras to prevent untoward incidents like eve-teasing.
- Laws ensuring due share to women in ancestral properties would be strictly implemented.

3. [Matrimonial disputes should be heard in camera: SC](#)

In news:

Historic verdict:

- A three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court, with a 2:1 majority, overruled its earlier orders to conduct matrimonial disputes cases through video conferencing
- **Bench Observation:** it is very doubtful whether the emotional bond can be established in a virtual meeting during video conferencing and it may even create a dent in the process of settlement.
- **Rulings:** matrimonial disputes should be conducted in camera in the spirit of Section 11 of the Family Courts Act of 1984 and video conferencing would destroy the privacy of the proceedings and probably defeat the cause of justice.
- **Earlier decision:**
- The majority judgment set aside a decision by a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court, directing all high courts to issue administrative instructions to family courts across the country to open video conferencing facilities and use the technology to conduct marital disputes whenever one of the parties — husband or wife — requests for it.
- The court had said this would spare the parties the drudgery of appearing in person for the proceedings.

4. [SC refers to Constitution Bench plea over conversion of Parsi woman](#)

In news:

- The Supreme Court referred to a Constitution Bench the question whether a Parsi woman can keep her religious identity intact after getting married to someone from another faith under the Special Marriage Act.
- **Senior advocates Indira Jaising arguments:**
 - Denying a woman respect and the right to observe her religion merely because she married outside her faith was violative of her fundamental right to religion enshrined under Article 25 of the Constitution.
 - A woman’s identity is not merged with that of her husband on marriage, Ms. Jaising argued.
 - ‘**Doctrine of coverture**,’ which holds that a woman loses her identity and legal right with marriage, is violative of her fundamental rights. The doctrine is not recognised by the Indian Constitution.

5. [Impact evaluation: Why flagship BPL health insurance scheme is in rather poor health](#)

In news:

- The head of the Indian Council of Medical Research, Dr Soumya Swaminathan, has become the first Indian on the global leadership team of the World Health Organisation

Quantitative evaluation of the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY)

- One of the main objectives of any health insurance scheme is to provide financial coverage (or risk protection) by reducing such burden while enhancing use of healthcare
- RSBY has not been able to reduce out-of-pocket payment for healthcare for the poor, and they face the catastrophic impact of such payments

India and RSBY:

- Outpatient care comprises up to 70% of total healthcare utilization in India and 60% of total health expenditure
- It has by far been excluded from RSBY coverage
- Because OP is not covered, people could delay seeking care until they are more severely ill, which is costly both from the perspective of costs and health
- Despite rising healthcare costs, the scheme continues to be capped at Rs 30,000 since 2008
- For a family of 4 or 4.5 persons, this is grossly inadequate

Positive impact of the scheme

- One positive impact of the scheme was in non-medical spending
- The poor increased their household consumption level, or non-medical spending, after RSBY intervention
- This can be called “virtual income transfer”

Other schemes:

- An evaluation of the Yeshasvini scheme in Karnataka by researchers from Delhi University reported an over 70% reduction in out-pocket spending and a 30% reduction in borrowings
- Evaluating the Rajiv Aarogyasri scheme in Andhra Pradesh in 2012, the nonprofit think tank Centre for Global Development found reduced inpatient out-of-pocket spending among enrolled families in phase I of the study, but relatively small impacts on outpatient out-of-pocket spending, and catastrophic payments

Basic Information:

Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY)

- RSBY, a tax-financed health insurance that is managed through private insurance companies, was introduced in 2008 for inpatient care to Below Poverty Line (BPL) families
- The scheme aims to provide health insurance coverage to the unrecognized sector workers belonging to the BPL category and their family members shall be beneficiaries under this scheme
- Scheme enables them to receive inpatient medical care of up to ₹30,000 per family per year in any of the empanelled hospitals
- The scheme has won plaudits from the World Bank, the UN and the ILO as one of the world's best health insurance schemes

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. India-EU talks in a muddle

Failure of the EU –India Summit held in New Delhi

- Failed to agree on the resumption of talks on the investment and free trade agreement.
- Diplomatic officials say the tough comments are a signal of the growing unhappiness among European diplomats over the long period it has taken to get talks on the Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA), as it is known, back on track after they broke down in 2013.

What's wrong?

- Commerce Ministry officials have repeatedly said that India is ready to restart talks, but would like to discuss a **comprehensive Free Trade Agreement including investment**, while the EU is keen to finalise the bilateral investment treaty first, given that India has allowed all its BITs with European countries and others to lapse in the

past year.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Jobs big worry as economy remains in ‘pessimistic zone’, show RBI surveys

Context:

- Recently released RBI's Consumer Confidence Survey and other important surveys.

Survey:

- Consumer Confidence Survey is a survey undertaken by the RBI.
- It obtained responses on household perceptions and expectations on the general economic situation, the employment scenario, the overall price situation and their own income and spending.
- It was conducted in six metropolitan cities— Mumbai, Kolkata, New Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru.

Key Highlights:

- The survey indicated that more people see consumer confidence declining, business sentiment in manufacturing dipping, inflation on the rise and growth sliding.
- There are two sub-indices in the survey- Current Situation Index (CSI) and Future Expectations Index (FEI)
- The CSI slipped further into the pessimistic zone, reflecting deterioration in sentiments on the employment scenario, the price level and income. Same was the case with the FEI which slipped relative to its previous reading in June 2017.
- There are five main variables in the survey on which responses from public were sought. These are Economic situation, Income, Spending, Employment and Price level.
- 7 per cent of respondents say the economic situation has worsened in September 2017 as against 25.3 per cent in the same period last year. The response for “one year ahead expectation” shows a decline to 50.8 per cent on the issue of economy “will improve”— down from 66.3 per cent in December 2016. The response for the current perception on the general economic situation showed 34.6 per cent saying “improved” as of September 2017, down from 44.6 per cent in September 2016.
- Employment prospects have been the biggest cause of worry for respondents. 7 per cent of respondents believed current perception about employment has “worsened”, which is much higher than the 31.4 per cent in November 2016.
- The perception of people on income levels has also come down to 26.6 per cent in September 2017 from 37.3 per cent in November 2016
- Despite gloomy sentiment on income, more than 80 per cent of respondents reported increased spending over the past year, which could partly be attributed to higher prices.

Key Highlights from other surveys:

- RBI's Survey of Professional Forecasters on Macroeconomic Indicators, said that forecasters have moderated their growth expectation for 2017-18 and 2018-19 in view of tempered assessment of private consumption demand and industrial growth.
- Real gross domestic product (GDP) and real gross value added (GVA) are likely to grow by 6.8 and 6.6 per cent, respectively, in 2017-18 and at 7.4 per cent each in 2018-19.
- The survey also says headline Consumer Price Inflation and Core Inflation are going to grow to 5.0% and 4.9% in Q2 in 2018-19.
- On the external front: improvement in external trade in both this as well as next year.
- In another survey- Industrial Outlook Survey of the Manufacturing Sector for Q2 of 2017-18- business sentiment in the manufacturing sector has worsened.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper III

1. How globalization has led to the reduction of employment in the formal sector of the Indian economy? Is increased informalization detrimental to the development of the country?

GS Paper IV

Case study

You are recently posted as district development officer of a district. Shortly thereafter you found that there is considerable tension in the rural areas of your district on the issue of sending girls to schools.

The elders of the village feel that many problems have come up because girls are being educated and they are stepping out of the safe environment of the household. They are of the view that the girls should be quickly married off with minimum education. The girls are also competing for jobs after education, which have traditionally remained in boys' exclusive domain, adding to unemployment amongst male population.

The younger generation feels that in the present era, girls should have equal opportunities for education and employment, and other means of livelihood. The entire locality is divided between the elders and the younger lot and further sub-divided between sexes in both generations. You come to know that in Panchayat or in other local bodies or even in busy crossroads, the issue is being acrimoniously debated.

One day you are informed that an unpleasant incident has taken place. Some girls were molested, when they were en route to schools. The incident led to clashes between several groups and a law and order problem has arisen. The elders after heated discussion have taken a joint decision not to allow girls to go to school and to socially boycott all such families, which do not follow their dictate.

1. What steps would you take to ensure girls' safety without disrupting their education?
2. How would you manage and mould matriarchic attitude of the village elders to ensure harmony in the inter-generational relations? (250 words) (25 Marks)

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Nothing here for Today!!!

Category: POLITY

1. SC ruling on age of consent today

In news:

- The Supreme Court will on Wednesday pronounce its verdict on whether or not an exception to rape, sanctioned by the Indian Penal Code that allows a man to have sexual intercourse with his wife aged above 15 is valid.

Ambiguity:

- Section 375 (rape) of the IPC, allows a husband to have sexual relationship with his 15-year-old wife.
- Definition of ‘child’ in recent laws such as the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, which includes any person below the age of 18.
- The court has repeatedly questioned the continued existence of this exception to rape when the other parliamentary laws have uniformly said that the age of consent of a girl is 18.

Government’s response: doing away with this exception clause in the IPC would open a **Pandora’s box** on marital rape, which does not exist in India.

NGO, Independent Thought’s contention : the exception clause was “violative of Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution to the extent that it permits intrusive sexual intercourse with a girl child aged between 15 and 18 years, only on the ground that she has been married.

Basic Information:

Section 375 in The Indian Penal Code

375. Rape .—A man is said to commit “rape” who, except in the case hereinafter excepted, has sexual intercourse with a woman under circumstances falling under any of the six following descriptions:—

(First) — against her will.

(Secondly) —Without her consent.

(Thirdly) — With her consent, when her consent has been obtained by putting her or any person in whom she is interested in fear of death or of hurt.

(Fourthly) —With her consent, when the man knows that he is not her husband, and that her consent is given because she believes that he is another man to whom she is or believes herself to be lawfully married.

(Fifthly) — With her consent, when, at the time of giving such consent, by reason of unsoundness of mind or intoxication or the administration by him personally or through another of any stupefying or unwholesome substance, she is unable to understand the nature and consequences of that to which she gives consent.

(Sixthly) — With or without her consent, when she is under sixteen years of age. Explanation.—Penetration is sufficient to constitute the sexual intercourse necessary to the offence of rape.

(Exception)—Sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under fifteen years of age, is not rape.] STATE AMENDMENT

(Manipur) —(a) in clause sixthly, for the word “sixteen” substitute the word “fourteen”;

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012: The Act is gender-neutral and defines a child as any person below the age of eighteen years.

It provides:

- Precise definitions for different types of Child abuse crimes
- Stringent punishments
- Mandatory reporting
- Child-friendly procedures
- Under Section 45 of the Act, the power to make rules rests with the Central Government
- Qualifications and experience of interpreters
- Arrangements for care and protection
- Criteria for award of compensation by the Special Court

The National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and State Commissions for the Protection of Child Rights (SCPCRs) have been made the designated authority to monitor the implementation of the Act

2. Law officers can take up private practice: Prasad

In news:

Union Law and Justice Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said that **government law officers** were allowed to take up private suits depending on the nature of the case. But they are disallowed from suits in which the state is party.

3. Passive euthanasia already a law, says govt.

Government response to the Supreme Court Constitution Bench:

- Passive euthanasia, the act of withdrawing life support to a terminally-ill patient, is already the law of the land.
- **Aruna Shanbaug case:** The government pointed out that the Supreme Court itself, in 2011, had issued comprehensive guidelines allowing passive euthanasia in the tragic case of the bed-ridden former Mumbai nurse Aruna Shanbaug.
- The government said it was finalising a draft law on passive euthanasia called '**The Management of Patients With Terminal Illness – Withdrawal of Medical Life Support Bill**', which was drawn up in line with the recommendations of the Law Commission of India that life support can be withdrawn for patients in **persistent vegetative state (PVS)** or suffering an irreversible medical condition.
- **Centre's objection:** The Centre, however, objected to legalising the **concept of 'Living Will'** — an advance written directive to physicians for end-of-life medical care.

Reason: this may lead to the abuse and neglect of the elderly, especially if they were financially well-off. The government pointed out that the living will was a concept which contradicts a person's instinctive urge to survive.

Social and philosophical aspects

Forcing a person to take medical treatment against their will is also a social issue

- On one hand, country is short of medical facilities etc, and on other hand, we force those who are in a hopeless situation to take treatment
- This also raises a "philosophical question" on whether a person can refuse treatment
- An individual who refuses to undergo treatment may become a burden on the resources of the state

Way forward

- As laid down in the Shanbaug case, the way ahead was to allow medical boards to decide whether to allow passive euthanasia or not

Basic Information:

Passive euthanasia:

- Passive euthanasia is the acts of hastening the death of a terminally-ill patient by altering some form of support and letting nature take its course.
- Passive euthanasia can involve turning off respirators, halting medications, discontinuing food and water so the patient dies because of dehydration or starvation.
- Passive euthanasia can include giving the patient large doses of morphine to control pain in spite of the likelihood that the painkiller can cause fatal respiratory problems.

Active euthanasia: Active euthanasia involves helping the patient to die on the basis of a request by either the patient or those close to him or her, usually direct family members.

Living Will:

- A Living Will is a document that allows a person to explain in writing which medical treatment he or she does or does not want during a terminal illness.
- A terminal illness is a fatal illness that leads ultimately to death.
- A Living Will takes effect only when the patient is incapacitated and can no longer express his or her wishes. The will states which medical treatments may be used and which may not be used to die naturally and without

the patient's life being artificially prolonged by various medical procedures.

4. East, NE States score high in curbing infant mortality

In news:

- **IMR:** Infant Mortality Rate(IMR) is counted as the number of deaths per 1,000 live births
- **Data released by the Sample Registration Survey (SRS) bulletin:**
 - According to the SRS' data, states from the east and northeastern part of the country have registered a significant drop in IMR
 - The all-India IMR has also decreased from 37 in 2015 to 34 in 2016
 - The SRS bulletin, published by the office of Registrar General of India

State wise performance:

- Bihar, which has the highest density of population in the country, has recorded a drop of four points in IMR from 42 in 2015 to 38 in 2016
- In Assam, the IMR has dropped from 47 to 43 and in Jharkhand, it has dropped from 32 to 29
- In Odisha, the IMR have dropped from 46 to 44
- West Bengal, which has been showing a steady decline over the past few years, has recorded a drop of one point from 26 in 2015 to 25 in 2016

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Post-Doklam, the healing touch of yoga

Key Points:

- China's Minzu University is offering the country's first master's degree in Yoga.
- **Significance :** It appears to be a clear signal that soft power is being deployed to reactivate China-India ties in the aftermath of the tense Doklam standoff.
- The programme is being sponsored by the China-India Yoga College at the University, and India's Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana.
- The three-year course includes two years in China and a final year in India.
- Classes will cover lessons on yoga asanas, yoga physiology, yoga anatomy, yoga therapy as well as meridian theory.
- **The curriculum includes courses in Hindi and Sanskrit.**

Category: ECONOMICS

1. IMF lowers India's growth projection, attributes it to demonetisation, GST

International Monetary Fund (IMF) predictions:

- In the latest **World Economic Outlook** released on October 10, IMF has projected India to grow at 6.7% in 2017 and 7.4% in 2018.
- **Reasons:** The report cited "lingering impact" of demonetisation and the Goods and Services Tax for the expected slow down during the current and the next year.

World economy is picking up steam:

- The IMF has revised upwards "global growth projections to 3.6% for this year and 3.7% for next.
- Pickups in investment, trade, and industrial production, coupled with strengthening business and consumer confidence, are supporting the recovery

2. No respite for Indian banks as bad loans hit record \$146 billion

Context:

- Indian banks' sour loans hit a record **5 trillion rupees** (\$145.56 billion) at the end of June.

- **Key Fact:** Asia's third-largest economy is no nearer to bringing its bad debt problems under control.

In news:

- A review of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data obtained through right-to-information requests shows banks' total stressed loans – including non-performing and restructured or rolled over loans – rose 4.5 percent in the six months to end-June. In the previous six months they had risen 5.8 percent.
- The bulk of India's sour loans are in the **state banks** and stem from lending to large conglomerates, especially in steel and infrastructure.
- **Key Fact:** Stressed loans as a percentage of total loans reached 12.6 percent at end-June, according to the RBI data, the highest level in at least 15 years.
- According to RBI data, new loans grew at just about 5 percent in the year to March, the lowest growth rate in more than six decades. Several banks have already cut back their loan books to conserve capital.
- **Negative impact:**
- The stubborn bad debt problem has eaten up bank profits and choked off new lending, especially to smaller firms.
- Banks are having to take higher provisions to account for more defaulters being pushed into bankruptcy. And margins are likely to be squeezed further by proposed new rules to encourage commercial banks to pass on central bank interest rate cuts.

Bank Recapitalization:

- Fitch Ratings estimates Indian banks will **need \$65 billion** of additional capital by March 2019 to **meet Basel III** global banking rules.
- Moody's expects the top 11 state lenders alone will need nearly \$15 billion. The government has just \$3 billion left in its budget for bank recapitalization.

3. Stressed companies to delay investment recovery by 2-3 yrs: India Ratings

Context:

- Report by India Ratings limited on the stressed assets scenario in the Indian industry.
- **Main theme:** Stressed corporates could derail the overall investment recovery for another two-to-three years in the wake of moderate consumption demand, global overcapacity and working capital disruptions due to the goods and services tax.
- **The main concern expressed by the report is decline in capital expenditure in the Indian industry.**

Key Findings:

- There are 75 stressed corporates who constitute 20 per cent of the total capital expenditure spending over FY12-17.
- These corporates are from key investment-linked sectors, such as metals and mining, infrastructure, and power.
- The majority of stressed corporates would require another 4-5 years to deleverage (the process of reducing the level of one's debt by rapidly selling one's assets) to a sustainable level of 4-5 times from their current leverage of 9-10 times

Reasons:

- **Key Areas of Stresses:** There are pockets of stress within sectors, especially infrastructure, metals and power (particularly thermal) owing to high leverage and weak cash flow.
- These sectors witnessed a significant decline in capacity utilisation.
- Corporates are likely to show an unwillingness to invest in long-term projects due to muted demand and significant leverage, despite a low interest rate environment.

Way forward: The core sectors need to focus on selling stressed assets and equity infusion in order to make efforts in incurring capital expenditure.

Basic Information:

- **Capital Expenditure :** Money spent by a business or organization on acquiring or maintaining fixed assets,

such as land, buildings, and equipment.

- **EBITDA:** Earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) is a measure of a company's operating performance. Essentially, it's a way to evaluate a company's performance without having to factor in financing decisions, accounting decisions or tax environments.

4. Is 'deep sea fishing' the silver bullet?

Context:

- Steps taken by the government of India and the state of Tamilnadu to promote deep sea fishing.

Issue:

- The main issue is to do with the oversized fleet of Tamil Nadu trawlers that fish regularly in Sri Lankan waters, often damaging the boats and gear of small-scale Tamil fishers from the Northern Province of Sri Lanka.
- The Sri Lankan government has not only passed a legislation banning trawling but its navy has also been vigilantly patrolling the International Maritime Boundary Line.

A new strategy:

- The plan is to remove as many trawl vessels from the Palk Bay as possible. And replace them with deep sea vessels that fish in the Bay of Bengal and Gulf of Mannar, in 2017-2020.
- The plan in the Palk Bay is to extract 2,000 trawlers from the bay. Each vessel will cost Rs 80 lakhs of which only 30 per cent (10% upfront+ 20% loan) is to be paid by the trawl owners, while rest will be paid by state and central government as subsidy.
- The Central and Tamil Nadu governments are jointly providing finance for the project.
- The new replacement tuna long liner boats cannot trawl or operate in the Palk Bay.
- The government is now creating a new deep-sea fishing harbour at Mookaiyur, located just south of the Palk Bay in the Gulf of Mannar, where many of these vessels are likely to be berthed.
- Priority is to be given to owners who have had their boats apprehended or damaged in Sri Lanka

Challenges:

- There is a question whether there are sufficient stocks of fish in the adjacent waters of the Bay of Bengal and Gulf of Mannar to make deep sea fishing economically viable for a large and new fleet of vessels.
- Are the trawl owners interested: do Palk Bay trawl fishers, who are used to one-day fishing, have sufficient skills and an interest for deep sea fishing.
- The question of what will become of trawl crews (who might not have the required skills for deep sea fishing) remains largely unaddressed, potentially jeopardising the local economy of the region.
- The main concern for the trawl owners is whether deep sea fishing is a sound investment or not.
- Some fishermen have doubts about the high operational costs of deep sea fishing and the loan repayment schedule.
- Equally of concern is the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department's capacity to monitor, control and carry out surveillance (MCS) of the process of decommissioning.

Way forward:

- Whether deep sea fishing will reduce the Palk Bay fishing conflict depends entirely on the downsizing of the existing trawl fleet. This means actual implementation of rules on the ground is the most important thing to look into.
- Various other solutions such as buy-backs, alternative livelihoods and skill development need to be rolled out with a simultaneous focus on a strong MCS system. Only then can this intransigent fishing conflict be finally resolved.

Basic Information:

- **Trawling:** Trawling is a method of fishing that involves actively dragging or pulling a trawl through the water behind one or more trawlers. Trawls are fishing nets that are pulled along the bottom of the sea or in midwater at a specified depth.
- **Deep Sea Fishing:** Deep sea fishing is a form of angling that requires deep waters and usually takes place

further away from land. The water depth should be at least 30 meters to be considered deep sea fishing territory.

5. Petroleum ministry to seek Cabinet approval for domestic gas trading hub

In news:

- Petroleum ministry is seeking approval from the Union Cabinet's for a domestic gas trading hub
- It help India adopt a better mechanism for price discovery of both domestic as well as imported gas
- Ministry is in the process of creating an internal think-tank to assist in priority areas like
 - (1) Foreign investment
 - (2) Moving towards gas-based economy
 - (3) Financing models
 - (4) Using technology and curbing hydrocarbon imports

- **Current Scenario:**

Currently, the price of natural gas in the country is determined through a government-mandated formula that links the local price to rates prevailing in gas-surplus nations

- **Plans ahead:**

Currently, India imports almost 60 per cent of its petroleum requirements

India also plans to double its network of pipelines to transport natural gas to 30,000 km within the next three-four years which will help in shifting to a gas-based economy, reduce greenhouse emissions and cut oil import.

6. A new industrial policy for Bharat

Context:

- A recent report by Deloitte LLP pointed out that India's young population will drive its economic growth to overtake China and other Asian tigers in the next few decades.
- The potential workforce in India is set to increase to 1.08 billion in the next 20 years and hold above the billion mark for 50 years.
- This requires enabling conditions for growth are created and sustained.

About Industrial Policy, 2017:

- The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), released the discussion paper on Industrial Policy 2017.
- It highlights the progress made in the last 25 years and facilitates discussions for the formulation of new industrial policy aimed at building a globally competitive Indian industry equipped with skill, scale and technology.
- It recognizes the need to gainfully employ a growing workforce and lists long-term and medium-term measures and related challenges.

Economic Survey 2017 opinion about rising workforce:

- It points out that the richer peninsular states in India will initially witness a sharp increase in working age populations, followed by a sharp decline.
- In contrast, the poorer hinterland states will remain young and dynamic, characterized by a rising working age population for some time, plateauing towards the middle of the century.

What needs to be done to cash upon demographic dividend?

- The poorer states in the hinterland are characterized by a substantial rural, informal economy where agriculture and allied non-farm activities are the principal sources of livelihood.
- For India to realize its economic potential, it is this population which needs to be tapped and provided opportunities.
- Significant migration in search of better sources of livelihood is also being witnessed from such areas towards urban centres, which needs to be carefully managed.

Issues:

- The policy does not discuss ideas for creating jobs for and in Bharat.
- It follows conventional approach that confines the scope of industrial policy to “manufacturing enterprises”, unrelated to agriculture and the services sectors.
- This myopic industrial policy can have adverse consequences in the longer term.
- It recognizes the importance of competition and strengthening global linkages and value chains. But incentives to select sunrise sector will potentially disincentivize competition and innovation, and curb the growth of other sectors
- This sector specific approach might result in policies soon becoming out of sync with dynamic economic developments and with our World Trade Organization (WTO) obligations.
- An effective industrial policy cannot be merely a collection of sectoral policies.

Way Forward:

- It must appreciate its linkages with agriculture, services policies and with trade, competition and sector-specific policies at a broader level.
- A systems’ view informed by a whole-of-government approach is needed.
- It will treat the economy like a complex human body, composed of many sub-systems, each of which performs a function to enable the entire system to remain healthy and grow.
- The Indian economy has suffered from several ill-advised medications in the past, and more recently as well. Such experiments need to be prevented.
- It requires different actors and government departments engaged in specific sub-systems to work with each other.
- Stakeholders involved in the design of specific policies must interact with each other and optimize the functioning of crucial sub-systems.
- A powerful nodal department in the prime minister’s office should be authorized to ensure coherence through coordination with different departments and related stakeholders, and enable swift decision making within predetermined time frames.
- A new forward-looking industrial policy for India must have Bharat as its soul.
- A long-term view needs to be taken on competition and trade-related issues, and the industrial policy should avoid the temptation of short-term benefits of over-protectionism.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY/HEALTH ISSUES

1. [WHO releases new guidelines to manage obesity in children](#)

Context:

- Childhood obesity a “ **Global epidemic**”.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) has released new guidelines on how trained professionals can better identify youngsters in need of help.

In news:

- India has the second highest number of obese children in the world after China, according to a study published in The New England Journal of Medicine in June this year.
- **Key Point :** Doctors say identification of obesity in children is the main issue as often parents think a chubby child is a healthy child.

Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI):

- The WHO guidelines titled “ **Assessing and managing children at primary healthcare facilities to prevent overweight and obesity in the context of the double burden of malnutrition** ” provides updates for the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI).
- The guideline includes counselling, dieting and assessment of eating habits along with the usual weight and height measurements.

Double-burden of malnutrition:

- In 2016, one half of all children overweight or obese lived in Asia and one quarter lived in Africa.

- Paradoxically, overweight and obesity is found in populations where under-nutrition remains common — this phenomenon is sometimes termed as ‘double-burden of malnutrition’.

Key Fact:

- A study published in **Paediatric Obesity** says India will have over 17 million children with excess weight by 2025.
- **Reasons for the increasing trend of Obesity among children:** urbanisation, increased income, availability of fast foods, educational demands, television viewing and gaming have led to a rise in the consumption of foods high in fats, sugar and salt and low physical activity.

What needs to be done?

Diagnose at early stage: Early prevention is the need of the hour to avoid an entire generation from falling prey to heart ailments, hypertension and diabetic complications.

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. What is Conference of Governors? What is its importance?

GS Paper IV

1. Critically analyze the various ethical issues associated with euthanasia?

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Nothing here for Today!!!

Category: POLITY

1. [Sex with minor wife, despite consent, is rape: Supreme Court](#)

Context:

- **Exception 2 to Section 375 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC):** allowed the husband of a girl child — between 15 and 18 years of age — blanket liberty and freedom to have non-consensual sexual intercourse with her. Her willingness or consent was of no concern.
- The husband in such cases was not punished for rape.

In news:

- **The Supreme Court's historic verdict:**
 - Sexual intercourse by a man with his wife, who is below 18 years of age, is rape.
 - A girl child below the age of 18 cannot be treated as a commodity having no say over her body or someone who has no right to deny sexual intercourse to her husband.
 - Human rights of a girl child are very much alive and kicking whether she is married or not and deserve recognition and acceptance
 - The court, however, refrained from dealing with the issue of marital rape of a woman aged above 18.
 - The exception clause to rape, carved out in the IPC, created an unnecessary and artificial distinction between a married girl child and an unmarried girl child.
 - The clause took away the right of a girl child to bodily integrity and reproductive choice. It had even the effect of turning a blind eye to trafficking of the minor girl children in the guise of marriage.
- **Exception 2 to Section 375 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code & statutory rape :** The exception had remained an anomaly because Section 375 itself mandated that sex with a girl below 18 years of age, with or without her consent, was **statutory rape**. An unmarried girl child can prosecute her rapist, but a married girl child aged between 15 and 18 could not even do that
- **Expert opinion:**
 - With this judgment, considered by experts as trigger to declaring child marriage **void ab initio**, the court ended the decades-old disparity between Exception 2 to Section 375 IPC and other child protection laws.
 - These include the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2006, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act and Juvenile Justice Act, all which define a “child” as someone who is below 18 years of age.

What is the conflict between IPC 375 and POCSO Act?

- Almost every statute in India recognises that a girl below 18 years of age is a child and it is for this reason that the law penalises sexual intercourse with a girl who is below 18 years of age.
- Exception 2 to Section 375 of the IPC: if a girl child between 15 and 18 years of age is married, her husband can have non-consensual sexual intercourse with her, without being penalised under the IPC, only because she is married to him and for no other reason.

Prohibition of Child Marriage Act:

- PCMA makes child marriage only voidable, that is, the burden is placed on the child bride to approach a court to declare her marriage a nullity.
- She has to do this within two years of attaining majority that is by the time she is 20 years old.
- If not, the marriage continues.

Will previous cases of child marriages/rape be reconsidered?

- The judgment will have “prospective effect” meaning it will not apply to past cases
- Cognizance of such offenses can be taken only in accordance with the provisions of section 198(6) of the Criminal Procedure Code
- The provision says that court shall not take cognizance of an offense under Section 376 IPC “if more than one year has elapsed from the date of commission of the offense”

Does this judgment apply to women above 18 years of age also?

- The SC bench clarified that it was not making any observation on “marital rape” of a woman who is 18 years of age and above as the issue was not before the court
- The question whether marital rape should be criminalized is pending before the Delhi High Court where the Centre has filed an affidavit opposing this saying that doing so may destabilize the institution of marriage apart from being an easy tool for harassing husbands

2. Sex with minor wife case: Why ‘magic number’ 15

Context:

- Exception 2 of Section 375 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code allows a husband to have sexual intercourse with his minor wife, with or without her consent, if she has crossed the age of 15.

What is the reason for fixing the magic figure of 15 years?

- In the year 1940, when the age of consent for sexual intercourse for a girl was 16 years, the age of marriage was 15 years and the age under the exception was also 15 years.
- In 1975, too, the age of consent was 16 years, the age of marriage was 18 years, but the age under the exception remained 15 years.
- Today, when the age of consent and marriage of a girl are both 18, the age under the exception clause is frozen at 15 years.
- **Inference:** The magic figure of 15 years is not based on any scientific evaluation, but is based on the mere fact that it has been existing for a long time. It strikes against the concept of equality. It violates the right of fair treatment of the girl child, who is unable to look after herself.

3. 'Living Will' can take effect only if a medical board certifies a person condition is irreversible: Supreme Court

Context:

- The Supreme Court is hearing a petition by NGO Independent Thought to legalize **euthanasia** and the **concept of 'Living Will'**.
- Five-judge Constitution Bench, headed by Chief Justice, is debating on when exactly a person's 'Living Will' or advance directive for end-of-life medical care should take effect.

In news:

- **Court's observation:** A person's advance directive to withdraw medical care to allow him to die with dignity should take effect only when a **medical board affirms** that his condition is beyond cure and irreversible.
- The Bench said it would lay down guidelines for drafting living wills and how it can be authenticated. It has reserved the case for judgment.
- Advance directives may be approved by a magistrate. The magistrate has to examine that the person executing the 'Living Will' is of sound mind. That he has taken informed consent.
- **Example:** If a man is admitted to a hospital and he goes into coma. The hospital informs the medical board, which takes a fair, informed and impartial decision that his medical condition is beyond cure. This decision is taken by the medical board on the touchstone of modern technology.
- **Two-fold test** as to when a 'Living Will' would come into effect:
 - When the medical condition of the patient has become irreversible.
 - When the prolongation of his life can be done only at the cost of pain and suffering which is at a level inconsistent with his advance directive.
- **Government's response:**
 - The legalization of 'advance directives' would amount to waiving of the paramount fundamental right to life enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution.
 - Government was opposing the concept of 'Living Will' as a principle of public policy. It said the State's primary obligation is to sustain life and not legalise a person's wish to die.
 - The government had said the passive euthanasia is the law of the land, with thousands of cases in which doctors withdraw life support after getting the informed consent of the relatives.
- **Gian Kaur judgment of 1996**
 - The court observed that right to live with dignity also includes right to die with dignity, to approve of passive euthanasia

4. SC lauds Karnataka for declaring child marriage void

In news:

- The Supreme Court lauded Karnataka for its pioneering act of amending the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA)** to make child marriage **automatically void**.

Amended PCMA:

- In Karnataka, the husband of a girl child would be liable for punishment for child marriage under the amended PCMA;
 - For penetrative sexual assault or aggravated penetrative sexual assault under the POCSO Act; and
 - If the husband and the girl child are living together in the same or shared household for rape under the IPC.

Highlights of a study published by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights and Young Lives based on the 2011 Census:

- Over 20% girls in this country are married before attaining the age of 18.
- More than one out of every five marriages violates the provisions of the PCMA and the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

5. Underweight and obese children: Alarm bells ring at both ends in India, Lancet study raises concern

Highlights of a study in the Lancet:

- The study was released on World Obesity Day on October 11
- The study looked at BMI (body mass index) trends in 200 countries from 1975-2016
- **Obese Population:** It has found that the number of obese girls in age group 5-19 has risen from 5 million to 50 million in 40 years. And that of boys from 6 million to 74 million.
- **Underweight Population:** The researchers say that if current world trends continue, “obese” will soon be more common than “underweight”

Scenario in India:

- India has among the largest shares of underweight children and teenagers
- And at the other end, it is part of a trend that has seen the number of obese under-20s worldwide rising tenfold in 10 years
- In India, the prevalence of obesity is between 1-2 %
- The prevalence of mild to severe underweight under-20s in India is 22.7% among girls and 30.7% among boys

Obesity among children:

- The middle class and upper middle class in India have fewer children and tend to overfeed them under the pretext of pampering
- As per the Lancet study, the percentage is between 1-2 in India but these will increase as social structures are changing in India

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Eye on China, foreign secy S Jaishankar in Seychelles for infrastructure pact

Context:

- Unannounced visit to the seychelles

In news:

- India had sent **Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar** on an unannounced visit to the seychelles
- **Possible reasons behind this move:** Due to concerns arise from China’s moves and increasing presence in Seychelles and to iron out differences over the development of infrastructure in Seychelles

Seychelles response:

- Seychelles has said it would like to take a “relook” at the agreement between the two countries to build military infrastructure on Assumption Island
- The agreement was signed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Seychelles in 2015
- Officials in Seychelles have said the agreement does not have legal backing on their side, whereas it has legal basis in India
- To avoid returning to the negotiating table, Jaishankar met Seychelles President Danny Faure and discussed the hurdles that have come up in recent months

Particulars of the agreement:

- The agreement will enable India to help Seychelles build military infrastructure for the Seychelles People's Defence Forces (SPDF) on Assumption Island
- The infrastructure also includes residential barracks for SPDF's Coast Guard and fixing up the jetty and existing airstrip for the SPDF

Concerns of India over China's presence in Seychelles

- According to Indian intelligence reports, there has been a sharp spike in the number of Chinese visitors in Seychelles over the last six years — from about 500 in 2011 to over 15,000 in 2016

Background information:

India's relations with Seychelles:

- The two countries have an established relationship in defence and maritime security, through which India helps to patrol the waters of Seychelles and gives equipment to the island nation's defence forces
- In recent years, India has agreed to help Seychelles map its hydrology reserves, launched a coastal surveillance radar project and boosted security cooperation with the nation
- India will also give a second Dornier maritime patrol aircraft

Category: ECONOMICS

1. PM's advisory council acknowledges slowdown

Context:

- Recently reconstituted Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (PMEAC) and its key areas of focus.
- The council acknowledged the slowdown in the economy.



Key Points:

- **Top priority:** Accelerating growth and employment over the next six months
- would be the top priority of the recently reconstituted Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (PMEAC).
- The five-member Council was unanimous that the government shouldn't stray from the path of **fiscal consolidation**, thus ruling out a **fiscal stimulus** to reverse the downturn in the economy
- The committee had reached a consensus on the **fiscal consolidation** policy being followed by the government.
- The committee has identified major priorities for accelerating economic growth over the next six month. The priority areas include economic growth, employment and job creation, informal sector and integration, fiscal framework, monetary policy, public expenditure, institutions of economic governance, agriculture and animal husbandry, patterns of consumption and production, and the social sector.
- **Economy Track Monitor:** Committee highlighted the need for effective tracking of key economic parameters, through possible mechanisms for instituting an Economy Track Monitor, using lead indicators and triggers for action, based on informed assessment and analysis.

Basic Information:

- **Fiscal Consolidation** refers to the policies undertaken by Governments (national and sub-national levels) to reduce their deficits and accumulation of debt stock.
- **Fiscal Stimulus:** An increase in public spending or a reduction in the level of taxation that might be performed by a government in order to encourage and support economic growth. Most government bailout packages offered to various business types can be considered a form of fiscal stimulus.

2. Cabinet nod for natural gas cargo-swap deal with Japan

In news:

- The Cabinet approved a cargo-swapping arrangement with Japan as part of a broader bilateral pact to create a gas exchange that could reduce India's logistical costs for natural gas import.
- As the world's largest importer of gas, Japan has pacts for supply with Qatar. India is having similar pacts with Australia.
- **What is the deal all about?** As part of the gas exchange, India will have a provision that will allow the swapping of these gas contracts which will save [on] transport costs. So, that India can get gas from Qatar instead of Japan and Japan can source our quantum from Australia.
- It is purely for logistics costs. It is a swapping of cargo and not of contracts, so the tariff at which the LNG is bought will not change.

3. Skill development: CCEA approves two World Bank-backed schemes

In news:

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs(CCEA) has approved two World Bank supported schemes of Rs 6,655 crore aimed at skill development in India
- The schemes are aimed to set up national bodies for accreditation and certification which shall regulate accreditation and certification in both long- and short-term Vocational Education and Training

About the Schemes:

- **Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP)** is a Rs 4,455-crore centrally sponsored scheme, including Rs 3,300 crore loan support from WB
- **Skill Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement (STRIVE)** is a Rs 2,200-crore central sector scheme, with half of the scheme outlay as WB loan assistance

4. The challenge of managing currency

Context:

- Steps to manage the currency volatility.
- Excessive exchange rate volatility could affect investment and growth possibilities in tradable sectors.
- **Capital flows:** Capital flows refer to the movement of money for the purpose of investment, trade, including the flow of capital within corporations in the form of capital spending on operations and research and development (R&D).

Background information:

- The latest World Economic Outlook report by the IMF shows that it has been tough for the central banks to manage currency market.
- The exchange rate volatility has become a significant problem from the year 2013 when the US Federal Reserve hinted that it could reduce its interest rates. This led to sudden capital outflow from the emerging markets including India. In 2015, the devaluation of renminbi also had a similar effect on the international economy although India was insulated from this shock.
- Capital flows are fairly volatile, non-intervention from the central bank can affect economic activity and could be a potential source of risk to financial stability.

Way forward measures:

- The central bank should continue to intervene in the market to protect the competitiveness of the rupee. This means the RBI should undertake purchase of foreign currencies.
- Now that India has adequate reserves, the government and the RBI should review the composition of foreign flows. Equity investment is more stable compared to debt which sometimes flows in only because of interest rate arbitrage.

Basic Information:

- **Current Account Deficit:** A capital account deficit shows that more money is flowing out of the economy along with increase in its ownership of foreign assets and vice-versa in case of a surplus.
- **Real Effective Exchange Rate :** The real effective exchange rate (REER) is the weighted average of a country's

currency relative to an index or basket of other major currencies, adjusted for the effects of inflation.

- **Market intervention by the RBI:** Purchase of foreign currencies will lead to decrease in supply of the same. This will increase the rupee supply in the market and help appreciation of foreign currencies leading to increase in competitiveness of Indian rupee.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY/HEALTH ISSUES

1. [New nanotube material may help create hypersonic aircraft](#)

In news:

- Scientists have identified an extremely lightweight material- boron nitride nanotubes (BNNTs), that can withstand a high temperature and stress, a step towards developing hypersonic aircraft able to travel at five to 10 times the speed of sound.
- **Advantages:** this discovery could lead to a drastic decrease in flight times.
- **Key Fact:**
 - Carbon nanotubes have been used in planes for their strength – they are stronger than steel – and their ability to conduct heat. However, BNNTs are the wave of the future when it comes to air travel.
 - While carbon nanotubes can stay stable at temperatures up to 400 degrees Celsius, BNNTs can withstand up to 900 degrees Celsius
 - BNNTs are also able to handle high amounts of stress and are extremely lightweight
 - Withstanding high temperatures is an important requirement for any material meant to build the world's next super planes

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. [Pondicherry Shark, Red Sea Torpedo and Tentacled Butterfly Ray may have become extinct, fear scientists](#)

In news:

- Three marine species, the **Pondicherry Shark, the Red Sea Torpedo and the Tentacled Butterfly Ray** might have become possibly extinct in the oceanic waters of the **Arabian Seas Region** (ASR) since no evidence of its existence has surfaced in the last three decades.
- Scientists are also worried about the possible disappearance of other species from the region even before they were known to science.
- The first ever assessment of the conservation status of sharks, rays, and chimaeras (collectively called chondrichthyans) in the region has left the scientists grim-faced as 78 of the 153 species revived were found fighting for survival.
- **Critically Endangered:**
 - The Guitar fish found in coastal waters of Kerala and Tamil Nadu and
 - the Ganges Shark found in Arabian Sea
- **Arabian Seas Region** The ASR covers the waters of the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, Sea of Oman, and the Persian Gulf. The region is also bordered by 20 countries including India, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel and Pakistan.
- **Key Fact:** India has banned the exploitation and trade of 10 species of sharks and rays. In 2015, India even banned the export and import of shark fins of all species.
- **Reasons:**
 - By-catch was found to be the biggest threat to the majority of chondrichthyan fishes besides the “pressure from artisanal and industrial fisheries.”
 - Increasing decline in the extent and quality of habitat as a result of coastal development and other anthropogenic disturbances, particularly for those critical habitats that many species depend on coral reefs, mangroves, sea grasses pose a serious threat to the survival of many species.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. “A child bride is more than doubly prone to health problems than a grown-up woman,” Discuss.

GS Paper II

1. Under the Indian Constitutional and Legal framework, what constitutes Hate speech? How does it violate Fundamental Right to Equality enshrined under Article 14?

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – October 13

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Category: WOMEN ISSUES

1. [Verdict today in Sabarimala case](#)

Context:

- Sabarimala temple and restricted entry of women of a certain age.
- The temple prohibits women aged between 10 and 50 from undertaking pilgrimage to Sabarimala — which means women are banned from even making the arduous trek to the shrine.

In news:

- **From three judge bench to constitution bench:** The Supreme Court will pronounce verdict on whether to refer to a Constitution Bench a bunch of petitions challenging the age-old practice in Kerala's famed Sabarimala temple to restrict entry of women of a certain age.
- **Prime issues to be dealt by the constitution bench:**

- Whether the multitude of worshippers of Swami Ayyappa visiting the famous shrine located in Kerala form a separate religious “denomination.”
- If so, should their privilege to manage their religious affairs yield to the fundamental right of women to practice religion freely.
- Included whether the restriction is a “permissible practice”
- Who is the competent authority to decide on whether the restriction comes within the ambit of ‘custom’; and, finally, whether such a ‘custom’ comes under the constitutional principles.
- **Reasons for the restriction:** The restriction finds its source in the legend that the Sabarimala temple deity, Swami Ayyappa, is a ‘Naishtika Brahmachari’ and should not be disturbed.

1991 Kerala High Court judgement:

- Supports the restriction imposed on women devotees.
- It had found that the restriction was in place since time immemorial and not discriminatory under the Constitution.

Category: POLITY

[1. Reconsider new Haj policy, urges Rajasthan body](#)

Context:

- **The new Haj policy for 2018-22.**

In news:

Reforms recommended:

- The reduction of embarkation points for Haj pilgrimage from the existing 21 to only nine across the country.
- Abolishing subsidy for Haj pilgrims and allowing women above 45 years of age to travel in a group of at least four without a male.

Rajasthan pilgrims against the recommendations made :

- Reason: termination of flights from Jaipur. The Haj flights from the State capital had started in 2005 after a seven-year-long agitation.
- The termination of flights from Jaipur would put the pilgrims to a great inconvenience, as they would be required to travel to either Delhi or Ahmedabad to board the special flights. It will impose an additional expenditure and cause a great difficulty to old and infirm pilgrims.
- Allowing women to travel without a male companion was against the principles of Shariah

[2. Lawyers as Seniors: Supreme Court frames rules for itself, 24 High Courts](#)

Context

- Days after it announced that it would put online reasons behind appointments and transfer of judges, the Supreme Court took another step towards transparency, this time in its process of designating senior lawyers.
- It laid down guidelines for itself and 24 High Courts to govern the exercise of designating lawyers as seniors and ordered setting up of a permanent committee headed by the Chief Justice of India assisted by a secretariat.

The Permanent Committee

- The permanent committee will comprise the **Chief Justice of India and two senior most companion judges , Attorney General of India and a representative from the bar nominated by the first four members.**
- For the HCs, it will have the Chief Justice of the respective HC and the Advocate General of the state in place of CJI and Attorney General.
- The Committee will interview the candidate and make an overall evaluation on the basis of his/her number of years of practice, judgments (reported and unreported) which indicate the legal formulations advanced by the Advocate concerned in the course of the proceedings of the case, pro bono work done by him/her, domain expertise of the applicant in various branches of law and publications by the advocate.
- After a name is considered and approved by the permanent committee, it will be put before the Full Court which will include SC/HC judges as the case may be and will further decide to accord senior designation to an advocate either unanimously or by majority, through secret ballot.

- The Full Court may also recall the senior designation of a lawyer if it feels he is guilty of conduct that disentitles him to the same.

The Permanent Secretariat

- The applications including proposals from the judges will be submitted to the permanent secretariat
- It will compile the relevant data and information with regard to the reputation, conduct, integrity of the Advocate(s) concerned including his/her participation in pro bono work; reported judgments in which the concerned Advocate(s) had appeared; the number of such judgments for the last five years.
- It will also publish the proposal of designation of a particular Advocate in the official website of the Court concerned inviting the suggestions and views of other stakeholders in the proposed designation.
- The cases will then be put up before the Permanent Committee for scrutiny.

The Senior Advocate

- Supreme Court rules say that the Chief Justice and the judges may with the consent of the advocate, designate an advocate as senior advocate if – In their opinion by virtue of his ability; standing at the Bar or special knowledge or experience in law distinction.

3. Saving child brides — on SC ruling on sex with minor wife

Context:

- The recent Supreme Court Ruling that criminalises sex with wife below 18 years of age

Key Points:

- By ruling that marriage cannot be a licence to have sex with a minor girl, the Supreme Court has corrected an anomaly in the country's criminal law.
- Earlier, the age of consent under the IPC was raised in 2013 from 16 to 18 to bring it in line with the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012. However, the age above which marriage is an exception to rape was retained at 15, as fixed in 1940.
- Under the Indian Penal Code, it is an offence to have sex with a girl below 18 years of age, regardless of consent.
- In other words, what was statutory rape is treated as permissible within a marriage.
- By reading down the exception to limit it to girls aged 18 and older, the court has sought to harmonise the various laws in which any person under 18 is a minor.
- Child marriage is a social evil and a serious infringement of child rights.
- It adversely affects the physical and mental health of children, denies them opportunities for education, infringes on their bodily autonomy and deprives them of any role in deciding on many aspects of their lives.

Practical application:

- It is not clear yet whether all men married to girls between the ages of 15 and 18 to be condemned to face criminal cases as rapists.
- Given the prevalence of child marriage in this country, it is doubtful whether it is possible or even desirable to implement the statutory rape law uniformly in the context of marriages.
- It is not clear what it means for those married under Muslim personal law, which permits girls below 18 to be married.
- POCSO criminalises even consensual teenage sexual activity and the latest ruling has brought this into the domain of marriage.
- A teenager could be prosecuted for a sexual offence under POCSO even if he was just a little above 18.
- Significantly, if boys under 18 but over 16 are charged with penetrative sexual assault under POCSO or rape under the IPC, which can be termed 'heinous offences', they could face the prospect of being tried as adults, according to the juvenile law as it stands now.
- Treating all below 18 as children may be good for their care and protection, but whether 18 is the right age for consent in this day and age remains a moot question.

The state's argument that given the widespread prevalence of child marriage it is not possible to remove the exception may be flawed from a formal standpoint, but its concerns about the implications of the verdict must not be underestimated.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. U.S. pulls out of UNESCO accusing it of ‘anti-Israel bias’

In news:

- The United States announced its withdrawal from the **N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)**, accusing it of “**continuing anti-Israel bias**”. The U.S. withdrawal will take effect on December 31, 2018 and until then it will remain a full member of the body.
- **Key Fact:** UNESCO is the first U.N. agency that has admitted **Palestine** as a full member, in 2011.
- **Desire to remain as a non- member observer state:** The United States indicated to the Director-General of UNESCO its desire to remain engaged with UNESCO as a non-member observer state in order to contribute U.S. views, perspectives and expertise on some of the important issues undertaken by the organisation, including the protection of world heritage, advocating for press freedoms, and promoting scientific collaboration and education.
- **Back in History:** The U.S. had earlier once withdrawn from the UNESCO, in 1984, under President Ronald Regan who accused it of favoring the Soviet Union. Under President George W. Bush, Washington rejoined the organisation in 2002.
- **Israel and UNESCO:**
 - Israel and UNESCO have a contentious relationship, and Israel recalled its ambassador to UNESCO in 2016, accusing it of ignoring Jewish views of the heritage of the region.
 - UNESCO declared the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron a Palestinian World Heritage Site

Basic Information:

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):

- UNESCO is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) based in Paris.
- Its declared purpose is to contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through educational, scientific, and cultural reforms in order to increase universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and human rights along with fundamental freedom proclaimed in the United Nations Charter.
- It is the successor of the League of Nations' International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation.
- UNESCO has 195 member states and ten associate members.
- UNESCO pursues its objectives through five major programs: education, natural sciences, social/human sciences, culture and communication/information.
- Projects sponsored by UNESCO include literacy, technical, and teacher-training programmes, international science programmes, the promotion of independent media and freedom of the press, regional and cultural history projects, the promotion of cultural diversity, translations of world literature, international cooperation agreements on secure the world cultural and natural heritage (World Heritage Sites) and to preserve human rights, and attempts to bridge the worldwide digital divide.
- It is also a member of the United Nations Development Group.

2. Fatah, Hamas sign reconciliation accord

In news:

Deal signed:

- Hamas and Fatah signed a reconciliation deal
- This deal came after Hamas agreed to hand over administrative control of **Gaza**, including the key **Rafah** border crossing

Modalities:

- The deal was brokered by Egypt
- It will bridge a bitter gulf between the Western-backed mainstream Fatah party and Hamas, an Islamist movement designated as a terrorist group by Western countries and Israel
- The agreement calls for Mr. Abbas's presidential guard to assume responsibility of the Rafah crossing on November 1
- And for the full handover of administrative control of Gaza to the unity government to be completed by December 1

Background

- Hamas and Fatah agreed in 2014 to form a national reconciliation government but the deal soon dissipated and Hamas continuing to dominate Gaza

Analysts opinion:

- According to the analysts, the deal is more likely to stick than earlier ones given Hamas's growing isolation and realisation of how hard Gaza was to govern, after its economy damaged by border blockades and infrastructure shattered by wars with Israel

Basic Information:

Hamas: Hamas is a Palestinian Sunni-Islamic fundamentalist organization

- It has a social service wing, Dawah, and a military wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades
- It has been the de facto governing authority of the Gaza Strip since its takeover of that area in 2007
- During this period it fought several wars with Israel
- It is regarded, either in whole or in part, as a terrorist organization by several countries and international organizations, most notably by Israel, the United States and the European Union

Fatah:



- Fatah, formerly the Palestinian National Liberation Movement, is a Palestinian nationalist political party and the largest faction of the confederated multi-party Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)
- Fatah is generally considered to have had a strong involvement in revolutionary struggle in the past and has maintained a number of militant groups
- Fatah had been closely identified with the leadership of its founder Yasser Arafat, until his death in 2004. Since Arafat's departure, factionalism within the ideologically diverse movement has become more apparent
- In the 2006 parliamentary election, the party lost its majority in the Palestinian parliament to Hamas.
- However, the Hamas legislative victory led to a conflict between Fatah and Hamas, with Fatah retaining control of the Palestinian National Authority in the West Bank

Rafah Border Crossing

- The Rafah Border Crossing or Rafah Crossing Point is the sole crossing point between Egypt and Gaza Strip
- It is located on the Gaza–Egypt border, which was recognized by the 1979 Israel–Egypt Peace Treaty
- The original crossing point was named Rafah land port
- Only passage of persons takes place through the Rafah Border Crossing
- All traffic of goods is diverted to the Kerem Shalom border crossing

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. Idli, dosa help fight mineral deficiency

In news:

Highlights of a study published last month in Current Science by scientists of the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research.

- South Indian food items like idlis and dosas help in the body's absorption of minerals such as iron and zinc.
- Why?: This is because these dishes have undergone fermentation, soaking, and germination, which reduces phytates, leading to enhanced bioavailability
- A large number of Indians have trouble absorbing iron and zinc from food, this is mainly due to vegetarian food

habits.

- The high content of phytates (anti-oxidants in cereals, legumes and oilseeds) in Indian foods slows down the absorption of iron and zinc. This causes deficiencies even in people whose diet may contain abundant quantities of these minerals.
- **Suggestions:**
 - Research efforts should focus on **bioavailability (absorption by the body) rather than biofortification**, as food sources already supply enough iron and zinc.
 - The absorption efficiency of these minerals among most Indians eating phytate-rich foods was below 10%. It should rise to 25% and above. This does not mean that people should quit vegetarian food, but they should adjust diets to reduce phytates.
 - The problem of phytates could also be overcome by eating fruits like guava and amla, and meat, poultry or fish.

2. [**India's hunger problem is worse than North Korea's: global hunger index report**](#)

Context:

- Recently released report of the International Food Policy Research Institute.
- The report talks about the global hunger problem.

Basics:

Global Hunger Index: The GHI score is a multidimensional index composed of four indicators

- Proportion of undernourished in the population,
- Prevalence of child mortality,
- Child stunting, and
- Child wasting.

Scores and indication: On the severity scale, a GHI score of less than 10 means “low” prevalence of hunger while a score of more than 50 implies an “extremely alarming” situation.

Key Highlights of Global Hunger Index report:

- India ranks 100 among 119 countries. It has a score of 31.4 on the Global Hunger Index (GHI). India is at the high end of the “serious” category.
- More than one-fifth of Indian children under five weigh too little for their height and over a third are too short for their age.
- Comparison with other nations: Although India ranks above Pakistan, it performs poorly with others such as Nepal (72), Myanmar (77), Bangladesh (88), Sri Lanka (84) and China (29).
- India is the world’s second largest food producer, yet it is also home to the second highest population of undernourished in the world.
- According to the GHI report, more than a fifth (21%) of children in India suffer from wasting (low weight for height)—up from 20% in 2005–2006.
- India’s poor score is one of the main factors pushing South Asia to the category of the worst performing region on the GHI scale this year.
- **Best performers amongst Developing nations:** Chile, Cuba and Turkey have a GHI score of less than 5 and ranked the best among developing nations.
- **Worst performers:** Nations like Chad and Central African Republic fare the worst with a score of 43.5 and 50.9, respectively.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. [**Why the economic slowdown, and how to fix it?**](#)

Context:

- Increased spending by the government and lowering of interest rates by the RBI.
- Fiscal stimulus is the only logical way to pull the economy out of slowdown.

Current state of the economy:

- Data from 107 companies from the organised sector (excluding IT & financial services) indicate that number of persons employed by them has decreased by 2% between Mar-2016 and Mar-2017.
- The latest RBI Consumer Confidence Survey concludes that there is significant dip in the consumer confidence and business sentiment in manufacturing.

The slowdown periods:

- The period 2003/04-2007/08 witnessed the most rapid sustained GDP growth in India at 8% per annum, riding on the boom in the world economy.
- Then came the bust, as growth dropped to 3.9% in 2008-09.
- Surprisingly, GDP growth rose to 5% per annum during 2009/10-2010/11. This recovery was attributable to counter-cyclical macroeconomic policies among other things.
- But the resilience did not last long. Growth slowed to 4% per annum during 2011/12-2013/14, as fiscal imbalances mounted, inflation quickened, and the current account deficit in the balance of payments widened.
- In 2015-16 and 2016-17 the GDP growth rate averaged 7.5% owing to one thing only- sharp drop in world oil prices, from more than \$110 per barrel to less than \$50 per barrel. This led to decrease in current account deficit and fall in inflation.

Reasons:

- Demonetisation and introduction of GST have led to decrease in output in mainly unorganised sectors. But these are not the real reasons for the current slowdown in the economy.

Structural reasons:

- **Rural distress:** GDP per capita in the agricultural sector has been less than one-tenth GDP per capita in the non-agricultural sector for 25 years. Employment creation is negligible. The outcome is rural distress.
- **Low share of manufacturing:** The share of manufacturing in GDP and employment is lower than it was 25 years ago. India's share in industrial production and manufactured exports in the world economy has declined steadily.
- Thus, GDP growth is supported largely by the services sector, while employment growth in the economy has been sustained essentially by construction activities and the informal services sector both of which have been hurt by demonetization.
- **RBI's reluctance to cut interest rates:** Between 2013-14 and 2015-16, the RBI repo rate, which sets interest rates in the economy, was reduced by a mere 1.25 percentage points although inflation came down by almost 5 percentage points in terms of the consumer price index. The opportunity to stimulate investment by dropping interest rates sharply was missed out altogether
- **Appreciation of rupee leading to erosion of export competitiveness:** Between January 2014 and June 2017, the rupee appreciated by 10% in nominal terms and 15% in real terms.

Remedial measures:

- Government should undertake fiscal stimulus by increasing spending and reviving demand. The government need to break free from the 3.5% fiscal deficit target and increase it to 4.0%. It is to be noted that borrowing is bad for the economy only when it is used for paying debts. But if it is used for creation of infrastructure and investment then it is actually good for the economy.
- **RBI should lower the interest rates by 2 percentage points:** It has to be noted that the inflation in economy was controlled not due to lowering of interest rates but because of the fall in global crude oil prices.

Basic Information:

- **Fiscal Deficit:** A Fiscal Deficit occurs when government's total expenditures exceed its total revenues (excluding borrowings).
- **Fiscal Stimulus:** Increasing government spending on infrastructure etc in order to lift investor sentiment, increase money supply in the market and increase demand in the economy.
- **Expansionary monetary policy:** This refers to a monetary policy by a central bank in which interest rates are cut in order to ease money supply in the economy.

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GS Paper II

1. “The role of pressure groups in India is marked by a number of remarkable features distinct to the Indian Political System”. Comment.

GS Paper III

1. Adaptation of PPP model for infrastructure development of the country has not been free from criticism. Critically discuss the pros and cons of the model.

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Category: POLITY

1. Supreme Court refers case of ban on women's entry into Sabarimala temple to Constitution Bench

In news:

Case transferred from three-judge Bench to Constitution Bench:

- The Supreme Court referred to a five-judge Constitution Bench the question whether the fundamental right of women to pray at the place of their choice can be discriminated against solely based “on a biological factor exclusive to the female gender.”
- Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court will scrutinise the age-old practice in Kerala’s famed Sabarimala temple of restricting entry for women aged between 10 and 50 — that is, those who are in the menstruating age.
- **The Supreme Court questioned:** How a temple managed by a statutory board — the **Travancore Devaswom Board** — and financed out of the Consolidated Fund of Kerala and Tamil Nadu “can indulge in practices violating constitutional principles/ morality.”
- **Temple authorities’ response:** justified the restriction, saying it is a practice founded in tradition.

Constitution Bench to decide:

- Whether the practice of excluding such women constitutes an “essential religious practice.”
- Whether a religious institution can exclude women as part of its right to manage its own affairs in matters of religion.
- Whether the ban qualifies as an “essential religious practice” of the Hindu faith, over which the court has no jurisdiction.
- Whether Ayyappa devotees form a separate religious denomination by themselves.
- If a temple managed by a statutory board can ‘indulge’ in the practice of banning women from entry on moral grounds.

Key Fact:

Rule 3 (b) of the Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship (Authorisation of Entry) Rules, 1965 : allows a ‘religious denomination’ to ban entry of women between the age of 10 to 50 years.

[**2. SC asks Centre to set up expert panel to check Blue Whale game**](#)

In news:

- The Supreme Court asked government to set up a panel of experts to block virtual dare games like **Blue Whale Challenge** which has allegedly led to several suicidal deaths.
- The apex court also sought the government’s response on a plea seeking to firewall such life threatening/violent games existing in the cyber world like ‘Choking game’, ‘Salt and Ice Challenge’, ‘Fire Challenge’, ‘Cutting challenge’, ‘Eyeball challenge’ and ‘Human Embroidery game’.
- **What is a Firewall?** Firewall is a system designed to prevent unauthorised access to or from a private network by controlling incoming and outgoing network traffic.
- **The Blue Whale Challenge:** The Blue Whale Challenge is reportedly a suicide game in which the player is given certain tasks to complete over a period of 50 days and the final task leads him or her to commit suicide. The player is also asked to share photos after finishing each challenge.

[**3. SC does a re-think on dowry harassment ruling**](#)

In news:

- **Previous verdict:**
 - On July 27, the Supreme Court had concluded that **Section 498A (dowry harassment) of the Indian Penal Code** has come under much abuse.
 - Dowry complaints are being filed in the heat of the moment by women over trivial issues.
 - Innocent relatives, including parents of advanced age, siblings and grandparents, suffer harassment.
 - The judgment directed ‘**Family Welfare Committees**’ to sift the genuine cases of dowry harassment from the trivial ones.
 - Police would take action only on the basis of the committee’s report.
 - These committees were directed to be made up of social workers, homemakers, retired persons and other citizens.
 - No arrest should normally be effected on dowry harassment complaints until the committee confirms the genuineness.
- **Absolute U-turn:** Two months after the Supreme Court stopped immediate arrests of accused in dowry harassment cases, the court did a re-think, saying its order dilutes the right of a woman to seek justice against the evil of dowry.

4. The legal message

Context

- Supreme Court criminalized sex between a man and his minor wife.
- The court refrained from adjudicating on the issue of marital rape, its judgment made reference to the Justice J.S. Verma committee recommendations that explained why the exemption of marital rape must be removed, and that a marital or other relationship is not a defence or justification for a lower sentence.

Exemption of Marital rape in India:

- The notion that marriage constitutes a contract, which includes the woman's irrevocable consent to sex
- A woman is the property of her husband, and rape is a violation of a man's property rather than a crime against women
- after marriage, a woman's identity becomes part of her husband's.
- The Indian government has consistently resisted a change in the law.
- Even after 2012 Delhi gang rape case that resulted in an amendment to the criminal legislation in India, including the definition and punishment of rape.
- However, the exemption of marital rape was retained, despite recommendations by the Justice Verma committee.
- According to lawmakers if marital rape is brought under the law, the entire family system will be under great stress.
- Recently Delhi High Court has been hearing petitions seeking the inclusion of marital rape under the existing rape law.
- This has been rejected by the government on the grounds that it will be used to harass men and will affect the institution of marriage.
- A greater importance is being given by the government to marriage than women rights.
- Women right activists do not believe in placing rape on a pedestal within the hierarchy of crimes within a marriage. That is, for a woman who is facing domestic violence, it is equally violating if her skull is fractured, her spine is broken, or her vagina is penetrated forcefully. What women object to is the violence involved.
- In cases of non-marital rape, judges have suggested that rape victims marry their rapist for a "happy conclusion", which highlights the notion that forced sex does not amount to rape if it takes place within a marriage.

Current scenario in USA

- In USA marital rape is treated differently from other forms of rape.
- Although all 50 states had enacted laws against marital rape by 1993, almost half the States still treat it differently from rape outside of marriage.
- In some states, marital rape is a chargeable offence only if the perpetrator uses or threatens to use physical force.
- Proof of marriage is often an easy way to reduce or mitigate the consequences of the offence.
- These kinds of legal distinctions legitimise the perception among law-enforcement agencies that cases of marital rape should be treated as less serious than rape outside of marriage.

Way Forward

- A narrow focus on sexual violence ignores the multiplicity of suffering faced by women and can result in inadequate attention being paid to their other needs. A broad focused policy approach is needed.
- We need to ensure that law and policy interventions do not inadvertently trivialise non-sexual violence and that steps are taken to strengthen compliance and implementation of laws relating to all forms of violence.
- There is a need to recognise that removing the current marital exception, if nothing else, has an important signalling effect.
- In order to prove effective, such a change needs to be accompanied by a deliberate attempt to shift attitudes that normalise violence in the home.
- The strategies must focus on structural factors that prevent the incidence of rape, rather than focussing only on strengthening response mechanisms.
- Since gender socialisation begins young, there is need to focus interventions on children and adolescents through family and societal institutions, popular culture and media. Disruptive and violent environment at home must be prevented.
- In addition to sensitising law enforcement authorities whose attitudes are merely symptomatic of widely-held beliefs about women and gender roles, we need to work with children, parents and the larger community to ensure marital rape is condemned, not condoned.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Rohingyas case: Have to strike a balance between national security and human rights, says Supreme Court

Context:

- Deportation of Rohingya's

In news:

- The Supreme Court sounded a warning to all the states with regards to the stance adopted against Rohingyas in India .
- The Supreme Court has also asked them to proceed with caution, citing the presence of women and children among the refugee groups that have settled in the country.

- **Supreme Court's observation :**

- ‘We have to strike a balance. It is not an ordinary case. The issue involves human rights of many.’”
 - National security is an important issue and cannot be secondary, but at the same time, human rights of Rohingyas should be kept in mind.
 - “If you (Centre) take any kind of contingency plan, you need to inform this court,”

- **Key Fact:**

- There are about 11 lakh Rohingyas (mostly Muslims) in Myanmar but they suffer discrimination and are denied citizenship.
 - Some 3,79,000 Rohingyas have fled Myanmar since violence against them in Rakhine state started on August 25, after Rohingya militants attacked police posts there.

2. Cross-border terror: India to speak up at Bahamas meeting

Context:

- Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting
- Venue: islands of the Bahamas.

Key Points:

- India will strongly articulate the need to strengthen counter terrorism measures and prevent radicalisation of youth through information and communication technology (ICT) at the Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting .

Main Agenda:

- Addressing the issue of using ICT and social media platforms to recruit terrorists and radicalise youth is also part of the agenda.
- Cyber crimes, climate change, the practice of child marriage, and the need for effective laws, to deal with these issues are also important items on the agenda.

3. Nepal Eminent Persons Group seeks review of 1950 friendship treaty with India

In news:

- The government had **appointed Eminent Persons Group (EPG)** to review the **1950 India-Nepal Friendship Treaty** .
- The group held discussion on “regulation” of movement of people across the border.
- Nepali sources confirmed that at the latest meeting of the EPG held on 8 October, the Nepali delegation brought proposals seeking changes required in the friendship treaty and the need for border policing to stop cross border crimes and trafficking.
- **Group's mandate:** To take a serious look at a possible review of the friendship treaty which was concluded decades ago.
- **Better border policing:** The border between two sides is already delineated and the border posts are already in place but many of these markers are damaged indicating poor maintenance. There is an urgent need to police the border better to stop cross border crime and ensure regulated movement of people.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. To reverse women leaving the workforce, policies must change behaviour before they change beliefs

Context:

- In most countries, higher numbers of educated women have resulted in the improvement of their societal status and economic participation
- But in women's participation in economic sector is very low

Women participation in economic spheres:

- Only 27 per cent of working-age women in India work
- The number fell sharply in the last decade from 43 per cent to 27 per cent
- Nepal and Bangladesh are way ahead, leaving only the Arab countries and Pakistan behind India

The World Bank report, 'Precarious Drop: Reassessing Patterns of Female Labour Force Participation in India'

- According to the report, participation of women in economic sector depends on their marital-status, age, education, family labour composition and whether in rural or urban India
- Stability in family income levels also lead to women dropping out of the workforce
- Other factors include lower levels of job creation, availability of very low paying jobs in the informal sector, poor infrastructure, safety issues, and boys outnumbering girls in technical and professional education
- The study concludes that "education skilling and legal provisions may not be sufficient"

Acceptable norms:

- In a heterogeneous country like India, 'acceptable' norms of work may differ based on income, caste, rural/urban and informal/formal sector
- One belief is allpervasive: women are primarily homemakers and men breadwinners

Key points:

- Research in neuroscience states that deep-seated 'typical' beliefs regarding race, caste, gender and other social categories get embedded or hardwired in the brain
- Inaccurate to start with, the brain finds it difficult to 'unlearn' them even when the reality has changed. It interprets new data in a biased manner to confirm originally held beliefs (confirmatory bias)

Can behavioural changes counter these stereotypes?

- Research in behavioural design provides evidence that this is indeed possible and has been successfully pursued in many countries
- There are 'behavioural insights' groups advising governments in the US, Britain, Australia and Germany

Misguided policies

- Government and corporate sector policies, instead of taking steps to encourage and hasten this permeability, have been misguided
- The flawed legislation introduced recently increasing maternity benefits from three to six months is a case in point
- For ensuring that women don't opt out of work, it reinforces gendered norms and unwittingly places women at a disadvantage
- What could have helped instead is a combination of maternity and paternity leave, on a 'use it or it lapses' basis

The way forward

- Involving women in the decisionmaking process and in leadership roles, rather than providing benefits passively, can have far-reaching benefits
- Behavioral design, when complemented by a judicious mix of legislation and incentives, can go a long way in resetting norms sooner

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. The wrong approach to environmental regulation

Context:

Recent SC order banning the sale of firecrackers in Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR), which has unexpectedly turned into a controversy

Two Issues:

The scope of the state's regulatory power vis-à-vis a religious celebration: On this account, the matter is relatively clear

- The bursting of firecrackers releases a heavy dose of carcinogens in the atmosphere, presenting a public health challenge for the entire city
- As soon as it is clear that bursting of firecrackers by one person presents a health challenge to another, any argument of religion cannot reign supreme in a constitutional, secular republic

The agency of the state that such regulation should vest with

- The more difficult question is the choice between regulation
- The decision requires numerous inputs from scientific organizations, regulatory institutions, public policy experts and civil society
- Since a court of law does not have in-house expertise in these domains, it should leave such matters to the executive
- The Supreme Court delivered its arguments in the broader framework of the “right to breathe clean air” and the “right to health”
- But it went about dismissing the commercial considerations of the firecracker industry.
- These considerations could have equally been framed in terms of the right to livelihoods of thousands who depend heavily on the sale of firecrackers during Diwali

Creditability of SC:

Bans are rarely effective

- It is difficult to imagine that no firecracker sale will happen in the entire territory of Delhi and NCR as a result of the SC order
- If the police fail to enforce the order, the credibility of the SC, particularly in cases of environmental regulation, will suffer immensely

Dealing of this matter by the SC

- The manner in which the SC has dealt with this particular case also raises a number of concerns
- It first passed an order on 11 November 2016 (after Diwali) banning the sale of firecrackers
- Then it partially lifted the ban on 12 September 2017
- To make matters worse, the court has ordered suspension of all the temporary licences issued after its 12 September 2017 verdict which allowed the grant of these licences

Not a new issue: In an earlier instance, the SC had increased the entry tax on trucks entering Delhi without factoring in the demand elasticity of goods (carried in those trucks) transported to Delhi

The way forward

- The elected government is in the best position to elicit scientific and economic inputs and take a call, even if it involves expending political capital
- The governments at the Centre and the states should involve different agencies like the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation and the pollution control boards and invest in setting regulatory standards
- This can solve environment issues, better than Judiciary

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. India to build more roads on China border

In news:

- The Ministry of Defence has decided to significantly enhance infrastructure along the **Sino-Indian border** including near Doklam, where the militaries of both sides were engaged in a two-month standoff.
- The decision was taken at the Army's commanders conference from October 9 to 15 which extensively deliberated on the recent face-off with China, besides analysing all possible security challenges on the northern border, according to official sources.
- Four passes Niti, Lipulekh, Thangla1 and Tsangchokla have been decided to be connected by 2020 on priority.

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper III

1. What do you know by Internet –of –things? Discuss its various applications in everyday life?

GS Paper IV

1. One of the scientists working in the R & D laboratory of a major pharmaceutical company discovers that one of the company's bestselling veterinary drugs, B has the potential to cure a currently incurable liver disease that is prevalent in tribal areas. However, developing a variant of the drug suitable for human beings entailed a lot of research and development having a huge expenditure to the extent of 50 crores rupees. It was unlikely that the company would recover the costs as the disease was rampant only in poverty-stricken area having very little market otherwise.

If you were the CEO, then—

- (a) Identify the various actions that you could take;
- (b) Evaluate the pros and cons of each of your actions.

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Category: POLITY

1. PM Modi to inaugurate first ever All India Institute of Ayurveda

In news:

- The first ever All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), modelled on the lines of AIIMS, will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the national capital on ‘Ayurveda Day’ on October 17.
- Set up as an apex institute under the Ministry of AYUSH, the AIIA will bring in the synergy between traditional wisdom of Ayurveda and modern diagnostic tools and technology.

2. Kancha Ilaiah case: We're not here to ban books, says Supreme Court

Context:

- The petition filed by advocate took exception to a particular chapter in a book titled ‘Post-Hindu India’ called ‘Hindutv-Mukt Bharat’.
- The book is critical about the caste system prevailing in India, especially in the Arya Vysya

community.

Supreme Court Observation:

- “Any request for banning a book of the present nature has to be strictly scrutinized because every author or writer has a fundamental right to speak out ideas freely and express thoughts adequately. Curtailment of an individual writer/author’s right to freedom of speech and expression should never be lightly viewed,”
- It is not up to the Supreme Court to use its powers to ban books, which are a free expression of a writer’s thoughts and feelings about the society and world he lives in. Courts cannot be asked to gag free expression.
- The Supreme Court has always placed the fundamental right to free speech at the highest pedestal.
- This is what the Supreme Court recorded in its two-page order while dismissing a petition to ban a book written by writer and activist Professor Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd called *Samajika Smugglurlu Komatollu*.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. [**NRIs can proxy-vote soon: Sushma**](#)

In news:

- Addressing women BJP workers in a town hall interaction, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said that soon **non-resident Indians** (NRIs) would be able to **proxy-vote** in elections in the country as the government was set to amend the **Representation of the People Act** .

Present situation: under the present law, NRIs registered in India as voters had to fly to the country during an election to cast their vote, but with the amendment, they could just issue an authorization letter to family members or relatives to vote on their behalf.

2. [**India plans a riposte to slavery report**](#)

In news:

- After sending a rebuttal to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) challenging India’s ranking in a global slavery report, India will build pressure on the global body to distance itself from the Australia-based **NGO-Walk Free Foundation**.
- It was the WFF, founded by Australia’s mining mogul Andrew “Twiggy” Forrest, that had compiled the report.
- As per the report, the highest number of people, 17,000, were surveyed in India and it was placed in a cluster of 53 countries like Honduras, Belize, Iraq, Pakistan and China.
- Indian security agencies informed the Prime Ministers Office (PMO) that though the methodology of sampling was not clear, the WFF’s entire focus was on India and had “ **enough potential to substantively harm India’s image and kill its exports market**”.
- The PMO was warned that there was “ **evidence of rising interest of private and multilateral institutions in highlighting human trafficking and forced labour as modern-day slavery, with India being the largest hub of slaves**”.

Point-wise rejoinder

- The Centre has tasked the **V. Giri National Labour Institute** , an autonomous body under the Labour and Employment Ministry, to prepare a point-wise rejoinder to the ‘ **modern slavery**’ report .
- The Labour Ministry shot off a strong letter to the ILO regarding its report titled ‘ **Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage 2017**,’ The report released on

September 19 did not contain any India-specific findings, barring one mention that 17,000 people were interviewed for the survey.

3. India acts against bottom trawling

Context:

- Bottom trawling by Indian fishermen had emerged as a major issue because of the disruptive impact it left on the coastal communities of Sri Lanka.
- Earlier in July, Sri Lanka banned bottom trawling, increasing the chances of interception of more Indian bottom trawlers.

In news:

- India informed Sri Lanka that it has taken measures to stop bottom trawling by its fishermen in the waters near the Sri Lankan coastline.
- During a weekend meeting of the **Joint Working Group (JWG)** in Delhi, officials expressed satisfaction over the release of Indian fishermen by Colombo, and reiterated the need to bring the rest of them back to India.

Initiatives taken by the Government of India to end bottom trawling:

- Recent initiatives taken by the Government of India to end bottom trawling in the **Palk Bay area** include the launch of a programme on diversification of bottom trawlers into deep-sea fishing vessels for tuna long lining under the **Blue Revolution Scheme**, construction of **Mookaiyu r** and **Poompuhar fishing harbours**, and capacity-building programmes for fishermen of the Palk Bay area in deep sea tuna long lining.
- Besides, fresh registration for bottom trawlers in the Palk Bay area has been banned by the Government of Tamil Nadu.
- India has informed that schemes promoting **seaweed farming** and **sea-cage farming** have begun in the **Palk Bay area** to wean away fishermen from **deep-sea trawling**.

Joint Working Group (JWG) mandate:

- From the beginning, the JWG has been dealing with the twin problems of arrest of Indian fishermen and boats by Sri Lanka and Sri Lanka's complaint against Indian fishermen for using "bottom trawling" which erodes aquatic resources in the Palk Bay area.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. A bigger nuclear submarine is coming

In news:

- India's second strategic nuclear submarine **Aridhaman** is just a few weeks from sea launch.
- There are plans to build a bigger and more potent version of the indigenous nuclear submarine in the immediate future.

New features to be added:

- The leap for India's ballistic nuclear submarine capabilities would come with the fourth submarine planned in the same class, named S4-Star.
- It would have a stronger weapons configuration integrated into an extra compartment that would be added to Arihant's original design.

Strategic capabilities:

- The indigenously built second nuclear submarine will add to India's growing nuclear capabilities, in the face of the new strategic realities of the region, including the assertive Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean.

Key Facts:

- Last October, India commissioned its first Ballistic Nuclear Submarine, **INS Arihant**.
- The vessel, weighing 6,000 tonnes, is powered by an 83 MW pressurised light water nuclear reactor.
- The project to build a strategic nuclear submarine to carry nuclear missiles began as the Advanced Technology Vessel project in the 1980s, and the vessel project was launched in 2009 by Dr. Manmohan Singh.
- Arihant, which can carry nuclear tipped ballistic missiles, is of the ship submersible ballistic nuclear class.

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Exercise of CAG's powers in relation to the accounts of the Union and the States is derived from Article 149 of the Indian Constitution. Discuss whether audit of the Government's policy implementation could amount to overstepping its own (CAG) jurisdiction.

GS Paper III

1. What is water-use efficiency? Describe the role of micro-irrigation in increasing the water-use efficiency.

Article 330.Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People

(1) Seats shall be reserved in the House of the People for

1. the Scheduled Castes;
2. the Scheduled Tribes except the Scheduled Tribes in the autonomous districts of Assam; and
3. the Scheduled Tribes in the autonomous districts of Assam

(2) The number of seats reserved in any State or Union territory for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes under clause (1) shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats allotted to that State or Union territory in the House of the People as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the State or Union territory or of the Scheduled Tribes in the State or Union territory or part of the State or Union territory, as the case may be, in respect of which seats are so reserved, bears to the total population of the State or Union territory

(3) Notwithstanding anything contained in clause (2), the number of seats reserved in the House of the People for the Scheduled Tribes in the autonomous districts of Assam shall bear to the total number of seats allotted to that State a proportion not less than the population of the Scheduled Tribes in the said autonomous districts bears to the total population of the State Explanation In this article 332, the expression population means the population as ascertained at the last preceding census of which the relevant figures have been published: Provided that the reference in this Explanation to the last preceding census of which the relevant figures have been published shall, until the relevant figures for the first census taken after the year 2000 have been published, be construed as a reference to the 1971 census.

Article 332. Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assemblies of the States

(1) Seats shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, except the Scheduled Tribes in the tribal areas of Assam, in Nagaland and in Meghalaya, in the Legislative Assembly of every State

(2) Seats shall be reserved also for the autonomous districts in the Legislative Assembly of the State of Assam

(3) The number of seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assembly nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats in the Assembly as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the State or of the Scheduled Tribes in the State or part of the State, as the case may be, in respect of which seats are so reserved bears to the total population of the State

(4) The number of seats reserved for an autonomous district in the legislative Assembly of the State of Assam shall bear to the total number of seats in that Assembly a proportion not less than the population of the district bears to the total population of the State

(5) The constituencies for the seats reserved for any autonomous district of Assam shall not comprise any area outside that district

(6) No person who is not a member of a Scheduled Tribe of any autonomous district of the State of Assam shall be eligible for election to the Legislative Assembly of the State from any constituency of that district

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Category: POLITY

1. [Plea to ensure OROP for retired judges](#)

In news:

- A former Madras High Court judge has approached the Supreme Court for implementation of the ‘One Rank, One Pension’ norm for retired High Court judges.

Petitioner contention:

- There is disparity in the pension paid to those appointed from the Bar and those promoted from the subordinate judiciary.
- The petitioner has sought a direction from the Court to the Centre to evolve a formula “to obviate the disparities in the pension payable to judges drawn from subordinate judiciary and the judges drawn from the Bar in tune with ‘One Rank, One Pension’ norms laid down by the Supreme Court in the 2014 judgment in Ramakrishnam Raju’s case.
- **Discrimination:** there is no difference in the pay, allowances and perks between judges irrespective of the number of years of service put in and irrespective of the source from where they were drawn, it is highly unreasonable to make a classification between the judges drawn from the Bar and judges drawn from the subordinate judiciary for the purpose of pension, thereby creating discrimination.
- **Null and Void:** The petition also asked the Supreme Court to take the initiative to declare the provisions relating to pensions payable to retired high court judges in the 1954 Act as a “null and void” and rectify all the anomalies in the Act.

2014 judgment:

- When persons holding constitutional office retire from service, making discrimination in the fixation of the pensions depending upon the source from which they were appointed is in breach of Article 14 and 16(1) of the Constitution of India. **One Rank, One Pension must be the norm in respect of a constitutional office.**

2. SC allows TN to increase Mullaperiyar water level

Context:

- **Mullaperiyar water level issue**

In news:

- The Supreme Court declared **unconstitutional** the law passed by Kerala in 2006, constituting the **Dam Safety Authority** to prevent the State from raising the water level in the Mullaperiyar dam from 136 ft to 142 ft.
- A major victory for Tamil Nadu.

Judgment:

- Restrained Kerala from enforcing its law on Tamil Nadu.
- By enacting the law and fixing the storage height of the dam at 136 ft, Kerala had nullified the **2006 judgment** and **usurped judicial power** and thus interfered with the judicial functioning.
- The Bench appointed a three-member committee with chairman of the Central Water Commission as the chairperson and representatives from the States of Kerala and Tamil Nadu to supervise and ensure that the water level in the Mullaperiyar dam was raised up to 142 ft.

Important observations :

- Constitution envisaged separation of powers among the Executive, Judiciary and Legislature and one should not encroach into the domain of the other. Independence of the judiciary and courts alone would ensure rule of law.
- Legislation could be invalidated on the ground that there was a breach of separation of powers in enacting the law, though the Legislature might have the competence to do so.
- The Legislature could only amend the law but could not invalidate a judgment or a decree passed by the court. The law enacted by Kerala legislature was an attempt to interfere with the judicial functioning, the Bench said and struck the law as unconstitutional and void.

Background information:

2006 judgment:

- On a suit filed by Tamil Nadu, the apex court in 2006 permitted the State to raise the water level from 136 ft to 142 ft.
- Within 15 days of the verdict, Kerala enacted a law and constituted Dam Safety Authority to prevent Tamil Nadu from raising the water level beyond 136 ft.
- In April 2006, Tamil Nadu filed a fresh suit to declare the law as unconstitutional. On Wednesday, after eight years the apex court decreed the suit in favour of Tamil Nadu.

Mullaperiyar Dam:

- The Mullaperiyar Dam or Mullaiperiyar Dam is a masonry gravity dam on the Periyar River in the Indian state of Kerala
- It is located 881 m (2,890 ft) above mean sea level, on the Cardamom Hills of the Western Ghats in Thekkady, Idukki District of Kerala, South India.
- It was constructed between 1887 and 1895 by John Pennycuick and also reached in an agreement to donate water eastwards to the Madras Presidency area (present-day Tamil Nadu).
- The Periyar National Park in Thekkady is located around the dam's reservoir.
- The dam is located in Kerala on the river Periyar, but is operated and maintained by Tamil Nadu state.
- **Bone of Contention:** For Tamil Nadu, the Mullaperiyar dam and the diverted Periyar waters act as a lifeline for Theni, Madurai, Sivaganga and Ramnad districts, providing water for irrigation and drinking, and also for generation of power in Lower Periyar Power Station. Tamil Nadu has insisted on exercising its unfettered rights to control the dam and its waters, based on the 1886 lease agreement. Kerala has pointed out the unfairness in the 1886 lease agreement and has challenged its validity. However, safety concerns posed by the 119-year-old dam to the safety of the people of Kerala in the event of a dam collapse, have been the focus of disputes from 2009 onwards. Kerala's proposal for decommissioning the dam and constructing a new one has been challenged by Tamil Nadu.

3. Need to implement progressive Acts: CIC

In news:

- **Strengthening of governance:** Chief Information Commissioner of India **Rajiv Mathur** called for immediate implementation of the **Whistleblowers' Protection Act, the Lokpal Act and the Lokayukta Act**, which would strengthen governance systems further.
- **Issue:** Although progressive legislations such as the Whistleblowers' Protection Act, the Lokpal Act and the Lokayukta Act have been enacted, the rules for these Acts have not been framed. As a result, neither the Union government nor States are executing these Acts.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. 'Free movement' along Myanmar border

In news:

- The Centre is putting in measures to facilitate free movement of Indian and Myanmarese citizens within 16 km along the Myanmar border.
- The Home Ministry held consultations with four States — Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh — on the Free Movement Regime (FMR).
- In June, the Ministry had constituted a committee to examine various methods to curb the misuse of free movement along the Myanmar border, a friendly country, with which it shares unfenced borders and unhindered movement of people across the border.

Parallel discussion:

- Parallel discussion involving the Ministry of External Affairs and their counterparts in Myanmar was on to allow Indian nationals going and staying in Myanmar under the bilateral agreement for up to 72 hours.
- **Present situation:** While India allows Myanmarese nationals to stay for 72 hours without visa, Myanmar allows stay only up to 24 hours.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Inflation at wholesale level slows to 2.6% in September

Key Stats:

- According to official data released, Inflation at the wholesale level has slowed down to 2.6% in September
- It shows a slowdown in the increase in food prices
- Growth in the Wholesale Price Index slowed in September from 3.24% in August
- According to the President of the FICCI, overall, inflation remains within RBI's target area(4% to 6%) and this is

an encouraging sign

- Inflation in the primary articles category slowed to 0.15% in September from 2.66% in August
 - The decrease in vegetable prices was the chief driver of the decline in primary food inflation to 2.0% from 5.8%
 - According to the **Investment Information and Credit Rating Agency of India Limited (ICRA)** , initial data has placed the index for crude petroleum at 55.6 for September 2017, only 1% higher than in June 2017,
 - Despite the 17% increase in the average price of the Indian crude oil basket in rupee terms in the period

2. NIIIF gets first investor, Abu Dhabi fund brings in \$1 bn

In news:

- The Abu Dhabi Investment Authority became the first institutional investor in the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund's Master Fund , with an investment of \$1 billion.

Basic Information:

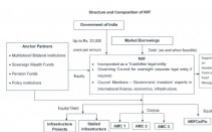
National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF)

- **National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF)** is a fund created by the Government of India for enhancing infrastructure financing in the country.
 - NIIF was proposed to be set up as a Trust, to raise debt to invest in the equity of infrastructure finance companies such as Indian Rail Finance Corporation (IRFC) and National Housing Bank (NHB). The idea is that these infrastructure finance companies can then leverage this extra equity, manifold.
 - In that sense, NIIF is a banker of the banker of the banker.NIIF is envisaged as a fund of funds with the ability to make direct investments as required. As a fund of fund it may invest in other SEBI registered funds

Objective: The objective of NIIF would be to maximize economic impact mainly through infrastructure development in commercially viable projects, both greenfield and brownfield, including stalled projects. It could also consider other nationally important projects, for example, in manufacturing, if commercially viable.

Functions of NIIF

- Fund raising through suitable instruments including off-shore credit enhanced bonds, and attracting anchor investors to participate as partners in NIIF;
 - Servicing of the investors of NIIF.
 - Considering and approving candidate companies/institutions/ projects (including state entities) for investments and periodic monitoring of investments.
 - Investing in the corpus created by Asset Management Companies (AMCs) for investing in private equity.
 - Preparing a shelf of infrastructure projects and providing advisory services.



3. Universal Basic Income is not feasible for India

IMF opinion on UBI:

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has added its bit to the ongoing debate on Universal Basic Income in India.
 - The latest Fiscal Monitor of the IMF, in its analysis, used fiscal space equivalent to the cost of the public distribution system and energy subsidies in 2011-12
 - It showed that this can finance an annual Universal Basic Income of Rs 2,600 per person
 - It is equivalent to about 20% of that year's median per capita consumption, with the estimated cost at about 3% of the gross domestic product (GDP)

Is UBI idea new to India?

- The basic idea of Universal Basic Income is not new for India
 - The erstwhile Planning Commission had worked on it in the early 1960s

Why UBI debate started?

- Economists in the Union finance ministry published an excellent chapter on Universal Basic Income in the 2016-17 Economic Survey
- A large proportion of the population in India still lives below the poverty line and a number of government programmes providing subsidies and support to the poor are marred by inefficiencies
- There are leakages in the system, and often, people who actually need government support are left out
- Universal Basic Income is seen by many as an alternative to the existing system of subsidies, which is often associated with systemic inefficiencies

Reason's India not opting for Universal Basic Income:

Fiscal capacity

- The Economic Survey calculations showed that a 75% universality rate with an annual Universal Basic Income of Rs 7,620 per year at 2016-17 prices will cost about 5% of the GDP
- Economists calculated that an inflation-indexed Universal Basic Income of Rs 10,000 at 2014-15 prices—about three-quarters of that year's poverty line—will cost about 10% of the GDP
- Thinking: It is often assumed that resources can be raised by rationalizing subsidies and capturing a part of the revenue foregone on account of various tax exemptions, including in the personal income tax
- Reality: The revenue forgone in most cases is optical and the result of poor design. In any case, a part of it is now out of the system with the implementation of the goods and services tax
- Further, politically, it will be extremely difficult to roll back subsidies in order to create fiscal space for Universal Basic Income

Can create distortions in the labour market

- A steady, permanent and guaranteed income without any work is likely to affect labour mobility and participation
- It is also likely to increase wages, as has been witnessed after the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
- Problem: Higher wages without a commensurate increase in productivity will affect India's competitiveness
- This could also have longer-term implications in terms of higher inflation and lower growth

Nature of Indian politics

- It is highly likely that political parties, in order to improve their chances in elections, would want to increase the amount of Universal Basic Income
- Or try to bring back subsidies in some form or the other, which will have fiscal implications
- India still has to prove that it can actually run balanced budgets for an extended period
- The political class always has this temptation to declare premature victories and give away fiscal gains

Need of the hour:

- India needs rationalization of subsidies, better targeting and operational efficiency
- It needs to move to cash transfers at an accelerated pace with the use of Jan-Dhan, Aadhaar and mobile
- This will help reduce costs and spare resources for capital spending to augment growth
- As history has shown, the best way to pull people out of poverty is sustained higher growth

4. Time for auto industry to go all electric

Context

- Electric Vehicles (EVs) and how government is planning to achieve its targets related to EVs.

Key Points:

- The government has been working to effect a radical shift in India's energy production and consumption patterns to reduce dependence on fossil fuels
- According to last year's National Electricity Plan (NEP3) forecast, India will achieve(ahead of schedule), the target of renewable energy being 40% of total power production by 2030
- The target was declared at the Paris Climate Change Conference in 2015

NITI Aayog's report on mobility transformation

- The government intends that all vehicles sold in India by 2030 should be electric
- A recently released NITI Aayog report on mobility transformation outlines a feasible and phased approach to achieve this goal
- It presents the government's vision of a shared, electric and connected mobility paradigm where mobility is a service based on an electric vehicle (EV) fleet, enabled by the convergence of
 - (1) Low-cost technologies,
 - (2) Smart designs,
 - (3) Business model innovation and supportive policies
- The Central government is calling global tenders for the first 10,000 electric cars, of which a pilot phase of 500 cars has already been awarded to Tata Motors Ltd and Mahindra & Mahindra
- Among the states, the Karnataka government has taken the lead in formulating India's first comprehensive EV policy
- The policy will support a complete ecosystem from manufacturing to deployment of charging stations

Why EVs are not popular in India?

- Due to range anxiety, high capital cost and long charging time, despite the obvious benefits of very low running costs and zero emission

Government's plan for Public Transport

- Coming to public transport, despite a sharp increase in private vehicle ownership over the last decade, India still relies heavily on public transport
- The government plans to make public transport more economical and environment-friendly by promoting electric buses
- However, the current generation of electric buses with traditional battery technology are prohibitively expensive at four to five times the cost of a diesel bus

How to counter challenges related to EVs?

- One way is “Battery swapping”
- To help bring down the capital cost of electric buses, experts are recommending two things among the various solutions being looked at
 - (1) reducing the battery size and
 - (2) adopting “swappable” battery technology,
- It will help in bringing down the upfront capital cost while reducing the operational cost and charging time
- The Indian auto industry is actively working in this direction as it helps state public transport agencies to induct electric bus fleets without incurring too much additional expenditure

Benefits of connected vehicles

- The government's agenda also focuses on developing an ecosystem to support the EV industry
- It will enable various stakeholders to stay connected, enabling a high-functioning ,EV-driven public transport system
- For example, an electric bus heading for the last stop can signal EV taxis in the area about how many passengers it will be offloading
- This ensures optimum onward journey options for the disembarking passengers
- Or EVs can communicate with refuelling stations about battery requirements, so there is never a danger of getting stranded
- These connected vehicles are also a necessary step towards the inevitable progression to autonomous vehicles

The Way Forward

- The auto industry has been growing at a steady pace and India is now becoming an export hub for small and medium-sized cars
- This leaves the auto industry well-placed to go all out on electric
- This is an opportune time for the auto industry to embrace the government's EV push and collaborate with technology and mobility solution providers to capitalize on this opportunity
- It will hugely benefit the nation, economically and environmentally

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Simply put: Now confirmed, mergers of neutron stars are factories of heavy chemical elements

In news:

- European Southern Observatory (ESO) has announced the first direct, visual identification of the source of a gravitational wave
- Detected by the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) on August 17
- This is the first time that such an event has been seen, rather than detected, and the output of numerous telescopes, terrestrial and in orbit, compared to identify a single source
- Radiations were detected in optical/near-infrared wavelengths as the counterpart of a gravitational wave source

Nobel Prize for LIGO scientists

On October 3, LIGO founders Rainer Weiss, Barry C Barish and Kip S Thorne were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics for detecting gravitational waves in 2015, generated by the collision of two black holes

What led to this finding?

- In August this year LIGO, together with the Virgo observatory in Italy, detected waves from the cataclysmic merger of two neutron stars, designated GW170817
- Soon after, the Fermi space telescope detected a burst of gamma rays from the same region of space, which is a signature of massive stars in collision
- The ESO then organized the astrophysical equivalent of a manhunt, marshaling its own resources and those of allied organizations
- Its Vista, VST and La Silla telescopes in Chile, along with the US DECam telescope, located the source of light near the galaxy NGC 4993 in the constellation Hydra
- The signal was picked up in Hawaii and over the following weeks, about 70 observatories watched the event unfold when they were on the dark side of the earth
- The Hubble Space Telescope tracked it, too

What do the observations tell?

- The observations place the electromagnetic source at 130 light years away, which matches with the distance to GW170817
- It confirms that when neutron stars collide into a kilonova — a body 1,000 times brighter than the average Nova — it produces a gamma-ray burst and gravitational waves
- This enormous exercise has joined the dots between various forms of imaging events and objects in deep space
- Also, ESO's experiment has established a much more important principle — that it is now possible to correlate the findings of instruments looking into the sky in different spectra

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. India in elite group with stealth ship

In news:

- India is rapidly marching towards indigenisation and the



- commissioning of the **third Kamorta class Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) stealth corvette- INS Kiltan**, is a classic example of that.
- **Uniqueness:** This ship is unique, as about 81% is built indigenously and is the first built by India that has a superstructure made up of **carbon fibre composite material**. This makes it a stealth corvette and makes India one among the few nations that have this technology or this class of ships.
- **Built by:** Garden Reach Ship Builders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata.

Key features:

- The carbon composite material gives it an extra stealth edge and also lowers the top weight and maintenance cost.
- The installed propulsion and auxiliary systems provides very low radiated underwater noise feature, required for anti-submarine warfare.
- The enhanced stealth features include ‘X’ form of Hull, full beam superstructure, inclined ship sides and use of Infra Red Signature Suppression (IRSS).

Nothing here for Today!!!

World Monuments Fund (WMF)

- World Monuments Fund (WMF) is a private, international, non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of historic architecture and cultural heritage sites around the world through fieldwork, advocacy, grant making, education, and training.
- Founded in 1965, WMF is headquartered in New York, and has offices and affiliates around the world, including Cambodia, France, Peru, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. In addition to hands-on management, the affiliates identify, develop, and manage projects, negotiate local partnerships, and attract local support to complement funds provided by donors.
- Every two years WMF publishes the World Monuments Watch (formerly the World Monuments Watch List of 100 Most Endangered Sites). Since the first list was compiled in 1996, this program has drawn international attention to cultural heritage sites around the world threatened by neglect, vandalism, armed conflict, commercial development, natural disasters, and climate change. Through the World Monuments Watch, WMF fosters community support for the protection of endangered sites, and attracts technical and financial support for the sites.

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. “Independence of the judiciary and courts alone would ensure rule of law”. Analyze.

GS Paper IV

1. Explain how ethics contribute to social and human well-being.

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Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. [More check-posts to come up on Bangladesh border](#)

In news:

- The Home Ministry will move a Cabinet note to construct seven **integrated check-posts (ICPs) along the Bangladesh border** to give a fillip to trade and business with the neighbouring country.
- In all, 13 such check-posts have been planned, seven of them along the Bangladesh border.
- **Key Fact:** The project was envisaged in 2007. A separate body — **the Land Port Authority of India (LPAI)** — was constituted in 2011 to boost trade via the land border points.
- Eventually, 19 ICPs are expected to come up along the Bangladesh border. Besides the seven in West Bengal, three will be in Assam, two in Meghalaya and seven in Tripura.
- An ICP has several facilities such as passenger terminal building, currency exchange counter, Internet hubs, cargo process building, cargo inspection sheds, warehouse, cold storage, quarantine laboratory, clearing agents, banks, vehicle scanners, isolation bay, parking and cafeteria.
- ICPs help put in place a system to secure the country's borders against hostile elements. It also facilitates trade

and commerce and boosts revenue.

2. Rohingya crisis worse than Syria's, says UN

- William Lacy Swing, Director-General of the UN's International Organisation for Migration (IOM), said: The Rohingya refugee crisis is worse than the exodus from Syria.
- The Rohingya exodus from southwest Myanmar to southeast Bangladesh is man-made and needs a political solution.
- He said the international community should treat the refugee influx as "a top priority" so that the problem was resolved quickly and refugees were able to go back to their country.

3. U.S. wants to deprive Iran of Indian energy market: Tehran's envoy to New Delhi

In news:

- Iranian Ambassador said that U.S. was trying to ensure that India reduced oil imports from his country
- It is working to deprive Tehran of the Indian energy market
- This is after the U.S. announcement of a tougher line on Iran, even imposition of possible new sanctions

Key Points:

- India has cut its oil imports from Iran by approximately 20% in 2017, though its global imports have risen by 5.4%
- The Petroleum Ministry says India has been trying to "diversify" its imports so as to get more competitive rates
- One major development is India's decision to import its first shipment of crude oil from the U.S., giving rise to speculation that New Delhi's new policy will come at the cost of imports from Iran

Effect on India-Iran relations

- He said that U.S. President Donald Trump's policy shift would not affect the India-Iran relationship
- Development of the Chabahar port project will remain on track

Other projects

- The **India-Afghanistan-Iran trilateral agreement** for **Chabahar** should be ratified by the Iranian parliament in the next few months
- India committed about \$1.6 billion to build the **Chabahar-Zahedan** railway line, which will facilitate trade to Afghanistan along with Chabahar port

4. U.S.-backed forces wrest Raqqa from Islamic State

In news:

- S.-backed forces took full control of Raqqa from the Islamic State group
- It was done after defeating the last jihadist holdouts in the de facto Syrian capital of their now-shattered 'caliphate'

Raqqa:

Raqqa, the most important urban center for Daesh after Mosul, has long been considered the terrorist organization's capital by the U.S.-led international coalition forces

5. The right balance

Context:

- Relations between India and the SCO.

Speculations:

- India's relations with Pakistan and China have entered a difficult phase has also generated apprehensions in India about the forum creating new pressures on Jammu and Kashmir

SCO's objective and India's expectations:

- Countering extremism, terrorism and separatism is a major objective of the SCO
- Sceptics would say the apparent convergence between what the SCO does and India wants may be somewhat deceptive
- They would insist that the difficulties encountered by the recent Indian bid to isolate Pakistan in various international forums should caution India against expecting too much on this front at the SCO

What India should do?

- India must persist in the belief that change is inevitable and purposeful diplomacy can allow India to probe for new opportunities for regional security cooperation
- The recent kidnapping and killing of two Chinese nationals in Pakistan underlines the prospect that Beijing can't forever remain untouched by the terror nurtured by Pakistan

Belt and road initiative issues:

- Differences between China's President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi could not be masked
- If Xi argued that the SCO could become a major vehicle for its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative, Modi articulated India's reservations, especially the impact of the project on India's sovereignty in Kashmir

Effective steps by the Indian PM

- The PM appears to have found the right balance between articulating India's concerns and underlining India's promise to strengthen inner Asian regionalism
- He outlined a realistic approach towards the SCO that combined a strong emphasis on countering terrorism and a readiness to explore win-win solutions for expanding connectivity

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Centre taking steps to formalise gold trade

Context :

- The Centre is taking steps for greater formalization of the gold trade with an eye on the future.
- In accordance with these steps, the country unveiled its first commodity options trading in the gold on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).
- The gold option contract, with gold (1 kg) futures as underlying, expiring on November 28, 2017 and January 29, 2018 were made available for trading yesterday.
- As an introductory measure, no transaction fee is being charged on this product till December.
- This marks an important evolution in the trading of the yellow metal itself.
- Options trading hedge all risks for those dealing in gold.
- Given that Indians were big buyers of gold there are expectations that the new product would be extremely successful and with appropriate policy measures it will help formalize the gold trade.

Benefits to the consumers:

- They are in consonance with the business environment for the future, the more it formalises, the better it is for consumers, jewellers and traders.
- The European-styled gold options are hedger-friendly and physically settled, which means on exercise at expiration, the options position develops into corresponding underlying MCX one kilogram gold futures position at the strike price of the exercised options.
- By hedging risk of rise in gold prices using 'Gold Call Options Contract,' a jeweller would not only be protected against price rise, but also would benefit from fall in gold prices.
- Similarly by hedging risk of fall in gold prices using a 'Gold Put Options Contract', a jeweller would not only be protected against price fall, but would benefit from rise in gold prices.
- Gold is the first product for options trading that SEBI had permitted after modern commodity derivatives trading started 14 years ago.
- The Finance Ministry had set up a committee for suggesting measures to transform India's gold market.

SEBI and the integration of commodity markets

- There has been a very conscious effort by the government and SEBI to develop and integrate commodity markets

in a phased manner.

- The introduction of options gives a strong impetus towards systematic development and transformation of commodity derivatives market in India, ushering in a new era in price risk management in response to stakeholder expectations.
- To further strengthen the market, a panel had been constituted in NITI Aayog to integrate spot and derivative market.
- The gold option is as an extremely low-cost product.

Options Trading in other commodities

- As per the SEBI rule, options trade is allowed in a commodity which has certain volumes in futures trade.
- Around 7-8 commodities like cotton, CPO, crude, silver, zinc and copper are there which also qualifies and after 3-6 months a decision will be taken to introduce options trading in them.

2. **Retrench India's farm economy to sustain it**

Context:

- In 2007-08, Madhya Pradesh government announced a bonus of Rs 150 above the minimum support price (MSP) per quintal of wheat
- Predictably, a large segment of farmers in the state shifted to the crop
- The bonus was stopped in 2014
- Farmers who had shifted production were not pleased
- It fed into the resentment that would eventually erupt in widespread farmer agitations in the state this year

Incentives for agriculture

- The Indian state has often played the same role in the agricultural sector
- Its policies have created artificial incentives that are unsustainable, an inefficient drain on public funds, or both

Scheme by MP government

- The **Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana** will replace government procurement with compensatory payments
- This will be when market prices are below the MSP
- It is being implemented as a pilot scheme for eight crops

Hope from the scheme

- The hope is that this will sidestep the implementation shortcomings of the procurement system
- These extend from the lack of government storage facilities and supply chain logistics
- Also, the fact that despite the government declaring MSPs for 25 crops, it largely procures only rice and wheat
- It will be less distortionary, freeing up space for the market to set rates

Reality check

- The knowledge that the government will make up the shortfall will incentivize traders to set rates well below the MSP
- The scheme has a two-month window, which means that the rush to sell in that period will also push prices down

Need for government intervention

- The agricultural sector is one of the handful where inelastic demand for the products, the deleterious public effects of supply shocks and inherent risks for suppliers mandate a government role

Agricultural reforms: What is needed?

Truly transformative agricultural reforms will require work on three levels

The first level is mandi system

- With the 2003 and 2017 versions of the model Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act, governments have attempted to liberalize this system, providing for private markets and integrated state markets

- This was a step towards a national market facilitated by the National Agriculture Market (eNAM)
- The problem with this is that it still operates within the mandi system
- Solution: Government needs to get out of the business altogether—and that is only possible with a switch from the public distribution system to direct benefit transfers

The second level of reforms should be aimed at inputs

- The Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana aims to extend irrigation cover to all forms and maximize water-use efficiency over a period of five years
- In a water-stressed yet groundwater-dependent country like India, this is only possible with comprehensive rural electrification, allowing for techniques such as drip irrigation
- The other major reform needed here is access to formal credit
- The current dependence on informal credit leaves farmers beholden to middlemen and traders who are often the credit suppliers, thus undercutting the former's bargaining power

The third level of reforms should be reduction in number of people participating in Agriculture

- As per the last Agriculture Census, the average farm holding in India is a minuscule 1.15 hectares
- Their number has been on the rise since the 1970s and is expected to touch 91% by 2030
- There is no feasible way to make such a fragmented agricultural economy workable
- For a sustainably healthy agricultural economy, the number of people participating in it must be drastically reduced
- Measures such as enabling large-scale contract farming and corporate farming will help here—but the only genuine solution is job creation in non-agricultural sectors

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Sawfish more threatened than tigers, say scientists

Key Points:

- The sawfish, included in **Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972** enacted to save them from exploitation, have been sighted off the Indian coast less than 10 times in over a decade and they appear to be more threatened than tigers and elephants.
- A statement issued by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute said the sawfish may be the most endangered fish species in India.

Only five species

- There are only five species of the sawfish ever identified — dwarf sawfish, knifetooth sawfish, smalltooth sawfish, largetooth sawfish and green sawfish.
- Sawfish are elasmobranchs, meaning their skeleton is made of cartilage. They are closely related to sharks and have shark-shaped bodies and, hence, are also called flat sharks.

Category: MISCELLANEOUS

1. IISc & IIT Bombay among world's top 200 for engineering

In news:

- **The Times Higher Education subject-wise rankings:** The Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bangalore and IIT Bombay are among the world's top 200 institutions for engineering and computer science
- IISc occupied the 89th spot, IIT Bombay was pegged in the 126- 150 category, globally
- IITs in Delhi, Kanpur and Kharagpur were placed in the 201-250 band, in that order, and IIT Madras and IIT Roorkee in the 251 – 300 category

Ranking:

- The rankings, scored 500 institutions worldwide, as opposed to 100 last year
- These rankings are on performance parameters such as
 - (1) Industry income,
 - (2) International outlook,

- (3) Teaching and research
- It highlights the educational institutions that are leading in electrical, mechanical, civil, chemical and general engineering courses

Top rankers

- Overall, Stanford University is number one, followed by California institute of Technology, Oxford University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Cambridge University
- While India has a total of eleven institutions in the rankings, China has 35 institutions, which is more than any other country in Asia

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. The effective management of land and water resources will drastically reduce the human miseries. Explain.

GS Paper IV

1. Did the Government of India Act, 1935 lay down a federal constitution? Discuss.

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Category: POLITY

1. Carry oxygen cylinders on all trains: SC to Railways

In news:

- The Supreme Court has made it mandatory for the railways to keep oxygen cylinders in all trains to ensure that the life-saving gas could be provided to travellers suffering from respiratory problems in case of emergency.
- The Supreme Court also directed the railways to take assistance of doctors from AIIMS to explore ways to put in place a system in moving trains to provide medical treatment to travellers if they take ill.
- The court passed the order on an appeal filed by the Centre challenging the Rajasthan high court's order directing the railways to provide a team of one medical officer, one nurse and one attendant in all long-

distance trains to cater to the medical needs of passengers.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. [In bluntest ever remarks, US talks up India to counter China](#)

Highlights of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson address to the Washington think-tank:

HIGHLIGHTS

- China, while rising alongside India, has done so less responsibly, at times undermining the international, rules-based order, Tillerson said.
- China's provocative actions in South China Sea directly challenge the international law and norms that the US and India both stand for, he said.

- United States and India are “two bookends of stability on either side of the globe,”
- Trump administration bluntly proposed that Washington and New Delhi work together in the Indo-Pacific region to counter the disruptive force that China has become.
- Trump’s America sought to woo New Delhi to counter Beijing’s growing assertiveness in the region and beyond.
- “The United States seeks constructive relations with China. But we won’t shrink from China’s challenges to the rules-based order, or where China subverts the sovereignty of neighboring countries, and disadvantages the US and our friends”.
- In this period of uncertainty and angst, India needs a reliable partner on the world stage. U.S wants to make clear: with our shared values and vision for global stability, peace and prosperity, the United States is that partner.”
- China’s provocative actions in the South China Sea directly challenge the international law and norms that the United States and India both stand for.
- **Beacons of the Indo-Pacific:**
- The world’s center of gravity is shifting to the heart of the Indo-Pacific. The United States and India – with our shared goals of peace, security, freedom of navigation, and a free and open architecture – must serve as the eastern and western beacons of the Indo-Pacific.
- We need to collaborate with India to ensure that the Indo-Pacific is increasingly a place of peace, stability, and growing prosperity – so that it does not become a region of disorder, conflict and predatory economics.
- **Warning to China’s client:**
- Tillerson also issued a blunt warning to China’s client state Pakistan, saying “states that use terror as an instrument of policy will only see their international reputation and standing diminish” and “it is the obligation, not choice, of every civilized nation to combat the scourge of terrorism” and the United States and India are leading that regional effort together.

2. [India seeks flexible LNG deals, IEA says it's happening](#)

In news:

- **International Energy Agency notes :** Liquid gas contracts are shedding their rigidity and becoming more flexible as regional systems gradually merge into an interlinked global market in an oversupplied situation.
- **Key points:**
- Flexible contract regime will help optimise cost of supplies and allow countries such as India to rapidly develop a gas-driven economy as part of strategy to reduce carbon footprint.
- Till now liquid gas trade has been confined to regional contracts with rigid terms, often biased in favour of the seller and offering little leeway for buyers. This is changing in the wake of fall in gas prices in

tune with drop in oil prices and rise of the US **fracking industry**.

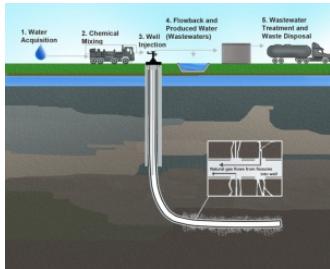
- The renegotiations have made gas more affordable for India and will result in huge savings to the economy.

Basic Information:

International Energy Agency

- The **International Energy Agency (IEA)** is a Paris-based autonomous intergovernmental organization established in the framework of the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** in 1974 in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis.
- The IEA was initially dedicated to responding to physical disruptions in the supply of oil, as well as serving as an information source on statistics about the international oil market and other energy sectors.
- **The IEA acts as a policy adviser to its member states, but also works with non-member countries, especially China, India, and Russia.**
- The Agency's mandate has broadened to focus on the "3Es" of effectual energy policy: energy security, economic development, and environmental protection. The latter has focused on mitigating climate change. The IEA has a broad role in promoting alternate energy sources (including renewable energy), rational energy policies, and multinational energy technology co-operation.

What is 'Fracking'



- Fracking is a term used for hydraulic fracturing, which is the process of creating fractures in rocks and rock formations by injecting specialized fluid into cracks to force them to open further. The larger fissures allow more oil and gas to flow out of the formations and into the wellbore, from where they can be easily extracted.
- Fracking has resulted in many oil and gas wells attaining a state of economic viability due to the level of extraction that can be reached, and has allowed drilling firms access to previously difficult-to-reach sources of oil and gas.

3. India, European Union restart talks on civil nuclear agreement

In news:

- India and European Union have restarted negotiations on a civil nuclear agreement that was virtually stalled after being signed way back in 2009.
- European Union experts from Brussels held discussions with officials from department of atomic energy last week in Mumbai.
- **Moving beyond their stalled free trade agreement:** With Europol beginning a working relationship with India's NIA to tackle terrorism and track terror groups that might target either side, there is a greater emphasis on security, counter-terrorism and foreign policy between India and EU, indicating the two are moving beyond their stalled free trade agreement.
- **India-EU civil nuclear agreement:** focuses on nuclear safety and “non-power technologies in the areas of water, health care and medicine, environment, etc.”
- **New interest in cooperating on maritime security:** EU has asked India to escort World Food Program (WFP) ships through the Indian Ocean as they travel to African states with food aid, recognising India's capacities and intentions of being a security provider in the Indian Ocean.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. 7 deadly pesticides world has banned used in India

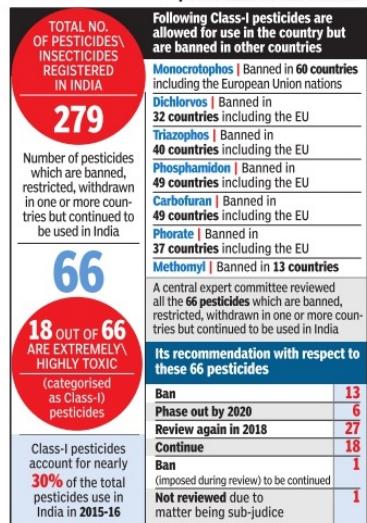
Context:

- Recent deaths of farmers due to pesticide poisoning in Yavatmal and other districts of Maharashtra have opened up a debate over the rationale of using all such pesticides in India which are either banned or restricted elsewhere in the world due to their high toxicity

In News:



BANNED ABROAD, AVAILABLE HERE



- The Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment has come out with a list of seven extremely or highly hazardous pesticides which continue to be used in India despite these being banned in many countries.
- The think tank questioned the central committee, headed by IARI scientist Anupam Verma, which had in 2015 reviewed the use of these pesticides but preferred not to ban them immediately.
- Seven hazardous pesticides are on the list of **18 Class-I** (classified as extremely/highly hazardous), which accounted for nearly 30% of the total pesticide use in India in 2015-16.
- Though the central committee had reviewed use of 66 pesticides and recommended ban on 13 of them from 2018 and phasing out of six others by 2020, allowing the use of others in the list till the next review is something which bothers researchers and farm experts.
- Referring to international code of conduct on pesticide management, the CSE flagged a provision which says all pesticides whose handling and application require the use of personal protective equipment that is uncomfortable, expensive or not readily available should be avoided, especially in the case of small-scale users and farm workers in hot climates.
- The think-tank said that the pesticides such as **Monocrotophos, Oxydemetonmethyl, Acephate and Profenophos** were believed to be responsible for the deaths and illness in Maharashtra.
- Pesticides like **Monocrotophos and Oxydemeton-methyl** are considered Class-I pesticides by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Class-I pesticides can be banned in several countries.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Outstanding credit grows 14.6% in 1 year; non-food loans fall to 13.6%

Context :

- Outstanding credit loans, bonds and commercial papers (CPs) grew 14.6 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) between September 30, 2016 and September 30, 2017.
- But in the same period last year the growth had been lower at 13.8 per cent.

The growth in other areas:

- The growth in non-food credit in the fortnight to September 29, 2017, was slightly lower at 13.6 per cent y-o-y.
- The net corporate bonds outstanding as at the end of September, was also up by 18 per cent as per latest data released by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi).
- Data from RBI showed that the net outstanding on commercial papers stood has also increased from last year.

Why is there growth in outstanding credit ?

- With banks increasingly participating in the bond markets, the share of bonds in total credit is rising.
- Higher-rated corporates have in recent days chosen to borrow from the markets rather than from banks as the former route has turned out to be cheaper.
- Bankers and sector analysts have in recent days made a case for measuring credit growth in terms of outstandings on loans as well as bonds as better-rated corporates are borrowing increasingly from the money markets.
- Between June 2016 and June 2017, around Rs 40,000 crore had moved from the bank's loan book to the markets.
- A large portion of it about 70 per cent of it is in the CPs, or commercial papers. These commercial papers swing between the loan book and the markets, depending on the price, availability, etc.

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. ‘Govts slept over alert on illegal cotton seeds’

Context :

- US giant Monsanto, which sells genetically modified seeds in India, had informed the Centre about the illegal sale and cultivation of **herbicide tolerant** (HT) variety cotton in 2008.
- Centre failed to take any actions to prevent the same.

In news:

- In a letter dated 2008, Monsanto had said that HT cotton was being “grown without the statutory approval of GEAC. The farmers were being offered cotton seeds with HT trait at a premium without valid documents and safety assessment which may impact the produce”.

• Key Fact:

- Currently, HT cotton is grown in about 8.5 lakh hectares in four major cotton-growing states of the country – Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. HT cotton packets did a business of Rs 472 crore this season.
- Today, desperate farmers, looking for lower input costs, are willing to pay Rs 1200-1,500 per packet for HT seeds, when the price for Bt cotton at Rs 800 per packet.

2. Fiji to sell world’s first climate-change ‘green’ bonds

In news :

- Fiji will issue a **\$50 million “green” bond** to help combat the effects of global climate change, the first

developing country to do so.

- **Usability of the fund raised:**

- The bond will be the first to earmark the cash raised to address the issue, according to the World Bank.
- The country will also use some of the proceeds to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions.

- **Key Fact:**

- The Pacific Island nation is seen as particularly vulnerable to climate change, with some of its 300 low-lying islands susceptible to rising seas.
- Poland and France have also issued sovereign green bonds to raise funds for renewable power, subsidize energy-efficient buildings, tree planting and other environmental projects.
- The global “green” bond market is expected to reach \$134.9 billion in 2017, according to the World Bank.

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G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Examine the functioning of Judicial Review in the Indian Political system.

GS Paper IV

1. You are a young, aspiring and sincere employee in a Government office working as an assistant, to the director of your department. Since you've joined recently, you need to learn and progress. Luckily your superior is very kind and ready to train you for your job. He is a very intelligent and well-informed person having knowledge of various departments. In short, you respect your boss and are looking forward to learn a lot from him.

Since you've good tuning with the boss, he started depending on you. One day due to ill health he invited you at his place for finishing some urgent work. You reached his house and you heard shouting noises before you could ring the bell. You waited for a while. After entering, boss greeted you and explained the work. But you were constantly disturbed by the crying of a woman. At last, you inquired with the boss but his answer did not satisfy you. Next day, you were compelled to inquire further in the office and found out that his behavior is very bad at home with his wife. He also beat up his wife.

His wife is not well educated and is a simple woman in comparison to her husband. You see that though your boss is a nice person in the office, he is engaged in domestic violence at home. In such a situation, you are left with the following options. Analyze each option with its consequences.

- I. Just ignore thinking about it because it is their personal matter.
- II. Report the case to the appropriate authority.
- III. Your own innovative approach towards the situation. (250 words)

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Category: POLITY

1. Kerala HC on 'love jihad': Bust institutions indulging in forcible religious conversion or re-conversion

Main observation by Kerala High Court: The court, while condemning any kind of violence against couples of inter-faith marriages, said, "This is a free democratic country and once a person becomes a major, he or she can marry whoever he/she likes."

Key points:

- The Kerala High Court ordered the state police to bust any institution that indulges in forcible religious conversion or re-conversion of an individual.
- The court additionally said inter-religious marriages must be encouraged and that love cannot be bound by religion.

- “We caution that every case of inter-religious marriage shall not be portrayed on a religious canvass and create fissures in the communal harmony otherwise existing in the God’s own country – Kerala,” .

What is the case all about?

- The High Court bench was hearing a habeas corpus petition filed by Anees Hameed, a Muslim man from Kannur, who had alleged that his wife Sruthi, a Hindu, was forcibly confined and tortured at a yoga centre near Kochi.
- Sruthi had openly testified in court that the people who ran the yoga centre tried to force her to abandon her marriage to Anees, whom she had met while studying at a college in Kannur.
- The couple had fallen in love and got married against the wishes of the girl’s parents.
- The court allowed the couple to decide their future course of action without interference from their parents.

2. Punjab approves hike in OBC income limit

In news:

- Punjab government has approved an increase in the gross annual income limit for the creamy layer of the Other Backward Classes and Backward Classes from ₹6 lakh to 8 lakh.
- The decision is in line with the Central government’s directive to ensure greater social justice and inclusion of members of the Other Backward Classes and Backward Classes in the matter of reservation.
- The Union Cabinet had, in August this year, decided to raise the income limit from ₹6 lakh to ₹8 lakh per annum for determining the creamy layer among the Other Backward Classes.
- **Fourth revision:** This was the fourth revision of the creamy layer, which was fixed at ₹1 lakh in 1993 and subsequently hiked to ₹5 lakh in 2004, ₹4.5 lakh in 2008 and ₹6 lakh in 2013.
- The move is reported to be aimed at ensuring more equitable distribution of reservation benefits among the OBCs.

3. Do all women have a right to enter Sabarimala?

Context:

- The Supreme Court of India has repeatedly struck down discriminatory religious practices, the latest of which is the triple talaq (in Shayara Bano v. Union of India, 2017)
- Reference of the Sabarimala entry row to a five-member Constitution Bench is in itself a radical judicial move

Violation of rights in Sabarimala temple issue

- Preventing women’s entry to the Sabarimala temple with an irrational and obsolete notion of “purity” clearly offends the equality clauses in the Constitution
- It denotes a patriarchal and partisan approach
- The entry prohibition takes away the woman’s right against discrimination guaranteed under Article 15(1) of the Constitution
- It curtails her religious freedom assured by Article 25(1)
- Prohibition of women’s entry to the shrine solely on the basis of womanhood and the biological features associated with womanhood is derogatory to women, which Article 51A(e) aims to renounce
- The classification based on age is, in essence, an act of discrimination based on sex

How did the age bar start at Sabarimala temple?

- The practice rests on a fragile rule and an equally fragile judgment of the Kerala High Court (S. Mahendran v. The Secretary, Travancore Devaswom Board, 1991)
- There is no unanimity on whether the Sabarimala temple bar is ‘age-old’

Rules for facilitating temple entry and contradictory clause

- The very purpose of the Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship (Authorisation of Entry) Act, 1965 is to ensure entry of all Hindus to temples without being discriminatory
- Rule 3(b), which instigates obstruction to women’s entry on the ground of menstruation, apparently runs counter to the very object of the parent enactment and is therefore untenable

View of the framers of constitution, judiciary, and international jurists

- R. Ambedkar famously said that public temples, like public roads and schools, are places meant for public access

and so the question of entry is, essentially, a question of equality

- The managerial rights of religious authorities under Article 26(b) of the Constitution cannot override the individual woman's religious freedom guaranteed under Article 25(1)
- The former is intended to safeguard, not annihilate, the latter
- Liberty is tested at the individual level, for individuals alone can constitute the public in a republic
- In S.R. Bommai (1994), the Supreme Court said that "secularism operates as a bridge" for the country to move on from "tradition to modernity."
- As American jurist Ronald Dworkin opined, political morality is to be brought into the heart of constitutional law

Not just about individual freedom

- It is erroneous to conceive of the issue only as one involving a fissure between individual freedom and gender justice on the one hand and religious practice on the other
- It also reflects a conflict among believers themselves
- It is essential to prevent monopolisation of religious rights by a few under the guise of management of religious institutions
- Article 25(2)(b) enables the state "(to provide) for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of the Hindus."

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. US firms approach USTR against India's medical price control measures

Context:

- Recent reports indicate that the lowering of prices on medical devices which are only one component of overall procedure costs are not being passed along to patients.

Contentions of American Companies:

- American companies producing medical devices and health information systems have approached the US Trade Representative against India's move to implement price controls on coronary stents and knee replacement implants that they say denying them equitable market access.
- In a petition, the Advanced Medical Technology Association (AdvaMed) requested the US Trade Representative (USTR) to suspend or withdraw India's benefits under Generalised System of Preferences (GSP).
- They are deeply concerned about recently implemented price controls on coronary stents and knee replacement implants in India that have slashed prices by as much as 85 per cent and 70 per cent, respectively, followed by signals that price caps for additional life-saving and life-improving medical devices may be forthcoming.
- The intention of the American companies was not for India to lose the benefits of GSP, but rather to advance engagement and meaningful discussions on restoring market access for medtech in India while keeping patients' interests at the center of all discussions.

Impact of price control by India on various medical devices

- Recent reports indicate that the lowering of prices on medical devices which are only one component of overall procedure costs are not being passed along to patients, which needs to be corrected.
- Price controls may also block innovations and limit patient access to the best available care.
- The failure to implement a mutually acceptable alternative could deter global organisations from making their latest products available to India's health care providers and patients, make Indian innovators less competitive in global markets, negatively impact future investment in India, and ultimately harm patients.

What India needed?

- India's focus on controlling prices of high-quality medical devices, without any attempt to address the larger picture and correct inefficiencies
- A stable and predictable market environment is key to driving investments in R&D, manufacturing, and other services to grow the medical technology industry in India, and meet the current and future needs of all of India's people.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. MPC minutes spotlight risks to inflation; signal RBI may stay on ‘hold’

MPC Meeting:

- A majority of the members of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) monetary policy committee flagged an increase in inflation risks.
- The central bank held its key policy interest rate at 6%.
- It also observed that a deceleration in retail inflation had been temporary as headline inflation.

Headline inflation close to 4%:

- It is important to recognise near and medium-term risks to the inflation outlook
- There is a need to be vigilant on account of uncertainties on the external and fiscal fronts; this calls for a cautious approach.

The inflation outlook for the coming months

- It is time to be in readiness to raise the policy rate to suppress the underlying drivers of inflation if they strengthen further
- CPI inflation was likely to moderate to about 3% in October.
- But this would be driven by food prices, while core inflation was likely to stay above 4% amid rising risks of fiscal slippage.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Air quality nosedives in spite of a quieter Deepavali

Context:

- This year's Deepavali was the quietest in recent history, but the low-key celebrations across the country didn't stop pollution levels from spiking sharply.

Key Facts:

- In Chennai pollution levels inched up to that of Delhi, a city where smog and pollution touch toxic highs during this season.
- Other cities in the south, such as Bengaluru and Hyderabad, also witnessed a sharp rise in air pollution.
- The **Air Quality Index (AQI)**, a six-rung classification scale that rates air quality from 'good' to 'severe', downgraded air quality in Chennai from 'satisfactory' on to 'poor' and 'very poor' in the days leading up to Deepavali.
- The primary pollutant in both cities was **PM 2.5**, or particles that are smaller than **5 microns** and linked to respiratory illnesses.
- **Reasons:** Experts suggest that the weather conditions, which slowed the speed of winds in the Bay of Bengal, resulted in the high levels of pollutants enveloping Chennai.

Basic Information:

'The National Air Quality Index' (AQI):

- 'One Number- One Colour-One Description' for the common man to judge the air quality within his vicinity.
- The formulation of the index was a continuation of the initiatives under Swachh Bharat Mission envisioned by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri NarendraModi.
- There are six AQI categories, namely Good, Satisfactory, Moderately polluted, Poor, Very Poor, and Severe. The proposed AQI will consider eight pollutants (PM10, PM2.5, NO₂, SO₂, CO, O₃, NH₃, and Pb) for which short-term (up to 24-hourly averaging period) National Ambient Air Quality Standards are prescribed.
- Based on the measured ambient concentrations, corresponding standards and likely health impact, a sub-index is calculated for each of these pollutants. The worst sub-index reflects overall AQI. Associated likely health impacts for different AQI categories and pollutants have been also been suggested, with primary inputs from the medical expert members of the group. The AQI values and corresponding ambient concentrations (health breakpoints) as

AQI Category, Pollutants and Health Breakpoints								
AQI Category	PM ₁₀ 24 hr	PM _{2.5} 24 hr	NO _x 24 hr	O ₃ 8 hr	CO 8 hr	SO ₂ 24 hr	NH ₃ 24 hr	Pb 24 hr
Good (0-50)	0.50	0.20	0.40	0.00	0.1.5	0.00	0.000	0.0.5
Satisfactory (51-100)	51-100	51-40	41-80	51-100	1.1-2.0	41-80	201-400	0.5-1.0
Moderately polluted (101-200)	101-250	63-99	83-130	101-168	2.1-3.0	83-130	401-800	1.1-2.0
Poor (201-300)	201-350	91-120	181	169-209	3.0-3.7	301-800	801-1200	2.3-3.9
Very poor (301-400)	301-450	121-150	281	209-249	3.7-5.4	801-1200	1200+	3.3-5.7
Severe (401-500)	401-500	200	400	249+	5.4+	1200+	1200+	5.7+

well as associated likely health impacts for the identified eight pollutants are as follows:

2. New species of large gecko discovered

Key Fact:

- New Lizard in Eastern Ghats
- A team of scientists' has found Geckos(a new species) from the Eastern Ghats
- The Kanger valley rock gecko Hemidactylus kangerensis is the newest addition to India's lizard species
- According to a paper published in the taxonomic journal Comptes Rendus Biologies, researchers of the National Centre for Biological Sciences has discovered the gecko from Chhattisgarh's Kanger Ghati National Park
- According to the researchers, the discovery highlights the need for dedicated surveys across the Eastern Ghats, where biodiversity has not been quantified too well

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. India eyes military expansion; Sitharaman to spend Diwali with soldiers in Andaman tri-service command

Key points:

- **India's plan of Military expansion**
- India is working on expanding the military effectiveness of its outpost at the juncture of Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea
- This includes creation of military infrastructure for greater naval presence in the islands which dominates the strategically important Malacca Strait

Possible reasons behind these steps

- The military focus is on countering the increasing Chinese presence in the region, which has been a cause of concern
- Chinese submarines have been sighted in the area and have also been docked at bases in Pakistan and Sri Lanka

Extension of airstrip at INAS Baaz

- INAS Baaz is the naval aviation base on Campbell Bay on the Great Nicobar island
- It is currently being extended from 3,050 feet to 10,000 feet
- The extension is scheduled to be completed by 2021
- It will allow the Navy to place its modern P-8I surveillance aircraft at INAS Baaz
- The Navy currently operates its eight P-8I aircraft(procured from the US in 2013) from INS Rajali in Tamil Nadu
- If the P-8I aircraft shift to Campbell Bay, our surveillance reach will get multiplied by thousand miles

Importance of INS BAAZ:

- Baaz gives us that flexibility which will cover South China Sea
- Moreover, Baaz is adjacent to Malacca straits, an area of immense strategic interest to us

Other developments

- The Navy also plans to commission its second Floating Dry Dock Navy (FDDN)
- It will allow more naval ships to be maintained and serviced in the islands
- The Navy is also in the process of constructing three forward operating bases (FOBs) in the islands — at Diglipur, Kamorta and at Campbell Bay
- It will allow its Khukri class corvettes to be distributed across various locations in the archipelago

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. “Conventional wisdom suggests that economic reforms succeeding liberalization policy of government in early 1990s should have reduced gender discrimination—but that hasn’t really been the case”. Discuss?

GS Paper II

1. “Codifying checks and balances in respective police Acts will bring assurance against illegal orders by the political establishment to the police”. Discuss.

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INTERNAL SECURITY

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2. [Tri-service command](#)

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Category: POLITY

1. Young lawyers make a plea for audible justice

Context:

- Justice should not only be done, but also seen to be done.
- A group of young lawyers and law students believes it should also be heard. And heard clearly.
- **Whistle for Public Interest (WHIP)**, a group of practising lawyers and law students who use the Right to Information Act of 2005 to promote transparency and accountability, said court proceedings are hardly audible for lawyers, litigants and even the media present in the courtrooms as judges do not switch on the microphones kept before them.

In news:

What the statute says?

- Under the “**open court**” system of administration of justice , the public should get reasonable access to courtrooms so that they could hear as well as watch the proceedings
- Section 153 B of the Civil Procedure Code and Section 327 of the Code of Criminal Procedure mandate “public access” to court proceedings.

WHIP request:

They want Supreme Court judges to use the microphones installed on their desks in courtrooms. Not using microphones has no “rationale” and amounts to “wastage of public money.”.

2. Govt. to boost rural employment

In news:

- The Rural Development Ministry is in the midst of examining proposals that promises to leapfrog job creation for the rural youth.

Out of the box suggestions:

- Migrant tracking system, low-cost accommodation for urban workers, and changing the word “labour” to “professional workers,”
- The Ministry’s flagship skill development programme — **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gramin Kaushal Yojana** — needs to “reinvent itself to reach the next level.”
- Link skill to entrepreneurship development and do not over-emphasize wage employment.
- Rural digital index on the same lines of smart city index.
- **Cluster approach:** Experts have suggested a cluster approach, where villages with **similar socio-economic conditions** should be clubbed and every village should have a gram vikas prerak (village development motivator), and call the “**bottom of the pyramid as the foundation of the pyramid** .”

3. Centre pushes for cash-free campuses

In news:

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development aims to make financial transactions completely digital in all higher education institutions.
- The higher education regulators — University Grants Commission (UGC) and All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) — are also being taken on board to help facilitate the transition.
- The move will bring within the digital ambit all such institutions — public and private — including Central and State universities, IITs, NITs, business schools, etc.
- Eventually, the Centre aims to fully digitise all campus processes — including admissions, assistance, assessments, result declaration, admission, etc. — with all these processes going on an integrated IT platform.

Vittiya Saksharta Abhiyan (VISAKA):

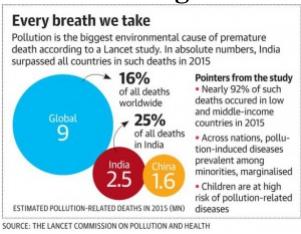
- The Centre had launched the **Vittiya Saksharta Abhiyan (VISAKA)**, meaning financial literacy campaign, for digital financial literacy early in 2017, enrolling lakhs of volunteers from among students to train families in their neighbourhood to conduct financial transactions digitally through the BHIM app.
- They were also asked to go to major markets, talk to shopkeepers, vendors and merchants’ associations to help shift to digital transactions.

4. Most pollution-linked deaths occur in India

Highlights of the report by The Lancet Commission on pollution and health:

- **Number of deaths in 2015:** 2.51 million, India had been ranked the No.1 in pollution related deaths.
- China recorded the second highest number of such deaths (1.8 million).
- India accounted for about 28 per cent of an estimated nine million pollution linked deaths worldwide in 2015.

- **Leading cause of deaths in 2015:** air pollution accounting for 6.5 million premature deaths.
- Among the world's 10 most populous countries, the largest increase in numbers of pollution related deaths were seen in **India and Bangladesh**. But the absolute number of air pollution deaths in Bangladesh was only 0.2



- million.
- The number of water pollution deaths in China was only about 34,000, compared to 0.64 million in the case of India.
 - In the case of air pollution, the number of deaths in India from ambient air pollution was 1.09 million, while deaths from household air pollution from solid fuels were 0.97 million.
 - In the case of water pollution, 0.5 million deaths were caused by unsafe water source, while unsafe sanitation caused 0.32 million deaths.
 - Several cities in India and China recorded average annual concentrations of particulate matter PM_{2.5} pollution of greater than 100 µg/m³, and more than 50% of global deaths due to ambient air pollution in 2015 occurred in India and China.

Pollution and diseases:

- Deaths from air pollution were a result of diseases such as heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).
- Pollution has been responsible for the most non-communicable disease deaths.
- Pollution is responsible for more deaths than a high-sodium diet (4.1 million), obesity (4.0 million), alcohol (2.3 million), road accidents (1.4 million), or child and maternal malnutrition (1.4 million).
- Pollution was also responsible for three times as many deaths as AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria combined.

Background information:

The Lancet Commission on pollution and health is a two-year project in which more than 40 international health and environmental authors were involved.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Spain moves to suspend Catalonia's autonomy

Context:

- Spain said it will move to seize some of the Catalan regional government's powers after its leader warned that he could declare independence, escalating the country's worst political crisis in decades.
- The central government in Madrid had given separatist leader Carles Puigdemont time until 10:00 am to say whether or not he was declaring a breakaway state in the semi-autonomous region following a chaotic referendum on October 1.
- Prime Minister of Spain had warned he would trigger Article 155 of Spain's Constitution a never before used measure allowing it to impose direct rule over the wealthy northeastern region unless Mr. Puigdemont backed down.

Impact of this decision:

- There are fears that such a move, allowing Madrid to potentially suspend Mr. Puigdemont's government and take over its police force, could spark unrest in a region where even Catalans who oppose independence cherish their autonomy highly.
- The separatist leader responded that Catalan lawmakers could vote to declare secession unilaterally if Madrid triggers Article 155.
- Article 155 a process that would take several days to restore legality in the region.
- The Catalonia crisis has prompted a series of huge street rallies, worried investors and added to the woes of a European Union already grappling with Brexit.
- Catalonia's 7.5 million residents are fiercely attached to their own language and culture but are divided on whether to break away from the rest of Spain.

- But according to the separatist leader his regional administration has a mandate to declare independence from what he says was a 90% “Yes” vote on October 1.
- But turnout was given as only 43%.

Many voters who oppose independence stayed away from a referendum that had been declared illegal by Spain’s Constitutional Court.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. U.S. starts anti-dumping probe into PTFE resin from India

In news:

- The U.S. has initiated anti-dumping duty investigations against import of **Polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) resin** from India and China.
- The probe is being started to determine whether imports of PTFE resin from China and India are being dumped in the U.S., and a countervailing duty investigation to determine whether producers of PTFE resin in India are receiving alleged unfair subsidies.
- ‘**Alleged margins**’: The PTFE is mostly used as a non-stick coating for utensils. The department has stated that the estimated dumping margins alleged by the petitioner range from 23.4%-408.9% for China and 15.8% to 128.1% for India.

Investigations:

- In the **anti-dumping investigations**, it said the department would determine whether imports of the resin from China and India were being dumped in the American market at less than fair value.
- In the countervailing investigation, it will determine whether Indian producers of PTFE resin are receiving unfair government subsidies.
- If the department establishes that the products are being dumped, they can impose duties on those imports.

Anti-dumping investigation:

- Countries initiate anti-dumping probes to determine if the domestic industry has been hurt by a surge in below-cost imports. As a counter-measure, they impose duties under the multilateral WTO regime.
- Anti-dumping measures are taken to ensure fair trade and provide a level-playing field to the domestic industry.
- They are not a measure to restrict imports or cause an unjustified increase in cost of products.

2. All major ports to get LDB services: official sources

Context:

- The **Logistics Data Bank’s (LDB)** services will soon be extended to all major ports in India.
- The **LDB project’s objective**: to ensure greater efficiency in the country’s logistics sector through the use of information technology.

In news:

- Discussions between the Government and the **Indian Ports Association (IPA)** in this regard have begun.
- The IPA is the apex body for India’s major ports under the shipping ministry’s supervisory control. Until now, the LDB project covered only the country’s western logistics corridor.
- As part of the LDB project, each container is attached to a **Radio Frequency Identification Tag (RFID) tag** and tracked through RFID readers. This, in turn, helps importers and exporters to track their goods in transit.

Background information:

- The LDB project was unveiled in July 2016 as an important ‘**ease of doing business’ initiative** to boost the country’s foreign trade and bring about greater transparency.
- It helps reduce the overall lead time of container movement, besides bringing down transaction costs that consignees and shippers incur.
- The project is implemented through a **Special Purpose Vehicle called Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Logistics Data Services Ltd. (DLDSL)** — jointly (50:50) owned by the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) Trust and Japanese IT services major NEC Corporation.

- The LDB project covers “the entire movement through rail or road till the Inland Container Depot and Container Freight Station.”
- The DLDSL so far provides “container tracking services to around 70% of the container traffic in India.”
- The services include providing users the ‘average delivery time’ as well as notifications through SMS and email.
- The LDB project also provides other services such as ‘congestion and bottleneck analysis’ as well as ‘performance bench-marking’ that aids the users to pinpoint supply chain inefficiencies, and in turn help improve the system.

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1. How do the Indian debates on Secularism differ from the debates in the West?

GS Paper II

1. Why does Constitution of India provide different forms of Oaths for the President, the Ministers, the legislators and the member of the judiciary? Discuss their significance.

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Category: POLITY

1. [Rajasthan to shield public servants from probes](#)

Context:

- The government in Rajasthan has **promulgated an ordinance** providing for prior sanction for investigation against public servants, judges and magistrates for acts done “**in discharge of official duties**”.
- Though the ordinance was promulgated last month and published in the official gazette, it came to light on Friday.

- The State government may initiate a move to convert it into an Act during the Assembly session beginning on October 23.

The Ordinance:

- The ordinance has virtually shielded public servants from police investigations
- It gone a step ahead by restraining the public and the media from disclosing the identity of government officials until the sanction to proceed with the probe is obtained.
- The sanctioning authority may take up to six months for taking a decision.
- While amending **Sections 156 and 190** of the Criminal Procedure Code, the ordinance lays down that if the sanctioning authority does not take a decision within six months, the prosecution sanction would be deemed to have been issued.
- Anyone found violating the restriction on printing, publishing or publicising the names, photographs and details of public servants, judges and magistrates for whom the sanction is yet to be granted, will be punished with two years' imprisonment and fine, according to Section 5 of the ordinance.

The issues with the ordinance:

- According to the opposition this ordinance will protect criminal and corrupt officials.
- It would create a cover for wrongdoing by government officials and encourage others to indulge in corruption.
- But the government has reiterated that the new provisions had been made to protect honest public servants acting in good faith.

2. PUCL demands repeal of ordinance on immunity to public servants

Context:

- Rajasthan has **promulgated an ordinance** providing for prior sanction for investigation against public servants, judges and magistrates for acts done “**in discharge of official duties**”

In news:

- The **People's Union for Civil Liberties** demanded repeal of a controversial ordinance which has made public servants immune against investigation and barred the media from disclosing their names until prior sanction is granted for their prosecution.
- The PUCL has also decided to challenge the ordinance in the Rajasthan High Court.

PUCL remarks on the ordinance passed:

- The ordinance is an attempt to silence the media and prevent the judiciary from exercising its function of setting the criminal law in motion.
- The amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code and Indian Penal Code brought through the ordinance went against the **Supreme Court's ruling in Lalita Kumari's case**, 2014. The judgment had dealt with both cognisable and non-cognisable offences committed by public servants. The apex court's Constitution Bench had held that an FIR has to be lodged and investigation initiated by the police officer on the complaint about a cognisable offence. In the cases of non-cognisable offences, the investigating officer is empowered to initiate a preliminary enquiry and seek the court's direction to obtain sanction for prosecution.
- The amendments, were superfluous and unnecessary as Section 197 of Cr.P.C. already

provides protection to public servants by making it mandatory for a court to take cognisance against them after getting the government's sanction. Instead of cognisance, the amendment refers to the word "investigate".

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Rex Tillerson to have big regional agenda during India visit

Context:

- Rex Tillerson visit to India.
- The Afghan-Pakistan situation and Indo-Pacific cooperation could eclipse bilateral concerns

In news:

Expected matters to be discussed:

- Regional issues could take precedence over bilateral ones
- Washington's new South Asia policy with respect to Pakistan and Afghanistan and prospects for more cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.
- The possibility of an India-Pakistan dialogue will be discussed
- Tillerson will also brief his Indian counterparts on the outcome of the **Quadrilateral Coordination Group** [U.S.-China-Afghanistan-Pakistan] meeting on talks with Taliban that took place in Oman on October 16
- **Pending bilateral issues to be discussed:** enhancing trade, the U.S.'s pitch to sell India UAV drones, F-16s and F-18s, and the outstanding decisions on the "foundational agreements" in defence.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. Hungry for publicity

Context:

- India ranks 100th out of 119 countries on the global hunger index – behind North Korea, Bangladesh, and Iraq but ahead of Pakistan
- The report ranked 119 countries in the developing world, nearly half of which have 'extremely alarming', 'alarming' or 'serious' hunger levels

Key Stats:

- Absolute poverty in India in 2011/12 came out to be around 12 percent, not 23 percent as officially reported (Tendulkar poverty line)
- The difference between 23 and 12 percent is the difference in measurement of consumption measured on a 30-day recall basis for food rather than the more accurate seven-day recall basis

IFPRI's Hunger Index

- IFPRI hunger index is not a hunger index at all
- It is an index about child mortality, and stunting, and wasting, and undernourishment of children

Addressing hunger:

- A definition of hunger is needed to evaluate policies to alleviate hunger
- The conventional approach is to measure hunger via calorie consumption
- However, the caloric equation (poverty means low consumption of calories) has long been given up as an indicator of hunger, or much else

Problem in India:

- Malnutrition affects stunting and weight and despite having considerably higher per capita income, India has the same IFPRI nutrition (reported as hunger) status as sub-Saharan Africa
- There is a genuine nutrition absorption problem in India
- The most likely cause of this is bad sanitation, a large component of which is open-defecation
- In the Indian environment, access to water and toilets, breastfeeding (to impart immunity in an unhealthy environment), access to sound health advice/treatment, the prevalence of vaccination and availability of vitamin supplements” are indicators of bad health, malnutrition etc.

Strategy to address the issue:

- In 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi started the drive to stop open defecation and said that we needed to do so from the ramparts of the Red Fort
- A few years from now, the large role played by toilet construction, and adoption, in increasing nutrition efficacy in India to East Asian levels will be visible

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Must link all bank accounts with Aadhaar: RBI

Context:

- The government had earlier this year made Aadhaar mandatory for opening bank accounts as well as for any financial transaction, including mutual fund investments.
- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, in Budget 2017, had mandated seeding of Aadhaar number with **Permanent Account Number (PAN)** to avoid individuals using multiple PANs to evade taxes.

In News:

- **RBI clarification:** Millions of bank account holders across the country will have to compulsorily link their accounts to their Aadhaar number by December 31, 2017 under the **Prevention of Money-laundering (Maintenance of Records) Second Amendment Rules, 2017** published in the Official Gazette on June 1, 2017.
- The union government has said it would extend until December 31 the deadline to furnish Aadhaar to avail benefits of social welfare schemes.
- **Petition before Supreme Court:** A petition before the court argues that the directive to link Aadhaar violates the fundamental right to privacy and equates citizens with money launderers.
- World Bank report says the dormancy rate in India is quite high, at 43 per cent.

Prevention of Money-laundering:

- The Prevention of Money Laundering (Maintenance of Records) Rules, 2005, mandated quoting of Aadhaar along with PAN or Form 60 by individuals, companies and partnership firms for all financial transactions of Rs 50,000 or above.

2. Govt permits banks to sell more small savings schemes

In news:

- In order to encourage savings, the government has allowed banks, including top three private sector lenders, to accept deposits under various small savings schemes like National Savings Certificate (NSC), recurring deposits and monthly income plan
- Until now, most of the small savings schemes were sold through post offices

Key Points:

- According to a recent government notification, banks can also sell National Savings Time Deposit Scheme 1981, National Savings (Monthly Income Account) Scheme 1987, National Savings Recurring Deposit Scheme 1981 and NSC VIII issue
- So far, these banks were allowed to receive subscription under Public Provident Fund, Kisan Vikas Patra-2014, Sukanya Samriddhi Account, Senior Citizen Savings Scheme-2004
- On the basis of the decision of the government, interest rates for small savings schemes are to be notified on a quarterly basis since April 1, 2016
- These schemes have a higher interest rate than that offered by banks on normal savings account
- Increased outlets for selling small savings scheme would result in higher mobilization under the scheme

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GS Paper I

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4. India's GVA growth may rise to 6.3 pc in Sep quarter: Nomura

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Category: POLITY

1. Ensure State panels for women are set up: SC

In news:

- The Supreme Court has asked the Centre if state commissions for women (SCW) actually exist.
- The top court raised the question as it dealt with the issue of precarious conditions faced by destitute widows living in Vrindavan and other places across the country.
- The court, which is hearing a matter pertaining to the condition of such widows, told the Centre that if SCWs did not exist in the States, then the State governments concerned should be asked to ensure setting up of such panels.
- **'No access to justice'**
- **Supreme Court observation:** the ostracised destitute widows belong to the "socially disadvantaged class" of society and were not treated with the dignity they deserve in the shelter homes in Vrindavan and elsewhere. It had equated them with socially underprivileged groups who have no real access to justice, are voiceless and needed to be empowered.

2. ‘Why exempt CBI from RTI Act?’

In news:

- A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court for an early hearing of a petition challenging a 2011 government notification, which includes the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on the list of “intelligence and security organisations” exempted from disclosing information to the public under the Right to Information Act.

The Petition

- According to the petition 2011 notification including the CBI in the Second Schedule of the Right to Information (RTI) Act of 2005 was arbitrary, especially when the organisation was only an investigating agency and not a security or intelligence organisation.
- It is alleged that it will scuttle the RTI appeal pending before the Chief Information Commissioner, in regard to the Bofors-Quattrocchi case in which order was passed by the Central Information Commission directing the CBI to provide the requisite papers to the petitioner.
- Also, by issuing the notification and placing the CBI in the Second Schedule, the government appears to be claiming absolute secrecy for the CBI without the sanction of the law.

The Impact of the 2011 Government notification

- Such an administrative decision has a profound impact on the citizens of India inasmuch as it restricts their fundamental right to information.
- By this notification the government could keep adding organisations to the Second Schedule, which do not meet the express criteria laid down in Section 24(2) of the RTI Act and ultimately render the RTI Act ineffective.

3. Unacceptable fetters: on the Rajasthan ordinance

Context:

- The recent Criminal Laws (Rajasthan Amendment) Ordinance, 2017.

Ordinance protecting public servants

- The Rajasthan ordinance making it a punishable offence to disclose the names of public servants facing allegations of corruption before the government grants formal sanction to prosecute them
- It is a grave threat to media freedom and the public’s right to know
- Section 228-B, the newly introduced (through the ordinance) Indian Penal Code offence that relates to acts done in the course of discharging official functions
- It prescribes a two-year prison term for disclosing the identity of the public servants concerned

Other issues related to the ordinance

- The Criminal Laws (Rajasthan Amendment) Ordinance, 2017 restricts judicial magistrates from ordering an investigation without prior sanction
- It may even paralyse an impending probe, as no investigating agency can approach a sanctioning authority without gathering any material
- It is an additional shield for public servants who already enjoy the protection of Section 197 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, and Section 19 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988
- The sections make prior sanction mandatory before a court can take cognizance of a case
- It may even paralyse an impending probe, as no investigating agency can approach a sanctioning

authority without gathering any material

Other sanctions by Union and State governments, protecting public servants

- The Union government, too, has a set of amendments to the Prevention of Corruption Act pending since 2013, including a proviso for prior sanction
- Provisions barring investigation or prosecution without prior sanction are also in force in Maharashtra

The Supreme Court verdicts:

- The SC verdict of May 2014 striking down a statutory provision for prior government clearance for a CBI probe against officials is very important
- The court had observed that such a provision destroys the objective of anti-corruption legislation, blocks the truth from surfacing, thwarts independent investigation and forewarns corrupt officers
- Anti-corruption legislation in India seems to be in a state of unacceptable flux

The way forward

- It is time the Centre enforced a strong body of legislation that punishes the corrupt, protects the honest, and ensures time-bound public services and whistle-blower safety

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Govt. may have to foot bill for rail safety fund

Context:

- The Ministry of Railways may ask the Finance Ministry to fund its share of the railway safety fund that is, **Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh (RRSK)** this year as the public utility is has an earnings shortfall of at least ₹10,000 crore in 2017-18.
- The actual income of the Indian Railways was 8.45% lower than the targeted earnings.
- Although the Railways' passenger and goods earnings had increased this year compared with the last year, its sundry earnings had declined sharply by during this period.
- Income from non-fare revenues, including land lease, advertising, PSU dividends and catering department, form part of the sundry earnings.

Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh- The Safety Fund

- Finance Minister had announced the setting up a special safety fund with a corpus of more than ₹1 lakh crore over a period of five years in Budget 2017-18.
- In the first six months of the current financial year, the Indian Railways had utilised a quarter of the safety fund.
- The Finance Ministry advised the Ministry of Railways to prioritise deploying RRSK funds on areas that reduce chances of human error and ensure training of safety staff.

Basic Information:

Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh

- It has been set up on the recommendations of a high-level safety review committee under Dr. Anil Kakodkar.
- The fund is utilised for track improvement, bridge rehabilitation, rolling stock replacement,

human resource development, improved inspection system, and safety work at level crossing, among other things.

- It is a non lapsable safety fund over a period of five years.
- The Finance Ministry would contribute Rs.15,000 crore annually towards the fund, the Ministry of Railways would fund the balance Rs.5,000 crore every year.

2. RBI to make LEI must for cos with over Rs 5 crore exposure

In news:

- The RBI is set to make Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) compulsory for companies having aggregate fund-based and non-fund based exposure over Rs 5 crore
- Banks will be required to capture this number in the Central Repository of Information on Large Credits (CRILC) database that captures details of loan above Rs 5 crore
- Past decisions of the RBI on LEI: RBI has made LEI mandatory for transactions in interest rate, forex and credit derivative market

Benefits of the LEI number

- It will enable banks to effectively monitor debt exposure of companies having businesses in multiple sectors and dealing with large number of banks and NBFCs
- It will make it easier for banks to detect frauds and willful defaulters and prevent ever-greening of loans
- The need for such a system was felt after the 2008 global financial crisis and global body, the Financial Stability Board, worked on the global structure of the LEI system
- It would also enable banks in preventing multiple loans to companies against the same collateral

Who can issue the LEI number?

- Firms can obtain their LEI code from Legal Entity Identifier India Ltd.(LEIL)
- The LEIL is a wholly owned subsidiary of Clearing Corporation India Ltd.
- LEIL is accredited by the Global Legal Entity Identifier Foundation (GLEIF) and recognised by RBI as issuer of LEI under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007
- Apart from the LEIL, any local operating unit accredited by GLEIF can issue LEI numbers.

Basic Information:

What is an LEI?

- The Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) is a global reference number that uniquely identifies every legal entity or structure that is party to a financial transaction, in any jurisdiction.
- It is a unique 20 digit alphanumeric code that is assigned to a legal entity.

Purpose:

- The global LEI system has been set up by regulatory authorities, including G20 and the Financial Stability Board, to address the global financial crisis.
- The LEI is designed to enable the identification and linking of parties to financial transactions in order to manage counter party risk.
- Its goal is to improve measuring and monitoring of systemic risk and support more cost-effective compliance with regulatory reporting requirements.

3. Sebi to tighten listing norms as part of crackdown on shell firms

Context:

- The Sebi is looking to tighten listing norms to prevent fly-by-night operators from getting listed on stock exchanges.
- These norms could be introduced as early as this month.
- The capital market regulator's move follows the government's ongoing crackdown on shell companies to curb black money.
- Earlier, Sebi had imposed a partial trading ban on 331 firms termed as shell firms by the ministry of corporate affairs.

SEBI Norms

- Sebi norms now specify that a company wishing to get listed needs to have a track record of generating profits and distributing dividends for at least three of the five years preceding the time it goes public, have a minimum net worth of Rs1 crore in each of the preceding three years and have net tangible assets of at least Rs3 crore in each of the three preceding years.
- A company cannot make a share allotment in a public issue if the number of prospective allottees is less than 1,000.
- A grading/rating system for initial public offerings have also been proposed so that investors have a basic idea of the quality of the company they are investing in.
- This rating can be given either by a credit rating agency or any external expert or by Sebi itself.

Why this move by SEBI ?

- Sebi wants to ensure that companies with stronger businesses and a potential to maintain profitability during the initial years of listing are allowed to go public.
- The plan is to increase the minimum net worth requirement, the proportion of assets held in tangible form, the number of years of profitability and the minimum number of public investors to whom shares are allotted.

Impact of this move

- It may prevent many small genuine businesses from getting listed and raising capital from the public to grow.
- However, it will definitely help to a large extent to ensure that only strong, mid-sized or larger companies are able to get listed.

Way forward

- There are more than 4,000 listed firms in the country. Of this, around 2,000 do not have enough liquidity and are suspected to be involved in dubious transactions or manipulations to show business only on paper.
- Firstly, action must be taken against companies that have defaulted and do not have enough liquidity.
- Sebi should not abruptly put unnecessary regulatory burdens on genuine businesses

4. India's GVA growth may rise to 6.3 pc in Sep quarter: Nomura

In news:

- The Indian economy is expected to see a rebound in the July-September quarter of this year
- GVA growth rate would be 6.3 percent, says a Nomura report

Recovery underway

- Nomura's proprietary indices suggest that growth bottomed out in the second quarter
- A recovery is underway in the third quarter, largely because consumption and investment indicators have improved in the third quarter
- Rural consumption indicators such as tractor and two-wheeler sales picked up sharply ahead of the festive season, despite weak monsoon, likely reflecting improving cash levels with remonetization
- Urban consumption indicators such as passenger vehicle sales and consumer credit also improved in the September quarter, relative to June quarter

Annual growth figures

- For this financial year, Nomura expects a GVA growth of 6.4 percent, slightly lower than the RBI's forecast of 6.7 percent
- This is partly because it expects the government to cut spending due to fiscal constraints

Stance on Monetary policy

- It expects rates to stay unchanged in the base case
- This is due to incremental growth momentum headed higher, core inflation above 4 percent and fiscal risks on the horizon

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

1. Article 164, provided for limiting the number of ministers in the state cabinet.
2. Article 164 was inserted in the Constitution based on the recommendation of the National Commission for Review of the Working of the Constitution headed by former Chief Justice of India, M.N. Venkatachaliah.

Choose the correct statements.

1. 1 only
2. 2 only
3. Both 1 and 2
4. Neither 1 nor 2

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Discuss impact of globalization on farming sector in India.

GS Paper IV

1. You are the Executive Director of an upcoming InfoTech Company which is making a name for itself in the market.
Mr. A, who is a star performer, is heading the marketing team. In a short period of one year, he has helped in doubling the revenues as well as creating a high brand equity for the Company so

much so that you are thinking of promoting him. However, you have been receiving information from many corners about his attitude towards the female colleagues; particularly his habit of making loose comments on women. In addition, he regularly sends indecent SMS's to all the team members including his female colleagues.

One day, late in the evening, Mrs. X, who is one of Mr. A's team members, comes to you visibly disturbed. She complains against the continued misconduct of Mr. A, who has been making undesirable advances towards her and has even tried to touch her inappropriately in his cabin. She tenders her resignation and leaves your office.

- a) What are the options available to you?
- b) Evaluate each of these options and choose the option you would adopt, giving reasons.

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Nothing here for Today!!!

Category: POLITY

1. U.P. plans to digitise medical college records

In news:

- The Uttar Pradesh government is planning to start an ‘**E-hospital**’ facility at State-run medical colleges.
- The six medical colleges of Kanpur, Jhansi, Agra, Meerut and Gorakhpur, and the Laxmipat Singhania Institute of Cardiology in Kanpur, have been picked for the implementation of the new facility under the first phase.
- **E-hospital facility to include:** Case histories of patients, and information related to hospital staff and stocks of medicines.
- Apart from E-hospitals, the government has also formed a **Medical Education Strategy Cell (MESC)**, the first of its kind in the State, to create a roadmap for phase-wise improvements in the medical education sector.

2. Centre eases norms for sewage plants

In news:

Setting the bar low		
The standards proposed in 2015 for upcoming sewage treatment plants have been relaxed in the final plan citing technological limitations		
Parameter	Proposed plan (Nov. 2015)	Final plan (Oct. 2017)
pH	6.5-9.0	6.5-9.0
Biochemical oxygen demand	10 mg/l	<20 or <30*
Total dissolved solids	20 mg/l	<50
Faecal coliform	<100	<1,000

- **New Plan: The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has relaxed standards for upcoming sewage treatment plants (STP), including those to come up on extremely polluted stretches of the Ganga.**

Earlier standards:

- **As per 2015-proposal the standard set for STP's was higher:** they would have to ensure that the biochemical oxygen demand (BoD) — a marker for organic pollutants — in the treated water had to be no more than 10 mg/litre.

New notification issued:

- A notification by the Union Environment Ministry this month has junked the 10 mg/litre target.
- It says that STPs coming up after June 2019 — except in major State capitals and metropolitan cities — need only conform to 30 mg/litre of BoD.
- These include proposed STPs to treat sewage in stretches of the river downstream of Haridwar, including Kanpur and Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh.
- New STPs in State capitals, however, have to cap BoD at 20 mg/litre.

Why such a move to ease the norms?

- The 10 mg criteria was impractical and required advanced technology that was too costly for most States.

Basic Information:

- **Biochemical oxygen demand**
- Biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), also called biological oxygen demand) is the amount of **dissolved oxygen** (DO) needed (i.e., demanded) by aerobic biological organisms to break down organic material present in a given water sample at certain temperature over a specific time period.
- The BOD value is most commonly expressed in milligrams of oxygen consumed per litre of sample during 5 days of incubation at 20 °C and is often used as a surrogate of the degree of organic pollution of water.
- BOD can be used as a gauge of the effectiveness of wastewater treatment plants.

Why is BOD important?

- Biochemical Oxygen Demand is an important water quality parameter because it provides an index to assess the effect discharged wastewater will have on the receiving environment.
- The higher the BOD value, the greater the amount of organic matter or “food” available for oxygen consuming bacteria.
- If the rate of DO consumption by bacteria exceeds the supply of DO from aquatic plants, algae photosynthesis or diffusing from air, unfavourable conditions occur.
- Depletion of DO causes stress on aquatic organisms, making the environment unsuitable for life. Further, dramatic depletion can lead to hypoxia or anoxic environments.
- BOD is also used extensively for wastewater treatment, as decomposition of organic waste by microorganisms is commonly used for treatment.

3. National anthem in movie halls: SC asks why do people have to wear patriotism on sleeve



Issue:

- JUSTICE D Y CHANDRAKUDI

- SC JUDGE

- SC JUDGE

- SC JUDGE

- SC JUDGE

- SC Judge Justice D Y Chandrachud was critical of last year's apex court order making it mandatory for movie halls to play the national anthem before the start of a film.
- Justice Chandrachud who was part of a three-judge bench which heard a petition filed by a film society seeking recall of its November 30 order making it mandatory for movie halls to play the anthem

Suggestion from the Chief Justice of India

- Chief Justice Misra said the court may modify its earlier order and replace the "shall" in it with "may"
- Appearing for the Centre, Attorney General too agreed with this
- But Venugopal opposed the recall of the entire order saying the singing of the anthem was a "unifying factor" in a country as diverse as India

4. HC orders penal action over manual scavenging

Context:

- The Madras High Court took serious note of a photograph published in The Hindu on October 3, of people involved in manual scavenging at Pondy Bazaar, and directed Additional Advocate General to ensure that those responsible were taken to task, and apprise the court of the action taken.

In news:

- The High Court Bench directed the State government to file a status report on steps taken by it so far for rehabilitation of people involved in manual scavenging in accordance with the provisions of the **Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act of 2013**.

Basic Information:

Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act of 2013

Key Provisions:

- The employment of manual scavengers, the manual cleaning of sewers and septic tanks without protective equipment, and the construction of insanitary latrines is prohibited.
- It provides for rehabilitation of manual scavengers and their alternative employment.
- Each local authority, cantonment board and railway authority is responsible for surveying insanitary latrines within its jurisdiction. They shall also construct a number of sanitary community latrines.
- Each occupier of insanitary latrines shall be responsible for converting or demolishing the latrine at his own cost if he fails to do so, the local authority shall convert the latrine and recover the cost from him.
- The implementing authorities shall be District Magistrate and the local authority.
- Offences under the act shall be cognizable and non-bailable, and may be tried summarily.

5. Centre tweaks groundwater extraction rules for industry

Context:

- Uniform regulatory framework on groundwater use across the country.

In news:

- **New proposal:** the Centre has come out with draft guidelines which stipulate existing and new industries, infrastructure and mining projects have to obtain a '**no-objection certificate' (NOC)** from district and state-level authorities for drawing groundwater.
- The draft guidelines exempt farmers from obtaining NOCs. It calls for medium and large farmers to adopt water conservation measures.

Conservation fee:

- The draft also proposes to levy a new water conservation fee based on quantum of groundwater extraction in lieu of existing provision of creating recharge mechanism, including construction of artificial recharge structures, by those undertaking projects.
- The proposed fee is based on water use quantity and groundwater capacity of particular area zone.

- The amount, therefore, varies from Rs 1 to Rs 6 per cubic metre.
- The funds raised through this new fee will be used by states for effective ground water management.

Present Scenario:

- At present, the **Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA)** has been granting NOC for withdrawal of water by industries, infrastructure, and mining projects.

Basic Information:

- **Central Ground Water Authority** has been constituted under Section 3 (3) of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 to regulate and control development and management of ground water resources in the country.

6. New policy on the cards to boost medical tourism

Context:

- India is considered a preferred destination for cardiology, orthopaedics, transplant and ophthalmology in curative care, it also enjoys high credibility in wellness and prevention and alternative medicine.

In news:

HIGHLIGHTS

- Medical tourism in India is projected to be a \$9 billion opportunity by 2020, currently the industry is pegged at \$3 billion.
- Globally, the medical tourism market is estimated at around \$40-60 billion.
- Indian govt has taken several steps to ease travel processes and promote medical tourism.

destination for

- The government plans to bring out a policy to promote India as a **key medical tourism**.
- The proposed policy aims to promote integrated treatment with **allopathy, ayurveda, yoga, unani, siddha and homoeopathy (AYUSH) streams**.
- The Union commerce ministry, along with ministries of tourism and health, has already launched a portal, **indiahealthcaretourism.com**, in three languages – Arabic, Russian and French— to provide comprehensive information to medical travellers.
- Medical tourism in India is projected to be a **\$9 billion** opportunity by 2020. Currently, medical tourism industry is pegged at \$3 billion. Globally, the medical tourism market is estimated at around \$40-60 billion.

Key Facts:

- India is emerging as one of the most credible destinations worldwide for curative treatment.
- With the given scale of healthcare infrastructure and projected growth, India can further strengthen its standing among the currently popular medical value tourism destinations such as Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and Mexico.
- A latest knowledge paper by FICCI and Quintiles IMS shows over **5,00,000 foreign patients seek treatment in India each year**.
- SAARC countries such as Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Maldives are the major sources of medical value travel, followed by African countries such as Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya.
- **Reasons:** Proximity, cultural connect and connectivity are the key reasons for inflow of patients to India from these regions.

Measures implemented to promote medical tourism:

- The process to issue medical visas has been made much more efficient, thus reducing the time taken in visa procurement.
- The scope of e-tourist visa has been expanded to include short- term medical treatment.
- Separate immigration counters and facilitation desks have also been set up at major Indian airports to boost the medical travel industry.

7. The gown and the Bench

Context:

- New permanent committee and guidelines for designating lawyers in the SC and HC as senior advocates

Guidelines issued by the Supreme Court:

- The SC has laid down guidelines for designating lawyers in the SC and HC as senior advocates
- Now, applications will be examined by a permanent committee known as the Committee for Designation of Senior Advocates
- The committee will publish the names of candidates on the respective courts' websites to ensure transparency
- Current system: Until now, the judges of the SC and HC had the sole discretion of according this status to advocates

Origin of collegium system: Political interference in the selection of judges in the third and fourth decades of independent India resulted in the collegium system where judges select judges

The Constitution (99th Amendment) Act, 2014 and the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act, 2014

- The opaque system and unsatisfactory selection, transfer, and elevation of judges to the SC caused disquiet and led to the passing of the acts
- The acts sought to give politicians and civil society a final say in the appointment of judges to the highest courts
- In 2015, a Constitution Bench of the SC declared these unconstitutional on the ground that the composition of the NJAC did not provide adequate representation to those from the judiciary
- It is in this context that one has to welcome the permanent committee

Composition of the permanent committee

It will consist of the:

- (1) Chief Justice of India,
- (2) Two senior-most judges of the Supreme Court/ High Courts,
- (3) The Attorney General of India/ the Advocate General of State, and
- (4) A member of the Bar to be nominated by the above four members

- The committee will have a permanent secretariat
- All applications for designation of senior advocate will be submitted to the secretariat
- The secretariat will compile all the relevant information with regard to the reputation, conduct, integrity, participation in pro-bono work, reported judgments in which the advocate has appeared, etc. of the candidates
- The committee will examine each candidate's case, interview the candidate, and make its assessment based on a point-based format

Concerns:

- There may be some reservation on the aspect of publishing names on the official website of the court and inviting suggestions as in the recent past
- There have been reports of motivated complaints and objections
- The secretariat should not be dragged into the jumble of investigating frivolous complaints or objections

The way forward

- This institutional mechanism and selection criteria seem suited to substitute the existing collegium system
- The executive and the legislature could also seriously consider introducing a new version of the NJAC which incorporates the salient features of this institutional mechanism
- The sooner the judiciary adopts such a mechanism for judges too, the better it is for the institution

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Not just strategic ties with Dhaka: Sushma

Context:

- External Affairs minister visit to Bangladesh.
- India is following a policy of neighbours first, and among the neighbours Bangladesh is foremost
- Bilateral relations between India and Bangladesh have gone beyond a strategic partnership

In news:

- External Affairs Minister highlights India's willingness to resolve all irritants in ties with Bangladesh with sincerity.
- Inaugurated 15 Indian-assisted development projects worth about \$8.7 million.
- The development projects, worth about \$8.7 million, include installation of **11 water treatment plants** in the southwestern coastline of Pirozpur, 36 **community clinics** and **reconstruction of Dhaka's historic Ramna Kali Temple** destroyed by invading Pakistani troops in the 1971 liberation war.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. Has hunger increased in India in recent years?

Context:

- India's ranking in Hunger Index

In news:

- India has ranked at the 100th position among 119 countries in its 2017 **Global Hunger Index (GHI) rankings**
- India has had a higher rank in previous versions of these rankings
- GHI is done by the Washington-based **International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)**

Inference:

- These findings have created an impression that the prevalence of hunger has increased in India in recent years
- A closer look at the numbers suggests that such conclusions are unwarranted
- To start with, the numbers reflect under-nutrition rather than hunger
- And even on that score, India's performance, has been improving over the past decade although its nutritional indicators still appear poor compared to those of its peers

Basis of GHI 2017 rankings

The 2017 GHI rankings are based on **the percentage of under-nourished population and three health indicators for children aged less than five years**

(1) Wasting (low weight for height)

(2) Stunting (low height for age) and

(3) Mortality

The GHI can take values between zero to hundred

Zero would indicate absence of any of the indicators, while hundred would indicate the worst possible situation

Reduction in India's GHI score

- The reduction in the GHI score is not surprising given what the statistics from the **Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)** and the **National Family and Health Survey (NFHS)**
- FAO data shows that prevalence of undernourishment has been decreasing in India over the past decade

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Law And Immunity

Context:

- An expert committee submitted an interim report on ‘How to police cyberspace’ to the Union Home Ministry .
- The report recommended amendments to the Indian Penal Code (IPC)

Key Points:

The recommended amendments to the Indian Penal Code (IPC) are noteworthy for two reasons

- One, they bring within the ambit of IPC (through amendments to Sections 153 and 505) any visual, audio, video, verbal or written communication, transmitted or retransmitted through any telecommunication service, device or computer
- They propose that any speech that is disparaging, offensive, indecent, abusive, hate, gravely threatening — and so interpreted — be criminalised

New avatar of Section 66A

- Section 66A of the IT Act may have been struck down in the Shreya Singhal case
- But this is its new, more astute avatar with a better-operating legal-ware
- It seeks to add yet another speech-control legislation to the plethora of existing penal codes
- These are Sections 295A, 124A, 153A, 505 that target acts ranging from malicious, to seditious, to disruptive of public order or morality, to violent, to plain mischievous

Governments’ dubious records on free speech

- There have been many cases where on one or the other pretext of public order, morality, derogatory speech, slander, and defamation was used to outlaw advocacy, mirth, caricature and the worst of all crimes, dissent
- It chooses to turn a deaf ear to posts, threats, and tweets that are deeply offensive, obscene, misogynistic and violently communal
- It chooses to remain unmoved by any civic or national imperative when the target of vicious trolling are journalists, film-makers, authors, writers, painters, common people who are just doing their jobs as citizens
- It even chooses to use an ordinance, as in Rajasthan, to outlaw the investigation into the conduct of judicial or political power

Freedom of speech

- It is nobody’s case that the freedom of speech is an absolute freedom
- But our constitutional commitment to free speech demands that it cannot be suppressed unless the situations created by allowing the freedom are pressing and the community interest is endangered
- This “danger” cannot be remote, hypothetical, or stemming from a poor appetite for mirth and scorn
- It should have, as the Supreme Court said in Shreya Singhal case, a proximate and direct nexus with the expression

Controlled speech adds to impunity of political power

- The trade-off between free speech and public order/morality has never hurt political dispensations
- The more controlled speech is, the greater has been the immunity and impunity of political power

Free speech is signal of healthy democracy

- We need to remember that free speech preconditions the realisation of many of our claims and entitlements
- Less of it translates into less democracy in general

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. Discuss the contributions of MaulanaAbulKalam Azad to pre- and post-independent India.

GS Paper II

1. “Free speech is signal of healthy democracy”. Comment

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ETHICS, INTEGRITY, AND APTITUDE

1. [Doctors' participation in executions violates medical ethics: IMA](#)

E. Prelims Fact

F. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Nothing here for Today!!!

Category: POLITY

1. SC bans use of pet coke in National Capital Region

In news:

- The Supreme Court directed the prohibition of industrial use of **pet coke and furnace oil in NCR regions** from November 1, 2017.
- The order follows the recommendation of the **Supreme Court-appointed Environment Pollution Control Authority (EPCA)** to ban the sale, distribution and use of furnace oil and pet coke in the NCR.
- Their use is already prohibited in Delhi.

Basic Information:

Petroleum coke:

- Petroleum coke is a by-product of the **oil refining process**. As refineries worldwide seek to operate more efficiently and extract more gasoline and other high value fuels from each barrel of crude oil, a solid carbon material known as petcoke is produced.

Harmful effects of use of furnace oil and pet coke

- Petroleum coke, also called pet coke or petcoke, is a solid carbon material that resembles coal; it is a product of oil refining
- Petroleum coke or Pet Coke is used by industries as fuel and contains various dangerous chemicals and heavy metals such as Chromium, Vanadium, etc
- Pet coke also has high Sulphur contents which on burning releases large amounts of Sulphates into the atmosphere
- These harmful chemicals cause air pollution and lead to various health risks

Environment Pollution (Prevention & Control) Authority (EPCA)

- It is a Central Government constituted committee for the National Capital Region in compliance with the Supreme Court order dated January 7, 199893
- It was constituted under subsection (1) and (3) of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 by MoEFCC
- This authority was constituted with sole objective of assisting SC for protecting and improving the quality of environment and preventing, controlling and abating air pollution in Delhi NCR

2. Procedure to remove ECs vague, says petition in SC

Context:

- Ambiguity on the removal procedure of the Election Commissioners might affect the functional independence of the EC.

In news:

- A petition was filed in the Supreme Court pointing out the vagueness in the procedure for removal of Election Commissioners, saying it affects the panel's autonomy.
- **Petition contention:**
- Proviso to Article 324 (5) of the Constitution safeguards the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) from arbitrary removal.
- The CEC can be removed from office only by the order of the President, just like a judge of the Supreme Court. However, the same constitutional provision is silent about the procedure for removal of the two Election Commissioners. It only provides that they cannot be removed from office except on the recommendation of the CEC.
- The petition, seeks to provide Election Commissioners with the same protection against arbitrary removal as the CEC.
- The plea also sought direction to the Centre to provide an independent secretariat to the Election Commission.

Key Fact:

- The CEC and the Election Commissioners have a tenure of six years, or up to the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier, and enjoy the same status and receive salary and perks as available to apex court judges.
- The CEC and the Election Commissioners enjoy the same decision-making powers.

3. Government plans to amend Hindu Adoptions Act to check adoption under personal law

Context:

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development is set to initiate amendments to **the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956 (HAMA)** so as to disallow any further adoptions under the personal law and instead bring it under the purview of the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**.

Why such a move?

- A study that showed that among the adoptable 48,000-odd children across child care institutions, only 2,000 are linked to adoption agencies under JJ Act, half of them are children with special needs.
- The Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) presently has a waitlist of more than 17,000 prospective parents.
- There cannot be two parallel systems as it makes it very difficult to check instances of child trafficking.
- The adoption provisions under HAMA need to be repealed so that adoptions happen only through JJ Act.

THE HINDU ADOPTIONS AND MAINTENANCE ACT, 1956 (HAMA)

- HAMA allows couples from Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Sikh communities to adopt children of parents belonging to these communities through a simple agreement.
- Adoptions under HAMA are between two individuals and it is very difficult to monitor cases of misuse, selling or trafficking of children.
- The JJ Act states that nothing in this Act shall apply to the adoption of children made under the provisions of the HAMA.
- Another recent study, by CARA, showed the extent of unregistered adoptions under HAMA.
- For Example-In Delhi less than 50 adoptions were officially registered in a year under HAMA, but 3,200 stamps were sold for the stated purpose of adoption where the deeds were simply notarised.

What is the problem?

- As per the adoption regulations of the JJ Act, all child-care institutions were to be registered with CARA within six months of the legislation coming into force in January 2016.
- Twenty months later, 10 per cent of the total institutions are both linked to adoption agencies and registered under the Act.
- The recent ministry study found that there are 9,400 child-care institutions across the country, over half of which are unregistered.
- The ministry will issue an ultimatum to all child-care institutions asking them to register under the JJ Act by December 31, else shut down operations.
- This is aligned with May 2017 order by a Supreme Court bench in a case regarding exploitation of children in a Tamil Nadu orphanage that held that all child-care institutions have to be registered under JJ Act by the year end.
- Many institutions hold on to the children as their funding agencies give them grants based on the number of children with them.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. New U.S. policy is a ‘game-changer’, says Ashraf Ghani

Context:

- Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's visit to India

In news:

- **Issues discussed:**
- Regional counter-terror efforts.
- Enhancing New Delhi's defence assistance to Kabul

- Both sides expressed an appreciation for the U.S.'s new South Asia policy.
- **Defense support:**
- Narendra Modi and Mr. Ghani spoke about India's security support as a strategic partner, including the training of Afghan personnel at Indian military academies.
- The Indian side agreed to extend further assistance depending on the needs of the Afghan defence and police forces

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's remarks on the new U.S strategy : New U.S. strategy is a “**game-changer**” aimed at ensuring a regional approach to fighting terrorism, including making Pakistan act against “**state sponsorship of sanctuaries** ” along the border with Afghanistan.

2. For the sake of the Indo-Pacific

Context:

- US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's visit to New Delhi this week
- Visit comes at an important moment for both countries and governments

India and USA

- The US-India relationship occupied high priority and visibility during the Obama administration
- The Donald Trump administration, too, has shown its commitment to the relationship, hosting Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Washington DC, earlier this year

Indo-Pacific region tensions:

- These range from mounting tensions with North Korea, the Rohingya crisis, and India's own standoff with China over Doklam to the lingering challenges in Afghanistan
- The US and India will increasingly need to work together on these
- The geo-economics of the Indo-Pacific are as important as the region's geopolitics
- There is a need to put options on the table in order to encourage private capital and cutting-edge technology to invest in the region

US-India commercial ties

- These have seen an uptick in recent years with PM Modi's market-oriented reforms
- India is currently the US' ninth largest goods trading partner
- India is also one of the fastest growing sources of foreign direct investment in the US, at nearly \$11 billion
- In a groundbreaking development illustrating growing economic convergence, the US delivered its first shipment of crude oil to the Paradip port a few weeks ago
- While two-way trade, and investment, between the two countries has increased significantly in the past five years, there is much room to expand the economic partnership

Challenges that American businesses encounter as they compete in the Indian market

- Market access barriers for medical devices,
- Tariff and non-tariff barriers on ICT products and agricultural goods,
- Lack of a strong intellectual property framework that benefits innovation and entrepreneurship

What India desires?

- On the US side, movement — even incremental — on a totalization agreement would be a welcome relief for temporary Indian workers and Indian companies from paying an annual social security payment

Shifts in the global economic order by 2050

- A recent report predicts dramatic shifts in the global economic order by 2050
- Six of the seven largest economies will be emerging economies led by China and India

Importance of economic linkage with the US

- India's position in a part of the world that contains the most important trade corridors necessitates deeper economic linkage with the US
- It is crucial for India to be able to develop its infrastructure, attract capital and cutting-edge technology, grow its economy and advance opportunities for its people
- India will only benefit by working with American businesses in order to attract private investment in a way that follows global standards for international development
- A fully realized US-India economic partnership is necessary to accomplish this

Category: ECONOMICS

1. ₹2.11 lakh crore for PSU banks to boost lending

In news:

- The Centre unveiled an ambitious plan to infuse ₹ 11 lakh crore capital over the next two years into public sector banks (PSBs).

Why?

- PSBs are saddled with high, **non-performing assets** and facing the prospect of having to take haircuts on loans stuck in insolvency proceedings.

Importance:

- The move is vital for **the slowing economy**, as **private investments** remain elusive in the face of the “**twin-balance sheet problem**” afflicting corporate India and public sector banks reflected in **slow bank credit growth**.

Experts' opinion regarding recapitalization:

- Recapitalization of banks is critical for revitalizing India's growth momentum at a time when the global economy is recovering.

Funding patterns:

- Budgetary provisions of ₹18,139 crore and the sale of recapitalization bonds worth ₹35 lakh crore.
- The balance would be raised by the banks themselves by diluting the government's equity share.

CRISIL's assessment of capital requirement:

- CRISIL's assessment of capital requirement for public sector banks to meet **Basel III** requirements is in the range of ₹4-1.7 lakh crore which will be met by the government's relief package

Basic Information:

Non Performing Assets:

NPA is a loan or an advance where...

- Interest and/ or installment of principal remain overdue for a period of more than 90 days in respect of a term loan.
- The account remains ‘out of order’ in respect of an Overdraft/Cash Credit (OD/CC).
- The bill remains overdue for a period of more than 90 days in the case of bills purchased and discounted.

- The installment of principal or interest thereon remains overdue for two crop seasons for short duration crops.
- The installment of principal or interest thereon remains overdue for one crop season for long duration crops.
- The amount of liquidity facility remains outstanding for more than 90 days, in respect of a securitisation transaction undertaken in terms of guidelines on securitisation dated February 1, 2006.
- In respect of derivative transactions, the overdue receivables representing positive mark-to-market value of a derivative contract, if these remain unpaid for a period of 90 days from the specified due date for payment.

Categories of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs)

- **Based upon the period to which a loan has remained as NPA, it is classified into 3 types:**
- Substandard Assets: An asset which remains as NPAs for less than or equal to 12 months.
- Doubtful Assets: An asset which remained in the above category for 12 months.
- Loss Assets: Asset where loss has been identified by the bank or the RBI, however, there may be some value remaining in it. Therefore loan has not been completely written off.

2. ₹5.35 lakh crore for new road project

In news:

- **BharatMala Pariyojana** : The Centre announced a **₹ 35 lakh crore** road construction package, called **BharatMala Pariyojana**
- The Union Cabinet approved **34,800 km** of roads nationwide, including in border and coastal areas.
- **BharatMala Pariyojana**: new umbrella programme aimed at optimizing the efficiency of movement of goods and people across the country
- The BharatMala project will include economic corridors (9,000 km), inter-corridor and feeder route (6,000 km), national corridors efficiency improvement (5,000 km), border roads and international connectivity (2,000 km), coastal roads and port connectivity (2,000 km) and greenfield expressways (800 km).
- Further, the remaining road projects of 10,000 km under the National Highways Development Project will form a part of the programme.
- The project will be executed through the **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL)**, Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways and State Public Works Department (PWDs).
- **Under the programme, roads will be built along the borders with Nepal and Bhutan**, bottlenecks on the existing Golden Quadrilateral highway network will be removed. Also, road connectivity to small industries will be ensured and manufacturing centres will be connected with national highways.
- **Funding pattern:** The BharatMala project will be funded in a three-pronged manner – market, private investment and asset recycling of NHAI's toll assets
- **Advantages:** With this program, India could get the much-needed cost competitiveness in the manufacturing sector by bringing down the logistics cost which is currently one of the highest amongst the emerging markets and way above that prevalent in developed economies.

3. India, U.S. to take up ‘high tariff’, visa curbs in Washington meet

In news:

India-U.S. Trade Policy Forum (TPF):

- Scheduled to be held in Washington DC on October 26
- **Agenda:** ways to iron out irritants including ‘visa curbs’ of the U.S. and India’s ‘high tariffs’ on manufactured products and ‘restrictions’ on e-commerce, as well as steps to expedite the conclusion of negotiations on a bilateral social security pact (or totalisation agreement).

Concerns of India and the U S:

- The TPF, which is the main forum to resolve bilateral trade and investment issues, is also likely to take up the ‘challenges’ that American innovative industries face due to India’s ‘weak’ Intellectual Property Rights regime.
- It would also discuss the ‘non-tariff barriers’ of the U.S. that are adversely impacting India’s agriculture, pharmaceuticals and other industrial exports.

Why is USIBC and US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) important?

Industry bodies including USIBC and USISPF are working with the governments of both the countries on mechanisms to ensure greater engagement at the State-level, instead of focusing entirely on the Central/Federal-level discussions

Category: ETHICS, INTEGRITY, AND APTITUDE

1. Doctors' participation in executions violates medical ethics: IMA

- **Resolution adopted by World Medical Association's (WMA), during its general assembly in Chicago, U.S.**: “it is unethical for physicians to participate in capital punishment, in any way, or during any step of the execution process, including its planning and the instruction and/or training of persons to perform executions.”
- In India, doctors are required to monitor vital signs during hanging and look for signs of life and then pronounce death.
- The national body of over three lakh doctors, Indian Medical Association (IMA) has written to the Medical Council of India (MCI) requesting that a guideline be introduced, stating that physicians’ participation in execution is “**unethical**.”

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. Discuss the role of Women in the freedom struggle especially during the Gandhian Phase.

GS Paper III

1. “Success of ‘Make in India’ programme depends on the success of ‘Skill India’ programme and radical labour reforms.” Discuss with logical arguments.

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Category: POLITY

1. [Deadline for mandatory linking of Aadhaar to govt schemes extended to March 31, 2018: Centre to SC](#)

Context:

- Aadhaar linking to avail benefits of government schemes.

Deadline extended:

- The deadline for mandatory linking of Aadhaar to avail benefits of government schemes has been postponed to March 31, 2018, the Centre informed the Supreme Court.

- Union government will take no coercive action against those who do not have Aadhaar and they will not be denied social welfare scheme benefits till March 31.

Key Fact:

- Aadhaar is a 12-digit biometric identity.
- **Coverage:** As many as 135 schemes (of 35 ministries) including the free cooking gas (LPG) to poor women, kerosene and fertilizer subsidy, targeted public distribution system (PDS) and MGNREGA will be covered by the extension.

Petitions pending before the Supreme Court:

- Challenges the constitutional validity of the decision to make linking of mobile numbers and bank accounts with Aadhaar a must.

Contention raised:

- The issue of mandatory linking of Aadhaar with bank accounts and mobile number is illegal.
- Non-linking of Aadhaar with bank account would make citizens liable for prosecution under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.
- Supreme Court is still hearing a petition to make the unique ID mandatory for availing of government benefits.

2. Going back to the basics

Highlights of a report by The World Bank: “Learning to Realize Education’s Promise”

- **Main theme:** focus on education
- **Important highlights:**

First: The report makes a moral case for education

- It does it with a rights-based approach
- And sub-sections titled ‘Education as freedom’; ‘Education improves individual freedoms’; ‘Education benefits all of society’

Second: Early childhood development

- One of the most important sections is not about education but about early childhood development
- The report discusses the far-reaching impact of poverty and chronic malnutrition on the physical and mental development of children
- The effects of stunting in the early years on physical, cognitive and socio-emotional development prevent children from learning well in later years
- The report points out that in low-income countries, stunting rates among children under-five are almost three times higher than in the richest
- Reduction of child stunting should be one of the major moral imperatives before nations today

Third: Role of technology

- It is good to see that technology is not regarded as a panacea in itself
- But as something that has the potential to enhance learning and that the teacher-learner relationship is at the centre of learning

Fourth: issue of public vs private schools

- The report acknowledges firmly that on the issue of public vs private schools, the results are still mixed
- There is no consistent evidence that private schools deliver better learning outcomes than public schools, or the opposite

Fifth: Shortage of teachers

- While school enrolments have increased significantly, massive teacher shortages persist

Sixth: Other related issues behind learning crisis

Beyond reading and arithmetic, any meaningful assessment of learning should also consider aspects such as comprehension, problem solving, critical thinking, and innovation

Beyond merely increasing assessment it is equally important to fund

- (1) The sector better;
- (2) improve teacher training;
- (3) support the continuing professional development of teachers;
- (4) And help teachers to help the poorest children to learn

The way forward

One would have liked to see greater focus on the continuing problems of access and equity, which are still the biggest problems in education. If there is one aspect of education which needs to be quantified and measured in order to make our education systems function better for all children, it is equity

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. U.S. makes H-1B visa renewals tougher

Context:

- Fresh changes in rules notified by the **S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)** for **renewal of non-immigrant visas** will severely impact **H-1B visa holders**.
- Increasing restrictions on H-1B visa programme remains a point of concern in the India-US relations, as a majority of these guest workers are Indians.

New rules notified:

- “The updated guidance instructs officers to apply the same level of scrutiny when reviewing nonimmigrant visa extension requests even where the petitioner, beneficiary and underlying facts are unchanged from a previously approved petition. While adjudicators may ultimately reach the same conclusion as in a prior decision, they are not compelled to do so as a default starting point as the burden of proof to establish eligibility for an immigration benefit always lies with the petitioner.”.

Key Points:

- Updated guidance provides clear direction to help advance policies that protect the interests of U.S. workers.
- The new rules are in line with the Donald Trump administration’s **Buy American, Hire American policy**.

Three types of status updates issued by USCIS:

- An H-1B worker goes to the USCIS for three types of changes to his status – amendment, transfer and renewal.
 - Amendments are sought when an H-1B employee changes the location within the same company;
 - transfer is sought when he moves from one company to another, and
 - A renewal is sought at the expiry of the visa, which is usually issued for three years at the beginning.
- Adjudicators must thoroughly review the petition and supporting evidence to determine eligibility for the benefit sought
- The previous policy — which has been in force for 13 years — instructed officers to give deference to the findings of a previously approved petition, as long as the key elements were unchanged and there was no evidence of a material error or fraud related to the prior determination.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. BharatMala will put more freight on roads

Positive impacts of the newly launched BharatMala initiative:

- The road construction programme, BharatMala, will connect 550 districts to national highways against 300 districts at present.
- Around 50 economic corridors to be constructed against the existing six.
- 70-80% total freight will move on national highways against 40% freight at present.
- BharatMala is a biggest infrastructure programme that will give priority to tribal and backward areas and border regions.

2. Capital infusion to be credit positive for public sector banks, says Moody's

Moody's remark on government's decision to recapitalize Public Sector Banks:

- The Centre's decision to infuse ₹11 lakh crore into public sector banks will be credit positive and the amount is large enough to comprehensively address their weak capital profile.

Key Fact:

- For the 11 rated public sector banks by Moody's, the rating agency estimates that their external capital requirements over the next two years would be about ₹70,000 crore to ₹95,000 crore.
- This estimate factors in the capital requirements for compliance with Basel-III norms and for conservative recognition and provisioning of their asset quality problems.

3. Centre to aid offshore e-commerce play

In news:

Indian e-commerce sector expansion:

- The Union government is working on a new policy to expand the footprint of the Indian e-commerce sector to tap potential markets outside the country, including **Africa and Southeast Asia**.
- This is part of efforts to achieve the target of making India a trillion-dollar digital economy in the next seven years.
- Currently, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology is looking at tapping markets such as **Southeast Asia, West Asia, SAARC countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, the Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and BRICS partners (Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa)**.
- **Key Fact:** The e-commerce economy is currently pegged at \$30 billion, and the government expects it to grow at \$150 billion by 2024-25.

New plans on the anvil:

- The government is also working on a strategy to make India a hub for data analytics, cloud computing and financial technology, besides encouraging development of Internet of Things, to push the digital economy.
- **Data Protection Act:** the Data Protection Act, the draft of which is likely to be ready by December 2017, will provide a policy framework on digital economy, including social media.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Come 2019, the kilogram will get a new measure

Key Points:

- **Reference used at present:** For 125 years, a salt-shaker-sized cylinder housed at the Bureau International des Poids et Mesures (BIPM), Paris and weighing exactly a kilogram served as the definition of the measure. The cylinder is made of 90% platinum and 10% iridium
- However, an international conference of heads of metrology institutes decided, on October 19 in Sevres, France, that the kilogram will no longer be pegged to this cylinder.

No more artefacts

- In essence, the units were freed from being defined on the basis of artefacts, as these being objects, were subject to wear and tear and sources of eventual error.
- The new artefacts, according to the International Committee for Weights and Measures, ought to derive from the constants of nature that are all interdependent.

- These include constants such as the Planck constant — the ratio of the electromagnetic radiation from a photon to its frequency — and the charge of an electron.
- Until this month, the kilogram was the only one among the units still pegged to a real object and now — after a formal vote in 2018 — the world is set to redefine the kilogram in terms of the Planck constant, the second and the metre.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. ‘Fish-lizard’ fossil from Kutch is a Jurassic first

New Discovery:

- A near-complete Jurassic-era fossil of an intriguing animal that looks like a mashup of a dolphin and lizard, and lived during the twilight of the dinosaurs, has been unearthed in **Kutch, Gujarat**.
- **Ichthyosaurs, or ‘fish- lizards’** in Greek, were large reptiles that lived at the same time as dinosaurs.
- **Key Fact:**
- While many ichthyosaur fossils have been found in **North America and Europe**, the fossil record in the Southern Hemisphere has mostly been limited to **South America and Australia**.
- It is the first Jurassic ichthyosaur found in India.
- Discovery throws light on the evolution and diversity of ichthyosaurs in the **Indo-Madagascan region** of the former Gondwanaland and India’s biological connectivity with other continents in the Jurassic.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Best defence technology offered

In news:

- S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said that his country would provide India the **best technologies** for its **military modernisation**, which include offers to supply **F-16 and F-18 fighter jets**.
- Statement issued by Mr. Tillerson: “The U.S. supports India’s emergence as a leading power and will continue to contribute to the Indian capability to provide security throughout the region.”.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. To what extent globalisation has influenced the core of cultural diversity in India? Explain.

GS Paper II

1. Indo-Pacific region has assumed great geopolitical significance in the present context. Comment.

Bills / Acts/ Schemes in News

The Consumer Protection Bill, 2015:

The Bill replaces the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. The Statement of Objects and Reasons of the Bill states that this is to widen the ambit and modernise the law on consumer protection due to the changes in the markets.

Definition of consumer: A consumer is defined as any person who buys a good or hires a service for a consideration. This includes the user of such good or service, but not one who obtains the good for resale or commercial purposes. It covers transactions through all modes including offline, online through electronic means, teleshopping, or multi level marketing.

Rights of consumers: The rights of consumers include the right to: (i) be protected against marketing of goods and services which are hazardous to life and property, (ii) be informed of the quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods or services, (iii) be assured of access to a variety of goods or services at competitive prices, and (iv) to seek redressal against unfair or restrictive trade practices.

Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA): The central government will set up the CCPA to promote, protect and enforce the rights of consumers. The CCPA will carry out the following functions, among others: (i) inquiring into violations of consumer rights, investigating and launching prosecution at the appropriate forum; (ii) passing orders for recall of goods, or withdrawal of services and reimbursement of the price paid, and pass directions for discontinuation of unfair trade practices; (iii) issuing safety notices and order withdrawal of advertisements; and (iv) declaring contracts that are unfair to a consumer as void.

Product liability: If defects in the manufacture, construction, design, testing, service marketing etc. of a product results in any personal injury or property damage to a consumer, the manufacturer is liable in a product liability action.

Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions: Consumer Grievance Redressal Commissions are to be set up at the district, state and national levels. A consumer can file a complaint with these commissions, regarding: (i) unfair or restrictive trade practices, (ii) defective goods or services, (iii) overcharging or deceptive charging, (iv) the offering of goods or services for sale which may be hazardous to life and safety, and (v) incurring loss due to an unfair contract.

The District Commission may issue the following orders regarding a complaint: remove the defect, replace the good, return the price amount, stop the sale or manufacture of hazardous products, discontinue unfair trade practices or pay compensation for any loss suffered by the consumer. Appeals from its decisions will be heard by the State Commission. Further appeals may be filed before the National Commission, and then before the Supreme Court.

Consumer Mediation Cell: The Bill introduces mediation as a mode of consumer dispute resolution. Consumer Mediation Cells will be established and attached to the redressal commissions at the district, state and national levels.

Penalties: Any person who fails to comply with an order of either of the Commissions would be liable for imprisonment from one month to three years, or with a fine from 10,000 rupees to 50,000 rupees.

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1. Bihar may sack staff who take dowry

E. Prelims Fact

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Nothing here for Today!!!

Category: POLITY

1. Centre keen on having court administrators

In news:

- The Union Law Minister has written to the Chief Justices of all the High Courts to seek their views on **developing a permanent cadre of administrators for court management and administration.**
- The move is aimed at allowing the judiciary to devote more time on judicial work and free them from administrative, managerial and financial work.
- **Tasks assigned** : these managers are meant to assist the Registrars in High Courts and Judges in District Courts in administrative tasks.

Present Scenario:

Judges overburdened:

- The situation is particularly bad in **lower judiciary** where judges are burdened with substantial administrative work.
- Key Fact: As per the **Indian Judiciary Annual Report 2016**, pendency of cases across district courts is a staggering 2.81 crores and as many as 5,000 judges' posts are vacant.
- Administrative work only added to the workload of existing judges.

13th Finance Commission recommendations: creation of the post of Court Managers in every district court and High Court.

Problems associated with creation of separate posts: Recruitment on contract basis, low remuneration package, reluctance on the part of the judiciary to accept Court Managers to participate in the judicial process have been identified as some of the reasons for failure to attract suitable candidates.

2. Air programme on dangers of Blue Whale game: SC tells DD

Context:

- Supreme Court views on Blue Whale game.

In news:

- Declaring the Blue Whale online game a threat to life, the Supreme Court directed

public broadcaster Doordarshan to conceive a cautionary and educational programme about the dangers of the online game which goads players, mostly students, to commit suicide.

- The Supreme Court gave the public broadcaster a week's time to prepare the programme and air it on prime time for an appropriate duration, possibly not less than 10 minutes.
- **The court also directed the competent authority in the government to see to it that private channels also telecast the programme.**
- **Motive behind the programme:** The idea behind the programme is to make parents and children aware of the dangers of online games like Blue Whale. The message of the programme should be that children should not be trapped into the game.

3. SC questions Centre on judicial posts

Context:

- Judicial appointments to the Supreme Court and the high courts.
- Six of the 24 high courts have been without regular Chief Justices for months.
- **Key Fact:** Judicial vacancies continue to be a formidable problem across the 24 high courts. Out of an approved total strength of 1079 high court judges, there are 387

vacancies as of



October 1, 2017.

Background Information:

- The Constitution Bench's historic decision, in **October 2015** : strike down the government's **National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) law**. The NJAC law had given politicians an equal say in judicial appointments to constitutional courts.
- **December 2015: five-judge Constitution Bench, tasked the Centre with the drafting and finalisation of the MoP (Memorandum of Procedure).**
- **Decisions taken:** Over a year and 10 months after a Constitution Bench placed its faith in the government to iron out the dos and don'ts of judicial appointments to the Supreme Court and the high courts, the **Centre is yet to deliver**.

The Supreme Court wants to know the reasons:

- The Supreme Court issued notice to the Attorney-General of India, to explain why the finalisation of the Memorandum of Procedure (MoP) for appointment of judges to the Supreme Court and the high courts continues to "linger".
- The Supreme Court also wants Attorney General, to address it on the delay in appointment of "regular" Chief Justices to various high courts.
- The apex court underlined that the "arrangement" of Acting Chief Justices in high courts should not continue for more than a month.

Basic Information:

Amicus curiae : An amicus curiae (literally, “friend of the court”) is someone who is not a party to a case and is not solicited by a party, but who assists a court by offering information that bears on the case. The decision on whether to admit the information lies at the discretion of the court.

4. Centre can now shift troops from Bengal

Context:

- The Union Government had appealed to the Supreme Court against a recent Calcutta High Court order restraining it from withdrawing troops deployed in the two districts (Darjeeling and Kalimpong) of West Bengal.

In news:

Supreme Court observation:

- “Law and order is your problem,” the Supreme Court told the Mamata government.
- It allowed the Centre to withdraw seven companies of the Central police forces stationed in the restive Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts of West Bengal for deployment in poll-bound States.
- Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat go to the polls in November and December.
- The Supreme Court ordered to withdraw seven companies of the Central police forces from the two districts, while eight of the total 15 deployed there stay back.
- **Why troops were deployed?** The districts of Darjeeling and Kalimpong, had witnessed a spate of violence following the resurgence of the Gorkhaland movement.

Calcutta High Court orders:

- Calcutta High Court had ordered Center not to withdraw troops deployed in the two districts.

Centers argument:

- If all 24 High Courts start dictating to us where and where not to deploy troops, there will be utter confusion. Deployment of troops is the executive’s exclusive domain.

Proceedings stayed in Calcutta High Court:

- The Supreme Court stayed the proceedings in the Calcutta High Court and recorded that the Supreme Court would comprehensively hear the issue.
- The Supreme Court would decide on two issues: **whether courts can intervene in the placement of troops; and whether courts can intervene with the government in the placement of forces in order to protect the lives of citizens .**

5. Panel to review orders of additional judges

Context:

- Practice of evaluating the judicial performance of additional judges.

Background information:

- **Procedure:**
 - A candidate is first appointed as additional judge of a High Court.
 - He or she serves a probationary period before being appointed a permanent judge.
- **October 2010 guidelines:** the Supreme Court had issued guidelines for constitution of **Judgment Committees** by **Chief Justices of High Courts** for assessment/evaluation of judgments of **Additional Judges of high courts** for the purpose of determining their suitability for appointment as permanent judges.
- **On March 3, 2017**, the Supreme Court Collegium withdrew the guidelines issued earlier.
- The government had recently urged the Collegium to have a relook at its decision to end the practice of evaluating the judicial performance of additional judges.
- **Practice revived:** Chief Justice Misra's Collegium, which met on October 26, unanimously found that there is indeed a “necessity” to assess the judgment of Additional Judges before they are made permanent.
- The Collegium has, however, tweaked their predecessor's guideline to ensure that “peers are not judged by peers” and appointed the panel .

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Spain sacks Catalonia's government

In news:

- The Catalan parliament had voted in the afternoon to make a unilateral declaration of independence
- The Madrid government sacked Catalonia's President and dismissed its parliament on October 27, hours after the region declared itself an independent nation.
- Central government ministries will take over the Catalan administration.
- A new regional election will be held in Catalonia on December 21.
- Several European countries, including France and Germany, and the United States also rejected the independence declaration and said they supported Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's efforts to preserve Spain's unity.

2. Tokyo for quadrilateral talks

Context:

- Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono declared in a media interview that Tokyo would call for a **quadrilateral dialogue** with Australia, India and the U.S.
- **External Affairs Ministry response:** India is “open” to work with partner countries for regional issues that are “relevant”.

Key Facts: India did the trilateral meeting with Russia and China on the topic of Asia-Pacific last year. India also did an India-Sri Lanka-Maldives trilateral on security matters

3. Act on terror, or we'll do it our way, US tells Pakistan

Context:

- **US Secretary of States Rex Tillerson, visit to Pakistan.**

In news:

- The United States issued its direst warning to Pakistan to roll up terrorist groups operating in the country and end the establishment support for such groups, warning that if Islamabad chose not to act, Washington will find ways to achieve its objectives.
- American support to Pakistan was “conditions-based”
- Dismissing Pakistan’s bogus narrative – largely for its domestic consumption – that India and US are backing terror groups in Afghanistan that are attacking Pakistan, Washington wanted Pakistan to show the same commitment it made to defeat militant groups domestically to those threatening Afghanistan or India.
- The US fears for Pakistan’s own future if the country remains in denial about its continued support to terror groups. Pakistan keeps repeating the claim that it has taken a lead role in the war on terror and has suffered as a consequence, although its establishment still nurtures US and UN designated terrorists such as Hafiz Saeed, Maulana Masood Azhar, and Dawood Ibrahim.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. 43 urban health centres go to pvt hands

In news:

- The Rajasthan health department has signed a MoUs with **private players** for operating urban primary health centres (PHC) in the state.
- Health department has handed over 43 urban PHC to 14 private players for operating it.
- These PHCs will be operated on **public private partnership (PPP) mode**.
- The responsibility of functioning of PHCs for which MoU had been signed will be of the private players.
- In the urban PHCs, the facilities of free medicines schemes, free diagnostic test schemes, immunization would remain available like they were available earlier.

2. Scientists link new virus to kala-azar

In news:

- Researchers have stumbled upon tantalizing evidence of **an unknown virus** that may be responsible for the persistence of kala-azar or visceral leishmaniasis.
- Historically, the parasite Leishmania donovani is believed to be responsible for the dreaded infection. People get infected when bitten by an insect called the sandfly, which harbours the disease-causing parasite.
- **New discovery:** a group of scientists from West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh said that another parasite- **Leptomonas seymouri** may also be involved in the spreads of the

disease.

- **The fact is still not clear:** Scientists are still not clear how the parasites cause the infection and how they manage to hide within the body.
- **Endemic to subcontinent**
- Kala-azar is endemic to the Indian subcontinent in 119 districts in four countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal)
- India itself accounts for half the global burden of the disease.
- If untreated, kala-azar can kill within two years of the onset of the ailment, though the availability of a range of drugs has meant that less than one in 1,000 now succumbs to the disease.

Basic information:

About Kala-azar:

- Visceral leishmaniasis (VL), also known as kala-azar, black fever, and Dum dum fever, is the most severe form of leishmaniasis and, without proper diagnosis and treatment, is associated with high fatality.
- Leishmaniasis is a disease caused by protozoan parasites of the Leishmania genus.
- The parasite migrates to the internal organs such as the liver, spleen (hence “visceral”), and bone marrow, and, if left untreated, will almost always result in the death of the host.
- Signs and symptoms include fever, weight loss, fatigue, anemia, and substantial swelling of the liver and spleen.
- This disease is the second-largest parasitic killer in the world (after malaria), responsible for an estimated 200,000 to 400,000 infections each year worldwide.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Decision on fishing subsidies certain in WTO's Dec. meet'

Context:

- WTO's Ministerial Conference meeting at Buenos Aires (Argentina) in December 2017.
- **Expected agreement :** An agreement on elimination of ‘ **harmful’ fisheries subsidies** is likely to be the only major outcome at the forthcoming meeting, according to the head of the principal United Nations (UN) agency handling issues related to trade, investment and development.

Key Fact: “Harmful fishing subsidies (globally) that contribute to overfishing are estimated to be as high as \$35 billion.”

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Arctic sea ice waning faster than predicted, says study

Context:

- Climate Change and its impacts.

Highlights of the study by University of Calgary, Canada:

- Arctic sea ice, a key indicator of climate change, could be dwindling faster than predicted.
- Research undertaken by the Cryosphere Climate Research Group under the Department of Geography at the university has found that satellite measurements over the years have overestimated the thickness of Arctic sea ice by as much as 25% because of the presence of salty snow.

Impacts:

- Dwindling ice cover hastens the warming of oceans, and has an impact on weather phenomena like the El Nino that influences the Asian monsoon.
- The thinning ice would make it difficult for animals like polar bears and seals and organisms like phytoplankton to survive

Basic Information:

Cryosphere:

- There are places on Earth that are so cold that water is frozen solid.
- These areas of snow or ice, which are subject to temperatures below 32°F for at least part of the year, compose the cryosphere.
- The term “cryosphere” comes from the Greek word, “krios,” which means cold.
- Ice and snow on land are one part of the cryosphere. This includes the largest parts of the cryosphere, the continental ice sheets found in Greenland and Antarctica, as well as ice caps, glaciers, and areas of snow and permafrost. When continental ice flows out from land and to the sea surface, we get shelf ice.
- The other part of the cryosphere is ice that is found in water. This includes frozen parts of the ocean, such as waters surrounding Antarctica and the Arctic. It also includes frozen rivers and lakes, which mainly occur in polar areas.
- The components of the cryosphere play an important role in the Earth’s climate. Snow and ice reflect heat from the sun, helping to regulate our planet’s temperature. Because polar regions are some of the most sensitive to climate shifts, the cryosphere may be one of the first places where scientists are able to identify global changes in climate.

Category: ETHICS, INTEGRITY AND APTITUDE

1. Bihar may sack staff who take dowry

Context:

- Dowry and Child marriage Issue
- Quote as an example

In news:

- The Bihar government has decided to take action against government employees who demand or promote dowry and child marriage.

Child Marriages :

- **‘Bandhan Tod’:** a mobile app was launched to raise awareness on resisting child marriage and providing assistance to adolescent girls in need of help.
- Strict action would be taken against priests and religious leaders who facilitated child marriages. Even the managers of banquet halls and hotels would be asked to take assurances at the time of booking.

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. “We need an external, independent body to determine parliamentary salaries” Examine?

GS Paper II

1. What do you know by Internet-of-things? Discuss its various applications in everyday life?

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1. Introduce eggs, milk in mid-day meal, ICDS diet: NHRC

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Nothing here for Today!!!

Category: POLITY

1. Give verdict copy in the vernacular: Kovind

In news:

- President Ram Nath Kovind suggested that a system be evolved for providing certified copies of High Court judgments translated in **local or regional languages of the litigants**.
- Copies of the translated judgments could be provided in 24 or 36 hours after the verdict was pronounced.
- The President pointed out that the High Courts delivered judgments in English, “but we are a country of diverse languages. The litigant may not be conversant with English and the finer points of the judgment may escape him or her. The litigating parties will thus be dependent on the lawyer or another person to translate the judgment. This can add to time and cost”.
- It was important not only to take justice to the people but also to make it understandable to the

litigating parties in a language they know

2. Before polls were called, Gujarat pushed terror Bill

In news:

- Days before the Gujarat Assembly elections were announced, the State government renewed its bid to revive the controversial **Gujarat Control of Terrorism and Organised Crime (GCTOC) Bill, 2015**, which authorises police officers to tap phones and submit the conversations as evidence in court.
- The Bill includes provisions to file a charge sheet within 180 days instead of the usual 90 and proposes stricter conditions for granting bail.

Inter-ministerial review:

- The Union Home Ministry has sent the Bill for inter-ministerial consultations, the fifth time since it was first conceived in 2003 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the Chief Minister of Gujarat.
- Former President Pranab Mukherjee had refused to clear the Bill, following which the Home Ministry recalled it in January 2016.
- The Ministry asked the State government for clarifications, and Gujarat had sent a fresh proposal this September.

Earlier attempts:

- The earlier **GUJCOC Bill** was reintroduced as **GCTOC Bill in 2015**. The same year the Information and Technology Ministry objected to the provisions that allowed “authorisation of interception of telephonic conversations and their admissibility as evidence in the court of law”.
- As per norms, agencies such as the Research & Analysis Wing (RAW), the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, the Enforcement Directorate and the police can tap phones only with the permission of the Union Home Secretary.
- The Bill in its earlier form was rejected thrice by two former Presidents — the late A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in 2004 and by Pratibha Patil in 2008 and 2009.
- One of the provisions to which objections were raised by the Centre was Section 25, which provided immunity to the State from any legal action for “anything which is in good faith done or intended to be done in pursuance of this Act.”

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. India turns down Pak. offer of talks on transit trade to Afghanistan

In news:

- India has rejected an offer from Pakistan for talks on transit trade to Afghanistan.
- According to sources, the offer was made by the Pakistan Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed when he met President Ashraf Ghani on October 1 in Kabul.
- During discussions on the renewal of the **Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA)**, that lapsed in 2015, President Ghani repeated concerns that trade with India over the Wagah border had been blocked by Pakistan, despite being agreed to in the APTTA.
- Days later, Indian officials at the **SCO Afghanistan-Contact group** meeting in Moscow, told the Afghan delegation that it would not take up the offer for talks.
- Pakistan has consistently refused to allow any Indian goods to travel over land Afghanistan, insisting that India use the sea-route via Karachi.
- Exasperated by Pakistan’s refusal to allow the truck trade, President Ghani has said repeatedly that he would cut off Pakistan’s access to Central Asia and issued a decree last week cancelling permission for Pakistani trucks to transit through Afghanistan.

New routes:

India and Afghanistan are now working on strengthening alternative routes, including the air cargo corridor launched in June this year, and the Chabahar sea route.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. [Introduce eggs, milk in mid-day meal, ICDS diet: NHRC](#)

In news :

- Stressing that food being served under the mid-day meal scheme and Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) do not guarantee the protein intake as envisaged, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has recommended to state governments and the Ministry of Women and Child Development to introduce eggs and milk as part of the meal in all states.
- The recommendation was made during a conference organised by the NHRC on the implementation of the National Food Security Act, 2013 on Friday.
- Malnutrition continues to haunt India despite economic growth and the mid day meal scheme and the ICDS are the two biggest nutrition programmes.
- While the meal is supplied in schools, the ICDS aims at providing supplementary nutrition through anganwadi centres to children aged below 6 years, besides pregnant and lactating women.

The recommendations of the NHRC

- For the ICDS scheme, it has been recommended that adequate food testing facilities be created preferably at the district level by all states through the public health department, universities and colleges.
- For the meal scheme, it was recommended that social audit and evaluation by a third party be conducted annually for each district and the reports be published on state portals.
- It also said that no child should be deprived of the meal because of non-linking of Aadhaar.
- The NHRC also questioned the state governments whether they have strictly followed Supreme Court orders banning contractors in supplying nutrition under ICDS and also whether adequate funds have been made available for full implementation of the Maternity Benefit Scheme or not.
- Moreover, experts said cash transfers instead of hot cooked meals may be counterproductive and must not be encouraged as cash can be used for other expenditure.
- Citing Kerala and Tamil Nadu as examples, the states were asked to resolve infrastructural gaps in terms of buildings, kitchens, drinking water supply and toilets within three years, by sourcing funds from different schemes and departments.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. [India to leapfrog 30 places in business ease rank](#)

In news:

- India will leapfrog **30 places to the 100th position out of 190 countries** in the **World Bank's Doing Business Report**, high-level sources have confirmed.
- The report is expected to be released on October 31 — “India will hit a century.”

Key Point:

- This huge jump in the country’s ranking is thanks to reforms in areas such as



'starting a business', 'dealing with construction permits', and 'resolving insolvency', where it was placed a lowly 155, 185 and 136 respectively last year.

- India was ranked a poor 130 overall last year, up by just one place from 131 the previous year.
- On the future prospects for India, the source said: If India maintains this momentum, it can jump to a rank in double digits next year," adding that Mumbai and Delhi — the two cities covered in the Report — had responded well to the government's call for improvement. The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion systematically worked with the line ministries and State governments to "get things done on the ground.
- The **World Bank's 'distance to frontier' score** — which "measures the distance of each economy to the 'frontier' that represents the best performance observed on each of the indicators across all economies in the Doing Business sample since 2005 – showed that India's score gradually improved from 48.77 in 2010 to 55.27 in 2017.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Four Asian vulture species now on highest protection list

In news:

- Several species of vultures, including four that have India on their migratory routes, were awarded the highest protection by the **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals**.
- **The whale shark**, which inhabits the Indian Ocean, got global protection too. However, the proposal to extend additional protection to the **chinkara or Indian gazelle** was withdrawn.
- The convention in Manila concluded with approvals for protection of 34 species in submissions made by 24 countries **from Asia, Africa, the Americas, Europe and Oceania**.
- The Asian vultures that are set to get collaborative international protection are the **red-headed vulture, white-rumped vulture, Indian vulture and slender-billed vulture**.
- **Threats**: They are faced with threats such as poisoning, hunting, collision with electricity cables and habitat degradation.
- A subspecies of the **black noddy, the yellow bunting and the lesser and great grey shrike** are the other avians on the protected list.
- Lions, chimpanzees, giraffes and leopards were marked out as species that needed additional protection.

Marine Species:

- Widespread over-fishing is driving many shark species, including the whale shark, to extinction. India is among 121 nations whose waters are home to sharks threatened with near extinction. The major threats are bycatch in nets and vessel strikes.
- Proposals for conservation of the blue shark and common guitarfish have also been accepted.
- A resolution to develop and manage protected area networks within the ASEAN region has been adopted.
- Proposals submitted by Mongolia to protect two of Central Asia's rarest species, Przewalski's horse and the Gobi bear, also got the nod.
- The Caspian seal has also been identified for conservation. It is the only marine mammal found in the world's largest inland sea, where its migration is prompted by ice formation and foraging.

About the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals:

- The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals — more commonly

abbreviated to just the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) or the Bonn Convention — aims to conserve terrestrial, marine and avian migratory species throughout their range. It is an international treaty, concluded under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme, concerned with the conservation of wildlife and habitats on a global scale

- Since the Convention's entry into force, its membership has grown steadily to include over 120 Parties from Africa, Central and South America, Asia, Europe and Oceania.
- The Convention was signed in 1979 in Bad Godesberg, a suburb of Bonn (hence the name), and entered into force in 1983. The depositary is the government of the Federal Republic of Germany.
- The CMS is the only global and UN-based intergovernmental organization established exclusively for the conservation and management of terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory species throughout their range. CMS and its daughter agreements determine policy and provide further guidance on specific issues through their Strategic Plans, Action Plans, resolutions, decisions and guidelines. All maintain on their websites a list of all decisions taken, guidelines issued and Action Plans adopted by the Member States.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. "The Himalayas are highly prone to landslides." Discuss the causes and suggest suitable measures of mitigation.

GS Paper IV

1. What do you understand by the following terms in the context of public service? a) Integrity b) Perseverance c) Spirit of service d) Commitment e) Courage of conviction f) Personal opinion

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Category: GEOGRAPHY

1. [NMDC planning to exploit beach sand in Krishna, Guntur](#)

In news:

- The National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) is contemplating exploring minerals available along the coast of Krishna and Guntur districts.
- The Geological Survey of India has confirmed the presence of beach sand minerals — **ilmenite, rutile, zircon, garnet and silliminate** — on the coastline of the two districts and its feasibility is under study.

- In beach sand mining, the sand collected from the beach is dumped in the same area after extracting the minerals without leading to any adverse impact on the coast.

Basic Information:

National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC):

- Incorporated in 1958 as a Government of India fully owned public enterprise. NMDC is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Steel, Government of India.
- Since inception involved in the exploration of wide range of minerals including iron ore, copper, rock phosphate, lime stone, dolomite, gypsum, bentonite, magnesite, diamond, tin, tungsten, graphite, beach sands etc.
- NMDC is India's single largest iron ore producer, presently producing about 30 million tonnes of iron ore.

Category: POLITY

1. Set up centres for vulnerable victims under all High Courts: SC

Vulnerable witnesses deposition centres:

- **Supreme Court observation :** Vulnerable witnesses in criminal cases, often minor survivors of rape or victims of sex abuse, should testify without fear or intimidation in a conducive environment.
- Concerned at the trauma these victims of crime face in conventional courtrooms, the Supreme Court has ordered the setting up of at least two vulnerable witnesses deposition centres in the jurisdiction of every High Court across the country within the next three months.
- The order upholds the right of vulnerable witnesses to be protected while testifying in court and is in consonance with international norms in these matters.

The case of vulnerable victims:

- Vulnerable witnesses are often treated like any other witness of the State in a criminal trial.
- Victims often end up being ill-treated by the very system they had approached in the hope of justice.
- Delay and intimidating questions during trial in a hostile environment lead to fewer convictions.

Guidelines for Recording the Evidence of Vulnerable Witnesses in Criminal Matters :

- The Supreme Court suggested that other high courts should adopt the Delhi HC's 'Guidelines for Recording the Evidence of Vulnerable Witnesses in Criminal Matters,' with required modifications.
- The Delhi HC's guidelines are filtered from the best practices followed by other countries and the police and precedents of the apex court and high courts.
- The practices include a screen or some arrangement by which the victim does not see the body or face of the accused; reducing cross-examination questions to writing and handing them over to the judge to be put to the victim in a language that is clear and not embarrassing; and sufficient breaks for victims of child abuse or rape while testifying.

2. Law panel wants more autonomy for tribunals

Context:

- Highlights of the report titled '**Assessment of Statutory Frameworks of Tribunals in India**', submitted to the Law Ministry, by the Law Commission of India.

Law commission of India recommendations:

- **Key Fact:** the disposal rate of the tribunals in comparison to the filing of cases per year had been remarkable — 94% — the pendency remains high.
- Appointments to tribunals and their functioning should remain independent of the executive's influence
- A Committee led by the Chief Justice of India should be in charge of the appointments of Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Judicial Members of the various central tribunals, which form a pillar of the country's justice delivery system.
- Every order emanating from the tribunal or its appellate forum, wherever it exists, attains finality
- Reappointment of chairman and others compromises the independence and fairness of the tribunal.
- The Commission has suggested a **common nodal agency**, possibly under the Law Ministry, to both monitor the working of the tribunals and to ensure uniformity in the appointment, tenure and service conditions for the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and members.
- **Present context:** As of now, tribunals function under the very government department which may be a litigant before them, and probably, against which they may have to pass orders.

HC power to review

- In a marked departure from its earlier stand, the Commission recommended the restoration of the High Courts' power of judicial review over the decisions of the tribunals.
- It said parties should be allowed to challenge a tribunal order before the Division Bench of the high court having territorial jurisdiction over the tribunal or its appellate forum.
- **Present Context:** Presently, parties are deprived of an opportunity to move high courts concerned against the orders of some tribunals and have to move the Supreme Court directly.

Location of the Tribunal:

- The Commission said tribunals must have benches in different parts of the country so that people of every geographical area may have easy access to justice
- Ideally, the benches of the tribunals should be located at all places where the high courts situate. In the event of exclusion of jurisdiction of all courts, it is essential to provide for an equally effective alternative mechanism even at grass root level. This could be ensured by providing State- level sittings looking to the quantum of work of a particular tribunal. Once that is done, the access to justice will stand ensured.

3. Devaluing high courts

Context:

- The interference in the power of High Courts by tribunals.

High courts:

- For the framers of our Constitution, high courts, occupied a central position
- They were conceived as a forum for adjudicating disputes under the Constitution, Central and State statutes before they moved to the Supreme Court
- HC's jurisdiction was more extensive than the SC's
- Parliament has inflicted damage on high courts with rampant tribunalisation
- Tribunals have replaced high courts for disputes under the Companies Act, Competition Act, SEBI Act, Electricity Act, Consumer Protection Act among others
- Any person aggrieved by an order of an appellate tribunal can directly appeal to the SC, side-stepping the high court
- Three main issues related to rampant Tribunalisation

First:

- These tribunals do not enjoy the same constitutional protection as high courts
- The appointment process and service conditions of high court judges are not under the control of the executive
- The enormous institutional investment to protect the independence of high courts is dispensed with when it comes to tribunals
- Many tribunals still owe allegiance to their parent ministries
- Tribunals are also not as accessible as high courts
- For example, there are just four benches of the Green Tribunal for the whole country
- In comparison, high courts were easily accessible for environmental matters

Second:

- Conferring a direct right of appeal to the Supreme Court from tribunals has changed the Supreme Court from being a constitutional court to a mere appellate court
- It has become a final clearing house for every appeal under every statute
- The Supreme Court should be a court of last resort deciding cases of the moment, and not a final forum with an all-embracing jurisdiction over disputes ranging from a custody battle to the scope of a municipal by-law
- If high courts were to exercise appellate jurisdiction over orders of tribunals, they would act as filters
- Enabling the Supreme Court to confine itself to those substantial questions where there is divergence among high courts

Third:

- The high courts are the training grounds for future SC judges
- When high court judges deal with several cases under a particular area of law, they carry with them the benefit of their experience and insights to the SC
- When high courts are side-stepped in favour of tribunals, Supreme Court judges hearing appeals from tribunals would have to deal with the finer nuances of disputes under specialised areas of law for the very first time
- This is not ideal for a court of last resort

Original jurisdiction of the SC

- The jurisdiction of high courts is also undermined by the SC when it directly entertains various writ petitions
- When the Supreme Court exercises original jurisdiction, it deprives the citizen and the state of

the right to challenge potentially erroneous orders

- A classic instance is the Supreme Court's ruling in the 2G case
- To overcome this ruling, the President had to invoke the advisory jurisdiction of the SC
- The ordinary citizen enjoys no such privilege
- This difficulty becomes even more acute when the SC takes on a legislative role by framing guidelines in the larger public interest
- Neither the individual nor the state has an effective remedy to challenge these norms

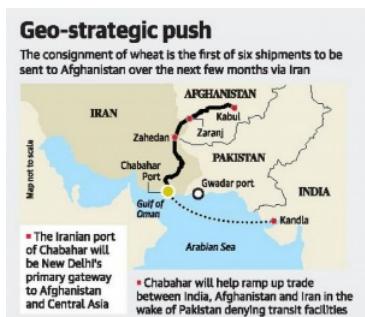
The way forward

- It has been asserted that when the Supreme Court decides an issue, it avoids conflicting judgments of the high court
- This is untrue. The SC is in a better position to resolve a dispute when it is confronted with two conflicting high court rulings on the same issue
- If high courts lose their prominence, India's justice delivery system will be the principal loser

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. India ships wheat to Afghanistan via Chabahar

In news:



- India began shipment of wheat to Afghanistan through the **Iranian port of Chabahar**.
- A press release from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) noted that the consignment would be the first to use the new route via Chabahar to access Afghanistan.
- The transfer was part of India's commitment to send **1 million tonnes** of wheat to **Afghanistan** on grant basis.
- The move is significant as it indicates India remains firm in delivering on its **regional commitment through partnership with Iran**, despite Tehran's ongoing tension with the United States.

Chabahar port:

- Operationalisation of the Chabahar port is an alternative, reliable and robust connectivity for Afghanistan.
- Operationalisation will open up new opportunities for trade and transit from and to Afghanistan and enhance trade and commerce between the three countries (India, Iran and Afghanistan) and the wider region

Earlier instances:

- India had earlier sent goods through the **Iranian port of Bandar Abbas in 2003** as Pakistan had not eased land access to Afghanistan.

India & Afghanistan:

- India to continue its support for reconstruction, capacity-building and socio-economic development of Afghanistan under the framework of the New Development Partnership.

Basic Information:

TRILATERAL AGREEMENT FOR TRANSPORT AND TRANSIT CORRIDOR: During the visit of Prime Minister to Iran in May 2016, India, Iran and Afghanistan signed a Trilateral Agreement to establish an International Transport and Transit Corridor through the Chabahar port.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

1. Army finalises plan to modernise weapons

Context:

- Modernization of weapons.

In news:

- The Army has finalised one of its biggest procurement plans for infantry modernisation under which a large number of light machine guns (LMGs), battle carbines and assault rifles are being purchased at a cost of nearly ₹40,000 crore to replace its ageing and obsolete weapons.
- **Security threats:** The world's second largest standing Army has been pressing for fast-tracking the procurement of various weapons systems considering the evolving security threats.
- The Army has also finalised the specifications for a **new 7.62 mm assault rifle** . and the **Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)**, the defence ministry's highest decision making body on procurement, is expected to give the go-ahead for the much needed procurement soon.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. Early Buddhist Stupa-art, while depicting folk motifs and narratives, successfully expounds Buddhist ideals. Elucidate.

GS Paper II

1. With a brief background of quality of urban life in India, introduce the objectives and strategy of the 'Smart City Programme'.

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G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

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Category: POLITY

1. Five-judge statute Bench to decide on Aadhaar validity

Context:

- Validity of the Aadhaar scheme.

In news:

- The Supreme Court decided to constitute a **five-judge Constitution Bench** to hear petitions from November against the **validity of the Aadhaar scheme**.
- The decision to set up a five-judge Bench comes despite Justice Rohinton Nariman's separate judgment in the nine-judge Bench declaring **privacy as a fundamental right**.

Historic judgment

- The nine-judge Bench of the Supreme Court came out with the historic judgment in favour of the common man's fundamental right to privacy against state intrusions.
- The nine-judge Bench verdict has a crucial bearing in the Aadhaar petitions, which have argued that Aadhaar's use of biometric details like fingerprints and iris scans violate bodily and informational privacy.

Petitioner's contentions:

- The petitioners argue that mandatory requirement of Aadhaar for these schemes "constrict rights and freedoms which a citizen has long been enjoying unless and until they part with their personal biometric information to the government".
- The petitions have termed the **Aadhaar Act of 2016** as **unconstitutional** and contrary to concept of limited and accountable governance.

Basic Information:

Justice K. S. Puttaswamy vs Union Of India case:

- A landmark case by the Supreme Court of India which holds that the right to privacy is protected under Article 21 and Part 3 of the Constitution. It also mentioned that it won't be an Absolute right and will have some reasonable restrictions in matters of national security and mutual interest of the citizens and the state.
- India is the only country with Right to Privacy as a Fundamental right under its Constitution

P. Shah panel- Nine point code:

- The group led by former Delhi High Court chief justice A P Shah was set up by the Planning Commission to identify privacy issues and prepare a document to facilitate the proposed Privacy Act.
- The group was set after concerns were raised about the impact on privacy of individuals with the emergence of several national programmes such as Aadhar, NATGRID, DNA profiling, Reproductive Rights of Women, privileged communications and brain mapping, most of which will be implemented through information and communication technology (ICT) platforms.

Nine National Privacy Principles:

- A data controller should give prior notice of collection and information to all individuals before taking consent.
- Individuals should be given choice to opt in/out with regard to providing personal information.
- Data collectors should only collect personal information necessary for the purpose identified.
- If there is change of purpose, it must be notified to the individual. After use in identified purpose, data should be destroyed.
- Individuals should have access to personal information for seeking correction, changes, deletion, etc.
- Personal information to third parties should only be disclosed or made public after giving notice and seeking informed consent.
- Data collectors should ensure security safeguards against loss, unauthorized access, destruction, use, etc.
- For openness, information should be made in an intelligible form, using clear and plain language, available to all individuals.
- Data controller should be accountable for complying with privacy measures such as external, internal audits and extending necessary support to privacy commissioners.

2. Centre gets SC to freeze hearing on Article 35A

Context:

- The Supreme Court hearing on the petitions against **Article 35A** of the Constitution.
- A writ petition filed by NGO, **We the Citizens**, which challenged the validity of both Article 35A and Article 370.

In News:

- The Centre convinced the Supreme Court to defer hearing on petitions challenging the special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir.

- **Centre's response:** it has appointed an interlocutor to commence talks with stakeholders in the State.. The interlocutor has started talks with stakeholders. If the court hears this case, it will affect dialogue process
- The government has appointed Dineshwar Sharma, a former Intelligence Bureau director, as interlocutor.

Article 35A:

- Article 35A is a provision incorporated in the Indian Constitution giving the Jammu and Kashmir State Legislature unlimited discretionary power to decide who are the ‘**permanent residents’ of the State** and grant them **special right and privileges** in State public sector jobs, acquisition of property within the State, scholarships and other public aid and welfare programmes.
- The provision mandates that no act of the State legislature coming under the ambit of Article 35A can be challenged for violating the Constitution or any other law of the land.
- Article 35A was incorporated into the Constitution in 1954 by an order of President Rajendra Prasad on the advice of the Jawaharlal Nehru Cabinet.
- The Presidential Order was issued under Article 370 (1) (d) of the Constitution. This provision allows the President to make certain “**exceptions and modifications** ” to the Constitution for the benefit of ‘State subjects’ of Jammu and Kashmir.
- So Article 35A was added to the Constitution as a testimony of the special consideration the Indian government accorded the ‘permanent residents’ of Jammu and Kashmir.

Contention:

- Parliament was not consulted when the President incorporated Article 35A into the Constitution through a Presidential Order issued under Article 370.
- **Article 368 (i)** of the Constitution mandates that only Parliament can amend the Constitution by introducing a new Article.

Basic Information:

Article 368. Power of Parliament to amend the Constitution and procedure therefor:

- (1) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, Parliament may in exercise of its constituent power amend by way of addition, variation or repeal any provision of this Constitution in accordance with the procedure laid down in this article
- (2) An amendment of this Constitution may be initiated only by the introduction of a Bill for the purpose in either House of Parliament, and when the Bill is passed in

each House by a majority of the total membership of that House present and voting, it shall be presented to the President who shall give his assent to the Bill and thereupon the Constitution shall stand amended in accordance with the terms of the Bill: Provided that if such amendment seeks to make any change in

- (a) Article 54, Article 55, Article 73, Article 162 or Article 241, or
 - (b) Chapter IV of Part V, Chapter V of Part VI, or Chapter I of Part XI, or
 - (c) any of the Lists in the Seventh Schedule, or
 - (d) the representation of States in Parliament, or
 - (e) the provisions of this article, the amendment shall also require to be ratified by the Legislature of not less than one half of the States by resolution to that effect passed by those Legislatures before the Bill making provision for such amendment is presented to the President for assent
- (3) Nothing in Article 13 shall apply to any amendment made under this article
- (4) No amendment of this Constitution (including the provisions of Part III) made or purporting to have been made under this article whether before or after the commencement of Section 55 of the Constitution (Forty second Amendment) Act, 1976 shall be called in question in any court on any ground
- (5) For the removal of doubts, it is hereby declared that there shall be no limitation whatever on the constituent power of Parliament to amend by way of addition, variation or repeal the provisions of this Constitution under this article.

3. Law panel moots life term for torture

IN news:

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- The Commission submitted that there has to be some effective mechanism to protect the interests of the victims of torture, the complainants and the witnesses against ill-treatment, threats or physical and mental violence.
- **Highlight:** "Torture has been a contentious issue having a direct bearing on the **right to life and liberty of an individual**. The Commission is of the opinion that such heinous acts must be curbed through strong legislation providing

stringent punishment, will act as a deterrent”.

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Requires insertion of section 114B : this will ensure that in case a person in police custody sustains injuries, it is presumed that those injuries have been inflicted by the police, and the burden of proof shall lie on the authority concerned to explain such injury.

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The Courts will decide upon a justiciable compensation after taking into account various facets of an individual case, such as nature, purpose, extent and manner of injury, including mental agony caused to the victim. The Courts will bear in mind the socio-economic background of the victim and will ensure that the compensation so decided will suffice the victim to bear the expenses on medical treatment and rehabilitation.

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The Commission recommends that an effective mechanism must be put in place in order to protect the victims of torture, the complainants and the witnesses against possible threats, violence or ill treatment.

4. Of bureaucracy and emotions

Context:

- Recently, a woman died of starvation in Jharkhand's Simdega district
- Her ration card was not Aadhaar card-linked, preventing her from receiving any food ration from the Public Distribution System (PDS) for several weeks

Main Reason behind the issue: Insensitive bureaucracy.

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Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni visit to India.

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2. China to block UN ban on Masood Azhar, yet again

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In news:

- **Citing a lack of “consensus,”** China has said that it is once again not designating Masood Azhar, head of Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammad, as an international terrorist.
- The Chinese position, expressed by its Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying, came ahead of Thursday’s meeting of the **1267 committee of the United Nations Security Council**, where Azhar’s status would be discussed.

Background Information:

- China had repeatedly imposed a “technical hold” on India’s application for banning Azhar, who has been accused of masterminding last year’s attack on an Indian Air Force base.
- In January, the United States filed a fresh application, backed by Britain and France after India’s filing on Azhar’s listing had lapsed last year.

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In news:

- Death from tuberculosis in India saw a 12% decline from last year.
- The number of new cases saw a 5% increase.
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- In spite of this year’s dip, India accounts for about 32% of the number of people worldwide who succumbed to the disease.
- **Key fact:**
- Rise in cases was due to greater surveillance and the dip in mortality from 480,000 to 423,000 in 2016, due to improved drug management.
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Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

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Key highlights of the New research paper-

- “**The Lancet Countdown: Tracking Progress on Health and Climate Change**” published by The Lancet:
- The Lancet report talks of the various ways climate change has started affecting the health of people across the planet.
- On an average there has been a 5.3% fall in productivity for rural labour estimated globally since 2000, as a result of rising temperatures around the world.
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Key Findings: “ The findings show that climate change is affecting the health of all populations, today. These impacts are disproportionately felt by communities least responsible for climate change and those who are the most vulnerable in society.”

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Category: POLITY

1. Five-judge statute Bench to decide on Aadhaar validity

Context:

- Validity of the Aadhaar scheme.

In news:

- The Supreme Court decided to constitute a **five-judge Constitution Bench** to hear petitions from November against the **validity of the Aadhaar scheme**.
- The decision to set up a five-judge Bench comes despite Justice Rohinton Nariman's separate judgment in the nine-judge Bench declaring **privacy as a fundamental right**.

Historic judgment

- The nine-judge Bench of the Supreme Court came out with the historic judgment in favour of the common man's fundamental right to privacy against state intrusions.
- The nine-judge Bench verdict has a crucial bearing in the Aadhaar petitions, which have argued that Aadhaar's use of biometric details like fingerprints and iris scans violate bodily and informational privacy.

Petitioner's contentions:

- The petitioners argue that mandatory requirement of Aadhaar for these schemes "constrict rights and freedoms which a citizen has long been enjoying unless and until they part with their personal biometric information to the government".
- The petitions have termed the **Aadhaar Act of 2016** as **unconstitutional** and contrary to concept of limited and accountable governance.

Basic Information:

Justice K. S. Puttaswamy vs Union Of India case:

- A landmark case by the Supreme Court of India which holds that the right to privacy is protected under Article 21 and Part 3 of the Constitution. It also mentioned that it won't be an Absolute right and will have some reasonable restrictions in matters of national security and mutual interest of the citizens and the state.
- India is the only country with Right to Privacy as a Fundamental right under its Constitution

P. Shah panel- Nine point code:

- The group led by former Delhi High Court chief justice A P Shah was set up by the Planning Commission to identify privacy issues and prepare a document to facilitate the proposed Privacy Act.
- The group was set after concerns were raised about the impact on privacy of individuals with the emergence of several national programmes such as Aadhar, NATGRID, DNA profiling, Reproductive Rights of Women, privileged communications and brain mapping, most of which will be implemented through information and communication technology (ICT) platforms.

Nine National Privacy Principles:

- A data controller should give prior notice of collection and information to all individuals before taking consent.
- Individuals should be given choice to opt in/out with regard to providing personal information.
- Data collectors should only collect personal information necessary for the purpose identified.
- If there is change of purpose, it must be notified to the individual. After use in identified purpose, data should be destroyed.
- Individuals should have access to personal information for seeking correction, changes, deletion, etc.
- Personal information to third parties should only be disclosed or made public after giving notice and seeking informed consent.
- Data collectors should ensure security safeguards against loss, unauthorized access, destruction, use, etc.
- For openness, information should be made in an intelligible form, using clear and plain language, available to all individuals.
- Data controller should be accountable for complying with privacy measures such as external, internal audits and extending necessary support to privacy commissioners.

2. Centre gets SC to freeze hearing on Article 35A

Context:

- The Supreme Court hearing on the petitions against **Article 35A** of the Constitution.
- A writ petition filed by NGO, **We the Citizens**, which challenged the validity of both Article 35A and Article 370.

In News:

- The Centre convinced the Supreme Court to defer hearing on petitions challenging the special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir.

- **Centre's response:** it has appointed an interlocutor to commence talks with stakeholders in the State.. The interlocutor has started talks with stakeholders. If the court hears this case, it will affect dialogue process
- The government has appointed Dineshwar Sharma, a former Intelligence Bureau director, as interlocutor.

Article 35A:

- Article 35A is a provision incorporated in the Indian Constitution giving the Jammu and Kashmir State Legislature unlimited discretionary power to decide who are the ‘**permanent residents’ of the State** and grant them **special right and privileges** in State public sector jobs, acquisition of property within the State, scholarships and other public aid and welfare programmes.
- The provision mandates that no act of the State legislature coming under the ambit of Article 35A can be challenged for violating the Constitution or any other law of the land.
- Article 35A was incorporated into the Constitution in 1954 by an order of President Rajendra Prasad on the advice of the Jawaharlal Nehru Cabinet.
- The Presidential Order was issued under Article 370 (1) (d) of the Constitution. This provision allows the President to make certain “**exceptions and modifications** ” to the Constitution for the benefit of ‘State subjects’ of Jammu and Kashmir.
- So Article 35A was added to the Constitution as a testimony of the special consideration the Indian government accorded the ‘permanent residents’ of Jammu and Kashmir.

Contention:

- Parliament was not consulted when the President incorporated Article 35A into the Constitution through a Presidential Order issued under Article 370.
- **Article 368 (i)** of the Constitution mandates that only Parliament can amend the Constitution by introducing a new Article.

Basic Information:

Article 368. Power of Parliament to amend the Constitution and procedure therefor:

- (1) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, Parliament may in exercise of its constituent power amend by way of addition, variation or repeal any provision of this Constitution in accordance with the procedure laid down in this article
- (2) An amendment of this Constitution may be initiated only by the introduction of a Bill for the purpose in either House of Parliament, and when the Bill is passed in

each House by a majority of the total membership of that House present and voting, it shall be presented to the President who shall give his assent to the Bill and thereupon the Constitution shall stand amended in accordance with the terms of the Bill: Provided that if such amendment seeks to make any change in

- (a) Article 54, Article 55, Article 73, Article 162 or Article 241, or
 - (b) Chapter IV of Part V, Chapter V of Part VI, or Chapter I of Part XI, or
 - (c) any of the Lists in the Seventh Schedule, or
 - (d) the representation of States in Parliament, or
 - (e) the provisions of this article, the amendment shall also require to be ratified by the Legislature of not less than one half of the States by resolution to that effect passed by those Legislatures before the Bill making provision for such amendment is presented to the President for assent
- (3) Nothing in Article 13 shall apply to any amendment made under this article
- (4) No amendment of this Constitution (including the provisions of Part III) made or purporting to have been made under this article whether before or after the commencement of Section 55 of the Constitution (Forty second Amendment) Act, 1976 shall be called in question in any court on any ground
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Category: POLITY

1. India cutting sorry figure with threats to artists, says Bombay HC

In news:

- A democratic country like India is cutting a very sorry figure with open threats being given to artists and others and with attacks on people for voicing their opinions.

- The high court, while referring to the Sanjay Leela Bhansali's controversy-hit film "Padmavati", observed that the director has not been able to release his film and an actress is facing death threats.
- The court noted that this was censorship of a different kind and it was damaging India's image.

• Justice Dharmadhikari observations:

- “ In this country, we have come to a situation where people cannot voice their opinions. Everytime a person says he or she wants to voice their opinion, somebody or a fringe group says they would not allow it. This does not augur well for the state,”
- “In which other country do you see threats given to artists and performers? It is distressing to know that a person makes a feature film and several people work tirelessly towards it, but is not able to release the film because of continued threats. What have we come to?”

2. Ministers not under RTI, says HC

In news:

- The Delhi High Court has set aside the **Central Information Commission** order declaring Ministers as "**public authorities**" and answerable under the **Right to Information law**.
- The High Court's order came on the Centre's appeal against the CIC order.

Background:

- **2014:** An application filed by a Maharashtra resident who wanted to know how to get an appointment with the Union Law Minister.
- In November 2014, the man moved an application before Additional Private Secretary, Ministry of Law and Justice, seeking to know the time period of the Minister or Minister of State meeting the public.
- As the information sought was not received, the matter reached the CIC. Here the Commission went on to frame the questions whether the Minister or his office was a "public authority" under the RTI Act.
- It gave the Cabinet Secretary at the Centre and Chief Secretaries in the States **two months** to appoint public information officers for each Minister's office.
- Also, the CIC said each Minister should get a website of his/her own where information can be disclosed.

3. EVMs Versus Paper Ballots

In news:

- Electronic voting machines (EVMs) were designed without any software in them, so that to tamper with them you had to replace the chip.
- We know that today it is possible to replace the chip if we have access to EVMs. And in a situation where the machines are kept in places where they are difficult to access, it may not be possible to tamper with all of them but it is possible to tamper with some of them by replacing the chip.
- Following election results, we invariably come across reports of malfunctioning EVMs. On the VVPAT (voter verifiable paper audit trail) front too, there are reports of malfunctioning. Also, as per the rules, paper ballots and VVPAT machines are not counted until the Returning Officer asks for it.

Global Experience with EVMs

- World over, countries are moving to paper ballots. Just as they are giving up on nuclear energy world over, countries realise that EVMs are problematic too, because they carry the risk of being tampered with. I feel the time has come for us to go back to the paper ballot.

- EVMs have been in place for two decades and it is time to acknowledge that they have failed. Some European countries have acknowledged that EVMs have failed. Countries there started with EVMs and are now going back to the paper ballot.

Problems of paper ballot

- Paper ballots are cumbersome. Transporting them and guarding them is a problem. And ballot boxes can be captured.
- If EVMs are manipulated, all the votes could be captured with a greater degree of sophistication to favor one party. Tampering with EVMs would make booth capturing much easier.
- Election Commission (EC) has said that the machines cannot be hacked into as they are designed in such a manner so as to make that impossible. But it is quite possible to replace the chips to get the desired verdict.

4. The Tenth Schedule and Role of Presiding Officers

In news:

- India's party-based parliamentary democracy requires MPs and MLAs to strike a fine balance between their roles as representatives of the people and of a political party.
- As members of the legislature are elected by votes sought in their own name and in the name of their party, the provisions of the Tenth Schedule should not be misused to stifle dissent, whether inside or outside the House.
- The anti-defection law works best as an insurance against violation of the people's mandate for a party, but it cannot be made a tool to stifle all dissent.

Recent Case

- The JD(U) order is the latest in a long list of contentious decisions on disqualification by presiding officers.
- Invariably, presiding officers take a politically partisan view, necessitating judicial intervention.
- The disqualification of dissident Janata Dal (United) leaders Sharad Yadav and Ali Anwar as members of the Rajya Sabha was done in needless haste.
- Even if it did not violate the letter of the anti-defection legislation, the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu, could have considered whether it militated against its spirit.
- Naidu took the view that all such cases should be disposed of within three months as any delay would be tantamount to subverting the anti-defection law.
- The decision under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution was sought to be justified on the basis of the argument that the two members voluntarily gave up the membership of their party when they attended political rallies organised by rival parties.
- Naidu went by the fact that the faction led by Mr. Yadav did not command a majority within the JD(U) legislature party in the Rajya Sabha.
- It is current political affiliation and not past electoral alliance that is relevant to the disqualification process.
- However, neither Mr. Yadav nor Mr. Anwar had disobeyed a whip or posed a danger to the stability of any government.
- Given this, the Rajya Sabha Chairman could have taken the assistance of the privileges committee before deciding the case.
- It is the fact that he did not exhaust all the procedural avenues before him that has left him open to charges that his ruling has a political hue.
- In many State Assemblies, such disqualification proceedings have had an impact on the very survival of the government, most recently in Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand.

5. A woman does not mortgage herself to a man with marriage: CJI

Context:

- The Supreme Court to decide: whether a Parsi woman can keep her religious identity intact after choosing to marry someone from another faith under the 1954 Act.

In news:

- **Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra's observation :** A woman does not mortgage herself to a man by marrying him and she retains her identity, including her religious identity, even after she exercises her right to marry outside her community under the Special Marriage Act.
- The Special Marriage Act of 1954 is seen as a statutory alternative for couples who choose to retain their identity in an inter-religious marriage.
- Nobody could presume that a woman has changed her faith or religion just because she chose to change her name after marrying outside her community

Case: A petition was filed by a Parsi, who was barred by her community from offering prayers to her dead in the Tower of Silence for the sole reason that she married a Hindu under the **Special Marriage Act**.

Key Point:

- A decision in favour of the woman would uphold the fundamental right to religion, dignity and life and create a paradigm shift for women within the minority community.

Disagrees with widespread notion

- The Bench, *prima facie*, disagreed with the widespread notion in common law that a woman's religious identity merges with that of her husband after marriage.

Defence lawyer argument:

- Arguing for the petitioner, senior advocate Indira Jaising submitted that every custom, usage, customary and statutory laws had to stand the test of the Fundamental Rights principle.
- **Article 372** (continuance of existing laws) of the Constitution was subject to **Article 13** , which mandated that laws should not violate the fundamental rights of an individual.
- Jaising argued that the fundamental right enshrined in **Article 14** of the Constitution guaranteed equality before the law and the equal protection of the laws. It prohibited discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. "Anything arbitrary violates the rule of law,".
- Denying a woman respect and the right to observe her religion merely because she married outside her faith was violative of her fundamental right to religion enshrined under Article 25 of the Constitution.
- Jaising argued that the '**doctrine of coverture**' , which held that a woman lost her identity and legal right with marriage, was violative of her fundamental rights. "**The doctrine is not recognised by the Constitution .**"

6. HC view on performance of judges will prevail: collegiums

Context:

- The apex court collegium's recommendation of five names to the Centre for the appointment as judges in the Karnataka High Court records the objections raised by the Chief Minister and Governor of the State.

- Both are consulted in the process of judicial appointments to High Courts.

In news:

- The Supreme Court Collegium made it clear that an objective assessment made at the High Court and Supreme Court levels about the performance or merit of candidates being considered for judicial appointment in High Courts overcomes any disagreement by the Chief Minister or Governor concerned.

Present case:

- The Karnataka High Court Collegium had forwarded a list of 10 names.
- Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra and Justices J. Chelameswar and Ranjan Gogoi who sat in the Collegium refer to the Karnataka Chief Minister objecting to the list, as several bodies of advocates had expressed concern that the “names recommended do not provide opportunity of representation to cross-sections of the society.”
- The Governor too had raised doubts about the efficiency of some candidates.
- The apex court Collegium differed. It notes that the minutes of the High Court Collegium meetings show that it had indeed taken into account the “merit, experience, performance, character and conduct of the recommendees”.
- The Supreme Court Collegium concluded that there was no need for any further examination. Addressing the Governor’s apprehensions, it recorded that the assessment of the persons recommended was done objectively by the judiciary at the High Court and the Supreme Court levels.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. UNESCO names Kumbh Mela Intangible Cultural Heritage

In news:

- After ‘yoga’ and ‘Nouroz’, Kumbh Mela/ KumbhMela, the largest congregation of pilgrims on the planet, has been listed as an Intangible Cultural Heritage under UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation)
- The inscription of ‘Kumbh Mela’ in the list was undertaken following recommendation by an expert body which examines nominations submitted by member countries of the UNESCO
- The Kumbh Mela is held in Haridwar, Allahabad, Ujjain and Nashik

Basic Information:

What's an intangible heritage?

As defined by UNESCO, cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants.

As per UNESCO, Intangible cultural heritage is:

- Traditional, contemporary and living at the same time
- Inclusive – contributes to social cohesion, encouraging a sense of identity
- Representative – skills and customs passed on to the rest of the community, from generation to generation
- Community-based

2. Trump's announcement on Jerusalem

In news

- U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, despite warnings at home and abroad, will worsen the Israel-Palestine conflict.
- Even though there is a Congressional resolution in the U.S. urging Washington to relocate its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, previous American Presidents avoided doing so given the legal, ethical and political implications of the issue, besides their commitment to a negotiated two-state settlement.

Background

- Jerusalem, which houses holy places of all three Abrahamic religions and is claimed by both Israelis and Palestinians, is at the very heart of the dispute.
- Israel occupied West Jerusalem in the 1948 war, soon after the proclamation of a separate state. Israel built its seat of power in West Jerusalem decades ago and occupied the East during the 1967 war, and later annexed it.
- Following its conquest of the eastern part from Jordan in the Six-Day War of 1967, the entire city has been under Israeli control.
- Palestinians insist that East Jerusalem should be the capital of their future state. Since the 1993 Oslo peace accord, the Palestinian Authority has pinned its hopes on negotiating a restoration of control of East Jerusalem, which it regards as its future capital.
- The UN's 1947 plan for the partition of Palestine between the Arabs and the Jews provided for the international governance of Jerusalem in view of the city's centuries-old religious and cultural sensitivities.
- It could be viewed as illegal as the Israeli claim that Jerusalem "complete and united" is its capital has been declared "null and void" by UN Security Council Resolution 478, which also asks member-countries to "withdraw diplomatic missions from the Holy City". The U.S. is now acting against the spirit of this resolution.

Impact of the announcement

- S. President Donald Trump's decision to recognize the disputed city of Jerusalem — revered by the Jews, Muslims and Christians — as the capital of Israel is a potentially provocative move.
- By recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the U.S. has endangered the peace process And in doing so, he has undermined the U.S.'s position as a neutral broker in Israeli-Palestinian talks. In short, he has dealt a blow to the peace process.
- To the extent that it makes a general reference to the historic city of Jerusalem, it leaves open the question whether the part alluded to is the east or the west of the city.
- A central aspect of the prevailing dispute between the Palestinian Authority and Israel revolves around the recent division of Jerusalem.
- By breaking with this consensus, Mr. Trump has in effect endorsed the Israeli claims to East Jerusalem.
- Trump's move raises vital questions about U.S. diplomacy in the region besides putting new roadblocks in the peace process.
- The Jerusalem gambit risks triggering another cycle of protests and repression in the Occupied Territories.
- In 2000, Ariel Sharon's visit to the al-Aqsa compound in the Old City sparked the second intifada.
- Palestinians are expressing similar distress today. The peace process is not going anywhere, while Israel has gradually been tightening its occupation and building new settlements.
- Hamas has already called for a third intifada. In the longer term, Mr. Trump has just made the two-state solution more complicated.

Resolution of Israel-Palestine Conflict

- The Israeli-Palestine conflict can be settled only after an agreement is reached on the status of Jerusalem.
- The city was not part of Israel in the original 1947 UN plan to partition Palestine. Jerusalem, which was supposed to be ruled by an international trusteeship, was conquered by Israel.
- This is why the UN has not recognized it as Israel's capital. With his latest announcement, Mr. Trump has endorsed the occupation.

US and Palestine

- Even if President Trump's pronouncement does not quite amount to prejudging the outcome of the stalled West Asia peace process, it has renewed long-standing anxieties over its shape and direction.
- Washington has been hostile to the growing international support for the Palestine cause.
- It opposed Palestine's elevation as a non-member observer at the UN in 2012, as well as its admission to the UNESCO.
- Similarly, the more recent U.S. decision to withdraw from the Paris-based institution was in response to the growing protection accorded to Palestinian heritage sites, which it viewed as an anti-Israel stance. Mr. Trump's moves would be watched even more closely

Category: ECONOMY

1. World awaits 'fair winds' as Buenos Aires hosts trade talks

Context:

- World Trade Organisation's (WTO) highest decision-making body meeting in Buenos Aires.
- The agenda for the multilateral trade negotiations would also include discussions on ways to advance e-commerce, investment facilitation and measures to help small firms participate effectively in the global marketplace.

In news:

- India is set to retain food security right and the protection of poor farmers and fisherfolk as top priorities at the upcoming meeting of the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) highest decision-making body in Buenos Aires.
- The city's Spanish name translates as 'fair winds' — a meaning fitting well in this context, considering that WTO rules are meant to "establish what is fair" in global trade and "discourage 'unfair' practices."

TFS proposal:

- India is keen to push forward its proposal on a **Trade Facilitation in Services** (TFS) Agreement.
- The TFS proposal aims to ensure relaxation of norms for movement of skilled workers and professionals across borders for short-term work.

Key Points:

- For India, a "permanent solution" to the issue of public stockholding for food security purposes is key.
- India is among the many countries which feel that the current WTO norms on public stockholding are very restrictive and prevent governments from meeting their people's food security needs.
- Another outstanding agricultural issue India wants to see resolved is a **Special Safeguard**

Mechanism (SSM) for developing countries.

- The SSM would permit developing nations like India to temporarily raise tariffs to counter import surges or price declines of farm items, and thereby protect their farmers.

On the negotiations to limit harmful fisheries subsidies, India is batting for continuation of subsidies to small and subsistence fisherfolk.

Focus on four areas with respect to e-commerce:

- The future of the Work Programme (covering issues related to trade arising from global e-commerce)
- The moratorium (practice of agreeing at every Ministerial Conference to not impose customs duties on electronic transmissions, until the next Ministerial Conference), Possible negotiations on e-commerce, and
- The setting up of a working group or other institutional structure.

Category: AGRICULTURE

1. Indian Navy and Dedicated Rescue Vessel

- Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Admiral Lanba detailed an ambitious acquisition plan for the Indian Navy that includes six diesel electric Scorpene-class submarines; three SSBNs (nuclear-propelled submarines equipped with a nuclear-tipped ballistic missile) to follow INS Arihant; and six SSNs (nuclear-propelled submarines) used in an attack role.
- When all these boats are operationally inducted, India will have a very credible underwater capability with a judicious mix of conventional and nuclear-propelled submarines.
- India acquired its first submarine, the INS Kalvari in 1967, six years after the Navy acquired its first aircraft carrier in 1961.
- In the intervening decades, the nation and its Navy have graduated to designing and indigenously building SSBNs — the INS Arihant.
- Concurrently, the Navy is also invested in building conventional boats in India through partnership programmes with foreign suppliers.
- For the record, India is the first country in the world to move straight to designing and building an SSBN, without moving up the scale from conventional boats and then SSNs.
- This level of professional accomplishment in the underwater domain has been realized against many odds and much of this has been possible due to the dedication and rigorous professionalism of the human resource that lies at the core of the submarine arm, from its formative years to where it is now poised.
- Thus it is appropriate that the President's Colors will be presented to the dolphin arm in Visakhapatnam.

Why a Dedicated Rescue Vessel?

- Submariners the world over are aware that they have chosen what may be the most hazardous and high-risk military specialization and have internalized the 'iron-coffin' syndrome.
- This is the unstated anxiety of the stoic submarine captain every time a boat dives that if it is unable to surface, the closure is the iron-coffin at the bottom of the sea.
- To prepare for such an exigency, every submarine-operating navy also invests in a deep submergence rescue vessel (DSRV) or has access to the same with navies that have such a capability.
- Accidents and tragic incidents do occur and the Navy's submarine arm has the ignominy of losing a boat in harbour.
- The most recent accident is that of the Argentine Navy's submarine, the San Juan, first reported

‘missing’ on November 15 and now deemed to have been lost with 44 crew members on board, including a lady officer.

- Sadly, the Argentine Navy did not have a dedicated DSRV and there is considerable speculation if this tragic loss of lives could have been averted had there not been such an inventory void.
- It merits notice that the Indian Navy does not have a dedicated DSRV even as it enters its 51st year and this void will be filled only later in 2018.
- The long-delayed DSRV acquisition symbolises much of the systemic ineptitude that characterises the Indian military machine and its many inadequacies.

Causes for the delay in acquisition of Dedicated Rescue Vehicle

- Without sounding like the bad fairy at the party, the inability of the Indian higher defence management ecosystem (from the Cabinet Committee on Security downwards) has resulted in denying the Navy’s submarine arm a critical rescue capability for decades and had a worst-case exigency ever occurred, the price paid would have been very high.
- This complacency in decision-making and fecklessness in critical policy formulation have adversely impacted the growth of the Indian military profile in many ways.
- The submarine trajectory is illustrative. Indigenous submarine-building capability got off to an encouraging start in the mid 1980s with the West Germany yard, HDW.
- Two boats were acquired from abroad and two were to be built at Mazagon Dock, Mumbai, as the foundation for an indigenous submarine programme.
- However, allegations of financial impropriety in the HDW deal led to then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi peremptorily cancelling the whole programme – and the indigenous submarine programme was set back by three decades.
- Insulating core national security interests from the vagaries of mercurial political/electoral compulsions is a matter that warrants the most serious and urgent deliberation by legislators.

Nothing here for Today!!!

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

- What characteristics can be assigned to monsoon climate that succeeds in feeding more than 50 percent of the world population residing in Monsoon Asia?

GS Paper II

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Category: POLITY/POLICY WATCH

1. Legal drinking age raised to 23 in Kerala

In news:

- The Kerala government has raised the legal drinking age from 21 to 23 years
- The State Cabinet has decided to amend the Abkari Act for the purpose.
- The previous UDF government had adopted a pro-prohibitionist policy by shutting down bars and closing state-run liquor vending outlets to reduce the availability of legal liquor.
- But in September this year, the LDF government eased the norms for four star and above bars by

reducing the mandatory offset from places of worship and educational institutions from 200 metres to 50 metres, touching off a State-wide scramble to upgrade bars and hotels.

- **Key Fact:** Maharashtra and New Delhi had raised the age to 25 but found it had little impact on the ground.

2. Centre to promote North East as single tourist destination

In news:

- The Centre will promote North East as a single tourism destination with an aim to double the tourist inflow within next three years.
- **Key Fact:**
 - The region has huge potential considering the untapped locations across the eight North Eastern states.
 - From 2013 to 2016, the tourism sector in North East grew by 5.2 per cent. During this period, 77 lakh domestic and 1.6 lakh foreign tourists visited the region.

Thematic destinations:

- The Centre is more interested in promoting the North East tourism as different thematic destinations such as adventure tourism and eco tourism under the existing tagline — **Paradise Unexplored**.
- The government is also looking at promoting North East in neighbouring countries, especially ASEAN nations.

3. U.P. becomes first State to endorse Centre's triple talaq draft bill

Context:

- On August 22, the Supreme Court struck down triple talaq, calling the practice unconstitutional and in violation of **Article 14** of the Constitution.

In news:

- Uttar Pradesh has become the first State to endorse the Central government's draft bill that makes instant **triple talaq a cognisable and non-bailable offence**.
- The draft law, provides for three-year imprisonment and a fine to a man trying to divorce his wife by uttering "talaq" three times.

Muslim Women Protection of Rights on Marriage Bill':

- The draft '**Muslim Women Protection of Rights on Marriage Bill'** was sent by the Centre to the States as the practice continued despite the Supreme Court striking it down.
- The draft was prepared by an inter-ministerial group headed by Home Minister Rajnath Singh.
- The proposed law would only be applicable on instant triple talaq or 'talaq-e-biddat' and it would give power to the victim to approach a magistrate seeking "subsistence allowance" for herself and minor children.
- The woman can also seek the custody of her minor children from the magistrate who will take a final call on the issue.
- Under the draft law, triple talaq in any form — spoken, in writing or by electronic means such as email, SMS and WhatsApp — would be bad or illegal and void.
- The provision of subsistence allowance and custody has been made to ensure that in case the husband asks the wife to leave the house she should have legal protection.

4. Section 498A, dowry: Most FIRs, least convictions

In news:

- Cruelty by husband or his relatives, covered under **Section 498A** of Indian Penal Code (IPC), makes up the largest chunk of all crimes against women
- The charge, often levelled by a wife against her in-laws in cases of dowry harassment, accounts for over 30 per cent of all crimes against women

Lowest rate of Conviction:

- Cases under Section 498A was found to have the lowest conviction rate — merely 12.1 per cent — among all cases of crimes against women

Other cases:

- Close to 10,000 cases were also registered under the Dowry Prohibition Act in 2016, but conviction rate here too was just over 15%
- The highest conviction rates have been reported in cases of immoral trafficking (38.5%) and acid attacks (37%)

Section 498A:

- Section 498A has been a matter of debate over the last few years
- Government in 2015 even attempted to make the offence compoundable. This would have allowed complainants to enter into a compromise with the accused and agree to have the charges dropped
- Making the dowry law compoundable was also among the recommendations made by the **Law Commission and the Justice Malimath Committee**
- Various courts, including the Supreme Court, have over the years called Section 498A as being prone to abuse
- In 2014, the SC said that it had a “dubious place of pride amongst the provisions that are used as weapons rather than shield by disgruntled wives”

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. [U.S. President Donald Trump recognises Jerusalem as Israel's capital](#)

In news:

- S. President Donald Trump reversed decades of policy and recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.
- This particular move will further drive a wedge between Israel and the Palestinians.
- Trump called his decision “a long overdue” step to advance the peace process. He said his decision marked the start of a “new approach” to solving the thorny conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

Palestine response:

- A Palestinian envoy said the decision was a declaration of war in the region.

2. [Solar Alliance comes into existence](#)

Context:

- The International Solar Alliance is an Indian initiative, jointly launched by PM Narendra Modi and the president of France on 30th November 2015 in Paris, on the sidelines of COP-21, the UN climate conference.

In news:

- India's global initiative, the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** that aims at increasing solar energy deployment in member countries, came into legal, independent existence.
- It is the first treaty-based international intergovernmental organisation to be based out of India.
- So far, 19 countries are part of the compact — **Bangladesh, Comoros, Fiji, France, Ghana, Guinea, India, Mali, Mauritius, Nauru, Niger, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Tuvalu, Australia, Cuba, Malawi and Peru**.

• Key features:

- The ISA, also sees itself as on a mission to mobilise more than \$1000 billion in investments needed by 2030 for “massive deployment” of solar energy, pave the way for future technologies adapted to the needs of moving to a fossil-free future and keep global temperatures from rising above 2C by the end of the century.
- India has committed itself to having 175,000 MW of renewed energy in the grid by 2022.

• India's contribution:

- As part of the agreement, India will contribute \$27 million (Rs.5 crore approx) to the ISA for creating corpus, building infrastructure and recurring expenditure over five years from 2016-17 to 2020-21.
- In addition, public sector undertakings of the Government of India, Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) and Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA), have made a contribution of \$1 million (Rs.5 crore) each for creating the ISA corpus fund.

3. Back India's entry into NSG, China told

Context:

- The political committee of the 41-member **Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies**, that is meeting in Vienna, is likely to decide on India's membership request to the **Wassenaar Arrangement**.

In news:

- Russia is speaking to China at “all levels” for India's membership at the **Nuclear Suppliers Group**, and hopes that India will win membership to the **Wassenaar Arrangement**.
- Russia's role is considered more important this year as it retains close ties with both India and China, two countries who have tense ties with each other.

Basic Information:

Wassenaar Arrangement:

- The Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies, commonly known as the Wassenaar Arrangement, is a multilateral export control regime (MECR) with 41 participating states.
- The Wassenaar Arrangement was established to contribute to regional and international security and stability by promoting transparency and greater responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies, thus preventing destabilizing accumulations.
- Participating states seek, through their national policies, to ensure that transfers of these items do not contribute to the development or enhancement of military capabilities which undermine these goals, and are not diverted to support such capabilities.
- Every six months member countries exchange information on deliveries of conventional arms to non-Wassenaar members that fall under eight broad weapons categories: battle tanks, armoured fighting vehicles (AFVs), large-caliber artillery, military aircraft, military helicopters, warships, missiles or missile systems, and small arms and light weapons.

Admission requires states to:

- Be a producer or exporter of arms or sensitive industrial equipment
- Maintain non-proliferation policies and appropriate national policies, including adherence to:
 - Non-proliferation policies, such as (where applicable) the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime, and the Australia Group
 - Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and, where applicable, START I (including the Lisbon Protocol)
- Maintain fully effective export controls
- The People's Republic of China and Israel are not members, but they have aligned their export controls with Wassenaar lists, and are significant arms exporters. The Arrangement is open on a global and non-discriminatory basis to prospective adherents that comply with the agreed criteria
- Admission of new members requires the consensus of all members.

Category: ECONOMY

1. RBI holds rates, eyes inflation and rebounding growth

In news:

- The Reserve Bank of India kept its policy rate steady, as widely expected, after inflation accelerated to a seven-month high and stronger economic growth reduced the need for monetary stimulus.
- The repo rate left unchanged at 6.00 percent, its lowest since November 2010.
- The RBI also kept the reverse repo rate unchanged at 5.75 percent.
- The annual rate of consumer inflation increased in October to 3.58 percent, driven by higher food and crude oil prices.

Basic Information:

Monetary Policy Tools:

Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) is a specified minimum fraction of the total deposits of customers, which commercial banks have to hold as reserves either in cash or as deposits with the central bank.

Statutory liquidity ratio (SLR) is the Indian government term for reserve requirement that the commercial banks in India require to maintain in the form of gold, government approved securities before providing credit to the customers.

- Statutory Liquidity Ratio is determined by Reserve Bank of India maintained by banks in order to control the expansion of bank credit.
- The SLR is determined by a percentage of total demand and time liabilities. Time Liabilities refer to the liabilities which the commercial banks are liable to pay to the customers after a certain period mutually agreed upon, and demand liabilities are such deposits of the customers which are payable on demand. An example of time liability is a six month fixed deposit which is not payable on demand but only after six months. An example of demand liability is a deposit maintained in saving account or current account that is payable on demand through a withdrawal form such as a cheque.

Repo rate is the rate at which the central bank of a country (Reserve Bank of India in case of India) lends money to commercial banks in the event of any shortfall of funds.

- In the event of inflation, central banks increase repo rate as this acts as a disincentive for banks to borrow from the central bank. This ultimately reduces the money supply in the economy and thus helps in arresting inflation.
- The central bank takes the contrary position in the event of a fall in inflationary pressures.

Reverse repo rate is the rate at which the central bank of a country (Reserve Bank of India in case of India) borrows money from commercial banks within the country.

- It is a monetary policy instrument which can be used to control the money supply in the country.
- Repo and reverse repo rates form a part of the liquidity adjustment facility.

Marginal standing facility (MSF) is a window for banks to borrow from the Reserve Bank of India in an emergency situation when inter-bank liquidity dries up completely.

- Banks borrow from the central bank by pledging government securities at a rate higher than the repo rate under liquidity adjustment facility or LAF in short. The MSF rate is pegged 100 basis points or a percentage point above the repo rate. Under MSF, banks can borrow funds up to one percentage of their net demand and time liabilities (NDTL).
- Bank rate is the rate charged by the central bank for lending funds to commercial banks.
- Bank rates influence lending rates of commercial banks. Higher bank rate will translate to higher lending rates by the banks. In order to curb liquidity, the central bank can resort to raising the bank rate and vice versa.

Market Stabilization scheme (MSS) is a monetary policy intervention by the RBI to withdraw excess liquidity (or money supply) by selling government securities in the economy. The MSS was introduced in April 2004. Main thing about MSS is that it is used to withdraw excess liquidity or money from the system by selling government bonds.

Open market operations (OMO) refers to the buying and selling of government securities in the open market in order to expand or contract the amount of money in the banking system, facilitated by the RBI.

2. PSU banks: reforms with recap

In news:

- The proposed **recapitalisation** of public sector banks will include a package of reforms.
- The Centre had announced a Rs.11 lakh crore recapitalisation plan for PSU banks, of which Rs.1.35 lakh crore would be raised **through recapitalisation bonds**.

Why recapitalization?

- Reeling under the pressure of poor asset quality over the last three years, PSU banks have seen their capital erode.
- Apart from making provisions for bad loans, the lenders would need capital to meet the **Basel-III norms** and to support their business growth.

Priority for infusion

- The banks that had managed their balance sheets ‘well’ would be given priority for capital infusion while others would have to show the resolve to reform.
- Recap bonds will be front loaded for banks that have managed their balance sheet strengths more prudently and can use injected capital to lend besides providing for legacy asset losses.

3. The unfortunate consequences of GST anti-profiteering rules

In news:

Anti-profiteering methodology

- India may adopt a product-specific approach similar to that of Australia to ensure that the full benefit

- of price reductions due to the goods and services tax (GST) is passed on to consumers
- This means that when the authority gets any complaint, it will examine the input tax credit flowing into a product and the resultant reduction in total tax

Success rate of Anti-profiteering :

- Enforcing this will be a tall order especially because anti-profiteering has not been a success in most countries where implemented. Australia, Malaysia, Canada and New Zealand are some countries where anti-profiteering or similar provisions have been put in place
- It crimped corporate profitability and it could also result in **tax terrorism**.

Reasons:

- Such provision can work only when things like raw material costs do not swing sharply
- There are many such variables and they would differ from one company to another, adding to the implementation challenge
- The movement in prices is also a function of the demand-supply scenario.

Nothing here for Today!!!

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

- What are the two major legal initiatives by the State since Independence addressing discrimination against Scheduled Tribes (STs)?

GS Paper II

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Category: POLITY

1. [Collegium and transparency](#)

Context:

- Recently, the Supreme Court decided to make public, on the court's website, its various decisions, including its verdicts on persons nominated for elevation as judges to the high courts, its choices of candidates for elevation to the Supreme Court, and its decisions on transfer of judges between different high courts

Case Histories:

- In the cases of **A. Zakir Hussain and Dr. K. Arul** (candidates nominated for elevation to the Madras High Court) the collegium has said: "keeping in view the material on record, including the report of Intelligence Bureau [IB] he is not found suitable for elevation to the HC Bench"
- The reasons offered for rebuffing the nomination of **Vasudevan V.N.**, a judicial member of the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal, are particularly perplexing. The report said: "While one of the

two consultee-colleagues has offered no views about his suitability, the other colleague has not found him suitable for elevation”

- As per record, his name was also recommended by the Collegium of the Calcutta High Court on 28.11.2016 and the Government of West Bengal has expressed its disagreement
- Record placed before us also shows that the proposal for his elevation initiated on a previous occasion by the Collegium of the Bombay High Court was rejected by the Supreme Court Collegium on 1st August 2013

Issues related to Vasudevan VN

- The collegium, ever since its inception, following the Supreme Court’s judgment in what is known as the Second Judges Case (1993). The present revelations, much opposed to their perceived objective, scarcely make the system more transparent
- In Mr. Vasudevan’s case, for example, we don’t know which of the “consultee-judges objected to his elevation, and why the judge interviewed found him unsuitable
- Also the collegium’s express noting that Mr. Vasudevan had previously been recommended by two different high court collegia
- These issues concerning the system employed to appoint judges to the Supreme Court and the high courts are of particular salience

Constitution of India and appointments of High Court judges:

- The President, who would act on the advice of the council of ministers is required to compulsorily consult certain authorities, including the Chief Justice of India (CJI)
- And when making appointments to a high court, the chief justice of that court

‘Consultation’:

- In 1977, in Sankalchand Sheth’s case, when interpreting the word “consultation,” the Supreme Court ruled that the term can never mean “concurrence”. Hence, the CJI’s opinion, the court ruled, was not binding on the executive
- And in 1981, in the First Judges Case, the court once again endorsed this interpretation, partly
- But twelve years later, in the Second Judges Case, the court overruled its earlier decisions. It now held that “consultation” really meant “concurrence”. And that the CJI’s view enjoys primacy, since he is “best equipped to know and assess the worth” of candidates
- In 1998, in the Third Judges Case, the court clarified its position further. The collegium, it said, will comprise, in the case of appointments to the SC, the CJI and his four senior-most colleagues. And, in the case of appointments to the high courts, the CJI and his two senior-most colleagues

Collegium is a part of the basic structure of the constitution

- When the Constitution was altered, through the **99th constitutional amendment** and when the collegium was sought to be replaced by the **National Judicial Appointments Commission**, the court swiftly struck it down
- It ruled, in what we might now call the **Fourth Judges Case** (2015), that the primacy of the collegium was a part of the Constitution’s basic structure and this power could not, therefore, be removed even through a constitutional amendment

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. Threefold rise in domestic budget for fight against tuberculosis

World Health Organisation report regarding TB cases in India:

- India's domestic budget for fighting tuberculosis showed a dramatic jump from about ₹700 crore in 2015 to ₹2,500 crore last year.
- In 2016, India recorded a 12% dip in the number of TB deaths from the previous year though the incidence dipped marginally by 1%.
- The number of notified cases of drug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) jumped from 79,000 to 84,000 in 2016
- However, with 1.7 million new cases in 2016, India still continues to be the largest contributor to the global burden with up to a quarter of the 6.3 million new cases of TB (up from 6.1 million in 2015). Inspite of the dip, India accounts for about 32% of the number of people worldwide who succumbed to the disease.

'90-90-90 target' by 2035:

- The government has committed to achieve a '**90-90-90 target**' by 2035 (90% reductions in incidence, mortality and catastrophic health expenditures due to TB).
- This is premised on improved diagnostics, shorter treatment courses, a better vaccine and comprehensive preventive strategies.

Activist opinions:

TB is still stigmatized and under-reported — especially from the private sector — and top-line drugs are still inadequate to treat people who suffer from the drug-resistant forms of the disease.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Govt. plans to sell Air India, AI Express together

In news:

- The Union government is working to conclude the sale of national carrier Air India by June 2018 and is keen on selling its core airline operations, together with its low-cost international airline, Air India Express.
- The decision was taken by the **Air India-specific Alternative Mechanism** — a group of Ministers led by Finance Minister to decide on the modalities of stake sale in the national carrier.
- **Modalities:** As per the decision, the Centre will look to sell AI's regional airline Alliance Air to a separate universe of bidders while Air India and Air India Express will likely go together.
- On June 28, the **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs**, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, gave an in-principle nod for strategic disinvestment of Air India. The ministerial panel, led by Finance minister, is aiming to divest stake in Air India and its subsidiaries by June 2018.
- The panel is also in favour of hiving off Air India's properties and non-operational assets into a special purpose vehicle (SPV) to retire a portion of the national carrier's debt.

2. Crypto currencies, ICOs under SEBI lens

Context:

- The rising popularity of **crypto currencies** and the increasing number of entities looking at raising funds through **Initial Coin Offerings** (ICO).

- The trend has caught the attention of the capital market regulator, which is evaluating whether such instruments and offerings can be brought under its regulatory purview.

In news:

- The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** is mulling whether an ICO can be regulated under the existing legal framework or certain amendments would be required in case the government wants the capital market watchdog to be the regulatory authority for such issuances.

Who should regulate?

- Incidentally, crypto currencies like bitcoin, ethereum and such offerings have been under government radar for long.
- Discussions have been held between various bodies, including SEBI and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), on the possible ways in which this segment can be regulated.
- The central bank is of the view that these instruments are securities and so SEBI should be the regulating body.

About ICO:

- An ICO, like an equity initial public offer (IPO), is an issuance of digital tokens that can be converted into crypto currencies and are mostly used to raise funds by start-up firms dealing in blockchain technology and virtual currencies like bitcoins and ethereum.
- Unlike an IPO, which is governed by SEBI regulations, there is no regulatory body for ICOs in India.

Key Points:

- According to data from UK-based CoinDesk, nearly \$2.7 billion has been raised globally through ICOs since 2014.
- ‘Bitcoins are neither ‘commodities derivatives’ nor ‘securities’ under Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1956.

3. Fiscal deficit rises to 91.3% of FY18 target in 6 months

In news:

- In the first six months of the current financial year, the country’s fiscal deficit touched 91.3 percent of the full-year budget estimate
- During the same period in the previous fiscal year, this figure was 83.9 percent
- In addition to the annual deficit, the national debt – the accumulation of past deficits and interest due to lenders to the Treasury – now exceeds trillion

Slippage of Fiscal deficit target:

- This will be due to lower-than-budgeted revenues, which are because of
- Uncertainty related to the buoyancy of indirect taxes post-GST, revenues from telecom and disinvestment flows
- Lower surplus transferred by the RBI

Basic Information:

What is ‘Fiscal Deficit’?

- A fiscal deficit occurs when a government’s total expenditures exceed the revenue that it generates, excluding money from borrowings. Deficit differs from debt, which is an accumulation of yearly deficits.
- A fiscal deficit is regarded by some as a positive economic event. For example, economist John Maynard Keynes believed that deficits help countries climb out of economic recession. On the other hand, fiscal conservatives feel that governments should avoid deficits in favor of a balanced budget policy.

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. How do you justify the view that the level of excellence of the Gupta numismatic art is not at all noticeable in later times?

GS Paper II

1. “The local self government system in India has not proved to be effective instrument of governance”. Critically examine the statement and give your views to improve the situation.

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Category: POLITY

1. [Speed up trial of politicians, says SC](#)

March 10, 2014 order:

- The Supreme Court, had ordered the government to conclude **criminal trials** in which **charges have been framed** against sitting MPs and MLAs “**speedily and expeditiously**” **within a year** .
- The apex court had ordered the trials to be held on a **day-to-day**
- Only “**extraordinary circumstances**” would justify a trial exceeding the one-year deadline.

Supreme Court’s current directives:

- It wanted the government to report back by December 13 on how many of these 1,581 cases were finally decided and how many ended in acquittals and convictions for MPs and MLAs.
- The court further directed the Centre to place on record how many cases have been filed against sitting and former legislators between 2014 till date.
- The apex court said it wanted details of the status of each such case and how the criminal trials ended in every one of them.

Additional Solicitor General response:

- The Centre was not averse to the setting up of special courts to exclusively try political persons.
- There was no room for a second opinion that corruption and criminality should be wiped out of politics.
- The government would support any move for the “ **utmost expeditious disposal**” of criminal cases involving political persons.

2. EC for life ban on the convicted

In News:

- The Election Commission (EC) took a definitive stand in the Supreme Court that **convicted persons should be banned from contesting elections for life**.
- EC is of the opinion that such a move would be a firm step against criminalisation of politics and uniform ban would be in the spirit of the fundamental rights of the Constitution, including the right to equality.
- As of now, a person, on conviction, is debarred from contesting any elections for the period of his or her prison sentence and six years thereafter.
- **The Election Commission’s proposals:**
 - Decriminalisation of politics
 - Making bribery a cognisable offence and
 - Prohibition on advertisements 48 hours before elections and a ban on paid news as recommended by the Law Commission in its reports.

Key Fact:

- An analysis by the **Association of Democratic Reforms** and National Election Watch has revealed that **61 of the 338 candidates** in the Himachal Pradesh Assembly elections have criminal records against them.
- Of the 338 candidates analysed, 158 are ‘crorepatis’.
- The Himachal Pradesh Election Watch and ADR have analysed the affidavits of 60 MLAs re-contesting in this election. Their average assets in 2012 were worth ₹23 crore, while this year

their average assets are worth ₹9.44 crore, which is an average increase of 80% in five years.

- Of the total candidates, 120 have declared their educational qualification to be between Classes V and XII pass, while 214 are graduates or above.

3. Bihar approves reservation for contractual postings

In news:

- Bihar approved reservation in **outsourced contractual appointments** made by the State government.
- The reservation policy to be implemented while hiring outsourced employees, including computer executives, IT assistants, drivers, peons and others.
- **For all categories:** SCs (Scheduled Caste), STs (Scheduled Tribe), OBCs (Other Backward Class), EBCs (Economically Backward Class), physically challenged people, women and all other categories entitled to reservation would be given the benefit of reservation as per rules.
- Besides, there will also be reservation in appointments of doctors, engineers, teachers and other posts on a contractual basis by the State government.

4. With draft rules, prospects of drones go skyhigh

In news:

- The government has issued draft regulations for drone operations that could be used for anything from e-commerce deliveries to photography.
- The drone industry offers many advantages and can help development in several sectors such as agriculture, oil and gas
- The newly drafted policy allows unfettered use of drones while taking care of the unique security challenges they pose.

Draft policy:

- The draft regulations, which will be finalised by December 31 this year, envisage a **virtually unregulated flight** at heights up to 50 feet for nano drones that weigh 250 grams or lower.
- All drones will have to operate within a visual line of sight, will be allowed only during day time and below 200 feet.
- Barring the nano drones that could also be used indoors, all drones will have to register with the **Director General of Civil Aviation**.
- Dropping human payload, animals or hazardous material will not be permitted,
- It would also be possible to imagine air rickshaw drones that could ferry passengers.
- The other classifications of drones, officially termed unmanned aircraft systems, are Micro (250 gm to 2 kg), Mini (more than 2 kg to 25 kg), Small (more than 25 kg till 150 kg) and Larger (over 150 kg).

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Russia-India partnership second to none: Envoy

In news:

- **Russian Ambassador quotes during a media briefing on the recently concluded tri-services exercise between Russia and India in Vladivostok:** Russia's partnership with India

is “**second to none**” and cannot be compared with its relationship with Pakistan.

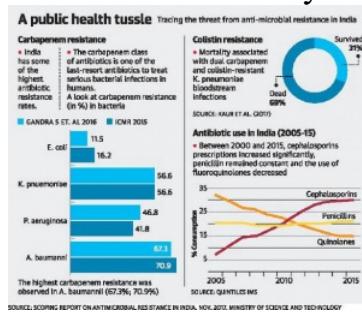
- There is no comparison between ties with India and Pakistan and that the purpose of the Russia’s two-week military drill in October with Pakistan near the Russian town of Minralney Vody, mainly focused on counter-terror cooperation.
- Our partnership with India is second to none while we have a normal inter-state relationship with Pakistan

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. [Mass bathing in Ganga aggravates anti-microbial resistance woes](#)

Highlights of the government-commissioned report—“Scoping Report on Antimicrobial Resistance in India”:

- **Research project:** researchers from the Newcastle University in the United Kingdom and the Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi sampled water and sediments at seven sites along the Ganga in different seasons.
- Mass-bathing in the Ganga during pilgrimages may be contributing to **anti-microbial resistance (AMR)**
- Such resistance —previously acknowledged to be widespread in India — is said to be the reason for certain key antibiotics becoming ineffective against diseases, including tuberculosis.



- **Findings :**

- The levels of resistance genes that lead to “**superbugs**” were found to be about 60 times greater during the pilgrimage months of May and June than at other times of the year.
- The researchers had then said preventing the spread of resistance-genes that promote life-threatening bacteria could be achieved by improving waste management at key pilgrimage sites.
- India has some of the highest antibiotic resistance rates among bacteria that commonly cause infections in the community and healthcare facilities.
- Resistance to the broad-spectrum antibiotics fluoroquinolones and third generation cephalosporin was more than 70% in Acinetobacter baumannii, Escherichia coli, and Klebsiella pneumoniae, and more than 50% in Pseudomonas aeruginosa.
- Other than ‘cultural factors’ such as bathing in the Ganga, the drivers of AMR included excessive use of antibiotics in the livestock industry and unchecked discharge of effluents by the pharmaceutical industry.
- **Key Fact:** In 2014, India was the highest consumer of antibiotics, followed by China and the United States. However, the per-capita consumption of antibiotics in India was much lower than in several other high-income countries.

What needs to be done?

- Too little work had been done so far to understand the cause and nature of AMR.
- AMR research studies in India were of limited scope in all areas.

Basic Information:

- **Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** is the ability of a microorganism (like bacteria, viruses, and some parasites) to stop an antimicrobial (such as antibiotics, antivirals and antimalarials) from working against it. As a result, standard treatments become ineffective, infections persist and may spread to others.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [Carnivorous plants use CO₂ to lure prey, says study](#)

In news:

- Carnivorous plants have been known to employ a variety of techniques like **nectar, smell, colour and ultraviolet fluorescence** to lure and capture prey.
- **New findings:** scientists at the **Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Gardens and Research Institute** here have come up with evidence that **some carnivorous plants use carbon dioxide (CO₂) to attract insects and ants to their prey traps**.
- Indian pitcher plant (*Nepenthes khasiana*) uses the gas, both to attract prey and to aid the digestive process.
- The unopened pitchers of the plant are carbon dioxide-enriched, with a gas concentration of 2,500 to 5,000 ppm (parts per million), approximately 10 times that in the earth's atmosphere.
- The open *Nepenthes* pitchers were found to emit CO₂ constantly to attract insects
- The high CO₂ environment in the pitchers and the dissolved CO₂ in the pitcher fluids might also act as a tranquilliser for the trapped prey.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. [UN says carbon emissions gap could affect climate target](#)

Highlights of the UN Environment Emissions Gap Report 2017:

- Report warns that a **big carbon emissions gap** exists between the levels that can be achieved in 2030 with present climate commitments, and what needs to be done using set pathways to limit increases in global average temperature to less than 2° Celsius or a more ambitious 1.5° C by the year 2100.
- Full implementation of the unconditional **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** and comparable action afterwards “could result in a temperature increase of about 3.2° C by 2100 relative to pre-industrial levels”, while full implementation of conditional NDCs would marginally lower that projection by about 0.2°C.
- The breaching of the safe limits that is possible even with current climate commitments — the NDCs that form the core of the **Paris Agreement** — indicates that governments will need to deliver much stronger pledges to cut greenhouse gas emissions when they are revised in 2020.
- **Fossil fuels and cement production account for about 70% of greenhouse gases.**
- The Paris accord pledges only a third of what is needed to avoid climate catastrophe, and adopting new technologies in key sectors, at investments of under \$100 per tonne of emissions, could cut them by up to 36 gigatonnes per year by 2030, which is more than sufficient to bridge the current gap.
- A large part of the potential to close the emissions gap lies in solar and wind energy, efficient appliances and passenger cars, afforestation and stopping deforestation.
- Strong action on plugging other greenhouse gases, such as hydrofluorocarbons, through the

Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, and other short-lived climate pollutants such as black carbon, could contribute.

- CO₂ emissions have remained stable since 2014, driven in part by renewable energy, notably in China and India.
- The report warns that other greenhouse gases, such as methane, are still rising, and a global growth spurt could send CO₂ emissions upward.

Basic Information:

The Montreal Protocol

- **The Montreal Protocol** on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (a protocol to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer) is an international treaty designed to protect the ozone layer by phasing out the production of numerous substances that are responsible for ozone depletion

Kigali Amendment

- In the 28th meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol, negotiators from 197 nations have signed a historic agreement to amend the Montreal Protocol in Kigali, a capital city of a tiny African country, Rwanda on 15th October 2016.
- As per the agreement, these countries are expected to reduce the manufacture and use of Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) by roughly 80-85% from their respective baselines, till 2045.

Kigali Agreement: Important Points

- It is a legally binding agreement between the signatory parties with non-compliance measures.
- It will come into effect from 1st January 2019 provided it is ratified by at least 20 member parties by then.
- It has shown a considerable flexibility in approach while setting phase-down targets for different economies accommodating their developmental aspirations, different socio-economic compulsions, and scientific & technological capabilities.
- It has divided the signatory parties into three groups-
 1. The first group consists of rich and developed economies like USA, UK and EU countries who will start to phase down HFCs by 2019 and reduce it to 15% of 2012 levels by 2036.
 2. The second group consists of emerging economies like China, Brazil as well as some African countries who will start phase down by 2024 and reduce it to 20% of 2021 levels by 2045.
 3. The third group consists of developing economies and some of the hottest climatic countries like India, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia who will start phasing down HFCs by 2028 and reduce it to 15% of 2024-2026 levels till 2047.
- It also has a provision for a multilateral fund for developing countries for adaptation and mitigation.
- The Technology and Energy Assessment Panel (TEAP) will take a periodic review of the alternative technologies and products for their energy efficiency and safety standards.
- This phase down is expected to arrest the global average temperature rise up to 0.5o C by 2100.
- Kigali agreement is an amendment to Montreal Protocol.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. Nirmala flags Indian Ocean issues

Context:

- First **Goa Maritime Conclave** (GMC) of Navy Chiefs of Indian Ocean littoral states hosted by the Indian Navy at the Naval War College in Goa.
- The GMC is intended to be held every year and aims to “bring together like-minded countries to evolve collective responses to challenges in the maritime domain.”

Concerns raised by Defence Minister during the conclave:

- Expressed concern at the **increased militarisation** in the Indian Ocean and the **extra-regional nations** setting up a “**near permanent presence**” in the region, in an apparent reference to the expanding Chinese presence in the region.
- Extra-regional nations are creating naval outposts as well as **dual-use infrastructure** in the region.
- There is an “incremental yet steady” increase in numbers of warships operating in the region. This militarisation “increases the complexities for the countries of this region.”

Maritime challenges

- **China has set up or acquired stakes in a series of infrastructure facilities in the region and has recently opened its first overseas military base at Djibouti in the Horn of Africa.**
- The Chinese Navy has also maintained a steady presence of warships and submarines in the Indian Ocean under the garb of anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden.
- To counter this, the Indian Navy has now put in place a **new concept of ‘mission based deployment’** to maintain round the clock surveillance on India’s vital areas of interest across the length and breadth of the **Indian Ocean Region** (IOR).

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Critically examine the Supreme Court’s judgement on ‘National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, 2014’ with reference to appointment of judges of higher judiciary in India.

GS Paper III

1. Among several factors for India’s potential growth, savings rate is the most effective one. Do you agree? What are the other factors available for growth potential?

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Category: POLITY

1. Delhi LG cannot simply sit on files and stultify governance: Justice Chandrachud

Context:

- **Five-judge Constitution Bench** hearing a batch of nine appeals filed by the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party government against an August 4, 2016 judgment of the Delhi High Court.
- **Controversy :** proviso to Article 239AA (4), which mandates that in case of a difference of opinion between the LG and the Council of Ministers, the former has to refer the issue to the President. In the meanwhile, while that decision is pending before the President, the LG, if the matter is urgent, can use his discretion to take immediate action.

High Court order:

- It declared the LG to have “complete control of all matters regarding National Capital Territory of Delhi, and nothing will happen without the concurrence of the LG.”
- LG has special powers greater than the President, greater than other Governors of States.

What the government is expecting?

- The Kejriwal government wants the Supreme Court to lay down the law on whether the LG can unilaterally

administer the National Capital without being bound by the “aid and advice” of the elected government.

In news:

Justice D.Y. Chandrachud oral observations regarding the role of The Lieutenant Governor:

- The Lieutenant Governor (LG) of Delhi cannot stultify proposals or schemes forwarded by the Council of Ministers to him by simply sitting on them.
- The LG is bound to pass the difference of opinions [between the LG and the Delhi Council of Ministers] to the President for early resolution.

Constitutional Status:

- The **69th Amendment of the Constitution in 1992** gave the National Capital of Delhi special status with its own democratically elected government and legislative assembly.
- Sub-section (4) of **Article 239AA** mandates that a Council of Ministers shall aid and advise the LG in his functions regarding laws made by the Legislative Assembly.

Various opinions:

- The Constitution Bench, led by **Chief Justice Dipak Misra**, prima facie said that the Delhi government’s ability to “aid and advise” the LG is limited to subjects other than public order, police and land in the National Capital. It said that the proviso to Article 239AA (4), on plain reading, seems to give primacy to the LG.
- Justice Ashok Bhushan remarked that the LG is entitled to take a different view and is not bound by the aid and advice of the Delhi Cabinet.

Counter arguments:

- Subramanian alleged that the LG has misused the discretion in this proviso to block governance to such an extent that decisions from appointment of teachers in municipal schools to opening of mohalla clinics have been pending for over a year.
- The Chief Secretary and other officers, without applying their minds to the various welfare proposals and schemes, simply forward the files to the LG, where it remains indeterminately.
- The “extraordinary discretion” of the LG is confined to special circumstances and not in everything.

2. All physical contact not harassment: Delhi HC

3. Finance Commission's changing roles, challenges over the years

Context:

- The government will soon constitute the **Fifteenth Finance Commission**, as per normal practice, a couple of years before the end of the five-year period during which the Commission’s recommendations are valid.

Constitutions provisions:

- Article 280 of the Constitution requires that a Finance Commission be constituted to recommend the distribution of the net proceeds of taxes between the Centre and states, and among the states.
- The framers of the Constitution were seeking to address the vertical imbalance between the taxation powers and expenditure and responsibilities of the federal government and the states, and the horizontal imbalance, or inequality, between states that were at different stages of development.
- Ensuring inclusiveness is, therefore, a key mandate of the Finance Commission.
- That means assigning weights to things like population, the fiscal distance between the top ranked states and the others, etc. **It is not that the best-performing state will be allocated the highest share** – even if delivery execution and governance are better – rather, the effort will be to narrow the development gap between states.
- **The Finance Commission Rules, 1951**, lay down the criteria for being members of the constitutional body: those having special knowledge of finance and accounts of government with wide knowledge and experience in financial matters and in administration, or with special knowledge of economics, and those who have been qualified to be appointed as a judge of a High Court.

Challenges ahead:

- As the Fifteenth Commission is set to be appointed, the criteria for distribution will be reviewed.
- The question is whether the commission will take into account the level of collections by each state after the roll out of the GST or not?
- The challenge this time will be the fact that unlike in the past, the share of net tax proceeds between the central government and states is almost equal.
- After the last Commission's recommendation to distribute 42%, raising the bar on higher transfer of resources will have a much bigger impact on the federal government.
- The twelfth Finance Commission had suggested that it was time now to perhaps look at a Constitutional amendment to fix a ceiling on the distribution of the net tax proceeds, with the Finance Commission arbitrating on distributing tax proceeds among states.
- The Commission itself reckons that its biggest role has been to uphold the country's federal structure, and to be an architect of fiscal restructuring – from being mainly an arbitrator between the Centre and states.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

[**1. India hits out at China's stance, as Beijing blocks UN move against Azhar**](#)

In news:

- China once again blocked an attempt by the U.S., U.K., and France to place **Masood Azhar** in the list of **global terrorists of the Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee of the UN Security Council** citing “no consensus” as a ground for its objection.
- India's response:
 - India hit out at double standards in the war on terrorism, hours after China blocked a move at the United Nations Security Council to place Masood Azhar, the Pakistan-based chief of the Jaish-e-Mohammed, in a list of global terrorists.
 - India's strong response did not name China but hinted at “one country” that had hurt the global campaign to ban the terror mastermind who is blamed for several attacks against India, including the Pathankot airbase attack of 2016.

Category: ECONOMICS

[**1. India falls to 108 on World Economic Forum's gender gap index**](#)

Context:

- Global Gender Gap Report
- Report published by World Economic Forum

Highlights of the report:

- According to the report, the gap between the achievements and well-being of men and women widened in the past year
- At current rates, it will take 100 years before women achieve equality in the four areas measured by the WEF:
 - Political empowerment
 - Economic participation
 - Health
 - Education

Rankings:

- The US fell to 49th among the 144 countries ranked, down from 45th last year and 23rd just 11 years ago. The country is only 77% of the way to gender parity in economic opportunity, a gap that's been narrowing, but not as quickly as in other countries.
- India, which sank to No. 108 overall, down 10 places from 2006 was the reverse of the US, with high rankings for women's political empowerment but near the bottom in health, education and economic participation. Economics is a particular area of concern, because women do a disproportionate amount of unpaid work, like childcare.
- Ranked 100 overall, China was No. 144—dead last—for gender parity when it came to women's health. One metric was life expectancy: Chinese women outlive men by less than two years on average, compared with a global average of five years. While about 70 percent of Chinese women participate in the work force, they earn only 64% of men's wages.

- Women in No. 1 ranked Iceland, for instance, may soon be equal to men in their contribution to the national economy

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. India offers to share real-time maritime data

In news:

- India has made an offer to share intelligence of maritime movements in the Indian Ocean in real-time with 10 Indian Ocean littoral States.
- This move is intended to counter China's increased presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- The information to be shared includes movement of commercial traffic as well as intelligence.

Co-operative system:

- India already has co-operative arrangements with several countries in the region and this initiative would see that expanding further.
- For instance, white shipping agreements to share commercial shipping data have been signed with 12 countries and more are in the works.

Nothing here for Today!!!

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

1. All the currency notes
2. All the currency notes except the one rupee note
3. All the currency notes except the hundred rupee note
4. Only notes of Rs. 10 and above

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Hard power without soft power stirs up resentments and enmities; soft power without hard power is a confession of weakness. Critically Analyze.

GS Paper III

1. "Gender equality has to be looked at in a holistic way" Discuss.

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Category: POLITY

1. [Specify deadlines in SMSs for Aadhaar linking, Supreme Court tells mobile service providers and banks](#)

Context:

- Petition challenging the linking of mobile numbers with Aadhaar The Supreme Court ordered that mobile service providers and banks should mention that **February 6, 2018 and December 31, 2017** are the last dates for Aadhaar linking.

In news:

- The Supreme Court on Friday sent a clear message to the public to not panic, by directing mobile service providers and banks to specify the last dates for linking mobile numbers and bank accounts to Aadhaar in the SMSs and e-mails they send to millions of subscribers.
- The Supreme Court Bench made it clear that the question of the very validity of the Aadhaar scheme is scheduled

- to be heard from the last week of November 2017.
- In case, by any chance, if the hearing is delayed, the petitioners are at liberty to mention for an extension in the Aadhaar linking of bank accounts.

Contention of the petitioner:

- The petitioners challenging the Aadhaar scheme argue that the mandatory requirement of Aadhaar for public welfare schemes “constrict rights and freedoms which a citizen has long been enjoying unless and until they part with their personal biometric information to the government”.
- The petitions have termed the Aadhaar Act of 2016 unconstitutional and contrary to concept of limited and accountable governance.

PMLA and Aadhaar :

- Rule 2(b) of the Prevention of Money Laundering (Maintenance of Records) Second Amendment Rules of 2017 requires Aadhaar for opening new bank accounts and for verification of existing bank accounts by December 31, 2017, failing which the “bank accounts will cease to be operational”.

2. Haj subsidy to be phased out next year

In news:

- Haj subsidy borne by the government and extended to pilgrims travelling to Saudi Arabia could be phased out as early as 2018.
- Supreme Court order:** The subsidy was to be phased out after a Supreme Court order recommended the same to the government in 2012, with 2022 as the outer limit.

New Alternative plans:

- Government is planning to spend the funds on educational programmes especially for girl children of the minority community.

Reformative measures:

- Among the recommendations was reducing the Haj subsidy to nil by 2018, allowing women without a male relative/escort/ mehram to undertake the Haj and to reduce embarkation points for Haj from 22 to nine airports which had flights to Saudi Arabia.

3. Judiciary best judge of competence: SC Collegium

Context:

- Appointment of Judges.
- Supreme Court observation:** Let judiciary, and not the Intelligence Bureau (IB), be the best judge of professional competence of candidates considered for judicial appointments

In news:

- The Collegium of Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra, Justices J. Chelameswar and Ranjan Gogoi made it clear that the IB should not delve into the professional competence of persons shortlisted for the judiciary.
- The IB does a background check on the candidates once their names are considered for elevation by the High Court Collegium concerned.
- The Supreme Court Collegium further laid down that only factually proven information supplied by the IB on candidates should be taken cognisance of by the Collegium.

4. SC: Engineering degrees secured since 2001 via correspondence invalid

In news:

- In a major setback to thousands of students who pursued engineering studies through **correspondence courses** offered by deemed universities in the last 16 years, the Supreme Court declared that the degrees were invalid, putting them at risk of losing jobs obtained on the basis of the certificates.

- **SC observation:** the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) did not approve distance learning programmes in engineering studies and the approval granted by the Distance Education Council (DEC) for such courses was illegal.
- The SC decision exposes the extent to which the regulatory system was compromised as the courses were being run for more than a decade and a half without attracting serious scrutiny.

Keep a vigil:

- The apex court directed the Centre to create an oversight mechanism to regulate deemed universities, saying that UGC completely failed to curb the commercialisation of education.
- It asked the government to review the deemed university status of various institutions.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Pak. faces flak over terror funding

Context:

- Financial Action Task Force plenary in Buenos Aires
- FATF looks into the matters of terror financing.
- China vetoed the latest bid to have Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar designated at the UNSC.

In news:

- Pakistan has failed to penalise or curb the activities of any of the terror groups [designated by the UNSC].
- India raised the issue at the International Cooperation Review Group (ICRG) in Argentina. Other countries supported India and now Pakistan has to submit a compliance report during the next session in February 2018.

FATFs' International Cooperation Review Group (ICRG) directives:

- Pakistan has been asked to report again in February on action taken against designated terror groups such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and its off-shoots Jamaat-ud Dawa and Falah-i-Insaniyat.

About FATF:

- The Financial Action Task Force (on Money Laundering) (FATF), is an intergovernmental organization founded in 1989 on the initiative of the G7 to develop policies to combat money laundering.
- In 2001 the purpose expanded to act on terrorism financing.
- The 37-member FATF is a voluntary group, without much power to enforce its ruling, it works through “peer pressure” and “naming and shaming” countries into compliance on terror finance by putting them on “grey lists and black lists”.

2. India, Bangladesh to kick off combat exercise in Mizoram next week

In news:

- **Exercise Sampriti :** The Indian and Bangladeshi armies are all set to hold an intensive combat exercise at the Counter-Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School at Vairenge in Mizoram from next week as part of the overall policy to bolster bilateral military ties.
- The aim behind “ **Exercise Sampriti** is to enhance **interoperability** between the two armies while conducting **counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism** operations in a semi-mountainous jungle terrain.
- “Sampriti will include a field training exercise at Vairenge, which will include heli-borne operations and neutralization of IEDs, and a command post exercise called Milap .
- Interestingly, the two armies will also hold a joint training capsule on anti-terror operations. The capsule’s main aim will be to train junior commanders of the Bangladesh Army in effectively handling such operations.
- The Indian armed forces, seeking closer cooperation on the counter-terrorism front, are working towards “building capacity” of the Bangladesh military, which ranges from training and exercises to military supplies and defence technologies.
- Bilateral naval cooperation has been traditionally strong, encompassing a wide span to include operational interactions through training, port calls, passage exercises along with “ **capability building and capacity augmentation initiatives**”. The Bangladeshi Navy is also the present chair of the Indian Ocean Symposium (IONS), which is a multilateral maritime cooperation platform launched by the Indian Navy.

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Private sector must invest more in contract farming: PM

Context:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi address at **World Food India (WFI) 2017**.

In news:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked the private sector to invest more in contract farming, raw material-sourcing and creating agri-linkages.
- He also pointed out that there are huge opportunities for global super-market chains considering India as a major outsourcing hub.
- Besides, he suggested that aerated drinks manufacturers consider blending 5% fruit juice in their products, and said such a procedure has major potential since fruit-juice based drinks are an intrinsic part of Indian food habits.
- In addition, he pitched for a venture based on ‘nutrition-rich and climate-smart crops’ to boost production and supply of India’s coarse grains and millets that ‘not only have high nutritional value, but can also withstand adverse agro-climatic conditions’.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY

1. IAF, DRDO successfully test indigenous ‘glide’ bomb, to be inducted soon

In news:

- SAAW (Smart Anti Airfield Weapon): An indigenously developed light weight ‘Glide’ bomb has been successfully tested in Chandipur in Odisha.
- A major milestone in the indigenous capabilities to develop guided bombs.
- The bomb is guided through precision navigation system, reached the targets at greater than 70 km range, with high accuracies.
- The guided bomb is developed by the Research Centre Imarat (RCI), Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), along with other laboratories of the DRDO and the Indian Air Force.

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

1. Maharashtra
2. Rajasthan
3. Gujarat
4. Jammu & Kashmir

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. To enhance the quality of democracy in India the Election Commission of India has proposed electoral reforms in 2016. What are the suggested reforms and how far are they significant to make democracy successful?

GS Paper III

1. What are the salient features of ‘inclusive growth’? Has India been experiencing such a growth process? Analyze and suggest measures for inclusive growth.

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – November 05

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Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [India and China oppose Fiji proposal to enhance Paris climate deal pledges](#)

In news:

- Fiji, which is the president of the conference, wants all countries to upwardly revise their targets ahead of climate change negotiations under the Paris climate agreement which begins in the German city Bonn, as the latest data shows that carbon emissions in 2016 was the highest ever.
- The proposal has been backed by out-going president Morocco.
- 197 countries will discuss the rules for operationalizing the climate accord that aims to restrict temperature rise by 2-degree Celsius to the pre-industrial levels by 2100.
- As US is out of Paris Climate Agreement, India should take it as an opportunity and a call for great and more ambitious action, not a call for inaction.

INDIA REPORT CARD

Positives :-

- India's installed solar capacity has increased three-fold to 13.4 GigaWatts (GW) since the Paris deal was signed in 2015.
- Renewable including hydro and wind, has become a sunshine sector for India with the installed capacity of over 58 GW by end of last fiscal, which is among the top five countries in the world.
- India is on track to meet its target of generating 40% of the energy from renewable sources by 2030 and to meet its target of reducing emission to GDP ratio called emission intensity by 33% by 2030 of the 2005 level. By 2016, the emission intensity reduction recorded was 18%.

Negatives :-

- India's increasing dependence on coal to meet its energy needs still remains a concern for the global climate

community. Around 59% of the total electricity generated in India is powered by coal.

ISSUES AT BONN :-

- **Pre-2020 Agenda:** The developing world will seek a status report from the rich nations on their promise to mobilise US \$100 billion a year from 2020 for rest of the world to fight climate change and to enhance emission reduction targets. The developing nations say the rich nations are far away from meeting these targets.
- **Facilitative Dialogue 2018:** This will thresh out key issues such as a transparent mechanism to review targets under the Paris agreement, when the targets need to be enhanced and how. Developing countries do not want review of the targets already decided, especially for climate change causing rich nations.
- **Finance:** Finance has been a bone of contention between the developed and the developing world with rich nations not willing to provide access to technology to address climate change. The Green Climate Fund set up to provide clean technology impetus to the developing world has not fully taken off and there is no clarity on how compensation mechanism called loss and damage will be operationalised.

2. [When Egypt's World Youth Forum #WeNeedToTalk backfires](#)

Key Points:

- World Youth Forum going to be held in Sharam El Shiekh & will be inaugurated by President of Egypt Mr Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.
- The Forum aims to provide a platform to the youth from all over the globe to engage with the key global policy makers.
- The forum will also cover role of youth in business and innovation, challenges and making of future leaders, gender equity and women empowerment among other things.

3. [Colombia signs UN deal against cocaine production](#)

Key Points:

- Colombia has signed a \$300 million agreement with the UN aimed at reducing the production of cocaine.
- According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), farmers who switch from growing coca, the raw material used to make cocaine, to safer crops will be compensated under the deal.
- Colombia is ranked as one of the main drug-growing nations in the world by the UNODC.

4. [China unveils massive island-building vessel](#)

In news:

China has unveiled a massive ship described as a “magic island maker” that is Asia’s largest dredging vessel.

The boat named Tian Kun Hao is capable of digging 6,000 cubic meters an hour, the equivalent of three standard swimming pools.

What is Dredging?

Dredging is a digging activity usually carried out underwater, in shallow seas or freshwater areas with the purpose of gathering up bottom sediments and widening.

What is Artificial Islands?

An artificial island is an island that has been constructed by people rather than formed by natural means.

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

1. Madhya Pradesh
2. West Bengal
3. Uttar Pradesh
4. Chattisgarh

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. What is Conference of Governors? What is its importance?

GS Paper IV

1. Critically analyze the various ethical issues associated with euthanasia?

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Category: POLITY

1. Supreme Court, High Court judges get DA hike

In news:

- The dearness allowance of judges of the Supreme Court and the 24 High Courts has been increased to 139% with effect from July 1 “at the same rates as are admissible to the members of the all-India service”.
- The judges have been given the DA hike based on the 6th Pay Commission as two bills to provide them the benefits of the Seventh Pay Commission are pending approval of the Union Cabinet.

2. Centre plans to set up more commercial courts

In news:

- The Union government has proposed to establish commercial courts in districts to further improve the parameters.
- The government is proposing amendments to facilitate the establishment of commercial courts, at the district level, in places where the High Courts have ordinary original civil jurisdiction.
- Legal remedy to commercial disputes and enforcement of business contracts are parameters of the World Bank ranking.
- In terms of ease of enforcing contracts, India jumped from 172 to 164.
- The specified value of commercial disputes would be brought down so as to expand the scope of commercial adjudication effectively and expeditiously.

Varying performance

- India's performance has been varied within the legal framework.
- For example, the World Bank's ranking marked "court system and proceedings in India" 4.5 out of a total of 5, but in management of cases, it was 1.5 out of 6.
- India also fared well in alternative dispute redress mechanism and scored 2.5 out of a total of 3 marks.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. India-Ukraine panel meeting falls through

In news:

- A scheduled meeting of the **India-Ukraine Inter-Governmental Commission** on November 1 was cancelled at the last moment despite all preparations for the event, including a draft protocol agreement on expanding bilateral ties being in place.
- Meeting was cancelled at the last moment due to a "scheduling problem".
- Both the sides have prepared a draft protocol covering commercial and cultural ties that will be signed during the rescheduled meeting.
- Inter-Governmental Commission is likely to give a new political orientation to bilateral ties which will also cover defence and political issues of mutual interest.
- Over the last year, India has held detailed talks with Ukraine which is fighting a war with Russia for several years. Russia too has reached out to Pakistan holding military exercise with Pakistani anti terror units.

2. Parliamentary panel studying Doklam issue

In news:

- The Parliamentary Committee on External Affairs plans to submit a comprehensive report on China-India ties next year and is looking at the "extremely topical" Doklam issue.
- The panel wanted to take a comprehensive look at the India-China ties by understanding their trade and political relations, cooperation in international bodies and the Chinese attitude on India's membership bid for the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), on terrorism and Pakistan among other aspects.

3. Quadrilateral Meet That Includes India Should Not Hurt Us, Says China

Key Points:

- China has hoped that a US-brokered quadrilateral meet that includes India, Japan and Australia is not aimed at China and would "comply with the trend of times" which it identified as peace, development, and cooperation.

- Washington was keen to have India, Japan, and Australia on board for a “productive” engagement, while Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is likely to propose the same arrangement between the four powers when President Donald Trump visits Tokyo on Monday.
- India has responded positively to the proposal, saying it has “an open mind to cooperate with countries with convergence but obviously on an agenda which is relevant to us”.
- The Chinese Foreign Ministry said it has noted the development and hopes that such an arrangement will promote mutual trust among countries in the region and not harm Beijing’s interests.
- The US, India, Japan and Australia have growing concerns over China’s increasing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region and its ambitious Belt and Road connectivity project.

Category: ECONOMY

1. GST council likely to lower 28% tax on some common-use items

Context:

In news:

- **Expected changes:** The Goods and Services Tax Council may consider lowering tax rates on goods such as handmade furniture, plastic products and daily-use items like shampoo, and simplify return filing rules.
- The Council, headed by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, will meet on November 10 to consider lowering the 28% rate on certain common-use items.
- The panel is likely to rationalise the tax rate in sectors where the total incidence of taxation has gone up because the goods were earlier either exempt from excise or attracted lower VAT rates in the previous indirect tax regime.

2. Banaganapalle mangoes get GI tag

In news:

- The famous Banaganapalle mangoes of Andhra Pradesh and Tulaipanji rice of West Bengal are among the seven commodities that have been granted Geographical Indication (GI) this fiscal year by the Indian patent office.
- The other five products which have received the GI tag this year include Pochampally Ikat of Telangana; Gobindobhog rice of West Bengal; Durgi stone carvings and Etikoppaka toys of Andhra Pradesh; and Chakshesang shawl of Nagaland

About GI:

- A GI is primarily an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory.
- Typically, such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin.
- Darjeeling tea, Tirupati laddu, Kangra paintings, Nagpur orange and Kashmir pashmina are among the registered GIs in India.
- This tag gave protection to the producer of these genuine products, which commanded premium pricing in the markets, both domestic and international.
- Once the GI protection is granted, no other producer can misuse the name to market similar products. It also provides comfort to customers about the authenticity of that product

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

1. Navy to use U.S. aircraft launch system in ship

Key Points:

- The Navy is likely to go with an advanced **catapult-based aircraft launch mechanism (CATOBAR)** from the U.S. for its second indigenous aircraft carrier (IAC-II), which is on the drawing board.
- For some time, India has been exploring the possibility of installing the U.S. electromagnetic aircraft launch system (EMALS).
- While the older generation of CATOBAR was powered by a steam catapult, EMALS uses an electric motor-driven catapult instead, which allows the launch of much heavier aircraft and also reduces the stress on the aircraft.
- EMALS will allow us to operate heavy surveillance aircraft in addition to heavy fighters.
- The Navy envisages the IAC-II to be around 65,000 tonnes and capable of carrying over 50 aircraft.
- The two countries (India and the US) had set up a joint working group on Aircraft Carrier Technology Cooperation (JWGACTC) under the **Defence Technology and Trade Initiative**, which held several rounds of discussions.

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

1. Discuss impact of globalization on higher education in India.

GS Paper III

1. Discuss India's achievements in the field of Space Science and Technology. How the application of this technology has helped India in its socio-economic development?

GS Paper IV

1. You are the Executive Director of an upcoming InfoTech Company which is making a name for itself in the market.

Mr. A, who is a star performer, is heading the marketing team. In a short period of one year, he has helped in doubling the revenues as well as creating a high brand equity for the Company so much so that you are thinking of promoting him. However, you have been receiving information from many corners about his attitude towards the female colleagues; particularly his habit of making loose comments on women. In addition, he regularly sends indecent SMS's to all the team members including his female colleagues.

One day, late in the evening, Mrs. X, who is one of Mr. A's team members, comes to you visibly disturbed. She complains against the continued misconduct of Mr. A, who has been making undesirable advances towards her and has even tried to touch her inappropriately in his cabin. She tenders her resignation and leaves your office.

- a) What are the options available to you?
- b) Evaluate each of these options and choose the option you would adopt, giving reasons.

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Category: POLITY

1. [Plotting social progress](#)

In news:

- The accomplishments of modern India are recognized around the world
- A country that was a symbol of hunger and poverty at the time of Independence and admonished for its Hindu rate of growth during the initial decades has now transformed itself into one of the fastest growing major economies
- These economic achievements are extensive, especially when considering the challenges that arose from following democratic governance after decades of oppressive colonial rule and being a multi-religious secular entity

Economic Growth perspective:

- There have been efforts to track individual social outcomes such as health, education and safety
- The National University of Educational Planning and Administration and the Government of India (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of School Education and Literacy) compute an Educational Development Index for primary and upper primary levels of education that compare States on different aspects on education universalization
- NITI Aayog has rolled out the health, education and water index
- A common measure to quantify the social progress of Indian States that can pinpoint the achievements and the challenges is still missing

Social Progress Index

- A Social Progress Index could bridge this gap
- It would rank States using social and environmental indicators on the basis of their capability to provide for basic needs such as shelter, water, and sanitation, a foundation for well-being
- Along with education, health, and communication facilities
- It would analyze the prejudices that prevail in a region prohibiting people from making their personal decisions
- Also evaluate whether citizens have personal rights and freedom or whether they are susceptible to child labour, human trafficking, corruption, etc

Highlights of a key study results:

- A study was conducted during 2005-2016 to help analyze whether States, especially using social and environmental indicators, are heading in the right direction
- The overall social progress score for the country now stands at 57.03 (on a 0-100 scale), approximately eight points higher than in 2005
- The country performs better in the provision of basic human needs rather than opportunities for its citizens

Inference:

- All the States have climbed the social progress ladder, with the group of States that had the worst performance in 2005
- Tripura, Meghalaya, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, and Bihar are now showing improvement
- This suggests that States with a relatively low level of social progress can improve rapidly
- Also the fact that the States that have achieved a threshold level of social progress, driving improvements becomes more difficult
- Average improvement was the lowest among the group of States that were categorized as “Very High Social Progress” in 2005
- The greatest improvements have been in areas where social progress most often accompanies economic prosperity
- Areas, where performance has declined or stagnated, is where the correlation with economic development is weak
- “Access to Information & Communication and Inclusion” depicts a strong relationship with per capita GDP and are the ones that have improved the most over the years
- “Health and Wellness & Environmental Quality”, that are least correlated with economic development, have eroded

Way Forward

- The overall findings show that while the economy is on the right track, there is an urgent need to identify and focus on social parameters. The reliance on the idea that economic development will automatically transform social conditions will hamper further improvements in social progress. Social progress needs to be stimulated by focussing on policies directly targeting social issues

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [Raja Mandala: Commonwealth in the time of Brexit](#)

Context:

Importance of commonwealth for India

Key Points:

- With the upcoming visit of Prince of Wales to India, India and the UK have an opportunity to think afresh about the future of the Commonwealth
- In the past an archaic anti-colonial view has distorted India’s view of the commonwealth
- And it was no surprise then that the Indian leadership stayed away from the last three Commonwealth summits in Malta, Colombo and Perth for one reason or another.
- He is coming to India to invite PM Narendra Modi to attend the Commonwealth Summit in London in April 2018
- The London Summit of the 52-nation forum, formally called the “Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting” is significant for many reasons

Significance of the summit

- Charles is likely to take over from Queen Elizabeth as the head of the organisation
- As the largest country in the Commonwealth, India will have a key role in formalising this transition
- An even more important change is Britain's impending separation from the European Union
- After the separation, the UK is making a big push to reconnect with its historic partners in the Commonwealth and the Anglosphere
- The UK wants commonwealth should have greater role in resolving contemporary global problems like climate change, urbanisation and sustainable development

India's Concern:

- The political conservatives in India, who dismiss the Commonwealth as a relic from the past, may not find Charles too persuasive
- Delhi's lack of interest in the Commonwealth in recent decades was reinforced by the preoccupation with
 - (1) Managing the complex relationships with its immediate neighbours
 - (2) Reordering its ties with the major powers
 - (3) And becoming part of regional institutions like the Association of the South East Asia

Nehru and Commonwealth:

- Despite considerable opposition from the Indian National Congress and many others, Nehru decided to join the Commonwealth.
- Nehru understood that the Commonwealth and British connection gave India a measure of flexibility in a world engulfed by the Cold War
- It allowed him to maintain a substantive political and economic link to the West even as he refused to become part of its alliance system

Importance of Commonwealth for both India and the UK

- For a Britain that is reinventing itself politically after Brexit, the Commonwealth has become an important forum to recalibrate London's international relations
- For a rising India, the Commonwealth is the most natural theatre to demonstrate its credibility as a "leading power"

The way forward

- The question today, then, is no longer about whether India and Britain should resurrect the Commonwealth, but how
- Modi's consultations with Charles this week should be the first step towards a revival of the Commonwealth at the London summit next April

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. Tuberculosis cases: Govt announces steps to check under reporting

Directions given by the Union health minister:

- The union health ministry has asked private hospitals to notify all cases of the disease reported in their facilities
- The government is aiming to eliminate tuberculosis (TB) by 2025
- The aim is to check under-reporting of tuberculosis, which has been flagged as a major area of concern by UN health agency World Health Organisation (WHO)

Other steps by the government

- The ministry will also set up two 24X7 call centres — in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh — so that patients can avail all information related to the disease by calling up these toll free numbers
- The ministry has also roped in the Indian Medical Association for further sensitisation of the health institutions

Key Facts:

- According to a report by the WHO, despite the reduction, India topped the list of seven countries accounting for

- 64% of the 10.4 million new tuberculosis cases worldwide in 2016
- India along with China and Russia accounted for almost half of the 490,000, multi drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) cases registered in 2016

Category: ECONOMICS

1. Crude oil futures surge to Rs 3,630 per barrel

Key Points:

- Crude oil futures rose 83 per cent to Rs 3,630 per barrel as speculators widened their positions amid a firm trend overseas.
- At the Multi Commodity Exchange, crude oil for December delivery was trading higher by Rs 30 or 0.83 per cent at Rs 3,630 per barrel in 62 lots.
- On similar lines, crude for delivery in current month was trading higher by Rs 29 or 0.81 per cent at Rs 3,608 per barrel in a business turnover of 1,416 lots.
- Analysts said rise in crude oil futures was largely in tandem with a firm trend in global market where prices hit their highest levels since July 2015 as markets tightened, while Saudi Arabia's crown prince cemented his power over the weekend through an anti-corruption crackdown that included high profile arrests.
- Meanwhile, the US benchmark West Texas Intermediate crude prices surged 12 cents or 0.22 per cent to \$55.76 a barrel, and Brent crude climbed 20 cents to \$62.27 a barrel.

2. One year of demonetisation: Digital transactions fail to gather steam after initial surge

Key Points:

- After an initial surge in digital payments, largely attributed to a shortage of cash in the banking system, digital transactions have seen a dip. This indicates a slow reversal in the usage of digital platforms
- This is despite doubling of point of sale (PoS) machines in merchant establishments across the country
- Mobile wallets have also seen a dip in volumes and value of transactions after the initial surge
- Unified Payment Interface (UPI), the payment platform of NPCI — promoted by RBI — had a slow takeoff even after the launch of BHIM (Bharat Interface for Money), which uses the UPI platform. The value of transactions through UPI are much below one percent of the total electronic payments in the country
- Bankers and analysts said a complete switch back to pre-November 8 trends has not happened. It shows the possibility that there has been some behavioral change in transaction patterns
- At a modest 11 percent, the country's electronic personal consumption expenditure (ePCE) rate is a far cry from some leading economies with ePCE rates upwards of 60 percent

True reality:

- With over 800 million debit cards and over 30 million credit cards in the market, almost every household in India now has access to a digital payment
- This has not yet translated into digital transactions
- At 3 times growth in payment volumes and over 3.5 times growth in transactions, consumers are beginning to enjoy the benefits of the debit card beyond its use as an ATM withdrawal instrument
- The year after demonetisation was driven by innovation, mainly new mobile applications allowing merchants to receive digital payments via UPI, Link Based, Bharat QR Scan & Pay to mPOS

GST & digitization

- GST has given the much-needed boost to the digitization initiative
- It will now be difficult to make cash deals anymore with digital trails of every transaction

Way forward

- Both the government and the regulators need to continue the initiatives taken by them
- Principle-based policies, regulation versus current approach of product or entity based regulations, seamless access to payments network and other critical payments infrastructures like UPI and RTGS will make sure that incentives continue to grow for digital transactions

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Climate meet begins: India pushes developed countries to deliver

Context

- FIJI set the stage for the fresh edition of the climate change conference, urging the world to commit itself to a 1.5 degree celsius limit on global warming, rather than a two-degree target, as it moves towards finalising the rule-book for the landmark 2015 Paris Agreement.
- The two-week conference, an annual year-end affair, is being held under the shadow of the decision of the USA administration to pull the United States out of the Paris Agreement, a move that severely undermines the goals and objectives of that agreement.
- On the opening day of the conference, however, there were no overt references to the US decision, even though that was the big subject of discussion in informal conversations.
- The US is participating in the conference, since its withdrawal cannot become effective until 2020, but its delegation remained silent on the opening day.
- India and other “like-minded developing countries” are a group of about 25 nations made an early intervention on Monday in a fresh bid to force the developed countries to deliver on their commitments under the Kyoto Protocol, the precursor to the Paris Agreement, which still has three years to go before expiring in 2020.

Doha developments:

- Amendments made to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol in Doha in 2013 extended the mandate of developed countries to take targeted cuts to their greenhouse gas emissions till 2020.
- The earlier mandate was to make emission cuts between 2005 and 2012.
- The Doha amendments are yet to become operational because they haven't been ratified by enough countries.
- Ratification of the Doha amendments was not included in the agenda of the current conference, which India and some other countries objected.
- They argued that the conference must decide on a deadline, possibly sometime next year, for every country to ratify the Doha amendments.
- The developed countries are trying to avoid their responsibilities under the Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol is not yet dead. There is still plenty that can be done within Kyoto Protocol provided there is intention to do so.
- Developing countries will continue to press for early operationalisation of the Doha amendments so that we can see some action being taken in the pre-2020 period as well.
- Fiji, the host and president of the conference, agreed to consider the suggestion by India and other countries, and appointed a facilitator to hold consultations .
- Fiji, which, like many other small island nations, is facing the worst impact of rising sea levels as a result of climate change, insisted that countries should adopt a 1.5 degree target.
- Small island countries are the most vocal in supporting the 1.5 degree target, threatened as their existence is by the rising seas.

The Paris Agreement

- The Paris Agreement wants the world to prevent the rise in global temperature beyond 2 degree celsius from pre-industrial levels, though it acknowledges that the effort to contain the temperature rise to within 1.5 degree celsius must not be abandoned.
- In the next two weeks and the year ahead to do everything we can to make the Paris Agreement work and to advance ambition and support for climate action before 2020.

Way Forward

- A greater effort is needed from the developed countries and big emitters in reducing their emissions.
- Aiming for 1.5 degrees is a serious challenge. But it provides a mission to the countries and engages their capacity for ingenuity, for organisation and sheer hard work.
- And may be the target will be achieved when humanity's capacity to innovate is unleashed.
- The latest scientific assessments indicated that the world was actually moving towards a 3 to 5 degree celsius temperature rise.
- A new report by WMO also showed that the carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere had crossed 403 parts per million, the highest ever.
- Scientists believe that concentrations of 450 ppm would lead to catastrophic and irreversible damage to the earth.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

1. Talks regarding international monetary system
2. Talks regarding refugee crisis
3. Talks at WTO regarding world trade
4. None

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

1. Indianness is not confined to the sectarian prejudices of some of the self-appointed guardians of Indian culture. Illustrate with examples.

GS Paper II

1. Under the Indian Constitutional and Legal framework, what constitutes Hate speech? How does it violate Fundamental Right to Equality enshrined under Article 14?

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Nothing here for Today!!!

Category: GENDER EQUALITY

1. Uttarakhand 13th in Gender Vulnerability Index

- The first ever Gender Vulnerability Index is computed by Plan India, a non-governmental organisation.
- It provides state-wise ranking by analyzing four parameters, namely health, education, poverty and protection/safety from violence.
- The index is topped by Goa followed by Kerala and Mizoram.
- Bihar ranked the lowest in the index particularly women safety and security.

- The composite index has been developed within research for the NGO's "Plan for Every Child campaign".
- It is aimed at comprehensively understanding the dimensions of various problems affecting children, particularly girls, in difficult circumstances.

Category: GOVERNANCE

1. 'LG cannot differ with govt. on trivial issues'

Context

- The Supreme Court on Thursday reminded the Delhi government that there were limitations to its powers under the Constitution, but added that in matters where the Lieutenant Governor (L-G) had differences with it, he could not sit on files.
- Instead, L-G was required to forward them to the President within a reasonable time.
- The court said in urgent matters, it is the L-G who is given primacy.
- The executive power of the government of Delhi was not exclusive to the executive power of the Centre.
- SC was hearing the Delhi government's plea challenging a Delhi High Court order confirming the L-G as the administrative head of the National Capital Territory (NCT).

The Plea by the State government

- Appearing for the state government, Senior Counsel contended that its day-to-day working was being hindered as civil servants feel they don't have to report to the ministers but only to the L-G and the L-G feels he has inherent power to veto.
- As a result, the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers is neutralized.
- And, even civil servants do not recognise the ministers as heads of departments. As a result no decision can be taken.
- The Senior Counsel for the state also sought to know if this is contemplated under Article 239AA and the provisions must be interpreted in a way that it serves the object.
- The counsel added that even the decisions on extending welfare measures were stuck because of the L-G's stance and this interfered with the government functioning and a constructive interpretation will not defeat the purposes of 239AA.

The SC viewpoint

- The SC wanted to know that in the absence of a law, who has the power the executive or the L-G and added that the language of the Constitution says L-G's decision is final.
- The court was of the view that the public order in Delhi, police or land cannot be subject of executive power of government of Delhi.
- The court also considered if some restrictions can be read into the proviso dealing with the powers of the L-G or whether it can be restricted to some cases.
- And added that even when there were differences between the L-G and state government, the L-G cannot be sitting on a file. He is under Constitutional obligation to refer it to President, which means he has to send that in a reasonable time. The L-G he must also record his differences in writing.
- The SC pointed out that under Article 239 (1), it was the President who appoints the administrator for Delhi and this administrator was designated as L-G, which means the administration of Delhi is by the President in the name of the administrator and that the substantive power to appoint the administrator is under Article 239 (which deals with the administration of Union Territories and President's power in this regard) and not under Article 239AA.
- But the State's counsel countered it by saying that though the genesis of appointment is in 239, the measure is in 239AA and the objective of 239AA would not have been to create dual governments.
- The SC said that the L-G was entitled to have his views and whatever power executive has it has to flow from 239AA.
- Article 239AA(4) (which speaks about a Council of Ministers to aid and advise the L-G) may be a recognition of Article 73, which says that the executive powers of the Union extends to all matters in respect to which the Parliament can make law.
- The CJI added that when the Constitution-makers included these provisions in the document, they probably had in mind the question of Constitutional collegiality.

Category: GOVERNANCE AND EMPLOYMENT

1. Demonetization made India a better habitat

Is unemployment our real problem?

- Our unemployment rate of 4.9 per cent is not vague but a wages problem(i.e. low wages)
- This diagnosis is important
- As our real problem is wages, India needs the higher productivity that comes from structural change: Formalisation, industrialisation, urbanisation, skilling and deep financial markets

How demonetisation made India a better habitat for formal job creation?

- Demonetisation has reduced cash with citizens.
- Bank deposits have increased by somewhere between Rs 2.8-4.3 lakh crore.
- Currently, banks are lending this liquidity to the RBI but when they start doing their jobs well, this liquidity will boost investment and formal job creation.
- Demonetisation exploded the number of digital payments on UPI/Bhim from 1 lakh in October 2016 to 7.7 crore in October 2017.
- Digitisation is important for formalisation because it makes regulatory arbitrage and tax evasion difficult.
- Demonetisation has catalysed a savings shift away from gold and real estate.
- The eight months after demonetisation saw mutual fund inflows of Rs 1.69 lakh crore and the three months after demonetisation saw Life Insurance Premiums rising by 46 per cent.
- Greater financialisation of savings creates a virtuous cycle for formal job creation because they deepen and broaden domestic capital markets.
- Expensive loans are better than no loans but the cost of money has been crippling for India's entrepreneurs.
- Lowering interest rates is a policy priority and banks had been only passing on 50 per cent of lower policy rates to customers; in the year after demonetisation this has risen to 100 per cent.
- India's economic trajectory suggests interest rates could reduce another 3 per cent over time.
- Sustained formal job creation needs the lower interest rates that come from macroeconomic stability, fiscal discipline, muted inflation expectations and an Independent Monetary Policy Committee.
- Demonetisation targeted a less-cash society because cash is the primary tool of corruption
- Demonetisation did not end corruption but raised its costs
- And ending our sense of humour about the rule of law that bred a riskless view of cash is an important precondition for sustained, formal, high-wage job creation

The way forward

- The problem for India's youth is not jobs but wages.
- As India completes a year of demonetisation, it's early for conclusions but the early results are encouraging

Category: SECURITY

1. The Indian Army has launched an independent and fully-integrated Joint Training Node (JTN)

- Planning to host foreign armies in joint exercises, the Indian Army has launched an independent and fully-integrated Joint Training Node (JTN) at Umroi cantonment in Shillong.
- The JTN is the first of its kind in eastern command and is different from other joint training centres in Belgaum, Varangte and Bakloh.
- The concept was envisaged keeping in mind the conducive weather terrain offering optimal training environment, and has been developed at par with training centres of leading armies of the world.
- The JTN is ready to host the Bangladesh Army, and exercises with Myanmar and Chinese armies are planned for next year.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Paradise Papers: Promoter firms pledge Zee shares to raise funds via offshore route

- Centre reconstitutes the Multi-Agency Group formed in 2016 to investigate disclosures on offshore accounts of 714 Indians.

What are the 'Paradise Papers'?

- These are around 13 million leaked files from offshore service providers and company registries obtained by a German newspaper.

- It was made public by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and its media partners.
- They essentially reveal the offshore interests and activities of politicians, world leaders and celebrities, and the tax engineering of more than 100 MNCs, from around 180 countries.
- It also includes details of corporate registries maintained by governments in 19 secrecy jurisdictions often referred to as “tax paradises”.
- Notably, a major portion of these files are in relation with a Bermuda firm Appleby and a Singapore-based Asiaciti Trust.
- Unlike the previous leaks, the latest revelations are more about mega corporates than individual players, on their misuse of offshore jurisdictions.
- India ranks 19th in terms of the number of names that feature in the papers.

What is the Multi-Agency Group?

- The latest report comes a few months after a similar ‘Panama Papers’ disclosure that came in 2016.
- The Panama Papers named several prominent Indian politicians, actors, and businessmen as having offshore undisclosed bank accounts.
- Following this, a Multi-Agency Group (MAG) was constituted.
- The government has now reconstituted this MAG led by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), to investigate cases relating to the ‘Paradise Papers’ data disclosure.
- This will have representatives from CBDT, Enforcement Directorate, Reserve Bank of India and the Financial Intelligence Unit.

How are offshore companies a concern?

Legality – It is not necessarily illegal to set up offshore companies.

- This is because India has double-taxation avoidance agreements (DTAAs) with several countries with lower tax rates than its own.
- The companies incorporated in such countries can use their tax residency certificates (TRC) to enjoy the tax benefits available legally.

Apprehensions – However, increasingly, companies and bank accounts are created overseas, providing nominee office-bearers and facilitating bank loans or transfer of shares in multiple secrecy jurisdictions.

- This essentially means using or incorporating overseas shell companies to take tax advantages through illegal means.
- These include:
 1. operating as fake entities and engaging in tax evasion, manipulation of the market, money laundering, parking black money, etc.
 2. round tripping i.e. taking untaxed money out of the country through inflated invoices and then bringing it back as investment.
 3. instances of assets of Indian companies being used to guarantee loans raised by offshore companies without disclosing it to Indian regulators.
 4. changing ownership of offshore companies to actually change the ownership of shares held in Indian companies without paying taxes in India.

Impediment – A company is generally entitled to arrange its financial affairs in whichever way it wishes, to reduce its tax liability.

- The fact that the motive for a particular transaction is to avoid tax does not necessarily invalidate the transaction unless the law of the land specifies so.
- There is a corporate army engaged in imaginative bookkeeping to discover and exploit legal loopholes to evade tax in most cases.
- The burden of justification thus is always on the financial regulators.

Exposures – The recent disclosures help regulators overcome the obstacle of secrecy, enabling them to investigate instances of financial malpractices.

- The sheer size of the Paradise Papers disclosures and the corporate-centric leads they provide, mark a big step forward.

- Such insight into corporate ingenuity allows regulators to bring in better laws and global tax reforms.

2. Nov. 8 was a black day: Manmohan Former Prime Minister calls note ban, GST twin blows that “broke the back of businesses”

- Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said the twin blows of demonetisation and implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) were disastrous for the economy and “broke the back of businesses.”
- Singh launched a scathing attack on the NDA government and reiterated his statement in Parliament that the note ban was “organised loot and legalised plunder.”
- “Demonetisation has proved to be mere bluster to reap political dividends while the real offenders have escaped. I repeat, this was organised loot and legalised plunder,” Dr. Singh said, a day before the controversial move’s first anniversary, which the Central government is celebrating as “Anti-Black Money Day.”
- “One must remember that nowhere in the world has any democracy undertaken such a coercive move, withdrawing 86% of legal tender in one single swoop.”

New low for investment

- According to him, the growth in private investment is at a 25-year low, which is terrible for the country’s economy.

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. India questions rich nations’ sluggish climate actions under previous commitments at Bonn Summit

- The climate change meet in Bonn must heed the 2015 targets, despite the U.S. reversal.
- The 23rd conference of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change under way in Bonn faces the challenge of raising the ambition of the world’s leaders, and giving practical form to the provisions of the Paris Agreement.
- Although 169 countries have ratified the accord, and there is tremendous support for greener, low-risk pathways to growth worldwide, the Trump administration in the U.S., one of the top emitters of greenhouse gases (GHGs), has announced it will withdraw from the pact.
- Even if it will take until 2020 to achieve an actual withdrawal, the U.S. action reverses the overall momentum achieved in Paris in 2015, and negates President Barack Obama’s legacy of regulations designed to reduce America’s GHG emissions, especially from the use of coal.
- It is heartening that China, which has achieved rapid economic growth and leads in GHG emissions, is firmly behind the pact to reduce the risk of climate change.
- There is steady progress in the growth of renewable energy sources as they become cheaper and the efficiency of solar, wind and energy storage technologies improves.
- The Agreement has a benchmark of raising \$100 billion a year by 2020.
- The recent Emissions Gap Report from the UN underscores the terrible mismatch between the voluntary pledges made by countries for the Paris Agreement and what is necessary to keep a rise in global average temperature below 2° C, preferably 1.5° C.
- India’s emissions have been rising overall, but it has committed itself to lowering the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33-35% by 2030 from the 2005 level.
- By some estimates, India has been awarded among the highest levels of multilateral climate funding at \$745 million since 2013.
- Securing funds for mitigation and adaptation is a high priority for India, but it must ensure that States acquire the capacity to absorb such assistance efficiently.
- While the emphasis on a giant renewable energy programme has won global acclaim, the focus is equally on India’s readiness to embrace green technologies across the spectrum of activity, including buildings and transport.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper III

- The famous Banaganapalle mangoes of Andhra Pradesh and Tulaipanji rice of West Bengal are among the seven commodities that have been granted GI this year. With respect to the GI tag, analyze the benefits available on the commodity after tagging?
- Recently Prime Minister Narendra Modi has asked the private sector to invest more in contract farming. What is contract farming and how can it benefit the agricultural economy in India?
- Is Naga peace talk process very crucial for North-east development? What measures can be taken by the government to bring a conclusion to the issue?

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – November 09

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Category: CULTURE

1. Cherry Blossom Festival

- Cherry Blossom Festival is being held in Shillong which will celebrate the flowering in this International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, with community events such as guided night walks, live music gigs, a beauty pageant, and stalls showcasing the cuisine, wine, arts and craft of the region.
- Cherry Blossom Festivals celebrated in countries like Japan, USA, Switzerland, and Korea have established an “intercontinental friendship”, and voiced hope that in a few years, Meghalaya can get international recognition with the active participation of government departments and stakeholders.
- The first cherry blossom festival in Shillong was held in 2016 but this year, the Meghalaya government decided to make it an international event this year.

- The festival is being organised by the Meghalaya government in collaboration with the Institute of Bioresources and Sustainable Development (IBSD), a national institute under the Department of Biotechnology, and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).

What can Travelers experience?

- Travelers can join night walks under illuminated cherry blossoms, led by volunteers at Ward's Lake between 5-8 p.m.
- Alongside, there will be a rock concert, traditional folk music, unplugged western music and dance performances from all over North East India, choir performances, bicycle rallies, storytelling sessions of local and world folktales and a Japan Higher Education Fair.

Category:

1. Area Suraksha Mitras

- Community policing (CP) is an initiative of Bengaluru city police in partnership with Janaagraha.
- The objective of the program is to address neighborhood safety and security concerns through responsible participation of the citizenry in crime prevention, at the level of the local community. Here both police and citizens work in partnership to ensure a safer and secure neighbourhood.
- Community Policing focuses on community engagement to address issues of crime and social disorder through the delivery of police services, which include aspects of traditional law enforcement, prevention and solving the safety and security challenges.
- It is an approach, wherein community support and interaction helps prevent & control crime and citizens have a say in identifying and solving neighborhood safety and security concerns. CP accomplishes this through harnessing participation from active **citizen volunteers, also called as Area Suraksha Mitras (ASMs)**.

2. Telangana leads state-wise ease of doing business ranking

- Telangana is currently atop the yearly state-wise ranking on assessment of implementation of the 'Business Reforms Action Plan' (BRAP) in 2017
- Telangana (with an implementation score of 61.83%) is followed by Haryana (54.03%), Odisha (45.70%), Chhattisgarh (45.43%), and West Bengal (44.35%) — completing the top five. However, the ranking is dynamic and till they are frozen, these positions could change due to intense competition between States.
- Telangana was the joint topper with Andhra Pradesh, in the ranking last year. However, Andhra Pradesh (score of 18.01%) is currently ranked 14th. Gujarat, ranked third last year, is now number eight with a score of 41.94% while Madhya Pradesh, which was fifth last year, is now 22nd with a score of 10.22%.

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. Andaman's new taste is sweet-and-sour

- Edible wild banana species discovered, the second such on the island in two years
- It is of a species of wild banana named **Musa paramjitiana**, in honour of Paramjit Singh, who happens to be the director of the Botanical Survey of India (BSI).
- The species was found in North Andaman's Krishnapuri forest, 6 kilometres from any human habitation.
- The plant grows to a height of nine metres and bears an edible, sweet-and-sour tasting fruit that is boat-shaped and has numerous bulb-shaped seeds. Its conservation status has been declared as 'Critically Endangered' as it has so far been spotted in only two locations on the islands, each with 6 to 18 plants in a clump.

2. New ant species discovered in the Western Ghats

- Researchers have discovered a new species of ant in the Western Ghats, recognised as one of the world's 'hottest hotspots' of biological diversity.
- The new species was found in the Periyar Tiger Reserve.
- Belonging to **Tyrannomyrmex**, a rare tropical genus of ants, the species was discovered by the team from the Vallakadavu range
- Paying tribute to their mentor and eminent myrmecologist Musthak Ali, who is regarded as the country's 'ant man', the authors of the study have named the new species *Tyrannomyrmex alii* (or *T. alii*) Sadasivan and Kripakaran 2017.

- *Tyrannomyrmex* is a rare myrmicine (subfamily of ants) ant genus that is distributed in the Indomalayan bioregion that extends from southern India and Sri Lanka to southeast Asia.

Where is it found?

- The particular genus had been erected in 2003 with the discovery of the species, ***Tyrannomyrmex rex Fernández, in Pasoh Forest Reserve***, Malaysia.
- Later, two more species that were under the same genus had been discovered; ***Tyrannomyrmex dux (or T. dux)*** from the Ponmudi hills in 2007 and ***legatus*** from the Sinharaja Forest Reserve in Sri Lanka in 2013.
- alli has thus become the four species of the rare genus and the second one from India. Notably, both of the *Tyrannomyrmex* species that have been described from the country are known from the Western Ghats range in Kerala.

How is it different?

- The new species can be distinguished from the **other species of the same genus through its morphological characteristics.**
- While it differed from ***T. dux* by the petiolar shape**, it became **dissimilar to *T. legatus* and *T. rex* by surface sculpture and pilosity**.

Periyar National Park

- Periyar National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary (PNP) is a protected area near Thekkady in the districts of Idukki, Kottayam and Pathanamthitta in Kerala
- It is notable as an elephant reserve and a tiger reserve.
- The park is a repository of rare, endemic and endangered flora and fauna and forms the major watershed of two important rivers of Kerala, the Periyar and the Pamba.
- The park is often called the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary or Thekkady. It is located high in the Cardamom Hills and Pandalam Hills of the south Western Ghats along the border with Tamil Nadu.
- The first official action towards the conservation of wildlife and biodiversity in Kerala was taken in 1934 by the Maharaja of Travancore, Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma, by declaring the forests around Periyar lake as a private game reserve to stop the encroachment of tea plantations

Category: SECURITY

1. Pakistani terrorists, smugglers may use drones to ship arms, drugs to India

- Terrorists and smugglers from Pakistan may use drones and paragliders to escape detection while dropping arms and contraband items in India from across the border, a multi-agency group has said in a confidential report
- Senior officials representing their respective agencies have elaborated in the report on the threat of use of drones and paragliders from across the border for dropping arms and drugs that can be retrieved later using the GPS coordinates
- The report says some women in border areas are being “trained to lure” officials to make them accomplices in smuggling.
- BSF has observed that drug peddlers and terrorists are found to be actively using social media platforms to communicate among themselves
- The report says Pak-based drug smugglers in the “guise of farmers” are trying to establish contact with innocent Indian farmers during day time while working in the fields.
- Security forces have zeroed in on the Gujar community living in ‘deras’ near the border that have long been suspected to be used for “logistic purposes” by terrorists and smugglers.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

1. AIIMS chief compares Delhi air pollution to Great Smog of London

- As air pollution hit alarming levels in Delhi, major city hospitals on November 8 experienced a surge in the number of patients complaining of respiratory problems with the AIIMS chief comparing the situation to the killer Great Smog of London in 1952.

Background

- The Great Smog of London, or Great Smog of 1952 sometimes called the Big Smoke, was a severe air-pollution event that affected the British capital of London in December 1952.
- A period of **cold weather, combined with an anticyclone and windless conditions**, collected airborne pollutants – mostly arising from the use of coal – to form a thick layer of smog over the city.
- It lasted from 5 December to 9 December 1952 and then dispersed quickly when the weather changed.

Options Available

N95 AURA PARTICULATE RESPIRATOR

3-panel disposable flat-fold respirator with a "cool flow" valve



Available: Online, select chemists
Comfort: Comfortable fit over nose and mouth
Fit: Fits well over the contours of the face, low chance of air leaking in from the sides, soft inner lining
Reusability: Disposable, change after using for a day or two
Sizes: Standard size
Price: Rs 207
Verdict: Worth the money in terms of comfort, effectiveness

TOTOBONO MASK

Compact, lightweight mask with a pair of disposable filters



Available: Online
Comfort: Compact and light, but needs effort to fit well. Plastic material may be an irritant.
Fit: Fitting problematic as air tends to leak down towards the chin.
Reusability: Reusable, change when filters turn grey
Sizes: Comes in two sizes, adults and child
Price: Rs 2,000-Rs 2,599 per piece, Rs 250 for a pair of filters
Verdict: Steep price

What did the doctors say?

- The current smog situation in the national capital is same to the post-Diwali situation in 2016 and expressed fear that around 25,000 to 30,000 people may lose their lives in Delhi-NCR due to diseases exacerbated by pollution.

Category: DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. Vietnam typhoon toll rises to 106

- Vietnam's deadliest storm this year, **Typhoon Damrey**, has killed 106 people, while dozens of dangerously full reservoirs release water. The storm, which struck on Saturday, left 25 missing and 197 injured, the country's search and rescue committee said.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Capital gains tax relief for foreign origin fund

- Income from sale of securities in India **by funds based abroad will be exempt from capital gains tax**, the government announced. This exemption will be given only when the India-focused fund is also charged to tax in India.
- The Finance Act of 2012 had amended section 9 of the Income Tax Act to address the ruling given by the Supreme Court in favour of Vodafone.
- Accordingly, **gains through indirect transfers were made subject to capital gains tax**. The condition being

that the Indian assets should exceed Rs 10 crore and represent at least half the value of all assets held by the foreign investor.

- Investors holding less than five per cent of the share capital or voting power of the company were exempt from this.

Tax relief

- Tax exemption will be given only when the India-focused fund is also charged to tax in India
- CBDT said the tax provision on indirect transfer would not apply to this type of income at PE and VC funds
- The issue was a concern among foreign portfolio investors
- On December 21 last year, CBDT issued a circular that offshore vehicles, including FPIs, were subject to indirect transfer provisions
- The move had set alarm bells ringing in fund houses from Hong Kong to New York

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

- Briefly discuss the developments in the geopolitics of the Middle East and its effects on India.

GS Paper III

- Discuss the futuristic applications of Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- What steps the government should take to further improve India's ranking in the World Bank's Ease of doing Business?

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Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [Trump to become first foreign leader to dine in Forbidden City since founding of modern China](#)

- Donald Trump will receive an honor in Beijing not granted to any US President since the founding of the People's Republic of China: official dinner inside the Forbidden City.

Architecture

- Originally constructed in the early 1400s, the Forbidden City is considered to be among the most important architectural and cultural monuments inside China. Designed to reflect the majesty of the emperor, the vast walled complex consists of over 90 palaces and courtyards of varying significance.
- The Forbidden City is a palace complex in central Beijing
- The Forbidden City served as the home of emperors and their households as well as the ceremonial and political center of Chinese government for almost 500 years.
- The Forbidden City was declared a World Heritage Site in 1987, and is listed by UNESCO as the largest collection of preserved ancient wooden structures in the world.

Category: GOVERNANCE

1. Tribal front IPFT to go it alone in Tripura polls

- The Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT) has long been campaigning for a separate Twipraland for tribals by carving out the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council.

Tipraland

- It is the name of a proposed state in India, **proposed by the Tipra people of Tripura**.
- The Twipra Kingdom is a former country which was ruled by 184 Tripuri/Tipra kings. The last king was **Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur Debbarma**. After his death in 1946, Twipra kingdom joined India as a Union Territory on 15 October 1949 under the name Tripura, and later achieved statehood.
- From that time onwards many **Bengali Hindus and Muslims immigrated to Tripura**, and slowly took political power from the Tipras. As the political and economic power shifted to the immigrants, the very existence of the Tipra people and their culture was jeopardized.
- The indigenous **Tipra people demanded an autonomous district**, which they finally achieved on 23 March 1979. However, the **Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAACD)** was unable to protect the rights of the indigenous Tipra and other tribal communities.
- The Tipra people feel it has become clear that without full governmental power, **the indigenous Tipra people cannot survive**. Thus the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura, a regional political party under the leadership of N.C. Debbarma, has advocated for converting the TTAADC area into a full-fledged state.

2. High Court restrains Rajasthan government from increasing quota

- The Rajasthan High Court restrained the government from implementing the provisions of a Bill passed in the State Assembly, by which it increased reservation for the Other Backward Classes (OBC) from 21% to 26%.
- The Bill, passed created the "**most backward**" category within the OBCs for providing reservation to Gujjars and four other nomadic communities in government employment and educational institutions.
- The Backward Classes (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions in the State and of Appointment and Posts in Services under the State) Bill, 2017, gave 5% reservation to the Gujjar, Banjara, Gadia-Lohar, Raika and Gadariya communities.
- With its passage, reservation in Rajasthan stood at 54%, exceeding the 50% ceiling mandated by the Supreme Court.

What does the government say about this?

- The State government has maintained that as per the Supreme Court's ruling in the *Indra Sawhney* case, special circumstances exist in Rajasthan for giving reservation to the OBCs beyond the 50% ceiling.
- The State OBC Commission has recommended quota to the communities classified as OBCs, which comprise 52% of the State's population.

What had SC commented in that case?

- The Supreme Court said, "the reservations contemplated in clause (4) of Article 16 should not exceed 50 per cent. While 50 per cent shall be the rule, it is necessary not to put off consideration of certain extra-ordinary situations inherent in the great diversity of this country and the people. It might happen that in far-flung and remote areas, the population inhabiting those areas might, on account of their **being out of the mainstream of national life and in view of the conditions peculiar** to and characteristic of them need to be treated in a different way; **some relaxation in this strict rule may become imperative**. In doing so, **extreme caution is to be exercised and a special case made out .**"

Category: HEALTH AND EDUCATION

1. On a mission to promote menstrual hygiene

Context

Two young medical professionals, pathologist Kadiyam Kavya and her friend gynaecologist Priti Dayal, are espousing a unique cause — going round rural schools not only educating the girls on menstrual hygiene, but also supplying them sanitary napkins free for one year.

Issue Area

- 80 per cent of the women do not use sanitary napkins, particularly those in rural parts, leading to severe health complications.
- Most of the girls, after attaining puberty, drop out of schools due to ignorance and lack of accessibility to sanitary napkins.

Category: ECONOMY

1. GST Council to tighten norms for Composition Scheme

Context

- The twenty-third meeting of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council was held in Guwahati
- It is set to tighten the noose on players who, authorities believe, have started splitting their business operations into smaller entities to avoid higher tax liabilities.

What is expected out of meeting?

- The Council is also set to cut tax rates on a large number of product lines.
- The Council is expected to further liberalise the Composition Scheme for small businesses and traders to pay a flat and low tax on their turnover.
- The annual turnover eligibility threshold is likely to be raised to ₹1.5 crore from the Rs.1 crore limit, imposed at the Council's October meeting.

Composition Scheme

- The composition levy is an alternative method of levy of tax designed for small taxpayers whose turnover is up to Rs. 75 lakhs (Rs. 50 lakhs in case of few States).
- The objective of composition scheme is to bring simplicity and to reduce the compliance cost for the small taxpayers. Moreover, it is optional and the eligible person opting to pay tax under this scheme can pay tax at a prescribed percentage of his turnover every quarter, instead of paying tax at normal rate.

The following people cannot opt for the scheme:

- Supplier of services other than restaurant related services
- Manufacturer of ice cream, pan masala, or tobacco
- Casual taxable person or a non-resident taxable person
- Businesses which supply goods through an e-commerce operator

The following conditions must be satisfied in order to opt for composition scheme:

- No Input Tax Credit can be claimed by a dealer opting for composition scheme
- The taxpayer can **only make intra-state supply (sell in the same state)** e. no inter-state supply of goods
- The dealer cannot supply GST exempted goods
- Taxpayer has to pay tax at normal rates for transactions under Reverse Charge Mechanism
- If a taxable person has different segments of businesses (such as textile, electronic accessories, groceries, etc.) under the same PAN, they must register all such businesses under the scheme collectively or opt out of the scheme
- The taxpayer has to mention the words 'composition taxable person' on every notice or signboard displayed prominently at their place of business
- The taxpayer has to mention the words 'composition taxable person' on every bill of supply issued by him.

The following are the advantages of registering under composition scheme:

- Lesser compliance (returns, maintaining books of record, issuance of invoices)
- Limited tax liability
- High liquidity as taxes are at a lower rate

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. Odd-even rule back in Delhi from Monday

- The odd-even vehicle rationing scheme will be enforced in the capital for a five-day period, from Monday, as part of a graded response plan to tackle pollution in Delhi.

Who will be exempted?

- It will be in place from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- Women drivers, two-wheelers and vehicles carrying children in school uniform, in addition to VVIPs, would be exempted from its provisions
- Vehicles driven or occupied by handicapped persons will also be exempt.
- According to the government, vehicles of the President, the Vice-President, the Prime Minister, Governors, the Chief Justice of India, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Union Ministers, Leaders of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, and SPG protectees, among others, will be exempt.
- Embassy vehicles do not come under odd-even rules and neither do commercial vehicles bearing yellow number plates.
- The Delhi government has not given any exemption to its Ministers, including the Chief Minister.

What is the Process?

- The policy mandates that private vehicles ply on the basis of the last number of their licence plates — odd numbered cars on odd dates and even-numbered ones on even
- It has been enforced in Delhi twice earlier: from January 1 to 15 and April 15 to 30.

Penal action for violation

- Motorists will have to pay Rs.2,000 if they violate provisions of the scheme
- It will be enforced by teams of the Delhi police, the transport department and sub-divisional magistrates.

2. Olive Ridleys keep date with Odisha coast, arrive in large numbers

- Olive Ridley turtles have kept their date with **Gahirmatha beach in Odisha's Kendrapara district**, known as **world's largest rookery of this endangered species**, arriving just offshore for mating in large numbers.
- To ensure safe mating, day and night patrolling has been intensified so that fishing attempts can be checked

Olive Ridley Turtles

- The Olive ridley turtles are **the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles** found in the world, inhabiting warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans.
- These turtles, along with their cousin the **Kemps ridley turtle**, are best known for their unique mass nesting called **Arribada**, where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs.
- Though found in abundance, their numbers have been declining over the past few years, and the species is recognized as **Vulnerable by the IUCN Red list**.

Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary

- It is a marine wildlife sanctuary located in Odisha
- It extends from Dhamra River mouth in the north to Brahmani river mouth in the south.
- It is very famous for its nesting beach for olive ridley sea turtles. It is the one of world's most important nesting beach for turtles

Nothing here for Today!!!

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

- The new report shows India's seriousness and implementation level of environment protection programmes, which is comparatively better than developed countries. Despite such reports the Delhi government suffers with severe pollution levels. What policy changes are required to address the urban pollution?

GS Paper II

- Briefly discuss on the effects of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (RFCLARR) Act, 2013.

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Category: CULTURE

1. Supreme Court refuses to stay release of film ‘Padmavati’

- The Supreme Court refused to entertain a plea seeking a stay on the release of Bollywood movie ‘Padmavati’, saying the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) considers all aspects before granting certificate to any film.

Central Board of Film Certification (Censor Board)

- It is a **statutory censorship and classification body** under the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**.
- It is tasked with “regulating the public exhibition of films under the provisions of the **Cinematograph Act 1952**”.
- The **government at the centre appoints the non-official members and a Chairman** who constitute the Board which is **headquartered at Mumbai**.
- There are a **total of nine regional offices** for the CBFC which includes Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, Thiruvananthapuram, Hyderabad, New Delhi, Cuttack and Guwahati.

- The body's primary function is to assign each film to one of the four categories –
 - U – Unrestricted public exhibition
 - A- Restricted to adults
 - UA –Unrestricted public exhibition (with a word of caution that Parental discretion required for children below 12 years)
 - S – Restricted to any special class of persons (for example: doctors)
- It assigns **certifications to films, television shows, television ads, and publications for exhibition, sale or hire in India** . Films can be publicly exhibited in India only after they are certified by the Board, including films shown on television.
- The Board is considered to be one of the **strictest Censor Boards in the world** . One of the most notable guidelines of the Board include: “any scenes which intend to degrade or disintegrate woman in any manner are not presented”.
- The Board consists of 25 other non-official members and a Chairperson (all of whom are appointed by Central Government).

Category: HISTORY

1. [Karnataka govt celebrates Tipu Sultan Jayanti amid heavy security, Opposition launches statewide protests](#)

- Bringing the state under a thick security blanket, “Tipu Jayanti” celebrations were held amid protests across Karnataka on Friday to mark the birth anniversary of the controversial 18th-century ruler of the erstwhile Mysore kingdom, Tipu Sultan

Background

- Tipu was a ruler of the erstwhile kingdom of Mysore and considered an implacable enemy of the British East India Company.
- He was killed in May, 1799 while defending his fort at Srirangapatna against the British forces.

Category: EDUCATION

1. [Centre approves creation of National Testing Agency](#)

- The Union Cabinet approved the creation of a National Testing Agency (NTA) to conduct entrance examinations for higher educational institutions.

Structure

- NTA will be created as a Society registered under the Indian Society Registration Act, 1860, and as an autonomous and self-sustained premier testing organization to conduct entrance examinations for higher educational institutions
- The entrance examinations will be conducted in online mode at least twice a year, thereby giving adequate opportunity to candidates to bring out their best
- The NTA will be chaired by an eminent educationist appointed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. There will be a Board of Governors comprising members from user institutions.

Significance

- Its creation will relieve the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) – which conducts exams like the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test – and the All India Council for Technical Education of the burden of conducting entrance tests.

Finance

- The Centre will give an initial grant of Rs. 25-crore to the NTA to start its operations in the first year. Thereafter, it will be self-sustaining

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [India caught in U.S.-Russia tussle](#)

- India appears to have been caught in a tussle between Russia and the US

- Russia's news agencies and major newspaper Kommersant carried a story alleging that the Indian navy gave a U.S. naval delegation access to Russian-purchased aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya and on-lease nuclear attack submarine INS Chakra, calling it an "unfriendly act" by India.
- According to Kommersant, sources said India committed several "unfriendly acts" towards Russia and they threatened to seriously complicate negotiations, both on the lease of the second nuclear submarine and other projects.

2. India to face U.K. in ICJ election

- The government is putting "all efforts in" to ensure the election of its nominee Judge Dalveer Bhandari for the International Court of Justice
- Officials said on Friday that India failed to secure enough support in the first few rounds of voting for the court where the Kulbhushan Jadhav case is being heard.

What is the process of election?

- To be elected, any candidate must obtain a majority of 97 votes or more in the UN General Assembly
- They must also have a majority of eight votes in the Security Council.
 - During the last unsuccessful round, India won 115 to U.K.'s 74 votes in the UNGA, but won only six out of 15 U.N. Security Council members, while U.K. won nine.
 - India's task is made more difficult, given the U.K. is a permanent member and has a vote in both the UNSC and the UNGA.

Why is it important for India?

- India has a particular interest in the ICJ spot, given the trial of Jadhav, the man convicted of spying in Pakistan, which is now in the international court at The Hague.
- In October, Pakistan had nominated an ad-hoc judge Tassaduq Hussain Jillani according to ICJ rules to sit on the Bench.

Category: ECONOMY

1. GST Council slashes tax rates on 177 items from 28% to 18%

- The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council slashed rates across the board, including for a range of daily items of consumption, relaxed penalties and tweaked rules to make it easier for businesses, especially small and medium enterprises, to comply.
- The biggest rationalization was the decision to cut the tax rate on 178 items from 28% to 18%, leaving only 50 items in the highest tax slab and offering major relief to consumers and businesses.
- It comes into effect from 15 November, is likely to boost consumer demand, reduce disquiet over compliance costs and also lend fresh momentum to the tax reform initiative.
- The tax reductions will, however, result in a revenue loss of about Rs20,000 crore a year

GST bonanza

Boost to consumer demand, better compliance

Items shifted from 28% to 18% tax slab		
Food and edibles  Cocoa products, chocolate, non-alcoholic beverages and wafers	Grooming products  Skincare products, shampoo, hair dye, shaving cream, soap, washing powder, creams and deodorants	
Personal accessories  Goggles, wristwatches	Wood and rubber  Tyre tubes for bicycles and three-wheelers, plywood furniture, wallpaper	Stone and ceramics  Articles of granite, marble, slate, plaster and mica, ceramic goods and glassware
28% to 12% Common kitchen appliances like stone grinders	18% to 12% Health Dental food, medicinal-grade oxygen, spectacles frames	Food items Refined sugar, condensed milk, pasta, curry paste
18%, 12% to 5% Eating out gets cheaper; 5% tax for all restaurants except in 5-star hotels	Handicrafts Furniture made of bamboo or cane, knitted hats, jute and cotton handbags	Relief for small businesses Eligibility ceiling for composition scheme raised to Rs1.5 crore from Rs1 crore Composition scheme tax rate for SMEs halved to 1%
5% to Nil Foods such as dried vegetables and sweet potatoes, dried or frozen fish, coconut shell		

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. Govt. offers free bus rides during odd-even scheme

- The Aam Aadmi Party government on Friday announced free bus rides aboard its Delhi Transport Corporation

fleet from November 13 to 17, the proposed dates of odd-even car rationing scheme, even as the National Green Tribunal questioned the rationale

- According to sources, the free rides are expected to cause a loss of around Rs. 9.5 crore to the cash-strapped public transporter.
- The government's decision of free bus rides is subject to the NGT's final call on the odd-even scheme.
- Meanwhile, the DTC will operate 500 additional buses under its 'Paryavaran Seva', with half their seats reserved for women.

2. Delhi pollution: NGT says no odd-even unless Delhi govt justifies its necessity

- The NGT chairperson noted that the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) had indicated that no real benefits in reducing air pollution accrued from the odd-even scheme when it was implemented in the past.

Nothing here for Today!!!

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

1. It is subpart of Beti Bachao campaign
2. Account will remain operative until she reaches 18 age.
3. For initial account opening, minimum deposit Rs.1000 required

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

1. Only 1 and 2
2. Only 2 and 3
3. Only 1 and 3
4. All of the above

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

GS Paper II

- India-Russia-China Strategic Co-Operation: Myth or Reality? Critically Comment.

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Category: GOVERNANCE

1. [Illegal phone exchanges thriving on SIM boxes Imported hardware serving as backbone for racket](#)

Keypoints:

- As technology develops, so does the scope to misuse it.
- The police observed it with Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) facility, which is increasingly used for criminal activities.
- Flashers, devices that can change IMEI (International Mobile Equipment Identity) numbers of handsets, are used to make stolen cell phones untraceable, and SIM boxes enable setting up of illegal telephone exchanges that rake in crores of rupees and cause massive losses to the government.

No international tariff

- “Each SIM box can hold up to 32 SIM cards which route international calls. A person in Dubai can call a local number from Dubai, which will be routed to a number in India and then to the intended call recipient. This way, the caller avoids the international tariff, which causes loss of revenue to the government. Even if operators of SIM box rackets charge 60% of the tariff, they make crores in a month,” said a Crime Branch officer who is part of the probe.

Hawala money

- Investigations conducted so far into the two illegal exchanges that were running in Mumbai have indicated that the

accused got money from their Dubai counterparts via hawala channels.

- The Dubai-based operators, who were allegedly the masterminds, would take a percentage of the profits, keep some aside for maintenance of equipment and send the rest to their Indian counterparts.
- The entire racket was operating on word of mouth. The Dubai-based operators had spread the word that they had the resources in case anyone wanted to make calls abroad at concessional rates.
- The preliminary estimate of the losses caused to the national exchequer is around ₹100 crore.

Category: GOVERNANCE

2. [CJI Mishra asserts himself in SC amidst corruption storm](#)

- A five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra has annulled an unprecedented order passed by the second senior-most judge, Justice J. Chelameshwar, to constitute a five-judge bench to deal with bribery allegations against a retired high court judge
- A two-judge bench headed by Justice Chelameshwar had issued the order to set up the constitution bench to decide whether a special team should probe allegations that former Orissa High Court judge Justice I.M. Quddusi had taken a bribe with the promise of influencing a Supreme Court case involving a private medical college.

What is the issue?

- The matter concerns two petitions seeking a probe by a special investigation team (SIT) into allegations of corruption contained in a first information report registered by the CBI last September.
- The FIR alleged that a conspiracy was hatched by some persons, including a former Orissa High Court judge and a hawala dealer, to bribe Supreme Court judges hearing the case of a debarred private medical college.
- The case involves corruption in the very highest echelons of power, including the justice delivery system.

Constitutional Benches of the Supreme Court:

- Constitution bench is the name given to the benches of the Supreme Court of India which consist of at least five judges of the court which sit to decide any case “involving a substantial question of law as to the interpretation” of the Constitution of India.
- This provision has been mandated by Article 145 (3) of the Constitution of India.
- The Chief Justice of India has the power to constitute a Constitution Bench and refer cases to it.
- Constitution benches have decided many of India’s best-known and most important Supreme Court cases.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [11 Trade ministers reach deal on Pacific trade without US](#)

Keypoints:

- Trade ministers from 11 Pacific Rim countries said they reached a deal to proceed with the free-trade Trans-Pacific Partnership deal
- An accord was reached on “core elements” of the 11-member pact
- The deal was in doubt after US President Donald Trump abandoned it in January this year.
- The TPP member countries are trying to find a way forward without the U.S., the biggest economy

What is the USA's stand now?

- The U.S. president lambasted the World Trade Organization and other trade forums as unfair to the United States and reiterated his preference for bilateral trade deals
- He said that he would not enter into large trade agreements, alluding to U.S. involvement in the North American Free Trade Agreement and the TPP

China supporting Free Trade

- Chinese President Xi Jinping said that nations need to stay committed to economic openness or risk being left behind
- He urged support for the “multilateral trading regime” and progress toward a free-trade zone in the Asia-Pacific

- China is not part of the TPP

Impact of Open Trade

- Open trade has an unequal impact on workers
- There are also concerns over automation in manufacturing that could leave many millions in a wide array of industries with no work to do

Category:ENVIRONMENT

1. Public transport system not equipped to accommodate all Experts say NGT order on odd-even difficult to implement

Keypoints:

- If the Delhi government enforces the odd-even scheme without the proposed exemptions, as the National Green Tribunal (NGT) ordered, the Capital's public transport infrastructure would need a significant refurbishment.
- According to government sources, the combined capacity of State-run buses and the Delhi Metro would need to be doubled to cater to just the registered number of two-wheeler users during implementation of the vehicle rationing measure.

Doubling capacity

- Public transport needs to be streamlined. We need to have dedicated pathways only for buses. Merely increasing the number of buses is not a solution.
- Road transport expert Dr. S.M. Sarin, questioning the efficiency of the odd-even scheme, said, "The contribution of vehicles (to air pollution levels) is only 16% to 20%.
- If the government goes ahead with its previous model of the scheme, there will be more two-wheelers and rickshaws on the road, rendering the task futile."

Category:ECONOMY

1. Only 50 items left in highest GST slab, list slashed three-quarters to ease tax burden

Keypoints:

- The highest Goods and Services Tax (GST) bracket was lowered three-quarters with only 50 items being retained in the 28 percent slab.
- It also decided to reduce the tax rate for all restaurants, barring those in luxury hotels, to 5 percent, without any input tax credit
- These measures are expected to cost the exchequer around Rs 20,000 crore
- The tax rate for manufacturers under the composition scheme was also reduced to 1 percent from the earlier rate of 2 percent, bringing it at par with the tax rate for traders
- The composition scheme for restaurants will continue unchanged with a tax rate of 5 percent
- The hike in the threshold for the composition scheme would require an amendment in the CGST Act, there was an agreement to increase it to Rs 2 crore from Rs 1 crore at present.
- Tanks and armored fighting vehicles have been now placed in the 12 percent tax slab instead of the earlier 28 percent
- The proposed rate changes will be effective from November 15 prospectively
- GST rate on takeaways have also been reduced to 5 percent without input tax credit, while the rate on outdoor catering will continue to be 18 percent with full input tax credit.
- The Council also provided relief to businesses by easing requirements for return filing as well as lowering the penalty for late filing
- As many as 40 percent of the businesses filing returns on GST Network portal have nil tax.
- The Council lowered late return filing fees for businesses

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

[/su_spoiler]

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

GS Paper III

- Considering the Mexico's pollution mitigation strategy briefly suggest suitable model to overcome the environmental crisis in India's capital region.

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Category: GOVERNANCE

1. [Rs. 330 cr. towards MNREGA wage payment pending](#)

- Wage payments of a whopping Rs. 330 crore under the MNREGA have been stuck in Karnataka since September 7 because of non-transfer of funds from the Centre.
- Karnataka is among the 19 States where wage payments have been delayed.

About MGNREGA

- The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), also known as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS) is Indian legislation enacted on August 25, 2005. The MGNREGA provides a legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage. The Ministry of Rural Development (MRD), Govt of India is monitoring the entire implementation of this scheme in association with state governments
- This act was introduced with an aim of improving the purchasing power of the rural people, primarily semi or un-skilled work to people living below poverty line in rural India. It attempts to bridge the gap between the rich and poor in the country. Roughly one-third of the stipulated work force must be women.
- Adult members of rural households submit their name, age and address with photo to the Gram Panchayat. The Gram Panchayat registers households after making enquiry and issues a job card. The job card contains the details of adult member enrolled and his /her photo. Registered person can submit an application for work in writing (for at least fourteen days of continuous work) either to Panchayat or to Programme Officer.
- The Panchayat/Programme officer will accept the valid application and issue dated receipt of application, letter providing work will be sent to the applicant and also displayed at Panchayat office. The employment will be provided within a radius of 5 km; if it is above 5 km extra wage will be paid.

Category: JUDICIARY

1. JM courts in all taluks

- The government proposes to set up judicial magistrate courts in all the taluk headquarters in the Tamil Nadu State in three years, based on the suggestion of the Madras High Court.
- The Madras High Court has suggested to the government to ensure that all the taluks in the State accounted for judicial magistrate courts.
- State Government has been implementing all the recommendations and suggestions made by the Madras High Court from time to time for the development of infrastructure facilities in the courts, filling up vacancies etc.,
- Another suggestion of the High Court was strengthening security arrangements in the courts.
- The government has issued orders for the installation of metal detectors and closed circuit television cameras in the courts.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. PM lands in Manila to participate in ASEAN, East Asia summits

- Beginning a new diplomatic initiative, India participated in the first formal official-level discussions conducted under the recently mooted regional coalition known as the ‘Quad’,

the quadrilateral formation that includes Japan, India, the United States and Australia.

- The discussions focused on cooperation based on their converging vision and values for promotion of peace, stability and prosperity in an increasingly inter-connected region that they share with each other and with other partners.
- They agreed that a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region serves the long-term interests of all countries in the region and of the world at large.
- The officials also discussed on addressing common challenges of terrorism and proliferation linkages impacting the region as well as on enhancing connectivity.
- Indicating the boiling regional tension with China and Beijing's assertiveness over the South China Sea issue, a statement from the Australian Foreign Ministry informed that freedom of navigation figured at the 'Quad.'
- Upholding the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific and respect for international law, freedom of navigation and over flight; increased connectivity; challenges of countering terrorism and upholding maritime security in the Indo-Pacific were also discussed.

2. South China Sea, Rohingya on ASEAN map

- **China's build-up of 'air surveillance and domination projects' in the region also likely to come up for discussion**
- The maritime dispute over the South China Sea, mass departure of the Rohingya citizens of Myanmar into Bangladesh and India, North Korean nuclear posturing and Islamic State-linked terrorism are likely to be the key talking points at the 31st ASEAN summit.
- The South China Sea has been at the center of discussions on multilateral problems at the ASEAN-China level, which has been further complicated by China's land reclamation projects aimed at building air surveillance and domination projects in the region.
- **Rohingya crisis**
- Dhaka expected ASEAN to raise the issue in a prominent way and convince Myanmar to stop the atrocities against the Rohingya.
- The presence of the pro-Islamic State militants in the Marawi city in southern Philippines is also expected to receive attention as the fight with the militants has been a major domestic issue of the Philippines.
- The developments in Marawi have also emerged as a reason for it to seek international support. China has in recent months extended support to the Philippines.
- It is expected that the simmering tension between the North Korea and the U.S. and Japan will also feature prominently on the agenda.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. The AI battlefield

- The first formal inter-governmental discussion on what machine autonomy means for the laws of armed conflict was organized by a United Nations group of experts in Geneva.
- The norms around what is considered acceptable in warfare have also evolved in response to new technologies.
- The norms that have been codified in international humanitarian law, is more or less universally accepted as regulating armed conflict among civilized states. But recent advances in artificial intelligence (AI) are throwing up a new challenge to these norms.

Concerns related to the AI

- Reality might not have yet caught up with popular culture depictions of “killer robots” and “conscious synths” demanding their rightful place in society
- Indeed, such depictions can be a distraction from the complex challenges that do exist
- But many technology leaders are worried about autonomous systems taking life-and-death decisions without “meaningful human supervision or control”
- The American tech billionaire Elon Musk and over 100 others recently signed a letter warning that the weaponisation of AI-based technologies risks opening a Pandora’s box
- These are not the only concerns about AI
- Technologists and ethicists are also grappling with other questions
- Such as legal liability when autonomous vehicles share the streets with pedestrians, predictive analytics subverting due process, and the algorithmic entrenchment of human biases

Important question in front of the UN expert group

- How, then, to deliver on the promise of AI while protecting the hard-won tenets of international humanitarian law and respecting the legitimate security and commercial interests of states and industry?
- This is the question we will be grappling with this week in Geneva

Importance of the UN solving such kind of issues

- In an era of diffusion of power and mistrust among the major powers, multilateral inter-governmental forums remain the only way to extend norms across the globe
- For better or for worse, governments still decide matters of war and peace. And the UN still offers a neutral venue to bring different points of view together

The way forward

- The discussions in Geneva are an opportunity to test a new approach, one we might call ‘distributed technology governance’
- This means the multilateral system’s search for durable international norms needs to integrate national regulatory approaches and industry self-regulation.
- Each level in this chain of subsidiarity — international humanitarian law, national regulations, and industry self-regulation — needs to move in full cognition of the other two
- We need to find ways for them to enjoy their respective sovereignty, while working in unison to deliver what the international community expects

Category: ECONOMY

1. More capital will push PSBs to up MSME credit: Arun Jaitley

- While there has been a significant increase in public investment and FDI inflows, but the private investment a key growth engine has continued to lag.
- The finance minister said more capital for public sector banks will prompt them to increase credit flow to MSMEs.
- This will ensure that “third engine” of private investment is fired up to propel growth and create jobs.
- MSMEs the sector creating jobs and giving the boost to the economy has no access to

international finance or bond market and the Demonetization decision has especially affected the MSMEs thus increased flow of credit plays a significant role.

Solution

- government had unveiled a mega capital infusion worth Rs 2.11-lakh crore two-year roadmap to strengthen PSBs, which includes recapitalization bonds, budgetary support, and equity dilution
- The government also ensured noninterference in commercial transactions
- A robust public sector banking system is desired so that ability to support growth itself increases

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. [Crisis is in the air](#)

Delhi has become world's air pollution outcaste

- Three years ago, the World Health Organisation (WHO) revealed that Delhi was the most polluted city in the world
- Particulate matter— PM of less than 2.5 microns — was at an annual average of 153 micrograms per cubic meter that year, well above the WHO limit of 35.
- Delhi's air was declared a “national emergency” thus resulting in
 1. Visitors will think more before visiting Delhi this winter
 2. Children can't attend school or play outside
 3. There will be financial losses due to days missed at work

Causes of air pollution

- Burning of farm residue
- Pollutants from thermal power stations in and around the capital
- Dust from construction
- Pollutants from vehicles

Preventive measures

- To prevent burning of farm residue, encourage farmers to recycle crop waste rather than burn it
- Stiff penalties can be imposed on thermal power plants and construction sites for not complying with pollution standards
- Pollution caused by private vehicles, whether they are four- or two-wheelers, can be curbed by restricting their numbers
- Odd-and-even number plate scheme, ought to be extended through the winter
- Parking fees ought to be drastically increased, and payable even at night time

Mistakes in administration

- Mumbai is building an Rs 15,000-crore coast road only for cars
- Mumbai has been spared the ignominy of Delhi when it comes to air pollution, one reason

being that the sea breezes waft pollutants away

- Once this road is built, all that will change since the prevailing winds are in a south-west direction
- All cities are making the mistake of prescribing metros as the solution for local transport
- In Delhi, the 200-km-plus Metro network doesn't seem to have reduced the number of cars appreciably, only two-wheelers

Alternative

- Buses, which can run both long distances in cities, as well as provide last-mile connectivity to and from metros and local railway stations
- Reserved bus lanes are the most cost-efficient and egalitarian means of city transport
- These penalize the polluters — cars and two-wheelers — and carry commuters comfortably and cleanly

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

- Latitude and its influence on solar radiation received.
 - Air mass influences.
 - Location of global high and low pressure zones.
 - Heat exchange from ocean currents.
 - Distribution of mountain barriers.
 - Altitude.
- 1, 2, 3 only
 - 3, 4, 5, 6 only
 - 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 only
 - All

- Mudrarakshasa – Vishakhadatta
- Ratnavali – Harshavardhan
- Kalidasa – Malavikagnimitra
- None of the above

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper III

- The Bonn Climate conference carries the spirit of Paris agreement. Discuss the challenges faced in the implementation of Paris agreement.

GS Paper II

- Aadhaar based Biometric Authentication is one of the ways to check corruption in the provision of Public services . Comment.
- Multilateral alliance has become an important means for India to counter the threat of

Chinese dominance in South Asia. Critically analyse.

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – November 14

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Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. India and Bangladesh: So near, so far

Transportation system projects between India and Bankgladesh

Kolkata-Khulna Bandhan Express

- To follow in the tracks of the erstwhile Barisal Express, which was stopped during the 1965 war with Pakistan
- The two countries, especially India's Northeast, stand to gain enormously from closer road and rail links

Agartala-Dhaka-Kolkata Bus link

- Service on the 490 km Agartala-Dhaka route began in September 2003, and ran irregularly until January 2015, when it was stopped for security reasons
- Service was restarted in May 2015 on an extended Agartala-Dhaka-Kolkata route (910 km)

Kolkata-Dhaka Maitree Express

- In 2008, rail links disrupted by hostility with erstwhile East Pakistan were reestablished, the 375 km route crossing the border at Gede on the Indian side and Darshana on the Bangladesh side

Agartala-Dhaka service

- A 15-km line between Agartala and Akhaura being built by the Indian Railways is set for completion by the end of 2018
- With this, a 37-hour journey that an Agartala-Dhaka-Kolkata train can cover in less than a third of this time

Siliguri-Parbatipur link

- A line links Siliguri in North Bengal to Parbatipur in northern Bangladesh, by which India sent a 42-wagon consignment of high speed diesel manufactured by Numaligarh Refinery in Assam in March 2017
- But there is no regular goods train movement on this route, and passenger

- services are unlikely soon
- Because of trans-border crimes and infiltration in the North Bengal sector

Kolkata-Dibrugarh waterway

- Kolkata-Dibrugarh waterway through Dhaka and Guwahati, started in 1844 by the East India Company and shut after the 1965 war, was recently reopened
- Heavy machinery and equipment for the Numaligarh refinery and Lower Subansiri hydroelectric project in Arunachal Pradesh have been transported by this route

Road Transport

- In November 2015, seamless road cargo transport between Kolkata and Agartala through Bangladesh was tried out successfully under the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA)
- Regular services are yet to start

Northeast: the biggest beneficiary

- The creation of East Pakistan — and subsequently, Bangladesh — significantly increased the distance between the Northeast and the Indian mainland
- Until 1947, a train to Guwahati from Kolkata took hardly 12 hours
- Today, despite increased speeds, the journey takes at least 18 hours by the fastest train, while a normal train — such as the Kamrup Express — takes almost 24 hours through Siliguri or New Jalpaiguri.
- Before Partition, people travelled from Guwahati to Kolkata via Lalmonirhat, in the Bangladesh district close to where the Brahmaputra crosses the border
- Trains between Assam and Kolkata through East Pakistan stopped in 1947; trains between West Bengal and East Pakistan stopped after the 1965 war

Category: GOVERNANCE

1. Charges against CJI scurrilous: SC Bench

- The allegations levelled against Chief Justice Dipak Misra are “scurrilous and per se contemptuous”, observed one of the judges hearing petitions by

- the Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reforms and advocate Kamini Jaiswal in the Supreme Court in the medical college bribery case.
- Justice Mishra is part of a Special Bench led by Justice R.K. Agrawal, and also comprising Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, which heard Ms. Jaiswal's petition for an SIT investigation into an alleged conspiracy to bribe Supreme Court judges for a favourable outcome in a pending case of a debarred private medical college.
 - Responding to Justice Mishra's remarks that the petitions were scurrilous, Mr. Prashant Bhushan submitted that the petitions do not name the CJI at all.
 - The purpose of the petitions was to protect the independence of the highest judiciary as the bribery was probed by a government-controlled agency, namely, the CBI.

2. Governor seeks clarification on Devaswom Ordinance

- Kerala Governor sought a clarification from the government regarding an Ordinance cleared and forwarded to him by the Cabinet for amending the Travancore Cochin Hindu Religious Institutions Act, 1950, to reduce the tenure of Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) members from three to two years.
- The Governor expressed his doubts about dissolving the board when preparations for the Mandalam and Makaravilakku festivals at Sabarimala were progressing.
- The government informed the Governor that preparations for the festival had been completed and it was being reviewed at the behest of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and the Devaswom Minister.

HC panel supervision

- A panel designated by the High Court was also supervising the preparations.
- The board headed by Mr. Gopalakrishnan assumed office before the festival season in 2015 and even if it completed its three-year tenure, it would have to demit office before the festival season in 2018.

3. Liquor sale ban exemption applies nationwide: SC

'Pertains to all municipal areas in country'

- The Supreme Court orally observed that its July 11 order exempting the

December 2016 ban on sale of liquor within 500 metres along national and States highways applies to all municipal areas across the country.

- The court was hearing a plea by the Tamil Nadu government for clarification on the ambit of the July 11 order of the apex court.
- The SC had explained in the July 11 order that the ban only extended along and in proximity of highways that provide connectivity between cities, towns and villages.
- The Punjab Haryana State government had come to the apex court after the Madras High Court raised doubts whether the exemption granted to municipal areas in the July 11 order pertained to only municipal areas in Chandigarh and none other.

4. JPC on land Bill to seek eighth extension

Background of the JPC and the Bill

- The JPC was set up in May 2015 to examine the Bill after it was opposed by many political parties, including allies of the ruling BJP
- The Bill seeks to remove the consent clause for acquiring land for five purposes — industrial corridors, public-private projects, rural infrastructure, affordable housing and defence

The Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on the bill

- The JPC on the Land Acquisition Bill, 2015, will seek the eighth extension in the upcoming Parliament session
- **Background:** The Bill that seeks to alter the 2013 Act brought in by the UPA regime was put on hold in 2015
- According to a committee member, out of 29 clauses, we have achieved unanimity on at least 27. More consultations are required for the remaining clauses

Category: ECONOMY

1. RBI remains net buyer of U.S. dollars

- According to the latest RBI data, continued to remain a net buyer of U.S. dollars after it bought \$1.259 billion in September from the spot market
- In September, the central bank had bought \$3.788 billion, while it sold \$2.529 billion in the spot market

- The RBI intervenes in the foreign market to contain volatility in the rupee and not to set a price band

2. Rajnath seeks insurance against bank fraud

- The Home Ministry has asked banks and e-wallet firms to publish statistics of online fraud and theft so that customers can make an “informed choice” before subscribing to the services.
- Home Minister also instructed all concerned to formalise an insurance plan for victims of bank fraud as most banks and insurance firms do not provide any cover for such frauds.
- Singh reviewed various measures, including strengthening of surveillance and legal frameworks, to deal with financial frauds using bank cards and e-wallets.
- Big data analysis by IIT-Delhi for identification of perpetrators of phone frauds to prevent duplication across e-wallets, and providing additional information through SMS or email alerts to customers from banks or e-wallet companies are some of the key measures being taken by the government.
- As per representational data available with the RBI, the value of prepaid payment instruments, which mainly include e-wallets, increased from ₹1,320 crore in November 2016 to ₹ 2,760 crore in September 2017.
- The customer alert mechanism to include names of beneficiaries of any financial transaction wherever necessary for better traceability and cross-checking on the part of the victim, publishing online statistics depicting the specific incidents, frauds of e-wallet companies and banks along with details including investigation to enable customers to make an informed choice before subscribing to e-wallet services are other initiatives being planned.
- An inter-ministerial committee on phone frauds (IMCPF) has been constituted in the Home Ministry in September last.

Category: SECURITY

1. Stone-pelting drops 90% in J&K

- Jammu and Kashmir Police chief S.P. Vaid has said that there has been a 90% dip in incidents of stone-pelting in Kashmir valley this year as compared to last year and credited the people for the improvement in the situation.

- “There are weeks when there is not even a single case of stone-pelting while in a day (last year) there used to be more than 50 incidents taking place. There is a huge change in the mood of people,” he said.
- The DGP said while National Investigation Agency raids helped, there were multiple factors at play, including demonetisation and action against top militant commanders that have resulted in a drop in stone-pelting incidents.
- Apart from these, detentions under the Public Safety Act also helped.
- There has been a tremendous success as far as “Operation All-Out”, the Army’s master plan to flush out militants from Kashmir.
- Most of the top leadership of HM (Hizbul Mujahideen) and LeT (Lashkar-e-Taiba) has been neutralised.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

- Briefly analyse the role of India in South Asian regional infrastructural development. Also discuss about the possible benefits to India’s underdeveloped region.

GS Paper III

- Why RBI intervenes in the Foreign Market?

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Category: ART AND CULTURE

1. Araku Balloon Festival

- “Araku Balloon Festival”, an international festival organised by Andhra Pradesh Tourism
- The event is aimed at showcasing the Araku Valley – known for its panoramic views of the Eastern Ghats, the coffee plantations, and the waterfalls – as a tourist destination. It has drawn scores of travellers, photography enthusiasts, and media from across the country.
- To be held from November 14 till November 16, the festival will light up the sky throughout the day and night on all the three days and enthusiasts would get to witness balloons of different shapes and sizes adorn the sky in the non-ticketed festival.
- Sixteen teams from 13 countries, including the US, Malaysia, Taiwan and Switzerland, are participating in the festival.
- Apart from the colourful and dazzling hot air balloons, para-motoring displays, a hare and hound race and others events will also be a part of the festival itinerary to keep festival-goers hooked on all three days.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Post-Doklam, India asserts itself in China's backyard

Key Points:

- Displaying convergence of interests with the new quadrilateral grouping with U.S., Japan and Australia, India reached out to China’s backyard, addressing an array of issues ranging from the tension in the Korean peninsula to freedom of navigation and sought a crackdown on chemical weapons during the ASEAN and the East Asia summits.
- A high-level Indian official told The Hindu that New Delhi has emerged as a more dependable partner for South-East Asia following the Doklam faceoff with China, and indicated that the South-East Asian countries expect New Delhi to be assertive with Beijing.

Issue Area

- India remains concerned about China’s manmade structures in the South China Sea that are likely to create navigational problems and international friction
- Southeast Asian region had been facing uncertainties following the exit of President Barack Obama as he took visible interest in the region.
- However, the latest visits by the leaders of the quadrilateral countries, including by

the new U.S. President Donald Trump have once again assured support to these countries as they face China's commercial and military domination.

Other issues discussed

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi shared concerns of DPRK's pursuit of missiles and nuclear weapons and called for complete verification and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.
- He also said that North Korea's proliferation links must be investigated and the parties who have supported these unlawful programmes must be made accountable

Basic Information:

Quadrilateral grouping

- The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD) was an informal strategic dialogue between the United States, Japan, Australia and India that was maintained by talks between member countries.
- The dialogue was initiated in 2007 by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, with the support of Vice President Dick Cheney of the US, Prime Minister John Howard of Australia and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India.
- Japan President Shinzo Abe delivered a speech to the Indian Parliament in August 2007, entitled a “confluence of the two seas”, a phrase he took from the title of a book written by Mughal prince Dara Shikoh.
- The dialogue was paralleled by joint military exercises of an unprecedented scale, titled Exercise Malabar.
- The diplomatic and military arrangement was widely viewed as a response to increased Chinese economic and military power, and the Chinese government responded to the Quadrilateral dialogue by issuing formal diplomatic protests to its members.

What was the intention?

- The initiation of an American, Japanese, Australian and Indian defense arrangement, modeled on the concept of a Democratic Peace
- The Quadrilateral was supposed to establish an “Asian Arc of Democracy,” envisioned to ultimately include countries in central Asia, Mongolia, the Korean peninsula, and other countries in Southeast Asia: “virtually all the countries on China’s periphery, except for China itself.”

ASEAN meeting

- Convened around the theme of a “free and open Indo-Pacific,” the first quadrilateral meeting addressed seven core themes: the rules-based order in Asia, freedom of navigation and overflight in the maritime commons, respect for international law,

enhancing connectivity, maritime security, the North Korean threat and nonproliferation, and terrorism.

- The agreements on terror financing, chemical weapons and de-radicalisation adopted at the East Asia Summit will help the region cope with the threat of terrorism effectively in future.

	US	India	Japan	Australia
Free and open Indo-Pacific	"shared vision for increased prosperity and security in a free and open Indo-Pacific region"	"a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region serves the long-term interests of all countries in the region and of the world at large"	"measures to ensure a free and open international order based on the rule of law in the Indo-Pacific"	"a shared vision for increased prosperity and security in the Indo-Pacific region and to work together to ensure it remains free and open"
Rules-based order	"upholding the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific"	"cooperation based on their converging vision and values for promotion of peace"	"direction for cooperation, including with countries in the region, in upholding the rules-based order and respect for international law in the Indo-Pacific"	"upholding the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific"
Freedom of navigation & overflight	"freedom of navigation and overflight"	N/A	"ensuring freedom of navigation ... in the Indo-Pacific"	"freedom of navigation and overflight"
Respect for international law	"respect for international law, and the peaceful resolution of disputes"	N/A	"respect for international law in the Indo-Pacific"	"respect for international law"
Connectivity	"increasing connectivity consistent with international law and standards, based on prudent financing"	"stability and prosperity in an increasingly inter-connected region that they share with each other and with other partners"; "enhancing connectivity"	N/A	"increase connectivity"
Maritime security	"coordinating on ... maritime security efforts in the Indo-Pacific"	N/A	"maritime security in the Indo-Pacific"	"upholding maritime security in the Indo-Pacific"
North Korea/proliferation	"further cooperating to curtail the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs and unlawful acts"	"proliferation linkages"	"tackling proliferation threats, including North Korea's nuclear and missile issues, against which maximized pressure needs to be applied"	"threats to international peace and security posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs"
Terrorism	"coordinating on counterterrorism"	"addressing common challenges of terrorism"	"countering terrorism"	"coordinate on efforts to address the challenges of countering terrorism"
Next Steps & Misc.	"The quadrilateral partners committed to deepening cooperation, which rests on a foundation of shared democratic values and principles, and to continue discussions to further strengthen the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region."	"The Indian side highlighted India's Act East Policy as the cornerstone of its engagement in the Indo-Pacific region."	"The participants affirmed their commitment to continuing discussions and deepening cooperation based on shared values and principles."	"The participants committed to continuing quadrilateral discussions and deepening cooperation on the basis of shared values and principles."

Drawbacks

- The Quadrilateral was viewed as an “Asian NATO;”
- Daniel Twining of the German Marshall Fund of the United States has written that the arrangement “could lead to military conflict,” or could instead “lay an enduring foundation for peace” if China becomes a democratic leader in Asia.

Category: POLITY

1. SC dismisses petition for SIT probe in bribery case

In news:

- The Supreme Court dismissed a petition filed by advocate Kamini Jaiswal seeking a Special Investigation Team probe in the medical college bribery case as an effort to “create ripples” within the apex court by throwing scandalous allegations at Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra.

Background:

- The case, which the Central Bureau of Investigation is looking into, involves allegations that former members of the higher judiciary took bribes to manipulate

court orders in favour of medical colleges that had failed to get official registrations.

Controversy in Supreme Court:

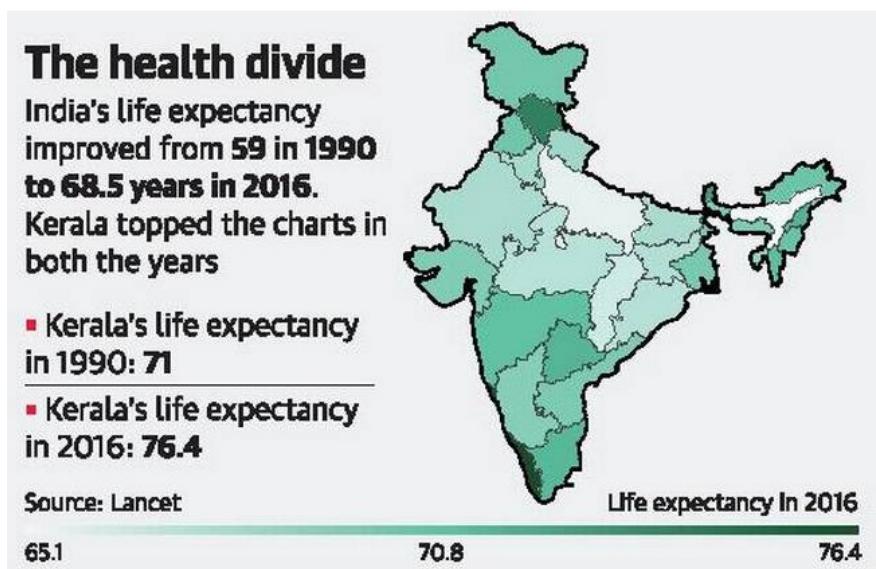
- Jaiswal's petition was mentioned before a two-judge bench headed by Justice Chelameswar for urgent hearing. The judge decided to take up the petition.
- This bench referred the matter to a larger five-judge Constitution bench on November 13.
- The petitioners had said that the bench should exclude Chief Justice Dipak Misra, who handled cases related to the Medical Council of India earlier this year, as there would be a conflict of interest.

Progress:

- However, a Constitution bench led by Chief Justice Dipak Misra, in an unprecedented hearing, nullified Justice Chelameswar's order
- The bench had said "the chief justice is the master of the roster" and no other judges of the Supreme Court can constitute benches.
- Future
- On November 11, the Supreme Court even issued a circular that from now on, all unassigned or unlisted cases can be mentioned only before the chief justice of India.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. [Indians add more years to their lives](#)



- 'India State-Level Disease Burden,' has revealed severe inequalities in the disease burden in different States.

Life Expectancy

- Life expectancy at birth in the country improved significantly during 1990 to 2016

— from 59.7 years and 58.3 years for females and males respectively in 1990 to 70.3 years for females and 66.9 years for males in 2016.

- But in a measure of the continuing inequalities, the life expectancy for females in Uttar Pradesh was 66.8 years — below the national average and 12 years less than in Kerala, where it was 78.7 years.
- Again, men in Kerala enjoyed a life expectancy of 73.8 years, but the corresponding figure for men in Assam was 63.6 years.

Under five mortality

- The study found that while under-5 mortality was improving in every State, there was a four-fold difference in the rate of improvement among States, which again indicated health inequalities.

Who published the report?

- The report was prepared under the India State-level Disease Burden Initiative, a joint project between the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- The report's findings were published in the journal Lancet.

Basic Information:

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)

- ICMR the apex body for the formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research
- It is one of the oldest and largest medical research bodies in the world.
- The ICMR is funded by the Government of India through the Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- ICMR's 26 National Institutes address themselves to research on specific health topics like tuberculosis, leprosy, cholera and diarrhoeal diseases, viral diseases
- The Council's research priorities coincide with National health priorities
- The Governing Body of the Council is presided over by the Union Health Minister.

2. Burden of disease shifts to non-communicable ailments

In news:

- The 'India State Level Disease Burden' report, prepared as part of the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study 2016, and published in Lancet, has found that every State in India has a higher burden from non-communicable diseases and injuries than from infectious diseases.
- The study used multiple data sources to map State-level disease burden from 333

disease conditions and injuries, and 83 risk factors for each State from 1990 to 2016.

Details

- The contribution of non-communicable diseases to health loss — fuelled by unhealthy diets, high blood pressure, and blood sugar — has doubled in India over the past two decades
- Air pollution and tobacco smoking continue to be major contributors to health loss

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. [Winged guests flock to Chilika](#)

In news:

- With winter setting in, migratory birds have started to arrive at Odisha's Chilika Lake, the largest brackish water lagoon in the country
- Avian guests from north, central and east Siberia, China, Mongolia, west Asian countries and the Himalayan region of India reach Chilika every year during winter months.
- The Nalabana island and its adjoining areas, spread over 15 sqkm inside the large lake, is a major perching region for these migratory birds

Delayed arrival

- This year, the arrival of migratory birds was slightly delayed due to climatic conditions. Usually the birds arrive at the lake in the second fortnight of October, but this year they started flocking in the beginning of November.
- Fall in atmospheric temperature was slightly late in this part of the country.
- Added to that, sporadic rainfall that continued till October kept high patches and vegetation of the lake submerged.

Where are they dispersed?

- At present, the migratory birds are perching in areas where the water level is comparatively low and mud patches are visible.
- Birds like waders are mostly seen at mud patches, while ducks are being sighted in areas of shallow water.
- The other bird varieties that are being sighted in large numbers in the lake include pintails, gadwals, shovellers, ruddy shelducks and pratincoles among others.

Bird-protection camps

- As many as 19 bird-protection camps have been set up by the Forest Department at Nalabana sanctuary and other areas around Chilika Lake.

- Around 30 former bird poachers, were arrested by the Forest Department in the past, are part of these bird-protection camps.
- No boats, except for two power boats of the Forest Department, are being allowed to enter the sanctuary area.

Nalbana Bird Sanctuary

- Nalbana Bird Sanctuary or Nalbana Island is the core area of the Ramsar designated wetlands of Chilika Lake.
- It was declared a bird sanctuary under the Wildlife Protection Act in 1973
- In the heart of the park, one can see thousands of birds descending during the migratory season. The island disappears during monsoon season due to inundation only to emerge again in post-monsoon.
- Nalbana means a weed covered island In the Odia language.
- Nalbana was notified in 1987 and declared a bird sanctuary in 1973 under the Wildlife Protection Act
- In 2002, The Bombay Natural History Society survey recorded 540 nests of the Indian river tern at the island, the largest nesting colony in the southeast Asia



Category: INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE

1. ‘Joint training doctrine’ for armed forces

In news:

- In a first, the Indian armed forces released a joint training doctrine meant to facilitate joint training and planning.
- Titled ‘Joint Training Doctrine Indian Armed Forces – 2017,’ it was released by Admiral Sunil Lanba, Navy Chief and Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee, in the presence of other two Service Chiefs.

Aim

- The aim of the doctrine is to promote ‘synergy’ and ‘integration’ among the three Services and other stake-holders leading to an enhanced efficiency and optimum utilisation of resources.
- It will also go a long way in ‘fostering initiative’ and ‘stimulating creativity’ for promoting ‘integration’ between the three services in times to come

What is the doctrine about?

- The doctrine brings out our approach to joint training at macro-level, fundamentals, objectives, joint structures, planning and organisation amongst other aspects in existence and in use in the armed forces
- It will serve as a ‘foundation’ and ‘knowledge base’ from which specific directives and strategies will be derived, from time to time.

Category: MISCELLANEOUS

1. Rashtriya Bal Kalyan Award presented to Super-30 founder

In news:

- President Ram Nath Kovind awarded this year’s “Rashtriya Bal Kalyan Award” to Super 30 founder Anand Kumar for his contributions in the field of teaching and education.
- What is super 30?
- Kumar’s Super 30 coaching institute has been providing free education, accommodation and food to students coming from the underprivileged section of society to crack the prestigious IIT entrance examination.
- Over 400 students have cracked IIT-JEE from Super -30 coaching institute since it has started in the year 2002 in Patna. Mr. Kumar now aims to increase the strength of students at Super 30.

Details about award

- The award, launched by the Department of Women and Child Development, carries a citation and Rs. 1 lakh.
- The awardees are selected after shortlisting the entries from all over the country.

2. Rasogolla hits sweet spot, gets GI tag

In news:

- The Geographical Indication (GI) Registry and Intellectual Property India presented the Geographical Indication Tag status to Banglar Rasogolla of West Bengal and
- Mamallapuram stone sculptures of Tamil Nadu.
- Tamil Nadu in its application stated that the sculptures from Mamallapuram were known to be carved in stone with characteristics of intricate designing chiselled finely, keeping with the spirit of the surrounding Pallava art and architecture.
- The description includes cave architecture, rock architecture, structural temples, open sculptures, relief sculptures and painting/portrait sculptures.
- West Bengal was involved in a lengthy battle with Odisha, which too had claimed Rasogolla as its invention.

History

- West Bengal believes that the Rasogolla was invented in Calcutta by confectioner Nabin Chandra Das. West Bengal in its application had provided proof of origin — historical records dating back to 1896.
- Odisha says it was invented in the holy city of Puri in the 13th century.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

- “A child bride is more than doubly prone to health problems than a grown-up woman,” Discuss.
- The effective management of land and water resources will drastically reduce the human miseries. Explain

GS Paper II

- Under the Indian Constitutional and Legal framework, what constitutes Hate speech? How does it violate Fundamental Right to Equality enshrined under Article 14?

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – November 16

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Category: POLITY

1. [Centre to aid start-ups in cybersecurity push](#)

In news:

- To encourage development of new technologies in the field of cybersecurity, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology will offer challenge grants of up to Rs.5 crore to start-ups to spur research and

development.

- The government is also in process of setting up a centre of excellence for blockchain technology.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

1. [**Zimbabwe Army seizes power, President Robert Mugabe ‘confined to his home’**](#)

In news:

- Zimbabwe's military said it had seized power in a targeted assault on "criminals" around President Robert Mugabe, who were causing social and economic suffering, but came out with an assurance that the 93-year-old leader and his family were "safe and sound".
- The army said today it has the President and his wife in custody and was securing government offices and patrolling the capital's streets following a night of unrest.

Turmoil in Zimbabwe:

- Mugabe has led Zimbabwe for the last 37 years.
- In contrast to his elevated status on the continent, Mr. Mugabe is reviled in the West as a despot whose disastrous handling of the economy and willingness to resort to violence to maintain power destroyed one of Africa's most promising states.
- In the last year, a chronic absence of dollars has led to long queues outside banks and an economic and financial collapse that many fear will rival the meltdown of 2007-2008, when inflation topped out at 500,000,000,000%.
- Imported goods are running out and economists say that, by some measures, inflation is now at 50% a month.

2. [**France wants to work with India in Indo-Pacific**](#)

In news:

- France will like to deepen cooperation with India in the **Indo-Pacific** bilaterally and not as a part of a multilateral arrangement like the recently convened "quadrilateral" between India, U.S., Japan and Australia.
- **France's Ambassador Alexandre Ziegler announcement:**
 - "We have a growing cooperation in the Indian Ocean, where both India and France have focal positions, and we are in the process of forming a defence and security partnership in the Indo-Pacific,"
 - This new cooperation would be discussed as part of the strategic partnership along with cooperation in counter-terrorism, defence hardware, nuclear energy, and space cooperation during the upcoming visit of Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian to India.

Large territory:

- France is the only western country with large territory in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) including the Reunion Islands, that spans about two million square kilometres of an **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)**, and it has a population of one million French Citizens in the region, including about 30% of Indian origin.
- The French navy maintains bases in the UAE, Djibouti as well as in Reunion, with a total of 20,000 forces permanently based in the IOR.
- France is India's oldest strategic partner, and has conducted India's first international 'Varuna' joint naval exercises since 1983.

3. [**Australians say 'yes' to same-sex marriage**](#)

In news:

- Celebrations swept across Australia as voters emphatically endorsed same-sex marriage after more than a decade of divisive debate, and political leaders immediately began moves to enshrine the historic shift in law by Christmas.
- Almost 62% of the 12.7 million people who participated voted "yes" to the question: "Should the law be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry?" Just 38.4% voted "no", according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, which carried out the poll.
- Nearly 80% of eligible voters took part in the poll, with the "yes" vote winning a majority in all of Australia's

States and territories.

Category: ECONOMY

1. More banks may sign MoUs with govt.

In news:

- The government is planning to ask more public sector banks to enter into an agreement with it if they want more capital, provided banks improve their performance.
- Earlier, the government had entered into an agreement with 11 banks, and had asked them to submit a turnaround plan and had linked capital infusion with the pace of turnaround.
- In the earlier round of MoUs, banks were asked to achieve several parameters such as reduction in gross non-performing assets, increase in recovery, restriction of slippages, among others. In other words, capital infusion in these laggard banks were to be linked to their performance.
- Recently, the government had announced a capital infusion of Rs.11 lakh crore in public sector banks over two financial years, starting from the current fiscal.
- Of the amount, the government plans to issue recapitalisation bonds worth Rs.35 lakh crore and the remaining would come from budgetary provisions and fund raising by banks from the market.

Category: INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Highways to be rated on safety features

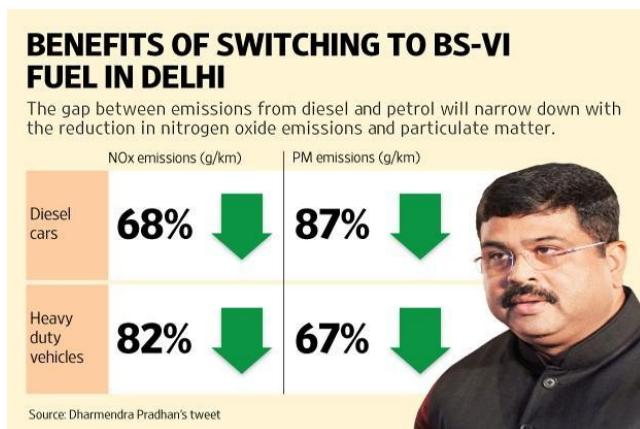
In news:

- In a bid to make Indian roads safer and curb fatalities, a global charity unveiled an **India Road Assessment Programme (IndiaRAP)** that will rate highways' safety levels, and seek to eliminate the most unsafe roads.
- The ratings are assigned on the basis of the level of safety which is 'built-in' to a road for vehicle occupants, motorcyclists, bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Five-star roads are the safest while one-star roads are the least safe.
- The IndiaRAP programme is being supported by FedEx Express and will be hosted by the Asian Institute of Transport Development, and will work with government agencies as well as investors, researchers and NGOs to assess existing highways and promote the use of better design to make roads safer.

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. Delhi to get BS-VI fuel two years early to tackle pollution

In news:



- The world's cleanest fuel will be introduced in the national capital two years earlier than planned, the Union government said on Wednesday as it seeks to reduce vehicular pollution.
- Bharat Stage VI (BS-VI) fuel will now be available with effect from 1 April 2018 in Delhi, the petroleum ministry said, and added that it is examining the possibility of introducing BS-VI fuel across the national capital region by 1 April 2019.
- **Positive impact:** This measure is expected to help mitigate the problem of air pollution in NCT of Delhi and

surrounding areas.

- **Key Fact:** In January last year, the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance decided to move the country up to BS-VI from the current BS-IV standards by 2020, skipping an intermediate level.

Key Stats:

- A 2016 report by Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, showed that cars and jeeps emit less than 10% of particulate matter, while trucks are the bigger culprits.
- A big contributor to Delhi's air pollution is road dust, which accounts for about 35% of tiny particles known as PM 2.5 in the air, followed by vehicles at 25%.
- Other contributors are domestic cooking, power plants and industries.
- PM 2.5 are tiny particles in the air that reduce visibility and cause the air to appear hazy when levels are elevated.
- **Seattle-based Global Burden of Disease Study** estimates that 586,787 premature deaths in India were attributable to fine particulate matter pollution in 2013.
- NOx, or oxides of nitrogen, are also major pollutants. They are a family of poisonous, highly reactive gases that form when fuel is burned at high temperatures.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE

1. [**Futuristic combat vehicle plan a game changer: Army**](#)

Key points:

- The two ambitious projects- **Futuristic Infantry Combat vehicle (FICV) and Future Ready Combat Vehicle (FRCV) programmes**, to equip the Army with futuristic combat vehicles are a game changer for the Indian industry.
- The FICV is an ambitious effort to indigenously design and manufacture a futuristic infantry vehicle by the private industry by roping in foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers.
- The Army has a requirement for more than 2,600 vehicles.
- On the other hand, the FRCV is a tender for the procurement of futuristic tanks through the Strategic Partnership model.

Nothing here for Today!!!

1. [**All Bihar jails to have videoconferencing: Nitish**](#)

In news:

- Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar announced that all jails in the State would have videoconferencing facility from next year.
- He also inaugurated 56 telephone exchanges at 30 jails, canteen facility for prisoners in 11 jails and laid foundation stones for multipurpose auditoriums at eight Central jails of the State.
- **Advantages:** All jails in the State will have videoconferencing facility, which would do away with the need for taking undertrials to the court for hearing of their cases. This will also ensure speedy dispensation of justice

Nothing here for Today!!!

G. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

H. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

- Does the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 ensure effective mechanism for empowerment and inclusion of the intended beneficiaries in the society? Discuss.

GS Paper III

- India has achieved remarkable successes in unmanned space missions including the Chandrayaan and Mars

Orbitter Mission, but has not ventured into manned space mission, both in terms of technology and logistics? Explain critically.

UPSC 2017: Comprehensive News Analysis – November 17

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Category: POLITY

1. [Govt. will uphold freedom of press in all forms: Modi](#)

In news:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the role of a free media was a “cornerstone of a vibrant democracy” and its contribution in giving “voice to the voiceless” was commendable, while greeting the press on the occasion of National Press Day.
- He underlined his government’s commitment to “upholding the freedom of the press and expression in all forms.”

2. [Anti-superstition Bill passed, with minor changes](#)

In news:

- The State Legislative Assembly passed the **Karnataka Prevention and Eradication of Inhuman Evil Practices**

- and Black Magic Bill, 2017**, popularly known as the ‘anti-superstition’ Bill, with minor changes.
- While stamping of mudra on the body, a practice in the upper caste community (Madhwa Brahmins), has been exempted from the ban, advertisements that offer miracle cures for diseases have been banned.

3. Quota in promotions: Five-judge bench to decide whether 2006 order needs to be revisited

Context:

- A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court will examine whether its 2006 judgment on the reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in promotions needs to be revisited.
- The matter was referred to the Constitution Bench by a three-judge bench.

Issue:

- The Constitution Bench has to decide on the limited issue whether the order in M Nagaraj vs the Union of India needs to be looked at afresh.
- The Constitution Bench will not go into the merit of the matter.

The 2006 Judgment

- In 2006, a five-judge Constitution Bench had ruled that the state was not bound to provide reservation for SCs/STs in promotions.
- But in case any state wished to make such a provision, it was required to collect quantifiable data showing backwardness of the class as well as its inadequate representation in public employment.
- Additionally, the state was required to ensure that reservation does not breach the 50 percent ceiling, adversely affect the creamy layer or extend it indefinitely.

Petition:

- Acting on a 2015 petition filed by the Tripura government which challenged an order of the Tripura High Court, a two-judge bench referred the matter to a Constitution Bench under Article 145(3).
- A petition before the High Court had challenged certain provisions of The Tripura Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Reservation of vacancies in services and posts) Act, 1991, saying that under these provisions, the state had granted reservation in violation of rules laid down in M Nagaraj vs Union of India case.

CJI views:

- The CJI is examining the issue whether a two-judge judge bench directly refers a matter to Constitution Bench
- According to him a Constitution Bench will first decode if the matter needs to be reconsidered at all

4. Govt planning ‘rent a roof’ policy in solar power push

In news:

- The Union government is working on a “rent a roof” policy to support its ambitious plan to generate 40 gigawatts (GW) of power from solar rooftop projects by 2022
- While investors have been enthused by India’s large ground-mounted, grid-connected solar parks, the solar rooftop market hasn’t gained much traction
- Of India’s ambitious target of 175GW of clean energy capacity by 2022, 100GW is to come from solar projects
- Of these, while 60GW is targeted from ground-mounted, grid-connected projects, 40GW is to come from solar rooftop projects. Wind power projects are to contribute 60GW

Suitability of India for such kind of projects

- The country offers a big opportunity given its 750GW potential as it records around 300 sunny days a year, with an average solar radiation range of 4-7 kilowatt-hours per square metre.

Various Concerns:

- According to some experts, there are concerns as India is not expected to achieve even half of the solar rooftop targets by December 2021

Government Strategy for Wind power Projects

- The central government is also firming up its strategy to expedite bidding out wind power contracts
- India has an installed wind power capacity of 33GW
- The country has auctioned 2GW of wind power contracts that saw tariffs fall to a record low of Rs2.64 per unit in the October auction conducted by state-run Solar Energy Corp. of India

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. [UN must list Azhar a global terrorist: France](#)

- Emphasising the need to designate Pakistani terror mastermind Masood Azhar as a global terrorist under the 1267 counter-terror committee of the UN Security Council, France sought international consensus on countering cross-border terrorism.
- France and India are successfully cooperating in areas like counter-terrorism and defence and highlighted France's territorial interests in the Indian Ocean region.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. [Why the Amish live longer](#)

In news:

- Scientists have identified a **genetic mutation** — found in an Indiana Amish family — that may extend life by up to ten years, and are now testing an experimental “longevity” drug that recreates the effect.
- The genetic mutation, discovered by the Northwestern University in the United States in an extended family of **Old Order Amish** living in the vicinity of Berne, Indiana, appears to protect against multiple aspects of biological ageing in humans.

Key Facts:

- Indiana Amish kindred with the mutation live more than 10 per cent longer and have 10 per cent longer telomeres (a protective cap at the end of our chromosomes that is a biological marker of ageing) compared to Amish kindred members who do not have the mutation.
- Amish with this mutation also have significantly less diabetes and lower fasting insulin levels.
- A composite measure that reflects vascular age also is lower — indicative of retained flexibility in blood vessels in the carriers of the mutation — than those who do not have the mutation, the research also found.
- These Amish individuals have very low levels of PAI-1 (plasminogen activator inhibitor), a protein that comprises part of a “molecular fingerprint” related to ageing or senescence of cells. It was previously known that PAI-1 was related to ageing in animals but unclear how it affected ageing in humans.

The community's origins:

- The Amish kindred in Berne, Indiana, have been genetically and culturally isolated and most are at least distantly related.
- The ancestors of the Indiana Amish emigrated in the middle of the 19th century from Berne, Switzerland.
- The mutation was introduced into the Amish kindred by farmers from Switzerland, who moved into the area.
- Two of their descendants, who carried the mutation, married into the Amish community. The Amish community outside the Berne area does not carry this mutation.
- People with the mutation live to be 85 on average, significantly longer than their predicted average lifespan of 71 for Amish in general and which has not changed much over the last century.

Category: ECONOMY

1. [GST rate cut: Centre doubles down on GST's gains for consumers](#)

In news:

- The Union Cabinet approved the creation of **the National Anti-profiteering Authority** to ensure that businesses pass on the benefits of GST to consumers.
- The authority has been granted wide-ranging powers, including to cancel the registration of offending firms in extreme cases.

- The apex body has been mandated to ensure that the benefits of the reduction in GST rates on goods or services are passed on to the ultimate consumers by way of a reduction in prices.
- According to the rules, if the NAA confirms that there is a need to apply **anti-profiteering** measures, then it has the authority to order the supplier to reduce its prices or return the undue benefit availed by it along with interest to the recipient of the goods or services. If this can't be done, then the company can be ordered to deposit the amount in the Consumer Welfare Fund.
- In extreme cases, the NAA can impose a penalty on the defaulting business entity and even order the cancellation of its registration under GST.

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. U.P. bans garbage burning in urban areas to tackle pollution

In news:

- As air quality in major cities of Uttar Pradesh hovers around “very poor” and “severe,” the State government has banned garbage burning in urban areas in a bid to reduce the pollution.
- The State government has also sought technological assistance from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, to create artificial rain.
- The government is also considering a review of old vehicles. It could remove them from roads, if necessary, to reduce vehicular pollution.
- **Key Fact:** The Air Quality Index of major cities in Uttar Pradesh like Moradabad, Lucknow, Kanpur, Ghaziabad, Varanasi and Noida has consistently been in the higher range of 400. It even touched 500 on a few days leaving the residents worried.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper III

- What are the major reasons for declining rice and wheat yield in the cropping system? How crop diversification is helpful to stabilize the yield of the crop in the system?

GS Paper IV

- Young people with ethical conduct are not willing to come forward to join active politics. Suggest steps to motivate them to come forward.

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Category: POLITY

1. [SC for nationwide ban on furnace oil, pet coke](#)

In news:

- The Supreme Court requested all States and Union Territories to move forward towards a nationwide ban on the use of pet coke and furnace oil to power up industries, in a bid to fight pollution.
- The Environment Bench of the Supreme Court had already ordered a ban on the industrial use of pet coke and furnace oil in the States of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan on October 24.

Why ban?

- This ban specifically came after an Environment Pollution Control Authority Report recommended the ban on sale, distribution and use of furnace oil and pet coke in the National Capital Region (NCR). Their use is already prohibited in Delhi.

- On October 24, the apex court also imposed a fine of ₹2 lakh on the Ministry of Environment for not fixing any emission standards for industries using pet coke and furnace oil in the NCR.

2. Aadhaar relief for NRIs, PIOs & OCIs; UIDAI says identity be sought only from those eligible

In news:

- Bringing relief to millions of Non Resident Indians (NRIs), Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) and Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs), the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has said that Aadhaar as an identity document should be sought only from those who are eligible for the unique ID as per the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016.
- This means that government agencies can now exempt those belonging to these categories from furnishing Aadhaar identity for availing services as they are not eligible for enrolling for the unique ID.
- The circular stated that the Prevention of Money Laundering (Maintenance of Records) Rules, 2017 and the Income Tax Act, 1961 clearly stipulate that the linking of Bank Accounts and PAN respectively is for those persons who are eligible to enrol for Aadhaar as per the Aadhaar Act, 2016.
- And individuals who were not assigned Aadhaar numbers shall be offered alternate and viable means of delivery of subsidy, benefit or service.

Need:

- What made the situation tricky for NRIs, PIOs and OCIs is that the Act as it stands today, allows only “residents” of India to enroll for the unique identity.
- The circular said the UIDAI had received several representations from these sections, informing about difficulties faced by them as various authorities demanded Aadhaar from them in respect of various services/benefits etc like maintaining existing NRE and NRO bank accounts and appearance by students in different exams in India.

The Aadhar Act, 2016

- The Act says every resident shall be entitled to obtain an Aadhaar number by submitting his demographic information and biometric information by undergoing the process of enrolment.
- Who is a resident is further defined as an individual who has resided in India for a period or periods amounting in all to one hundred and eighty-two days or more in the twelve months immediately preceding the date of application for enrolment.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. India, France to enhance counter-terror ties

In news:

- India and France decided to enhance counter- terror cooperation, and asked the international community to oppose those financing, sheltering and providing safe havens to terrorists.
- On maritime security, the two sides discussed growing cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region.

Press statement:

- “We expressed grave concern on growing terrorism and decided that we need to fight the evil together. We appealed to all countries to oppose those financing, sheltering and providing safe havens to terrorists,”

Category: ECONOMY

1. Economy gets Moody's thumbs up

Context:

- Moody's upgrades sovereign rating, expects high growth to continue as a result of ongoing reforms

A shot in the arm

Moody's changing India's rating to Baa2 from Baa3 is the first such upgrade in more than 13 years

The Baa2 club
India's rating now: Baa2 with a stable outlook

outlook), Oman, Panama, Philippines, Spain, Uruguay

Moody's says India's long-term growth potential stronger than other Baa-rated countries

Forecast 2017-18: GDP growth at 6.7%, set to

quicken to 7.5% in the next financial year

- Economic growth to be bolstered by the recent government measures to support SMEs and exporters with GST compliance

The scorecard

Rating	Description
Aaa	Prime Investment-grade
Aa1, Aa2, Aa3	High grade
A1, A2, A3	Upper medium
Baa1, Baa2 (India's rating), Baa3	Lower medium

Other Baa2 countries:
Bulgaria, Colombia, Italy (negative)

Moody's The decision to upgrade the ratings is underpinned by Moody's expectation that continued progress on economic and institutional reforms will, over time, enhance India's high growth potential

We welcome it and believe that it is a belated recognition of all the positive steps taken in India in the last few years

ARUN JAITLEY, Finance Minister



In news:

- Global credit rating agency Moody's Investors Services raised India's sovereign rating for the first time in 13 years, citing the country's high growth potential in the years to come, thanks to economic and institutional reforms.
- Main inference: The continued progress on economic and institutional reforms will**, over time, enhance India's high growth potential and its large and stable financing base for government debt, and will likely contribute to a gradual decline in the general government debt burden over the medium term.

Upgrade:

- The Indian government's rating as a local and foreign currency issuer from Baa3 with a positive outlook to Baa2 with a stable outlook.
- Borrowing obligations rated Baa2 are subject to moderate credit risk. They are considered medium grade and as such may possess certain speculative characteristics.
- Baa3, by contrast, was the lowest investment grade rating.

On debt-to-GDP ratio

- Moody's expects India's debt-to-GDP ratio to rise by about one percentage point this fiscal year to 69% of GDP

Other comments by the rating agency

- The rating agency agreed that a lot remains to be done such as fixing the GST's implementation challenges, weak private sector investment and the slow resolution of banking bad loans
- Moody's said it expects at least some of these issues to be addressed over time and will help further improve the Indian government's effectiveness and overall institutional framework

Basic Information:

Moody's Investors Service

- Moody's Investors Service, often referred to as Moody's, is the bond credit rating business of Moody's Corporation, representing the company's traditional line of business and its historical name
- Moody's Investors Service provides international financial research on bonds issued by commercial and government entities
- Moody's, along with Standard & Poor's and Fitch Group, is considered one of the Big Three credit rating agencies
- The company ranks the creditworthiness of borrowers using a standardized ratings scale which measures expected investor loss in the event of default. Moody's Investors Service rates debt securities in several bond market segments
- These include government, municipal and corporate bonds; managed investments such as money market funds and fixed-income funds; financial institutions including banks and non-bank finance companies; and asset classes in structured finance
- In Moody's Investors Service's ratings system, securities are assigned a rating from Aaa to C, with Aaa being the highest quality and C the lowest quality

2. After Moody's, all eyes on S&P, Fitch Ratings

In news:

Rating agency Moody's upgraded India's sovereign rating after a gap of almost 14 years

- The attention is now on the other two global rating agencies, Standard & Poor's and Fitch Ratings

Chief Economic Advisor's views

- Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian hopes that rating agencies might not be inconsistent amongst each other
- Subramanian had earlier observed that ratings agencies followed inconsistent policies while rating India as opposed to awarding ratings to China

S&P's view about the upgrade

- In October, S&P had said the country needed to improve its fiscal position for a rating upgrade
- For an upgrade, India would have to address its weak fiscal balance sheet and weak fiscal performance
- India has one of the highest general government debt-to-GDP levels (68%) among emerging market sovereigns
- A potential rating upgrade is likely to come from improved fiscal performance

Government's limitations

- Year after year, the fiscal deficit remains relatively large with the interest burden and subsidies taking a big chunk of government spending
- So there's not a lot of room for the government to maneuver, despite pressing infrastructure needs

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. 'PSLV built by domestic industry by 2020'

In news:

- ISRO is preparing to hand over the entire gamut of launch vehicle manufacture to domestic industry by 2020
- Efforts are on to set up a consortium of companies for the purpose

Contributions of Private Industry in ISRO's missions

- Until now, public and private industries have only supplied devices, components and sub-systems for ISRO's launch vehicles, including the PSLV and the GSLV
- ISRO already has a partnership with private industry to produce satellites
- The IRNSS-1H communication satellite aboard the ill-fated PSLV C-39 was the first to be produced by a consortium of six companies
- ISRO had a partnership with about 500 domestic industries for the supply of various components and devices

Expectations

- ISRO stressed on the need for industry to reduce the manufacturing and material cost without compromising on quality to bring down the launch cost
- ISRO had tightened tolerance to error following the failure of the PSLV- C39 mission

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. Delhi smog: Gulf dust storm had a bigger role than stubble burning

Reason for Delhi Smog apart from Stubble Burning:

- Besides stubble burning, a "multi-day dust storm" in Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia was the main cause of Delhi's smog between November 6 and 14.
- According to a study by the System of Air Quality And Weather Forecasting And Research (under the Ministry of Earth Sciences) and India Meteorological Department (IMD).

Key Points:

- There was a large multi-day dust storm that emerged in Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in the last week of October

- 2017 and continued up to November 3 and 4. This dust storm was carried by relatively cool winds.
- Winds at a height and low wind speed close to the surface meant that the pollutants were carried towards Delhi.
 - Also, stubble burning in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana was very high on November 6 and upper-air winds became North Westerly (towards Delhi) with high speed and started pumping pollution in Delhi.
 - The study says that the dust storm was responsible for 40 percent of the pollution on November 8, when the average air quality index was 478, indicating “severe” levels of pollution.
 - While stubble burning was responsible for 25 percent of the pollution, “local sources” also played a role.

Multiday Storm :

- According to the study, if external sources had not affected air quality, the average concentration of PM 2.5 would have been about 200 micrograms per cubic meter instead of 640 micrograms per cubic meter

Weather Conditions in Delhi

- The weather conditions that persisted locally between November 8 and 14 were calm winds, cool temperature, inversion layer trapped pollution within Delhi territory.

Impact of measures taken under Graded Action Plan

- According to the SAFAR and IMD report, the imposition of emergency measures such as a ban on construction and entry of trucks in Delhi made a positive difference of around 15 percent

2. Bonn climate change conference nears end amidst calls to phase out coal

In news:

The New Initiative- The Global Alliance To Power Past Coal

- A new initiative, led by the United Kingdom and Canada, to phase-out the use of coal for electricity generation was launched at the COP-23 at Bonn
- It seeks to bring together countries, regions, and cities to commit themselves to phase-out of coal within their jurisdictions within their chosen timelines
- A declaration by the newly-launched alliance said that coal phase-out needed to be carried out no later than by 2030 in the OECD and EU countries
- And no later than by 2050 in the rest of the world to meet the temperature goals set in the Paris Agreement.
- According to the declaration phasing out traditional coal power is one of the most important steps to tackle climate change and meet commitment to keep global temperature increase well below 2 degree Celsius (compared to pre-industrial times), and to pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5 degree Celsius
- Eighteen countries and a few states from the United States and Canada joined the alliance at the time of its launch
- The alliance says it hopes to have at least 50 partners by next year’s climate change conference.
- The global alliance launched is a fantastic example of the leadership needed to win the race against climate change

Financing:

- The French President promised to compensate for the loss of American funding to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which carries out periodic assessments of climate change science and whose recommendations provide the scientific foundation to the international climate negotiations

Other Announcements:

- An important agreement on ‘pre-2020 actions’ was announced.
- And also four European countries agreed to ratify the Doha amendments to the Kyoto Protocol.
- A new ‘border tax’ to protect the economy of Europe from imports from countries that do not respect these (climate) goals and are not supporting the environmental transition was also proposed by French President.
- Countries agreed to organize a series of workshops to explore ways to climate-proof agriculture

Nothing here for Today!!!

Black Rod

- It is a senior officer in the House of Lords. He is responsible for controlling access to and maintaining order within the House and its precincts.
- The Clerk of the Parliaments, to whom Black Rod reports, is in overall charge of the administration of the House, which provides all other services for Members of the Lords.
- The post is most visible at the annual state opening of parliament, when Black Rod is sent from the Lords to the House of Commons to summon MPs to hear the Queen's speech.
- The ceremony involves the door to the Commons being slammed in Black Rod's face. He – as it has been until now – uses his staff to knock three times on the door and gain admittance.
- Black Rod is also officially responsible for royal sections of parliament, such as the robing room and the royal gallery. They report to the clerk of the parliaments, who is in overall charge of the administration of the houses.

Context

- Sarah Clarke becomes first female Black Rod after 669 years.

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

- Hunger and Poverty are the biggest challenges for good governance in India still today. Evaluate how far successive governments have progressed in dealing with these humongous problems. Suggest measures for improvement.

GS Paper III

- Stem cell therapy is gaining popularity in India to treat a wide variety of medical conditions including leukaemia, Thalassemia, damaged sornea and several burns. Describe briefly what stem cell therapy is and what advantages it has over other treatments?

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Category: POLITY

1. [Right to life stands on higher pedestal than right to religion: Bombay HC](#)

In news:

Context:

- Observing that the **right to life** contemplated as a **fundamental right** under the Constitution stands on a “**higher pedestal than the right of religion**”, the Bombay High Court recently granted the custody of a minor girl child to her maternal grandmother.
- The father of the child is Muslim while the mother, who was a Hindu, had converted to Islam after marriage.
- The child’s paternal and maternal grandmothers were contesting for her custody since her mother has died and her father is accused of killing her and is on a death row in the UAE.

Court observations:

- The right to live with dignity, the right to preserve childhood and the human rights of the child are contemplated within the Fundamental Right to Life under **Article 21** of the Constitution.
- Though the Constitution grants the **Right to Religion** under **Article 25**, under such circumstances, Article 21 stands on a higher pedestal than the Right of Religion.
- According to the Supreme Court, all the religions have noble principles and thoughts wherein human dignity is revered.
- And no religion teaches that the child be exposed to vices, dishonesty and falsity.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. [Russia again vetoes bid to renew Syria gas attacks probe](#)

In news:

- Russia cast a second veto in as many days at the **United Nations Security Council** to block the renewal of a probe to identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks in Syria.
- A draft resolution put forward by Japan would have extended the UN-led Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) for 30 days to allow time for negotiations on a wider compromise. But Russia used its veto power to prevent adoption after 12 council members voted in favour of the measure, effectively ending the mission.
- It was the 11th time that Russia has used its veto power to stop council action targeting its ally Syria.
- A separate Russian draft resolution that called for changes to the JIM failed to garner enough support, with just four votes in favour.

Category: HEALTH ISSUES

1. [Anti malaria drug could fight Zika virus](#)

In news:

- **New research:** A medication used to prevent and treat malaria has the potential to fight the deadly Zika virus.
- The new study, published in the journal Scientific Reports, showed that the anti-malaria drug, called **chloroquine**, has the potential to treat Zika infections.

Category: ECONOMY

1. [Moody's India rating upgrade: Concerns over NPAs, private funds persist](#)

Context:

- With Moody's Investors Services issuing a clear warning, that India's rating upgrade could be downgraded if its fiscal metrics and the outlook for general government fiscal consolidation deteriorates materially.
- High debt/GDP ratio is likely to increase in the next two years on slower growth.
- More worrying will be how the deficit of states plays out in the wake of GST.

Reasons for increase in trend in Fiscal Deficit:

- Burgeoning bad loans
- Fresh uncertainty on the revenue projections from the GST front
- Slack private investments and subdued non-tax revenue trends.
- Due to problem areas like power and telecom, farm loan waivers and Rs 2.11 lakh crore bank recapitalisation (to be funded by recap bonds).
- So the actual fiscal deficit could turn out to be much larger.
- Therefore, the government's fiscal deficit target of 3.2 per cent of the GDP may come at a cost of over Rs 70,000-crore cut in capital expenditure, according to an SBI research report.

Fiscal glide path:

- The government hopes to maintain its fiscal glide path.
- But many analysts are not convinced, according to them even as reform measures will reduce the risk of sharp rise in debt but near-term concerns persist in terms of government adhering to its fiscal glide path especially in the light of the incremental spending undertaken to boost economic growth

Key points:

- The upgrade has come after India's economic growth unexpectedly slowed to 5.7 per cent in the June quarter, the slowest in three years, amid the disruption caused by the rollout of the GST and demonetisation shock.
- The removal of a number of commodities from the two highest tax brackets to lower brackets is unlikely to help matters on the revenue front.
- The first volume of the Economic Survey released in January had projected growth in the range of 6.75-7.5 per cent in 2017-18 against 7.1 per cent in 2016-17.
- The Index for Industrial Production (IIP) growth fell to 2.5 per cent in first six months of 2017-18 as against 5.8 per cent in same period of last year.
- Given the evident pressures on the fiscal front and the likelihood that the government may not even meet this year's and next year's fiscal target, the rating upgrade seems to have come at a wrong time.
- Markets should worry that the government, now having received the rating upgrade, may actually slacken and relax its commitment to reducing fiscal deficit, as per the stated plan.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. The superbugs of Hyderabad

In news:

- Effluent from pharmaceutical companies contain high concentrations of antibiotics that are turning the Hyderabad city's lakes and sewers into breeding grounds of drug-resistant superbugs
- Since the pharmaceutical industry took root in the city in the 1970s, environmental pollution has threatened agriculture, aquaculture and the health of city residents
- New research in the last few years shows this pollution to be a threat of a larger, more terrifying scale

Dangerous species:

- The Kazipally well, along with ditches, lakes, and rivers around the pharmaceutical cluster, receives large doses of antibiotics, along with the traditionally monitored pollutants
- When these antibiotics come in contact with pathogenic bacteria (which cause disease in humans), the latter learn to resist the former, making human infections by these pathogens extremely hard to treat
- Antibiotic resistance is arguably the biggest threat to global health in the 21st century
- In 2014, around 700,000 people across the world died due to infections that evaded antibiotics, a number that is estimated to touch 10 million by 2050

New Studies in India:

- It isn't clear how many Indians die from antibiotic-resistant infections each year
- One study from Delhi's Ganga Ram hospital found that between 2002 and 2009, among patients infected by Klebsiella pneumoniae (a pneumonia-causing bacterium), the percentage of these pathogens that were resistant to carbapenems grew from 2% to 52%
- Carbapenems are a class of last-resort antibiotics which doctors use only when others have failed

Antibiotic resistance:

- A big driver of resistance is the overuse of these drugs
- When people take antibiotics they don't need, for a viral flu, for instance, the bacteria in their body learn to tolerate these drugs by acquiring resistance genes
- Resistance genes don't come out of nowhere – some of them have existed for decades in soil and water, helping environmental bacteria fight natural antibiotics
- Studies in Hyderabad's pharmaceutical cluster now show that the large doses of man-made antibiotics in pollution hotspots like Kazipally force these environmental bacteria to evolve by boosting the numbers of

- resistance genes
- When human pathogens like *Staphylococcus aureus* (which causes skin and respiratory infections), mix with these environmental bacteria, they borrow these genes freely, making them potential killers

Government regulations:

- As of today, India does not limit antibiotics in pharma waste water
- India's first concrete move to tackle the problem was the 2017 National Action Plan for Antimicrobial Resistance, which talks about imposing limits on antibiotics in industrial waste. But these regulations are at least three years away

Antibiotic resistance leads to:

- The cost of antibiotic resistance will be enormous for both India and the world
- One estimate puts the expense of treating a resistant bloodstream infection at ₹42,000 more than a susceptible infection
- This could devastate the healthcare system, which today takes antibiotics for granted

Way forward :

- Complying with pollution norms
- The cost of better pollution-control isn't that high
- Complying with pollution norms doesn't need more than 3-4% of the production cost

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. Shift to EVs won't eradicate pollution'

In news:

Key Points:

- If India wants to move ahead with its target of all-electric vehicles by 2030, and also wants to truly help the environment while doing so, then it will need much more renewable energy than the 175 GW target set for 2022, according to Purpose Climate Lab, a global campaign group focused on climate and environmental issues in India.
- Unless the renewable energy target is significantly increased, the target of an entire fleet of electric vehicles will have no material benefit to the environment.

Reduce oil imports: The concept of electric transportation, especially public transportation, is a really good one because it will reduce India's imports of foreign oil, which is great, since those billions of dollars can then be spent to expand renewable energy programmes .

Social impact of simply shifting the fuel requirement from petrol and diesel to coal:

- Coal power plants are away from cities, in communities that don't always have the power to challenge what happens to them. They are usually poor, and away from concentrations of political and elite classes of people. Every community in the country should have the right to be protected from air pollution.
- Urban areas themselves were not entirely protected from the fumes from power plants.
- Gases like SO_x and NO_x, travel hundreds of kilometres to urban centres.

1. Plant emissions higher than believed

In news:

- New study prediction :** Carbon released by plant respiration may be around 30% higher than previously predicted.
- The study, published in the journal Nature Communications, suggests that as the mean global temperature increases, respiration will increase significantly.

Future prospects

- Such increases may lower the future ability of global vegetation to offset carbon dioxide emissions caused by burning fossil fuels.
- Plants both capture carbon dioxide and then release it by respiration. Changes to either of these processes in response to climate change have profound implications for how much ecosystems soak up carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels.
- The findings are based on the comprehensive GlobResp database, which is comprised of more than 10,000 measurements of carbon dioxide plant respiration from plant species around the globe.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

- The question of India's Energy Security constitutes the most important part of India's economic progress. Analyze India's energy policy cooperation with West Asian Countries.

GS Paper III

- Discuss the potential threats of Cyber attack and the security framework to prevent it.

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5. 210 govt. websites made Aadhaar details public: UIDAI
6. Govt. nod to suggestion on Haj quota increase

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1. Tejas world-class fighter jet, plays defined role'

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

1. 'Trump village' gets the biggest toilet pot model

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Category: POLITY

1. New J&K surrender policy to target local militants

Fresh surrender policy:

- Earlier, the surrender policy was limited to those who crossed the Line of Control into Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in the early 1990s and were stuck there.
- The new surrender policy is considering provision of “passports and jobs to any local youth who gives up the gun” and “support for his full assimilation into society.”

2. J&K government to set up ‘milk villages’

In news:

- The Jammu and Kashmir government has hit upon the idea of setting up ‘milk villages’ across the State in an attempt to bridge the demand-supply deficit of milk.
- Under this ambitious project of the Animal Husbandry Department, 50 identified beneficiaries of the village will be provided 100% subsidy to establish dairy farm units on modern lines.
- The project would also provide an opportunity to Gujjars — the main milk producer’s group — to grow up economically and contribute to the State.
- Establishing ‘milk villages’ will not only improve the standard of life of the community, but also boost the economy and social status of the tribe.

3. ‘Dispose of old cases in mission mode’

In news:

- Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad urged judges of the High Courts and the district courts to work in a ‘mission mode’ to dispose of all 10-year-old pending cases as quickly as possible.
- He also called upon lawyers to give pre-litigation services and start pro bono advocacy to give honest, credible and free legal advice to the poor.

4. Making caste slur on SC/STs over phone an offence, says SC

In news:

- The Supreme Court has ruled that using **casteist remarks** over phone in a **public place** against the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe category amounts to criminal offence, warranting a jail of a maximum five years.
- The apex court refused to stay criminal proceedings and quash an FIR against a person, who allegedly used derogatory casteist remarks over phone to a woman from the the SC/ST category.

5. 210 govt. websites made Aadhaar details public: UIDAI

In news:

- More than 200 central and State government websites publicly displayed details such as names and addresses of some Aadhaar beneficiaries
- The UIDAI took note and got the Aadhaar data removed from the said websites

UIDAI and Data security:

- UIDAI has a well-designed, multi-layer approach robust security system in place
- It is being constantly upgraded to maintain the highest level of data security and integrity
- The architecture of the Aadhaar ecosystem has been designed to ensure data security and privacy which is an integral part of the system from the initial design to the final stage

How does UIDAI ensure data security?

- Various policies and procedures have been defined, these are reviewed and updated continually
- This helps to appropriately control and monitor any movement of people, material, and data in and out of UIDAI premises
- Security audits are conducted on a regular basis to further strengthen security and privacy of data

6. Govt. nod to suggestion on Haj quota increase

In news:

- The government has accepted a high-level committee's recommendation of increasing by over 3% the quota of private tour operators sending Haj pilgrims to Saudi Arabia.
- The high-level committee formed by the government to frame the draft 'Haj Policy 2018-2022' had made the recommendation last month.
- The committee had recommended that the quota of private tour operators be increased from the present 26.47% to 30%.
- **Key fact:** India has an annual Haj quota of 1.70 lakh. Out of this, according to the allocation for 2017, 1.25 lakh pilgrims could travel to Saudi Arabia through the Haj Committee of India (HCoI).

Category: ECONOMY

1. RBI to launch multimedia campaign

Context:

- New innovative approach to educate the citizens.

In news:

- The Reserve Bank is planning to launch a full-fledged multimedia and multilingual

campaign to create general awareness among citizens of its regulations and initiatives.

- The RBI's communication department has sought applications from advertising agencies for designing the creatives for the pan-India awareness campaign.
- The campaign will be in 14 languages — Hindi, Assamese, Bangla, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, and English — with focus on regional languages.
- The media mix will include traditional ones such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television channels and cinema halls and new ones that include digital.
- It also plans to create an awareness campaign — Suno RBI Kya Kehta Hai — through SMSs to warn the public against falling prey to unsolicited and fictitious offers from fraudsters.

2. Centre to spur local electronics output

Context:

- Net zero imports in electronics by 2020

In news:

- The government is set to bring out a new policy to spur domestic electronics production by March 2018 in a bid to boost its flagship 'Make in India' programme and curb the country's trade deficit.
- The government had first unveiled an **Electronics Manufacturing Policy in 2012**, which included schemes such as Modified Special Incentive Package Scheme and electronic development fund.
- The new policy is likely to take a re-look at the utility of these schemes which have either ended or will expire soon.
- **Innovation, R&D:** the revised National Policy on Electronics will strive to increase the competitiveness of the electronics manufacturing industry; innovation, R&D and start-ups; promoting research in emerging technologies and India-specific initiatives and strategies to promote/ incentivise exports in electronics system design and manufacturing.
- **Key Fact:** Domestic consumption of electronic hardware in India was \$63.6 billion in 2014-15. Imports stood at \$36.9 billion, as per NITI Aayog.

3. Centre readies institutional body to push electric mobility

In news:

- The government plans to set up a committee for an institutional framework on large-scale adoption of electric vehicles in India as a viable clean energy mode — particularly for shared mass transport — to help bring down alarming levels of pollution in big cities.
- The government think-tank NITI Aayog has sought comments from Ministries, including heavy industry, environment, road, transport and highways, and power on the issue and is in the process of chalking out the nitty-gritty of the framework.
- The panel will be tasked with issues related to electric mobility, including setting up of

charging stations across the country and subsidising the cost of electric vehicles on a long-term basis.

- The Centre has recently invited proposals from cities with population of above 10 lakh for extending grants under the **FAME India (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric and Hybrid Vehicles in India)** scheme to promote large-scale adoption of EVs (electric vehicles) in multi-modal public transport.

4. ‘India up one notch in per capita GDP’

IMF data:

- India has moved up one position to 126 in terms of GDP per capita of countries.
- India still ranked lower than all its BRICS peers.
- Qatar remains the world’s richest on this parameter.
- The data, which forms part of the latest World Economic Outlook report of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), ranks over 200 countries in terms of per capita GDP based on purchasing power parity (PPP).

What is PPP?

- PPP is the rate at which the currency of one country needs to be converted into that of a second country to ensure that a given amount of the first country’s currency will purchase the same volume of goods and services in the second country as it does in the first.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

1. Tejas world-class fighter jet, plays defined role’

In news:

- **Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) manufacturer of Tejas states :** The indigenously developed Tejas Light Combat Aircraft is a world class fighter jet and can effectively play its “defined” role in securing Indian skies.
- Tejas is a four-and-half generation world class fighter jet.
- **IAF remarks:** The aircraft is not enough to maintain its combat readiness and it needed to quickly procure a fleet of foreign single engine fighters to deal with any possible security challenges, in the backdrop of the dwindling size of its fighter fleet.

Category: MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

1. ‘Trump village’ gets the biggest toilet pot model

- World’s biggest toilet pot model was unveiled at Marora, popularly known as the ‘Trump village’, in Haryana on the World Toilet Day on Sunday in a bid to create awareness towards sanitation and use of toilets.
- The nondescript village, with a population of 1,800, in Mewat region was in June rechristened as ‘Trump village’ by NGO Sulabh International Social Service

Organisation in a gesture to U.S. President Donald Trump ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Washington.

- A mega pot of toilet made up of iron, fibre, wood and plaster of Paris — measuring 20×10 feet — was unveiled in the hamlet to mark the World Toilet Day, which is observed on November 19 to inspire action to tackle the global sanitation crisis.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

1. Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) is airspace over land or water in which the identification, location, and control of civil aircraft is performed
 2. The concept of an ADIZ is defined in Tokyo Convention
 3. It covers only that country's territory
-
1. Only 1 and 2
 2. Only 2 and 3
 3. Only 1 and 3
 4. All of the above

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

- Clarify how mid-eighteenth century India was beset with the spectre of a fragmented polity. (2017)

GS Paper IV

- One of the tests of integrity is complete refusal to be compromised. Explain with reference to a real life example.(2017)

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Nothing here for Today!!!

Category: POLITY

1. [Aadhaar data was never breached: UIDAI](#)

Context:

- UIDAI response to the reports of over 200 government websites displaying Aadhaar-related data of beneficiaries.

In news:

- Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) said there has been no breach or leak of Aadhaar data.
- The data on these websites was placed in public domain as a measure of proactive disclosure under RTI Act by these government and institutional websites which included beneficiaries' name, address, bank account, and other details including Aadhaar number and was collected from the third party/users for various welfare schemes.
- UIDAI clarified that Aadhaar number is not a secret number. It is to be shared with authorised agencies when an Aadhaar holder wishes to avail a service or benefit of government scheme/s or services.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. India hosts intl. congress on military medicine

In news:

- India is for the first time hosting the World Congress of the International Committee of Military Medicine.
- **Theme:** 'Military Medicine in Transition: Looking Ahead'.
- It is a platform to share medical best practices and also foster long term bonds.

2. In ICJ, it's down to the wire for India, U.K.

In news:

- UN General Assembly and the Security Council assemble for separate meetings in New York to hold the 12th round of voting to break the stalemate between India's Dalveer Bhandari and Britain's Christopher Greenwood for re-election to the International Court of Justice (ICJ)
- The winning candidate needs to get a majority in both the General Assembly (GA) and the Security Council (SC), but 11 rounds of voting so far ended with India winning in the UN General Assembly and the U.K. winning in the Security Council.
- **Historical challenge:** It is the first time in UN history that the candidacy of a permanent member of the Security Council is challenged in the way it has been by India, and all five permanent members, the P5, appear to have rallied behind Mr. Greenwood.
- The U.K. has already indicated to members of the SC that it plans to invoke a clause that has never been used to suspend voting and move to a **conference mechanism** of the GA and the SC if the first round of voting does not yield a clear outcome.
- **What is conference mechanism?**
 - The conference mechanism involves three members of the GA and three of the SC jointly selecting the winner.
 - India has told member countries that this would amount to bypassing the desire of an overwhelming majority.

3. U.S. declares North Korea a state sponsor of terrorism

In news:

- S. President Donald Trump declared North Korea a state sponsor of terrorism
- This move allows the Trump administration to impose additional sanctions on Pyongyang over its nuclear and missile programmes.
- Nuclear-armed North Korea fired a ballistic missile over Japan on 29 August in a major

escalation of tensions by Pyongyang. Five days later, it carried out a sixth nuclear test, sending tensions soaring over its weapons ambitions and causing global concern.

4. China to induct new long range missile into PLA next year: report

In news:

- China's next-generation multi- nuclear warhead intercontinental ballistic missile with a proclaimed ability to hit targets "**anywhere in the world**" may be inducted into the People's Liberation Army (PLA) early next year.
- The new missile—**the Dongfeng-41**—also has a speed of more than Mach 10 and can use decoy devices and chaff to pierce its way through the enemy's missile warning and defence systems.
- The Dongfeng-41 is a three-stage solid-fuel missile with a range of at least 12,000 kms, meaning it could strike anywhere in the world from a mainland site
- The missile can carry up to 10 nuclear warheads, each of which can target separately.

5. Sri Lankan PM set to meet Modi, Kovind

In news:

- Sri Lankan Prime Minister to visit India on an official visit.
- He will hold bilateral discussions with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and call on President Ram Nath Kovind during his stay in New Delhi, in addition to participating in the **Global Conference on Cyberspace** to be held in the Indian capital later in the week.
- Currently, the neighbours are negotiating the **Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement**, and the terms for a likely deal allowing India to develop the **Mattala airport near Hambantota town**, where the Chinese hold a majority stake in a port.
- India and Sri Lanka have also agreed, in principle, to jointly operate the World War-era oil storage facility in the eastern port town of Trincomalee but the terms are yet to be firmed up, amid opposition from oil union workers in the island.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Logistics sector to soon get infrastructure status

In news:

- The **logistics sector** will soon get **infrastructure status**, a move that will help the industry raise funds at **competitive rates** and **boost India's trade**.
- The proposal mooted by the Commerce Ministry has been approved by the Finance Ministry.

Secretary-level post:

- Realising the importance of the logistics sector to promote trade, the government has created a separate special secretary-level post in the Commerce Ministry to coordinate with all the ministries concerned and departments.
- Earlier, there was no single department or ministry to look at all aspects related to logistics covering various modes of shipment such as sea, roads and railways.
- Exporters, too, have time and again demanded a specific department to deal with the issues related to logistics.
- **Key point:**
 - Huge investments are required in the sector to boost the country's trade, and granting infrastructure status would help the industry attract investments.

- Definition of logistics includes industrial parks, warehouses, cold storages and transportation.
- This status would help the sector get credit at competitive rates and on a long-term basis as rising logistics cost impacts the global competitiveness of exporters
- Logistics costs of exports are very high in India and due to this, Indian goods are less competitive in global markets.
- According to a report, about 14 per cent of the total value of goods goes into the logistics cost. On the other hand, in other major economies, this is just 6-8 per cent.
- A strategy paper released in 2010 by the Commerce Ministry had emphasised on the need to invest billions of dollars in improving infrastructure, including logistics, to boost exports.

2. ‘Indian renewable energy firms among lowest rated’

In news:

- Indian renewable energy companies are among the most poorly rated investment grade companies in the Asia-Pacific region, according to a report by ratings agency Fitch.
- **Fitch’s 2018 Outlook on Asia-Pacific Utilities :** Most of the issuers are owned by their respective sovereigns due to the strategic importance of energy supply

Key Points:

- Tariffs for both wind and solar electricity hit a new low of under ₹0/kWh in mid-2017, making the two the cheapest source of electricity in the country.
- Renewable energy made up 58% — its biggest share yet — of the 25 GW of generation capacity added in India in FY17.
- The small renewable players would remain protected from price risks due to long-term power purchase agreements, but said that production volumes would vary on the basis of climatic patterns.
- India’s overall demand for petroleum products would grow at about 5% over the medium term, driven by strong GDP growth over the next two financial years and continued growth in auto sales.
- Fitch expects Indian State-owned oil and gas companies to undergo large debt-funded consolidation in 2018.
- India’s overall demand growth for petroleum products to remain at around 5% over the medium term, driven by strong GDP growth of around 7.4-7.5% over the next two fiscal years and continued growth in auto sales.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. ISRO opens doors to private sector

In news:

- In an attempt to increase the number of satellite launches and build the capacity of the private sector, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) issued a Request For Proposal (RFP) tender to the private industry for **Assembly, Integration and Testing (AIT)** of 30-35 satellites.
- Under this, 4-5 companies would be selected after evaluation and awarded parallel contracts. They would be responsible for the AIT of satellites at ISRO facilities
- ISRO currently launches 3-4 launches per year but the demand is for 16-18 satellites.
- The private sector already supplies majority of the sub-systems in satellite manufacturing.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Which of the statements given above are correct?

1. Only 2 and 3
2. Only 3
3. Only 2
4. All of the above

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

- “The growth of cities as I.T. hubs has opened up new avenues of employment, but has also created new problems”. Substantiate this statement with examples. (2017)

GS Paper IV

- The crisis of ethical values in modern times is traced to a narrow perception of the good life. Discuss.

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Category: POLITY

[1. Penal law soon on triple talaq](#)

In news:

- The Union government has set up a ministerial committee to frame a new law that would attract penal provisions in the case of use of **triple talaq or talaq-e-biddat** for divorce between Muslim couples, and will be bringing the new Bill in the winter session of Parliament.

Talaq-e-biddat:

- The Supreme Court had, in August this year, in a majority judgement set aside the practice of talaq-e-biddat, an arbitrary and unilateral decision by a Muslim husband to end the marriage by utterance of the word talaq three times.

Key Point : As the law stands today, the victims have no option even after approaching the police as there exists no provision in law to take action against the husband.

2. No need for privacy in court: Supreme Court

Context:

- The possibilities of having audio and video recordings of proceedings in the constitutional courts — the Supreme Court and the high courts.

In news:

- Judges have no need for privacy inside the courtrooms they preside in, Supreme Court judge, Justice A.K. Goel, said, giving the thumbs-up for audio and video recording of court proceedings.
- Unlike the legislature, proceedings inside courtrooms have been a zealously guarded affair.
- The to and fro between lawyers and judges, submissions made by the advocates and questions asked from the Bench have hitherto been beyond the eye of the camera or the ear of a recorder.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. India pulls off a diplomatic coup, wins prized ICJ seat

In news:

- India's nominee to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), Dalveer Bhandari, was re-elected after the United Kingdom withdrew its candidate, Christopher Greenwood.
- The U.K. chose to withdraw after it became clear that it would not win the contest in the General Assembly (GA) and it did not have adequate support in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for its attempts to derail the voting process itself.

Notable incident :

- This is the first time in the 70-year history of the United Nations that the U.K. will not be on the ICJ; and this is the first time that one of the five permanent members of the UNSC lost out to an ordinary member in a race.
- This is also the first time that one sitting member of the ICJ lost to another sitting member.

Pride of place

India has managed to get its own man in The Hague court. A look into the process

• Five of the 15 judges of ICJ are elected every three years	• While four candidates were elected smoothly, India's Dalveer Bhandari and U.K.'s Christopher Greenwood ended up in a deadlock as the former won in the UNGA and the latter won in the UNSC, in multiple rounds of voting	• India opposed the move; U.K. could not gather adequate support
• This year, there were six candidates for five places	• U.K. wanted to end voting and move to a conference mechanism	• U.K. withdrew its candidate
• The winning candidates require a majority in both the General Assembly and the U.N. Security Council, in simultaneous voting through secret ballot		

Basic Information:

International Court of Justice:

- The International Court of Justice is the primary judicial branch of the United Nations (UN). Seated in the Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands, the court settles legal disputes submitted to it by states and provides advisory opinions on legal questions submitted to it by duly authorized international branches, agencies, and the UN General Assembly.
- The ICJ is composed of fifteen judges elected to nine-year terms by the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council from a list of people nominated by the national groups in the Permanent Court of Arbitration.
- The election process is set out in Articles 4–19 of the ICJ statute. Elections are staggered, with five judges elected every three years to ensure continuity within the court. Should a judge die in office, the practice has generally been to elect a judge in a special election to complete the term.

2. 'Rakhine State Is a Crime Scene.' Amnesty International Accuses Myanmar of Apartheid

In news:

- Amnesty International said that Myanmar's persecution of Rohingya Muslims fits the legal definition of apartheid, a crime against humanity.
- In a report based on a two-year investigation, the group said that Rohingya, a mostly stateless minority from

Myanmar's western state of Rakhine, are "trapped in a vicious system of state-sponsored, institutionalized discrimination."

- Amnesty traces the roots of the crisis to systemic discrimination and segregation that has intensified dramatically since 2012, when deadly riots erupted between Buddhists and Muslims in several parts of the state. Buddhists make up the majority in both Rakhine state and in the country at large.
- **Key Fact:** The Rohingya are widely considered one of the world's most persecuted minorities.

Basic Information:

Apartheid

Apartheid was a system of institutionalised racial segregation and discrimination in South Africa between 1948 and 1991. Broadly speaking, apartheid was delineated into petty apartheid, which entailed the segregation of public facilities and social events, and grand apartheid, which dictated housing and employment opportunities by race

[**3. China draws 3-stage path for Myanmar, Bangladesh to resolve Rohingya crisis**](#)

Context:

- China has proposed a three-phase plan for resolving the Rohingya crisis, starting with a ceasefire in Myanmar's Rakhine State so that refugees can return from Bangladesh, China's Foreign Ministry said ahead of meeting of European and Asian officials in Myanmar.

Rohingya crisis

- The refugee crisis erupted after the military launched a brutal counter-insurgency operations against the militants after attacks on an army base and dozens of police security posts in Rakhine on Aug. 25.
- Consequently, more than 600,000 Muslim Rohingya fled to Bangladesh .
- Myanmar's military has said that all fighting against the Rohingya Islamist militants died out on Sept.5, but it remains on guard against incursions by fighters who had fled to Bangladesh with the refugees.
- The group behind those attacks, Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), had declared a one-month ceasefire on Sept.10, which was rejected by the government. But there have been no serious clashes since.
- The refugees' suffering has caused an international outcry.

Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)

- The foreign ministers Asia-Europe Meeting, or ASEM, opening in the Myanmar is an important multilateral diplomatic gathering which happens once every two years and is designed to discuss issues between Asia and Europe.

China's 3 stage solution :

- The first stage is to effect a ceasefire on the ground, to return to stability and order, so the people can enjoy peace and no longer be forced to flee.
- According to Chinese official the first phase's aim has already basically been achieved, and the key is to prevent a flare-up.
- Second stage is bilateral dialogue to find a workable solution.
- The third phase should be to work toward a long-term solution based on poverty alleviation as poverty was the root cause of the conflict.

Myanmar's Increased Engagement with the World

- The United States and other Western countries have become more engaged with Myanmar since it began a transition to civilian government after nearly 50 years of military rule.
- China has close relations with both Myanmar and Bangladesh, and has long been a key player in lawless borderlands where rebel ethnic groups have fought Myanmar's government for decades.
- The conflict in those border regions have occasionally pushed thousands of refugees to seek shelter in China.
- Since the Rohingya crisis, China has repeatedly expressed support for what it calls the Myanmar government's efforts to protect stability.
- The international community and the United Nations Security Council are expected to give encouragement and support to Myanmar and Bangladesh to create the necessary conditions and a good environment.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. India calls for stronger treaties to protect space assets

In news:

- Stressing international cooperation in space as in all domains of global commons, India called for strengthening global treaties to protect space-based assets and prevent militarization of outer space

Over 200 treaties

- India had more than 200 international cooperation agreements with more than 40 countries and international organizations
- The maiden moon mission, Chandrayaan-I, is a “successful example of international cooperation with international payloads”
- In May, ISRO launched the communications satellite GSAT-9, also called SAARC satellite, meant to provide connectivity and disaster support to countries in South Asia
- India is party to all the legally binding instruments on outer space

2. Govt. unveils draft of law to regulate space sector

Context:

- Space Activities Bill, 2017.

In News:

- The draft of the country's first Space Law, stipulates licences for all space-related players and activities.
- The draft also sets out penalties of ₹1 crore and above and jail terms for violations.
- The proposed bill, also seeks to keep the government out of any liability arising out of harm that these commercial activities may cause — to people, environment, other countries or outer space.
- The draft Bill defines objects, people and geography that will come under the future law.
- The Centre will keep a registry of all space objects.

New body proposed

- All persons or entities engaged in space will now need a licence
- The government will form a new authorised body for the purpose of issuing license.
- So far, the national space agency Indian Space Research Organisation's major works have related to satellites, launchers and applications. These were governed by the Satellite Communication Policy, 2000; the Remote Sensing Data Policy, 2011; and international treaty obligations on outer space activities as mandated by the **UN Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space or UNCOPUOS**.

Why such a law is needed?

- Increasing applications of Space-based solutions have meant an increased participation of private sector industry and startups.
- Commercial opportunities in space activities and services, nationally and internationally, demand a higher order of participation by private sector agencies. This situation demands a necessary legal environment for orderly performance and growth of space sector.

3. Oldest stars in our galaxy discovered

In news:

- Astronomers have discovered some of the oldest stars in our Milky Way galaxy by determining their locations and velocities.
- Just like humans, stars have a life span: birth, youth, adulthood, senior and death.
- Scientists at Georgia State University in the U.S. focussed on old or “senior citizen” stars, also known as **cool subdwarfs**, that are much older and cooler in temperature than the Sun.
- In a study, astronomers conducted a census of our solar neighbourhood to identify how many young, adult and old stars are present.

- They targeted stars out to a distance of 200 light years, which is relatively nearby considering the galaxy is more than 1,00,000 light years across.
- A light year is how far light can travel in one year.

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. An app to get tiger numbers right

In news:

- In order to reduce human error and provide more reliable estimates, field data collection for tiger enumeration in the country is set to go digital
- In the forthcoming **All-India Tiger Estimation**, to be taken up in December-January, the authorities plan to eliminate the process of manual recording of signs of the carnivore and other habitat details

M-STRiPES:

- An app named M-STRiPES (Monitoring System For Tigers-Intensive Protection and Ecological Status) developed by the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun will be used for the first time
- Though the app has already been in place in some national parks, its usage and application has been made mandatory only now, for the fourth All-India Tiger Estimation
- With the availability of M-STRiPES, human error will be eliminated and the use of the app would ensure a more robust estimate

About the app

- It is a free app that will be made available to staff participating in the tiger census exercise, and they will feed in their observation during the carnivore sign survey and transect marking
- Details such as pellet density, vegetation status, and human disturbance, if any, will also be recorded

About National Tiger estimates

- The national tiger estimates are conducted once in four years, with the first conducted in 2006
- The last nationwide assessment, held in 2014, pegged the tiger figures across the country at 2,226
- Karnataka alone was home to 400 tigers, a bulk of them in Bandipur and Nagarhole

Nothing here for Today!!!

Kangri or Kanger:



- A kanger is an earthen pot woven around with wicker filled with hot embers used by Kashmiris and Himachalis beneath their traditional clothing to keep the chill at bay, which is also regarded as a work of art. In Kashmir, it is normally kept inside the Phiran, the Kashmiri cloak, or inside a blanket. If a person is wearing a jacket, it may be used as a hand warmer.
- It is generally believed that Kashmiris learnt the use of the kangri from the Italians who were in the retinue of the Mughal emperors, and usually visited the Valley during summer. In Italy (where a similar device was known as a scaldino) and Spain, braziers were made in a great variety of shapes and were profusely ornamented. Historical data, however, contradicts the claim that kangri came to Kashmir from Italy, but it is known that it was used in the time of the Mughal Empire. Those visiting Kashmir for the first time during the winter season are surprised to find people carrying firepots in their hands or in their laps but every Kashmiri knows how to handle the apparatus with care. It is a part of Kashmiri tradition and even in modern times it sees a huge demand, and is even used in public or private offices during winters.

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

1. 1 only
2. 2 only
3. 1 & 2 only
4. 1, 2 & 3 only

Select the correct statements

1. 1 only
2. 2 only
3. Both 1 and 2
4. None of the above

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper III

- ‘Climate Change’ is a global problem. How India will be affected by climate change? How Himalayan and coastal states of India will be affected by climate change? (Mains – 2017)

GS Paper IV

- You are a Public Information Officer (PIO) in a government department. You are aware that the RTI Act 2005 envisages transparency and accountability in administration. The act has functioned as a check on the supposedly arbitrarily administrative behaviour and actions. However, as a PIO you have observed that there are citizens who filed RTI applications not for themselves but on behalf of such stakeholders who purportedly want to have access to information to further their own interests. At the same time there are these RTI activists who routinely file RTI applications and attempt to extort money from the decision makers. This type of RTI activism has affected the functioning of the administration adversely and also possibly jeopardises the genuineness of the applications which are essentially aimed at getting justice.

What measures would you suggest to separate genuine and non-genuine applications? Give merits and demerits of your suggestions. (Mains- 2017)

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Category: POLITY

1. Gram panchayat certificate no proof of citizenship: SC

In news:

- **Supreme Court:** A certificate of residency issued by a gram panchayat is not a document of citizenship and is “meaningless” unless supported by some other valid record to make a claim for inclusion in the National Register of Citizenship (NRC).

Batch of pleas

- The apex court was hearing a batch of pleas challenging the Gauhati High Court order holding that a certificate of residency issued by a gram panchayat (village council) secretary was not a legal and valid document for claim to citizenship.
- About 48 lakh claims have been made using certificates issued by gram panchayat secretaries, out of a total of 3.29 crore claims made so far for inclusion in the NRC which is being prepared in Assam to identify illegal migrants.

Government's stance:

- The Assam government said the High Court was justified in invalidating the document as it cannot be claim to citizenship.

2. ‘Safe city’ plan for women to kick off in eight cities

In news:

- Home Ministry is all set for a comprehensive ‘safe city’ plan for women, which will soon be kicked off in eight cities where a robust emergency response system and police-verified public transport will come into place.
- The safe city plans will be implemented in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Lucknow and Hyderabad.
- The plan of action to be submitted by these cities within a month will be assessed by the Steering Committee headed by the Union Home Secretary, which will make suitable recommendations.

Issues discussed:

- 33% reservation for women in police, installation of CCTV cameras, deployment

of women in police stations, prevention of cybercrime, infrastructure issues, mapping of dark spots and crime-prone areas and involvement of educational institutions, among others.

Various initiatives:

- ‘Himmat’ app, all women patrol van, ‘shishtachar’ programme of the Delhi police; ‘Hawkeye’ mobile app and ‘Bharosa’ programme of the Hyderabad police; ‘Suraksha’ app of the Bengaluru police and Power Angels of Uttar Pradesh police.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Pak. court frees Hafiz Saeed

In news:

- A Pakistani court ordered the release of **Hafiz Saeed**, the chief of **Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD)** and one of the alleged masterminds of the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks that killed more than 160 people.
- A review Board of the Lahore High Court overruled the government’s request to extend the detention citing that Saeed’s release may trigger international sanctions against Pakistan.
- The review board looking into the case has refused to extend his house arrest as the government failed to provide any evidence against the charges.
- **Background information:**
 - Saeed, who carries a bounty of \$10 million announced by the U.S. for his role in terror activities, has been under house arrest since January this year.
 - Last month, authorities had withdrawn terrorism charges against Saeed and the JuD, a front of the terror organisation Lashkar-e-Taiba, and kept him in detention under the Maintenance of Public Order Act, paving the way for his release.
 - Saeed’s detention was extended four times since January when the government cracked down on the JuD and its charity arm Falah-e-Insaniat Foundation.

2. Rakhine operation was ethnic cleansing

In news:

- The United States labelled the Myanmar military operation against the Rohingya population “**ethnic cleansing**” and said it would consider targeted sanctions against those responsible.
- Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said in a statement, “After a careful and

thorough analysis of available facts, it is clear that the situation in northern Rakhine State constitutes ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya.

- The United States supports an independent investigation into what happened in Rakhine State and will pursue actions including possible targeted sanctions.

Human rights organizations observation:

- Human rights monitors have accused Myanmar's military of atrocities, including mass rape, against the stateless Rohingya during so-called clearance operations following Rohingya militants attacks on 30 police posts and an army base.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Bankruptcy code to be amended

In news:

- The Union Cabinet approved a proposal to promulgate an Ordinance to amend the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)**.
- The move is to strengthen the IBC by explicitly preventing certain persons — including wilful defaulters, disqualified directors, those who have indulged in fraudulent transactions as well as promoters whose account is classified as non-performing assets (NPA) beyond a prescribed duration — from regaining control of the defaulting company through the backdoor in the garb of a resolution applicant.

About IBC:

- The IBC provides for an effective and robust legal framework for “time-bound insolvency resolution to release assets locked up in NPA and promote maximisation of value of assets, failing which, under-utilised resources of unviable business are released through liquidation.”

2. Cabinet approves new finance panel

In news:

- The Cabinet has set the ball rolling for the constitution of the Fifteenth Finance Commission, which will decide the devolution formula for revenue-sharing between the Centre and States from the year 2020 till 2025
- Cabinet has given an in-principle nod to constitute the Commission and finalize its terms of reference

14th Finance Commission:

- The Fourteenth Finance Commission, whose recommendations were accepted by the government and are effective till March 31, 2020, had mooted a ten percentage points jump in States' share of the central pool of taxes from 32% earlier to 42%

Tasks assigned to 15th FC

- The Fifteenth Finance Commission's recommendations have to be in place before April 1, 2020
- Both the Centre and States' expenditure patterns need to be retained and the impact of the new distribution of taxes system on States and the Centre has to be considered by the Commission
- The Commission will have to grapple with the significant changes in the taxation framework, such as the Goods and Services Tax, which has replaced the earlier indirect taxation system

3. New direct tax law coming

In news:

- Direct tax regime: The government has constituted a new task force to review the country's 56-year old Income Tax law and suggest a new law to replace it.
- The task force is led by Central Board of Direct Taxes Member Arbind Modi to review the Income Tax Act, 1961 and draft a new direct tax law in consonance with economic needs of the country.

Terms of reference

- Draft an appropriate direct tax legislation keeping in view the direct tax system prevalent in various countries, international best practices, the economic needs of the country and any other matter connected thereto.
- The task force had been given six months to submit its report to the Centre.

4. The potential of smart contracts in banking

Context:

- Bankchain is a consortium of 27 banks (22 of them are Indian) of which the State Bank of India (SBI) was the first Indian member
- It is working to devise blockchain-based solutions for banking and, along with the SBI, planning to launch a beta program to use smart contracts next month

About Blockchain and bitcoin

- In late 2008, an unknown person (or group) named Satoshi Nakamoto created a crypto-currency, bitcoin
- Its novelty consists in the fact that its operations are authorized without any trusted third-party carrying out administrative or security tasks
- This minimizes the transaction fees eventually weighing on users and considerably reducing the time for processing the operations
- Centralized networks rely on one or more trusted bodies (for example, banks) to keep a detailed record of transactions and update users' balance
- Bitcoin, on the other hand, decentralizes the administrative activity and lets "miners" process the transactions carried out in the system
- The transparency, accessibility and stability of the transactions' record are ensured by the public broadcasting of the operations throughout the nodes of the network (the computers running the software)
- And their subsequent addition to a shared database containing the complete transaction history for any given bitcoin
- This shared ledger is called the "blockchain", i.e the sequence of all the verified "blocks" of transactions, recorded chronologically—timestamped—one after the other

Usability:

- Just as bitcoin uses the blockchain to maintain a ledger of a crypto-currency, the blockchain can be used to keep track of the ownership of any asset or data that can be digitized and represented by computer code
- Once the asset is on blockchain, users can compose smart contracts that contain the terms of the agreement, and automatically execute them once certain predetermined conditions are satisfied
- They roughly follow the scheme of an "if-then" function
 - For example, if the smart contract relates to the acquisition of an intellectual property right licence, Party A creates a smart contract to which the licence X is permanently attached, programming that X is to be released upon certain conditions Y, and launches it into a blockchain
 - Whenever Party B wishes to obtain the information/licence, they transfer consideration Y to the protocol
 - Automatically, the smart contract algorithm releases X to party B and delivers Y to Party A, eliminating delays and room for non-compliance
 - Once the obligation is fulfilled on the one side (Y), the computer protocol autonomously performs the other side of the agreement (X)

Disadvantages of traditional contracts:

- Traditional contracts are always subject to a degree of uncertainty with respect to their final outcome

- Smart contracts leave no room for voluntary breaches of the agreement
- By entrusting the network with the performance of the agreed terms, they reduce the likelihood of expensive and time-consuming disputes

Why are banks reluctant to Blockchain?

- Smart contracts on a decentralized, “permission-less” blockchain like bitcoin don’t allow any meddling by third parties
- This is because in a permission-less system, any computer can join as a node to run the code and amending the ledger will require access to all the nodes
- Banks are uncomfortable with losing control of the system and they prefer “permissioned” blockchains like Bankchain
- Bankchain restricts the access to nodes to other banks, while individual customers can join as users after complying with know your customer (KYC) norms
- Pre-selected nodes allow banks to intervene between transactions, providing the ‘emergency entry’ into the system whenever interventions are deemed appropriate

Benefits:

- Currently each bank carries out its own KYC process.
- This can be done by one bank and securely uploaded on the blockchain, thereafter shared with the other banks once the trigger is generated by the customer
- Smart contracts can automatically release insurance payments for verifiable claims like delayed flights, motor accidents or death
- This would involve bringing authorized third parties like hospitals and garages to join a single platform with insurers and the insured, and bring process efficiencies
- Most securities have settlement delays of two days or longer that can be brought down to minutes, which will also reduce working capital requirements for collateral
- Other applications include crowdfunding for small businesses, enabling the trading of tokenized equity shares and settlement of syndicated loans between banks

Threats:

- While permissioned blockchains bring many benefits of a decentralized network, they compromise on the promise of immutability by limiting the nodes in the system
- The unlimited nodes in bitcoin make it tamperproof while pre-selected nodes in a permissioned blockchain allow authorities to intervene between transactions and

- expose the points of vulnerability
- It is quite unsure that banks can provide the same level of data integrity that is guaranteed by permission-less blockchains like bitcoin

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. Migratory birds start arriving in Chilika

In news:

- Lakhs of migratory birds arrived at the Chilika Lake, Asia's largest brackish water lagoon.
- Major bird congregations have been spotted in the wetlands of the **Nalabana Bird Sanctuary** inside Chilika and Mangalajodi, a major village on the banks of the lake.

Key Facts:

- Nalabana with a 15.59-sq.-km area is hosting the highest number of migratory birds this time round. Similarly, the wetlands of Mangalajodi have begun to fill up with lakhs of ruffs, godwits, plovers, sandpipers and migratory ducks. With 11.59 sq km of mudflats, Mangalajodi receives about 3 lakh birds during winter.
- Migratory birds fly across continents from Caspian Sea, Baikal Lake and remote parts of Russia, Mongolia and Siberia and flock to the marshy lands of the Nalabana Bird Sanctuary inside the Chilika Lake, which is spread across over 1000 sq. km.
- The Odisha government has announced a bird festival for the first time in January, showcasing the diversity of migratory birds and their numbers.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

1. In a first, air-launched Brahmos missile test-fired

In news:

- In a milestone, a BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was fired successfully for the first time from a Sukhoi-30MKI fighter aircraft of the Indian Air Force.
- **Effectiveness:** The successful maiden test-firing of Brahmos Air Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM) from Su-30MKI will significantly bolster the IAF's air combat operations capability from stand-off ranges.

Conquering air, land and sea

India successfully test-fired the air variant of BrahMos missile from a Sukhoi-30MKI fighter jet. With this test the country has completed tests of the cruise missile triad for land, sea and air variants

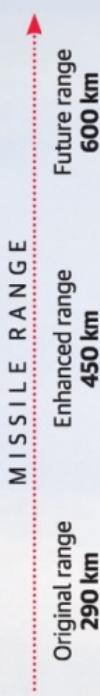
IAF Su-30MKI was chosen for its airframe made of titanium and high-strength aluminium alloys



The BrahMos is a **2.5 tonne supersonic air-to-surface cruise missile** with range of more than **400 kms** and can reach **2.8 times the speed of sound**

- IAF is the first Air Force in the world to have successfully fired an air launched **2.8 Mach** surface attack missile in this category

- Complex algorithms for separation of missile from aircraft was indigenously developed by DRDO's Research Centre Imarat



Inducted into the Navy

June 28, 2006

Former PM Manmohan Singh announces that BrahMos has been inducted into the Navy. Image shows a target on fire after being hit by the missile fired from a navy ship in Bay of Bengal off Odisha coast during one of many tests in 2004

Army acquires missile

June 21, 2007

A.P.J Abdul Kalam had sowed the seeds of BrahMos by signing an agreement with Russia in 1998. Here he is seen handing over a replica to the then Chief of the Army Staff, symbolising the commencement of the delivery of the missile's land version

Submarine variant

March 20, 2013

The maiden flight of the submarine variant of BrahMos was successfully test-fired from a pontoon off Visakhapatnam in the Bay of Bengal
▪ It marked a global first in the vertical launch of a supersonic cruise missile from an underwater platform

- Key Fact:** Brahmos ALCM, which weighs 2.5 tonnes, is the heaviest weapon to be deployed on India's Su-30 fighter aircraft. It has a range of 290 km.

Completes tactical cruise missile triad

- Brahmos, the world class weapon with multi-platform, multi-mission role is now capable of being launched from land, sea and air, completing the tactical cruise missile triad for India.
- The land and sea variants of Brahmos are already operational with the Army and the Navy. Recently, the range variants were upgraded from 290 km to 450 km after India joined the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR).

Key Fact: BrahMos is a joint venture between India and Russia and named after the

Brahmaputra and Moscow rivers.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Which of the following statements are correct?

1. 1 only
2. 2 only
3. Both 1 and 2
4. Neither 1 nor 2

Which of the above statements are true?

1. 1 only
2. 2 only
3. Both 1 and 2
4. Neither 1 nor 2

Which of the above statements are true?

1. 1 only
2. 2 only
3. Both 1 and 2
4. Neither 1 nor 2

Which of the above statements are true?

1. 1 only
2. 2 only
3. Both 1 and 2
4. None of the above

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

- Account for variations in oceanic salinity and discuss its multi-dimensional effects.

GS Paper IV

- A building permitted for three floors, while being extended illegally to 6 floors by a builder, collapses. As a consequence, a number of innocent labourers including women and children died. These labourers are migrants of different places. The government immediately announced cash relief to the aggrieved families and arrested the builder.

Give reasons for such incidents taking place across the country. Suggest measures to prevent their occurrence.

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Nothing here for Today!!!

Category: POLITY

1. More seats for Sikkim Assembly

In news:

Wider representation

The number of seats in Sikkim assembly is set to increase from 32 to 40. A look at the present and the proposed composition of Sikkim Assembly.

	PRESENT SEATS	PROPOSED SEATS
Bhutia-Lepchas	12	12
Limboo-Tamang	0	5
Sangha	1	1
Scheduled Castes	2	2
Other communities	17	20



- The Home Ministry has proposed an increase in the number of seats in the Sikkim Assembly from 32 to 40. The expansion will be the first

since the State merged with India in 1975.

- The seats are being increased to accommodate people from the **Limboo and Tamang communities**, notified as the **Scheduled Tribes** in Sikkim in January 2003.

Various provisions:

- As per constitutional provisions, the total number of seats for STs should be in proportion to the population.
- As per the Delimitation Act, 2002, the number of seats in an Assembly of any State can only be readjusted on the basis of the first census conducted after 2026.
- The final order made by the Delimitation Commission could not have been challenged by any court but the special constitutional provision to Sikkim allows them to make the changes.

2. BC panel Bill to return to House

In news:

- The Union government will reintroduce **the Constitution (123rd) Amendment Bill, 2017**, in the winter session of Parliament, which seeks to accord constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC).
- The decision comes after Opposition members in the Rajya Sabha managed to clear amendments to the Bill, making that version different from the one cleared by the Lok Sabha in the monsoon session.
- The President may specify the socially and educationally backward classes in the various States and Union Territories, in consultation with the Governors, and a law of Parliament will be required for amending the list of backward classes.
- **Key Fact:** The NCBC, a statutory body created in 1993, was given limited powers: to recommend inclusion in or exclusion of a community from the Central list.

Grievance redressal

- The power to hear complaints of the OBCs and protect their interests remained with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes.
- Since the National Commission for Scheduled Castes deals with the grievances and safeguards of the SCs as well as the OBCs, it has limited capacity to address the needs of the OBCs.

3. Union Ministers hold meeting on ‘triple talaq’

In news:

- A group of Union Ministers including Home Minister discussed at length a draft law to put an end to instantaneous ‘triple talaq’, a Muslim way of divorce, which is said to be still in practice despite the Supreme Court striking it down.
- The Centre is planning to bring the legislation in the winter session.
- The Ministers also discussed whether a new legislation should be brought or the existing penal provisions be suitably amended to make it an offence.
- According to the law, a victim of ‘talaq-e-biddat or instant triple talaq, would have no option but to approach the police for redressal of her grievances, as a Muslim clergy would be of no assistance to her.
- Even the police were helpless as no action could be taken against the husband in the absence of punitive provisions.

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Right to access Internet non-negotiable: India

- Union Minister for Electronics and IT Ravi Shankar Prasad said that the right to access the Internet is non-negotiable and no single entity can have a monopoly over this.
- Prasad’s comments follow the U.S. proposal to roll back earlier rules related to open internet, clearing the way for service providers to charge users differently based on content or restrict access to some content.

2. India to help Mauritius on digital locker

In news:

- The Government of India will assist Mauritius to develop and set up digital locker services.
- The government will offer technical support and advisory services to Mauritius. The decision was taken during a bilateral meeting during the conference.
- Besides, in similar separate meetings with Iran and Denmark, it had been decided to collaborate on issues related to IT.

3. Rohingya repatriation deal signed

Memorandum of Understanding:

- Bangladesh and Myanmar have signed a memorandum of understanding on the return of Rohingya people who fled the Rakhine state in the wake of a military crackdown.
- At least 600,000 Rohingya people have fled Myanmar to the neighbouring Bangladesh since the army started an operation in August following an attack by Rohingya militants.

Rohingya crisis:

- The stateless Rohingya have been the target of communal violence and vicious anti-Muslim sentiment in mainly Buddhist Myanmar for years.
- They have also been systematically oppressed by the government, which stripped the minority of citizenship and severely restricts their movement, as well as their access to basic services.

4. The new bipolarity in Asia

New bipolarity in Asia:

- S. President Donald Trump makes no secret of the fact that he believes in a world governed by self-interest, with little room for shared responsibility
- In contrast, Chinese President Xi Jinping is projecting himself as a firm believer in globalisation and free trade
- It is against this backdrop that there are signs of a new bipolarity

taking shape in Asia

- It possibly seeks to replace similar attempts by the U.S. previously — such as the pivot to Asia — to counter China and its aggressive designs in the region
- Implicitly, though not as yet explicitly, it seeks to create a coalition of all those willing to align with the U.S. against China's expanding ambitions and its inexorable march towards dominance in Asia

Anti-China:

- Talks held recently at the level of officials between the U.S., Japan, Australia and India (the Quadrilateral) are seen as an indication of this
- As China's expansionist attitudes intensify, more countries in East and Southeast Asia are expected to align with the Quadrilateral group of countries
- Vietnam could be one such country, but quite a few other countries in the region could follow suit

Attitudinal changes

- The recent Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings provided a further glimpse of attitudinal changes that are in the making
- Trump and PM Modi made use of this occasion to announce that the two countries were prepared to work together for the future of Asia
- It is a euphemism for what many see as keeping a check on China's aggressive designs in the region
- It is, perhaps, for the first time that India has indicated a resolve to align openly with the U.S. to tackle broader issues in the Indo-Pacific region

China's acceptance:

- The recent 19th Chinese Communist Party Congress placed special emphasis on a strong military “capable of winning wars”
- The deliberations left little room for any adjustment or compromise to accommodate the concerns of other countries of Asia, or for that matter the U.S.

- The deliberations of the Party Congress have further emboldened China to pursue its preferred course of action

Advantage that China possesses

- Apart from its massive military build-up, China is positioned most advantageously as far as economic aspects are concerned
- It is today the most important trading partner for over 90 countries
- Its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has caught the imagination of the world, including that of Europe
- Most countries of Asia and Europe, including many of India's neighbours, do not seem to have a problem with the BRI

Sustaining bipolarity not going to be easy

- Latent concerns about Chinese expansionism have not prevented several Asian nations from endorsing and backing the BRI
- Most Asian nations also show no inclination or desire to blame China for siding with Pakistan, which continues to shelter high-ranking global terrorists, including Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar
- Even Mr. Trump, during his recent visit to China, seemed to have softened his criticism of China, after China produced some attractive mega deals
- All this only exposes the vulnerabilities of bipolarity in the extant situation today

India emerging as a leader

- In Asia, India, Japan and, to an extent, Vietnam appear willing to endorse the U.S. initiative to build up opposition to China's designs
- India has lately taken up issues well beyond South Asia, such as North Korea and China's actions in the South China Sea
- Currently, India is emerging as one of the countries in the region firmly committed to freedom of navigation and over-flight
- Also, for unimpeded commerce based on the principles of international law, particularly the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea
- This puts it in direct confrontation with China, as also in opposing

China's ambitions in the Indian Ocean and the Indo-Pacific

Way Forward

- As the outlines of a new bipolarity in Asia become clearer, and with the formal setting up of the Quadrilateral, China is certain to regard all this as an attempt to encircle it
- This will pave the way for a new round of turmoil as China might use both force and inducements to win more and more Asian countries to its side
- The consequences of this could be quite significant for peace and stability in the Asian region

Category: ECONOMY

1. [**President signs bankruptcy ordinance**](#)

In news:

- President Ram Nath Kovind gave his assent to the ordinance approved by the Union Cabinet to amend the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)** to strengthen the regime.
- The ordinance aims at putting in place safeguards by prohibiting wilful defaulters, those associated with non-performing assets (NPAs), and the habitually non-compliant, from regaining control of the defaulting company or stressed assets through the back door in the garb of being a ‘resolution applicant’.
- The amendments also provide for fine ranging from Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 2 crore for those violating these norms.
- The ordinance aims at putting in place safeguards to prevent unscrupulous, undesirable persons from misusing the IBC.
- The amendment also provides such check by specifying that the Committee of Creditors (CoC) should ensure the viability and feasibility of the resolution plan before approving it.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [**Particle accelerator for art revs up**](#)

In news:

- The world's only particle accelerator dedicated to art was switched on at the Louvre in Paris
- It will help experts analyse ancient and precious works

Key Fact:

- The 37-metre AGLAE accelerator housed underneath the huge Paris museum will be now be used for the first time to routinely study and help authenticate paintings and other items made from organic materials
- It can determine the chemical make-up of objects without the need to take samples
- The AGLAE works by speeding up helium and hydrogen nuclei to speeds of between 20,000 to 30,000 km per second and then bombarding the object, which emits radiation that can be captured and analysed

Objects being tested

- Among the first objects to be tested by the newly configured accelerator were Roman votive statues of the household gods
- They were uncovered from the ancient forum of Bavay close to the border with Belgium

Category: CYBER SECURITY

1. Unite to fight dark forces in digital space: PM

In news:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for sharing of information and coordination among nations to ensure that "**digital space does not become a playground for the dark forces of terrorism and radicalisation**".
- Speaking at the Global Conference on Cyber Space (GCCS), attended by delegates from 131 countries, Mr. Modi pitched for creating "cyberwarriors" to keep the digital space safe.

- Modi said: “Cyberwarriors who will remain on the alert against cyberattacks. We need to ensure that cyberprotection becomes an attractive and viable career option for the youth.”
- Modi launched the Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance (UMANG) mobile app.

Category: ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ECOLOGY

1. Bamboo ceases to be a tree, freed of Forest Act

In news:

- After 90 years, the bamboo has legally ceased to be a tree with the government, amending the **Indian Forest Act** and axing the bamboo — **taxonomically a grass** — from a list of plants that also included palms, skumps, brush-wood and canes.
- **Importance:**
 - In doing so, the government hoped to promote cultivation of bamboo in non-forest areas to achieve the “twin objectives” of increasing the income of farmers and also increasing the green cover of the country.
 - This will now create a viable option for cultivation in 12.6 million hectares of cultivable waste land.
 - It will encourage farmers and other individuals to take up plantation/block plantation of suitable bamboo species on degraded land, in addition to plantation on agricultural land and other private lands under the agro-forestry mission
- Bamboo grown in the forest areas would continue to be governed by the provisions of the Indian Forest Act.
- For several years now, the classification of the bamboo — with its multifarious uses as an edible item, furniture and construction — as a tree meant that it couldn’t be easily ferried across State borders. It also required permits from village councils and couldn’t be cultivated in non-forest areas.

Key Fact:

- The current demand of bamboo in India is estimated at 28 million

tonnes.

- Country has 19% share of the world's area under bamboo cultivation, its market share in the sector is only 6%.
- At present, it imports timber and allied products, such as pulp, paper, and furniture.
- In 2015, it imported about 18.01 million cubic metres of timber and allied products worth Rs.43,000 crore.

Category: INTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

1. 'BrahMos increases strike range'

In news:

- The successful test of the **air-launched BrahMos** cruise missile greatly enhances India's strike range not just on the borders but across the Indian Ocean.

Effectiveness:

- China is increasing its presence in the Indian Ocean to safeguard its critical energy lanes.
- If fired [BrahMos] from Andaman and Nicobar islands, the whole of Malacca Straits gets within striking range.
- With BrahMos now on Su-30MKIs even Gwadar gets compromised. It gives striking range.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Which of the statement/s given above is/are CORRECT?

1. 1 only
2. 2 and 4 only
3. 3 and 2 only

4. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Which of the statement/s given above is/are INCORRECT?

1. 1 only
2. 2 only
3. Both 1 and 2
4. None of the above

1. 1,2,3,4,5
2. 1,3,4,5,6
3. 2,3,4,5,6
4. 1,2,3,5,6

Which of the statement/s given above is/are INCORRECT?

1. 1 only
2. 3 only
3. 1 and 3
4. 2 and 3

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper III

- “Digital space should not become a playground for the dark forces of terrorism and radicalization” Comment. (250 words)

GS Paper IV

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D. GS4 Related

E. Prelims Fact

F. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Nothing here for Today!!!

Category: POLITY

1. Rajnath to chair meet on Centre-State relations

In news:

- Home Minister Rajnath Singh will chair a meeting of the **Standing Committee of the Inter State Council (ISC)** to discuss the recommendations made by the **Puncchi Commission on Centre-State relations**.

About Puncchi Commission :

- The Punchhi Commission, which was notified in 2005, submitted its report in 2010.
- Its recommendations pertaining to national security, communal harmony, Centre-State financial relations and planning are expected to be discussed.

Commission observations:

- The Commission in its report had said that ‘**National Security**’ as a subject was not specifically listed in any of the three Lists, i.e. the Union, the State or the Concurrent List.
- The subject of Security under the **Article 352** and under the Emergency Provisions in Part XVIII of the Constitution has been assigned to the Union Government. Though it is an overriding executive power of the Union, in Constitutional practice, however, ‘Security’ is a subject in which the States and the Union have a common interest and are expected to act in a co-ordinated manner.
- The Commission also said that in case of communal riots, which has a potential of causing widespread violence within a territory, “the use of **Article 355** may be in order.” “A clarificatory line in this, regard, if required, may be inserted making the provision explicitly clear that the Centre can depute Paramilitary Forces to such trouble spots in exceptional circumstances even if a request from the State Government is not received. The aim has to be to ensure quick control of the situation, bring it back to normal, hand over the area to the local administration as quickly as possible and then withdraw the Central forces.

Basic Information:

Article 352. Proclamation of Emergency

(1) If the President is satisfied that a grave emergency exists whereby the security of India or of any part of the territory thereof is threatened, whether by war or external aggression or armed rebellion, he may, by Proclamation, made a declaration to that effect in respect of the whole of India or of such part of the territory thereof as may be specified in the Proclamation Explanation A Proclamation of Emergency declaring that the security of India or any part of the territory thereof is threatened by war or by external aggression or by armed rebellion may be made before the actual occurrence of war or of any such aggression or rebellion, if the President is satisfied that there is imminent danger thereof

(2) A Proclamation issued under clause (I) may be or revoked by a subsequent proclamation

(3) The President shall not issue a Proclamation under clause (I) or a Proclamation varying such Proclamation unless the decision of the Union Cabinet (that is to say, the Council consisting of the Prime Minister and other Ministers of Cabinet rank under Article 75) that such a Proclamation may be issued has been communicated to him in writing

(4) Every Proclamation issued under this article shall be laid before each House of Parliament and shall, except where it is a Proclamation revoking a previous Proclamation, cease to operate at the expiration of one month unless before the expiration of that period it has been approved by resolutions of both Houses of Parliament Provided that if any such Proclamation (not being a Proclamation revoking a previous Proclamation) is issued at a time when the House of the People has been dissolved, or place during the period of one month referred to in this clause, and if a resolution approving the Proclamation has been passed by the Council of States, but no resolution with respect to such Proclamation has been passed by the House of the People before the expiration of that period, the Proclamation shall cease to operate at the expiration of thirty days from the date on which the House of the People first sits after its reconstitution, unless before the expiration of the said period of thirty days a resolution approving the Proclamation has been also passed by the House of the People

(5) A Proclamation so approved shall, unless revoked, cease to operate on the expiration of a period of six months from the date of the passing of the second of the resolutions approving the proclamation under clause (4); Provided that if and so often as a resolution approving the continuance in force of such a Proclamation is passed by both Houses of Parliament the Proclamation shall, unless revoked, continue in force for a further period of six months from the date on which it would otherwise have ceased of operate under this clause Provided further that if the dissolution of the House of the People takes place during any such period of six months an a resolution approving the continuance in force of such Proclamation has been passed by the House of the People during the said period, the Proclamation shall cease to operate at

the expiration of thirty days from the date on which the House of the People first sits after its reconstitution unless before the expiration of the said period of thirty days, a resolution approving the continuance in force of the proclamation has been also passed by the House of the People

(6) For the purpose of clause (4) and (5), a resolution may be passed by either House of Parliament only by a majority of the total membership of that House and by a majority of not less than two thirds of the members of that House present and voting

(7) Notwithstanding anything contained in the foregoing clauses, the President shall revoke a Proclamation issued under clause (l) or a Proclamation varying such Proclamation if the House of the People passes a resolution disapproving, or, as the case may be, disapproving the continuance in force of, such Proclamation

(8) Where a notice in writing signed by not less than one tenth of the total number of members of the House of the People has been given of, their intention to move a resolution for disapproving, or, as the case may be, for disapproving the continuance in force of, a Proclamation issued under clause (l) or a Proclamation varying such Proclamation,

(a) to the Speaker, if the House is in session; or

(b) to the President, if the House is not in session, a special sitting of the House shall be held within fourteen days from the date on which such notice is received by the Speaker, or as the case may be, by the President, for the purpose of considering such resolution

(9) The power conferred on the President by this article shall include the power to issue different Proclamations on different grounds, being war or external aggression or armed rebellion or imminent danger of war or external aggression or armed rebellion, whether or not here is a Proclamation already issued by the President under clause (l) and such Proclamation is in operation

Article 355. Duty of the Union to protect States against external aggression and internal disturbance:
It shall be the duty of the Union to protect every State against external aggression and internal disturbance and to ensure that the government of every State is carried on in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution

2. 'No fresh polls if NOTA votes exceed candidates'

In news:

Context:

- **Chief Justice of India** rejected a public interest litigation petition suggesting fresh elections whenever the public chose overwhelmingly the “None of the Above” (NOTA) option.

Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra's Observation:

- Holding elections in our country costs money.
- The court said a voter had the right to express his dissent by staying at home.

Supreme Court advocate Ashiwni Upadhyay opinion :

- If NOTA got the highest number of votes, it would amount to an expression of public dissatisfaction with the candidates in the fray.
- If this happened, the result should have to be nullified by the Election Commission.
- His petition had even sought a ban on the parties and their candidates who failed to NOTA in the first election from contesting the fresh polls.

Basic Information:

NOTA option

- “None Of The Above”, or NOTA for short, also known as “against all” or a “scratch” vote, is a ballot option in some jurisdictions or organizations, designed to allow the voter to indicate disapproval of all of the candidates in a voting system
- It is based on the principle that consent requires the ability to withhold consent in an election, just as they can by voting “No” on ballot questions
- When “None of the Above” is listed on a ballot, there is the possibility of NOTA receiving a majority or plurality of the vote, and so “winning” the election
- In such a case, a variety of formal procedures may be invoked, including having the office remain vacant, having the office filled by appointment, re-opening nominations or holding another election (in a body operating under parliamentary procedure), or it may have no effect whatsoever, as in India

Category: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS/BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. India, Sri Lanka to expedite projects

Context:

- Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe visit to India.

In News:

- **Area of focus :** Expediting decisions on joint projects and solving the problems that have emerged.
- Among the projects discussed in particular were the plans for India to develop the **Trincomalee harbour**, including the Oil Tank farms project, as well as the Indian bid to lease and manage the **Mattala airport in Hambantota**.

2. Arrest Hafiz Saeed and charge him for his crimes, U.S. tells Pakistan

In news:

Context:

- Hafiz Saeed, mastermind of the 2008 Mumbai terror attack was released from house arrest by Pakistani authorities.
- Saeed is a designated global terrorist and the U.S. has declared a bounty of \$10 million on his head.

In news:

- **the US reaction:** Pakistan should ensure that Hafiz Saeed is arrested and charged for his crimes, the U.S. said a day after he was released from house arrest.

‘Act against LeT’

- The U.S. has repeatedly asked Pakistan to act against the LeT.
- In May 2008, the U.S. Department of the Treasury designated Saeed as a specially designated global terrorist under Executive Order 13224.
- Saeed was also individually designated by the UN under UNSCR 1267 in December 2008 following the November 2008 Mumbai attack in which 166 people, including six American citizens, were killed.

Category: ECONOMY

1. S&P stands pat on its rating

In news:

- Standard & Poor's (S&P) retained its **BBB- rating for India's sovereign** with a 'stable' outlook.
- A BBB- rating denotes the lowest investment grade rating for India's sovereign debt.
- S&P expects India's economy to grow robustly over the two-year period from 2018-20 with foreign exchange reserves rising further.
- India's GDP growth rate is among the fastest of all investment-grade sovereigns, and we expect real GDP to average 7.6% over 2017-2020.
- The rating agency estimated public sector banks would need a capital infusion of about \$30 billion to make large haircuts on loans to viable stressed projects and meet the rising capital requirements under the Basel III norms.

Reasons:

- S&P cited India's **low per capita income , the sizeable fiscal deficit and high general government debt** as factors that continue to weigh down the country's credit profile and reiterated its stable outlook — indicating that the rating is unlikely to see a change in the near future.

2. [**Post note ban, big drop in cash deals**](#)

In news:

- RBI study claims major drop in cash payments after note-ban.
- RBI study reveals: "fundamental shift" in the payment habits in the economy-a move away from cash payments to and a wider adoption of retail electronic payments, card usage at merchant terminals and cheques.
- The demonetisation has impacted the inter-bank payments and settlement system significantly in moving cash transactions to non-cash modes of payments in three segments- retail electronic payments, card usage at PoS terminals and cheques.
- As per the study, cheque volumes and values contracted during the pre-demonetisation period but recorded positive growth during demonetisation as well as post-note-ban months.
- There was a sharp growth in card transactions at points of sale terminals for both demonetisation and post- demonetisation periods, it added.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [**Sagardhwani retraces historic Indian Ocean expedition routes**](#)

In news:

- Marine acoustic research vessel **INS Sagardhwani** is riding a wave of history that charted the course of oceanographic research in the Indian Ocean.
- The Kochi-based ship, operated by the Navy and equipped with eight scientific laboratories, recently joined an international campaign to revisit the first major interdisciplinary '**International Indian Ocean Exploration (IIOE)**' undertaken by 13 countries with 46 vessels in the 1960s.

'International Indian Ocean Exploration-2

- IIOE-2, as the ongoing commemorative expedition is known, is organised by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) under the UN.
- It hopes to furthering the scientific community's understanding of the Indian Ocean biophysical variability in response to monsoon and human activity. A total of 52 nations are taking part in IIOE-2, carrying out oceanographic research in designated areas in the Indian Ocean.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Which of the statement/s given above is/are CORRECT?

1. 1 only
2. 2 only
3. Both 1 and 2
4. Neither 1 nor 2

(d)

Type : Intergovernmental Organisations

Level : Moderate

Explanation:

Budapest Convention on Cybercrime

- The Council of Europe helps protect societies worldwide from the threat of cybercrime through the **Budapest Convention on Cybercrime**, the Cybercrime Convention Committee (T-CY) and the technical co-operation Programme on Cybercrime.
- First international treaty addressing crimes committed using or against network and information systems (computers).
- Developing countries including India have not signed it stating that the developed countries lead by the US drafted it without consulting them.

Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

- IGF is a multi- stakeholder forum for policy dialogue on issues of Internet governance.
- It brings together all stakeholders in the Internet governance debate, whether they represent governments, the private sector or civil society, including the technical and academic community, on an equal basis and through an open and inclusive process.
- The establishment of the IGF was formally announced by the United Nations Secretary-General in July 2006.

Meridian Process

- It aims to provide Governments worldwide with a means by which they can discuss how to work together at the policy level on Critical Information Infrastructure Protection (CIIP).
- Participation is open to all countries and targets senior level policymakers.
- An annual conference and interim activities are held each year to help build trust and establish international relations within the membership to facilitate sharing of.

Tallinn Manual

- It is an academic, non-binding study on how international law (in particular the jus ad bellum and international humanitarian law) applies to cyber conflicts and cyber warfare, a document that was put together by Western experts under the aegis of NATO.

United Nations (UN)

- The International Multilateral Partnership against Cyber Threats (IMPACT) is the first United Nations-backed cyber security alliance.
- The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is the specialized agency of the United Nations

which is responsible for Information and Communication Technologies.

- ITU deals also with adopting international standards to ensure seamless global communications and interoperability for next generation networks; building confidence and security in the use of ICTs; emergency communications to develop early warning systems and to provide access to communications during and after disasters, etc.

(a)

Type : Current Affairs

Level : Moderate

Explanation:

New report published by World Bank

Which of the statement/s given above is/are INCORRECT?

1. 1 only
2. 2 only
3. Both 1 and 2
4. Neither 1 nor 2

(c)

Type : Current Affairs

Level : Moderate

Explanation:

About the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana ('Saubhagya')

1. It claims to ensure **electrification** of all **willing households** in the country
2. It makes promises to provide a **free electricity connection** to all willing **BPL households**
3. And to **all others** on a **payment of Rs. 500** (which shall be recovered by the power distribution companies/power departments in 10 instalments along with electricity bills)

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper III

- “What are the reasons for poor acceptance of cost effective small processing unit? How the food processing unit will be helpful to uplift the socio-economic status of poor farmers?” (250 words)

GS Paper IV

- You are the manager of a spare parts company A and you have to negotiate a deal with the manager of a large manufacturing company B. The deal is highly competitive and sealing the deal is critical for your company. The deal is being worked out over a dinner. After dinner the manager of manufacturing company B offered to drop you to the hotel in his car. On the way to hotel he happens to hit motorcycle injuring the motorcyclist badly. You know the manager was driving fast and thus lost control. The law enforcement officer comes to investigate the issue and you are the sole eyewitness to it. Knowing the strict laws pertaining to road accidents you are aware that your honest account of the incident would lead to the prosecution of the manager and as a consequence the deal is likely to be jeopardized, which is of immense importance to your company.
- What are the dilemmas you face? What will be your response to the situation? (250 Words)

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2. ['Judiciary not representative: President Kovind](#)
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4. [Chandigarh's new draft parking policy seeking 50% road tax invites criticism](#)

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. [Here comes the sun watcher, India's Aditya-L1](#)

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. [New identity for an Eastern Ghats resident](#)
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Category: POLITY

[**1. Centre to distribute solar lamps to youth in Maoist-hit districts**](#)

In news:

- The home ministry has asked Left Wing Extremism (LWE)-affected states to distribute 15 lakh solar lamps to students in the 35 worst affected districts until all villages are electrified.
- Home Minister Rajnath Singh is learnt to have instructed states to expedite the process of distributing the solar lamps so that students don't suffer for want of electricity.
- The official said though the recruitment by Maoists has seen a declining trend, the government wanted to reach out to the youth in villages.
- Home ministry has also decided to link telecom towers with optical fibres as the mobile towers were unable to bear the load of many calls at one time.

Key Fact:

The 35 worst LWE-hit districts:

1. Telangana (1): Khammam

2. Bihar (6): Jamui, Gaya, Aurangabad, Rohtas, Jehanabad, Arwal.
3. Chhattisgarh (8): Dantewada, Bastar, Kanker, Surguja, Rajnandgaon, Bijapur, Narayanpur, Sukma .
4. Jharkhand (10): Chatra, West Singhbhum, Palamau, Garhwa, East Singhbhum, Bokaro, Lohardaga, Gumla, Latehar, Hazaribagh.
5. Madhya Pradesh (1): Balaghat.
6. Maharashtra (2): Gadchiroli , Gondia.
7. Orissa (5): Gajapati, Malkangiri, Rayagada, Deogarh, Sambalpur.
8. Uttar Pradesh (1): Sonebhadra.
9. West Bengal (1): Paschim Midnapur.

2. Judiciary not representative: President Kovind

In news:

Key Points:

- President Ram Nath Kovind expressed concern over the “**unacceptably low**” representation of women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes in the higher judiciary. He called for long-term measures to remedy this situation.
- He said that only 4,700 of the 17,000 judges — roughly one in four — in India were women.
- Kovind said all the three organs of the State — the judiciary, the executive and the legislature — needed to be careful not to cross into one another’s finely defined spaces. “Public life is today a glasshouse. There is a relentless demand for transparency and scrutiny. Our legal fraternity needs to be mindful of these legitimate urges of the people — the ultimate masters in a democracy. All three organs of the State are obligated to be models of good conduct,”
- The President said there was a need to look at **alternative dispute resolution**
- Kovind said lawyer fees needed to be brought down and India’s reputation of having an expensive legal system must be changed.

3. Rajnath seeks cooperation of States on Central forces

In news:

Context:

- 12th Inter-State Council meeting.

Union Home Minister highlights the following issues during the meeting:

- The Centre and the State governments should engage in greater cooperation so that differences on issues such as deployment of Central forces are resolved quickly.
- He said a number of steps had been taken in recent years by the Centre to promote cooperative federalism.
- It is important for everyone to promote the spirit of cooperation with greater zeal and expressed satisfaction over the deliberations held in a “harmonious and congenial” atmosphere for arriving at consensus on complex issues.
- He said the standing committee is being convened to lend speed to the process of harmonising Centre-State relations.
- The subjects discussed at the standing committee meeting included financial transfers from the Centre to the States, Goods and Services Tax, structure and devolution of functions to local bodies and district planning.

4. Chandigarh's new draft parking policy seeking 50% road tax invites criticism from all

In news:

Context:

- Chandigarh's new draft parking policy.
- Decongesting of city roads.

In news:

- According to the new policy, residents who buy cars costing Rs 10 lakh and above will have to pay 50% of its price as road tax.

- If you buy a second car, irrespective of the price, you will have to pay 50% of its price.
- The existing policy charges 6% as road tax for vehicles costing up to Rs 20 lakh and 8% for vehicles above Rs 20 lakh.
- The city has the highest density of vehicles in the country, the average number for each family being more than two.
- The new draft policy also seeks to clamp down on the number of vehicles sold in one quarter. Moving on, residents will have to purchase certificate of ownership/entitlement and certificate of parking availability during vehicle registration will be a necessity.
- The administration has also planned to hike the rates of public parking.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Centre to seek 20,000 MW of solar bids

In news:

- The government is planning bids for a total of 20,000 MW of solar energy plants projects in this financial year
- Of these projects, 3,600 MW have already been completed
- The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy is planning bids for 30,000 MW of solar projects in 2018-19 and 2019-20, each
- In wind energy, the Centre has announced the third wind power auction of 2,000 MW, the largest of its kind in India so far

Make in India link:

- The government is planning a 20 GW auction, but only for those who are willing to manufacture in India

Plans ahead:

- As per the Ministry's plan, Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) will invite two separate bids for 3,000 MW of solar projects in December 2017 and January 2018 each
- NTPC is to invite a bid for 5,000 MW of solar projects in February 2018
- And another 6,000 MW will be bid out in March 2018 by SECI and other Central PSUs
- Encouraging results from Wind Energy projects
- In wind energy, the Ministry said it had already received bids for 32 GW of projects, which is more than 50% of the 60 GW target set for 2022
- The government is expecting bids for a total of 8-9 GW this year, and 10 GW each in 2018-19 and 2019-20

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Here comes the sun watcher, India's Aditya-L1

In news:

- Sometime in 2019 or 2020 India will send **ISRO's solar mission Aditya-L1** to a vantage point in space, known as **the L1 Lagrange point**, to do imaging and study of the sun.
- This launch will happen in the early part of the next solar cycle – an occurrence in which sunspots form on the face of the sun, growing in size and number and eventually diminishing, all over a period of eleven years.
- It will be the first 100% Indian mission which will not only negotiate a challenging orbit, but will also benefit the global scientific community in understanding the sun.
- Aditya L1 has two in situ particle-detection payloads – Aditya Solar wind Particle EXperiment (ASPEX) and Plasma Analyser Package for Aditya (PAPA) will study aspects that affect space weather. the origin of solar wind ions, their reaction to coronal mass ejections, the distribution of these in the heliosphere – the space around the sun that extends up to Pluto – and so on. The various payloads in Aditya-L1 will also study space weather.

L1 point:

- The so-called L1 point is 1.5 million kilometres away. Here, due to the delicate balance of gravitational forces, the satellite will require very little energy to maintain its orbit. Also it will not be eclipsed from the sun. The 1,500-kg class satellite will be programmed to orbit this point and image the sun's magnetic field from space for the very first time in the world.

- Scientists hope to capture the close-ups of the sun from here, uninterrupted by eclipses for years.

Solar Cycle:

- Like seasonal changes on the earth, the sun experiences approximately eleven-year-long cycles during which sunspots, caused by the sun's magnetic field, start forming, increase in the ascending phase and decrease in the descending phase towards the end of the cycle.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. New identity for an Eastern Ghats resident

In news:



- For the last 70 years, Mahendragiri gecko did not get its rightful place in the classification scheme.
- Now Mahendragiri gecko has been added to the species list of the Eastern Ghats.
- Discovered from Andhra Pradesh's Mahendragiri hills, it is the second gecko to be found endemic to the area. The discovery highlights the biodiversity importance of the region, say scientists.

Genetics help

- Genetic analysis, which involves scrutiny of an organism's DNA, helped scientists to discover that the Dutta's Mahendragiri geckos were not a population of Spotted rock geckos (found in the northern Western Ghats in Maharashtra) as it was believed.
- DNA sequence data showed that these two geographically-separated populations are different and a careful examination of their characteristics showed that the new species has many unique, diagnostic characters.
- Dutta's Mahendragiri gecko has golden eyes and pale, black-bordered horizontal bands.
- The lizard is the 32nd species of Hemidactylus gecko found in India.

2. Rajasthan seeks nod to bring tigers from other States

In news:

- After seeking the Centre's nod for shifting of tigers from Ranthambore to Mukundara Hills Tiger Reserve, the Rajasthan government has asked for permission to bring tigers from other States for their rehabilitation and cross-mating in order to develop strong breeds of the big cat.
- The Sariska Tiger Reserve in Alwar district, where the tiger population had vanished a few years ago, had brought back a significant number of big cats.
- Shifting tigers to Rajasthan would help resolve the problem of hereditary diseases among them and improve their breeds through cross-mating.
- The Mukundara Hills is the third notified tiger habitat in the State, after Ranthambore and Sariska. Though it was established to cater to the spillover tiger population from Ranthambore, the majestic cat is still missing from its wildlife population.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

Which of the statement/s given above is/are CORRECT?

1. 1 only
2. 2 only

3. Both 1 and 2
4. Neither 1 nor 2

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4. Neither 1 nor 2

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper II

- Critically evaluate the focus and performance of Centre's Swachh Bharat Mission.

GS Paper III

- Discuss the practical solutions that can plug loopholes in Public Distribution System.

In the Collegium system, the Chief Justice of India (CJI) and a panel comprising four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court recommend appointments and transfers of judges. The collegium system evolved after three landmark judgments of the Supreme Court, popularly known as the ‘three judges cases’ that comprised the first, second and the third judges cases.

The **first judges case** was the SP Gupta case. It was decided on December 30, 1981 that the President, with sensible reasons, could reject judges’ names recommended by the CJI. This shifted more power on the executive from the judiciary in the appointments process.

In the **second judges’ case**, a nine-judge bench of the Supreme Court overturned the verdict of the first judges case by creating a Collegium system. The majority verdict delivered by Justice J.S. Verma in the Supreme Court Advocates on Record Association Vs Union of India case on October 6, 1993, stated that the CJI should be entrusted with the primary role of appointments of judges. However, the three judges ruling in this case could not reach a consensus on the exact role of the CJI in the process, leading to a lot of confusion in the appointment and transfer of judges for years.

The final judgement in the series, the **third judges case** (October 28, 1998) made things clearer after the President’s request to the Supreme Court for a clarity. In this case, the Supreme Court came up with nine guidelines that the Collegium system should follow to function effectively. This case established the supremacy of the judiciary in the appointment and transfer of judges.

WHAT IS NJAC?

NJAC or the National Judicial Appointments Commission is a constitutional body proposed to replace the existing Collegium system of appointing judges. The NJAC proposed a transparent and broad-based process of selection of judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts. The judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts were to be selected by the NJAC commission, whose members were drawn from the judiciary, legislature and civil society.

The NJAC was established by amending the Constitution (99th Amendment) Act, 2014, passed by the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha in August 2014. Alongside, the Parliament also passed the National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, 2014, to regulate the functions of NJAC. The State legislatures of 16 states ratified both the Bills and the President gave his assent on December 31, 2014. The NJAC Act and the Constitutional Amendment Act came into force from April 13, 2015.

Constitution of the NJAC

The NJAC will consist of six people: the Chief Justice of India (CJI), two senior-most judges of the Supreme Court, the Law Minister, and two ‘eminent persons’. These eminent persons would be nominated for a three-year term by a committee consisting of the CJI, the Prime Minister, and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. One eminent person had to be nominated from among the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs, minorities or women. These eminent persons were not eligible for re-nomination.

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Category: POLITY/POLICY WATCH

1. [N.K. Singh is 15th finance panel chief](#)

Key Points:

- The Centre on Monday announced that the Fifteenth Finance Commission would be headed by former Secretary to the government of India N.K. Singh.
- The panel is tasked with looking into tax collections and how they are to be divided between the Centre and the States, the principles that should govern the grants in aid to the States and to review the levels of fiscal deficit, among other issues.

2. [National Mineral Policy: GreenMin wants ‘polluter pays’ principle included](#)

Context:

- The Union environment ministry has suggested to the Union mines ministry that the ‘polluter pays’ principle which states that those who produce pollution should pay for the damage done to human health and the environment should be included in the national mineral policy (NMP) so that the miners become “cautious” and “responsible”.

Reasons for such a move:

- Earlier in August, the Supreme Court had passed a judgment, wherein it directed the Central government to revisit the NMP, 2008, and announce a “fresh and more effective, meaningful and implementable policy” before the end of this year.
- The mines ministry formed a committee which included officials from various ministries including Union environment ministry after this judgment and its first meeting took place in August.
- The committee in its recent meeting suggested that ‘polluter pays’ principle may be incorporated in the policy so that the miners become cautious and undertake mining in a responsible manner.

SC judgment regarding Polluter Pays principle

- In 1996, the Supreme Court held the ‘polluter pays’ principle to be part of the environmental law of the country in the case of Vellore Citizens’ Welfare Forum vs. Union of India and Others.
- The Supreme Court stated that the ‘polluter pays’ principle means that the absolute liability for harm to the environment extends not only to compensate the victims of pollution but also the cost of restoring the environmental degradation.
- Remediation of the damaged environment is part of the process of ‘Sustainable Development’ and as such polluter is liable to pay the cost to the individual sufferers as well as the cost of reversing the damaged ecology.
- Currently, National Green Tribunals across the country work on the ‘polluter pays’ principle as it is mentioned in its governing law: National Green Tribunal Act, 2010.

Committee suggestions:

- The committee added that prospecting license (PL) should not be allowed in very dense and thick forests as it is very difficult to give clearance in those cases.
- A reconnaissance permit (RP) is granted for preliminary prospecting through regional, aerial, geophysical or geochemical surveys and geological mapping.
- A PL is required for exploring, locating and proving mineral deposits.
- A mining lease (ML) is required to finally extract minerals.
- Also, while developing mining infrastructure in the area, it should be ensured that the process should cause only minimum damage to flora and fauna of that area by using state-of-the-art techniques.
- Conservation of biodiversity, forest wildlife should be an integral part of NMP.
- In order to ensure rehabilitation and reclamation of mined areas, specific timelines or clear guidelines should be formulated.
- According to the Ministry of Mines, reclamation has to be taken up by the forest department of MOEFCC as they have collected NPV (Net Present Value) / CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Management and Planning Authority) funds.
- But, CAMPA funds are for compensation for the trees felled on account of mining and NPV is for the damage caused to the eco-system and emphasized that it is the responsibility of miners to undertake reclamation work.

3. Govt. working on new ‘gas standards’

In news:

- The government is looking to prepare a unified testing methodology to ensure that all agencies that map air pollution use accurate instruments.
- The **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)-National Physical Laboratory (NPL)** is in the process of setting up ‘gas standards’, or reference samples of **Carbon Monoxide (CO), Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂), Nitrous Oxide (NO₂) and Particulate –Pb (lead), –As (Arsenic) and –Ni (Nickel)**.
- Currently, the **National Ambient Air Quality standards** specify the upper limits for pollutants and, based on this, the **Air Quality Index** — that grades air quality in cities from ‘Good’ to ‘Severe’ — is prepared for several Indian cities.
- CPCB has prescribed guidelines for the maximum permissible levels of 12 gases and pollutants, depending on residential, rural or industrial locations.
- The NPL has developed a custom air sampler that claims to measure PM2.5 levels far more accurately than existing devices.

4. Can’t force govt. to frame a law: SC

In news:

- The Supreme Court said it respected the government's “**political compulsions**” and would not compel it to ratify the **UN Convention against Torture**, or command it to frame a standalone anti-torture legislation.

No ratification

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

Law Commission report:

- In its 273rd report handed over to the Law Ministry on October 30, the commission has proposed the Prevention of Torture Bill, 2017, which gives a wide definition to torture, not limited to physical pain but also including “inflicting injury, either intentionally or involuntarily, or even an attempt to cause such an injury, which will include physical, mental or psychological in nature”.

5. Views sought on data protection law

In news:

- The government released a white paper looking into the scope of a data protection law, and opened up for public discussion till December 31, issues pertaining to its ambit, what constitutes personal data, what is sensitive data, and the international applicability of such a law.
- The **N. Srikrishna committee**, set up under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**, in the white paper recommended that the law be applicable to all processing of personal data that takes place within India or by an entity that has a presence in India.
- The paper noted that it may be necessary to make the law applicable to all kinds of processing that the government may have a “legitimate interest in regulating” even though it may not be entirely based in India or may be carried out by non-Indian entities that do not have a presence in India.
- The committee set limits on this extended jurisdiction, though, saying that the law should not be so wide as to constitute an unnecessary interference with the jurisdiction of other countries or have the effect of making it a general law of the Internet.
- For instance, the mere fact that a website (operated from abroad) is accessible from India should not be a reason for subjecting the website to Indian law
- According to the paper the personal data “ought to include any kind of information including opinions or assessments irrespective of their accuracy.”

Category: ECONOMY

1. GST, note ban impact bottoming out: Survey

In news:

- **FICCI's latest Economic Outlook Survey:** The slowdown in the economy due to demonetisation and the impact of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) seems to have bottomed out.
- Regarding inflation, the FICCI survey said that wholesale price index-based inflation for the year 2017-18 is likely to be about 2.8% and consumer price index-based inflation would be at 3.4%.

2. ‘Infrastructure status: a first step for logistics’

In news:

- The Centre's decision to assign infrastructure status to the logistics industry is a good first move, but there are several other problems that need to be addressed such as the lack of proper regulatory oversight and the lack of skilling in the sector.
- The e-waybill system also needs several improvements before it can viably be rolled out across the country, such as the removal of the need for e-waybills for intra-city or intra-State transport and the modification of the validity of the e-waybills.

Main Problems:

- The first obvious problem is that generally this is an industry that is not very regulated, which means that it has

become a highly fragmented industry.

- The second problem is that it employs a large number of blue collar workers but there isn't enough infrastructure to train them.
- The e-waybill system — timed at tracking the transport of goods worth ₹50,000 or more across the country — is probably one of the most critical and contentious points as far as the GST system is concerned.

3. Draft national energy policy proposes aligning energy prices with international rates

Context:

- A draft national energy policy proposing aligning energy prices with international rates will be put up for the approval of the Cabinet.

Impact:

- If approved, energy prices across sectors would become market-driven and subsidies would be limited to identified beneficiaries via direct benefit transfer, much on the lines of the LPG subsidy.

Background:

- The government think tank Niti Aayog in June released a draft National Energy Policy (NEP), on which it had been working since 2015.
- Prime Minister had chaired interministerial consultations on the policy after the coal ministry expressed reservations over market-driven prices that would pose a threat to the monopoly and margins of Coal India.

Highlights of draft NEP:

- The policy will help India integrate with the global energy world without compromising on the energy needs of the poorest of the poor, who will continue to get subsidy on all forms of energy directly into their bank accounts through direct benefit transfer.
- The outward-looking policy is against any kind of subsidies at the production and distribution levels as it distorts the system.
- Instead, it has strongly vouched for DBT as the technological platform to transfer subsidies to the poor after the success of LPG.
- In its draft policy, Niti Aayog said India's energy demand was likely to soar around three times by 2040, leading to increase in overall primary energy imports.
- It had also made a case for a single regulator to govern India's energy market to make 'India's economy energy-ready' by 2040.
- The NEP will replace the Integrated Energy Policy of the UPA regime and lay the road map for government push towards clean energy and reducing fuel import.
- According to the draft NEP, the period 2017-2040 is expected to witness a quantum leap in the uptake of renewable energy, drastic reduction in energy intensity, doubling of per-capita energy consumption and tripling of per-capita electricity consumption.

Category: AGRICULTURE

1. Maharashtra reports 2,414 farmer suicides in January-October period

In news:

- As per the data reported by the six divisional commissioners across the state, 2,414 farmer suicides were reported in the state between 1 January and 31 October. This is happening five months after a Rs34,022-crore farm loan waiver

Farm loan waiver scheme:

- Ministers, farm sector experts, and activists say bureaucratic bottlenecks and technical snags have hampered the implementation of the scheme, aggravating the crisis

Corruption the main culprit:

- The online system has bared several problems and bogus accounts, it has also caused delays

- Since there is no money to be made, there is no incentive for government staff and bank officials (especially the cooperative banks) to speed up the implementation

Fake accounts:

- Government had announced the farm loan waiver on 24 June, which it claimed would benefit 8.9 million farmers
- But the online application system coupled with Aadhaar identification helped banks and the government weed out nearly 2 million names
- The final list of eligible beneficiaries the government drew up has 5.6 million farmers
- But due to administrative reasons, the government could transfer benefits to only 2.5 lakh farmers

Financial assistance to the families of deceased farmers

- Of the 2,414 farm suicides reported till October end, the government has identified 1,277 cases as “eligible” for ex-gratia financial assistance
- Of these, relatives of 1,246 farmers have already been given the assistance of Rs1 lakh each
- The government has rejected financial assistance in 728 cases terming them “ineligible” and another 409 cases are being probed further

Nothing here for Today!!!

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F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

- How do the Indian debates on Secularism differ from the debates in the West?

GS Paper II

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Category: POLITY

1. Telecom regulator backs Net neutrality

In news:

- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) came out in strong support of Net neutrality in a series of recommendations following a long process of consultations.
- The content mentioned includes all content, applications, services and any other data, including its end-point information, that can be accessed or transmitted over the Internet.
- TRAI warned against any “discriminatory treatment” including blocking, degrading, slowing down or granting preferential speeds to any content.
- The service providers should be restricted from entering into any arrangement, agreement or contract, by whatever name called, with any person, natural or legal, that has the effect of discriminatory treatment based on content, sender or receiver, protocols or user equipment.
- In February 2016, TRAI had barred telecom providers from charging differential rates for data services in its Prohibition of Discriminatory Tariffs for Data Services Regulations, 2016, effectively blocking such attempts by Facebook and Airtel.
- Facebook had earlier rolled out its Free Basics service in partnership with Reliance Communications as a “differential service” and lobbied hard for it on social media which put it at loggerheads with the telecom regulator.
- TRAI has recommended a multi-stakeholder body which would be responsible for developing technical standards for monitoring and enforcement of the principles.
- To monitor violations, TRAI has recommended the establishment of a collaborative mechanism in the form of a multi-stakeholder body which would be responsible for developing technical standards for monitoring and enforcement of the principles.

Category: SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Ivanka exhorts women entrepreneurs to focus on education, technology

- Adviser to the U.S. President Ivanka Trump underscored the importance of education and technology for women entrepreneurs to make a mark in their chosen field.
- Participating in a panel discussion on ‘Be the Change: Women’s Entrepreneurial Leadership’ after the inauguration of the Global Entrepreneurship Summit-2017 here on Tuesday, Ms. Ivanka said technology was disrupting every sphere of life.
- It was important to train women in digital literacy, computer science and give them access to skill training.
- Citing the U.S. scenario, she said women comprised only 47% of the workforce, but only 21% of them were in the IT field.
- The U.S. President pumped in funds to bring focus on skill training for women and give opportunity to every American woman to participate in the economy and re-enter the workforce and become well-versed with the digital technology, she said.
- All the panellists were unanimous in that the entrepreneurs, significant number of them being women, were revolutionising economies, more so in the U.S. and India.

- Appreciating the diverse representation among the entrepreneurs at the GES-2017 with more than 50 per cent being women, Ms. Ivanka said networking and mentorship was more valuable to entrepreneurs.
- Each entrepreneur should make it a goal to at least help one more woman in their communities become an entrepreneur. Closing the gender entrepreneurship gap world-wide could raise global GDP by two per cent, she said
- Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman elaborating the priority being given to encourage start-ups and women entrepreneurs said that push should also come from women themselves.
- Women's skills were under-estimated by women themselves. Environment in the country today was conducive to promote women entrepreneurship through access to funding, mentoring and skill training.
- Nirmala said start-up concept was gaining momentum as it was not possible for government to generate as many jobs as people wanted. Thus focus was to provide skill sets to people and encourage spirit of entrepreneurship.
- Nirmala said that they had learnt from the experiences of countries and left it to entrepreneurs themselves to come up with solutions rather than imposing from the top.
- An important decision would be to provide level playing field to start-ups with women entrepreneurs. A meeting would be convened with industry leaders and Chambers of Commerce on December 4 to give an opportunity to start-ups in the defence sector.
- The Defence Minister said as directed by the Prime Minister, efforts were on to encourage women at every district across the country to establish start-ups. Start-ups should not be confined to metros alone, she said.
- Women who set up small and micro enterprises would be helped to explore global markets for their products with the help of a UN organisation, she disclosed.

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Chabahar port ready, next stage for India

- Iranian President Hassan Rouhani will inaugurate the first phase of the Chabahar port development project on Sunday, with senior Afghan and
- Iranian media quoted President Rouhani as saying that the port "will enhance trade in the region", with a final aim to connect not just to Afghanistan via rail but also to the 7,200-km International North-South Transport Corridor to Russia.
- Iran's parliament, or Majlis, recently ratified the trilateral trade agreement signed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President Rouhani and Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani in May 2016.
- The inauguration of the port will effectively pave the way for India to carry forward the next phase of construction and development of two berths for its use, particularly for trade with Afghanistan.
- Next, the government, which has committed \$500 million to the port project, will develop a free-trade area around the port, and finally will complete the loop with a \$1.6-billion railway line to Zahedan.
- India has already completed the Zaranj-Delaram highway in Afghanistan, which would facilitate the trade to Kabul and eventually beyond to Central Asia. Mr. Gadkari said the first part of India's construction would be finished in 2018.
- At present, India is using the port's existing commercial route to transport more than 1.1 million tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan, of which the first consignment of 15,000 tonnes from the Kandla port came to Zaranj, via Chabahar.

2. India supports creation of a Palestinian state: PM

- In a statement on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented his government's position and said that India will continue to support nation building activities by the Palestinians, and urged for the creation of a Palestinian state that will co-exist 'peacefully' with Israel.
- The special day marks Resolution 181 of the United Nations which called for creation of independent

Israeli and Palestinian states and was adopted on this day in 1947.

- The two-state solution of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is based on this resolution.
- The day is being marked in the backdrop of the ongoing diplomacy to bring the two sides to the negotiation table. “India hopes for early resumption of dialogue between the Palestinian and the Israeli sides to move towards finding a comprehensive negotiated resolution,” Mr. Modi said.
- The statement was sent to the United Nations a few days ago through the Permanent Mission of India at the UN.
- Modi’s statement adds India’s support to the global push for a negotiated settlement of the longstanding demand for a Palestinian state next to Israel.
- The statement is the first occasion that the Prime Minister has spoken about the need for a viable Palestinian state since his visit to Israel last July.
- However, the India-Israel Joint Statement issued during his visit this year did not mention the need to create a Palestinian state but had mentioned the need for ‘mutual recognition’ and ‘security arrangements’ as the basis for a peaceful solution to the issue.
- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is likely to visit India in January reciprocating Mr. Modi’s visit.
- The Prime Minister also expressed India’s long-term commitment to the Palestinian people and said, “India is an active development partner of Palestine, engaged in extending technical and financial assistance to improve the lives of the Palestinian people. We will continue to support the development and nation-building efforts of Palestine.”
- Several events and seminars are expected to be held in India to mark the day of solidarity with the Palestinians.

3. India, Russia update pact on security

- India and Russia have concluded a comprehensive agreement on security and reviewed the implementation of the Agreement on Information Security signed in October 2016 during the just-concluded visit of Home Minister Rajnath Singh.
- Singh, who paid a three-day visit to Russia, met his counterpart, Nikolai Patrushev, and signed deals on disaster management and narcotics smuggling.

Category: EDUCATION

1. Rethink school education

- In Uncertain Glory — India and its Contradictions , Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen begin their chapter on education with a quote from Rabindranath Tagore: “The imposing tower of misery which today rests on the heart of India has its sole foundation in the absence of education.” This is as true today as it was nearly 90 years back.
- While India highlights its ever-improving literacy levels, educationally it is a terrible under-performer, too embarrassed to participate in the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment tests covering reading and computational skills for 15-year-olds.
- Successive studies have repeatedly established that a majority of those in each class in India have educational attainments much lower than the one they are in.
- Data from the Ministry of Human Resource Development show that only half of all students who enter primary school make it to the upper primary level and less than half that — around 25 million — get into the 9-12 class cycle.
- We have around a million primary schools and only half that number at the upper primary level. The number of secondary schools is less than 150,000 for a country of 1.3 billion, and even this comes down to just 100,000 at the higher secondary level.
- While there are around five million primary school teachers, at the secondary level the number is just 1.5 million. India has persisted with a schooling system that has long failed its young.
- The inexorable shift to private school education along with the Right to Education Act represents a failure of the public-school system. It is government schools that should be the drivers of change by becoming the first, not the last, choice of parents to send their children to.

- For that to happen, our public-school system must be swiftly and radically revamped, while our teacher training institutions, of which the District Institutes of Education and Training constitute an important part, speedily re-jigged to turn out world-class teachers, of the kind that will encourage children to stay on in, not drop out of, school.
- It is time that India began viewing school education as a critical strategic investment and gave it the status of a vital infrastructure project. As all in-country efforts have failed, we should go in for a radical overhaul of our educational infrastructure with the help of countries that have an amazing record in providing quality school education — Finland, for instance. We can surely afford to pay for that.
- If only India had begun revamping school education at the start of economic liberalisation, it would by now have had the world's largest pool of well-educated and highly trained workers.
- Fortunately, India continues to have the largest number of young people anywhere. By ensuring they get a world-class education over the next few decades, India will be well on its way towards becoming a developed nation sooner than expected.

Category: ECONOMY

1. Invest in India, PM tells entrepreneurs

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi said his government understands that an environment of transparent policies and a rule of law providing a level playing field are necessary for entrepreneurship to flourish.
- Inaugurating the Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) here said this calling upon entrepreneurs from across the globe to “come make in India, invest in India, for India and for the world.”
- The three-day GES, co-hosted by the US and Indian governments is the first in the annual series to be travelling to South Asia, has ‘Women First, Prosperity for All’ as the theme. More than 50% delegates are women.
- “In Indian mythology, women is an incarnation of Shakti, the goddess of power. We believe women empowerment is vital to our development,” Mr.Modi said, adding Indian women continue to lead in different walks of life.
- The government, under its Mudra scheme of providing easy finance of up to Rs. 1 million to entrepreneurs, has sanctioned over 90 million loans worth Rs. .4.28 trillion since 2015. More than 70 million of the loans have been sanctioned to women entrepreneurs.
- The Prime Minister also highlighted how the government was focused on reducing the regulatory burden and providing support to start-ups. “Our 1,200 redundant laws have been scrapped. 87% rules for foreign direct investment have been eased in 21 sectors, and several government procedures have been taken online. The process is yet not complete”.
- Listing various other programmes of his government, he said “we are working on development of a national gas grid. A comprehensive national energy policy is also in the pipeline,”he added.

2. No compromise on India's interests at WTO: Prabhu

- At next month's meeting of the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) highest decision-making body, India will not compromise on its interests including ensuring food security as well as protecting its resource-poor and low-income farmers and fisher-folk, according to Commerce Minister Suresh Prabhu.
- Prabhu also said India — at the December 10-13 (WTO's) Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina — will hold firm on its position against the inclusion of new issues such as ‘e-commerce’ and ‘investment facilitation’ into the ongoing round of multilateral trade negotiations, without first resolving the outstanding ones including food security.
- Besides, he said India will make sure that the ‘development agenda’ (to improve the developing countries' trading prospects) of the talks, which began in Doha in 2001, is not subverted.
- India will stand firm on all the issues that it has raised so far, and will not make any compromise or dilute its stand. We will not directly or indirectly reduce our ability to push our own agenda forward.
- Also, the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) is not dead. The DDA is as important as it was before

and it will be taken forward.

- Prabhu said the highest priority for India was to ensure that a ‘permanent solution’ on the issue of public stockholding for food security purposes is a part of the Buenos Aires meeting outcomes.
- Prabhu’s predecessor Nirmala Sitharaman had said, “without a permanent solution, public stockholding programmes in India and other developing countries will be hampered by the present ceiling on domestic support which is pegged at 10% of the value of production, and is wrongly considered as trade-distorting subsidy to farmers under existing WTO rules.”
- “The existence of such a subsidy element is determined by comparing present day administered prices with fixed reference prices of the 1986-88 period which is unrealistic. Developing countries are finding themselves hamstrung by the existing rules in running their food stockholding and domestic food aid programmes.”
- Currently, an interim mechanism called the ‘Peace Clause’ is available for developing nations including India, according to which they cannot be challenged at the WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism (DSM) even if they breach the cap of the product-specific domestic support (10% of the value of production).
- However, Mr. Prabhu said India “will insist on a permanent solution that is much better than the Peace Clause.”
- Since a country that wants to invoke the Peace Clause has to comply with several stringent conditions (on notification and transparency and commitment on prohibition of exports from public stockholding), India is keen that a ‘permanent solution’ does not have onerous riders.
- He also said meaningful reforms in agriculture can happen only when the disproportionately large subsidies of the developed countries are reduced.
- On talks to eliminate ‘harmful’ fisheries subsidies, the minister said “India will protect its small and subsistence fisherfolk, and we want sustainable fishing. We want subsidies for small fisherfolk to continue.”
- In addition, at the WTO talks, India will also “very aggressively” push its proposal for Trade Facilitation in Services (which, among other things, aims to ease norms on the movement of skilled workers and professionals across borders for short-term work).
- Criticising attempts by certain countries to undermine the WTO’s DSM by blocking the appointment of new judges, the minister said, “the DSM is an important pillar on which the entire multilateral trading system stands.
- We will not allow it to be weakened. Efforts must be taken to quickly fill in the vacancies as, without judges, the DSM will not be able to function.

3. India must integrate with global value chain: ADB

- The manufacturing sector’s share in India’s GDP has remained stagnant despite the government’s efforts to increase it, according to Asian Development Bank Country Head Kenichi Yokoyama, who added that India must do more to integrate with the global value chain in which it currently only plays a small part.
- Yokoyama also highlighted problems with the inequality between Indian states, the inadequate investment in the infrastructure sector and the poor planning behind urban development.
- “The share of manufacturing in India’s GDP has been stagnant despite the government’s efforts in this direction,” said Mr. Yokoyama. “The heart of the global value chain resides in southeast Asia at the moment, and India plays only a small part in that.”
- We are working with the government to increase this. And, despite increasing per capita GDP growth, the challenge still remains of bridging the wide gap between the Indian states,” he added.
- “We expect GDP growth this year to be 7%,” Sabyasachi Mitra, Deputy Country Director, ADB, said. “Next year, we expect it to increase to 7.4%. There is an upturn in the global economy, trade is picking up, and the capital expenditure has been front-loaded.”
- Even lead indicators such as the index of industrial production, sale of commercial vehicles and indirect tax collections all point to higher GDP growth looking ahead, said Abhijit Sen Gupta, Economist at ADB.

4. India seeing increasing formalisation: Jaitley

- The country is witnessing a new chapter in history being written where every day is seeing a new initiative that further expands the formalisation of the economy, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said on Tuesday.
- “It is a great tribute to entrepreneurship in India that in five years a payment gateway started its operations, grew so rapidly, and expanded its activities to include online banking,” Mr Jaitley said while inaugurating Paytm’s payments bank.
- “This is a new chapter in history being written that almost every day some such initiative is taking place that is increasing the formalisation of the economy,” he added.
- Paytm has 28 crore users, recorded 250 crore annual transactions from 50 lakh merchants, with transaction value of Rs. 80,000 crore, said Vijay Shekhar Sharma, Paytm founder.

5. Sharma to head GST ‘profiteering’ watchdog

- The government said that it had appointed B.N. Sharma as the first Chairman of the National Anti-profiteering Authority (NAA), which is tasked with ensuring the benefits of the Goods and Services Tax are passed on to consumers.
- The appointments help reassure “consumers of Government’s commitment that GST would result in lower prices of goods and services,” a statement said.
- Once the Authority confirms there is justification to apply anti-profiteering measures, it has the authority to order the business concerned to reduce prices or return undue benefit availed, with interest at the rate of 18% to consumers.

Category: ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. India loses billions to air pollution: UN

- India had the highest share of welfare costs (or a loss of income from labour), of about \$220 billion (about Rs. 1.4 trillion), in South and South-East Asia — of a combined total of \$380 billion from mortality due to air pollution, according to a report by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
- The global mortality costs from outdoor air pollution are projected to rise to about \$25 trillion by 2060 in the absence of more stringent measures. At regional and national scale, China’s welfare costs from mortality were the highest at nearly \$1 trillion followed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries with a combined total of \$730 billion, the report added quoting a 2016 projection by the OECD.
- Although certain forms of pollution have been reduced as “technologies and management strategies have advanced,” approximately 19 million premature deaths are estimated to occur annually as a result of the way societies use natural resources and impact the environment to support production and consumption, it notes.
- “If consumption and production patterns continue as they are, the linear economic model of ‘take-make-dispose’ will seriously burden an already-polluted planet, affecting current and future generations,” the report’s foreword concludes.
- To curb pollution in various forms, the UNEP called for strong high-level political commitment and engagement of the local government, civil society and other stakeholders.
- “Pollution is a universal challenge [but] the good news is that we already know what we need to do to prevent and reduce it,” UNEP Executive Director Erik Solheim said in a statement, stressing that “now the responsibility is on governments, businesses, cities and local authorities, civil society and individuals around the world to commit to act to beat pollution in all its forms.”
- To achieve high level political commitment in key economic sectors, there is a need to go beyond the environmental ministries and include other relevant ministries such as finance, agriculture, industry, urban, transport, energy and health.
- There is also a need to engage the local government, civil society organisations, business leaders,

industries, trade unions and citizens at large. Reporting on the progress that comes from acting on pollution – whether through voluntary measures or formal laws – is a crucial step in this transition.

- The report, ‘Towards a pollution-free planet’, was launched during the first Conference of Parties for the **Minamata Convention**, which addresses mercury issues, and ahead of the annual U.N. Environment Assembly, to be held in early December.

The **Minamata Convention**, which addresses mercury issues.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Earthworms may grow in Martian soil, says study

- Scientists show that worms crucial to healthy crops can reproduce in Martian soil
- Scientists have successfully grown earthworms in a Mars soil simulant, an advance that points to the possibility of life and future human colonies on the red planet.
- The two young worms are the first offspring in a Mars soil experiment at Wageningen University & Research Centre in The Netherlands.
- The experiments are crucial in the study that aims to determine whether people can keep themselves alive on the red planet by growing their own crops on Mars soils.
- “To feed future humans on Mars, a sustainable closed agricultural ecosystem is a necessity. Worms will play a crucial role in this system as they break down and recycle dead organic matter,” researchers said.
- Researchers observed the growth of rucola plants in Mars soil simulant provided by NASA, and added worms and pig slurry.
- “Clearly the manure stimulated growth, especially in the Mars soil simulant, and we saw that the worms were active,” said Wieger Wamelink of Wageningen University & Research. “However, the best surprise came at the end of the experiment when we found two young worms in the Mars soil simulant,” said Wamelink.
- Worms are very important for a healthy soil, not only on Earth but also in future indoor gardens on Mars or the Moon.
- They thrive on dead organic matter such as old plant remains, which they eat, chew and mix with soil. By digging burrows, the worms also aerate and improve the structure of the soil, making watering the plants more effective.
- The latter proved to be very important in earlier experiments where water would not easily penetrate the soil. The application of worms will solve this problem, Wamelink said.
- However, further research would be required to understand the growth of such life forms in low gravity conditions.

2. Indonesia: the world's volcanic hotspot

- The Southeast Asian archipelago is situated on the Pacific “Ring of Fire”, a vast zone of geological instability where the collision of tectonic plates causes frequent quakes and major volcanic activity.
- Indonesia, where more than 40,000 people have been evacuated over fears of an imminent volcanic eruption at Mount Agung on Bali, is the world’s most volcanic area.
- The Southeast Asian archipelago of more than 17,000 islands and islets – and nearly 130 active volcanoes – is situated on the Pacific “Ring of Fire”, a vast zone of geological instability where the collision of tectonic plates causes frequent quakes and major volcanic activity.

3. Infusing technology into education

- With emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT) and Big Data Analytics knocking at India’s doors, the country needs to sow the learning seeds early — in the classroom — and China and Turkey can show the way, top global Intel executives have said.
- The world has realised what is coming its way in the next 10-20 years and has already begun

modernising classrooms at schools to prepare a technology-ready workforce.

- “The Chinese and Turkish authorities have given kids IoT-enabled devices in millions of schools. Every student has a device connected to an intelligent whiteboard at the front of the classroom. There are teacher-controlled devices too. The curriculum is designed for that kind of environment. This is the future of education,” Joe D. Jensen, Vice President, Internet of Things (IoT) Group, and General Manager, Retail Solutions Division at Intel, told IANS.
- “Intel has installed 400,000 IoT-enabled connected devices for schools in Turkey, a million-and-a half in Chinese schools and another million to go in China in the next two years,” Jensen informed.
- Technology can do wonders in providing a great educational experience and create a pool of talent for these disrupting technologies.
- “In China, the newest innovation is that there are eight video cameras and a series of microphones in a classroom at certain private schools and colleges. The videos of the classroom activities are recorded daily. Parents can later log on and see the student-teacher interaction,” Jensen told IANS.
- For Lisa Davis, Vice President and General Manager, IT Transformation for Enterprise and Government at Intel, while India is at the cusp of dramatic changes in delivering next-generation education, it is also set to learn new ways to infuse technology in many other sectors.
- “Not just education, we are looking at the financial services, transportation, retail and healthcare sectors too in India. The next big wave is coming in video surveillance and the security sector, and our teams are engaged with the stakeholders in the country,” Davis told .
- Intel has also pushed the envelope towards creating a modern workforce in India.
- In April this year, Intel made a commitment to democratise AI in the country by training 15,000 developers and engage with not just businesses but also the government and academia to enable the adoption of AI.
- Intel India has trained 9,500 developers, students and professors in the past six months.
- The chip giant has collaborated with 40 academic institutions that are using the technology for scientific research and 50 public and private organisations across e-commerce, healthcare, technology, defence, and banking and financial services.
- Intel India has also launched an initiative to strengthen the use of technology in the country’s education ecosystem. It is collaborating with leading device manufacturers, education digital content publishers and education solution providers to build end-to-end solutions that promote the use of technology.
- The company will then help deploy management solutions for schools, classrooms, content and learning, and also manage student information systems.
- “India is at the cusp of a technology boom, but needs training and teaching right from the beginning to prepare a future digital workforce,” Davis stressed.

4. Auto fuel from CO₂ emissions

- Researchers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) have developed a new system that could potentially be used for converting power plant emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) into useful fuel for cars, trucks and planes.
- The new method, described in a paper in the journal ChemSusChem , is based on a membrane-based system. The membrane, made of a compound of lanthanum, calcium, and iron oxide, allows oxygen from a stream of carbon dioxide to migrate through to the other side, leaving carbon monoxide behind.
- Carbon monoxide produced during this process can be used as a fuel by itself or combined with hydrogen and/or water to make many other liquid hydrocarbon fuels as well as chemicals including methanol (used as an automotive fuel), the study said.

Nothing here for Today!!!

Nothing here for Today!!!

F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam

G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper I

- Discuss the significance of India-Iran-Afghanistan Trilateral.

GS Paper III