

Reang Tribe

| Back home



UPSC MONTHLY MAGAZINE

**Sunil Mehta
Committee**

Fighting the bad
loan menace

**No Confidence
Motion**

Why, what of the
no trust motion.

**Lynching: Create separate
laws says SC to Union and states**

Mobocracy to be replaced
by rule of law

**Pakistan
Elections**

Will it make
difference to
India?

RESULTS

Incredible results in IAS 2013



We broke our past record in IAS 2014



We did it again in IAS 2015



And we've done it yet again in IAS 2016



And we've done it yet again in IAS 2017

5 Ranks
in Top 10

34 Ranks
in Top 100

236 Ranks
In The Final List



Rank 3
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Gupta



Rank 6
Koya sree
Harsha



Rank 8
Anubhav
Singh



Rank 9
Saumya
Sharma



Rank 10
Abhishek
Surana



Ashima
Mittal
Rank-12



Abhijeet
Sinha
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Varjeet
Walia
Rank-21



Keerthi
Vasan V
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Abhilash
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Vikramaditya
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POLITY

1. Braille-enabled Voter IDs launched by EC

Context

- The Election Commission launched voter identity cards with Braille label to ensure greater participation of persons with visual impairment in the electoral process.

National Consultation on Accessible Elections

- It is a part of the ECI's pursuit of its mission 'leave no voter behind' with special focus on "Persons with Disabilities" (PWD).
- They are aimed at identifying the barriers or gaps in the inclusion of PWD's in the electoral process, to assess the existing accessibility initiatives and to find solutions for the challenges being faced by the PWD's.
- The national consultation will be participated among others by the Chief Electoral Officers of all states, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working in the area of empowerment of the differently abled and senior officials of the Union Ministries of Social Justice & Empowerment, Information & Broadcasting, Electronics and Information Technology, Youth Affairs and Sports, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), Central Public Works Department and the National Literacy Mission Authority.

Measures taken for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the electoral process

- Printing of photo-identity cards with Braille,
- Accessible communication awareness materials,
- A mobile phone application to motivate and educate the voters and appointment of Disability Coordinates at the Assembly constituency, district and State level.
- Free transport facility to PWDs and their Assistants.
- The EC plans to impart cascaded training on accessibility to poll officials, set up auxiliary polling stations, provide accessible photo voter slips, sign-language window in all the audio visual training and advertisement content material for the convenience of deaf persons

2. cVigil

- "cVIGIL" is a user-friendly and easy to operate Android application
 - * The app requires an Android smartphone equipped with a camera, good internet connection and GPS access. The operating system should be Android Jellybean and above.
- It will be operational only where elections are announced

* The beta version of the app will be made available for the public and election staff to download so that they can acquaint themselves with its features and also try sending dummy data.

* Upon successful completion of the trial that is underway, the application will be made available for general use by all

What was the need of the app?

- So far, the complaints about violations of Model Code of Conduct often could not be followed instantly, leading to the violators escaping detection from the action squads.
- There was lack of documented evidence in the form of pictures or videos was seen as a hurdle in verifying a complaint.
- Absence of a robust response system to quickly and accurately identify the scene of occurrence of violations with the help of geographical location details hampered election officers' ability to apprehend the violators. The new app is expected to fill in all these gaps and create a fast-track complaint reception and redressal system.

Procedure to be followed

- The vigilant citizen has to click a picture or record a video of upto two minutes' duration of the scene of violations of the model code. The photo or video is to be uploaded on the app.
- The automated location mapping will be done by the app using the Geographic Information System.
- After its successful submission through the app, the vigilant citizen gets a Unique ID to track and receive the follow up updates on her or his mobile.
- A citizen can report many incidents in this manner and will get a unique id for each report for follow up updates.
- The identity of the complainant will be kept confidential.

Implementation

- Once the complaint is lodged, the information beeps in the District Control Room from where it is assigned to a Field Unit.
- A field unit consists of Flying Squads, Static Surveillance Teams, Reserve teams etc.
 - * Each Field Unit will have a GIS-based mobile application called 'cVIGIL Dispatcher', which allows the unit to directly reach the location through navigation technology and take action.
- After a Field Unit has taken action, it messages and uploads the relevant document as 'action taken report' via the 'cVIGIL Dispatcher' to the returning officer concerned for his decision and disposal.

- If the incident is found correct, the information is sent to the National Grievance Portal of the Election Commission of India for further action and the vigilant citizen is informed about the action taken within a hundred minutes

Safeguards

- To prevent any misuse, the app will not allow uploading of the pre-recorded or old images and videos.
- The app will not facilitate saving of the photos or videos recorded using the 'VIGIL' app into the phone gallery either.

Significance

- It will receive complaints about Model Code of Conduct violations.

3. CIC bilingual Mobile app

- The Central Information Commission (CIC) has launched an updated version of its mobile application
- RTI applicants can submit their second appeal or complaint and link papers in both the languages i.e. in Hindi and English, through this app
- Second appeals or complaints are filed under the Right to Information (RTI) Act by an applicant who is aggrieved over a government department's reply to his or her application made under the transparency law seeking governance related information.
- Using this app, people can get real-time status in both the Hindi and English languages.

4. Delhi be given statehood?

- This issue was raised by the first time by Pattabhi Sitaramayya in 1947 in the Constituent Assembly.
 - * B.R. Ambedkar, Jawaharlal Nehru and others did not oblige, he did manage to get a Chief Minister with limited powers in a Part C State.
- Delhi could again have a Chief Minister only in the early '90s with the introduction of Articles 239AA and 239BB in the Constitution and with the passage of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991

Metaphors used for Delhi

- Delhi is a quasi-state – partly a union territory, partly a state
- The 'schizophrenic' state, the capital with a 'split-personality disorder' or the place that is operated by 'remote control'

Special Union Territory

- It has few unique institutions, like an elected Legislative Assembly and a High Court

Delhi is not a State

- CJI quotes from the 1987 Balakrishnan report to conclude that Delhi is not a State 'Control of the Union over Delhi is vital in the national interest' 'Lieutenant-Governor has free hand in judicial, quasi-judicial functions' 'Administrator has to be more active than the Governor of a State'
- Delhi as the national capital belongs to the nation as a whole.
- The report said the control of the Union over Delhi was vital in the national interest.

Yes

The Chief Minister-Centre Tussle Creates Tension

- Presently, the Delhi government does not have control over three primary bodies –
 - * The Delhi Development Authority (DDA),
 - * The Delhi Police
 - * The trifurcated Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD).
- Controlling the Delhi Police which currently reports indirectly to the central government through the Lieutenant Governor, will mean the Delhi government will have more accountability in matters of law and order.
- Full statehood will also mean that the trifurcated MCD which reports to the Ministry of Home Affairs, will fall under the Delhi government's ambit.
- The reason why this is integral is because having two power centers in the same state is bound to create confusion and conflict, the burden of which at the end of the day falls on citizens.
- And if there is a hiccup in something out of their jurisdiction, it could also cost the government the next election, which compounds the unfairness.

Delhi and the Issue of Electing its Own Bureaucrats

- Delhi cannot recruit its own cadre of officers to run the government's administration – something other states in the country can do through its own Public Service Commission.
- The Centre exercises immense, albeit problematic, authority in this sphere by controlling these cadres through the Home Ministry, instead of the Delhi government.

Population

- In 1991, when the 69th Amendment to the Constitution created the Legislative Assembly of Delhi, the city's population was much smaller. Today, there are nearly two crore people in Delhi.

Granting full statehood to Delhi would ensure that all agencies presently under Union control are answerable to the NCTD and through them become directly accountable to people of Delhi. Coordination is likely to improve and the constant blame game between Union and the state government would stop.

No

- The capital's monuments, emblematic buildings and landscape reflect the country's diversity as well as its unity. Host to the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the national government, these capitals are their respective country's pride.
- Statehood raises the subjects of police and public order. The constitution allots these as state subjects. In many states, political influence has been pervasive in police postings.
 - * Often, the force is used for framing false cases and going slow on serious ones.
 - * Delhi Police not being under the state government has, by and large, remained immune from political manipulation.
- It involves the safety of the many entities organically linked to it, especially the embassies which are protected by treaties and conventions and are given immunity in various respects. There is also the issue of security of the visiting heads of states and other dignitaries.
 - * But because the upkeep of maximum standards of security is how the safety of the capital is judged.
 - * An attack on a Union minister or diplomat would guarantee an 'unsafe' tag not just for Delhi but the country.
 - * This is a major responsibility of the Centre and cannot be given to another entity.
- A seemingly mundane yet important point against the grant of statehood to the Delhi is the inability of its city government to bear the cost of police salaries and the pension liabilities of all city government employees, which are today borne entirely by the Centre.
 - * The budget of the Delhi government would implode if that bill were laid at its door—a predicament which would flow from the mantle of statehood.
 - * This could mean increased tax burden on the people of Delhi.

The World Example

- Washington DC is a well-known federal district but it enjoys much less autonomy than the Delhi government. The citizens of DC do not have any representatives in the US senate and only one non-voting representative in the US House of Representatives.
- Mexico City, about the same size as Delhi, is also a federal district. Like Delhi and DC, it does not enjoy the powers that other states enjoy, as the president or the Mexican congress has the authority to introduce bills and make decisions concerning the city.

Therefore, keeping in mind international practice, the fact that Delhi's governance structure is akin to many federal country capitals and the fact that the city government is being heavily subsidised, it would be prudent not to press for statehood.

5. DISHA dashboard**Context**

- The Ministry of Rural Development launched the DISHA dashboard, a data-driven decision-making tool that will make it easier to monitor governance by geography in real time

Details

- The dashboard has three filters: time, scheme and geography.
- The application, which is now available to all members of Parliament and State Assemblies as well district officials, allows the user to track the progress of multiple and diverse schemes in a certain district, block, or even a gram panchayat
 - * One Time Passwords or OTPs are being provided to all MPs to ensure that key data indicators remain protected from misuse.
 - * Currently, the tool is only available to legislators and government officials, but the Ministry is considering the possibility of making some of its features available online to the public on a later date
- The ultimate plan is to integrate all 42 Central schemes — representing a total outlay of ₹3 lakh crore — which are already monitored by DISHA or District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committees.

Meeting Management Software

- This will serve the objective of paperless meeting.
- This software will help in preparing meeting notices, agenda setting, communicating with members, circulating agenda, meeting minutes and also generate triggers on items which require follow-up action.

Significance

- Currently, geographic mismatches make it difficult to unite data; for instance, while the Rural Development Ministry tracks its schemes by gram panchayat, the Health Ministry tracks it by anganwadis, which are mapped by population, while crime data uses different boundaries. So, this helps in better integration.
- So many schemes have overlaps and potential for synergies, but it is hard to see them without this kind of tool. It will help MPs, MLAs and District Magistrates to make data-driven decisions.
- It makes it easy to identify which districts are lagging with respect to each scheme and take corrective action on them due to the dashboard

- It will lead to successful implementation of flagship programme of central government

6. Electoral reforms

Context

- There are meaningful electoral reforms beyond simultaneous elections
- It is perhaps no surprise that political parties are deeply divided over the idea of holding simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies.

Law Commission of India

Mixed signal

The Law Commission's consultation meet on simultaneous polls for Lok Sabha and Assemblies threw up a divided house among political parties

Written response to Law Commission:	In support	Opposed
• BJP has written stating that it will give a detailed response later	• CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury wrote to the Law Commission on Friday to oppose the idea	Trinamool Congress, DMK, JD(S), DMK, AAP, TDP, CPI, IUML, Bodoland People's Front, Goa Forward Party
Yet to appear/respond: Congress, BJD, RJD, BSP, JD(U)		

- During consultations initiated by the Law Commission of India, nine parties opposed it, arguing that it went against the constitutional fabric and that it would be impractical.
- Four parties backed the concept. The BJP has sought time for a detailed response, though it is Prime Minister Narendra Modi who has been advocating the idea. The Congress has now spoken out against the proposal

Significance

- In principle, there are obvious advantages to the 'one nation, one election' idea — election expenditure will be drastically cut and ruling dispensations will be able to focus on legislation and governance rather than having to be in campaign mode forever.
- However, as many of the naysayers have pointed out, the idea is fraught with practical difficulties. Also, some parties fear that a simultaneous poll, particularly in this era where news is easily and widely disseminated, will privilege national issues over regional ones even if, arguably, the reverse may happen too.
- The issue is that synchronization would involve curtailment or extension of the tenure of a House — the legal propriety of which is questionable.

The key proposal

- Assemblies be bunched into two categories based on whether their terms end close to the 2019 or the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.
- Elections could be held for one group in 2019 and for another in 2024 so that subsequent elections could be synchronised. Or, polls could be held for one group along with the 2019 election and for the rest 30 months later, so that there is a round of elections every two and a half years.
- An attempt at solving the problem of regimes falling due to lack of majority is the proposal for a 'constructive vote of no-confidence'.
- This means that when passing a motion expressing lack of trust in a regime, legislators must necessarily propose an alternative. If a mid-term election has to be held, the term of such a House would only be for the remainder of its tenure.
- These two recommendations may partially address the question raised by the DMK on whether all Assemblies would be dissolved too if the Lok Sabha has to be prematurely dissolved. However, it is unclear if it will be palatable for all parties to invest their time and resources in an election that would win them only a curtailed term.
- Another proposal is allowing a one-time waiver of the anti-defection law to enable the House to elect a leader in the event of a hung House is. However, these reforms can be adopted even without simultaneous elections.
- Also, there are many pressing reforms needed in the electoral space including curbing the use of black money to fund elections and tackling the staggered manner in which elections are held in many States.

7. Fake News

Introduction

- India is a burgeoning market for social media platforms and messaging services, with close to half a billion Internet users on mobile platforms — the second largest online population in the world. The growth rates for media access on smartphones are astonishing.
- Misinformation can be categorized into seven categories, namely satire or parody, misleading content, imposter content, fabricated content, false connection, false content and manipulated content.
- While all these forms exist in India, fabricated and manipulated content are gaining steam, leading to the possibility of potential violence and impacting society.
- Social media and messaging services, which are essentially meant to share information, ideas and interests or to facilitate virtual communities interact, participate and communicate

- Equally disturbing however is the increasing instances of misleading and maliciously false online content. They are increasingly being abused to incite communal riots and spread false information.

Incidents

- In India, as of July 1, 2018, fake information-induced mob lynching has claimed 23 lives¹ in 18 of such reported incidents

Impact

- The phenomenon of fake news has wider implications for law and order
- Safety and security of the citizens,
- To the democratic credentials of the country.
- Deepens communal polarisation or incites hatred
- Fake news, fake social media messages and campaigns have also been used to malign the reputation of organisations as well as to manipulate stock markets

Govt Action

- The government has taken a stern stand with clear directions to the messaging service providers such as WhatsApp,³ who have reciprocated with assurances of incorporating suitable technology to curb the menace.
- WhatsApp globally, which is nearly 1.5 billion. In India, over 250 million users are on WhatsApp. In a response letter to India's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEIT), WhatsApp has made it clear that it will ramp up efforts to fight fake news in India.
 - * More control to Group Admins
 - * WhatsApp Group Admins now have a lot more control over who can send messages on a group, change group photo and description, etc. The features will essentially prove to be helpful for bigger groups on WhatsApp, where a large number of people are involved. As a group admin, one can make co-admins as well, thus giving power to send messages, etc only to those who can be relied upon.'

Global Experience

Germany

- In an effort to combat the spread of fake news and hate speech, Germany in 2017 officially unveiled a landmark social-media bill that could land social media companies to face fines of up to €50m (£43m) if they persistently fail to remove illegal content from their sites.
- The measure requires social media platforms to remove obviously illegal hate speech and other postings within 24 hours after receiving a notification or complaint, and to block other offensive content within seven days.

China

- It is apparently in a better position to tackle the problem as they have both technical measures and legal regimes in place
- Artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms to detect fake news and a bot that is an expert in generating misinformation

Challenges

- This includes decisions pertaining to taking down of fake content, who makes that decision
- would it, in some way or the other, interfere with the freedom to speech or expression,
- The manner in which technology should respond to parody and satire meant purely for entertainment.

Way forward

- By and large, eradicating the fake news problem calls for a collective effort of individuals, governments, social media and content platforms, and organisations producing innovative technology solutions.
- Standalone technology solutions cannot be effective, unless and until they are integrated with social causes and awareness among the masses to solve such mounting problems.

8. Gambling should be allowed but regulated says law commission

Context

- The Law Commission of India submitted a report to the government, saying that since it is impossible to stop illegal gambling, the only viable option left is to "regulate" gambling in sports.
- The commission, headed by former Supreme Court judge, Justice B.S. Chauhan, recommended "cashless" gambling in sports as a means to increase revenue and deal a blow to unlawful gambling.

Recommendations

- Transactions between gamblers and operators should be linked to their Aadhaar and PAN cards so that the government could keep an eye on them
- The commission recommended a classification of 'proper gambling' and 'small gambling'.
 - * Proper gambling would be for the rich who play for high stakes,
 - * Small Gambling would be for the low-income groups
- The panel wanted the government to introduce a cap on the number of gambling transactions for each individual, that is, monthly, half-yearly and annual. Restrictions on amount should be prescribed while using electronic money facilities like credit cards, debit cards, and net-banking. Gambling websites should also not solicit pornography, it said

- According to the commission, Foreign Exchange Management and Foreign Direct Investment laws and policies should be amended to encourage investment in the casino/online gaming industry. This would propel tourism and employment

9. Judicial Appointments: In need of a practical plan

Why in news?

- The stage-wise and uniform timeline for lower judicial appointments is problematic
- Recruitment to the lower judiciary has been under public scrutiny due to its failure to fill almost a quarter (23%) of vacancies that persist.
- The recruitment process of district judges is now the subject matter of a public interest litigation filed in the Supreme Court. The matter has now come to a standstill given opposition by States to a centralised selection mechanism for judges.

Highlights of the issues

- This is not the first time that the Supreme Court has tried to streamline the examination process for the lower judiciary.
- In *Malik Mazhar v. U.P. Public Service Commission* (2008), it highlighted the importance of a prescribed time-schedule for judicial service examinations and laid down stage-wise time lines for lower judicial appointments — for civil judges (junior division) and district judges (direct recruitment) in 321 days and 183 days, respectively. An examination cycle is calculated from the date of notification to the last date for joining.

However, such a benchmark has three problems.

- The rationale behind arriving at this timeline is unclear.
- It is an inaccurate benchmark to measure performance as it does not consider different sanctioned strengths and State resources in conducting such exams.
- Strict adherence to such timelines affects aspirants.

No coherent rationale

- A clear timeline does ensure greater accountability. However, the Supreme Court offers no substantial justification for determining these timelines. From the order, it appears that these were based on suggestions from States and the amicus curiae in the case.
- With no clear, scientific principle or methodology offered, it ends up being a 'one-size-fit-all' timeline, which forces a comparison of States that are not similarly placed. This leads to the second issue.
- A report by the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy on 'Ranking Lower Court Appointments' collated publicly available data on recruitment cycles undertaken by States (2007-2017).
- The study covered direct recruitment of district judges and civil judges (junior division) and measured the performance of States in terms of the number of days taken ('timeliness') to complete a cycle, and the percentage of vacancies potentially filled.

- But this timeline applies uniformly to States, regardless of sanctioned strengths. The timeliness measure in the report, when compared with data on sanctioned strengths in the lower judiciary, illustrates why this benchmark is inappropriate in measuring State performance.
- To elaborate, States with lesser sanctioned strengths also see lower numbers of applicants and have a natural advantage in adhering to the timeline.

Current Scenario

- Take the case of Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra for example. For civil judges, Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra have a sanctioned strength of 62 and 1,118, respectively.
- Both must finish their recruitment cycles within 321 days. The study found that while Himachal could complete its cycle within an average of 178 days, it took 443 days for Maharashtra. When benchmarked against the prescribed timeline, Himachal performs better than Maharashtra, but the comparison is unfair, given the wide variance in sanctioned strengths, and, therefore, the number of applicants.
- The study also showed that of the top five jurisdictions on the timeliness metric for civil judges, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh (States) and Puducherry (Union Territory) have a sanctioned strength below 70.
- These States are quickest in completing recruitment cycles. Evidently, the sanctioned strength influences the timeliness of the recruitment process.

Logistical difficulties

- Clearly, this court-stipulated timeline does not account for the structural and functional capacities of States.
- While one assumes there is greater capacity in the larger States, there is no reason to persist with this assumption without empirical verification. More importantly, there is no methodological justification in prescribing a uniform timeline without accounting for different capacities in States.
- The Malik Mazhar guidelines could have easily ensured this by prescribing a standard which could be subject to State modifications rather than making them fixed. Currently, States can deviate from this timeline only by making an application to the Supreme Court.

Conclusion

- The prescribed timeline does not register potential problems for candidates. If the timeline is strictly implemented, aspiring candidates will find it impossible to appear for examinations in multiple States, potentially harming the career opportunities of candidates who are otherwise eligible for judicial service in multiple States.
- While the idea of a definite timeline is undisputedly a good one, it should be flexible to suit the administrative and resource capacities of different States.

- This curbs their flexibility. Further, and more importantly, the court needs to adopt a more data-driven, methodological basis for such a timeline.

10. L-G bound by 'aid and advice' of Delhi govt., says Constitution Bench

Context

- In what could be a landmark Judgment the Supreme Court has resolved the political deadlock between Aam Aadmi Party and Lieutenant-Governor, the SC has said that the LG is bound by the aid and advice of council of ministers in the National Capital Region?

SC's View

- Governance of Delhi cannot rest upon the whims of one functionary — the Lieutenant-Governor.
 - * The CJI held that the Delhi has the power to make laws with respect to any matters enumerated in the state list and the concurrent list.
 - * He made it clear that the control of the Centre is confined to three areas – land, police and public order – and there cannot be any attempt on the part of the Union government to seize all control.
- The Lieutenant-Governor has not been entrusted with any independent decision-making power. He has to either act on the 'aid and advice' of the Council of Ministers or he is bound to implement the decision taken by the President on a reference being made by him.
 - * It pointed out that the "aid and advice" concept cannot apply to the exercise by the administrator of any judicial or quasi-judicial functions.
 - * The L-G is bound by the aid and advice of the Delhi Cabinet only in matters where the Assembly has the powers to make laws.
- In case of difference of opinion, the L-G should straightaway refer the dispute to the President for a final decision without sitting over it or stultifying the governance in the National Capital
 - * Although it has been emphasized that this power is not to be exercised mechanically, anything that has sensitivity or can cast a financial burden which is beyond the government's capacity or cause political problems with the Centre or other states and implicate vital interests of the Union.
 - * The LG can differ with CoM, ask for reconsideration and make a reference to the Centre. Till a decision comes, the LG's orders would prevail.

SC on People's mandate

- It's the people who are sovereign and the decisions of the elected government in Delhi represent the public will, perception and popular sentiment
- the Supreme Court observed that a well-deliberated legitimate decision of the Council of Ministers cannot be stymied by the negative attitude of the L-G. What suffers is the concept of collective responsibility.

- if the collective responsibility of the Council of Ministers is not given the expected weightage, there will be corrosion of the essential feature of representative government
- Any undue interference amounts to betrayal of the faith of the collective in fulfillment of their aspirations of democratic self-governance
- SC also coined the term "collaborative federalism" to define the inter-dependence between the two.

* Governments are in their respective pursuits of development. The Union government and the State governments should endeavour to address the common problems with the intention of arriving at a solution by showing statesmanship, combined action and sincere cooperation. In collaborative federalism, the Union and the State governments should express their readiness to achieve the common objective and work together for it

Delhi High Court

- It had declared that the L-G has "complete control of all matters regarding the National Capital Territory of Delhi, and nothing will happen without the concurrence of the L-G."
- Deviations from the Delhi High Court judgment
 - * It has dispelled the idea that the elected government has to wait to implement its decisions until the lieutenant governor (LG) acquiesces.

Implications

- As long as Delhi is the national capital, it is everyone's capital and the voice of non-Delhi citizens have to be heard through the central government acting on the decisions of Parliament.
- Supreme Court has restored the primary role played by the "representative government" in the National Capital Territory i.e. an elected government cannot be undermined by an unelected administrator.
- Union and its units should embrace a collaborative federal architecture for co-existence and inter-dependence.
- The controversies over the arbitrary withholding of Cabinet decisions may end, or at least diminish

11. Live streaming of court proceedings can be undertaken Center to SC

Context

- The Supreme Court said that it is ready to go live on camera while the government mooted a separate TV channel for live-streaming court proceedings.
 - * Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal proposed a dedicated channel like the Rajya Sabha TV and the Lok Sabha TV for the Supreme Court.

Yes

Live stream is an extension of the 'open court' system, where the public can walk in and watch court proceedings.

- With court proceedings beamed live on air, litigants, law students and the public can watch them as they happen.
- With the entire country watching them, there would be fewer interruptions, raised voices and adjournments from the lawyers.
- It will negate the chances of any misreporting, errors or second-hand information.
 - * The need to avoid multiple versions or wrong projections of facts, or the menace of fake news or faulty reporting
- Further, note that to promote transparency, live-streaming has been allowed for both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha proceedings since 2004.

No

- The role of the judiciary cannot be equated with the roles of the legislature and the executive. While broadcasting parliamentary proceedings may be good for ensuring accountability, this is not the case with the courts. The reason is simple.

* In democratic governance, the public is sovereign, and the public judges its representatives. But the public cannot judge the judges. Judges are accountable neither to the general public nor to the sovereign. They are accountable only to the rule of law and to the Constitution, as established by law.

- The unwanted public gaze caused by live-streaming will tend to make judges subject to popular public opinion and accountable to the general public.
- With live-streaming, there is a strong possibility that lawyers will tend to address not only the judges but also the public watching them. This will only hamper their objectivity.
- Another important aspect is that debates inside a courtroom, especially before Constitution Benches of the Supreme Court, require reasonable expertise to be understood.
 - * Also, during hearings, judges make oral observations and ask questions which may not be a formal expression of what they are thinking.

Challenges

- Agreements entered with broadcasters should be on a non-commercial basis.
- No one should profit from the arrangement. There should be no unauthorized reproduction.
- Due concern should be taken care for cases involving national security concerns, matrimonial disputes and rape cases.

- A public viewing of marital dispute and rape case proceedings would seriously affect justice and amount to a violation of the fundamental right to privacy. So an alternative mechanism should be present

International Practice

- There are recordings of videos in the highest courts in Canada and Australia
- Recording happens in some international courts, most notably in the International Court of Justice, shows that this exercise is neither novel nor so difficult.

Way Forward

- Live-streaming should not be called for in all types of matters nor in all courts. The emphasis is to make those matters that are of great public importance available for all to see. Therefore, matters which have a privacy dimension, such as family matters or criminal matters, or matters with legal procedural intricacies should be out of its preview.

12. No Confidence Motion/ No-Trust Motion

- The Indian constitution does not mention no-confidence
- But the constitution under article 118 Provides for Rules of procedure
 - * Each House of Parliament may make rules for regulations, subject to the provisions of this Constitution, its procedure and the conduct of its business
- Lok Sabha's Rule 198 mentions the procedure for a motion of no-confidence. So, a no-confidence motion can only be passed in Lok Sabha as Rule 198 allows any member of the House to give a written notice.

Procedure

- The member asking for leave has, before the commencement of the sitting for that day, to give to the Secretary General a written notice of the motion which he/she proposes to move
- Once a notice is given, the speaker (Sumita Mahajan) reads it in the House and asks those who are in favour of it.
- In case there are 50 MPs in favour, a date for discussing the motion is assigned.
- A motion of no-confidence is required to be taken up within 10 days from the date on which the leave to move is granted by the House.
 - * In fixing the date for the discussion of such a motion, the Speaker may ask the Leader of the House to suggest to him/her the date or dates in consultation with the leaders of various Opposition Parties or Groups.
 - * Time for discussion of the motion may be allotted by the House on the recommendation of the Business Advisory Committee

- * Once the motion is accepted, the Speaker will announce a day when the motion is to be discussed. The Speaker can allot one day, multiple days, or a part of a day to discuss the motion. S/He can also prescribe a time limit for speeches during the discussion.

How it works?

- The prime minister or minister's reply to the charges made. The mover has the right to reply.
- After the debate, the speaker puts the motion for voting to the house and ascertains the decision of the house by voice vote or a division.

Implications:

- The government is expected to resign if it loses a trust vote.
- In case it refuses to do so, the President has the power to remove the prime minister.
- In the history of Indian Parliament, no Prime Minister has been forcibly removed so far.
- After a government loses a trust vote and resigns, it continues to function, but as a caretaker government with almost the same powers as it had before the voting.
- However, a caretaker government wouldn't have the power to take any major policy decisions since Parliament remains dissolved. A new government gets elected after the general elections.

History of NCM in Lok Sabha:

- So far, 27 no-confidence motions have been moved in Lok Sabha since Independence.
- Acharya Kripalani moved the first no confidence motion against Jawaharlal Nehru in August 1963, immediately after the India-China war.
- Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister faced the most number with 15 no-confidence motions.
- Lal Bahadur Shastri and Narasimha Rao both faced it thrice, Morarji Desai twice and Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajiv Gandhi, Atal Bihari Vajpayee faced once each.
- All the no-confidence motions have been defeated except when Prime Minister Morarji Desai resigned during the discussions in July 1979.

Context

- Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan accepted a notice given by Vijayawada MP Kesineni Srinivas for a no-confidence motion against the Narendra Modi government
- While several Opposition MPs, including Mallikarjun Kharge of the Congress, had given notices, the Speaker accepted the one from Telugu Desam Party's Vijayawada MP Kesineni Srinivas on the ground that his was the first.

13. Pending Cases in Court

Context

- Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra flagged rising pendency in appeals lying with High Courts. He has since directed High Courts to prepare action plans for disposal of five and 10-year-old cases. He has also asked for High Court Arrears Committees to periodically review the situation

Why is there delay in courts?

- The discourse on case pendency has largely revolved around delayed appointments and vacancies.
- One of the main reasons for arrears in the Supreme Court are lengthy arguments.
 - * In the U.S. Supreme Court, the time given to advocates on either side in a majority of cases is half-hour.
 - * This system can be adopted only if the advocates on either side are asked to file detailed briefs.
 - * There should be a time-limit for arguments.
- A large part of the time in the Supreme Court and the High Courts is taken up in dealing with public interest litigation.
 - * While it is true that PIL has been a great benefit, there are also a number of cases filed which do not deserve to come under that category.
 - * Unfortunately, as this class of litigation attracts media attention, judges are inclined to play to the gallery and deal with PIL petitions in preference to ordinary cases.
 - * Consequently, the cases of the ordinary litigants remain undisposed of.
- One of the main reasons for the delay in the disposal of cases is that persons of ability are not being appointed judges of the subordinate courts.
- Impact of listing techniques
 - * First, listing patterns were generally erratic, with the number of matters listed for the same courtroom ranging from 1 to 126 a month. In some courtrooms, it was 80-120 cases for a month.
 - * Second, a large number of cases listed in a day meant that inevitably, matters listed towards the end of the day remained left over.
 - * Third, old pending matters barely made it to court. Our case data over three years showed that 91% of them remained unheard despite being allotted a separate day and specific judges.

Have Tribunals relieved the courts?

- Many tribunals and forums have been constituted to relieve ordinary courts of their burden: administrative tribunals at the Centre and in the States, the income-tax appellate tribunal, sales tax appellate tribunals, consumer forums at the State and district levels, family courts, special courts to deal with atrocities on SCs and STs and many other special courts.

- However, these have not only failed to ease the case load in ordinary courts but have themselves accumulated arrears.
- For instance, the consumer forum is expected to dispose of cases within three months but there are cases pending for several years.

Challenges

- With increase in cases it puts pressure on judges to dispose of as many cases as possible, a problematic situation as it does not consider the quality of adjudication itself.
- It does not shed light on the exact nature of cases that have remained pending the longest, or the stage at which pendency recurs the most

Solutions

- Cause list preparation should be made more scientific if supported by a consistent study of the variance in the number of cases listed across courts
 - * Causelists are schedule of cases to be heard by the courts on the following day(s). Every court must have a causelist for each working day.
 - * The Causelists give details such as the Court Number, the bench dealing with the cases and the case details like case number, petitioner/respondent, respective advocates, etc.
- Disposing of old and pending matters must be prioritized.
 - * Despite allotting two days in week to hearing these matters Their rate of case movement in newer matters (taken up on all other days of the week) was much faster than case movement recorded on specific days where old cases were listed.
 - * A solution would be to implement a policy where no adjournments are granted for frivolous reasons.
- Under Article 128 of the Constitution, the Chief Justice of India, with previous consent of the President, may request any person, who was a judge of the Supreme Court or a judge of the High Court qualified to be appointed to the Supreme Court, to act as a judge of the Supreme Court to dispose of arrears. This provision should be used frequently.
- There is a similar provision, Article 224-A, by which a retired judge of any High Court is requested to sit as a judge to help in disposing of arrears.

Advantages of listing

- Scientific listing has clear benefits. It will introduce standardization across courts and help disincentive judges from using discretionary practices in the number and nature of cases listed before them.
- It will promote fairness — a reasonable number of cases would be listed every day and distributed across the day based on stage and case type.
- Another benefit would be better quality of adjudication

Conclusion

- So, it is time that the judiciary as an institution opens itself to the services of competent external agencies that can help them record, manage and analyze their data better, to build and sustain a healthy institution because Justice delayed is Justice denied

14. Polavaram Project

- Polavaram Project is a multi-purpose irrigation project which has been accorded national project status by the union government
- This dam across the Godavari River is under construction located in West Godavari District and East Godavari District in Andhra Pradesh state and its reservoir spreads in parts of Chhattisgarh and Odisha States also

Objectives

- The water from the dam reservoir will irrigate agricultural land in the districts of Krishna, East and West Godavari and Visakhapatnam through two major canals
- To Store water at Polavaram dam in West Godavari district.
- Hydro-electricity generation of about 960 MW
- To Supply Water to Visakhapatnam & Vizag steel plant.

Issue Area

- Telangana has been fearing submergence of many of its villages due to the multi-purpose project on Godavari river as the estimated flood discharge is much higher
- The project will submerge villages along the Sabari River in Konta block of Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district.
- In Odisha, villages along the Sabari and Sileru rivers (tributaries of the Godavari) in Motu block will be submerged.
- The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the project says 276 villages will be affected; an estimated 177,275 people live in these villages.
- It has evoked widespread opposition from the members of Adivasi Konda Reddi Sangham as it will not only submerge large tracts of tribal lands displacing lakhs of Adivasis and but snatches away their livelihood options including bamboo craft

Context

- Chairperson of NCST presented a special report on "Indira Sagar Polavaram Project" Affected Tribal People to the President of India.

- The report and recommendations are under Article 338A(5)(e) of the Constitution on the measures to be taken by the Government of Andhra Pradesh for the effective implementation of constitutional safeguards and other measures for the protection, welfare and socio-economic development of the Scheduled Tribes who are affected on account of Polavaram Irrigation Project in Andhra Pradesh.
- In its report, the commission also recommended that the state government should revise the compensation packages "on the suo-moto basis," keeping in view the observations and modalities suggested by the Supreme Court in the case of Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd Versus Mathias Oram and others

15. Police Chiefs will be appointed after consultation with UPSC

Context

- The Supreme Court has henceforth asked all state Governments to consult UPSC before making any appointments to Pivotal position of Police Chief

Recommendation and Current Status

- The court passed seven directives, primarily to "ensure that State governments do not exercise unwarranted influence or pressure on the police."
- To ensure that DGP is appointed through a merit based transparent process

How to select DGP	
The Supreme Court has issued seven directives to be followed by the States when appointing the Director General of Police	
▪ Proposals should be sent to the UPSC, three months before incumbent's retirement	one of the panel's choices
▪ UPSC to prepare a panel of names as per Prakash Singh judgment. It should try and choose within the zone of consideration who have got two years of service	▪ Appointing persons on their retirement day is not in conformity with the Prakash Singh verdict
▪ States shall appoint	▪ State's and Centre's rules running counter to the SC directions will remain in abeyance
OLD RULE (AS PER PRAKASH SINGH JUDGMENT OF 2006)	
▪ DGP shall be selected by the State government from among three senior-most officers of the department empanelled for promotion	▪ The promotion should be based on their length of service, very good record and range of experience for heading the police force
	▪ Once the officer is selected for the job, he or she should have a minimum tenure of at least two years irrespective of their date of superannuation

Issue Area

- State governments have even gone to the extent of appointing their 'favourite' officers as DGP just before their superannuation date so that they could continue in service even after retirement.
 - * The practice of the state governments appointing favourites as acting DGPs on the eve of their retirement, so that they could have a two-year tenure beyond their retirement age at 60.

Prakash Singh case

- In 2006, the SC had said states must give a fixed tenure of at least two years to DGPs after selecting them from a panel prepared by the UPSC.

16. Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2018

- The bill seeks to punish bribe-givers and bribe-takers

- The Bill provides for jail terms of three to seven years, besides fine, to those convicted of taking or giving bribes to public officials.
- The Bill extends the ambit of public servants who will be protected by the provision of a prior government sanction for prosecution.
 - * It proposes a 'shield' for government staff, including those retired, from prosecution by making it mandatory for investigating agencies like the CBI to take prior approval from competent authority before conducting any enquiry against them.
 - * This has been provided to ensure that honest officers were not intimidated by false complaints

	Bribery What is new <ul style="list-style-type: none">Giving a bribe is now an offence punishable by a 7-year prison termExecutive officer is forced to give a bribe, but it should be reported within seven daysBribe is termed 'undue advantage', defined as 'gratification other than legal remuneration' What it was <ul style="list-style-type: none">No specific provision, except as abstemtion		Pre-investigation approval What is new <ul style="list-style-type: none">Police officer cannot conduct probe without prior approval of relevant authority or govt (except when caught red-handed) What it was <ul style="list-style-type: none">No such provision in the Act, but a rule similar to it was struck down by Supreme Court		Sanction for prosecution What is new <ul style="list-style-type: none">Sanction required for prosecuting former officials for offences done while in officeCentre may notify guidelines for sanctionDecision on request should be made within 3 months, which may be extended by a month* What it was <ul style="list-style-type: none">Sanction was required under PCA for serving officers only		Criminal misconduct What is new <ul style="list-style-type: none">Only be two forms of criminal misconduct<ul style="list-style-type: none">Misappropriation of property entrusted to public servantIntentionally enriching oneself illicitly What it was <ul style="list-style-type: none">There were five kinds: sometimes are taking bribe habitually, getting anything free or at concession, obtaining pecuniary advantage for oneself or for another without public interest		Forfeiture of property What is new <ul style="list-style-type: none">Section introduced for State Courts under this Act to attach and confiscate property What it was <ul style="list-style-type: none">This was not done under the Prevention of Corruption Act, but under a 1944 ordinance through civil courts
Compiled by K. Venkataramanan									

17. Right to Information (Amendment) Bill, 2018

- The bill seeks to amend the Right to Information Act of 2005

Features

- It mandates the replacement of culture of secrecy with a culture of transparency.
- Under Section 4(2) of the RTI Act, it says: "It shall be a constant endeavour of every public authority... to provide as much information suomotu to the public at regular intervals... so that the public have minimum resort to the use of this Act to obtain information." But the implementation is poor.

Changes to be made

Applications for information about amendments made under the RTI Act have been stonewalled and information denied.

- There appears to be a proposal to allow for the withdrawal of appeals based on a written communication by the appellant and closure of proceedings upon death of the appellant.
- The proposed rules also suggest that a complaint be filed within 90 days from the date the cause of complaint arose, failing which a request for condoning the delay is required.
- The salary, allowances and other service conditions of the Chief Information Commissioner are similar to those of the Chief Election Commissioner and that of the Information Commissioner are similar to those of an Election Commissioner.

- * The government is contending that the CIC cannot be equal to the CEC, because the latter is a constitutional institution, while the former is just the creation of a statute and hence, a level below

Issue Area

- Manner of secrecy and lack of any public consultation is a violation of the Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy and undermines basic democratic principles
- The Central Information Commission and state commissions are entrusted with the statutory responsibility of enforcing a fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution of India, the freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a), which is part of basic structure of the Constitution, which means it cannot be tinkered with by any contemporary executive.

18. Rule of Law Index

- It is published by World Justice Project
- It measures the rule of law based on the experiences and perceptions of the general public and in-country experts worldwide
- The rule of law index relies on eight factors—constraints on government powers, absence of corruption, open government, fundamental rights, order and security, regulatory enforcement, civil justice, and criminal justice—to come to a finding.
- The Index is intended for a broad audience that includes policy makers, civil society organizations, academics, citizens, and legal professionals, among others

Four Universal Principles of the Rule of Law

- Accountability
 - * The government as well as private actors are accountable under the law.
- Just Laws
 - * The laws are clear, publicized, stable, and just; are applied evenly; and protect fundamental rights, including the security of persons and property and certain core human rights.
- Open Government
 - * The processes by which the laws are enacted, administered, and enforced are accessible, fair, and efficient.
- Accessible & Impartial Dispute Resolution
 - * Justice is delivered timely by competent, ethical, and independent representatives and neutrals who are accessible, have adequate resources, and reflect the makeup of the communities they serve.

India

Overall Score	Regional Rank	Income Rank	Global Rank
0.52	3/6	7/30	62/113

Score Change Rank Change

0.00 4▲

- India's rank was 62, better than China, Pakistan, Myanmar and Bangladesh;
- Denmark occupied the top spot.

19. Witch-Hunt bill cleared by President Kovind

Context

- President Ram Nath Kovind has approved the Assam Witch Hunting (Prohibition, Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2015, converting it to an Act.

Details

- The Act was prepared to rein in the rising incidents of witch-hunting cases across the State, following demand from cross-section of society.
- The Act also talks about various measures that the administration and police should initiate, along with NGOs and civil society, to educate people about witch-hunting.
- The act was gross violation of basic human rights and contravenes the letter and spirit of universal declaration of human rights.

Stats

- Between 2001 and 2017, 193 people -- 114 women and 79 men -- have been branded as witch and killed and 202 cases have been registered by the police during this period,

Punishment

- Every offence under this Act shall be cognizable, nonbailable and non compoundable within the meaning of the Code
- It imposes imprisonment of up to seven years, along with a fine of up to Rs 5 lakh, for branding someone as witch
 - * The fine realised as punishment for an offence shall be paid to the victim or his/her next of kin as compensation.
- The Act would be imposed, along with Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), if someone is killed after being branded as witch.
- The punishment for leading a person to commit suicide after intimidating, stigmatising, defaming and accusing her as witch, may be extended to life imprisonment, along with Rs 5 lakh fine.

'Mission Birubala'

- An NGO working towards eradication of witch-hunting and superstition from the society

Project Prahari

- It aims to educate people about the menace and introduce community Policing launched by Director-General of Police Kuladhar Saikia
- As Deputy Inspector-General in Kokrajhar, he launched Project Prahari in 2001, which blended normal policing with social campaigns to check the menace.

20. Uttarakhand HC declares animal kingdom a legal entity

Context:

- The Uttarakhand high court has declared the entire animal kingdom, including birds and aquatic animals, as a legal entity having rights of a "living person". The move aims to ensure "greater welfare" of animals.
- The entire animal kingdom, including avian and aquatic ones, are declared as legal entities having a distinct persona with corresponding rights, duties and liabilities of a living person.

Legal entity

- A legal entity means an entity which acts like a natural person but only through a designated person, whose acts are processed within the ambit of law. This means the animal kingdom could be represented by a custodian.

Constitutional status:

- Invoking Article 21 of the Constitution, the court said: "Article 21 of the Constitution, while safeguarding the rights of humans, protects life and the word 'life' means animal world".
- The court cited a 2014 Supreme Court judgment to say any disturbance from the "basic environment which includes all forms of life, including animals life, which are necessary for human life, fall within the meaning of Article 21 of the Constitution".

As part of the judgment, the court has issued following directions:

- Create an animal welfare committee in every district of the state. All citizens of Uttarakhand shall be "persons in loco parentis" (in the place of a parent). This gives them the responsibility to protect animals and ensure their welfare.
- The court also gave directions ranging from the amount of load allowed to be pulled by various animals in accordance with the kind of carriage being pulled to the amount of riders per carriage.
- Further banning the use of spike or other sharp tackle or equipment on the animal, the court also directed the state government to ensure that if temperature exceeds 37 degree Celsius or drops below 5 degree Celsius, no person be permitted to keep in harness any animal used for the purpose of drawing vehicles.

- The court also went into the aspect of animal safety, highlighting the need for fluorescent reflectors in carriages and animals, certificates of unladen weight of vehicles, compulsory shelter of suitable size for horses, bullocks and stray cattle and a direction to the veterinary doctors of Uttarakhand to treat any stray animals brought to them or by visiting them.

- The court said as the carts driven by animals have no mechanical devices, animal-drawn carriages have to be given Right of Way over other vehicles.

Background:

- The order came in response to a public interest litigation seeking directions to restrict the movement of horse carts/tongas between Nepal and India through Champawat district and highlighted that ailing, infirm and old horses were being abandoned by the owners in the Indian Territory.

Significance:

- This order will go a long way in building a compassionate society as it was illogical to treat sentient creatures as inanimate objects.
- Uttarakhand high court in March 2017 accorded the status of "living entity" to the Ganga and Yamuna rivers, a decision subsequently stayed by the Supreme Court.

21. Aspirational districts- Govt. deploys 800 IAS officers for village outreach

Context

- A battalion of Central government IAS officers has been drafted to ensure on the ground implementation as the Centre races to saturate 117 "aspirational districts" with seven flagship social welfare schemes by Independence Day.

Monitoring

- Direct daily calls to a section of District Collectors to monitor progress, while third-party observers for each district —mostly from NGOs or academia— have been drafted in to do random checks of villages and report back to the Ministry.

Criticism

- Large-scale involvement of Central officers raises questions about the viability of such drives, and about roles in a federal democracy.
- Direct connections to the district administration tend to bypass State administrations, while sending out large Central teams to do the work of local officials fails to empower local human resources
- It may create a veneer of efficiency and a high quality publicity campaign, but it undermines the logic of federalism.

ECONOMY

1. Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement

- APTA previously named the Bangkok Agreement, is an initiative under the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP) for trade expansion through exchange of tariff concessions among developing country members of the Asia Pacific Region, in place since 1975.
- Being the oldest preferential trade agreement among developing countries in Asia-Pacific, APTA aims to promote economic development through the adoption of mutually beneficial trade liberalization measures that will contribute to intra-regional trade expansion and provides for economic integration through coverage of merchandise goods, services, investment and trade facilitation.
- APTA is a Preferential Trade Agreement, under which the basket of items as well as extent of tariff concessions are enlarged during the trade negotiating rounds which are launched from time to time.

2. Central Motor Vehicles Rules

Changes

- It provides that driving licence and the pollution-control certificates can be carried either in physical or digital form
- FASTags and Vehicle Tracking System device mandatory for all commercial vehicles obtaining national permit.
- No fitness certification shall be required at the time of registration for new transport vehicles sold as fully built vehicles. Such vehicles will be deemed to be having certificate of fitness for a period of two years from the date of registration.
 - * Fitness certificate of transport vehicles will be renewed for a period of two years for vehicles up to eight years old and for one year for vehicles older than eight years.
- All goods carriage vehicles will be required to carry goods in a closed body of the vehicle or container.
 - * If it is necessary to carry goods in open bodies, goods will be covered by using appropriate cover like tarpaulin or any other suitable material.
 - * However, goods of indivisible nature, not capable of being carried in a closed body or being covered, may be carried without cover.

3. Cities Investment to Innovate, Integrate and Sustain (CITIIS) Challenge

- It is a challenge to identify top projects in 15 of the 100 selected smart cities, which will then receive an additional funding of approximately ₹80 crore each.
- The new funding will be financed by a €100 million loan from the French government's international development agency L'Agence Française de Développement (AFD).
- The cities would be encouraged to pitch projects in four particular sectors: sustainable mobility, public open spaces, urban governance & ICT, and social innovation in low-income settlements.
- It is in line with the NITI Aayog guideline
- The duration of the program will be three years (FY2018-19 to FY2020- 21).
- The repayment of the principle and interest would be equally shared by the Central Government and State Government on 50:50 basis.
- The National Institute of Urban Affairs would conduct the Challenge process for selection of projects under the Indo-French partnership

4. Champion Services Sectors

- It is proposal of the Department of Commerce to give focused attention to 12 identified Champion Services Sectors for promoting their development, and realizing their potential.
- It includes Information Technology & Information Technology enabled Services (IT & ITeS), Tourism and Hospitality Services, Medical Value Travel, Transport and Logistics Services, Accounting and Finance Services, Audio Visual Services, Legal Services, Communication Services, Construction and Related Engineering Services, Environmental Services, Financial Services and Education Services.
- This initiative is expected to enhance the competitiveness of India's service sectors thereby creating more jobs in India, contributing to a higher GDP and export of services to global markets.

5. Coal Mine Surveillance & Management System (CMSMS)

- The basic objective of CMSMS is reporting, monitoring and taking suitable action on unauthorised coal mining activities.
- The CMSMS is a web-based GIS application through which location of sites for unauthorised mining can be detected.

- The basic platform used in the system is of Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology's (MeITY) map which provides village level information.
- The leasehold boundary of all the coal mines are displayed on this map. The system will use satellite data to detect changes by which unauthorised mining activity extending beyond the allotted lease area can be detected and suitable action can be taken on it. It is the working of the concept of 'cooperative federalism' in action.
- The complaint originating from coal mines allotted to Coal India will go to Coal India Offices and those originating from coal blocks not allotted to Coal India will go straight to the State Government Officers and for each complaint the alert will also go to the District Magistrate and SP of the district

6. Companies Act, 2013

Why in news?

- The Centre has announced the constitution of a committee to recheck several provisions of the Companies Act, 2013 that impose stiff penalties and, in few cases, prison terms as well, for directors and key management personnel.
- The 2013 law entailed the first massive remodel of India's legal regime to govern businesses that had been in place since 1956 and was borne of a long-drawn consultative process.

Ministry of corporate affairs (MCA) has constituted a 10-Member Committee to review the offences under the Companies Act, 2013

- To review the penal provisions in the Companies Act, 2013 it has been setup to examine 'de-criminalization' of certain offences.
- The MCA seeks to review offences under the Companies Act, 2013 as some of the offences may be required to be decriminalized and handled in an in-house mechanism, where a penalty could be levied in cases of default.
- It can also allow the trial courts to pay more attention on offences of serious nature.

Details

- The panel, which includes top banker Uday Kotak, has been given 30 days to work out whether some of the violations that can attract imprisonment (such as a clerical failure by directors to make adequate disclosures about their interests) may instead be punished with monetary fines.
- It will also examine if offences punishable with a fine or imprisonment can be re-categorized as 'acts' that attract civil liabilities.
- The committee has also been told to suggest the broad contours for an adjudicatory mechanism that issues penalties to be levied for minor violations, perhaps in an automated manner, with minimal discretion available to officials.

Challenges

- Some of the provisions in the law are so tough, even a spelling mistake or typographical error could lead to be construed as a fraud and lead to harsh strictures.
- The government hopes such changes in the regulatory regime should allow trial courts to devote attention to serious offences rather than get overloaded with cases as zealous officials pursue prosecutions for even minor violations.

Significance

- The decision to build in harsh penalties and prison terms for corporate wrongdoing in the 2013 law was, no doubt, influenced by the high-pitched anti-corruption discourse that prevailed in the country at that moment in time.
- Aside from several cases of crony capitalism that had come to light during the second UPA government, massive corporate frauds reported at once-revered firms such as the former Satyam Computer Services had spooked investors and other stakeholders about the credibility of corporate India's books and governance standards.
- The overall review of the Companies Act was at the top of industry's wish list as a means to revive the economy. Industry captains had red-flagged the effect of such provisions on the ease of doing business, and investor sentiment in general.
- It is also required to be seen as to whether any non-compoundable offences, namely offence punishable with imprisonment only, or punishable with imprisonment and also with fine under the Companies Act, 2013 may be made compoundable.

The terms of reference of the Committee are as follows:

- To analyses the nature of all 'acts' categorized as compoundable offences viz. offences punishable with fine only or punishable with fine or imprisonment or both under the CA-13 and recommend if any of such 'acts' may be re-categorized as 'acts' which attract civil liabilities wherein the company and its 'officers in default' are liable for penalty;
- To review the provisions ally to non-compoundable offences and recommend whether any such provisions need to be re-categorized as compoundable offence.
- To investigate the existing mechanism of levy of penalty under the CA-13 and suggest any improvements thereon;
- To lay down the broad contours of an in-house adjudicatory mechanism where penalty may be levied in a MCA21 system driven manner so that discretion is minimized.
- To take required steps in formulation of draft changes in the law and other matter which may be relevant.

Conclusion

- A trust deficit between industry and government owing to go astray incidents of corporate misconduct should not inhibit normal business operations.

- The government is ultimately moving purposefully on this, a rethink perhaps triggered by the fact that private sector investment is so far to pick up steam and capital still seeks foreign shores to avoid regulatory risks.

7. Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR)

- It is in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry
- DGTR is the apex National Authority for administering all trade remedial measures including anti-dumping, countervailing duties and safeguard measures.
- It will provide trade Defence support to our domestic industry and exporters in dealing with increasing instances of trade remedy investigations instituted against them by other countries.
- The DGTR will bring Directorate General of Anti-dumping and Allied duties (DGAD), Directorate General of Safeguards (DGS) and Safeguards (QR) functions of DGFT into its fold by merging them into one single national entity.
 - * Directorate General of Anti-dumping and Allied Duties (DGAD) deals with anti-dumping and CVD cases
 - * Directorate General of Safeguards (DGS) deals with safeguard measures
 - * Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) deals with quantitative restriction (QR) safeguards.
- The DGTR will also bring in substantial reduction of the time taken to provide relief to the domestic industry.

8. E-Commerce Task Force

- The government had decided to set up a task force to finalize the contours of a policy on the fast-growing e-commerce sector
- The objective was to come out with a framework for an e-commerce policy
- The task-force met to consider suggestions submitted by various government-industry sub-groups that were set up to provide inputs to help shape the country's e-commerce policy
- It deliberated upon various suggestions on issues ranging from cross-border data flows, taxation, trade facilitation and logistics, consumer confidence and intellectual property rights

9. Ease of Doing Business- rankings of States in India

- Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, released the final rankings of States in Ease of Doing Business
- The top rankers are Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Haryana. Jharkhand and Gujarat stood fourth and fifth respectively.

- The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in partnership with the World Bank Group, released the Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP) 2017 for implementation by States/ UTs.

- * The BRAP includes 372 recommendations for reforms on regulatory processes, policies, practices and procedures spread across 12 reform areas.

Aim

- The aim of this exercise is to improve delivery of various Central Government regulatory functions and services in an efficient, effective and transparent manner.

Reforms

- States and UTs have conducted reforms to ease their regulations and systems in areas such as labour, environmental clearances, single window system, construction permits, contract enforcement, registering property and inspections.
- States and UTs have also enacted Public Service Delivery Guarantee Act to enforce the timelines on registrations and approvals.
- The current assessment under the BRAP 2017 is based on a combined score consisting of
 - * Reform evidence score that is based on evidences uploaded by the States and UTs
 - * Feedback score that is based on the feedback garnered from the actual users of the services provided to the businesses.

10. EV30@30 Campaign

- It aims for 30% sales share of Electric Vehicle's by 2030
- It is aiming to achieve 100% EV sales in passenger light duty vehicles and buses by 2030.
- The campaign will support the market for electric passenger cars, light commercial vans, buses and trucks (including battery-electric, plug-in hybrid, and fuel cell vehicle types). It will also work towards the deployment of charging infrastructure to supply sufficient power to the vehicles deployed.

11. FDI Confidence Index

- The Foreign Direct Investment Confidence (FDI) Index prepared by A.T. Kearney is an annual survey which tracks the impact of likely political, economic, and regulatory changes on the foreign direct investment intentions and preferences of CEOs, CFOs, and other top executives of Global 1000 companies.
- The report includes detailed commentary on the markets and the impact a variety of global trade issues have on their FDI attractiveness, as well as a ranking of the top 25 countries

India's Ranking

- India in 2018 has fallen out of the top 10 destinations for FDI in terms of its attractiveness
- India ranks 11 in the 2018 AT Kearney FDI Confidence Index, down from 8 in 2017 and 9 in 2016.
- India fell out of the top 10 for the first time since 2015.

What was the issue?

- It could be due to teething troubles in the implementation of the goods and services tax and the government's demonetization decision in 2016.

Reforms Initiated

- Notable reforms include the elimination of the Foreign Investment Promotion Board, a government agency responsible for reviewing all potential foreign investment, and the liberalization of foreign investment thresholds for the retail, aviation, and biomedical industries

The sheer size of the Chinese and Indian markets, however, will continue to be a draw for investors, and they remain the highest-ranking emerging markets on the index

12. Global Mobility Summit

Context

- NITI Aayog, in collaboration with various ministries and industry partners, is organizing 'MOVE: Global Mobility Summit' in New Delhi
- This Summit will help drive Government's goals for vehicle electrification, renewable energy integration and job growth and also speed up India's transition to a clean energy economy.

Details

- It will be the first Global Mobility Summit of its kind, with over 1,200 expected participants from across the world including Government leadership, Industry leaders, Research Organizations, Academia, Think Tanks and Civil Society Organizations.
- MOVE Summit aims to bring together and engage with key stakeholders within the rapidly transforming global mobility landscape and to evolve a public interest framework for a shared, connected, zero emission and inclusive mobility agenda for the future
- MOVEMENTUM; the Expo will feature exciting future technologies and cutting edge innovations which will shape the mobility paradigm, showcasing India's push towards transformative mobility solutions.]

Significance

- It is the key driver for generating employment, accelerating economic growth & providing innovative solutions to improve efficiency and efficacy of transport sector.

13. GST day

- 1st July 2018 was celebrated as 'GST day', to commemorate the first year of the unprecedented reform of Indian taxation

- GST is a fitting tribute to spirit of cooperative federalism taken by consensus GST - 'ONE NATION, ONE TAX, ONE MARKET'
- The introduction of GST is truly a game changer for Indian economy as it has replaced multi-layered, complex indirect tax structure with a simple, transparent and technology-driven tax regime. It will integrate India into a single, common market by breaking barriers to inter-State trade and commerce. By eliminating cascading of taxes and reducing transaction costs, it will enhance ease of doing business in the country and provide an impetus to 'Make in India' campaign

14. IFFCO iMandi

- IFFCO is large-scale fertilizer cooperative federation in India, which is registered as Multistate Cooperative Society. It is one of India's biggest cooperative society that is wholly owned by Indian Cooperatives.
- It has partnered with Singapore-based technology firm iMandi to start an e-commerce platform for farmers which would cater to 5.5 crore farmers associated with the cooperative.
- It is a 'one stop shop' for agri inputs and produce
- Apart from buy-sell, the app has features like communication (chat and calling), entertainment and information/advisory content to keep the farmers engaged.

15. Jute Sector

- The ban of plastic and single use plastic holds potential for the jute sector.
- But the sector is not in a position to take advantage due to its problems

Problems faced by Jute Sector

- There is lack of availability of quality raw jute
- Shrinking acreage
 - * West Bengal is India's single largest raw jute cultivator producing almost 75 % of the crop in Nadia, Dinajpur, Murshidabad and North 24 Parganas districts.
 - * But acreage had stagnated amid low productivity and falling prices of the cash crop.
- Failure of most jute mills to modernize
- Dependence on government-support like packaging reservations. Only a section of the industry has diversified into non-packaging segments.
- Primitive, labor-intensive cultivation methods and retting (drenching raw jute in water to extract the fibre) — a crucial determinant in raw jute quality — creates problems

Govt Step to boost the sector

- The I-CARE programme unveiled by the National Jute Board and the Jute Corporation of India seeks to address this issue by introducing a pilot project on retting technologies aimed at increasing farmers' returns.

I-CARE (Improved Cultivation and Advanced Retting Exercise)

- It is a programme to improve the quality of raw jute and farmers' yield in India as part of jute product diversification drive.
- It will popularize/introduce some of the better agronomic practices
- The improved agronomic practices include: line sowing of jute using seed drill to increase yield by 10-15%; weed management in jute by wheel hoeing/nail weeder instead of hand weeding for reducing the cost of weeding; and distribution of quality certified seeds at 50% subsidy.
- Also, under the project, regular SMSes are sent in regional languages on improved practices in jute cultivation, to registered farmers.

16. India now sixth-largest economy, squeezing past France

Context

- India has overtaken France to become the world's sixth-biggest economy, according to World Bank figures for 2017.
- India's Gross Domestic Product was \$2.597 trillion (Rs 178 lakh crore) at the end of last year against \$2.582 trillion (Rs 177 lakh crore) for France.

Details

- The US tops the list followed by China, Japan, Germany and Britain.
- The new calculations were arrived on the basis of Indian economy's performance in 2017.
- India's per capita GDP is still a fraction of that of France. This is due to the difference between the populations of the two countries – India has 134 crore inhabitants, France just 6.7 crore.

Suggestions by IMF

- International Monetary Fund has projected India to grow at 7.4% this year and 7.8% in 2019, compared to a global growth forecast of 3.9% for both years.
- It has advised the government to simplify and streamline the Goods and Service Tax in order to sustain its high growth rate.
- The other steps suggested by the International Monetary Fund include cleaning up the banking sector and introducing reforms in key markets such as labour and land.

17. 'Khan Prahar' App

- Khan Prahar is a tool for reporting any activity taking place related to illegal coal mining like rat hole mining, pilferage etc. One can upload geo-tagged photographs of the incident along with textual information directly to the system. Hence, both satellite data and human information will be used to capture information on the unauthorized mining activities.
- Once reported, the information will be automatically directed to the nodal officers to take suitable action on those activities.
- The complainant can also track his complaint through the system. The identity of the complainant shall not be revealed.
- This app can easily be downloaded in Android and IOS.

18. Minimum Support Price for paddy hiked

- MSP is a price at which the government buys crops from farmers, irrespective of its price.
- It acts as a floor price mainly during production shortages, to protect agriculture producers from sharp falls in farm prices.

Details

- The Union Cabinet has approved a hike in minimum support prices (MSPs) for kharif crops so that they are 50% higher than the cost of production, not including land costs.
- MSPs were announced for 14 commodities, with major hikes being seen in cereals such as bajra, jowar and ragi, as well as cotton.

The MSP for eligible crops is declared by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP). The CACP has three different definitions of production costs –

- A2 (actual paid out cost): There are the costs the farmer actually pays out of his/her pocket for buying various inputs ranging from seeds to fertilizers to pesticides to hired labour to hired machinery or even leased-in land, both in cash and in kind which are all put under the cost A2 concept.
 - A2+FL (actual paid out cost plus imputed value of Family Labour): in agriculture, farmers also use a lot of family labour and if their cost is imputed and added to cost A2, that concept is called cost A2+FL.
 - C2: It includes not only imputed costs of family labour but also the imputed rent of owned land and imputed interest on owned capital.
- * C2 costs are more comprehensive, accounting for the rentals and interest forgone on owned land and fixed capital assets

Advantages

- The hike would boost farmers' income and purchasing capacity, and have a positive impact on the wider economy

Criticism

- It will be useful for paddy farmers in states with a strong procurement machinery, but for states lacking this mechanism it is of no use
- Farmers wanted Govt to implement the recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission, but the Govt has insisted on A2+FL
 - If MSP had been announced on C2 basis, then paddy price would have risen by at least Rs 700 per quintal, but the government has only increased it by Rs 200 per quintal.
- The MSP hike will push up inflation, add to the fiscal deficit and prompt RBI to raise interest rates more steeply than expected

Way forward

- Cost plus Pricing of MSPs, be it cost A2+FL or C2, is fraught with dangers as it totally ignores the demand side.
- The terms of reference of CACP rightly require it to consider demand-supply, cost of production, price trends in domestic and international markets, terms of trade, inter-crop price parity, etc before recommending the MSP.

19. Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCDNER)

- The scheme aims at promotion and production of certified organic commodities focusing on export oriented crops – oranges of Tamenglong, lemons of Kachai (Ukhrul), pineapple, king chilli, ginger, turmeric as horti crops and chakhao (black aromatic rice) as agri crop.
- Support is provided for 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.

20. NAMASYA

- NALCO Micro & Small enterprise Yogayog Application
- It is designed by NALCO a Navratna CPSE under Ministry of Mines
- This mobile App is to provide a platform and support to the Micro & Small Scale industries to carry out their businesses.
- It provides a platform for MSE vendors to understand NALCO's efforts towards development of MSE by putting in place MSE related specific programmes and providing special benefits to this sector. Information like Reserved Items, Annual procurement plan, information on other MSE vendors etc. are provided on this easy to use App.

21. Negotiable Instruments (Amendment) Bill, 2017

- Negotiable Instruments are written contracts whose benefit could be passed on from its original holder to a new holder. In other words, negotiable instruments are documents which promise payment to the assignee (the person whom it is assigned to/given to) or a specified person. These instruments are transferable signed documents which promise to pay the bearer/holder the sum of money when demanded or at any time in the future.
- Promissory notes, bills of exchange, and cheques fall under the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881

Bill Details

- This Bill allows a court hearing a cheque bounce case to direct the drawer — the person who wrote the cheque — to pay interim compensation to the person who filed the complaint.
- The interim compensation will be up to 20% of the amount of the cheque.

Significance

- The bill aims to counter the delaying tactics employed by people who want to avoid paying cheques issued by them
- It will reduce the issue of undue delay in final resolution of cheque dishonour cases

22. Purvanchal Expressway

- It is a 340-km-long expressway stretching from the Lucknow to Ghazipur on the eastern fringes bordering Bihar.
- The six-lane road will pass through Barabanki, Faizabad, Sultanpur, Ambedkarnagar, Azamgarh, Mau and Ghazipur.
- The Purvanchal Expressway will also feature an airstrip for emergency landing of fighter planes — near Sultanpur district.
- The Expressway would reduce travel time from Purvanchal to Delhi via the Lucknow-Agra Expressway and the Yamuna Expressway.

Significance

- It is being developed in order to transform the most remote and under-developed eastern region of the state
- The Purvanchal Expressway will also provide other benefits such as fuel saving, time saving and control in pollution level, along with reduction in accidents
- The areas near the expressway will come up with new educational institutes, industrial training institutes, medical institutes, new townships and other various Commercial buildings, which will generate employment.
- The Purvanchal Expressway after getting connected with the existing Agra-Lucknow Expressway shall become a vast industrial corridor. This will link Eastern boundary to Western boundary of Uttar Pradesh, which will result into overall development of the state.

Projects in Varanasi

- Varanasi City Gas Distribution Project
- Varanasi-Ballia EMU train
- International Convention Centre,
- Panch Koshi Parikrama Marg,
- Several projects under the Smart Cities Mission and Namami Gange.

Bansagar Canal Project

- This project would provide a boost to irrigation in the region, and will be beneficial for the farmers of Mirzapur and Allahabad districts of UP.

23. Shram Suvidha Portal (SSP)

- The Unified SSP is developed to facilitate reporting of Inspections, and submission of Returns.
- SSP has been envisaged as a single point of contact between employer, employee and enforcement agencies bringing in transparency in their day-to-day interactions.
- Unique Labour Identification Number (LIN) will be allotted to Units to facilitate online registration.
- Filing of self-certified and simplified Single Online Return by the industry. Now Units will only file a single consolidated Return online instead of filing 16 separate Returns.
- Mandatory uploading of inspection Reports within 72 hours by the Labour inspectors.
- Timely redressal of grievances will be ensured with the help of the portal.
- This will bring in the necessary ease in compliance of provisions related to labour and will be a step forward in promoting the ease of doing business.

24. Solar import duty to drive costs- Boon or Bane**Context**

- The Directorate General of Trade Remedies after hearing an application from the Indian Solar Manufacturers Association recommended a safeguard duty on solar component imports from China and Malaysia of 25% for the first year, 20% for the first half of the second year, and 15% for the last six months of the second year.

Boon

- Currently, 85-90% of solar modules used in India are imported from China and Malaysia. This provides the opportunity for the domestic module industry to flourish.
- the imposition of safeguard duty would be a positive development as it would lead to an improvement in their competitiveness against the cheaper imports
- It can reduce the trade deficit that is currently in favor of China

Bane

- It could raise capital costs for solar projects based on imported modules by 15-20%
- Imports were helping India accelerate its renewable energy adoption programme.
- This could give rise to aggressive pricing practices of other Indian producers
- It could end up slowing the pace of capacity addition in solar capacity

Challenges

- The two-year time period for the proposed duty would be too short to actually benefit the domestic manufacturers in terms of capacity addition

25. Startup India Yatra

- To promote job creation in tier 2 and tier 3 towns and cities, Startup India organizes the Startup India Yatra in one state every month
- The Yatra conducts boot camps where students are taught lessons in business planning followed by a pitch fest where ideas are invited.
- Shortlisted business ideas get incubated in State run incubators.

26. Sunil Mehta Committee

- It was set up to look into the faster resolution of stressed assets

Important Recommendations

- The report comprises a bank-led resolution process and a five-pronged strategy to resolve stressed assets called Project Sashakt
 - * The idea behind Project Sashakt is to ensure the operational turnaround of the banks and stressed companies so that the asset value is retained.
 - * Sashakt aims to strengthen the credit capacity, credit culture and credit portfolio of public sector banks.
- The government will not interfere in the resolution process; it would entirely be led by banks
- Suggestions were also made to prevent job losses from foreclosures and create additional jobs by reviving businesses.

Five-pronged resolution

- SME Resolution Approach,
- Bank-Led Resolution Approach,
- AMC/AIF Led Resolution Approach,
- NCLT/IBC Approach,
- Asset-Trading Platform

Slabs and Addressal

- For loans up to Rs. 50 crore, the resolution of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) sector, the committee suggested the setting up of a steering committee by banks for formulating and validating the schemes, with a provision for additional funds.
 - * The committee recommended that banks should create a focused vertical for management of stressed assets for priority resolution of SMEs
 - * Stating that the resolution should be complete within 90 days, the committee suggested that the resolution of these assets be under a single bank's control, with the bank having the liberty to customize it.
 - * Resolution should be non-discretionary, non-discriminatory and completed within a time-bound manner
- For loans between 50 crore and 500 crore, the committee called for a Bank Led Resolution Approach (BLRA), with the resolution being achieved in 180 days.
 - * The resolution plan has to be approved by lenders holding at least 66 per cent of the debt.
 - * The Independent Steering Committee appointed by the Indian Banks Association (IBA) has to validate the process within 30 days.
 - * Here financial institutions will enter into an inter-creditor agreement to authorize the lead bank to implement a resolution plan in 180 days.
 - * The lead bank would then prepare a resolution plan including empanelling turnaround specialists, and other industry experts for an operational turnaround of the asset.
 - * In this category, the key challenge would be to arrive at a consensus, as the exposure is held by multiple banks/lenders.
- For loans above 500 crore, the committee recommended the setting up of an Independent Asset Management Company (AMC) which would act as a 'market maker' and ensure healthy competition, fair prices and cash recovery.
 - * The committee also said an alternative investment fund (AIF) would raise funds from institutional investors. Banks would be given an option to invest in this fund if they wish. AIFs can also bid for assets in NCLT
 - * In case the lead bank is unable to complete the resolution process within 180 days, the asset would go to the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).

Significance

- It will ensure robust governance and credit architecture to prevent a build-up of non-performing loans in the future

Inter-Creditor Agreement signed by banks

Context

- Indian banks trying to sell their troubled assets signed an inter-creditor agreement to push for the speedy resolution of non-performing loans on their balance sheets.

Why is this agreement important?

- The disagreement between joint lenders was the biggest problem in resolving stressed assets. To overcome this issue inter-creditor agreement was introduced.
- So, the government now hopes that the holdout problem, where the objections of a few lenders prevent a settlement between the majority lenders, will be solved through the inter-creditor agreement.

Rules

The inter-creditor agreement is aimed at the resolution of loan accounts with a size of ₹50 crore and above that are under the control of a group of lenders.

- As per the terms of the agreement, if 66% of the lenders agree to a resolution plan it would be binding on all lenders.
- A dissenting creditor
 - * Could sell its loan at a discount of 15% of the liquidation value to other lenders
 - * Buy the entire loan at 125% of the resolution plan agreed to by other lenders.
 - * Another option with a dissenting creditor is to sell their loans to any person at a price mutually arrived between dissenting lender and the buyer.
 - * However, a dissenting creditor cannot sell it to an asset reconstruction company.
- The agreement also has a standstill clause wherein all lenders are barred from enforcing any legal action against the borrower for recovery of their dues. During the standstill period, lenders are also barred from transferring or assigning their loan to any other person except a bank or finance company.

Significance

- This move will process and would provide the resolution to stressed assets issue much earlier than the earlier model which relied solely on the joint lenders' forum to arrive at a consensus among creditors
- This act would also be logical for joint lenders who want to avoid a deadlock to agree on the ground rules of debt resolution prior to lending to any borrower.

Issue Area

- The obligation on the lead lender to come up with a time-bound resolution plan can have unintended consequences.

- * Banks may be compelled to engage in a quick-fire sale of stressed assets due to arbitrary deadlines on the resolution process.
- * This will work against the interests of lenders looking to get the best price for their stressed assets.
- It would be in the interest of the majority of creditors to take the time to extract the most out of their assets.
- The biggest obstacle to bad loan resolution is the absence of buyers who can purchase stressed assets from banks
- Bank's unwillingness to sell their loans at a deep discount to their face value

Conclusion

- The government can solve this problem by getting all its apparatus right, if not the bad loan problem is likely to remain unresolved for some time to come.

27. World Customs Organization (WCO)

- It is an intergovernmental organization headquartered in Brussels, Belgium
- It was established in 1952 as the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC) is an independent intergovernmental body whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.
- As the global center of Customs expertise, the WCO is the only international organization with competence in Customs matters and can rightly call itself the voice of the international Customs community.

Context

- India has become the Vice-Chair (Regional Head) of the Asia Pacific Region of World Customs Organization (WCO) for a period of two years, from July, 2018 to June, 2020.

Structure

- The WCO has divided its Membership into six Regions. Each of the six Regions is represented by a regionally elected Vice-Chairperson to the WCO Council

28. World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

treaties

Context

- Cabinet approves accession to WIPO Copyright Treaty, 1996 and WIPO Performance and Phonograms Treaty, 1996. The treaties extend coverage of copyright to the internet and digital environment

Benefits

- To enable creative right-holders enjoy the fruit of their labour, through international copyright system that can be used to secure a return on the investment made in producing and distributing creative works;

- To facilitate international protection of domestic rights holder by providing them level-playing field in other countries as India already extends protection to foreign works through the International Copyright Order and these treaties will enable Indian right holders to get reciprocal protection abroad;
- To instill confidence and distribute creative works in digital environment with return on investment; and
- To spur business growth and contribute to the development of a vibrant creative economy and cultural landscape.

WIPO Copyright Treaty

- It came into force in 2002 and has been adopted by 96 contracting parties till date and is a special agreement under Berne Convention (for protection of literary and artistic works).
- It has provisions to extend the protection of copyrights contained therein to the digital environment.
- Further it recognizes the rights specific to digital environment, of making work available, to address "on-demand" and other interactive modes of access.

WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty

- It came into force on May 20, 2002 and has 96 contracting parties as its members.
- WPPT deals with rights of two kinds of beneficiaries, particularly in digital environment –
 - * Performers (actors, singers, musicians etc.)
 - * Producers of Phonograms (Sound recordings).
- The treaty empowers right owners in their negotiations with new digital platforms and distributors. It recognizes moral rights of the performers for the first time & provides exclusive economic rights to them.

Both the treaties provide framework for creators and right owners to use technical tools to protect their works and safeguard information about their use i.e. Protection of Technological Protection Measures (TPMs) and Rights Management Information (RMI).

29. World's largest mobile manufacturing plant in Noida

Context

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of the Republic of Korea Moon Jae-in inaugurated Samsung's mobile manufacturing plant, touted as the biggest in the world, in Noida.

Details

- The South Korean electronics major plans to make India an export hub, with 50% of its overall production coming in the next three years from the present 10%.
- 30% of the phones made at the Noida plant would be exported.

Significance

- Commitment of better ties with friendly nations such as South Korea as part of Make in India

30. Alternative cereals can save water

Context

- According to an analysis by researchers from the U.S.-based Earth Institute, Columbia University and Indian School of Business, a switch from growing rice and wheat to 'alternative cereals,' such as maize, sorghum, and millet, it could reduce the demand for irrigation water by 33% and improve nutritional availability to consumers (supply of protein, iron, and zinc).

Crop Water Requirement (CWR)

- It is the product of the water required by a crop and the harvested area — to calculate water consumption in every district in this period.
- It was considered because actual water consumption data was not available
- Blue Water Demand (refers to water extracted from irrigation)

Issue Area

- Rice is the least water-efficient cereal when it came to producing nutrients, and was the main driver in increasing irrigation stresses.
 - * Replacing rice with maize, finger millet, pearl millet, or sorghum could save irrigation and improving production of nutrients such as iron by 27% and zinc by 13%
- This week India announced a 50% hike, or ₹ 200 per quintal, in the minimum support price for paddy — the key kharif crop — along with several other crops.
 - * Though hikes were also announced for alternative cereals, some of which were included in the analysis, the government doesn't procure these crops like it does rice and wheat.
 - * It mainly uses these procured cereals to meet obligations under the Food Security Act.

Stats

- It takes 2,173 litres of water to produce a kg of husked rice which is a global average
- For India, the figure is 2,688 litres
- In 2014-15, India exported 37.2 lakh tonnes of basmati. To export this rice, the country used around 10 trillion litres of water. To put it another way, India virtually exported 10 trillion litres of water.
- At least one-fifth of this would have been surface/groundwater.

EMBEDDED WATER CONTENT BY WEIGHT AND NUTRITIONAL VALUE

Crop	Production water footprint (cubic metre/tonne)				Nutrition water footprint		
	Green	Blue	Grey	Total	litre/kcal	litre/gram of protein	litre/gram of fat
Sugar crops	130	52	15	197	0.69	0	0
Vegetables	194	43	85	322	1.34	26	154
Starchy roots	327	16	43	387	0.47	31	226
Fruits	726	147	89	962	2.09	180	348
Cereals	1,232	228	184	1,644	0.51	21	112
Oil crops	2,023	220	121	2,364	0.81	16	11
Pulses	3,180	141	734	4,055	1.19	19	180
Nuts	7,016	1,367	680	9,063	3.63	139	47
Milk	863	86	72	1,020	1.82	31	33
Eggs	2,592	244	429	3,265	2.29	29	33
Chicken meat	3,545	313	467	4,325	3	34	43
Butter	4,695	465	393	5,553	0.72	0	6.4
Pig meat	4,907	459	622	5,988	2.15	57	23
Sheep/goat meat	8,253	457	53	8,763	4.25	63	54
Beef	14,414	550	451	15,415	10.19	112	153

Green: rainwater; Blue: surface and ground water; Grey: Water required to carry off pollutants

Source: Meesha M. Mekonnen and Arjen Y. Hoekstra (2012). A global assessment of water footprint of farm animal products

31. Government forms panel to upgrade norms for state, district level economic data collection

Context

- The government has set up a 13-member committee to upgrade the norms for computation of economic data at states and districts level in the backdrop of plans to revise the base year for National Accounts or GDP calculation

Details

- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) will change the base year to 2017-18 for the calculation of GDP and IIP numbers from the current 2011-12 with an aim to capture changes in the economy.
- The panel has been asked to "review the concepts, definitions, classifications, data conventions, data sources and data requirements for preparation of State Domestic Product (SDP) and District Domestic Product (DDP) and to lay down revised guidelines".
- It will also suggest measures for improving SDP and DDP in the country taking into consideration availability of data and requirements of the Centre and states/union territories.

Base Year

- The Central Statistics Office (CSO), MOSOPI, revises the base year of the macroeconomic indicators, as a regular exercise, to capture structural changes in the economy and improve the quality and representativeness of the indices.
- The CSO had last updated base year for GDP calculation to 2011-12 from January 2015, replacing the old series base year of 2004-05.

32. RBI flags States fiscal stress

Context

- In a report 'State Finances: A Study of Budgets of 2017-18 and 2018-19', the central bank noted that States' consolidated gross fiscal deficit (GFD) overshot the budget estimates in 2017-18 due to shortfalls in own tax revenues and higher revenue expenditure.

Details

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has pointed to the fiscal stress that States are facing due to several factors including farm loan waivers and said higher borrowing by them could crowd out private investment.
- States budgeted a gross fiscal deficit to gross domestic product (GDP-GDP) ratio of 2.7% in 2017-18, revised estimates reveal GDP-GDP ratio of 3.1%
 - * The deterioration was located in the revenue balance.
 - * In contrast, the capital account has helped to contain the GDF
- Apart from having a dampening impact on rural credit institutions, such loan waivers, the report pointed out, impact credit discipline, vitiate credit culture and dis-incentivize borrowers to repay loans, thus engendering moral hazard.

33. Trade War: China sees towards India for Pharmacy**Context**

- China is preparing to give swift regulatory approvals to India-manufactured drugs as Beijing looks for new commercial partners ahead of what could be a protracted trade war with the United States.

Areas of trade

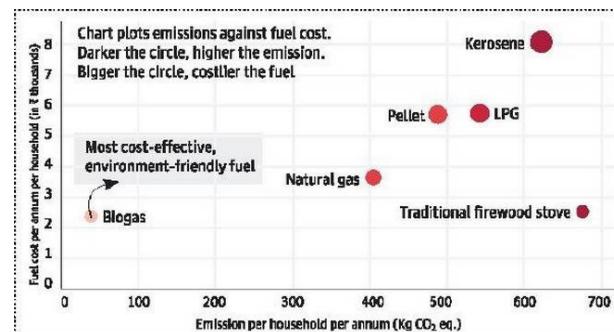
- Indian firms are looking to fill gaps in Chinese demand for generic drugs, software, sugar and some varieties of rice
- In May, China exempted import tariffs on 28 drugs, including all cancer drugs, a move that would help India reduce its trade imbalance with China

Stats

- India dominates the world's generic drugs market, exporting \$17.3 billion of drugs in the 2017/18 (April-March) year, including to the U.S. and the EU.
- But only 1% of that went to China, the world's second-largest market for pharmaceuticals

34. Sustainability and energy security: A clean cooking strategy**Context**

- In its drive towards sustainability and energy security, India must ensure an awareness of better cooking fuel choices.
- Energy use, a key indicator of living standards across the world, is also instrumental in raising it. The choice of cooking fuel in households (especially rural) has a huge impact on living conditions, especially for women and children.

**Need for Adaptation**

- Among the various options available for cooking fuel
 - * Firewood and pellet are the most polluting.
 - * LPG and kerosene are moderately cleaner.
 - * Biogas and natural gas are cleaner fuels for combustion.

Importance for India

- On an average in India, household spending on cooking fuel accounts for around 5-6% of its total expenditure. Factors such as socio-economic (availability and easy access, also determined by household income and price of fuel, education and awareness), culture or lifestyle, and, to a large extent, government policies also influence cooking fuel choice.
- Affordable, reliable and clean energy for cooking is essential not only for reducing health and environmental impacts but also helping women to do more productive work and developing the rural economy.

Comparing the options for clean energy

- Among the various fuel options available (firewood, pellet, biogas, kerosene, liquefied petroleum gas or LPG, piped natural gas or PNG) biogas accounts for the lowest effective greenhouse gas emission.
- PNG and then LPG are next. An assessment of annual life cycle emissions of various fuels per household per annum is based on the estimation of life cycle emissions, feedstock processing, fuel processing, distribution and cook-stove use.
- Further, a comparison of the levelised cost of various fuels (non-taxed and not subsidized), annual life cycle emission per household (kg/CO₂ equivalent) and extent of in-house air pollution for various cooking fuels suggests that biogas and PNG are the best cooking energy options.
- Cooking fuels emit substantial amounts of toxic pollutants (respirable particles, carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen and sulphur, benzene, formaldehyde and polyromantic compounds) which contribute to indoor air pollution.
- In households with limited ventilation — common in rural household and semi-urban areas — these pollutants cold lead to severe health problems.

National level programmes

- National level programmers to ensure that most switch to clean cooking fuels have been initiated since the 1980s, the National Project on Biogas Development (NPBD) being an example.
- But the programme has been hampered by mala fide practices, poor construction material, a lack of maintenance, misrepresentation of achievements and a lack of accountability and follow-up services.
- In order to ensure access to clean energy —A key focus area for poverty alleviation
 - * The government launched a flagship programme, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana in May 2016. with a cumulative target of providing LPG connections to more than eight crore families.
 - * Further, the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) has been holding auctions across cities for distribution of gas for cooking through PNG.
- However, since conventionally, governments have been subsidising LPG and as such a consumption-based subsidy is not available for biogas and PNG, it has led to a preference for LPG over other cleaner, safer, more cost effective and locally available options (biogas in rural areas).
- Further, LPG import along with large subsidies is a drain on government resources which hamper the focus on other social development programmes.

What can Work?

- To promote biogas in rural and semi-urban areas, adopting the service-based enterprise model with suitable resource availability offers a sustainable approach. It will also help self-drive the programme.
- The model is being successfully implemented in Hoshiarpur, Punjab using a 100 cubic meter biogas plant. The plant supplies clean and piped cooking biogas to 44 households and a school every day.
- Such models can also generation employment significantly at the grass-root level an important additional benefit of running a biogas programme.
- However, there is a need to provide financial support and facilitate capacity building in order to promote enterprise-based models for community-level plants.
- The cost-competitiveness of natural gas (including imported re-gasified LNG) calls for scaling its penetration in urban and semi-urban/rural areas.
- PNG needs to be promoted in urban areas beginning with the densely populated Tier-I and Tier-II/III cities, making LPG just one of the options to choose from rather than it having an edge over others.

- For this, the cost of LPG must be set as the upper-cost ceiling and the PNGRB could focus only on the setting up of safety regulations, with distribution rights being given to distributors.

The way forward

- To further enable a consumer to freely make cooking fuel choices, consumption-based subsidies need to be replaced with a functional subsidy that is provided on the basis of household income levels and local variables.
- Possibility of leakages must also be eliminated by ensuring that subsidies of any kind are provided only through direct benefit transfer. Such an approach will provide a neutral thrust and promotion to different types of cooking fuels on the basis of their original virtues.
- As India takes a long-term view on sustainability and energy security, it is important to create an environment where its citizens are aware of the options and make their energy choices based on the nature of the fuel and not because of socio-economic constraints.

35. Moody's survey shows oil prices as the main risk to India's economy

- Oil prices, pace of banks' balance sheet clean-up and investment remain the key credit risks in India, according to an investor survey by Moody's Investors Service.
- India would not meet the central government's fiscal deficit target of 3.3% of GDP for the financial year ending in March 2019, according to the release.
- The government's bank recapitalization package was mostly insufficient to resolve solvency challenges.
- Although the recapitalization package will be sufficient to meet the minimum regulatory capital needs, it will be insufficient to support credit growth.
- Banks have not been able to raise new capital from the equity markets as planned under the government's recapitalization measures.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Africa visit by PM

Context

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi is on a three nation, five-day tour to Africa which includes Rwanda, Uganda and South Africa, to encounter challenges of Chinese competition as well as declining Indian trade and investment

World Investment Report for 2018

- The report issued by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Indian FDI in Africa in 2016-17 at \$14 billion was even lower than it was in 2011-12 at \$16 billion.
- * China on the other side increased from 2011-12, when its investment levels were identical to India's at \$16 billion, to a massive \$40 billion in 2016-17.
- A similar slump both in actual and comparative terms has been seen in India-Africa trade figures from 2013 to 2017, when export and import figures fell from \$67.84 billion to \$51.96 billion.
- * The China-Africa bilateral trade, in comparison, has hovered around the \$170 billion mark
- In fact, with the exception of the 2015 figures, which jumped due to a single investment of \$2.6 billion by ONGC Videsh Ltd. for a stake in the Rovuma gas field of Mozambique in 2014, Indian investment in Africa has steadily decreased year-on-year since 2014.

Defence Diplomacy

- In Rwanda PM Modi signed agreements on cooperation in the field of defence. Rwanda is not the only one eager for security cooperation with India.
 - * Almost all of the African leaders who came to the Third India-Africa Summit in October 2015 sought greater defence engagement with India.
 - * But the gap between Delhi's promise and performance on defence diplomacy continues to grow.
- China-Africa Defence and Security Forum in Beijing, at the forum, China promised "comprehensive support" for the modernization of the armed forces of African nations. According to the Chinese media, that support includes supply of new technologies as well as lending personnel and strategic advice.
 - * According to the Stockholm Institute of Peace Research, China's arms exports to Africa have increased 55 per cent during the period 2013-17 in comparison to the preceding five years.
- India's military training facilities have always been attractive to other developing countries, including those in Africa.

- * China has, however, stepped up its military training programmes in Africa.
- * Besides facilities in China, Beijing opened a comprehensive training centre near Bagamoyo, Tanzania. China is also in negotiations with Tanzania to build a major port in Bagamoyo.
- India has seen African peacekeeping in narrow diplomatic terms, for example in reinforcing its claims for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council.
 - * China, in contrast, has seen peacekeeping as a means to enhance its military profile in Africa and learning the arts of power projection.
 - * Beijing has nearly 2,400 peacekeepers currently deployed in Africa and is training many regional peacekeepers. China has offered \$100 million in grant aid to establish an African Rapid Response Force to cope with regional crises.
 - * Along with growing military assistance and arms sales, China is stepping, somewhat gingerly, into political mediation and conflict resolution in the continent.

Other areas where china has stepped up its diplomacy

- Beijing has taken big steps towards cooperation with the African governments on internal security, including in the areas of countering terrorism and money laundering.
 - * Strengthening domestic police forces has become an important element of China's security strategy in Africa.
- China is also exporting artificial intelligence software that is boosting the surveillance capabilities of the African states through the use of such new technologies as facial recognition

Issue Area

- Few companies are looking at the African continent with any degree of seriousness
- One of India's biggest problems has been its concentration on East African trade and investment opportunities, as well as a dependence on petroleum and LNG
- India's exports to African countries have also been dominated by petroleum products, and a diversification is needed to broaden economic engagement.

Conclusion

- Modi's visit to Africa pointed out that India is not in a race with China in Africa. That is quite true, since India can't match the massive resources that China deploys in the continent. But it does not mean Delhi can continue to ignore its responsibility to put India's defence diplomacy in Africa and beyond on a modern and credible footing.

2. BRICS- Regional Aviation Partnership

- Cabinet has approved the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) amongst BRICS Nations on the Regional Aviation Partnership Cooperation viz. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- The objective is that BRICS countries would benefit from the establishing of an institutional framework to cooperate in the field of civil aviation.

Among the areas of cooperation, following areas have been identified:

- Public Policies and best practices in regional services;
- Regional Airports;
- Airport infrastructure management and air navigation services;
- Technical cooperation between regulatory agencies;
- Innovation;
- Environment Sustainability; including deliberation of global initiatives;
- Qualification and Training;
- Other fields as mutually determined

Impact:

- The MoU signifies an important landmark in the civil aviation relations between India and other BRICS Member States and has the potential to spur greater trade, investment, tourism and cultural exchanges amongst the BRICS Nations.

3. Girinka

- It is a flagship programme of the government of Rwanda
- The Girinka (meaning 'May you have a cow') programme started in 2006 to provide one cow to every poor family for their nutritional and financial Security.
- In addition, it serves as a source of soil nutrients via manure to assist in small scale cropping activity.
- It is helping to transform rural livelihoods and address poverty alleviation.
- The programme was set up with the central aim of reducing child nutrition rates and increasing household incomes of poor farmers.

Context

- The Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, donated 200 cows to residents in Rweru model village in Bugesera District, Eastern Province as part of Girinka (one-Cow-per-Poor-Family) programme which he described as the perfect tool for social bonding in communities across the country.

4. Immigration Visa Foreigners Registration & Tracking (IVFRT)

- The Project envisages facilitation services to the travelers including on-line application forms, 24x7 on-line channel, phone support for grievance redressal and e-mail/SMS support for dissemination of information, application status and feedback.
- The Project seeks to achieve service delivery within specified time limits for each category of travelers.
- The core objective of the IVFRT project is to develop and implement a secure and integrated service delivery framework that facilitates legitimate travelers while strengthening security. It has a Global outreach.
- It will help in bringing more efficiency in immigration, visa and online registration of foreigners, security and other services.
- There would be capacity building and periodic training and constant upgradation of software and hardware equipment to maintain quality.

5. Israel's 'Nation State' Law

- The law establishes Israel as the
 - * Historic home of the Jewish people
 - * With a "united" Jerusalem as its capital
 - * Declares that the Jewish people "have an exclusive right to national self-determination" in Israel.
- The legislation, a "basic law" gives it the weight of a constitutional amendment — omits any mention of democracy or the principle of equality, in what critics called a betrayal of Israel's 1948 Declaration of Independence, which ensured "complete equality of social and political rights" for "all its inhabitants" no matter their religion, race or sex.

Law downgrades status of Arabic

- The law downgrades the status of Arabic, until now an official language of the State of Israel, along with Hebrew.
- The law sets Arabic as a language with "special status." Arabs make up approximately 20% of Israel's population and about 36% of the population of Jerusalem.

Key Point:

- Israel has no constitution but instead passed over time a series of Basic Laws which have constitutional status.
- The nation state law is the 14th such basic law.

What do the supporters of bill say?

- It is aimed to boost Israel's Jewish identity and will not discriminate against minorities.
- Some Israeli Jewish politicians consider that the founding principles of Israel's creation, as a state for Jews in their ancient homeland, are under threat and could become less relevant, or obsolete, in the future.

Issue Area

- Arab community, which makes up a fifth of Israel's population, faces discrimination when it comes to opportunities and rights
- It challenges the basic concepts of equality, which even Israel's declaration of independence promised to all its inhabitants.
- The legislation is racist and a form of apartheid aimed at creating two systems within one country.
- The emphasis on Jerusalem and the promise to promote settlements pose a direct threat to any peace process with the Palestinians.
 - * Jerusalem remains a disputed territory, with Palestinians seeing its eastern part as the capital of their future state. Israel's claim over the city remains a key point of dispute between the two sides.
 - * Besides, if Israel sees Jewish settlements as a national value and continues to promote them in the Palestinian territories, it cannot command confidence when it says it is still committed to the two-state solution.

Threat to Jews living outside Israel

- It is bound to exacerbate the problem that Jews living outside Israel face — namely, how to reconcile their affinity with Israel with their loyalty to the states in which they reside
- With the recent resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe, the new law makes European Jews more vulnerable to attacks by right-wing and neo-Nazi elements in these countries

Regional implications

- The law automatically excludes Israeli Arabs from the sphere of full citizenship.
- It will put states like Saudi Arabia that are interested in normalizing relations with Israel in a very uncomfortable position
- It will strengthen hardline Iranian leaders who argue that Israel is an alien construct in West Asia and has no right to exist in the region.

Together, these laws allow the Israeli state to institutionalize discrimination against the minorities at home, deepen occupation in the Palestinian territories and stifle even the limited rights of the Palestinians living under occupation.

6. Joint Exercises conducted by Airforce

S. No.	Country	Exercise	Year
1.	Bangladesh	Table Top Ex	2017
2.	Israel	Ex Blue Flag-17	2017
3	Oman	Ex EASTERN BRIDGE - IV	2017
4.	Russia	EX INRA-17	2017
5.	Singapore	JOINT MILITARY TRAINING	2015, 2016, 2017
6.	Thailand	EX SIAM BHARAT	2016, 2017
7.	UAE	DESERT EAGLE-II	2016
8.	UK	INDRADHANUSH-IV	2015
9.	USA	RED FLAG 16-1	2016
10	Multinational Air Exercise	EX Samvedna with Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka UAE	2018

7. Joint Exercises conducted by Army

S. No	Country	Country	Year
1.	Australia	Ex AUSTRALIA HIND	2016-17, 2017-18
2.	Bangladesh	Ex SAMPRITI	2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18
3.	China	Ex HAND IN HAND	2015-16, 2016-17
4.	France	Ex SHAKTI	2015-16, , 2017-18
5.	Indonesia	Ex GARUDA SHAKTI	2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18
6.	Kazakhstan	Ex PRABAL DOSTYK	2016-17, 2017-18
7.	Kyrgyzstan	Ex KHANJAR	2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18
8.	Maldives	Ex EKUVERIN	2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18
9.	Mongolia	Ex NOMADIC ELEPHANT	2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18
10.	Myanmar	IMBEX	2017-18
11.	Nepal	Ex SURYA KIRAN	2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18
12.	Oman	AL NAGAH	2016-17
13.	Russia	Ex INDRA	2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18
14.	Seychelles	Ex LAMITIYE	2015-16, 2017-18

S. No	Country	Country	Year
15.	Sri Lanka	Ex MITRA SHAKTI	2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18
16.	Thailand	Ex MAITREE	2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18
17.	UK	Ex AJEYA WARRIOR	2015-16, 2017-18
18.	USA	Ex YUDHABHAYAS Ex VAJRA PRAHAR	2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18
19.	Vietnam	VINBAX	2017-18
20.	Multinational (ADMM Plus)	Ex FORCE 18	2015-16

8. Joint Exercises conducted by Navy

S.NO	Country	Exercise	Year
1.	Australia	AUSINDEX	2017
2.	Bangladesh	IN-BN CORPAT	2018
3.	Brazil & South Africa	IBSAMAR	2016
4.	France	VARUNA	2016, 2017, 2018
5.	Indonesia	IND-INDO CORPAT	2016, 2017, 2018
6.	Malaysia	IN-MN Table Top Ex	2016, 2017
7.	Myanmar	IMCOR	2016, 2017, 2018
8.	Oman	Naseem-al-Bahr	2017
9.	Russia	INDRA NAVY	2016, 2017
10.	Sri Lanka	SLINEX	2017
11.	Singapore	SIMBEX	2016, 2017
12.	Thailand	INDO-THAI CORPAT	2016, 2017, 2018
13.	UAE	In-UAE BILAT	2018
14.	UK	KONKAN	2016, 2017
15.	USA	MALABAR	2016, 2017, 2018
16.	Multilateral Exercise by Brunei	ADMM+ Exercise	2016
17.	Multilateral Exercise by Indonesia	Ex KOMODO	2016
18.	Multilateral Exercise by India	MILAN	2018

9. Long-Term Visas (LTVs)

Context

- The Union Home Ministry has stepped up its effort to expedite grant of LTVs to "persecuted minorities" from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.
- The visa facility, first introduced in 2011 for persecuted Hindus from Pakistan in 2011, was further liberalized after the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government came to power in 2014.

Procedure

- After an application reaches the central system, it's forwarded to three agencies for verification — the State government, the Intelligence Bureau and the

Home Ministry.

- As per new guidelines, the state government will have to clear proposals for grant of LTVs to Hindu minorities within 21 days, failing which approval of the Centre deemed to be taken
- The State government, through the local police, has to run a background check on the applicants who has applied for an LTV to Hindu minorities within 21 days. If the State doesn't reply within 21 days, the system will log them out and the application will be deemed to be cleared. If, in future, there is a security implication, the onus will be on the State government
- Earlier, the state government had 45 days to process the proposals, which led to inordinate delays and corruption

Relaxation in Rules

- They would be able take up self-employment or do business
- There are provisions to allow free movement of LTV holders within States and UTs where they are staying instead of restricting their movement within the place of stay.
- MHA further relaxed norms for those staying on LTV, allowing them to buy property, open bank accounts and obtain PAN as well as Aadhaar cards.
 - * They are barred from buying immovable property in and around restricted or protected areas, including cantonment regions.

Background

- The move comes days after one of its Home Ministry officials was arrested by the Rajasthan Anti-Corruption Bureau for allegedly extorting money from Pakistani Hindu migrants for their visa extension, visa transfer and grant of citizenship.

10. Mattala Airport

Context

- India has agreed to form a joint venture with Sri Lanka to operate the country's loss-making Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport in Hambantota



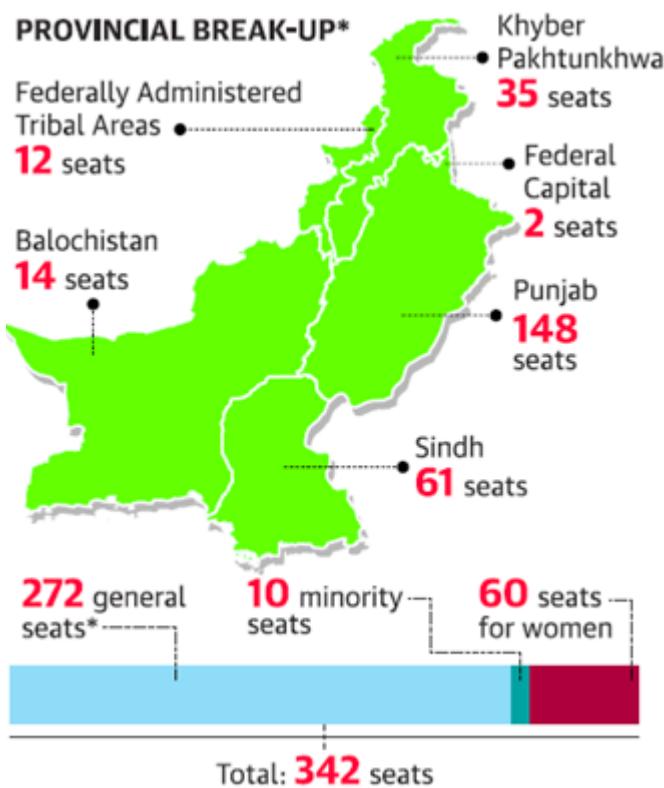
Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport (MRIA)

- It is located in a remote area in an under-developed part of the country, Mattala airport has struggled to attract both passengers and airlines.
 - This has led to MRIA being dubbed the “world’s emptiest international airport,” with its vacant corridors, gates, and tarmac

Why India wants to buy the world's emptiest airport in Sri Lanka?

- The airport is India's answer to Chinese domination and limit Beijing's influence in the island nation
- Hambantota would make a fine logistics point for an expanded Chinese naval presence, Colombo has repeatedly claimed that no Chinese naval facility will be permitted in Sri Lanka but New Delhi worries that China's influence will one day reach a point where the Sri Lankan government cannot say no.
- There are also fears of influx of Chinese labour in the Northern Province — traditionally affiliated to India owing to its ethnic makeup of Tamil's.

11. Pakistan Elections



Political Parties

Pakistan had its general elections, marking the completion of its first ever decade of unbroken democracy. This signifies, since its independence, the nation has seen only two democratically elected governments completing full terms in office.

- The first major player in the national election is Shahbaz Sharif, leading the incumbent party (PML-N) into the elections after his brother and former Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, was disqualified from holding the elected office and the party leadership for life with his name appearing in Panama Papers.
- The second major player is Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, son of assassinated Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. He is leading Pakistan People's Party into the elections and is hoping to capitalize on the support his mother enjoyed.
- The third major player is Pakistani cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan, leader of the Pakistan-Tehreek-e-Insaf(PTI). He is considered to be posing a tough challenge to the incumbent PML-N. Imran believes that his tough stance against corruption would fetch him a majority in the elections

Military Rule

- Since 1947, Pakistan has been ruled three times by military dictators who served as President for many years.
 - In 1958, Muhammad Ayub Khan became the President.
 - In 1977, Zia-ul-Haq became the President after ousting Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.
 - In 1999, Pervez Musharraf held the post and remained in office till 2008
- The military dictators often used reasons like rigging in elections, incompetence, and corruption among civilian leaders to justify their autocratic rule.

Issue Area

- Pakistan has fallen behind Bangladesh, which was earlier its eastern wing, in terms of human development indicators.
- Another major consequence has been the diminishing stature of its Constitution. Military rulers have tweaked the Constitution in the past on their whims and fancies to justify their coups.
- Pakistan has lost many economic growth opportunities owing to its political instability.

Challenges Ahead

- To steady an economy being crushed by debt to China and by UN financial strictures,
- To battle growing divides in society and the overwhelming influence of terror groups,
- To re-establish disrupted ties with neighbours
- To stave off the increasing military influence in the small space that the civilian leadership had been able to establish for itself.

What would India want from the elections?

- A stable civilian government not submissive to the military is what India would look forward to for its diplomatic relations.

- There have been incidents in the past of the Pakistan military establishment sabotaging relations whenever something is done by both countries' governments to strengthen their relations.
 - * For example: After PM Modi's impromptu visit to Lahore to meet Nawaz Sharif, there was an attack on the Indian Air Force station in Pathankot.

Conclusion

- The reason to celebrate these elections is that they are happening at all, marking only the second civilian-to-civilian electoral transfer in Pakistan's history.

12. Project Amad

- It is an Iran Project to develop Nuclear Weapons

13. Resolution 2427

- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has adopted Resolution 2427 to provide a legal framework for mainstreaming the rights, well-being, protection and empowerment of children in armed conflicts.
- The resolution also aims to combat the recruitment of children by Non-State armed groups and treat the formerly recruited children primarily as victims. The resolution was unanimously approved by the 15 member council.

Details:

- The 15-member Council committed to taking concrete action in response to serious abuses and violations of human rights — including those of children — which could constitute early indications of descent into conflict.
- The resolution strongly condemns recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts as well as their re-recruitment, rape, maiming, killing and any other form of abduction or sexual violence.
- It also condemns attacks against schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access by parties to armed conflict and all other violations of international law committed against children in situations of armed conflict.
- It demands that all relevant parties immediately put end to such practices and take special measures to protect children.
- It also emphasizes responsibility of all states to put end to immunity ; investigate and prosecute those responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and other conspicuous crimes committed against children.
- It recapitulates the Security Council's readiness in adopting graduated and targeted measures against persistent perpetrators of violations and abuses against children.

- It calls on the UN and the member states to mainstream child protection into all relevant activities in prevention of during conflict and post-conflict situations, with the aim of sustaining peace and preventing conflict.
- It reiterates importance of ensuring that children continue to have access to basic services during the conflict and post-conflict periods, including education and health care.
- It urges the member states of the UN, bodies and civil society to take into account, specifically, girls' equal access to education.
- It also stresses the importance of long-term and sustainable funding for mental health and psychosocial programming in humanitarian contexts.
- It aims at ensuring all affected children receive timely and sufficient support
- It encourages the donors to integrate mental health and psychosocial services in all humanitarian responses.

14. Return of Prisoners to place of Origin

Introduction

- With hardship and troubles that Prisoners go through in foreign Prisons, the laws, rules and norms for repatriation should be looked into in the international circles

Stats

- The Minister of State for External Affairs told Parliament in March 2018 that there were as many as 7,850 Indian nationals in the prisons of 78 countries.
 - * More than 2,095 Indian nationals (2017) were known to be sentenced abroad (in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, the U.K., the U.S., Canada, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, China, France, Germany, Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand),
- Data on detentions from India's National Crime Records Bureau showed that at the end of 2015 there were 6,185 foreign national prisoners; 66% of them were from Bangladesh alone.
 - * 2,363 foreign nationals were sentenced prisoners in India at the end of 2015.
- They would be eligible for repatriation subject to nationality verification.

Global conventions

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: Guarantee's right to return to one's home country is under Article 12(4) of the

- Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, 1963: A sentence served in a foreign land, far away from family, familiar food and language, has been globally perceived to be more onerous than one served at home. Therefore, the Vienna Convention provides for information to consulate, consular protection and consultation upon arrest, detention and during trial in a foreign country including entitlement to travel documents.
- UN Model Agreement on the Transfer of Foreign Prisoners and Recommendations on the Treatment of Foreign Prisoners 1985: It lays emphasis on the social rehabilitation of foreign prisoners through early repatriation to their home countries to serve their remaining sentence.

In consonance with these international humanitarian commitments, most countries have legislated on a Repatriation of Prisoners Act. The transfer framework under the Act is premised on the principles that an offence committed abroad is also an offence in the home country and the sentence implemented upon transfer shall not be aggravated.

Repatriation of Prisoners Act, 2003

- India legislated its Repatriation of Prisoners Act in 2003, which came into force on January 1, 2004.

What was the need?

- The humanitarian intent behind the Act is to allow convicted foreign nationals a chance to get transferred to their home countries
- Prisoners of Indian origin in other states to be brought back to India, to serve the remaining part of their sentences.
- It is based on the belief that being close to their families in their native countries would help prisoners in the process of rehabilitation.

Procedure

- The 2003 Act allows a convicted foreign national to make an application to the Centre to transfer his custody from India to his native country.
- On receiving such an application, the Centre would get in touch with the officer in charge of the prison and conduct an enquiry into various aspects.
- These include whether there is any
 - * pending inquiry, trial or proceeding against the prisoner;
 - * whether the convict has been sentenced to death or convicted of an offence under military law;
 - * if his transfer would be prejudicial to the sovereignty, security or any other interest of India,
 - * They have at least six months of their sentence still left to serve, and their transfer has the consent of both treaty countries.

- The Centre would seek information from the country where the prisoner wants to get transferred.
- This would include a check on whether the convict is indeed a citizen of that country or not; the relevant law for the offence for which he is undergoing sentence; the duration of sentence for the particular offence in that country; and, finally, an undertaking from that country to administer the remaining sentence on the prisoner.
- The same conditions would apply for an Indian prisoner transferred here from a foreign country on a warrant.

How to make laws well-suited?

- If the sentence of imprisonment passed against the prisoner in that country is found incompatible with Indian law, either regarding its nature or duration, or both, the Centre may make it compatible, by order.
- India also acceded to
 - * The Council of Europe's Convention on the transfer of Sentenced Persons of 1983.
 - * Inter-American Convention on Serving Criminal Sentences Abroad
- India has also taken steps for reciprocal transfers under the Act by developing a Standard Draft Agreement, signing 30 bilateral transfer agreements

Merits

- It can save the cost of providing consular services abroad by bringing back Indian prisoners
- It can simultaneously satisfy the public expectation of bringing nationals home and the meeting of international humanitarian commitments.

Issue Area

- Despite the call of alarming numbers and the scope of treaties, there were only nine foreign prisoners repatriated from India in 2015, six from the U.K. and one each from France, Germany and the UAE.
- Between 2003 and March 2018, only 63 of 171 prisoner applicants abroad have been transferred to India.

Conclusion

- Justice V.R. Krishna once stated in the Charles Sobraj judgment of 1978: "Compassion wherever possible and cruelty only where inevitable is the art of correctional confinement."

15. UNHRC and human rights

Background

- The withdrawal of the U.S. from the Human Rights Council (HRC) of the United Nations sent shock waves through the international community, foreign-policy think-tanks and human rights non-governmental organisations.

- However, some feel this was the right decision and are now advocating withdrawal by other countries; this includes those in India.

Why was HRC established?

- The HRC was established in 2006, as part of the UN's reform process, replacing the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.
- Council members are elected by the General Assembly with three-year terms, with a maximum of two consecutive terms.
- It was to serve as a forum for all states to examine and 'peer review' the record on human rights.
- The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, where all states are scrutinized, is currently in its third cycle (2017-2021). No state is exempt from this process, including Security Council members.
- UPR is a unique process which involves a periodic review of the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States.
 - * The UPR is a significant innovation of the Human Rights Council which is based on equal treatment for all countries.
 - * It provides an opportunity for all States to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to overcome challenges to the enjoyment of human rights.
 - * The UPR also includes a sharing of best human rights practices around the globe.

Strengths

- The HRC is also a forum to monitor international obligations of a state based on international law that states themselves have undertaken.
- They have addressed LGBTIQ rights and discrimination on the basis of religion.
- Another aspect overseen by the HRC is the appointment of special rapporteurs — independent mandate holders — on issues including internal displacement, torture, racial discrimination, as well as country specific mandates.
- In addition, there are distinct international commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions into particular violations.

Issue Area

- The main criticism against it is that it is made up of states not known for their human rights records; that many are in fact egregious violators of human rights.
- Current members include Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom — a few of the 47 states elected by the General Assembly, based on geographic quotas.

- The actual track record is not meeting intended objective — the overt manner in which a human rights agenda and the evolution of human rights norms are facilitated — and also less tangible gains from having such a body composed of states and actually engaging with them
- Politics is unavoidable, with states using the opportunity to highlight the records of other states.

USA withdrawal

- The factor that precipitated its withdrawal is the alleged targeting of Israel by the HRC.
- Discussions and reform proposals are already in the works, with engagement by states and human rights organizations indicating a consensus building approach but the impatience of the current U.S. administration and its disdain for multilateralism has resulted in the impetuous decision to withdraw. Invoking sovereignty as the basis to disengage is specious at best and malafide at worst.

Conclusion

- It is not just states but also individuals who are in need of a more robust defense of their rights stand to lose much in this debacle. Therefore there needs to be an increase in substantive engagement with issues concerning the rights of individuals rather than just rhetoric.

16. Delhi, Seoul signed 11 MoUs and agreements between them

- MoU's involved agreements on upgrading their economic partnership CEPA, trade remedies, railway safety research, cyber strategy, and cultural exchanges, India and South Korea signed a joint vision statement on strategic ties in the region.
- Agreements covering a broad spectrum of areas, included Internet of Things (IOT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data and anti-dumping.
- They will enhance military exchanges, training and experience-sharing, and research and development including innovative technologies for mutual benefit. They also agreed to encourage defence industries to intensify cooperation
 - * To encourage Korean defence manufacturers to "Make in India", one of whom, Hanwha Techwin, has partnered with Larsen and Toubro to produce K-9 Vajra artillery guns for the Indian

Hand-in-hand Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India is a stakeholder in the peace process in the Korean peninsula after holding wide-ranging deliberations with the South Korean President on Tuesday

■ Agreement to explore tripartite deals for development programmes in third countries	■ Set target of \$50 billion trade by 2030 (presently \$20 billion)
■ Agreement to discuss training programmes in Afghanistan	■ MoU on railway design and safety research
■ Agreement to upgrade the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), negotiations still on	■ MoU on cooperation in Telecom and ICT services
	■ MoU on Princess Suriratna memorial project in Ayodhya, South Korea will be sending a cultural delegation to U.P.

India is central pillar of New Southern Policy
— MOON JAE-IN

Republic of Korea is indispensable partner in Act East Policy
— NARENDRA MODI

Early Harvest Package

- India and South Korea signed a joint statement agreeing to discuss an 'early harvest' package for the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) aimed at identifying key areas for enhanced trade between the two countries.
- Early harvest agreement of the CEPA which has three chapters: goods, services, and investments

17. South Korean President Moon Jae four-day visit to India

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has ambitions to align India's Act East policy with Korea's New Southern Policy

Korea's New Southern Policy

- South Korea's development of its relations with Southeast Asia, ASEAN and India in Particular.
- The New Southern Policy was rolled out against the backdrop of South Korea's diplomatic row with China over deployment of the U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) anti-missile system in South Korea, which led to retaliatory measures from Beijing.
- Moon's New Southern Policy aims to strengthen the economic-cooperation and build a prosperous and people-centric community of peace

* while India's "Act East Policy," as articulated by Modi, focuses on promoting deeper economic engagement, reinvigorating cultural and civilizational relations, and developing new strategic partnerships with countries in the Indo-Pacific region through continuous engagement at bilateral as well as at multilateral levels.

- Both these policies show convergence in their objectives and should further strengthen the Special Strategic Partnership between India and South Korea.

Advantages of enhancing the relationship

- The India-South Korea axis can be very valuable at a time when the world is passing through a phase of uncertainty; this vital bilateral partnership can significantly contribute to peace, security, and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, especially through strengthened economic partnership and deepen security relations.
- South Korea's open market policies finds a clear resonance with India's economic liberalization, and the Act East Policy certainly complements the New Southern Policy and adds new substance and impetus to bilateral cooperation between two nations in all areas of engagement.
- A lot of complementarities exist at various levels between two countries; for example, South Korea's technological advancement and manufacturing capabilities can be helpful in India's economic growth and human resource development.
- Seoul's successful development story of the last few decades can complement Modi's vision of making a "New India" by 2022

Defence engagement

- India and South Korea have also deepened their bilateral relations in the defense sector through more military exercises and training as part of efforts to enlarge their partnership beyond economic engagement.
- The two countries hold a joint anti-piracy, search and rescue exercise, Sahyog-Hyeoblyeog, which is conducted between the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and Korean Coast Guard (KCG) to improve maritime security and interoperability in the Indian Ocean Region.
- Besides holding more joint exercises, New Delhi is also looking to attract South Korean defense companies to invest in India.

Other areas of cooperation

- In particular, the Indian government's plan to build 100 smart cities and construct industrial corridors to link the major cities is an important area where South Korean companies can participate in infrastructural projects that will be mutually beneficial for both nations.
- There are vast business opportunities for both countries to expand cooperation in other unexplored areas such as shipbuilding, the aerospace industry, manufacturing of medical devices, and food processing. Seoul's high-end technology can be effectively coupled with the high-skilled workforce of India.

Issue Area

- Trade, at \$20 billion, is a fraction of the potential, given that India and South Korea are Asia's third and fourth largest economies. This figure has been a cause for worry, as the two countries had hit the \$20-billion mark in 2011 after the signing of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.
- The large trade deficit in South Korea's favour has led India to be wary of further opening up.
- In turn, Korean companies cite problems in doing business in India, despite a special "Korea Plus" desk set up by the Prime Minister's Office in 2015.
- Tourism between the two countries has always been low, and strategically both New Delhi and Seoul are preoccupied with tensions in their immediate neighborhoods and ties with the big world powers than with each other.

Conclusion

- South Korea can be an indispensable partner of India in its Act East Policy in the Indo-Pacific region.
- In the context of growing Chinese assertiveness, India and South Korea share a common vision as well as similar concerns with respect to the emerging economic and security architecture and the regional order that is taking shape in the Indo-Pacific region.

18. United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP)**Context:**

- UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has appointed Major General Jose Eladio Alcain of Uruguay as Chief Military Observer and Head of Mission for the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), which monitors the ceasefire in the disputed Jammu and Kashmir.

UNMOGIP:

- UNMOGIP is one of the oldest UN mission, deployed in January 1949 to supervise the ceasefire between India and Pakistan in the State of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The first team of unarmed military observers, who formed the nucleus of UNMOGIP, arrived in the mission area in January 1949 to assist the Military Adviser to the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP)
- UNMOGIP has 44 military observers, 25 international civilian personnel and 47 local civilian staff.
- The observer group is financed by the United Nations regular budget

India's position:

- Since the Shimla Agreement of 1972, India has adopted a non-recognition policy towards third parties in their bilateral exchanges with Pakistan over the question regarding the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

- But, the military authorities of Pakistan have continued to lodge alleged ceasefire violations complaints with UNMOGIP.

19. India-U.K. bilateral ties- Lack of Trust in relationship**Context:**

- A "lack of trust" permeates the bilateral relationship between Britain and India, Britain's former High Commissioner Sir Richard Stagg said, raising questions about the ability of the two countries to forge a closer relationship in the wake of Brexit.

India's concerns

- Britain's relationship with Pakistan
- Indian government request to extradite high net worth individuals such as Vijay Mallya back to the country (and reports that Nirav Modi may have sought asylum in Britain) and slow implementation by Britain
- student visas row
 - * India also pulled out of signing an MOU on the return of illegal migrants because of the 15-day period that would have been stipulated in the agreement for documents to be verified, which India viewed as unrealistic.

How can Britain enhance relationship?

- security and defence cooperation,
- Joint exercises of the armed forces,
- Working with India to achieve reform at international bodies such as the UN and WTO.

SOCIAL ISSUES

1. Adoption of Children

Context

- The Union Cabinet approved amendments to the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 to enable speedier adoption of children.

Details

- The Union Cabinet approved amendments as cases were facing long delays at the level of courts.
- Adoption process is set to get simple for prospective parents, who will now not be required to make several rounds to a court to seek an adoption order as the Union Cabinet authorized District Magistrates or District Collectors to do so.

2. Adultery must remain a punishable offence, Centre tells Supreme Court

Section 497 of IPC says, "Whoever has sexual intercourse with a person who is and whom he knows or has reason to believe to be the wife of another man, without the consent or connivance of that man, such sexual intercourse not amounting the offence of rape, is guilty of the offence of adultery and shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to 5 years, or with fine, or with both. In such case, the wife shall not be punishable as an abettor."

- If someone "lives in adultery", the partner can file for divorce

Women as Subordinate

Married woman as her husband's "subordinate" violated the constitutional concepts of gender equality and sensitivity

- The offence of adultery ceases the moment it is established that the husband connived or consented to the adulterous act. So, is a married woman the "property" of her husband or a passive object without a mind of her own?
- Section 198 (1) and (2) of the Code of Criminal Procedure: (2) For the purposes of sub- section (1), no person other than the husband of the woman shall be deemed to be aggrieved by any offence punishable under section 497 or section 498 of the said Code: Provided that in the absence of the husband, some person who had care of the woman on his behalf at the time when such offence was committed may, with the leave of the Court, make a complaint on his behalf.
- Further, only a husband or the person in whose care the husband has left his wife can file a complaint under Section 497.

- * The petition challenges the validity of Section 198 (1) and (2) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which deems that only a husband can be an aggrieved party in offences against marriage like adultery and only he can go to court.
- * The law does not confer any right on women to prosecute the adulterous husband

Adultery law biased against men

- As per the Indian law, a woman cannot be punished for the offence of adultery.
- Only a man who has consensual sexual intercourse with the wife of another man without his consent can be punished under this offense in India.

Center's View

- The Union government told the Supreme Court that it does not want to drop adultery as an offence, saying such a move would only weaken the institution of marriage.
- It opposed a petition before the Supreme Court that seeks to amend the provision to make men and women equally liable.
- The ministry referred to a judgment passed in 1985, Smt. Sowmithri Vishnu v. Union of India, where it cited that "It is better, from the point of view of the interests of the society, that at least a limited class of adulterous relationship is punishable by law. Stability of marriages is not an ideal to be scorned."

3. Anti-Trafficking Bill Draft

Features of Bill

- The draft Bill divides various offences into "trafficking" and "aggravated trafficking".
 - * The former category of crimes would carry a jail term of seven to 10 years
 - * The latter would carry a punishment of at least 10 years in jail, which can be extended to life imprisonment.
- The aggravated crime will include trafficking for the purpose of forced labour, begging, trafficking by administering chemical substance or hormones on a person for the purpose of early sexual maturity, trafficking of a woman or child for the purpose of marriage or under the pretext of marriage or after marriage.
- The new law also seeks to make way for punishment of three years for a person found to be promoting or facilitating trafficking.

- National Anti-Trafficking Bureau will perform the functions of international coordination with authorities in foreign countries and international organisations
- In order to break the nexus, both at the national and international levels, the bill provides for attachment and forfeiture of property and also proceeds from the crime.
- The apex anti-terror body National Investigation Agency (NIA) will be the nodal authority for probing cases of human trafficking
- The bill proposes creating a rehabilitation fund for the victims, designating courts in every district for quick, time-bound trials as well as protecting those rescued from traffickers at the earliest.

Existing Provisions

- The IPC already criminalizes trafficking under Section 370.

Issue Area

- Use of criminal law to solve a social problem
- The rehabilitation process disregards the wishes and choices of the "rescued" person, especially sex workers.
- Sex workers' collectives have been left out of any consultations by the government in drafting this Bill.
 - * Sex workers are also against human trafficking and have decades of experience in implementing their own effective anti-trafficking strategies like the Self-Regulatory Board, which has successfully checked the entry of minors and non-consensual persons into sex work.
 - * Instead of adopting a top-down approach to trafficking, the government must inculcate these successful models and strategies into any anti-trafficking efforts.
- It only creates further confusion by introducing existing offences in the new packaging of "aggravated offences", adding more layers of bureaucracy and complicating enforcement.
- The heightened worry around the misuse of the Bill also stems from the well-documented fact that criminalization and punitive laws provide cover for increased violence against sex workers by the police.
- It will criminalize sex workers and transgenders the Bill should explicitly state that consenting adult workers will not be penalized under the new law.
 - * Deprives them of their source of livelihood.

4. Baiga

- They are an ethnic group found in central India, primarily in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. The largest number of Baigas is found in Baiga-chuk in Mandla district and Balaghat district of Madhya Pradesh
- The Baiga tribes practice shifting cultivation in the forest areas

- These techniques also known as 'swidden' agriculture
- They say they never ploughed the Earth, because it would be a sin to scratch the breast of their Mother, and they could never ask their Mother to produce food from the same patch of earth time and time again – she would have become weakened.
- One of the tribes for whom tattooing is an integral part of their lifestyle is the Baiga tribe
- Baigas interact with outsiders in Hindi and they have also picked up few local languages. Among them, they talk in a language called 'Baigani'. It takes its style from Chattisgarhi and is also influenced by Gondi language

5. Commission for de-notified, semi-nomadic, nomadic tribes

Context:

- The NITI Aayog has backed a proposal by a panel constituted by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to set up a permanent commission for De-notified (DNT), Semi-Nomadic (SNT), and Nomadic Tribes (NT).

Proposed by Idate Commission:

- Bhiku Ramji Idate Commission on DNT, SNT, and NT communities, in its report, had recommended setting up a permanent commission for the communities on the lines of similar commissions for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes.
- Composition:** In its report submitted to the social justice ministry in January 2018, the Idate Commission said such a permanent commission should have a prominent community leader as its chairperson, and a senior Union government bureaucrat, an anthropologist, and a sociologist as members.
- Other important recommendations of the panel include granting Constitutional protection to these communities under a separate third schedule after Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, making them eligible for reservation, and extending the protective cover of Prevention of Atrocities Act to them.

Need for special attention:

- The DNT, NT, SNT communities have been identified as the most marginalised by several commissions set up since Independence.
- The community has for long not been enumerated in the Census data.
- The Renke Commission report of 2008 had arrived at a rough estimate of their population being between 10-12 crore but none of its recommendations were implemented.

NITI Aayog's views:

- NITI Aayog has offered to set up a working group to come up with policy suggestions on many issues of these marginalized communities.

- It has also proposed lowering tuition fees and relaxing admission conditions for children from the communities, and easy allotment of land and housing for members of the community in which 90% or more are landless.
- The Niti Aayog has also supported the panel's suggestion to form a dedicated National Finance Development Corporation for DNT, SNT and NTs.

6. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) questioned by SC

Context:

- The Supreme Court has said no one can violate the integrity and the bodily privacy of a woman in the name of religion after the Centre condemned the practice of female genital mutilation performed by some communities on children as a religious practice.

Details

- It is also called as female genital cutting and female circumcision
- It is the ritual cutting or removal of some or all of the external female genitalia apparently in an attempt to keep their sexual desires under control.
- It is a ritual performed on every girl child within the Dawoodi Bohra religious community
- The FGM is performed "illegally upon girls (between five years and before she attains puberty)"
- UNICEF estimated in 2016 that 200 million women living today in 30 countries—27 African countries, Indonesia, Iraqi Kurdistan and Yemen—have undergone the procedures
- Untrained midwives or older women in the community are usually the ones carrying out this procedure. The procedure is carried out usually with a knife or a blade,

Violations

- The practice of 'khatna' or 'FGM' or 'Khafid' also amounts to causing inequality between the sexes and constitutes discrimination against women.
- Since it is carried out on minors, it amounts to serious violation of the rights of children as even minors have a right of security of person, right to privacy, bodily integrity and the freedom from cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment
- It violates the rights of the child and human rights
- This is happening without any medical reason and does not have any reference in the Quran

Health issues

- In the short-term, there may be pain, excessive bleeding, fever, infections, shock, or even death.
- In the long term, there may be urinary or vaginal problems, pain during intercourse, and complications at childbirth. Correcting the damage may need surgery.

SC view

- Such practices on children would be an offence under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.

Govt View

- The practice violated various fundamental rights of the girl child and moreover, such kind of genital mutilation has serious repercussions on their health.

Current Status in India

- There is no law in India banning FGM or Khatna T

International Practice

- Countries like the United Kingdom, and around 27 African countries have banned this practice
- It violates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- It is a crime in the United States of America under the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996
 - * In 2017, United States officials arrested two doctors in Detroit for allegedly cutting the private parts of six girls; the trial is still underway.
- India is now becoming a hub for FGM because of the recent legal action taken against FGM among Bohras in Australia and USA.
- In 2016, Australia sentenced three Dawoodi Bohras to 15 months in jail under the country's female genital mutilation law.

7. India Smart Cities Fellowship (ISCF) Program

- The India Smart Cities Fellowship Program is designed to provide valuable experience to the youth interested in smart cities specifically, and urban renewal sector in general and will bring in new ideas, passion and energy to the challenging but exciting work of implementing cutting edge, high-impact solutions to key urban problems.
- This program will cultivate young leaders, strengthen their understanding of Indian urban sector and prepare them for greater leadership roles in future.
- Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation

8. Jeeja Ghosh & Anr v Union of India & Ors (2012) case

- It involved a passenger with cerebral palsy (a condition caused by lack of oxygen to the brain either during pregnancy or at the time of delivery)

What was the case about?

- Jeeja was offloaded from a Kolkata–Goa SpiceJet flight by the crew, following the captain's orders that she was unfit to take the five-hour-long flight due to her disability, that is, cerebral palsy.
- She argued that the agony, humiliation and emotional trauma which she had to undergo after being offloaded like a common criminal

Supreme Court

- The Court has recorded a finding that this is “the worst form of discrimination.”
- The Supreme Court in 2016 ordered SpiceJet to pay Rs.10,00,000 as damages to disabled rights activist Jeeja Ghosh.
- The Court, while allowing her petition, echoed the contemporary shift in disability discourse from the charity and medical models to a rights-based paradigm.

Laws

- Persons with disabilities are now considered subjects with rights and the Court observed that the rights granted to persons with disabilities under the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 (hereafter PWD Act 1995) formed human rights in themselves.
- The Court also took note of the fact that in spite of international law and domestic legislation being in place to protect the rights of persons with disabilities, their lives are handicapped by social, cultural and attitudinal barriers.
 - * India is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).
 - * Articles 5 and 9 therein contain detailed provisions for reasonable accommodation and accessibility in transport and public spaces, respectively.

Court's View

- Every citizen of India has a fundamental right to travel across the country.
- The disabled traveler has this right to undertake the journey with human dignity and respect, a facet of the right to life granted under Article 21.
- The disabled traveler has also the right to be treated equally with other travelers under Article 14 of the Constitution.

9. Lynching: Create separate laws says SC to Union and states

Context

- The Supreme Court condemned recent incidents of lynching and mob violence as “horrendous acts of mobocracy”, and asked Parliament to pass law establishing lynching as a separate offence with punishment.

Observation of SC

- SC held that it was the obligation of the State to protect citizens and ensure that the “pluralistic social fabric” of the country holds against mob violence.
- The Supreme Court, while hearing a PIL, ruled that no ‘citizen can take law into his hands nor become law unto himself’.

- * The limited role, if any, of a vigilante is to report an incident to the police and not become the law and punisher himself
- * What the law provides may be taken away by lawful means; that is the fundamental concept of law.
- Any “external forces” who assume the role of protectors are criminals
 - * When any core group with some kind of idea take the law into its own hands, it ushers in anarchy, chaos, disorder. Eventually, there is an emergence of a violent society

Violations

- The lynchings were “targeted violence” against particular religion, caste, and thus, in violation of the constitutional guarantees under Article 15 of the Constitution. Article 15 protected from discrimination on the basis of religion, caste, sex, gender.

Recommendations

- SC ordered the Centre and the States to take immediate steps to stop the dissemination of fake news or stories on social media, which has tendency to whip up a mob frenzy.
- The court ordered the State governments to have a special task force to procure intelligence on people “likely” to spread hate speeches, provocative statements and fake news” in each district.
- The district-level nodal officers should hold regular meetings with their local intelligence units to identify the existence of the tendencies of vigilantism, mob violence or lynching in the district and take steps to prohibit instances of dissemination of offensive material on social media.
- Areas with a five-year history of lynching should be identified in each district within the next three weeks. Nodal officers in districts shall take steps to eradicate hostile environment against any community or caste.
- The court said the police shall register a FIR under Section 153A (promoting enmity) of the IPC against the suspects.
 - * If found guilty, a person faces up to five years of imprisonment.
 - * The trial shall be held in a fast-track court on a day-to-day basis and completed in six months.
 - * The court said the courts should grant maximum sentence to guilty persons to make an example of them and serve as a deterrent.
- The judgment directed the Central government to issue appropriate directions/advisories to the States to reflect the gravity of the situation.

- The State governments have been given a month to prepare a lynching/mob violence victim compensation scheme with due regard paid to the nature of bodily injury, psychological injury and loss of earnings including loss of opportunities of employment and education and expenses incurred on account of legal and medical expenses and so on.
 - * It said compensation for victims should not be determined solely on the basis of their religion, caste, etc, but on the basis of the extent of injury caused as "anyone can be a victim" of such a crime.

Rajiv Gauba Committee

Context

- The Centre has set up a four-member panel headed by Union home secretary Rajiv Gauba to formulate appropriate measures and legal framework to deal with mob lynching

Details

- The panel will submit its recommendations to a ministerial committee, headed by Union home minister, which will submit its recommendations to Prime Minister

Digital Armies by UP Govt

Context

- To curb incidents of lynching and violence due to fake news on social media, the Uttar Pradesh police will set up 'Digital Armies' of prominent residents to keep a vigil on inflammatory posts and rumour-mongering.

Details

- As part of the initiative, all the 1,469 police stations in the State will have a WhatsApp group consisting 250 members including ex-servicemen, teachers, doctors, advocates and journalists among others
- These 'digital volunteers' will inform their local police station if they come across fake news on the social media and at the same time, disseminate correct information among the locals to curb the spread of rumours
- The digital volunteers will be linked through WhatsApp. The group operating at the police station level will be linked to the district WhatsApp group, which would be linked to the U.P. DGP
- The move comes in the wake of the Central government's directions to take effective steps to stop the spread of the rumours and fake news

How to be a member of this group?

- According to the State police, the application forms to become a digital volunteer are available on their website uppolice.gov.in.
- A district level committee under the SP will select the volunteers and at least two of them will be selected from each ward, locality and village.

10. Malnourished children underreported in Odisha

Context

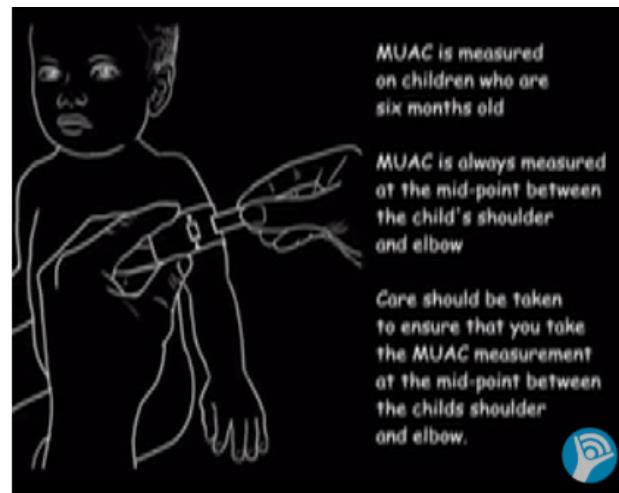
- The Odisha State Food Commission has expressed concern over the underreporting of severe acute malnourished (SAM) children in the State.

Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM)

- It is defined by a very low weight for height
- It is the most extreme and visible form of undernutrition. Its face is a child – frail and skeletal – who requires urgent treatment to survive.
- They may also have nutritional oedema – characterized by swollen feet, face and limbs. About two thirds of these children live in Asia and almost one third live in Africa.
- Severe acute malnutrition is a major cause of death in children under 5, and its prevention and treatment are critical to child survival and development

How is SAM measured?

- Anganwadi workers use MUAC (Mid Upper Arm Circumference) tape to determine SAM and list out all children whose MUAC measurement is below 11.5 cm.
- Many districts did not identify and report on MAM (Moderately Acute Malnourished) children.
 - * This includes all those children whose MUAC measurement lies in between 11.5 cm and 12.5 cm



Concern

- Undernutrition continues to be a serious child health issue in Odisha and almost one third of the under five years children population due to faulty methods of screening of SAM children at the community level had led to poor detection.
- Many anganwadi centres still do not have MUAC tapes or it is in a mutilated or spoiled condition.

- * It has also been observed during field visits that many anganwadi workers are not able to take MUAC measurements correctly and make errors.

11. Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention

Context

- In a bid to eliminate the need for manual scavenging, the Centre has launched a challenge asking innovators, NGOs, research institutions, companies and cities to propose technology and business solutions to clean urban sewers and septic tanks without human entry.
- The challenge will be part of the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention to be held on October 18 this year.
- The objectives are to identify technological and business process innovations, endorse viable business models suitable for cities of different sizes and geographies, and pilot test shortlisted technologies and solutions in select project cities and bridge the gap between innovators or manufacturers and beneficiaries such as urban local bodies and citizens.

Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention:

- It will be launched at the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi. It will be a first-of-its-kind International Sanitation Convention.
- The government will use the occasion to “showcase its performance” and “success story” in the Swachh Bharat programme in the past four years, which was launched on October 2, 2014, and have a face-to-face dialogue with the world leaders to share their experiences on sanitation programmes.

12. National Workshop on Skill Development for Persons with Disabilities

- A “National Workshop on Skill Development for Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)” was organized by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) under Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- DEPwD implements an umbrella scheme namely Scheme for Implementation of Right of Persons with Disabilities Act (SIPDA) which has a component for Skill Development of PwDs.
- The Skill Development programme for PwDs is implemented through the training Partners empanelled with this department and also through its National Institutes, their Composite Regional Centres and also through National Handicapped Finance & Development Corporation (NHFDC).

- The Workshop dwelt upon all the issues involved in the skill development for Persons with disabilities and come out with workable solution in identifying core areas for skill development in the context of PwDs, mechanism for appropriate mapping of categories of Disabilities viz. a viz. industrial requirement and also promoting positive attitude in the private sector to consider PwDs as one of their valuable workforce.

13. National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP)

- It is a cross-disability, non-profit organization, working as an interface between the Government, Industry, International Agencies, and the Voluntary Sector towards empowerment of persons with disabilities.
- NCPEDP advocates for the need to move away from traditionally held views of charity and welfare to those of productivity and enabling of disabled people.
- The trust was established in 1996

Leprosy must not continue to be a ground for divorce

Need for a relook

There are currently 119 provisions across various Acts passed by the Central and State governments that continue to discriminate against people affected by leprosy, the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People notes



- The Orissa Municipal Corporation Act, 2003, disqualifies a leprosy patient from contesting civil polls. Even the Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, has a provision that bars someone infected with the disease from contesting elections for the post of a panch or any other member of the institution

- Section 13 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, that allows dissolution of marriage if one of the partners has been “suffering from a virulent and incurable form of leprosy”; Section 2 of the Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act, 1939; Section 27 of the Special Marriage Act, 1954; Section 18 of the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956; Section 18 of the Jammu and Kashmir Hindu Adoptions And Maintenance Act, 1960; Section 13 of the Jammu and Kashmir Hindu Marriage Act, 1980 and Section 2 of the Jammu and Kashmir Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1999, perpetuate the stigmatization of those affected by leprosy

14. Pardhi community

- The tribe is found mostly in Maharashtra and parts of Madhya Pradesh
- The word Pardhi is derived from the Marathi (state language) word ‘Paradh’ which means hunting and Sanskrit word ‘papardhi’ which means hunting or the game to be hunted.
- The criminal branding of the tribe goes back to 1871 after the British passed the “Criminal Tribes Act”. In 1952, the tribe was denotified as “criminal” and named as a nomadic tribe. However this has not changed the public perception of the tribe, and they continue to be stigmatized and live as outcasts, further aggravating their economic hardships.

Context

- Two persons from the nomadic Pardhi community were allegedly beaten to death and six more injured after being brutally assaulted by a mob in a village in Aurangabad district

15. Sabarimala temple bar unreasonable: SC

Case History

All eyes on SC

The chronology of the long-standing petition in the Supreme Court against the restriction on women aged between 10 and 50 from entering the Sabarimala temple in Kerala:



1991: In *S. Mahendran versus the Secretary, Travancore*, the Kerala High Court upheld the State's ban on menstruating women from entering the temple. The HC order went unchallenged for 15 years.

2006: Kannada actor Jayamala claimed she had entered the sanctum

sancutum and touched the idol of the deity in Sabarimala. Her claims led to a furore, leading to a case against the actor.

2006: A PIL against the Kerala HC order was filed by the India Young Lawyers Association, contending that the ban violated constitutional rights of women.

2008: On March 7, a Bench of Justices S.B.Sinha and V.S. Sirpurkar referred the case to a three-judge Bench. The case lay in cold storage for 8 years.

2016: On April 13, a Bench of Justices Dipak Misra, V. Gopala Gowda and Kurian Joseph heard a batch of petitions.

2016: On April 25, senior advocate K.K. Venugopal, representing the Devaswom, said, "There is a reasonable classification by which certain class of women are excluded." The SC enquired if the defence was implying that menstruation was associated with purity of women.

2017: On Oct. 13, the SC referred the Sabarimala case to the Constitution Bench

Observations by SC

- Tagging a woman's right to enter the famous Sabarimala temple with her menstrual cycle is unreasonable
- Exclusion of women aged between 10 and 50 from entering a temple because they are considered 'impure' amounts to the practice of untouchability, a social evil abolished by law.
- Women and their physiological phenomena are creations of God. If not God, of nature. Why should this (menstruation) be a reason for exclusion for employment or worship or anything
- Sabarimala temple drew funds from the Consolidated Fund, had people coming from all over the world and thus, qualified to be called a "public place of worship."

Constitutional Mandate

- The Constitution upheld the ideals of liberty of thought, expression, belief and faith, be it for man or woman.
- The discrimination was a violation of the Art 14 right to equality and gender justice. 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.
- Article 25 (1) which mandates freedom of conscience and right to practise religion. So, All persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion
- Art 51 A: to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;

* 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

Laws that bar women from entering Sabarimala

- Article 26: Freedom to manage religious affairs Subject to public order, morality and health, every religious denomination or any section thereof shall have the right to manage its own affairs in matters of religion;
- The ban on 'menstruating women' was enforced under Rule 3(b) of the Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship (Authorisation of Entry) Rules 1965, which states that "Women who are not by custom and usage allowed to enter a place of public worship shall not be entitled to enter or offer worship in any place of public worship".

Issue Area

- 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
- Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship (Authorisation of Entry) Act, 1965
 - * 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.

Conclusion

- The Sabarimala case represents not just the hopes of devout women seeking entry into the temple, but also those who wish a strong, cogent constitutional precedent be established for the future.
- Sabarimala is an opportunity for the court to give us a precedent that firmly entrenches constitutional morality and liberates individual rights from the choking hold of group rights.

16. Section 377

Context

- The five-judge bench led by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra, was hearing a batch of petitions challenging the British-era provision

Observations

- A person's choice of a partner is a fundamental right, and it can include same-sex partner, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud
- Justice Chandrachud drew his observation from the March 2018 judgment in the Hadiya case, which held that neither the State nor one's parents can influence an adult's choice of partner. That would be a violation of the fundamental right to privacy.
- Justice D.Y. Chandrachud said any law criminalising a community for their sexuality was an example of "social disdain."

- "A declaration from the court will remove the ancillary disqualifications for people joining services, contesting elections. It will no longer be seen as moral turpitude," Chief Justice Misra

Indu Malhotra

- Justice Indu Malhotra, the lone woman judge on the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court hearing the fight against Section 377 of the IPC, made a strong case against criminalisation of homosexuality.
- The prejudice and stigma piled on the LGBTQ community has denied it even basic medical care in the country
- They succumb to marry the opposite sex, leading to a life of mental trauma and bi-sexuality.
- Homosexuality is not against the order of nature and is nature itself. Hundreds of animal species show the same sexual orientation.

Laws that criminalize the community

- Andhra Pradesh (Telangana Area) Eunuchs Act criminalized transgender persons
- Section 36A of the Karnataka Police Act of 1963, which was amended only in 2016, saw transgender persons as a criminal class.
- Section 377 violates Articles 15 (discrimination on sex), 14 (equality), 19 (liberty) and 21 (life and dignity) of the Constitution. It was a terrible colonial legacy which has a "chilling effect."

The legal journey so far

On Wednesday, the Centre took a neutral stand on the constitutional validity of Section 377, leaving it to the court's wisdom. A timeline of the legal provision:

1862: The section came into force

July 2009: The Delhi High Court read down the Section to apply only to "gross sexual, pernicious, non-sensual sex, and sexual acts by adults with minors

December 2013: A Supreme Court Bench set aside the Delhi HC judgment, it upheld the criminalisation of gay sex and dismissed the LGBTQ community as a "negligible population"

February 2016: An SC Bench indicated that the question of constitutionality of

Section 377 required a possible back-to-roots, in-depth hearing

August 2017: the fight against the Section got a boost when a SC Bench upheld the right to privacy as a fundamental right. The Bench had observed that the chilling effect of Section 377 "poses a grave danger to the unhindered fulfillment of one's



sexual orientation, as an element of privacy and dignity"

2017-18 saw a flood of writ petitions to quash Section 377

January 8, 2018: A Bench led by Chief Justice of India referred the petitions to a Constitution Bench to examine the legality of the Section and re-visit the 2013 verdict, saying that a section of people cannot live in fear of the law which atrophies their right to choice and natural sexual inclinations

January 10, 2018: A Constitution Bench starts hearing the writ petition. CJ says a person cannot be held criminally liable for his sexuality. Justice Chandrachud observes that if an adult has a fundamental right to choose his or her partner under Article 21, the term "partner" includes same-sex partner

The global experience

How the world viewed homosexuality

■ Section 377 was based primarily on blind prejudice and without any scientific basis		■ After 1970, the view that homosexuality was pathological and dangerous was gradually discarded
■ The criminal code of Napoleon was silent on sexual relations between consenting adults		■ By 1973, homosexuality was removed from the list of mental disorders. In the 1990s, executive orders were issued banning discrimination in federal and state-level government offices. This was followed by leading private corporations
■ In the U.S., the efforts of Senator Joseph McCarthy led to widespread persecution of gays at every level of government activity		■ Private corporations and defence corporations in the U.S. were required to ferret out and discharge homosexual employees by an executive order of President Eisenhower

SOURCE: FROM THE WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS OF SENIOR ADVOCATE ARVIND DATAR IN COURT

Examples from World

- Leo Varadkar
 - * The son of an Indian father and Irish mother an Indian immigrant has made Irish history by becoming the country's youngest and first openly gay prime minister.

Call or WhatsApp 09980837187 for guidance

- Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir

* She is an Icelandic politician and the former Prime Minister of Iceland, who is a lesbian.

17. Swachh Survekshan Grameen (SSG) 2018

- It was launched by Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation
- In this program ranking of all districts and states on the basis of quantitative and qualitative sanitation (Swachhata) parameters will be conducted by independent Agency
- For this a countrywide communication campaign, along with engagement of rural communities to improve the sanitation and cleanliness of their surrounding areas

How will the survey be conducted?

- As part of Swachh Survekshan Grameen 6,980 villages in 698 districts across India will be covered.
- Total 34,000 public places namely schools, anganwadis, public health centres, haat/bazaars/religious places in these villages will be visited for survey.
- Citizens' feedback will be collected from over 50 lakh citizens on SBM related issues through direct interaction as well as online feedback.

The weights to different elements of the SSG would be as below:

- Direct Observation of sanitation in public places: 30%
- Service Level Progress on sanitation progress in the country as per SBMG- MIS: 35%
- Citizen's Feedback on sanitation parameters: 35%

18. Smart Urbanization is the need of the hour

Context

- Over 34% of India's current population lives in urban areas, rising by 3% since 2011. Cities require a renewal that factors in rural-urban migration

A rising number

- The existing large urban agglomerations (those with a population above 50 lakh) have remained mostly constant in number since 2005, smaller clusters have risen significantly (from 34 to 50 clusters with 10-50 lakh population).
- By some estimates, India's urban population could increase to 814 million by 2050. And yet, cities look and feel downtrodden, riven with poverty and poor infrastructure, with little semblance of urban planning.
- With an increase in urban population will come rising demands for basic services such as clean water, public transportation, sewage treatment and housing.

Smart City front

- The smart city project implementation is also lagging, with about 148 projects completed and over 70% still at various stages of preparation.

- There is still an outstanding shortage of over 10 million affordable houses despite the government taking encouraging steps to incentivize their construction.

Definition of Urban

- Urban development comes under State governments, with the Governor notifying an area as urban based on parameters such as population, density, revenue generated for the local administration and percentage employed in non-agricultural activities.
- This notification leads to the creation of an urban local government or municipality, classifying the area as a "statutory town".
- The Central government considers a settlement as urban :
 - * If it has a urban local government, a minimum population of 5,000;
 - * Over 75% of its (male) population working in non-agricultural activities; and
 - * A population density of at least 400 per sq. km.
- However, many States consider such "census towns" as rural, and establish governance through a rural local government or panchayat.

Urban India's challenges

- Recurring instances of floods in Mumbai,
- Dengue in Delhi.
- Lakes on fire in Bengaluru paint a grim picture.
- Work on the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor project and the bullet train is very slow
- Another issue is the low level of urban infrastructure investment and capacity building.
 - * India spends about \$17 per capita annually on urban infrastructure projects, against a global benchmark of \$100 and China's \$116.
- Announcing a variety of schemes, the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission included, but implementation has been mostly inadequate, with exploration of financing options limited as well.

Systemic policy to deal with urban migration

- Internal migration in India is very closely linked to urban transitions, with such migration helping reduce poverty or prevent households from slipping into it. Urban migration is not viewed positively in India, with policies often bluntly seeking to reduce rural to urban migration.
- Preventing such migration can be counterproductive —it would be better to have policies and programmes in place to facilitate the integration of migrants into the local urban fabric, and building city plans with a regular migration forecast assumed.

- Lowering the cost of migration, along with eliminating discrimination against migrants, while protecting their rights will help raise development across the board.

Way forward

- The announcement of a new urbanization policy seeks to rebuild Indian cities around clusters of human capital, instead of considering them simply as an agglomeration of land use, is a welcome transition.
- We need to empower our cities, with a focus on land policy reforms, granting urban local bodies the freedom to raise financing and enforce local land usage norms.
- For an India to shine, the transformation of its cities is necessary.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Brainy Skin

Context

- An Indian-origin scientist working on a project to create a robotic hand covered in so-called brainy skin that mimics the human sense of touch has won 1.5 million pounds in funding for the project.

Details

- Human skin is an incredibly complex system capable of detecting pressure, temperature and texture through an array of neural sensors that carry signals from the skin to the brain.
- Brainy Skin reacts like human skin, which has its own neurons that respond immediately to touch rather than having to relay the whole message to the brain.
- This electronic thinking skin is made from silicon-based printed neural transistors and graphene — an ultra-thin form of carbon that is only an atom thick, but stronger than steel.
- Inspired by real skin, this project will harness the technological advances in electronic engineering to mimic some features of human skin, such as softness, bendability and now, also sense of touch. This skin will not just mimic the morphology of the skin but also its functionality.
- The research, dubbed neuPRINTSKIN (Neuromorphic Printed Tactile Skin), received the latest 1.5 million pounds in funding from the Engineering and Physical Science Research Council (EPSRC)

Significance

- The super-flexible, hypersensitive skin may one day be used to make more responsive prosthetics for amputees, or to build robots with a sense of touch.
- Brainy skin is critical for the autonomy of robots and for a safe human-robot interaction to meet emerging societal needs such as helping the elderly.

2. Center of Excellence (CoE) for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence by NASSCOM

Context

- The National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom), India's premier software lobby, opened a Center of Excellence (CoE) for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence

Details

- The aim is to serve as a platform for intelligence-sharing and technology collaboration between stakeholders to build collective capabilities for the industry and country in the cutting-edge areas of artificial intelligence

- The CoE initiative is a nationwide programme on innovation, focusing on solutions in smart manufacturing, automotive, healthcare, agriculture, energy, IoT, banking and financial services, retail, telecom, and host of emerging technologies.

Significance

- The center aims to support SMBs, by fast-tracking their product development, provide market access to enterprises and assist them by co-creating programs along with other industry partners and start-ups to solve complex and real-world business problems.

3. Crew Interactive Mobile Companion, or CIMON

- It is the first personal, artificial intelligence-powered companion in space.
- It is an English-speaking droid, roughly the size of a basketball which will help conduct experiments on the International Space Station (ISS).
- The robot has been described as a "flying brain"
- CIMON was developed by the European aerospace company Airbus on behalf of the German space agency, which is known by its German acronym, DLR. The robot's AI is IBM's famous Watson system.

Current Status

- Currently, astronauts read these instructions from a laptop which is an arduous process
- This will be replaced by a responsive, hands-free companion like CIMON

Significance

- CIMON will increase the efficiency of the astronaut
- It will help mitigate the disorientation astronauts may feel in space
- CIMON will be able to access lots of relevant information, including photos and videos, about the procedure in question

4. DNA Profiling Bill

- The Union Cabinet has cleared a Bill that allows law enforcement agencies to collect DNA samples, create DNA profiles and special databanks for forensic-criminal investigations.

The DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill

- It is the latest version of a Bill that originated as a DNA profiling Bill, framed by the Department of Biotechnology.
- The aim of that draft legislation was to set in place an institutional mechanism to collect and deploy DNA technologies to identify persons based on samples collected from crime scenes or for identifying missing persons.

Proposals

- 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, or one for two or more states, as required.
- All regional DNA databanks will be mandated to share their information 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.

Labs

- 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, for example, by police, 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.

Concerns

- The main issue is whether DNA technology is foolproof, and whether the proposed law adequately addresses the possibility of abuse.
- There are chances, however remote, 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.
- More frequently asserted are the privacy-related objections.
- Questions such as whose DNA can be collected and under what circumstances, whether the consent of the individual is required, who can access the database, to what uses the DNA information can be put apart from identifying an individual, and the circumstances under which a record can be deleted, have been raised repeatedly.
- It has been pointed out that information like ancestry or susceptibility to a disease, or other genetic traits, is liable to be misused.
- It has also been argued that DNA tests have not led to an improvement in conviction rates in countries where it is already being followed.

5. Gravitational Waves Observatory

- The Government of India has given 'In-Principle' approval for Construction and Operation of Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Laboratory – India (LIGO) in India in collaboration with LIGO Laboratory, United States of America.
- This is the third observatory identical to the two LIGO observatories in USA.
- LIGO-India Observatory is scheduled to be operational in 2024.
- Hingoli District of Maharashtra has been selected as the primary site and the process of acquiring land for the project is in advanced stage.

6. Global Relay of Observatories Watching Transients Happen (GROWTH)

- It is the country's first robotic telescope located at the Indian Astronomical Observatory (IAO) at Hanle in Ladakh
- It is designed to observe dynamic or transient events in the universe.
- The fully robotic optical research telescope is designed to capture cosmic events occurring in timescales much shorter than light years – years, days and even hours.
- It is part of a multi-country collaborative initiative
 - * Universities and research institutes from the US, the UK, Japan, India, Germany, Taiwan and Israel are part of the initiative.
- The primary research objective of the project is time domain astronomy, which entails the study of explosive transients and variable sources in the universe.

Funding

- The project is fully funded by the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) under the PIRE project, administered by Indo US Science and Technology Forum.

How does it work?

- The 70 cm robotic telescope joins other larger facilities at IAO in Hanle - the Himalayan Chandra Telescope, the gamma-ray array telescope (HAGAR), and the imaging Cherenkov telescope (MACE).
- The telescope is expected to generate enormous amounts of data - over one thousand gigabytes in a year.
- It is also programmed to directly communicate with different ground-based and space-based surveys searching for transient sources.
- The telescope has a sensitive camera capable of detecting even the faintest transients found by partner survey telescopes such as the Zwicky Transient Facility at Palomar, California

Transient surveys

- It involves scanning a part of the sky, moving on to other areas, returning to the first part repeatedly and comparing images to see changes such as increase or decrease in brightness of a source.
- Transient events in the universe are caused due to several factors such as relatively benign flares on stars, accretion of matter on compact objects, stellar mergers and explosions. All this results in a flash in the sky for a period and then slowly fades away.

7. Long March-9 rocket /Changzheng rocket

- It is operated by the People's Republic of China.
- In English, the rockets are abbreviated as LM- for export and CZ- within China, as "Chang Zheng" means "Long March" in Chinese pinyin.
- The rockets are named after the Long March of Chinese communist history.

Context

- China is working on a super-powerful rocket that would be capable of delivering heavier payloads into low orbit than NASA

Details

- By 2030, the Long March-9 rocket under development will be able to carry 140 tonnes into low-Earth orbit -- where TV and earth observation satellites currently fly
- Europe's Ariane 5 rocket delivers about 20 tonnes
- Elon Musk's Falcon Heavy about 64 tonnes
- It would outstrip the 130 tonnes of NASA's Space Launch System, which is due to become operational in 2020.
- China is also planning to build a base on the moon

Structure and working

- China's Long March-9 would have a core stage measuring 10 metres (33 feet) in diameter and boast four powerful boosters, each with a diameter of five metres.
- The first stage and the boosters will be retrieved after a vertical landing

Uses

- The rocket could be used in manned lunar landings, deep space exploration or constructing a space-based solar power plant.

8. Net Neutrality

Context

- In a move that will ensure open and free Internet in India, the government has approved the principle of net neutrality.

Key developments in the Net neutrality debate

January 2015: DoT sets up a committee to give recommendations on Net neutrality	February 2016: TRAI bars telecoms from charging differential rates for data services
March 2015: TRAI issues paper on regulatory framework for over-the-top services	March 2016: DoT seeks TRAI's recommendations
May 2015: Committee recommends that apps offering domestic calling be brought under the framework like telecom operators, but those providing messaging and international calling services over the Internet be kept free from licensing	Nov. 2017: TRAI recommends upholding the basic principles of Net neutrality
	July 2018: Telecom Commission approves TRAI's recommendations on Net neutrality

Significance

- This means that telecom and Internet service providers must treat all data on the Internet equally, and not discriminate or charge differently by user, content, site, platform, or application.
- They cannot engage in practices such as blocking, slowing down or granting preferential speeds to any content.
- India's decision to uphold Net neutrality assumes greater significance given that in the U.S., the rules on Net neutrality were repealed.

Critical services

- But certain emerging and critical services will be kept out of the purview of these norms.
- A separate committee has been set up under the DoT to examine what these critical services will be.
- These may include autonomous vehicles, digital healthcare services or disaster management.

Background

- The Telecom Commission (TC) — which is the highest decision-making body in the Department of Telecom (DoT) — approved the recommendation made by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).

Recommendations

- Internet access services should be governed by a principle that restricts any form of discrimination or interference in the treatment of content, including practices like blocking, degrading, slowing down or granting preferential speeds or treatment to any content.
- This principle would apply to any discriminatory treatment based on the sender or receiver, the network protocols, or the user equipment, but not to specialized services or other exclusions.
- These would not apply to reasonable traffic management practices by the service provider.
- To implement Net neutrality, the regulator had recommended that the terms of licence agreements that govern the provision of Internet services in India be amended to incorporate the principles of non-discriminatory treatment of content along with the appropriate exclusions and exceptions.

- The regulator has further recommended establishing a multi-stakeholder not-for-profit body for the monitoring and enforcement of these principles.
- The Telecom Commission also gave its nod to install 12.5 lakh Wi-Fi hotspots in all gram panchayats

9. Pad Abort Test by ISRO

- It is a test of a launch escape system to determine how well the system could get the crew of a spacecraft to safety in an emergency on the launch pad.
 - * Launch Escape System (LES) or launch abort system (LAS) is a crew safety system connected to a space capsule, used to quickly separate the capsule from its launch vehicle rocket in case of a launch abort emergency, such as an impending explosion.
- ISRO describes PAT as the first milestone in qualifying its crew escape system in an emergency.
- The test is also one of the many main and supporting technologies that the space agency is developing ahead of its ambitious Human Space Flight Programme (HSP)

How does it work?

- According to information put together from multiple sources, a roughly 3,770-kg trial crew module, aided by four solid-fuelled rockets built around it, will be flown up to a distance of 2.4 km.
- On firing, the module will be jettisoned and demonstrate a safe descent with the help of parachutes — all this in around three minutes.

Significance

- The priority of all space agencies in a human space mission is the safe return of its astronauts.
- With the pad abort test, ISRO aims to prove its technology that will safely parachute future astronauts down in case their space vehicle develops snags while taking off

Human Space Flight Programme (HSP)

- The Indian human Spaceflight programme is a proposal by the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) to develop and launch a two-person crew to low Earth orbit.
- There is no time-frame set for this, as manned space programme is not an approved programme by the Government of India.
- India and Russia signed a memorandum of understanding on joint activities in the field of human spaceflight programme in 2008.

10. Parker Solar Probe

- NASA's Parker Solar Probe will study sun's outer atmosphere and to understand how sun works.
- It is set to fly into the sun's corona within 3.8 million miles from the solar surface, seven times closer than any other spacecraft.

- The previous closest pass to the sun was by a probe called Helios 2, which in 1976 came within 43 million km.
- The distance of the earth from the sun is approximately 149.6 million km.

Why is it named so?

- The name of the probe initially called the Solar Probe Plus has been renamed as the Parker Solar Probe in honor of astrophysicist Eugene Parker. This is the first time NASA has named a spacecraft after a living person.
- Astrophysicist Eugene Parker published a research paper predicting the existence of solar wind in 1958. At that time, it was thought that the space between planets was a vacuum. Parker's theory of solar wind was later confirmed by satellite observations.

Details

- The probe will be subjected to brutal heat and radiation that has not experienced by any other man-made probes previously.
 - * It has been outfitted with a heat shield designed to keep its instruments at a tolerable 29 degrees Celsius even as the spacecraft faces temperatures reaching nearly 21,370 degrees Celsius at its closest pass.
- The objective of the mission will be to study sun in detail and shed light on Earth and its place in the solar system.
 - * The primary science goals for the mission are to trace how energy and heat move through the solar corona and to explore what accelerates the solar wind as well as solar energetic particles.
- The mission will work towards determining the structure and dynamics of the plasma and magnetic fields at the sources of the solar wind. This will be NASA's first mission to the sun and its outermost atmosphere corona.
- The probe will use Venus' gravity during seven flybys over nearly seven years to gradually bring its orbit closer to the Sun

Why do we study the sun and the solar wind?

- The corona gives rise to the solar wind, a continuous flow of charged particles that permeates the solar system. Unpredictable solar winds cause disturbances in our planet's magnetic field and can play havoc with communications technology on the earth. NASA hopes the findings will enable scientists to forecast changes in the earth's space environment.
- In the most extreme cases of these space weather events, it can actually affect our power grids on the earth
- The sun is a source of light and heat for life on Earth. The more we know about it, the more we can understand how life on Earth developed.

11. Space Wars

Context

- U.S. President Donald Trump has announced the creation of a “space force” or a sixth branch of the American armed forces

Historical background

- The imperative by America to build space weapons, which is nothing new, goes back to the Cold War, an example being the Strategic Defense Initiative of the Reagan Administration.

Why is this important for USA?

- The intention is to see that the U.S. establishes and maintains dominance in space.
- The purpose being to deny the Russians and the Chinese advantages in space.
- There is exponential growth in China's space military capabilities over the last two decades.

Issue Area

- What advantages it will bring to American war-fighting capabilities are still unclear.
- U.S. Air Force — historically a major constituency and votary for space weapons — is not entirely enthusiastic about this new service, which could take resources away from it and the prestige
- Adding another military arm would only compound the organizational challenges facing the U.S. armed services.
- Objections have also emerged from within the Administration
 - * First, it could undercut ongoing missions
 - * Second, it could very well increase budgetary allocations in the future.
 - * Third, a space corps could undermine American efforts in the domain of joint warfare.
- Nevertheless, the fundamental difficulty of a space corps is that the physical environment of space is not conducive to the conduct of military operations without incurring serious losses in the form of spacecraft and debris. And despite efforts to make spacecraft more fuel efficient, the energy requirements are enormous.

China and Russia's responses

- China has reiterated it opposes the weaponization of space
 - * With a range of terrestrial interests in direct conflict with the Americans, Beijing will be in no mood to allow U.S. space dominance.
- Russia for its part has been shriller in its response, making it clear that it will vigorously take on the U.S.
 - * However, given its lack of the resources for competition, it will in all probability, for tactical reasons, align itself with China.

Implications for India

American military goals, which are still undefined in space, could still have consequences for India.

- India is officially committed to PAROS, or the prevention of an arms race in outer space, it is yet to formulate a credible official response
- India has yet to establish a credible space command of its own.

Way forward

- India should come out with an official white paper on space weapons.
- The government needs to engage with multiple stakeholders directly about the role space weapons will play in India's grand strategy. More than their war-fighting attributes, space weapons have one principal function — deterrence.

12. Scientific Research Infrastructure for Maintenance and Networks (SRIMAN)

What was the need for this Policy?

- In recent years India has seen a growth in acquisition of research equipment (mostly imported). However, access to equipment's needs attention.
- It is common to find in Indian laboratories, expensive equipment's lying idle or underutilized.
- According to a recent study by NSTMIS, DST (2013), 94% of the research equipments used in India are imported while only 6% are being manufactured indigenously.
 - * Further, the study showed that large number of equipment's are not shared and are marred with issues related to maintenance and want of spares.
 - * This adds to the burden of research infrastructure costs
- A suitable ecosystem for sharing of scientific equipment's is a solution to this problem. A culture of collaboration/sharing between institutions helps in optimum utilization of equipment's resulting in better maintenance of the equipment.

So, the Department of Science and Technology (DST) has come up with this policy document.

Features

- Procurement and maintenance of equipment and infrastructure for research
- Providing access and sharing of scientific equipment and infrastructure
- Disposal of scientific equipment and infrastructure
- Capacity Building of operators and technicians for efficient operations
- Monitoring of usage of expensive scientific research infrastructure
- Infrastructure Management for efficient operations

It plans to hire out to researchers all lab equipment that cost more than 10 lakh.

How does it work?

- It envisages institutions declaring on a website how often their instruments would be available for use by those outside the department or university.
- Those who would like to use, for example, a DNA-sequencing machine, would have to pay a fee and specify the purpose and time they would want it for.

Advantages

- The Govt would now rent instruments in government labs generating a steady rental income
- This would reduce the amount of time such expensive instruments remain idle.
- The policy also aims through its proper implementation to increase scientific output by wider access and reduce brain drain by providing access to wide section of researchers.

13. TRAI - 'Users own data, not entities storing them'

Context

- Telecom regulator TRAI said each user owned his or her data collected by or stored with the entities in the digital ecosystem that includes devices and applications.

Details

- The entities, it stressed, are mere custodians of the data
- The right to choose, consent, data portability, and the right to be forgotten ought to be given to consumers.

All these were said because TRAI felt, the existing framework for protecting the personal data of telecom users is not sufficient.

Recommendations on Consumer side

- running consumer awareness programmes
- It has suggested that multilingual, easy to understand, short templates of agreements or terms and conditions be made mandatory.
- It has also recommended prohibiting use of "pre-ticked boxes" to gain users' consent.
- TRAI suggested that device manufacturers incorporate provisions so that users can delete pre-installed applications if they so decide.
- Also, the user should be able to download the certified applications at his/ her own will and the devices should in no manner restrict such actions by the users,

Recommendations on Policy side

- The regulator has recommended that the personal data of telecom consumers should be encrypted during the motion as well as during the storage in the digital ecosystem

- Decryption should be permitted on a need basis by authorised entities in accordance to consent of the consumer or as per requirement of the law.

- Department of Telecommunication should re-examine the encryption standards

- TRAI has suggested that a common platform be created for sharing of information relating to data security breach incidences by all entities in the digital ecosystem, including telecom service providers

- * Data security breaches may take place inspite of adoption of best practices/ necessary measures taken by the data controllers and processors.

- * Sharing of information concerning to data security breaches should be encouraged and incentivized to prevent/ mitigate such occurrences in future

- All entities in the digital ecosystem that control or process users'personal data such as devices, operating systems, browsers as well as applications, be brought under a data protection framework.

14. Vikas Engine

- The test for a duration of 195 seconds was conducted by scientists at the ISRO Propulsion Complex (IPRC) in Mahendragiri in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu

Soaring high

The Vikas engine is aimed at improving the payload capability of PSLV, GSLV and GSLV Mk-III launch vehicles



■ Vikas is a family of liquid fuelled rocket engines

■ **Utility:** The engine is the workhorse liquid rocket engine powering the second stage of India's PSLV; second stage and the four strap-on stages of GSLV ; and twin engine core liquid stage (L110) of GSLV Mk-III

■ **Performance:**

Thrust 800 kN,
Specific impulse: 290 seconds

■ **Dimension**
Length 3.70 m (12.1 feet)

■ **Liquid-fuel engine:**
Propellant: N₂O₄

■ **Cycle:** Gas generator

SECURITY AND DEFENSE RELATED

1. BrahMos tested in extreme weather conditions

- It is a short range ramjet supersonic cruise missile that can be launched from submarines, ships, aircraft or land.
- The name BrahMos is a portmanteau formed from the names of two rivers, Brahmaputra and Moskva of Russia. It is the world's fastest anti-ship cruise missile in operation.
- The missile travels at speeds of Mach 2.8 to 3.0.
- It is capable of carrying a warhead of 300 kilogram and has top supersonic speed of Mach 2.8. It can strike a target at maximum range of 290-km.
- It is two-stage missile, the first one being solid and the second one ramjet liquid propellant. BrahMos has already been inducted into the Indian Army and Navy. While, the Air Force version is in final stage of trial.

Context

- BrahMos has again proved its all-weather capability, flying in sea state 7, with waves as high as nine meters
 - * Sea state is the degree of turbulence at sea, generally measured on a scale of 0 to 9 according to average wave height

WMO Sea State Code	Wave height	Characteristics
0	0 metres (0 ft)	Calm (glassy)
1	0 to 0.1 metres (0.00 to 0.33 ft)	Calm (rippled)
2	0.1 to 0.5 metres (3.9 in to 1 ft 7.7 in)	Smooth (wavelets)
3	0.5 to 1.25 metres (1 ft 8 in to 4 ft 1 in)	Slight
4	1.25 to 2.5 metres (4 ft 1 in to 8 ft 2 in)	Moderate
5	2.5 to 4 metres (8 ft 2 in to 13 ft 1 in)	Rough
6	4 to 6 metres (13 to 20 ft)	Very rough
7	6 to 9 metres (20 to 30 ft)	High
8	9 to 14 metres (30 to 46 ft)	Very high
9	Over 14 metres (46 ft)	Phenomenal

2. Counter-drone strategy for country's airports

- The counter-drone plan is prepared by a committee headed by Director General of BCAS (Bureau of Civil Aviation Security) Kumar Rajesh Chandra
- They have proposed neutralizing drones through a "soft kill" approach which will include entrapping or jamming drones instead of destroying them.
 - * "Soft kill" approach will be employed instead of a hard kill approach because destroying a drone with a payload of explosives or biochemical will result in an attack and serve the purpose of their handlers.
 - * Therefore, the best approach is to entrap them and not destroy them.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs may prepare a separate plan to deal with drone attacks in sensitive zones such as Parliament

- The Ministry of Civil Aviation had released draft rules for unmanned aircraft systems in 2017 and proposed to ban their operation within 5 km radius of an airport and 50 km from an international border.

BCAS (Bureau of Civil Aviation Security)

- The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security is an attached office of the Ministry of Civil Aviation of India.
- It is the regulatory authority for civil aviation security in India.
- It is headed by an officer of the rank of Director General of Police and is designated as Commissioner of Security (Civil Aviation).
- Commissioner of security (CA) is the appropriate authority for implementation of Annexure 17 to Chicago Convention of International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
- Commissioner of security (CA) is responsible for the development, implementation and maintenance of the National Civil Aviation Security Programme.
- The main responsibility of BCAS are laying down standards and measures in respect of security of civil flights at International and domestic airports in India.

3. Drug Laws in India need changes

context

- Punjab government recommended to the Union government the death penalty for first time offenders convicted for drug trafficking and smuggling.

Conviction Rate

- In 2015, 41.7% of all prisoners in Punjab were in jail for various offences related to this law.
- The conviction rate recorded for NDPS cases in Patiala for the same year was 90.7%.
- The comparative conviction rate under the Indian Penal Code was 30.7%.

Laws in India

- The law on drugs is covered by the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (NDPS Act).
- The Act's primary objective is to deter drug trafficking. It uses every trick in the book to achieve this: strict liability offences, mandatory minimum sentences, even the death penalty for certain repeat offences
- The death penalty was introduced in the Act in 1989, to deter narco-terrorism.

- * The legislators even at that time believed that the only way to tackle the growing drug menace was to incorporate the harshest possible punishments in the law.
- The law also provides a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years for offences involving commercial quantities of drugs.
 - * This determination is based on the assumption that people found with commercial quantities of drugs are drug traffickers.

Commercial Quantity

- An executive notification passed by the Department of Revenue in 2009 led to a major change in how commercial quantities under the Act were determined, creating a situation where many offences involving commercial quantity were, in fact, not trafficking offences
- This notification assigns punishment based on the weight of the whole drug and not just pure content
- Supreme Court had held in E. Michael Raj v Intelligence Officer, Narcotics Control Bureau (2008) that the rate of purity of the drug is decisive for determining the quantum of sentence — for small, intermediary or commercial quantity
 - * The punishment, the judgment had held, must be based on the volume or content of the offending drug in the mixture and not on the aggregate weight of the mixture as such
- Thus, given how the law is interpreted, it is hard to say whether the people imprisoned are traffickers, peddlers, mules or users

Drug	Small Quantity	Commercial Quantity
Amphetamine	2 grams	50 grams
Buprenorphine	1 gram	20 grams
Charas/Hashish	Charas/Hashish	1 kg
Cocaine	2 grams	100 grams
Codeine	10 grams	1 kg
Diazepam	20 grams	500 grams
Ganja	1 kg	20 kg
Heroin	5 grams	250 grams
MDMA	0.5 grams	10 grams
Methamphetamine	2 grams	50 grams
Methaqualone	20 grams	500 grams
Morphine	5 grams	250 grams
Poppy straw	1 kg	50 kg

Law does not consider if person is a peddler or smuggler, or an addict feeding his habit.

- Under the law, proving possession alone is sufficient, the prosecution does not have to prove intent to lead to conviction. Since intent is harder to prove than a criminal act alone, strict liability ensures higher

convictions.

- This has, predictably, led to another predicament. The police in Punjab follow a template charge-sheet format, just to prove possession.
- They rarely, if ever, examine the intent of the criminal act. The way investigation is conducted right now, it is impossible to tell whether the person is a peddler or smuggler, or an addict feeding his habit.

Issue Area

- Cabinet's proposal to make the law even harsher is an attempt to play to the gallery.
- Assumption that harsher measures can help deal with the drug problem is flawed.
- Deterrence by harsh punishments has consistently failed
- It may alleviate people's concerns for the time being, but it will not yield the results the state as well as its people so desperately seek

What should be done?

- To ensure that traffickers are caught instead of users, the law must make intent an ingredient of offences under the NDPS Act.
- The burden of proof should be on the prosecution to prove that the accused possessed the drug for a particular purpose. Possession alone should not be sufficient to constitute an offence under the Act.
- The Act is also blatantly unforgiving of anyone found in possession of any drug.
 - * Section 27 of the Act makes consuming any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance a criminal offence. Criminalizing addiction stigmatizes it, which automatically inhibits addicts from coming forward for treatment.
 - * The state should consider decriminalizing addiction and developing an effective treatment strategy by consulting experts, partner agencies and users, and allocating adequate resources
- The Punjab government must assess its infrastructural needs and ensure that they are met.
- Given the geography, the drugs, whether it is opium or heroin, make an easy and assisted entrance into Punjab from the Golden Crescent (Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan), and synthetic drugs are thought to come in via Himachal Pradesh.
 - * Therefore, security-planners in New Delhi have to make sure that the border is properly barred to the flow of narcotic substances.

Way forward

- The political class has a critical role to play in winning the war on drugs. It is not enough that politicians merely line up to have themselves tested for drugs to win political brownie points.

- They need to put the State and the nation above self-serving political ends and agree that this battle must be fought in concrete ways, going beyond photo-ops and sound-bites.

4. Jammu Kashmir Police can book Army Personnel?

SC to decide

Context

- The case was about the tussle between Jammu Kashmir and the Center, if army can be prosecuted for their action taken in "good faith."

J&K View

- It is the duty of a police officer to register an FIR if a cognizable offence has been committed, whether by an Army man or not.
- The controversy is covered by the Constitution Bench decisions in the Naga People's Movement of Human Rights judgment of 1997 and the Lalita Kumari verdict of 2013.

* A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in *Lalita Kumari v. Govt. of U.P. 2008*) held that registration of First Information Report is mandatory under Section 154 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, if the information discloses commission of a cognizable offence and no preliminary inquiry is permissible in such a situation.

* If the information received does not disclose a cognizable offence but indicates the necessity for an inquiry, a preliminary inquiry may be conducted only to ascertain whether cognizable offence is disclosed or not.

* o The police officer cannot avoid his duty of registering offence if cognizable offence is disclosed. Action must be taken against erring officers who do not register the FIR if information received by him discloses a cognizable offence.

Center View

- The Centre countered that Section 7 of The Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act of 1990 lays down that there would be no legal proceedings against Army personnel for acts done within the course of their duty.

5. Kargil Vijay Diwas

- A motorcycle expedition comprising of 'SHWET ASHW' the elite Motorcycle Display Team of the Corps of Military Police, was flagged off' on 02 July 2018 to commemorate the victory of Indian Army in Operation Vijay 1999.
- The expedition will traverse a distance of more than 3250 Kms from Bangalore to Dras, Jammu and Kashmir over a period of 24 days across eight states of the country, reaching Kargil War Memorial, Dras on 26 July 2018.

- The expedition will be flagged in on 26 July 2018 at Kargil War Memorial, Dras as a part of the 'Kargil Vijay Diwas' celebrations.

Aim of Expedition:

- To strengthen the brotherhood, pay homage to the supreme sacrifices made by our martyrs during the Kargil War and motivate the youth to join Indian Army.

Background:

- The war took place between May and July of 1999 in Jammu and Kashmir's Kargil district.
- The conflict is believed to have been orchestrated by the then Pakistan army chief General Pervez Musharraf without the knowledge of the then Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.
- It began with the infiltration of both Pakistani troops and terrorists into Indian territory.
- The infiltrators positioned themselves in key locations that gave them a strategic advantage during the start of the conflict.
- Based on information from local shepherds, the Indian Army was able to ascertain the points of incursion and launch "Operation Vijay".
- Thus, Operation Vijay (1999) was the Indian operation to push back infiltrators in the Kargil War.

6. People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK)

- It is an armed insurgent group in Manipur demanding a separate and independent homeland. PREPAK was formed under the leadership of R. K. Tulachandra in 1977.
- Its main demand is the expulsion of 'outsiders' from the State.
- As the cadres are drawn from the Meitei people who are predominantly Vaishnavites, the group operates mainly in the Imphal valley.
- It is believed that the group has camps in Myanmar for training in understanding with the NSCN-K.

7. Reang tribe (Brus in Mizoram)

Context

- 32,876 displaced people belonging to the Bru community will be repatriated to Mizoram from Tripura after two decades of being away from home
- Centre and the governments of Mizoram and Tripura entered into tripartite agreement for the same

Background

- The Bru community once spread across Mamith and Kolasib districts of Mizoram, were forced to flee their native land in 1997 after animosity between the tribe and the Mizo turned violent.
- Conflict between the communities began in 1995 when organizations representing Mizo — majority community in the state — demanded that Brus be stripped of their voting rights as they were not indigenous to Mizoram.

- The exodus in 1997 was spurred by violent clashes in Mamith subdivision, a Reang-dominated area, when they demanded creation of an autonomous council. The demand was vehemently opposed by Mizo groups.
- This led to rise of militant outfits among the Brus who in 1997 shot dead a Mizo forest guard.
- The violent backlash from Mizos to this incident forced Brus to flee to Tripura where they have been living in refugee camps in pitiable condition for close to two decades.

Details

- The displaced people currently are living in temporary camps in Tripura
- The Central government will provide financial assistance for rehabilitation of Bru community members in Mizoram and address their issues of security, education, livelihood

Financial Assistance

- Each Bru family will be given one-time financial assistance of ₹4 lakh to be kept in fixed deposit in name of head of the family within one month of repatriation.
- Each family will be given assistance of ₹5,000 per month along with free ration for two years.
- A house building assistance of ₹1.5 lakh is to be disbursed

Significance

- The Brus have been in their camps for a generation, but their story remains unknown in most of India.
- It probably shows the difference in the ways different displaced populations are treated in India.
- The halting repatriation process has lessons for the handling of possible future displacement crises and resettlement efforts.

About the Tribe

- The Bru can be found all over the Tripura
 - * They may also be found in Mizoram, Assam, Manipur and Bangladesh.
- They speak the Reang dialect of Kokborok language which is of Tibeto-Burmese origin and is locally referred to as Kau Bru.
- Bru are the second most populous tribe of Tripura after the Tripuris

Culture and religion

- The marriage system is similar to other Tripuri tribes of Tripura.
- There is no dowry system.
- Dance is an integral part of Reang life.
- The Hojagiri folk dance of Riang sub tribe is rather well known all over the world.
- 'Buisu', not 'bihu' is the most popular festival of reang tribes.

- The majority of the Reang belong to the Vaishnav school of Hinduism and claim Kshatriya status.
- They are polytheists and believe in multiple Gods and Goddesses.

8. RIMPAC

- It is the world's largest international maritime warfare exercise.
- RIMPAC is held biennially during June and July
- It is hosted and administered by the United States Navy's Pacific Fleet, headquartered at Pearl Harbor
- The US invites military forces from the Pacific Rim and beyond to participate.
- This program will include gunnery, missile, anti-submarine, and air defense exercises, as well as amphibious, counter-piracy, mine clearance, explosive ordnance disposal, diving, and salvage operations.
- Described by the US Navy as a unique training opportunity that helps participants foster and sustain the cooperative relationships that are critical to ensuring the safety of sea lanes and security on the world's oceans
- China, which has participated in past events, has been disinvited from this year's RIMPAC over its actions in the South China Sea, specifically the militarization of its man-made islands in the Spratly chain.

9. Social Media Communication (SMC) hub

Context

- The ministry of information and broadcasting is in the process of setting up a Social Media Communication (SMC) hub in every district across the country that will be the eyes and ears of the government and report back with real-time updates from ground zero.

What is it?

- The hub proposes to monitor social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and even email) handles at the very local level in multiple languages to carry out "sentiment analysis", track down the influence-making social media users and to categorize the conversations on social media into positive, negative and neutral sections.
- It also aimed to track real time the way social media receives news on government's schemes and announcements and also political events.

Structure

- The project is meant to strengthen the social media division and recruit social media managers to be deployed in districts of the country.
- Each district will have one social media manager who will be entrusted with the tasks of keeping a
 - * close eye on the regional and local media,
 - * collecting data of regional media and of local events,

- * providing content for social media
- * Supporting media units at the regional level for social media publicity.
- * provide 'reports on sentiment, reach, details relating to trending topics and hashtags and compile six reports per day'
- These social media managers will also monitor local editions of newspapers, local cable channels, local audio channels (FM) and key local social media handles for important local developments.
- They will make a daily analysis report incorporating local sentiments to be sent to region head in the PIB as well as the media hub (command centre)
- Broadcast Engineering Consultants India Limited, a PSU under the I&B Ministry, has been given the mandate for the social media hub.

Implementation

- As part of the project, new software is being developed for the hubs that will enable two-way communication and help disseminate information.
- The platform is expected to use predictive analytics in a bid to study how "public perception (can) be moulded in a positive manner for the country, how could nationalistic feelings be inculcated in the masses, how can the perception management of India be improved at the world..."
- The platform will eventually power a realtime New Media Command Room and operate in Indian languages like Hindi, Urdu, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Bengali, Punjabi and Tamil, along with English.
 - * The tool, which will be able to monitor in all major Indian languages as well as several foreign ones, will use Natural Language Processing to "extract sentiment as well as the context".
 - * Natural Language Processing is a technology used by computers to understand the sentiment behind human communications.

Advantages

- The tool should act as the guiding tool for the ministry to understand the impact of various social media campaigns conducted on various schemes run by the government
- It could help in efficient decision making by identifying the key problem areas
- The social media manager will identify positive stories regarding various initiatives launched by the government and apprise the I&B Ministry to disseminate the success stories through various platforms

Concern raised by SC

- Govt wants to tap WhatsApp texts, it will be like creating a surveillance state said Supreme Court

Issue Area

- Such intrusive action on the part of the government, is not only without the authority of law, but brazenly infringes fundamental right to freedom of speech under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution. Such action of the government also violates right of privacy
- The tool will use the data to create "a 360-degree view of the people who are creating buzz across various topics". It will then target citizens with "personalized responses".
- The government can analyse digital footprint to detect your sexual orientation or political preference. Combined with your Aadhaar data, the setting up of a totalitarian regime will be complete.

Way forward

- The government should, therefore, focus on enacting tough data protection laws which ensure a balance between individual rights and legitimate concerns of the state like national security or investigation of crime.

10. Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act - A flawed Legislation

Historical Background

- In the Constituent Assembly (CA) debates K.T. Shah said acts like "Public Safety Acts" and "Defence of India Acts" had wide range of restrictions, they have been imposed to curtail the fundamental rights

Present Context

- The arrest of five individuals, ostensibly for instigating the riots at Bhima-Koregaon at the beginning of the year, throws the fears expressed in the CA
- The accused, who include activists and lawyers, have been booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

UAPA Definition

- The UAPA authorizes the government to ban "unlawful organizations" and "terrorist organizations" (subject to judicial review), and penalizes membership of such organizations

Issue Area

- The definition of "unlawful activities" includes "disclaiming" or "questioning" the territorial integrity of India and causing "disaffection" against India.
 - * These words are staggeringly vague and broad, and come close to establishing a regime of thought-crimes
- The problem of excessive breadth is then carried over into the "membership clauses", which are the heart of the UAPA.
 - * "Membership" of unlawful and terrorist organisations is a criminal offence, and in the latter case, it can be punished with life imprisonment.

- * But the Act fails entirely to define what "membership" entails.
- * These are not theoretical considerations: charge sheets under the UAPA often cite the seizure of books or magazines, and presence at "meetings", as clinching evidence of membership.
- Section 43D (5) of the Act prohibits courts from granting bail to a person if "on a perusal of the case diary or the [police] report ... [the court] is of the opinion that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the accusation against such person is *prima facie* true."
 - * But with inordinately slow pace at which criminal trials progress, Section 43D(5) of the UAPA is effectively a warrant for perpetual imprisonment without trial.
 - * on more than one occasion in recent years, terror accused have been acquitted after spending more than a decade in jail.
 - * This is something for which there can be no compensation or restitution; and it is only made possible because the law places an unbreakable shackle upon personal liberty.
- The traditional argument in Defence of laws such as the UAPA — that the state must be given a strong hand to control terrorist and other violent and disruptive activities
 - * It proves too much because it subordinates every other constitutional value — freedom of speech, personal liberty, the right to a fair trial — to the overarching concern of order.
 - * Such an attitude can be justified only in times of war or Emergency (and even then, subject to safeguards). But what the UAPA does is to normalise this "state of exception" and make it a permanent feature of the legal landscape.

Supreme Court

- In 2011, the Supreme Court attempted to narrow the scope of these provisions, holding that "membership" was limited to cases where an individual engaged in active incitement to violence.
- Anything broader than that, it ruled, would violate the constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and of association.
- The application of this ruling, however, has been patchy and arbitrary
 - * One judge of the Bombay High Court invoked it to grant bail to some members of the Kabir Kala Manch music troupe,
 - * Another judge ignored it and refused bail to other members of the same troupe (they were ultimately granted bail by the Supreme Court).

Way Forward

An examination of the UAPA shows how, in one overarching "anti-terrorism law", vast discretionary powers are conferred upon state agencies, judicial oversight is rendered toothless, and personal liberty is set at naught.

- So, the Constitution exists to protect us from the consequences of those imperfections.
- Civil and political rights are based upon the understanding that at no point should so much power, and so much discretion, be vested in the state that it utterly overwhelms the individual.
- The purpose of a Constitution and Fundamental rights should be to establish a "culture of justification" where the state cannot abuse its power.
- The power to keep citizens incarcerated for long periods of time, on vague charges, and without affording them an opportunity to answer their accusers in a swift and fair trial, is an anathema to democracy and the rule of law.
- The UAPA's stringent provisions should go the way of its predecessors — the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act. They should be removed by Parliament, and, in the alternative, struck down as unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.
- And if that is not feasible, then there must at least be a change in the legal culture, with the courts following the example of the Bombay High Court in the first Kabir Kala Manch case and granting bail unless the state can produce some cogent proof of criminality.

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

1. Bandipur National Park

- It is a national park located in Karnataka
- This national Park was established in 1974 as a tiger reserve under Project Tiger

Context

- The number of deaths of animals resulting from vehicles passing through the forest corridor has been reduced from as many as 93 wildlife deaths from 2004 to 2009, has declined to 34 between 2010 and 2018 after the ban on night traffic through the tiger reserve was introduced in 2009.
- Traffic has been banned through the tiger reserve from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m.

2. Blacktip Shark

- It is common to coastal tropical and subtropical waters around the world, including brackish habitats.
- The blacktip shark has a stout, fusiform body with a pointed snout, long gill slits, and no ridge between the dorsal fins.
- Most individuals have black tips or edges on the pectoral, dorsal, pelvic, and caudal fins.
- Blacktip sharks can grow up to eight feet long and weigh up to 100 kg.
- Targeted by commercial fisheries, the blacktip is classified as near threatened by protection group the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

3. Black Soft-shell Turtle

- IUCN: Extinct in the Wild
- It is a species of freshwater turtle found in India (Assam) and Bangladesh (Chittagong and Sylhet).

4. Central Institute of Plastics Engineering & Technology (CIPET)

- Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers
- The main objective of setting up of the institute was to develop manpower in different disciplines of Plastics Engineering & Technology
- The CIPET: CSTS at Dehradun, under the Department of Chemicals & Petrochemicals, Government of India, is being established with a total project cost of Rs. 51.32 crore having funding support of Government of India and Government of Uttarakhand on 50:50 basis.

• CIPET renders Technology Support Service in the areas of design, tooling, plastics processing and testing and quality assurance in India and abroad. CIPET has been in the forefront of strengthening the technological capabilities and has been constantly building capacities and leveraging its expertise, caliber and skill sets to meet the emerging and evolving needs of the industries.

5. Dhole/ Asiatic Wild Dog/ Indian Wild Dog/ Red Dog

- IUCN: Endangered
- Occurrence: Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; India; Indonesia; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Myanmar; Nepal; Thailand
- Threats: depletion of prey base, habitat loss, persecution due to livestock predation, disease transmission from domestic dogs, and possibly interspecific competition.

6. Dry Sorbent Injection (DSI) system

Context

- National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC)'s Dadri Power Plant is opting for a Dry Sorbent Injection (DSI) system for controlling sulphur dioxide (SO₂) emissions and ensuring compliance with the 2015 environmental norms

How does it work?

- DSI is the practice of injecting a dry alkaline mineral into a flue gas stream to reduce acid gas emission.

Advantages

- DSI offers advantages in comparison to traditional acid gas scrubber technology: lower capital cost, wide range of favorable operation conditions, and much lesser time for completing installation and commissioning.
- While conventional wet limestone flue gas desulphurization (WLFGD) takes over two years, DSI takes only 12-14 months to be up and running.
- It also reduces emissions of other acidic gases and heavy metals like mercury.

7. Formalin in Fish

- To ensure safety and hygiene at fish handling and distribution centres, Food Safety officials in Kerala launched an initiative named 'Operation Sagar Rani'.

Context

- The State Food Safety wing officials during inspection seized 6,000 kg of fish preserved using formalin (formaldehyde) at the inter-State border check-post at Walayar in Palakkad.

Why is formalin added?

- Formalin is derived from formaldehyde, which is a substance that is carcinogenic (having the potential to cause cancer), to humans.
 - * It is also used as fungicide, germicide, and disinfectant.
 - * In mortuaries it is used as a preservative for bodies and organs
- Fish is a highly perishable commodity. If it isn't maintained at the proper temperature of 5 degree Celsius, it gets spoilt. To avoid that and increase its shelf life, the sellers now use chemicals such as formalin and ammonia.
- So, to prevent rot during transport, fish traders resort to using formalin

Health issues

- Having even 30 ml of a solution, which contains as little as 37% formalin, can kill a fully grown adult.
- The sustained ingestion of formalin can eventually lead to cancer.
- Breathing even the smallest amount of formaldehyde gas can lead to pneumonia and bronchitis.
- If formaldehyde is present in the air, people could experience a burning sensation in their eyes, nose and throat, apart from coughing and sneezing.
- They could also experience nausea and skin irritation.

How to detect it?

- Fish preserved with formalin will be rubbery flesh, stiff, hard scales, no fishy smell and no flies around
- A kit devised by the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) to help detect if fresh fish has been treated with formalin.
 - * The kit contains strips of paper and a reagent solution.
 - * If anyone suspected their fish is adulterated, they should first rub the fish with the paper and then put a drop of the solution on the paper.
 - * If it turns dark blue, it means the fish is contaminated.

Law

- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India has banned formaldehyde in fresh fish
- International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) labelled the chemical a carcinogen in 2004.

Doubts on formaldehyde as cancer causing agent

- The evidence the IARC relied on mainly consists of studies on workers in industries such as printing, textiles and embalming. Such workers inhale formaldehyde fumes, and the studies show high rates of nasopharyngeal and other cancers among them.

- But there is little evidence that formaldehyde causes cancer when ingested orally. A 1990 study by U.S. researchers estimated that humans consume 11 mg of the chemical through dietary sources every day.

So, why is formaldehyde in fish a problem?

- Fresh fish should not have preservatives, and the presence of formaldehyde points to unscrupulous vendors trying to pass off stale catch
- Lack of evidence linking ingested formaldehyde with cancer doesn't necessarily make the chemical safe. At high doses, it causes gastric irritation.
- When certain marine fish are improperly frozen during transit, formaldehyde forms in them naturally. But this formaldehyde binds to the tissue, unlike added formaldehyde, which remains free.
 - * And so, measuring free formaldehyde versus bound formaldehyde can be one way of distinguishing a contaminant from a naturally occurring chemical.

Conclusion

- Some formaldehyde consumption may be unavoidable and it may not be a health risk either. But the line between safe and unsafe consumption should be drawn by experts, in a transparent manner.

8. Furadan

- It is used to control insects in a wide variety of field crops, including potatoes, corn and soybeans.
- It is a systemic insecticide, which means that the plant absorbs it through the roots, and from here the plant distributes it throughout its organs where insecticidal concentrations are attained.
- Carbofuran also has contact activity against pests.

Context

- Water birds were part of the diet
- So, Fishermen discovered a way of killing waterfowls using a pesticide called Furadan.

9. Ganga Praharis

- It is an initiative of Ministry of Water Resources
- A group of trained volunteers will be reaching to each and every house in areas along river Ganga to educate them about the importance of protecting river's biodiversity.
- It is part of the "Biodiversity Conservation and Ganga Rejuvenation" project being sponsored by National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) under the aegis of the Namami Gange programme
- The Ganga Praharis will be linked to various local environmental authorities, non-governmental stakeholders in their respective states and various other national, academic and research institutions for their capacity development.

- Ganga Praharis of the five main stem Ganga basin states will be linked through mobile applications such as Bhuvan Ganga app, my gov app and Swachhta app thereby creating a broad network among them.

10. Ganga Vriksharopan Abhiyan

- National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) is running "Ganga Vriksharopan Abhiyan" in five main stem Ganga basin states – Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.
- The campaign, which has been initiated as part of the Forest Interventions in Ganga (FIG) component of Namami Gange programme, is significant as it aims to bring greater awareness among people and other stakeholders regarding the importance of afforestation for the task of Ganga Rejuvenation.
- A number of schools, colleges and departments have been requested to "Adopt a Plant" for turning this campaign into a people's movement.
- In order to implement the afforestation project in a scientific manner, Forest Research Institute (FRI), Dehradun was assigned the project to prepare a Detailed Project Report (DPR) on the basis of which the State Forest Departments would carry out their plantation activities.
 - * The FRI report provides a multi-disciplinary approach with potential plantation and treatment models.

11. IndARC

- It is an Indian observatory which is expected to help scientists understand the Arctic climate process and its influence on the Indian monsoon system.
- It is the country's first underwater moored observatory in the Kongsfjorden fjord, half way between Norway and the North Pole
- Designed and developed by scientists from the Earth System Science Organisation (ESSO), National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCAOR), National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) and Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)
- IndARC was deployed from RV Lance, a research vessel belonging to the Norwegian Polar Institute

Features

- The observatory is anchored at a depth of 192 m and has an array of 10 state-of-the-art oceanographic sensors strategically positioned at various depths in the water.
- sensors were programmed to collect real-time data on seawater temperature, salinity, ocean currents and other vital parameters of the fjord

Why is this program important?

- Scientists predict that melting of the Arctic glaciers will trigger changes in weather patterns and ocean currents that could affect other parts of the world.

- The interaction between the Arctic ice shelf and the deep sea and its influence on climate shift requires detailed studies over an annual seasonal cycle

Significance

- IndARC would be used for climate modelling studies to understand the influence of the Arctic processes on the Indian monsoon system.

12. Indian Pangolin/ Thick-tailed Pangolin

- UCN: Endangered
- This species is distributed in South Asia from parts of eastern Pakistan through much of India south of the Himalayas (excluding northeastern portions of the country), Southern Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka
- This species is included in Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972.

Threats

- This species has been hunted historically as a local source of protein and for medicinal purposes
- It continues to be hunted for consumptive use, for example in the Western Ghats

Context

- A special unit of the Odisha police has launched a drive to bust an international syndicate that peddles 'endangered' pangolin, one of the world's most illegally traded mammals

13. Kanha National Park

- It is in Madhya Pradesh
- It came into being in 1955 and forms the core of the Kanha Tiger Reserve, created in 1974 under Project Tiger.
- The Park's landmark achievement is the preservation of the rare hardground Swamp Deer (Barasingha), saving it from near extinction.

14. Koalas

- It is an arboreal herbivorous marsupial native to Australia
- IUCN: Vulnerable
- Current threats to this species include continued habitat destruction, fragmentation, and modification (which makes them vulnerable to predation by dogs, vehicle strikes, and other factors), bushfires, and disease, as well as drought associated mortality in habitat fragments

Unsolved mystery

- Scientists are intrigued as to how koalas feed on leaves of eucalyptus which are toxic or even fatal to most mammals
 - * Eucalypt diet has limited nutritional and caloric content, koalas are largely sedentary and sleep up to 20 hours a day.

Result from Research

- Researchers found expansions within a particular gene family (P450 gene) and reported that these genes help the koala detoxify the eucalyptus leaves.
- These genes were found to be expressed in many tissues, especially the liver, indicating its role in detoxification
- Researchers also found novel lactation proteins in the koala bears. They reported that these proteins protect the young ones in the pouch and help it develop a strong immune system.

15. MSTRIPES

- Monitoring System for Tigers Intensive Patrolling and Ecological Status
- It is a software-based monitoring system launched across Indian tiger reserves by the Indian government's National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in 2010

Implementation

- Forest guards in tiger reserves will be equipped with personal digital assistants and GPS devices
- This way, the signs such as bonfire, snare, tree felling, animal carcass or body parts etc signifying illegal activities will also be recorded by the field staff with site images, which with other set of information will reach out to the software enabled phones and systems immediately.
- The software system maps the patrol routes of forest guards, and the resulting data are then analyzed in a geographic information system.

Advantages

- MSTRIPES produces easily interpretable reports and maps that are useful for management and policy decisions.
- The system reduces the response time to detrimental events like poaching or habitat degradation and becomes a comprehensive tool to keep the pulse of a tiger reserve.
- All these years, data pertaining to carnivore signs, pellets and status of habitat was manually recorded in the prescribed format on a paper by the field staff, but this exercise was prone to errors. With the availability of M-STRIPES, human error will be eliminated
- It paves the way for greater standardization and elimination of inconsistencies in data interpretation.

16. National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research renamed

Context

- After decades of work in its mission to Antarctica, the government is refocusing priorities to the other pole — the Arctic — because of opportunities and challenges posed by climate change.

Details

- The Govt has now renamed the National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCAOR) — since 1998, charged with conducting expeditions to India's base stations to the continent — as the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research.
- It is in talks with Canada and Russia, key countries with presence in the Arctic circle, to establish new observation systems
- Currently India only has one Arctic observation station near Norway

Concerns

- A big worry for India is the impact of melting sea ice on the monsoon.
- Over the years scientists across the world are reporting that the rapid ice-melt in the Arctic is leading to large quantities of fresh water into the seas around the poles.
- This hinders the release of heat from the water and directs warm water into the seas around India, the theory goes, and eventually weakens the movement of the monsoon breeze into India

Significance

- With new expeditions there will be more research focus on the other poles
- Sea ice at the Arctic has been melting rapidly — the fastest in this century. That means several spots, rich in hydrocarbon reserves, will be more accessible through the year via alternative shipping routes. So, energy reserves can be accessed

Himalayan outreach

- Along with the Arctic, India's earth sciences community also views the Himalayas as a "third pole" because of the large quantities of snow and ice it holds and proposes to increase research spends towards understanding the impact of climate change in the Himalayas.
- It has already established a high-altitude research station in the Himalayas, called HIMANSH, at Spiti, Himachal Pradesh.

17. Neelakurinji/ Strobilanthes kunthiana

- It is a shrub that is found in the shola forests of the Western Ghats.
- Nilgiri Hills, which literally means the blue mountains, got their name from the purplish blue flowers of Neelakurinji that blossoms only once in 12 years.
- The Paliyan tribal people living in Tamil Nadu used it as a reference to calculate their age

18. Nilgiri Tahr

- IUCN: Endangered
- The Nilgiri tahr, known locally as the Nilgiri ibex or simply ibex, is an ungulate that 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 and largest of three tahr species

Threats

- incidents of forest fire destroying fodder
- spread of diseases through unregulated cattle crazing in areas close to the habitat
- unsustainable non-timber forest produce collection
- poaching and unabated human intervention in the habitat in the name of pilgrimage to sacred places

19. Online Continuous Emission Monitoring Systems (OCEMS)

Context

- inci. Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has directed State Pollution Control Boards (SPCB) to close down industrial units that haven't installed Online Continuous Emission Monitoring Systems (OCEMS).

Details

- It will also now become mandatory for a new industrial unit to install an OCEM to commence operations.
- The CPCB has since 2015 made it mandatory for industries to install OCEMS.

Implementation

- Industries, particularly Grossly Polluting Industries, are mandated to report their emissions to pollution control boards.
- The CPCB has been insisting that industries install OCEMS that relay data to the CPCB as well as SPCB offices.
- Whenever, say ammonia discharge levels are breached by an industry, an sms alert is sent out to officials who can then trigger action.
- The industries that require OCEMS include distilleries (including fermentation industry), sugar, fertiliser, pulp & paper (paper manufacturing with or without pulping), pharmaceuticals, dyes and dye-intermediates, pesticides, tanneries, thermal power plants, iron and steel, zinc, copper and aluminium smelters.

20. Red Panda/ Lesser Panda/ Red Cat-bear

- IUCN: Endangered
- Countries occurrence: Bhutan; China; India; Myanmar; Nepal
- Red Panda is closely associated with montane forests (oak mixed; mixed broad-leaf conifer; and conifer) with dense bamboo-thicket understorey

- Red Panda is largely vegetarian, eating chiefly young leaves and shoots of bamboo. It also takes fruit, roots, succulent grasses, acorns, lichens, birds' eggs and insects
- The major threats are habitat loss and fragmentation; habitat degradation; and physical threats. These are all compounded by the region's increasing human population; climate change; natural disasters

21. Salicornia

- It is a plant that grows in salty marshes in the mangrove wetlands along the coastline of Krishna district
- The Andhra government has intensified the efforts to tap commercial benefits from the plant through cultivation as well as extraction of the substitute to salt with low sodium content

Uses

- The patients suffering from hypertension, diabetes and gastric related ailments prefer the Salicornia salad and salt.
- It is sold in grocery stores or appears on restaurant menus, usually as 'sea beans' or samphire greens or sea asparagus.

22. Southeast Asian Narrow-headed Softshell Turtle/ Chitra chitra

- IUCN: Critically Endangered
- Native: Thailand
- Found in large rivers with clear water and sandy bottoms.

Threat

- This species is intensively exploited for food and international pet trade

23. Workshop on Greenhouse Gas Inventories in Asia (WGIA)

- It is an initiative of Government of Japan to improve the quality of Greenhouse Gas Inventories of Asian countries by building capacities through training and exchange of experience.
- The workshop is tasked to improve GHG inventory dataset credibility in Asia and help bind countries within the Asian region
- WGIA participants are government officials, inventory compilers, researchers and staff in international organizations
- 15 countries including Brunei, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam are WGIA members and around 100 GHG inventory experts from these countries participated along with representatives from UNFCCC, IPCC, FAO and other specialized agencies.
- India is hosting WGIA for the first time.

24. Mercenary Conservation: wildlife private conservancy

Why in news?

- Karnataka recently drafted Private Conservancy Rules in a bid to increase forest area through private land.
- Under the rules, anyone who has a minimum of 100 acres of land bordering a national park can convert it to a "Wildlife Private Conservancy".
- Of this land, 5% can be used to construct buildings for ecotourism; the rest has to be kept for flora and fauna.

Criticism

- Allowing for private forests can lead to illegal activities and change the natural behaviour of wildlife.
- With activists and retired forest officers concerned that this could lead to illegal activities in private spaces.

Following South Africa's Approach

- Though policies are different in India and South Africa, there has been much talk about how we are going down the Africa way with this new approach.
- In South Africa, agricultural land can be converted into wildlife reserves. The government specifies how much land is required for each animal, purchases are then made, and wildlife is introduced.
- Some game reserves allow hunting, which is legal. Hunting rights for specific animals are auctioned regularly.
- The highest bidder may gun down the animal and carry its head as a "trophy".
- Each species has a minimum bid with the Big Five — namely, the cape buffalo, rhino, elephant, leopard and lion — being the most expensive.
- The locals wholeheartedly support hunting as it brings in foreign exchange and thus motivate the management to run the game reserve better, in turn leading to more hunting bids.

Issues involved

- Private reserve owners treat wildlife in any way they deem fit.
- In one game reserve, an elephant recently went rogue and broke the fence.
- It was shot down and the carcass was left rotting inside the reserve for months. In another instance, a red hartebeest with a tumour was shot down and thrown to lions.
- On inspection, the "tumour" was found to be a deposit of grass that happened probably due to a redirection of food through a cavity or hole. A veterinarian could have easily solved this, but that was not to be.

Rules and responsibilities

- Though these wildlife spaces are massive, they are private and hence fenced. This constantly challenges and changes the natural behavior of wildlife. Some reserves have two sections: one with lions and one without.
- However, predators ensure survival of the fittest, and as a corollary, their absence leads to overgrazing and excess population. There is also a territorial issue: in enclosed spaces, an alpha cannot be established easily as the non-alphas are unable to find new ground.
- This leads to more infighting and behavioral disturbances. Also, the rules for poaching are still in the grey. Rhinos are regularly poached for their horns. Reserves urge people not to geo-tag their location, for example on social media, in fear of poachers noticing.
- Even though South African game reserves claim to respect wildlife, it is a business for them as their animals are bred and gunned down for money. If money weren't a motivating factor, the spaces would have continued being agricultural lands.

HEALTH ISSUES

1. Antara and Chhaya

Two new contraceptives launched by Health Ministry to aid family planning

- The 'Antara' contraceptives are safe and highly effective, it is injectable being effective for three months
 - * The 'Antara' contraceptive, containing synthetic progesterone, can be used by women between the ages of 18 and 45 and is reversible.
 - * The contraceptive can be used during breastfeeding.
 - * It has been proved successful in the treatment of anaemia. It also offers protection against some types of cancer.
- The 'Chhaya' is a contraceptive pill for one week and will help meet the changing needs of couples and help women plan and space their pregnancies.
- The contraceptives are being launched under the government's Mission Parivar Vikas

AntaraRaj app

- It is a web-based application to track women using Antara injectable contraceptive and send them reminders, through SMSes, about the next dose to minimise drops outs
- Reminder messages will be sent to users and accredited social health activists (ASHAs) on their mobile phones, seven days before the due date for the next dose.

2. Eat Right Movement

- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has unveiled 'The Eat Right Movement', built on two broad pillars of 'Eat Healthy' and 'Eat Safe'.
- The programme aims to engage and enable citizens to improve their health and well-being by making the right food choices.
- Its aim is to cut down salt/sugar and oil consumption by 30% in three years and 15 major food manufacturers have already joined the programme

FSSAI:

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has been established under Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 which consolidates various acts & orders that have hitherto handled food related issues in various Ministries and Departments.
- It was created for laying down science based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption.

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

3. Medical Tourism

Context

- Advanced facilities, skilled doctors, and low cost of treatment have made India a popular hub of medical tourism, attracting a large number of foreign patients every year.

Stats

- The total number of visitors in 2017 was 4.95 lakh
- This number had stood at around 2.34 lakh in 2015, and 4.27 lakh in 2016.
- Bangladesh and Afghanistan continued to be the top countries from where the maximum number foreign tourist arrivals (for medical purpose) was seen
- Other countries from where large numbers of medical tourists came to India include Iraq, Oman, Maldives, Yemen, Uzbekistan and Sudan.

Why is India a hub of Medical Tourism?

- The primary reason that attracts medical value travel to India is cost-effectiveness, and treatment from accredited facilities at par with developed countries at much lower cost.
- Top of the line medical and diagnostic equipment from global international conglomerates is available at many Indian hospitals.
- Indian nurses are among the best in the world. Nearly 1000 recognized nurses-training centers in India, mostly attached to teaching hospitals, graduate nearly 10,000 nurses annually.
- Doctors in western part of the world are increasingly prescribing Indian system of natural healing and medicine to their patients. This will make many foreign patients to choose India for treatments.

Key Players

- There are several important players in the medical tourism sector such as doctors, tour operators, hotels, hospitals and insurance agencies.
- Doctors play a key role in spreading the word about the medical services available in India during their visits abroad, medical tour operators actually arrange the tours for interested parties.

- * Also known as travel facilitators they have tie-ups with the doctors, hospitals, hotels, insurance agencies and the tourism wing within and outside India.
- A perfect coordination between all these players is absolutely essential to develop this sector into a booming business.

Govt initiatives

- The Union commerce ministry, along with ministries of tourism and health, has already launched a portal, www.indiahealthcaretourism.com, in three languages Arabic, Russian and French— to provide comprehensive information to medical travelers
- 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.
- Road shows focusing on Medical Tourism is a continuous process and is organized in consultation with the Stakeholders from time to time.

Advantages

- Apart from the demand for qualified doctors, nurses, dieticians, and other para-medical staff, this sector promises immense growth opportunities for various other professionals.
 - * Advertising/ marketing/ sales force, administrators, travel coordinators, case managers, relationship officers, PR executives, IT professionals, guides and language interpreters all have good openings
- This will help address issues of instability in relationship between India and Pakistan which can act as silver lining amidst tension.
- Increase in foreign exchange earned

Concerns

The key concerns facing the industry include:

- absence of government initiative
- lack of a coordinated effort to promote the industry
- no accreditation mechanism for hospitals
- the lack of uniform pricing policies and standards across hospitals
- Customer Perception as an unhygienic country

Conclusion

- India is in an advantageous position to tap the global opportunities in the medical tourism sector. The government's role is crucial to the development of medical tourism. The government should take steps in the role of a regulator and also as a facilitator of private investment in healthcare.
- Mechanisms need to be evolved to enable quicker visa grants to foreign tourists for medical purposes where patients can contact the Immigration Department at any point of entry for quick clearance.

- Tax incentives to the service providers, import duty reduction on medical equipment, committees to promote and foster medical tourism are some of the initiatives that can be undertaken.

4. National Health Stack (NHS)

- The NITI Aayog has come out with a blueprint of the National Health Stack (NHS), a shared digital healthcare infrastructure, with a view to implement the Centre's flagship scheme Ayushman Bharat and other public healthcare programmes in the country. The proposed initiative will become part of the Centre's flagship National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS).
- It envisages a centralized health record for all citizens of the country in order to streamline the health information and facilitate effective management of the same.
- The proposed NHS is an approach to address the challenge and seeks to employ latest technology including Big Data Analytics and Machine Learning Artificial Intelligence, a state of the art Policy Markup Language and create a unified health identity of citizens - as they navigate across services across levels of care, i.e. Primary, Secondary and Tertiary and also across Public and Private.
- the system is usable by the Centre and the states across public and private sectors and will be able to host digital health records for all citizens by 2022
- The key components of the NHS include electronic health registries, coverage and claims platform, digital health ID cards, federated personal health records (PHR) framework and the National Health Analytics Framework.

Significance

- National Health Stack will significantly bring down the costs of health protection
- Converge disparate systems to ensure a cashless and seamlessly integrated experience for the poorest beneficiaries
- Promote wellness across the population.

5. Quadrivalent Influenza Vaccine

- The new quadrivalent flu vaccine manufactured by Sanofi helps protect against four influenza strains (two A strains and two B strains)
 - * The two A virus strains are H1N1 and H3N2 — and two B virus strains are Victoria and Yamagata
- The viruses used in the vaccine are killed and this eliminates the possibility of the virus in the vaccine itself causing infection.
- In India, the vaccine will be available as single dose pre-filled syringe.
- Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) has approved active immunisation of adults of age 18 to 64 years

How is it different?

- A trivalent influenza vaccine contains both A subtype viruses, it has only one of the B subtype virus, the quadrivalent vaccine offers greater breadth of protection as it includes both B subtype viruses

6. TB- Turning the tables

- Over the last few decades, the emergence of TB strains that are resistant to first-line medication has alarmed doctors and public health experts.

Concerns

- Some forms of drug-resistance — especially to the two first-line drugs (referred to as multidrug-resistant TB or MDR-TB) — require a longer duration of therapy that is more expensive and toxic.
- Therefore, MDR-TB and other advanced forms of drug resistance have the potential to undermine global TB elimination efforts.
- These concerns are particularly relevant for India which has the world's largest TB epidemic and the largest number of individuals with MDR-TB.

TB drug-resistance survey

- On World TB Day this year (March 24), the Government of India released the country's first national TB drug-resistance survey.
- It found that 6% of patients seeking care in the government sector have MDR-TB; this includes 3% of patients diagnosed with TB for the first time and 12% of patients with a prior history of TB treatment.

Other findings

- Recent modelling studies predict that the percentage of patients with MDR-TB in India is only likely to rise over the next two decades.
- As of 2013, the outcomes of patients with MDR-TB in the government TB programme were dismal.
- Of the 61,000 patients estimated to have reached government diagnostic centres that year, 14% were successfully diagnosed and have completed therapy.
- To its credit, since 2013, the government has made efforts to improve diagnosis and treatment of such patients.
- The findings of the survey highlight an urgent need to accelerate these efforts.

Shortcomings of the survey

- The findings of the survey are limited by the fact that it was conducted using a sample of a little over 5,000 patients from the public sector.
- This is a significant shortcoming as about 50% to 60% of patients in India are being treated in the private sector.
- Recent studies have found very poor quality of TB care in the private sector.

- It is quite common for patients to first consult a private or informal health-care provider when they develop symptoms, which has been shown to increase delays in diagnosis.
- Also, patients often do not have access to support systems that are in place in the public health system

Drug susceptibility testing (DST)

- Drug susceptibility testing (DST) is used to determine if a patient has MDR-TB, thereby enabling prompt diagnosis and treatment.
- In previous years, the government had restricted use of DST to patients at higher risk for MDR-TB (those with a history of TB treatment).
- As a result, patients diagnosed with TB for the first time had to fail the first-line regimen before being screened with DST, resulting in prolonged delays in diagnosis.
- Last year, the government introduced universal DST in 19 States.
- It needs to be rapidly rolled out in the States with the highest TB burden if there is to be a meaningful impact in India's MDR-TB epidemic.
- Further, strict adherence to medication can lower the chances of developing drug resistance and reduce TB deaths.
- Improving pill-taking by patients, however, is easier said than done.
- The MDR-TB drug regimen is demanding and can have severe side-effects (loss of appetite and hearing loss) if patients are not closely monitored.
- Enhanced counselling and access to patient support groups may help patients stick to their treatment.
- In addition, innovative treatment-monitoring technologies such as digital pillboxes may assist in improving patient outcomes.

Way forward

- Engaging with the private sector is crucial to address the challenge of drug resistant TB (DR-TB).
- Innovative models for Mumbai, Patna (Bihar), and Mehsana (Gujarat) have proven to be successful.
- These models can serve as a starting point for conducting a drug resistance survey in the private sector and extending universal DST to the private sector.
- While the government is employing some of these strategies, the pace and scale of implementation has been slower and smaller than will be needed to turn the tables on DR-TB.

EDUCATION

1. IISc, IIT-D chosen for special grants

- Six higher education institutions have been named Institutions of Eminence (IoE) by the Centre.
- This will create an enabling architecture for 10 public and 10 private Colleges
 - * Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, the Indian Institutes of Technology at Mumbai and Delhi, in the Govt sector
 - * Manipal Academy of Higher Education and BITS Pilani under Private
 - * Jio Institute of the Reliance Foundation, in the Greenfield sector

Institution of Eminence

The plan for selecting Institutions of Eminence was first announced by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in his budget speech in 2016

- should offer interdisciplinary courses
- Conduct research in "areas of emerging technology".
- It must have a mix of foreign and Indian students and faculty, with "student amenities comparable with that of globally reputed institutions".

Aim

- The aim of the Institutions of Eminence scheme is to bring selected higher educational institutions in top 500 of world ranking in the next 10 years and in top 100 eventually overtime.
- The scheme has been launched with an objective to provide world class teaching and research facilities to Indian students within the country and enhance general level of education of the country.

The parameters for setting up Greenfield institutions, as issued by HRD, are:

- Availability of land for construction of the institution
- Putting in place a core team with very high qualification and wide experience
- Making available funding for setting up the institution
- A strategic vision plan with clear annual milestones and action plan

Background

- An empowered committee, under former Chief Election Commissioner N. Gopalaswami, recommended these institutions.
- The Greenfield category institutions will be issued letters of intent for three years within which they have to commence academic operations for the notification declaring them IoE to be issued. If they fail the committee can recommend cancellation of the IoE status.

Significance

- These institutions will have full flexibility in fixing their curricula and syllabi
- Can admit 30% foreign students with no restrictions on fees
- Will be free from the regulations of the NCTE, the IJGC, or the HEC
- The 10 government institutions, in addition to the autonomy, will also get Rs 1,000 crore each from the HRD Ministry to achieve world-class status.
- The government has also made it clear that will offer no financial assistance to the private institutions under this scheme, though they will get autonomy to pursue academic excellence.

2. INSPIRE Awards-MANAK

- Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research (INSPIRE)
- MANAK (Million Minds Augmenting National Aspiration and Knowledge)

Objective

- It will help in attracting talented young students to study Science and pursue career in Research
- To promote creative thinking and foster a culture of innovation among them.

Details

- It is an initiative of Department of Science & Technology (DST)

INSPIRING INNOVATORS OF TOMORROW

inspire awards - manak

million minds augmenting national aspiration and knowledge

Who can apply?

Any student enrolled in class 6th to 10th at any recognised school, government or private, aided or unaided.

■ The INSPIRE Awards-MANAK is aimed to target million innovative ideas of school students.

■ This program is an attempt to channelise the spark in minds of school students to become future innovators for welfare of the society and benefit of the nation.

■ Parents, Teachers and Schools are urged to help students express themselves and be part of nation building process through their ideas and innovations.

Do you have an Idea to solve a Problem?

School students may join INSPIRE Awards-MANAK programme for reward and recognition

How to participate?

■ Students need to submit their original innovative ideas to the Head Master/ Principal of the school.

■ Schools need to submit 2 to 3 best ideas received from students with potential to solve societal problem through science and technology on web portal www.inspireawards-dst.gov.in.

How the scheme will help?

■ The top 1,00,000 (one lac) ideas will be shortlisted and an Award Money of Rs 10,000 will be transferred to each student for participation at District level exhibition.

■ The top 10,000 ideas selected at district level competition will be further screened at the state level competition.

■ The top 1,000 ideas selected at state levels will receive mentoring support to develop prototype and models by National Innovator Foundation-India (NIF) and other reputed technology institutions for showcasing at national level competition.

■ The top 60 ideas will be displayed at the Festival of Innovation & Entrepreneurship (FIE).

3. Meritocracy in China

History

- The role of meritocracy in Chinese history, focused on the so-called examination system, has been a matter of long scholarly scrutiny. For centuries until 1905, Chinese emperors selected their bureaucrats on the basis of performance in examinations.
- As Francis Fukuyama has argued, bureaucratic merit came to be intimately associated with state-building in China.

- By and large, India's rulers — Hindu, Muslim and British (in the first century of East India Company rule) — did not pursue this route and relied on patronage, hurting the state-building process.
- Moreover, the Chinese examination system became so famous for its rigour and standards that it attracted European attention. Some scholars argue that after the collapse of the East India Company in 1858, even the British Crown used the Chinese model to structure the Indian Civil Service (ICS) examinations.

Gaokao

- It is an academic examination held annually in the People's Republic of China
- This examination is a prerequisite for entrance into almost all higher education institutions at the undergraduate level. It is usually taken by students in their last year of senior high school, although there has been no age restriction since 2001.
- Gaokao has four parts: Chinese, English, Mathematics, and one of two optional streams, sciences (physics, chemistry, biology) or the humanities (political science, history, geography). Roughly 70 per cent of the students pass the exam, earning the right to enter China's 2,000-odd universities and colleges
- Near the examination centres, there is no construction work, no traffic noise, and the cops enforce street calm.
 - * Ambulance vans are available to deal with nervous breakdowns,
 - * Security cameras check for cheating, which can lead to seven years in jail.
- Primetime TV discusses how difficult the exam questions were

Comparison the joint entrance examination (JEE) for the IITs and Gaokao

- The Chinese exam is not for technical education, but for the college system as a whole, including the sciences and humanities.
 - * Indian national entrance tests are primarily for engineering (and medical) education, not for college entrance in general.
- China's affirmative action programme is slender, compared to India's. A few points, roughly 1 per cent-7 per cent, can be added to candidates' scores if they come from the minority communities, constituting 8.4 per cent of China's population.
 - * India's colleges, including the IITs, are also governed by affirmative action. By now, all over India, 49.5 per cent of seats in higher education are reserved for the historically disadvantaged SCs, STs and OBCs.
 - * India's democracy imposed the principle of inclusive representation on the education system.

China, in fact, practices affirmative action in reverse. The hukou system and the provincial quotas for colleges, decided mostly by the central government, jointly produce this outcome. All Chinese carry a rural or urban hukou, which also specifies the province they come from. The top colleges are in the leading cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai. These colleges reserve a substantially larger proportion of seats for those who carry local hukous, even if their gaokao scores are lower.

Conclusion

- A true meritocracy would place equally meritorious students from rural or urban settings, richer or poorer provinces, on an equal footing.
- India amends this principle by reserving seats for those who may score lower but are historically deprived.
- China modifies the principle in the opposite direction. Its quota system gives preference to the privileged. That is also not meritocracy, but a serious violation of it.

4. National Council for Teacher Education (Amendment) Bill

- It will amend the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) Act, 1993
- The amendment seeks to grant retrospective recognition to the Central/State/Union Territory funded Institutions/Universities conducting Teacher Education Courses without NCTE recognition till the academic year 2017-2018.
- The retrospective recognition is being given as a onetime measure so as to ensure that the future of the students passed out/enrolled in these institutions is not jeopardized.
- The amendment will make students studying in these Institutions/Universities, or already passed out from here, eligible for employment as a teacher.

NCTE Act, 1993

- The NCTE Act, 1993 came into force in 1995 and is applicable throughout the country, except the State of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The main objective of the Act is to provide for the establishment of a NCTE to achieve planned and coordinated development of the teacher education system, regulation and ensure proper maintenance of norms and standards in the system.
- In order to achieve the objectives of the Act, separate provisions have been, made in the Act, for recognizing Teacher Education courses and to lay down guidelines for compliance by recognized Institutions/Universities.
- All institutions running teacher education courses, such as B.Ed and D.El.Ed have to obtain recognition from the NCTE under section 14 of the NCTE Act.
- Further, courses of such recognized institutions/universities must be permitted under section 15 of NCTE Act

5. **Samagra Siksha**

- ‘Samagra Shiksha’ is the scheme of the Union Ministry for Human Resource Development.
- It is an integrated Scheme for school education as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme extending support to States from pre-school to senior secondary levels for the first time.
- This programme subsumes the three erstwhile Centrally Sponsored Schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).
- The Scheme is a paradigm shift in the conceptual design of school education by treating ‘school’ holistically as a continuum from pre-school, primary, upper primary, secondary and senior secondary levels.
- It is a landmark step and completely overhauled the existing Schemes in School Education to treat schooling as a smooth transition from pre-school, primary, upper primary, secondary and senior secondary level.
- It focuses on improving quality of education at all levels by integrating the two T’s – Teachers and Technology.
- The budget outlay on the new scheme will be now Rs. 34,000 crore in 2018-19 and to Rs. 41,000 crore in 2019-20 i.e. an increase of 20% which shows Central Government’s commitment for Education.

ART AND CULTURE

1. Aanayottu

- The Aanayottu (feeding of elephants) is a festival held in the precincts of the Vadakkunnathan temple in City of Thrissur, in Kerala.
- The festival falls on the first day of the month of Karkidakam (timed against the Malayalam calendar), which coincides with the month of July.
- It is believed that offering poojas and delicious feed to the elephants is a way to satisfy Lord Ganesha—the god of wealth and of the fulfillment of wishes.
- The Vadakkunnathan temple, which is considered to be one of the oldest Shiva temples in southern India, has hosted the Aanayottu event for the past few years.

2. Advaita, Dvaita and Visishtadvaita

- Adi Shankaracharya is considered the propagator of this philosophy. This is the oldest school of Vedanta, and it states that Brahman is the only reality and the world is illusory (Maya).
- He was born in Kaladi in Kerala.
- It states that both the individual self (Atman) and Brahman are the same, and knowing this difference causes liberation.
- Human suffering is due to Maya or illusion (also known as Mithya or Vaitathya). Only knowledge of Brahman can destroy Maya. When Maya is removed, Satyam or the truth that “the individual is none other than God” is realized.
- With time there was a reaction against the Advaita concept of Nirguna brahman (God without attributes i.e. formless aspect of divinity) with the emergence of the idea of Saguna brahman (God with attributes) which believed in incarnation

Dvaita or Dualism

- Madhvacharya propounded this philosophy. It considers Brahman and Atman as two different entities, and Bhakti as the route to eternal salvation.
- He was born near Udupi in Karnataka
- According to Dvaita, Jivatma are many and Paramatma is one.
- Concerning the soul Madhvacharya says that no two souls are alike. They each have different characteristics, different states of happiness/sorrow. The soul becomes similar to God in some respects when it is liberated, yet even in these respects it is much inferior to God.
- According to his philosophy, the world is not an illusion but a reality.

Visishtadvaita

- In the twelfth century, Ramanuja, was born at Sriperumbudur near modern Chennai, preached Visishtadvaita.
- Vishishtadvaita literally means the Unique Advaita, that is, Advaita with some amendments
- Brahman exists and his manifestations or attributes are real. Attributes (living and nonliving) are real but are controlled by Brahman.
 - * Brahman only exists. Manifestations are temporary. They are the result of ignorance. When ignorance is removed there is no second.
- According to him God is Sagunabrahman. The creative process and all the objects in creation are real but not illusory as was held by Sankaracharya.
- He was enormously influenced by the Tamil Bhakti Saints called Alvars.

Context

- A 216-foot-tall Ramanuja set to become the world's second tallest statue will be unveiled in Hyderabad in Telangana

Details

- Once the Ramanujacharya statue is unveiled, it will become the second tallest, a distinction now held by the Guanyin figure on Mount Xiqiao in China's Guangdong region, at 203 feet.
- Currently, the Great Buddha of Thailand is the tallest statue, at 302-feet.
- The statue of the Bhakti saint marks a millennium

3. Badshahi Ashoorkhana

- It was built sometime in 1611 by Hyderabad's founder Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah.
- Charminar and the Charkaman archways are well known as having been built to by Muhammad Quli, a much more stunning example of the king's contribution to the city is the Ashoorkhana called Badshahi Ashoorkhana near Madina area of the city.
- It is house of mourning during Muharram
 - * The Ashoorkhana turns into a pilgrimage site when alams (battle standards) are installed to commemorate the battle of Karbala in 680 A.D. Ashoora or 10th day of Muharram is when the battle took place.
- The monument was lost for several decades when Emperor Aurangzeb's forces turned it into a bandikhana to keep wheeled vehicles.

4. Behdienkhlam Festival

- “Behdienkhlam” held mid-July every year at the small peripheral town of Jowai, Meghalaya.
- It is the most important festival of the Jaintias and is celebrated after the sowing is over.
- The Behdienkhlam literally means driving away the plague as “Khlam” means ‘Plague’ and “Beh Dein” means to drive away the plague.
- It is the ritualistic expression of the relentless struggle of mankind to overcome the destructive forces of nature, including diseases, since the dawn of civilization.
- During the festival, decorated and colourful raths are immersed in ‘Wah Ainar’, a muddy pool.
- The non-Christian ‘Pnar’ people who believe either in the traditional faith of ‘Niamtre’ or Hinduism observe this festival.

Context

- Behdienkhlam, one of the most colourful festivals of the State, was celebrated in the Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya.

5. Bengi Nacha

- It is a ritual performed by inhabitants of Masiakhali village in Odisha’s Ganjam district where frogs are made to dance to appease the rain gods.
- As per tradition, two big frogs were snared and then bathed with turmeric water and smeared with vermillion.
- They were then tied to a long pole with a piece of new cloth and carried around the village to the beat of traditional drums and cymbals.
- It will help them kick off Kharif season

6. Burra Katha

- It is an oral storytelling technique in the Katha tradition, performed in villages of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- It is a narrative entertainment that consists of prayers, solo drama, dance, songs, poems and jokes.
- The topic will be either a Hindu mythological story or a contemporary social issue
- It is seen during Dussehra or Sankranti festival seasons to describe events in epics like Ramayan and Mahabharat and also some of best and moral stories of kings

7. Gonds Painting

- The Gonds, are the largest Adivasi Community in India and are Dravidian’s whose origin can be traced to the pre-Aryan era. They are mainly found in Madhya Pradesh and its surrounding States. The word Gond comes from Kond, which means green mountains in the dravidian idiom.

- The Gond called them Koi or Koiture. About half of Gonds speak Gondi languages, while the rest speak Indo - Aryan languages including Hindi.

Painting

- Gond paintings are considered to be from predominantly from Madhya Pradesh, it is also quite common in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Odisha.
- The Gonds traditionally painted on mud walls of their houses.
- According to the Gond belief system, each and everything whether it is a hill, river, rock or a tree is inhabited by a spirit and, consequently, is sacred. So the Gond people paint them as a form of respect and reverence. Gond paintings are a reflection of man’s close connection with his natural surroundings
- While a majority of Gond paintings do take inspiration from nature, it isn’t the only source of inspiration. Gond paintings can also take inspiration from myths and legends of India or alternatively, they may also showcase images from the daily lives of the tribe. It can also showcase abstract concepts like emotions, dreams and imagination.

8. India Tourism Mart

- India will organise its first-ever India Tourism Mart (ITM) for three days from September 16.
- it would be similar to major international travel marts organised by many countries.
- The Mart will provide a platform for all stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality industries to interact and transact business opportunities.
- It will be the best platform for the States to showcase their products to international buyers, opinion makers and bloggers and attract more tourists to their respective states.
- The event will also provide an opportunity to the buyers to see the world class tourism facilities available in our country such as Airports, Hotels, Tourist destinations, upcoming facilities, MICE facilities, possibility in the field of adventure tourism and other niche products.
- The event will be organised by the Tourism Ministry, in partnership with the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH) with the support of States/UTs

9. Madhubani/ Mithila Painting - Bihar

- It is practiced in the Mithila region of Bihar in India and Nepal.
- Painting is done with fingers, twigs, brushes, nib-pens, and matchsticks, using natural dyes and pigments, and is characterized by eye-catching geometrical patterns.

- There is ritual content for particular occasions, such as birth or marriage, and festivals, such as Holi, Surya Shasti, Kali Puja, Upanayana, Durga Puja.
- Traditionally done by women by the region using bright earthy colors which is Characterized by line drawings filled in by bright colors and contrasts/patterns
- It was painted on freshly plastered mud walls and floors of huts, but now they are also done on cloth, hand-made paper and canvas.
- Madhubani paintings mostly depict nature and Hindu religious motifs, and the themes generally revolve around Hindu deities
- They have been given GI status

10. Nishagandhi Festival

- It is conducted by Kerala is a seven-day cultural fiesta is held in the Nishagandhi Auditorium, in the majestic premises of the lush green Kanakakkunnu Palace in the heart of Thiruvananthapuram
- Odissi, Kathak, Bharatanatyam, Manipuri, Mohiniyattam, Chhau, and Kuchipudi are some of the dance forms staged regularly as part of the festival.

11. Puli Kali

- “Puli”=Leopard/Tiger & “Kali”= Play
- It is a dance performed by men adorning the costume of leopard/Tiger.
- It is performed in different parts of Kerala during the festival of Onam
- It is mainly practiced in Thrissur district

12. Ramayana Express

- It will cover important destinations related to the epic in a 16-day journey.
- The tour will be spread across India as well as Sri Lanka.
- It will be priced at ₹15,120 per person, which will cover all meals, accommodation, wash and change facilities in dharmashalas, all transfers, sight-seeing arrangements and a dedicated tour manager.
- It will then cover the important destinations of Ramayana circuit such as Nandigram, Sitamarhi, Janakpur, Varanasi, Prayag, Shringverpur, Chitrakoot, Nasik, Hampi and Rameswaram.

13. Rani-ki-Vav

- Located in Gujarat's Patan, the 900-year-old structure is a major tourist attraction, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and was awarded as the cleanest iconic place in India in 2016.
- It is located on the banks of Saraswati River.
- It was built by the Solanki dynasty's queen Udayamati in the 11th century as a memorial to her deceased husband Bhimdev I.

- Rani-ki-Vav was built in the complex Maru-Gurjara architectural style. It highlights the sanctity of water as it is designed as an inverted temple under the earth's surface. The central theme is the Dasavataras, or ten incarnations of Vishnu, including Buddha. The avatars are accompanied by sadhus, brahmins, and apsaras (celestial dancers).

Context:

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will soon be releasing a new lavender Rs 100 currency note. The banknote highlights the rich and diverse cultural heritage of India as it prominently displays a photograph of ‘Rani-ki-vav’ (The Queen’s Stepwell), an 11th century architectural wonder.

14. Sadmridangam

- Sadmridangam is made using steel and fiber. It weighs lesser than the traditional wooden mridangam
- The interior is hollow and one can dismantle and reassemble
- It was developed by percussion maestro Kuzhalmannam Ramakrishnan
 - * He is winner of Layaratna title, Ramakrishnan holds the world record for the longest performance on a hand drum for his 301-hour non-stop mridangam playing.

Patent

- The patent office of Union government awarded the patent for the design to the innovative product.
- The Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trademarks has given the patent under ‘drum’ category

Significance

- The improvised instrument with all the features of mridangam ensures more mobility for artistes

15. Thanjavur Painting

- It is a style of painting characterized by bold drawing, techniques of shading and the use of pure and brilliant colours flourished at Tanjore in South India
- The style is decorative and is marked by the use of bright colours and ornamental details.
- It is distinguished by its famous gold coating.
- Thanjavur paintings are characterized by rich, flat and vivid colors, simple iconic composition, glittering gold foils overlaid on delicate but extensive gesso work and inlay of glass beads and pieces or very rarely precious and semi-precious gems.
- In Thanjavur paintings one can see the influence of Deccani, Vijayanagar, Maratha and even European or Company styles of painting.
- Thanjavur paintings have Geographical Indication tag

Gold foil in Thanjavur paintings serves two objectives:

- The glitter makes the painting more attractive,
- it also prolongs the life of the artefact

Issue Area

- Foils made of fake material similar to genuine gold was being used in the painting
- People could not find out if the gold foil and gemstones used in these traditional crafts were authentic or fake

Solution

- Researchers from SASTRA University, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu have found a solution that uses Raman spectroscopy to tell whether the foil used in the paintings is made of gold or some other cheaper material.
- The researchers validated their detection of fake gold by carrying out an Energy Dispersive X-ray analysis (EDX) of the paintings, which confirmed the Raman spectroscopy findings.
- Raman spectroscopy, which helps identify molecules in 'gold' foil is attractive as it is non-destructive.

16. Thotlakonda Buddhist Site

Context

- The laying of a foundation stone for the construction of a tourist amenities centre which includes an amphitheatre, rest rooms and information centre close to the second century BCE Buddhist site at Thotlakonda in Visakhapatnam is a cause of concern to heritage conservationists and members of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH).

Concern

- The buildings will not only mar the original heritage site but are also against norms laid down by the courts.
- AP High Court had passed an order stating that 'no construction or development activity of any sort shall be permitted within the boundaries of the ancient site of Thotlakonda as detailed in the GO
 - * Tourism should be developed, but not at the cost of destruction of protected areas

About the site

- The Thotlakonda site was first discovered by a helicopter pilot of the Eastern Naval Command in 1976
- Thotlakonda is identified as Hinayana Buddhist complex

17. UNESCO World Heritage Tag to Mumbai's Victorian and Art Deco buildings

Context

- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declared Mumbai's Victorian and Art Deco Ensembles, straddling two heritage precincts of Fort and Marine Drive, a World Heritage Site.

Unique Attribute

- Miami and Jerusalem are known for beautiful art deco buildings, and Canada and London for their Victorian buildings. Mumbai alone has a combination of both.
- The feat makes Mumbai the second city in India after Ahmedabad to be inscribed on the World Heritage List.
- Mumbai would have the unique distinction of being both a financial capital and a world heritage site

Maharashtra leads the states with five UNESCO tags

- Victorian and Art Deco buildings in the Fort precinct and Marine Drive
 - * It includes the row of public buildings of the High Court, Mumbai University, Old Secretariat, NGMA, Elphinstone College, David Sassoon Library, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Western Railways headquarters, Maharashtra Police headquarters to the east of Oval Maidan and the Art Deco buildings consisting of the first row of Backbay Reclamation scheme, buildings such as the Cricket Club of India and Ram Mahal along Dinshaw Wacha Road, the iconic cinema halls of Eros and Regal and the first row of buildings along Marine Drive.

- The Elephanta Caves
- The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus
- Ajanta and
- Ellora caves

Across India, there are now 37 world heritage sites, making it the seventh ranked country in the list of world heritage properties

Significance

- Mumbai's tourism and culture would be hugely benefitted
- Mumbai will be now on the international tourist map and will help attract investment on the lines of London
- This acknowledges the wealth of India's 19th and 20th century architecture in historic city centres such as Mumbai, Kolkata and Delhi

18. World Sanskrit Conference

- The World Sanskrit Conference is being held in various countries across the globe once in every three years and so far it has been held thrice in India.

- The purpose of this conference is to promote, preserve and practice the Sanskrit language all over the world by the people.
- The Delhi International Sanskrit Conference of 1972 is considered to be the first World Sanskrit Conference.
- The seventeenth conference was held in Vancouver, Canada

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR)

- Established in 2005, the AMCDRR is a biennial conference jointly organized by different Asian countries and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR).

Objectives

- Transforming the commitments made in Sendai by the governments into visible action.
- Deciding the direction for implementation and monitoring of the Sendai Framework

Context

- The Indian high level Ministerial delegation participated in the AMCDRR 2018 which was held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.
- The AMCDRR 2018 hosted over 3,000 delegates and participants from Asian and Pacific countries, governmental and inter-governmental organisations, United Nations and international organisations, and stakeholder groups.
- The theme of the AMCDRR 2018: 'Preventing Disaster Risk: Protecting Sustainable Development'

2. Ensemble Prediction Systems

- It is for generating operational 10-days probabilistic forecasts of weather initiated by Ministry of Earth Science
- The EPS will enhance the weather information being provided by the current models by quantifying the uncertainties in the weather forecasts and generate probabilistic forecasts.
- The probabilistic forecasts of severe weather events at 12 km grid scale across India will greatly help the disaster management authorities and other users in making better emergency response decisions by explicitly accounting for the uncertainty in weather forecasts.
- The probabilistic forecasts will also be very useful for various sectors of the economy including agriculture, water resources, tourism and renewable energy.

3. Global Centre for Disaster Statistics (GCDS)

- International Research Institute of Disaster Statistics (IRIDeS), has set up the "Global Centre for Disaster Statistics" (GCDS) in April 2015, for the purpose of supporting the development of disaster statistics.

- The GCDS will create a unique collaboration among United Nations organizations and other Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) related institutions, centering on collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- The purpose of the Centre is to support countries to manage disaster risks in their country and contribute to international process on DRR.

4. National Disaster Risk Index

- The index takes many factors into consideration before ranking the states/ union territories like the exposure of population, agriculture and livestock, along with the environmental risk.
- The disasters taken into consideration include cyclones, earthquakes, landslides, etc.
- The index does not talk about the possibility of a natural disaster, but the economic vulnerability of the region and the steps taken by the administration to mitigate the risks.
- This index is currently in a draft form made by the Union Home Ministry with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Ranking

- Maharashtra has been ranked at the top of the list of Indian states, vulnerable to natural disasters, followed by West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh
- Among the Union Territories, Delhi is the most vulnerable to such disasters.

DISASTER-PRONE		Why Pune? On a scale of 10 it has scored 9.48 due to highest exposure to hazard and vulnerability, while its capacity to deal with risk is lower at 4.43 (out of 10). Pune is affected by drought (7.93 on 10), but lower than Nashik's at 8.35	Disaster Risk Index of States
District	State	Rank	
North 24 Parganas	West Bengal	1	 Maharashtra
Pune	Maharashtra	2	 West Bengal
South 24 parganas	West Bengal	3	 UP
Thane	Maharashtra	4	 MP
Hoogly	West Bengal	5	 Karnataka
Howrah	West Bengal	6	 Assam
Bangalore	Karnataka	7	 Andhra
Nashik	Maharashtra	8	 Gujarat
Gulbarga	Karnataka	9	 Bihar
Mumbai suburban	Maharashtra	10	 Note: The All-India ranking of these states and districts has been assessed on six parameters: hazards; vulnerability; hazard-specific vulnerability; hazard & vulnerability exposure; capacity and risk

5. Operation Nistar

- It was a rescue operation conducted by Indian Navy in the cyclone-hit Socotra island in Yemen.
- The cyclone Mekunu had badly hit various parts of Oman and the Socotra island.

6. Flood of despair: Mumbai's flooding woes

- Focus of the article: Mumbai's capacity to deal with nature's challenges is falling with every passing year

Introduction

- Mumbai is an efficient city in some ways, but this reputation depends on fair weather. It turns into a soggy mess with the arrival of a monsoon.
- This year the season has begun with the spectacular collapse of a pedestrian bridge on a crucial railway line in Andheri, causing injuries and overall urban paralysis.
- Not even a year has passed since the ghastly stampede on a foot over bridge at Elphinstone Road station that took over 20 lives.

Thinking lines

- The recurrent disasters involving infrastructure are proof of the indifference among policymakers to the city's needs, even as they speak of a 'global standard' of living.
- The city continues to attract a large number of people looking for opportunity
- Urban managers, led by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, have not invested enough in new infrastructure and have done a shoddy job of maintaining the old.
- If Maharashtra has to achieve higher rates of economic growth and touch an ambitious 10%, as Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis desires, Mumbai's infrastructure planning should be in the hands of an empowered custodian who can secure the cooperation of all urban agencies.
- A return to nature is needed to relieve Mumbai of its flooding woes. According to one estimate, the city's Mithi River, blocked by debris and garbage, has lost about 60% of its catchment to development.

Integrated Flood Management (IFM)

Integ IFM – to maximise the efficient use of the flood plains and minimize loss of property and life; to enhance the benefits of floods and minimise their destruction

IFM measures can be grouped into 4 classes

- Land-use measures; – aimed at "keeping people away from floods".
- Structural measures; - aimed at "keeping flood waters away from the people".
- Flood preparedness measures; aimed at "getting people ready for floods".
- Flood emergency measures; – aimed at "helping affected people cope with floods".

Strategies to prevent floods in these two metros

- Introduce better flood warning systems
- Modify homes and businesses to help them withstand floods

- Construct buildings above flood levels
- Protect wetlands and introduce plant trees strategically
- Restore rivers to their natural courses
- Introduce water storage areas, Improve soil conditions, Put up more flood barriers must also be implemented.
- Municipal bodies of our cities have to come out with consistent and coherent urban policy.

Way forward

- A cleaner river connected to functional drainage can aid in the speedy removal of flood waters, and improve the environment.
- In a 2015 study, the World Bank found that half of the poor did not consider moving out of flood-prone areas, because of the uncertainty of living in a new place with severe social disruptions and reduced access to education and health facilities.
- What this underscores is the need to make the best use of all available space, densify development where feasible, and improve conditions in situ.
- It is welcome that a joint safety audit with the IIT will be conducted on public infrastructure, in the wake of the bridge collapse. But such inspections must be regularly carried out and quick remedial steps taken.

GEOGRAPHY

1. AT2018cow

- It is a very bright celestial object seen close to the very small galaxy CGCG 137-068 was spotted by the ATLAS telescope

Details

- The cow proved to be suitably interesting, because though it was initially thought to be a nova, later analysis showed that it was more like a broadline supernova of the type Ic.
 - Specifically, a Type Ic supernova is caused by the explosion of an extremely massive star which has lost its outer layers of hydrogen and helium.
- A nova is defined as "A star that suddenly becomes much brighter and then gradually returns to its original brightness over a period of weeks to years".
 - A nova is a nuclear fusion on the surface that brightens the star for a while.
 - The gas is heated as it is compressed, and the hydrogen may go up in flames in nuclear reactions that brighten the surface and blow excess gas outward. This type of explosion is called a nova.
- A supernova is "a rare celestial phenomenon involving the explosion of most of the material in a star, resulting in an extremely bright, short-lived object that emits vast amounts of energy"
 - It is basically a procedure when a star is completely destroyed because it is not able to sustain its gravity anymore.

Difference

- Supernova releases much more mass than a nova.
- Supernova destroys its host star; whereas a nova does not.
- Supernovae cannot occur at the same place more than once.
- More energy is released in a supernova than in a nova.
- Supernova lasts longer than a nova.
- Nova occurs more often than supernovae.

Indian Astronomical Observatory

- It is located near Leh in Ladakh
- It is operated by the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bangalore.
- It is currently the third highest optical telescope in the world, situated at an elevation of 4,500 meters
- The Himalayan Chandra Telescope is a 2.01 meter named after India-born Nobel laureate Subrahmanyam Chandrasekhar

2. Blood Moon

- Total lunar eclipses are sometimes called blood moons because of the reddish orange glow the moon takes on.
- The word "eclipse" means to obscure.
 - When the moon passes between the Earth and the sun, it's called a solar eclipse.
 - When the Earth passes between the sun and the moon, it is a lunar eclipse.
- The Moon does not have any light of its own—it shines because its surface reflects sunlight. During a total lunar eclipse, the Earth moves between the Sun and the Moon and cuts off the Moon's light supply. When this happens, the surface of the Moon takes on a reddish glow instead of going completely dark.
- The reason why the Moon takes on a reddish color during totality is a phenomenon called Rayleigh scattering. It is the same mechanism responsible for causing colorful sunrises and sunsets, and for the sky to look blue.

3. Meghalayan age

Context:

- The most recent age in Earth's 4.54 billion year history began 4,200 years ago and has officially been designated the Meghalayan Age, after the Indian state.
- Earth's recorded history is divided into eon, era, period, epoch and age, with the age being the smallest unit of geologic time.

Why is it called 'Meghalayan'?

- The evidence was found in the state of Meghalaya where a stalagmite found in the Mawmluh cave
- Located at an elevation of 1,290 metres, Mawmluh cave is one of the longest and deepest caves in India, and conditions here were suitable for preserving chemical signs of the transition in ages

Demarcation

- It is the first formal geological subdivision of the Holocene epoch that began 11,600 years ago and extends to the present, into three ages: Greenlandian, Northgrippian and Meghalayan.
- Geologists usually examine sedimentary deposits, ice cores and deposits below the seafloor for clues for classification of geological period

The beginning of Meghalayan age:

- The Meghalayan age began when a mega-drought devastated civilizations across the world, whose effects lasted two centuries. It severely disrupted civilizations in Egypt, Greece, Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, and the Yangtze River Valley.
- It is part of a longer period known as the Holocene Epoch, which reflects everything that has happened over the past 11,700 years.
- Evidence of the climatic event has been found in sediments on all seven continents, including those from Meghalaya.
- International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) has officially accepted the new phase.

Concerns

- Some scientists believe a new geologic classification must be made to reflect the influence of humans on the planet – an age tentatively called the Anthropocene – and that the division of Holocene thwarts those efforts.
- Episodes that are used to mark the start of the stages are not truly global in scope. In the case of the Meghalayan age, the mega drought only affected civilizations in the Middle East and North Africa, India and parts of China, and leaves out the huge civilizations that existed in the Americas and Africa and Northern Europe.

4. International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS)

- The IUGS is an international non-governmental organization devoted to international cooperation in the field of geology.
- It is a Scientific Union member of the International Council for Science (ICSU), which it recognizes as the coordinating body for the international organization of science.
- IUGS promotes and encourages the study of geological problems, especially those of worldwide significance, and supports and facilitates international and interdisciplinary cooperation in the earth sciences.
- IUGS is a joint partner with UNESCO for the International Geoscience Programme (IGCP) and they also participate in the Global Network of National Geoparks (GGN).

5. Mini-Cloud Bursts

- A mini-cloud burst is defined as rainfall in excess of 50 mm in two consecutive hours.
- Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) has coined this new term due to increase in heavy rainfall of short durations during the summer monsoon in many places in India

Details

- extreme rainfall of over 200 mm translates to only 16 mm of rainfall per hour, the intensity of rainfall is far more in the case of mini-cloud bursts
- Also, compared with extreme rainfall, the rate of water accumulation exceeding absorption and the probability of flash floods are three times more in the case of mini-cloud bursts
- Over most parts of India, the highest recorded rainfall in two hours is 100-150 mm, and the locations (other than the mountainous regions of Himalayas) that have recorded rainfall of over 150 mm in two hours are those that also experience cloud bursts.

Difference with Cloud Burst

- The India Meteorological Department already recognizes cloud bursts — heavy rainfall, irrespective of the amount — in the mountainous regions of Himalayas with its steep slopes, which lead to flash floods, and rainfall over 100 mm per hour in other places.
- In contrast, mini-cloud bursts are indicative of torrential downpour but of lower intensity than cloud bursts

IMD Classification

- Currently, on a 24-hour basis, the IMD classifies rainfall as heavy (over 60.5 mm), very heavy (over 130 mm) and extremely heavy (over 200 mm).

Occurrence

- The study found that mini-cloud bursts are “very common” in the foothills of the Himalayas.
- The west coast records more than three mini-cloud bursts per season,
- The Indo-Gangetic plains and the Saurashtra region receive two per season.
- At just one per season, Rajasthan and States to the east of the Western Ghats experience the least number of mini-cloud bursts.
- For the rest of India, the amount of rainfall per mini-cloud burst is 50-70 mm.

HISTORY

1. Subramania Bharati

- Chinnaswami Subramania Bharati, also known as Bharathiya was a Tamil writer, poet, journalist, Indian independence activist and a social reformer from Tamil Nadu.
- Popularly known as "Mahakavi Bharati", he was a pioneer of modern Tamil poetry and is considered one of the greatest Tamil literary figures of all time.

Works

- His numerous works included fiery songs kindling patriotism during the Indian Independence movement.
- He covered political, social and spiritual themes.
- Bharati used simple words and rhythms, unlike his previous century works in Tamil, which had complex vocabulary.
- He also employed novel ideas and techniques in his devotional poems.
- His poetry not only includes works on Hindu deities like Shakti, Kali, Vinayagar, Murugan, Sivan, Kannan(Krishna), but also on other religious gods like Allah and Jesus.
- He worked as a journalist with many newspapers, including The Hindu, Bala Bharata, Vijaya, Chakravarthini, the Swadesamitran and India.
- He was well-versed in various languages and translated speeches of Indian National reform leaders like Aurobindo, Bala Gangadar Tilak and Swami Vivekananda.

Women

- Bharati is considered the first to have advocated and campaigned for women's participation in politics.
- He advocated greater rights for women and their education.
- He visualized a modern Indian woman at the vanguard of society.
- He was of the strong opinion that the world will prosper in knowledge and intellect if both men and women are deemed equal.
- He condemned the Shashtras, the procedures formulated by some orthodox Hindus and weren't held as holy by most Hindus, that suppressed women's rights.
- Most of his views are considered contemporary even in modern times

Caste system

- Bharati also fought against the caste system in Hindu society.

- He openly criticized the preachers for mixing their individual thoughts while teaching the Vedas and the Gita.
- He strongly advocated bringing the Dalits to the Hindu mainstream.

Tribute

- The Government of India in 1987 instituted a highest National Subramanyam Bharti Award conferred along with Ministry of Human Resource Development, annually confers on writers of outstanding works in "Hindi literature".

MISCELLANEOUS

1. 2021 census data to be stored electronically

- The data collected during the 2021 Census will be stored electronically, the first time since the decennial exercise was conducted in 1951 in Independent India.
- The RGI issued the notification as the process for the 2021 Census kicks in.
- According to an amended rule notified by the Registrar-General of India, the schedules and other connected papers shall be disposed of totally or in part by the Director of Census Operations, after creating an electronic record of such documents.

Old practice

- Till now the schedules (a tabular form containing details of individuals), carried by enumerators to households, were being stored in a physical form at the government's storehouse in Delhi.
- It is based on these schedules that the relevant statistical information on population, language and occupation are sorted and published.
- An individual's household data are not published by the RGI. They are published in the form of tables on the Census website. The data are preserved for 10 years and then destroyed.

New format

- The records, running into crores of pages, were occupying space in government office and it has now been decided that they will be stored in an electronic format.
- The electronic record has been given the status of a document under the IT Act, 2000 so that if there is any infringement action can be initiated.
- From now on, it can be stored forever in an electronic format.

2. Anil Swarup Committee set up to synergise NCC and NSS

Context

- Government has decided to set up a committee under the Chairmanship of Shri Anil Swarup to suggest measures to strengthen National Cadet Corps (NCC) and National Service Scheme (NSS).
- The Committee will deal with issues like expansion, strengthening training infrastructure, rationalizing resources, reducing manpower deficiency affecting NCC and NSS.
- The Committee will also submit recommendations for building synergies between these two institutions viz. NCC and NSS and further strengthen them for empowering the youth

National Service Scheme (NSS)

- NSS is a Central Sector Scheme. The Scheme was launched in the year 1969 with the primary objective of developing the personality and character of the student youth through voluntary community service.
- The ideological orientation of the NSS is inspired by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. Very appropriately, the motto of NSS is "NOT ME, BUT YOU".
- NSS is being implemented in Senior Secondary Schools, Colleges and Universities
- Each NSS unit adopts a village or slum for taking up its activities
- It is being implemented by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports

National Cadet Corps

- It is a youth development movement. It came into existence under the National Cadet Corps Act of 1948.
- It is a Tri-Services Organization, comprising the Army, Navy and Air Force, engaged in grooming the youth of the country into disciplined and patriotic citizens.
- It has enormous potential for nation building. The NCC provides opportunities to the youth of the country for their all-round development with a sense of Duty, Commitment, Dedication, Discipline and Moral Values so that they become able leaders and useful citizens.
- The NCC provides exposure to the cadets in a wide range of activities, with a distinct emphasis on Social Services, Discipline and Adventure Training.
- The NCC is open to all regular students of schools and colleges on a voluntary basis. The students have no liability for active military service.

3. Golden Globe Race

- The Golden Globe Race is being conducted by Sir Robin Knox Johnston of UK to commemorate 50 years since the world's first solo non-stop circumnavigation undertaken by him in 1968 onboard the Indian built boat, Suhaili.

Context

- Commander Abhilash Tomy of the Indian Navy is the only invitee from Asia to participate in the prestigious Golden Globe Race (GGR)

4. Green Mahanadi Mission

- It is a plantation drive launched by Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik under which 2 crore saplings will be planted along the Mahanadi river and its tributaries.

5. Making Cities Resilient Campaign (MCRC)

- It was launched in May, 2010 - addresses issues of local governance and urban risk
- The Campaign is led by the UNISDR but is self-motivating, partnership and city-driven with an aim to raise the profile of resilience and disaster risk reduction among local governments and urban communities worldwide.

Objectives

- Raise awareness of citizens and governments at all levels of the benefits of reducing urban risks.
- Include disaster risk reduction on participatory urban development planning processes and protect critical infrastructure.

6. Origami

- ori meaning “folding”, and kami meaning “paper” (kami changes to gami due to rendaku)
- It is the art of paper folding, which is often associated with Japanese culture
- The goal is to transform a flat square sheet of paper into a finished sculpture through folding and sculpting techniques.
- November 11 is Origami Day in Japan, where the paper crane has become a symbol of peace

7. Paudhagiri

- It is a campaign aimed at increasing the green cover in the state of Haryana
- Under the campaign, 22 lakh students from Classes VI to XII of all government and private schools in Haryana will plant a sapling each during three months of the monsoon — July, August and September.

8. Public Affairs Index 2018

- It is released by the think tank Public Affairs Centre (PAC) in Bengaluru.
- Released annually since 2016, the index examines governance performance in the states through a data-based framework, ranking them on social and economic development they are able to provide.
- Founded in 1994 by renowned Indian economist and scholar late Samuel Paul, the think tank works to mobilise a demand for better governance in the country.
- The think tank has undertaken the study across all the Indian states considering them across 10 themes such as essential infrastructure, support to human development, social protection, women and children as well as law and order.
- The states were divided into two categories -- large and small -- on the basis of their population. States with more than two crore population were considered large.

Ranking

- Kerala stands as the best governed state in the country
- Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Karnataka and Gujarat followed Kerala among the top five states delivering good governance
- Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar ranked the lowest on the PAI, indicating higher social and economic inequalities in the states.
- Among smaller states (with population less than two crore), Himachal Pradesh topped the list, followed by Goa, Mizoram, Sikkim and Tripura which figured among the top five states with good governance.
- Nagaland, Manipur and Meghalaya were ranked at the bottom of the index among small states.

Child Friendly State

- This year's PAI also included a separate index on the children of India, giving a measure of how child-friendly each of the states are.
- Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and Mizoram topped the index on being the states to provide better living conditions for all children.

9. Yo-Yo test

- The Yo-Yo test was invented by Dr. Jens Bangsbo, a Danish scientist and football coach, in the 1990s. He tested it on footballers to improve their overall fitness levels, with a routine that was not just about running long distances.
- For elite footballers, the benchmark score was set high at 21.
- Yo-Yo was introduced to Indian cricket by the national team's strength and conditioning coach Shankar Basu. Ahead of India's tour of Sri Lanka in 2017, the cricketers underwent these tests.

Procedure

- The grueling routine has two sets of cones that are 20 metres apart.
- Once the beep is sounded, an athlete has to reach the marker on the other side by the time the next beep sounds, turn and get back to where he started before the third beep.
- The frequency of the beeps gradually increases for the subsequent trips;
 - * a trip is a successful completion of a run to the cones at the other end and back.
 - * There is a gap of about seven seconds between each trip.
- What starts off as a fast jog at the start becomes distinctly quicker as the test progresses with the duration between the beeps decreasing.
- The point at which an athlete misses two beeps (twice unable to finish trips before the third beep goes off) is his score.

- The test is considered 'stopped' if the person fails to catch up with the pace of the beeps. The entire process is software-based and the results are recorded.

What does it test?

- Yo-Yo probes a sportsperson's endurance and ability to pace himself
- optimal fitness must be achieved
- Irrespective of a cricketer's ability, the present Indian team management feels a minimum fitness level is non-negotiable.

Other teams

- The benchmark Yo-Yo score for Indian cricketers have been set, rather low, at 16.
- For New Zealand and England, it is 19 and above,
- while Sri Lanka and Pakistan have fixed it at 17

Examples

- Prominent cricketers such as Suresh Raina and Yuvraj Singh had failed to surmount the hurdle.
- Rayudu's missed out on the England ODI series

Critics Question the Procedure

- Those who argue against Yo-Yo point out that it measures only one aspect of fitness and does not take into account factors such as agility, flexibility and mental toughness, and the specific demands needed by different breeds of cricketers such as batsmen, spinners and fast bowlers.
- Cricket Australia has replaced Yo-Yo, which it found "unreliable," with a two-km time-trial.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following statement/s is/are incorrect with respect to the high seas?

- i. These are parts of the sea that are not included in the territorial sea or in the internal waters of a State.
- ii. The high seas are open to all States, whether coastal or land-locked.
- iii. The high seas shall be reserved for peaceful purposes..

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- A. i) and ii) only
- B. ii) only
- C. i) and iii) only
- D. None of the above

2. Consider the statements:

- i. Supreme court has jurisdiction over the decisions regarding disqualification of a member of the parliament.
- ii. An exemption has been provided to the Speaker and deputy speaker of the House of people to disqualification.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. i) only
- B. ii) only
- C. Both i) and ii)
- D. None

3. Article 243G talks about the provisions related to powers, authority and responsibilities of panchayats. These matters for economic and social development of the villages are listed in

- A. Schedule 10
- B. Schedule 11
- C. Schedule 12
- D. Schedule 7

4. Which of the following is incorrectly matched?

- A. Humayun's Tomb – Haji Begam
- B. Hampi – Vijayanagara Empire
- C. Churches and Convents, Goa – Portuguese
- D. Moti Masjid, Agra – Akbar

5. Consider the following statements with respect to the National Human Rights Commission of India:

- i. NHRC is an autonomous public body constituted under Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.
- ii. It can intervene in any proceeding involving any allegation of violation of human rights pending before a court.
- iii. It can give recommendations and enforce decisions as well.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- A. i) only
- B. i) and ii) only
- C. i) and iii) only
- D. All of the above

6. Consider the following statements with respect to the Right to Equality:

- i. Socially and Educationally backward citizens or SCs or STs can get special treatment in admission to educational institutions.
- ii. Educational institutions cover private, aided, unaided and minority institutions.

Choose the correct option:

- A. Only i) is correct
- B. Only ii) is correct
- C. Both are correct
- D. Both are incorrect

7. Article 20 deals with protection with respect to the conviction for offences. Which of the following provisions are included in it?

- i. No retrospective law
- ii. No double jeopardy
- iii. No preventive detention
- iv. No self-incrimination

Choose the correct option:

- A. All of the above
- B. i) and iii) only
- C. i), iii) and iv) only
- D. i), ii) and iv) only

8. What are applications of cryogenics which is the study of the production and behaviour of materials at very low temperatures?

- i. Space travel
- ii. Preservation of biological samples
- iii. High speed trains
- iv. Cyclotrons

Options:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1, 2 and 3 only
- C. 2, 3 and 4 only
- D. All of the above

9. Which of the following statements with respect to Koala bear is incorrect?

- A. It is an arboreal herbivorous native to Australia
- B. Koalas are listed as Vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature
- C. They typically inhabit open eucalypt woodlands
- D. None of the above

10. Consider the following statements:

- i. The Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA) was previously known as the Bangkok Agreement.
- ii. It is the oldest preferential trade agreement between countries in the Asia-Pacific region.
- iii. Its objective is to hasten economic development among the participating states opting trade and investment liberalization measures.
- iv. India is the only original member.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

- A. i) and ii) only
- B. i), ii) and iii) only
- C. i), ii) and iv) only
- D. All of the above

11. Consider the following statements:

- i. Thanjavur painting is a classical South Indian painting style.
- ii. Thanjavur glass paintings follow the techniques of Chinese reverse glass paintings.
- iii. The style drew heavily from the other major South Indian styles.
- iv. The subject of these paintings was chiefly Hindu religion.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- A. i) and ii) only
- B. iii) and iv) only
- C. ii) only
- D. None of the above

12. Which of the following statement/s with respect to Cattle Egret is/are incorrect?

- i. It is a species of heron.
- ii. It is found in the tropics, subtropics and warm temperate zones.
- iii. The species is evaluated as Least Concern by IUCN.

Options:

- A. i) only
- B. iii) only
- C. i) and iii) only
- D. None of the above

13. Consider the following statements:

- i. Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) is a joint venture of MHRD Government of India and Canara Bank.
- ii. It was established for financing creation of capital assets in higher education institutions in India.
- iii. It is a not-for-profit organisation that will leverage funds from the market.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are incorrect?

- A. i) only
- B. i) and ii) only
- C. iii) only
- D. None of the above

14. Which of the following statements with respect to Minimum Support Price (MSP) is incorrect?

- A. It is a form of market intervention by the Government of India to insure agricultural producers against any sharp fall in farm prices.
- B. It is announced by the Government of India at the beginning of the sowing season for all the crops.
- C. It is based on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).
- D. Both b) and c)

15. Consider the following statements regarding Right to Equality:

- i. Socially and Educationally backward citizens or SCs or STs can get special treatment in admission to educational institutions.
- ii. Educational institutions cover private, aided, unaided and minority institutions.

Choose the correct option:

- A. Only i) is correct
- B. Only ii) is correct
- C. Both are correct
- D. Both are incorrect

16. Indian Constitution talks about Right to Equality in employment. According to it:

- i. State cannot discriminate against citizen on the grounds of residence.
- ii. Parliament can prescribe residence as a condition for certain employment.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- A. i) only
- B. ii) only
- C. Both i) and ii)
- D. None

17. Which of the following statement/s is/are incorrect with respect to Bhitarkanika National Park?

- i. It is the second largest mangrove ecosystem in India.
- ii. Bhitarkanika has one of the largest populations of endangered saltwater crocodile in India.
- iii. It has been designated as a Ramsar site.

Options:

- A. i) and ii) only
- B. ii) only
- C. ii) and iii) only
- D. None of the above

18. Consider the following statements:

- i. Right to life is available against executive only.
- ii. It covers biological and social life.
- iii. It is not confined to animal existence but extends to life with dignity.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are incorrect?

- A. i) and ii) only
- B. i) only
- C. ii) and iii) only
- D. None of the above

19. Which of the following is/are included in Right to life?

- i. Right to pollution free water.
 - ii. Right to life with human dignity.
 - iii. Right to free legal aid and speedy trial.
 - iv. Right to livelihood.
 - v. Right of women to be treated with decency.
- A. ii), iv) and v)
 - B. i), ii), iv) and v)
 - C. ii), iv) and v)
 - D. All of the above

20. Quit India Movement was launched in response to:

- A. Cabinet Mission Plan
- B. Cripps Proposals
- C. Simon Commission Report
- D. Wavell Plan

21. Consider the following statements with respect to Import Cover.

- i. It is an important indicator of the stability of a currency.
- ii. It measures the number of months of imports that can be covered with foreign exchange reserves available with the central bank of the country

Which of the above statements are correct?

- A. i) only
- B. ii) only
- C. Both i) and ii)
- D. None of the above

22. Consider the following statements:

- i. Fundamental rights under Article 14 and 19 can be diluted to give effect to certain Directive principles.
- ii. If President of India reserves a bill for his own consideration and then approves, then judicial review would not be possible.
- iii. Any law, relating to Schedule 9, can be curtailed on the grounds of violation of Fundamental rights and it cannot be challenged.

Choose the correct option.

- A. Only i) and ii) are correct
- B. Only iii) is correct
- C. All the statements are correct
- D. All the statements

23. Consider the following statements:

- i. In Mandal case, court rejected reservation to the economically backward higher classes and creamy layer among OBC.
- ii. Ram Nandan committee was constituted by the government to identify creamy layer among OBCs in 1993.
- iii. National backward class commission was established as per the recommendations of the Sachar committee report.

Options:

- A. i) only
- B. i) and ii) only
- C. i) and iii) only
- D. iii) only

24. Which of the below statement/s is/are correct regarding the Battle of Imphal and Kohima fought between British and the Japanese in 1944

- i. It was voted as Britain's greatest battle beating Waterloo.
- ii. The Japanese brought a large number of Indian troops captured after the fall of Malaya and Singapore.

Identify the correct statements:

- A. only
- B. ii) only
- C. Both i) and ii)
- D. Neither i) nor ii)

25. Consider the following statements

- i. Tides are the response to the gravitational pull of the sun, the rotation of the earth and the moon.
 - ii. In the open ocean tidal currents are relatively weak.
- Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?
- A. i) only
 - B. ii) only
 - C. Both i) and ii)
 - D. None of the above

26. Which of the following places is/are known for mural paintings?

- i. Ajanta caves
- ii. Bagh caves
- iii. Badami Caves
- iv. Ellora caves

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- A. I, IV only
- B. II, III only
- C. II, III, IV
- D. I, II, IV

27. Which of the following can be the problem of developed countries?

- i. Low population levels
 - ii. High proportion of old age population
 - iii. Inefficient agricultural sector
 - iv. Congestion in towns
 - v. Growth of slums.
- A. All 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
 - B. Only 2, 4, 5
 - C. Only 1, 3, 4, 5
 - D. Only 1, 2, 3, 4

28. Consider the statements:

- i. The Aligarh Movement was started by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan for the social and educational advancement of the Muslims in India.
- ii. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan fought against the medieval backwardness and advocated a rational approach towards religion.

Choose the correct option:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. None of the above

29. Consider the following statements regarding Mission Indradhanush:

- i. The campaign is part of the Universal Immunization Programme by 2020 and aims to cover all those children by 2020 that are either unvaccinated or are partially vaccinated against seven vaccine preventable diseases.
- ii. It includes diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, tuberculosis, measles and hepatitis B.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. None of the above

30. Mahamastakaabhisheka is a grand festival of

- A. Hindus
- B. Jains
- C. Buddhists
- D. Zoroastrians

31. The self-regulating capacity of Eco-system is known as

- A. Ecological Niche
- B. Homeostasis
- C. Ecological Succession
- D. Ecotone

32. Consider the following statements:

- i. An ordinance can be issued when only one House is in session.
- ii. If Parliament takes no action at all, an ordinance ceases to operate on the expiry of 6 months from the reassembly of Parliament.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

33. Three of the following criteria have contributed to the recognition of Western Ghats – Sri Lanka and Indo-Burma regions as hotspots of bio-diversity.

- i. Species richness
- ii. Vegetation density
- iii. Endemism
- iv. Ethno-botanical importance
- v. Threat Perception
- vi. Adaptation of flora and fauna to warm and humid conditions

Which three of the above are correct criteria in this context?

- A. Only 1, 2 and 6
- B. Only 2, 4 and 6
- C. Only 1, 3 and 5
- D. Only 3, 4 and 6

34. Man & Biosphere programme is affiliated with:

- A. UNESCO
- B. IUCN
- C. UNFCCC
- D. WWF

35. Which of the following Directive Principles enjoys primacy over all the Fundamental Rights?

- A. Art 39 (b) and 39 (c)
- B. Art 38
- C. Art 44
- D. None

36. Which of the following is not an extra-constitutional body?

- A. Delimitation Commission.
- B. Zonal Commission
- C. National Commission for Women
- D. Cabinet Committees

37. Consider the following statements with respect to Nipah Virus outbreak.

- i. Urbanisation and deforestation can be a reason for the outbreak.
- ii. Nipah Virus can be transmitted to the humans through pigs.
- A. only
- B. ii) only
- C. Both i) and ii)
- D. None of the above

38. Which of the below statement/s is incorrect?

- A. Gold ETF is an option to invest in gold online
- B. Gold ETFs are open-ended mutual fund schemes
- C. These can be traded on a stock exchange just like the shares of an individual company
- D. None of the above

39. The theory of Separation of Powers is well founded in

- A. Federal form of government
- B. Presidential form of government
- C. Parliamentary form of government
- D. All the above

40. Which of the following acts enabled the Constituent Assembly of India to enact a constitution of its own free will?

- A. Cabinet Mission Plan, 1935
- B. Government of India Act of 1935
- C. Indian Independence Act, 1947
- D. None of the above

41. Which term is most appropriately defined by the seasonal migration of people with their animals in search of pastures and water, with the change in season?

- A. Transhumance
- B. Milpa farming
- C. Pastoral nomadism
- D. Subsistence agriculture

42. What are the health ill-effects of open air defecation and lack of sanitation and hygiene?

- i. Diarrhoea and intestinal infections
- ii. Typhoid
- iii. Cholera
- iv. Polio

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

- A. Only 1 and 2
- B. Only 2 and 3
- C. Only 1, 2 and 3
- D. All of the above

43. The Right of a child to free and compulsory education is a Fundamental right under Article 21A. Consider the following statements in this regard:

- i. Children of the age 6 to 14 years are entitled to free and compulsory education.
- ii. It has been enforced in every state.
- iii. It is in consonance with the Directive Principle provided under Article 45.

Which of the statements are correct?

- A. a) i) only
- B. b) ii) only
- C. c) iii) only
- D. d) None of the above

44. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar called Article 32 as 'Soul of the Constitution'. Which of the following is not correct regarding Article 32?

- A. It deals with the rights relating to Constitutional remedies.
- B. It cannot be suspended even during the Emergency.
- C. Supreme Court enjoys Original jurisdiction over it.
- D. Citizens are empowered to move directly to the SC in case of violation of the Fundamental rights.

45. Consider the following statements about the Battles of Panipat.

- 1. The First Battle of Panipat (1526), was between the Mughal sultan Akbar and Hemu.
- 2. The Second Battle of Panipat was between the Mughal sultan Babur and the Delhi Sultan Ibrahim Lodi.
- 3. The Third Battle of Panipat resulted in a Durrani victory.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?

- A. All of the above
- B. 3 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. None

46. Anekantavada is related to which of the following?

- A. aHinayana Buddhism
- B. Mahayana Buddhism
- C. Shaivism
- D. Jainism

47. Consider the following statements regarding the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, 1931.

- i. Immediate release of non-violent political prisoners was agreed upon, but death sentences of Bhagat Singh and his two comrades were not commuted.
- ii. INC agreed to discontinue Civil-Disobedience Movement.
- iii. Government conceded the right to make salt for any use.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- A. I and II only
- B. I and III only
- C. II and III only
- D. All of the above

48. The background for Non-Cooperation Movement was prepared by:

- i. Jallianwala Bagh incident
- ii. Khilafat issue
- iii Hunter committee report

Options:

- A. I only
- B. II only
- C. I and II only
- D. All of the above

49. Consider the following statements with respect to Curative petitions.

- i. Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) is a set of farming methods, and also a grassroots peasant movement, which has spread to various states in India.
 - ii. It was evolved in the state of Karnataka.
 - iii. It means farming with Nature and without chemicals, without using any credit and without spending any money on purchased inputs.
- A. Only i and ii
 - B. None of the above
 - C. Only i and iii
 - D. Only ii and iii

50. Which one of the following statements is incorrect with respect to Swachh Survekshan?

- A. Swachh Survekshan is a ranking exercise taken up by the Government of India to assess rural and urban areas for their levels of cleanliness.
- B. The Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India takes up the Swachh Survekshan in urban and rural areas.
- C. The Quality Council of India (QCI) has been commissioned the responsibility of carrying out the assessment.
- D. None of the above

51. Consider the following statement/s regarding Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC).

- i. It is a particular form of contracting arrangement.
- ii. The EPC Contractor is made responsible for all the activities from design, procurement, construction, to commissioning and handover of the project to the End-User or Owner.
- iii. Management services are also included in EPC.

Which of the above statement/s is/are incorrect?

- A. III only
- B. I and II only
- C. II and III only
- D. All of the above

52. Which of the following statement regarding Jallianwala Bagh Massacre (Amritsar) is incorrect?

- A. A large unarmed crowd had gathered there on 13 th April 1919.
- B. The crowd had gathered to protest for Indian independence
- C. General Dyer ordered the army to open fire as Martial law was in place.
- D. None of the above

53. Consider the following statements with respect to Curative petitions.

- i. Curative petitions are not heard in open court.
 - ii. Only two issues can be raised in them, that the judgment was passed without hearing the party and judicial bias.
- A. Both are correct
 - B. Both are incorrect
 - C. Only i is correct
 - D. Only ii is correct

54. Which of the following can be stated as the reasons for the peasants' and workers' movements in the 1930s?

- i. Impact of the economic depression of 1929.
- ii. Civil Disobedience Movement.
- iii. Rise of the left parties.

Choose the correct option:

- A. I only
- B. I and II only
- C. I and III only
- D. All of the above

55. Consider the following statements regarding the revolutionary movements in India.

- i. They contributed in the propagation of modern political ideas like federalism, democracy, etc.
- ii. They tried to provide an alternative to mainstream politics.
- iii. Although in early phase they had religious influence, their approach was mostly secular in nature.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- A. II only
- B. I and II only
- C. II and III only
- D. All of the above

56. Identify the correct statements:

- i. Sufis were organized in to orders known as "silsilas".
 - ii. Sufis who followed Islamic laws are called "Be-shara".
 - iii. Sufis who did not follow Islamic laws are called "Ba-shara".
- A. i and ii only
 - B. ii and iii only
 - C. i only
 - D. iii only

57. Consider the following statements about The Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2015:

- 1. The Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2015 that proposes citizenship to Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Buddhists from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.
 - 2. There has been resistance to the Bill in Manipur.
- a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only
 - c) Both 1 and 2
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2

58. Consider the following statements:

- 1. The Committee on Data Protection Framework is setup under the Ministry of Law.
 - 2. The Data Protection Framework Committee will be headed by Justice B.N. Srikrishna.
- Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
- A. 1 only
 - B. 2 only
 - C. Both 1 and 2
 - D. Neither 1 nor 2

59. Consider the following statements about Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA):

- 1. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is known commonly as the Iran nuclear deal or Iran deal.
- 2. Under the agreement, Iran agreed to eliminate its stockpile of medium-enriched uranium.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

60. Consider the following statements about Wholesale Price Inflation (WPI):

- 1. In India, headline inflation is measured through the WPI.
- 2. It is measured on year-on-year basis, also known as point to point inflation.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

61. Consider the following statements about National Register of Citizens:

- 1. It is a list containing the bona fide Indian Citizens and Migrants
- 2. Currently the list is being updated in the state of Assam

Which of the above statement(s) is/are incorrect?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

62. Consider the following statements regarding VVPATs.

1. VVPAT was used for the first time in Goa's state assembly elections
2. It is a method of providing feedback to voters using a ballotless voting system.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are incorrect?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

63. Consider the following statements.

1. CAATSA has imposed sanctions on Iran, South Korea and Russia
2. India has concluded a deal to procure S-400 Triumph air defence missile system from the US.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

64. For the protection and preservation of the monument Taj Mahal

1. The State Government has to consult the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).
2. Is state government itself is responsible for maintenance of the Taj Trapezium Zone (TTZ).

Which of the above statement(s) is/are incorrect?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

65. Which union ministry has organized the 2nd meeting of National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges under POSHAN Abhiyaan in New Delhi?

- A. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
- B. Ministry of Panchayati Raj
- C. Ministry of Food Processing Industries
- D. Ministry of Women and Child Development

66. Which state government has launched a plantation drive 'Green Mahanadi Mission'?

- A. West Bengal
- B. Odisha
- C. Jharkhand
- D. Chhattisgarh

67. The aim of Rowlatt Act was:

- A. To provide for compulsory economic
- B. Support to British war efforts.
- C. To curb the activities of trade unions.
- D. To curtail the civil liberties of Indians.

68. Consider the following statements about Clean Ganga Fund?

1. Activities outlined under the 'Namami Gange' programme for cleaning of river Ganga.
2. Control of non-point pollution from agricultural runoff, human defecation, cattle wallowing etc.
3. Setting up of waste treatment and disposal plants along the river around the cities.
4. Conservation of the biotic diversity of the river.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- A. 1, 2, and 3 only
- B. 1, 2, 3 and 5 only
- C. 1, 2, 3, and 5 only
- D. All of the above

69. Consider the following statements:

1. Article 23 permits state to impose compulsory service for public purposes.
2. Article 23 allows gender-based discrimination

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

70. According to the Lucknow Pact which was signed between INC and Muslim League in 1916:

1. Muslims were to be given one-third representation in the state government.
 2. Separate electorates for Muslims were accepted.
 3. Self-government in India was to be demanded.
- A. Only 1 and 2
 - B. Only 2 and 3
 - C. Only 1 and 3
 - D. All of the above

71. Consider the following statements about Abdul Ghaffar Khan:

1. He was popularly known as Frontier Gandhi.
2. He was the leader of Khudai Khidmatgars (Red shirts).
3. Khudai Khidmatgar was a Pashtun violent movement against the British Empire by the people of the North-West Frontier Province.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are incorrect?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Only 3
- D. None of the above

72. Which of the following statements with respect to the Central Water Commission is incorrect?

- A. It is charged with the general responsibilities of coordinating the schemes for control, conservation and utilization of water resources throughout the country.
- B. It is headed by a Chairman, with the status of Ex-Officio Secretary to the Government of India.
- C. Both a and b
- D. None of the above

73. Consider the following statements:

1. Ghost dunes are crescent-shaped depressions on the surface of the Red Planet.
2. They are formed when lava or other sediments seep into the base region of a dune and solidify there.
3. Ghost dunes indicate life on early Mars.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are incorrect?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 1 and 2
- C. Only 3
- D. None of the above

74. Which of the following statements is incorrect with respect to Consultative Status?

- A. The status recognises an NGOs' special expertise in certain areas of work of the U.N. body.
- B. Consultative status provides NGOs with access to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
- C. There are three types of consultative status: General, Special and Roster.
- D. None of the above

75. Which of the following statement/s is/are incorrect regarding the Yellowstone super-volcano?

1. It is a long-dormant complex of volcanoes in the United States that has unique origins and an activation process that is completely different from that typically associated with volcanoes.
2. The Yellowstone Caldera is a part of the Rocky Mountains and located mostly in Wyoming.
3. The Yellowstone volcanoes were produced by a gigantic ancient oceanic plate that dove under the western U.S. about 30 million years ago.

Options:

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 1 and 3
- C. Only 2
- D. None of the above

76. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct with respect to the National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme?

1. It is aimed at eliminating the deadly condition by 2030.
2. It was launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in collaboration with the WHO.

Options:

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

77. Sanjay Dubri National Park is in the state of

- A. Rajasthan
- B. Odisha
- C. Madhya Pradesh
- D. Maharashtra

78. Theyyam festival is hosted in

- A. Tamilnadu
- B. Kerala
- C. Karnataka
- D. Andhra Pradesh

79. Consider the following with reference to E-Government Development Index (EGDI):

1. It is published by World Economic Forum.
2. It is published yearly. It speaks about e governance initiatives taken by Govt and Private companies in a country.

The correct code is:

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither of them

80. Consider the following statements about Tiger:

1. Its IUCN status is critically endangered
2. India has the highest number of tigers
3. In India, Karnataka leads in state ranking

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

- A. Only 3
- B. Only 1
- C. Only 2 and 3
- D. Only 1 and 3

81. Consider the following with respect to Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project:

1. It is an off-shoot of the Pranahitha-Chevella Lift Irrigation Scheme
2. The project includes the longest tunnel to carry water in Asia

Which of the following statement/s is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

82. Justice Srikrishna Committee submitted Report on

- A. Data Protection
- B. Prevention of Corruption
- C. E-commerce policy
- D. Updating of NRC in Assam

83. Consider the following statements:

1. The 1st BRIC Summit was held in Brazil
 2. South Africa became the member of the grouping in 2010
- Which of the following statement/s is/are correct?
- A. 1 only
 - B. 2 only
 - C. Both 1 and 2
 - D. Neither 1 nor 2

84. Consider the following statements:

1. LIDAR stands for Light Detection and Ranging
2. It is a method that measures distance to a target by illuminating the target with pulsed laser light and measuring the reflected pulses with a sensor.
3. LIDAR is used to make 2D representations of the target.

Which of the statement/s is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. All of the above

85. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct with respect to GDP Deflator?

- i. It is the ratio of the value of goods and services an economy produces in a particular year at current prices to that of prices that prevailed during the base year.
 - ii. The GDP deflator is a measure of inflation.
- A. i only
 - B. ii only
 - C. Both i and ii
 - D. None of the above

86. Consider the following statements about CPI-Consumer Price Index:?

- i. A consumer price index (CPI) measures changes over time in the general level of prices of goods and services meant for the purpose of consumption.
- ii. CPI is based on a comprehensive list of goods that covers the entire economy.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- A. 1 only.
- B. 2 only.
- C. Both 1 and 2.
- D. None of the above

87. Consider the following statements:

- i. The Insolvency Law Committee is headed by Corporate Affairs Secretary Injeti Srinivas and it is studying the feasibility of introducing cross-border insolvency provisions.
- ii. The existing Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) has no provisions pertaining to cross-border insolvency matters.

Choose the incorrect option:

- A. I only
- B. II only
- C. Both I and II
- D. None of the above

88. Which of the following were the factors leading to the Decline of Mughals?

- 1. Jagirdari crisis
- 2. Intense factionalism within Mughal court
- 3. Socio-religious issues leading to alienation of the masses
- 4. Weakening might of the Mughal Army
- 5. Recurrent peasant revolts

Options:

- A. i), ii) and iii) only
- B. i), ii), and v) only
- C. i), ii), iii) and iv) Only
- D. All of the above

89. Consider the following statements :

- i. The Expert Committee to 'report on the challenges faced by the current auction system and recommend changes' was headed by Pratyush Sinha.
 - ii. The panel has recommended developing a Coal Index for determining the value of blocks and a revenue-sharing model with the States.
- A. I only
 - B. II only
 - C. Both I and II
 - D. None of the above

90. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct?

- 1. Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan Committee was setup to measure and monitor the implementation of road safety laws in the country.
 - 2. All Roads are covered under the Union List of legislation.
- A. i only
 - B. ii only
 - C. Both i and ii
 - D. None of the above

91. Consider the following statements about National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR):?

- i. Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan Committee was setup to measure and monitor the implementation of road safety laws in the country.
- ii. All Roads are covered under the Union List of legislation.

Select the correct answer using the codes given:

- A. 1 only.
- B. 2 only.
- C. Both 1 and 2.
- D. None of the above

92. Consider the following statements about MSTRIPES:

- i. It is a software-based monitoring system launched by the Indian government's National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in 2010.
- ii. MSTRIPES stands for Monitoring System for Tigers Intensive Patrolling and Ecological Status.

Options:

- A. I only
- B. II only
- C. Both I and II
- D. None of the above

93. Which of the following statement/s is/are incorrect?

- i. Madhubani art is practiced in the Mithila region of Bihar in India and Nepal.
 - ii. It was originated in Nepal and the art form travelled to India later.
 - iii. Painting is done with fingers, twigs, brushes, nib-pens, and matchsticks, using natural dyes and pigments.
- A. i only
 - B. ii only
 - C. Both i and ii
 - D. None of the above

94. Which of the following statement with respect to Dhole is incorrect?

- A. The dhole is a canid native to Central, South and Southeast Asia.
- B. It is listed as Extinct in the wild by the IUCN as populations are decreasing and are estimated at fewer than 2,500 adults.
- C. They are found in Alpine zones in India.
- D. None of the above

95. Non-Cooperation movement, 1920-21 included:

- i. Surrender of titles
- ii. Boycott of Government affiliated schools and colleges
- iii. Boycott of foreign goods
- iv. Defiance of forest laws
- v. Strikes and Hartals
- vi. No-tax Movement

Choose the correct option:

- A. I, II, III and V only
- B. I, II, III, V and VI only
- C. I, II, III, IV and V only
- D. All of the above

96. Public Accounts Committee was established as per the recommendations of:

- A. Hunter commission
- B. Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms
- C. Morley-Minto Reforms
- D. Simon Commission

97. Which of the following statement/s is/are incorrect with respect to the Black Rhino?

- A. It is native to the eastern and southern Africa including Botswana and Kenya
- B. Although the rhinoceros is referred to as black, its colours vary from brown to grey
- C. The species is classified as Extinct in Wild by IUCN
- D. Both a and c

98. Which of the following factors can contribute to Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)?

- 1. Genes
 - ii. Cigarette smoking, alcohol use, or drug use during pregnancy
 - iii. Exposure to environmental toxins during pregnancy
 - iv. Exposure to environmental toxins, such as high levels of lead, at a young age
 - v. Low birth weight
 - vi. Brain injuries
- Options:
- a) i, ii, and iv only
 - b) i, ii, iii and v only
 - c) i, ii, iii, iv and v only
 - d) All of the above

99. Consider the following statements regarding the President of India.

- 1. All executive actions of the Government of India are formally taken in his name
- 2. He can make rules for more convenient transaction of business of Union Govt

Which of the above statement(s) is/are incorrect?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

100. Consider the following statements:

- 1. Silent Valley is located in Tamil Nadu.
- 2. Silent Valley is home to the largest population of lion-tailed macaques

Which of the statements are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWER KEYS

Question No	Answer Keys
1.	D
2.	B
3.	B
4.	D
5.	B
6.	A
7.	D
8.	D
9.	D
10.	B
11.	D
12.	D
13.	D
14.	B
15.	A
16.	C
17.	D
18.	B
19.	D
20.	B
21.	D
22.	C
23.	D
24.	C
25.	C

Question No	Answer Keys
26.	D
27.	B
28.	C
29.	C
30.	B
31.	B
32.	A
33.	C
34.	A
35.	D
36.	D
37.	D
38.	D
39.	B
40.	C
41.	A
42.	D
43.	B
44.	B
45.	B
46.	D
47.	A
48.	D
49.	B
50.	B

Question No	Answer Keys
51.	A
52.	B
53.	A
54.	D
55.	D
56.	C
57.	A
58.	B
59.	C
60.	C
61.	B
62.	B
63.	D
64.	A
65.	D
66.	B
67.	C
68.	D
69.	D
70.	B
71.	C
72.	D
73.	D
74.	D
75.	D

Question No	Answer Keys
76.	C
77.	C
78.	B
79.	D
80.	B
81.	C
82.	A
83.	B
84.	A
85.	C
86.	A
87.	B
88.	D
89.	C
90.	A
91.	C
92.	C
93.	B
94.	B
95.	C
96.	B
97.	C
98.	D
99.	D
100.	B

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. With the consumption levels of plastic in India on the rise, curbing the plastic menace will prove to be an arduous task. Discuss the challenges faced by the government in the implementation of the various legislations to control plastic pollution and suggest measures to design and implement an effective policy..
2. Wars bring plight to one, an opportunity for another. In this context, discuss the economic impact of World War II on various sections of the Indian society.
3. The draft Higher Education Commission of India (HECT) Bill has proposed a new commission which is to provide for more autonomy and facilitate holistic growth of the education sector. Critically analyse HECT Bill in light of the above statement
4. Women have an important role to play in promoting a new attitude towards the use of water resources, based not only on technical knowledge, but also on cultural and ethical values. Discuss
5. Socio-economic issues in rural areas contribute to the problems prevailing in urban areas. Explain with suitable examples.
6. Directive principles of state policy propose that the state shall strive to prohibit intoxicating drinks that are injurious to health. Examine the recent developments in this direction
7. The unorganised sector plays a pivotal role in the Indian economy and hence deserves special attention. Examine the issues and challenges faced by the unorganised sector and the workers
8. Nepal has changed the course of bilateral relations with India. Discuss in the context of China-Nepal relations
9. India has lost its eminent position in South Asia as a consequence of reckless adventurism in its neighbourhood
10. Diversity in India takes form in numerous ways. Explain
11. E-governance has the potential to make governance ethical. Discuss.
12. Corruption is an important manifestation of the failure of ethics. Illustrate with suitable examples
13. Transparency and accountability can play an important role in addressing both developmental failures and democratic deficits. Illustrate with examples
14. Explain in detail how Judiciary can be restructured by taking examples from other countries
15. Accountability and Transparency are not only the responsibilities of Legislature and executive but also of Judiciary. Illustrate with examples
16. Live streaming of cases should be fundamental but with suitable exception. Critically Analyze
17. Bodily freedom and Right to Privacy takes precedence over Right to practice of Religion. Explain
18. The guardian of the Constitution should first Guard the interests of its functions. Explain
19. The scope of Right to Life is virtually limitless, embodying everything that a human being requires to live a quality life. Discuss
20. The choice of cooking fuel in households has a huge impact on living conditions especially for women and children. Discuss
21. The draft HECL Bill is an unprecedented move towards excellence in the education sector. Critically analyse
22. Urban planning is the answer to the growing problem of environmental degradation in cities. Discuss
23. Why is there no formation of deltas by rivers of the Western Ghats?
24. The revolt of 1857 was the first war of independence. Critically analyse
25. Discuss the reasons for the decline of Maratha power
26. Civil service ethics is more than the mere definition of actions complying or not complying with the law. Discuss

27. Marx's relevance today is chiefly in the analysis of the concentration of wealth in the hands of the property-owning classes. Discuss in Indian context.
28. The Consumer Protection Bill, 2018 aims to empower the interests of consumers. What are the salient features of the bill? What will be its impact on e-commerce?
29. Co-operative federalism is a Myth. Illustrate with examples
30. Discuss Net Neutrality with respect to the recent developments in India.
31. Explain the need for protection of Coral reefs with special reference to the Great Barrier Reef
32. The Resolution of Kashmir Crisis is not guaranteed even if there is a consensus among all the concerned stakeholders involved. Discuss.
33. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is an excellent opportunity for India to secure its economic and security interests in the region. Elaborate.
34. Discuss the challenges to the agriculture sector in India. What are the initiatives by the present government to tackle those challenges?
35. The insurgency in the North-east region of India is a long standing threat to the unity and integrity of the nation. Discuss.
36. The recent judgement of the Supreme Court on the SC/St atrocities act sends out a message that the Act is being misused. To what extent is it constitutionally right to dilute the provisions of the Act. Critically Analyse
37. Social media induced violence is a rising threat in Indian society. What makes India vulnerable to such a phenomena? Suggest some measures to curb this trend of Social Media induced violence.
38. The balance between fundamental rights and parliamentary privilege must be re-examined. Analyze.
39. Bureaucracy and political intervention go hand in hand. Explain.
40. Critically analyse the changes proposed in the RTI Act by the Government. Discuss the challenges in the current RTI framework..
41. The Coal Sector is in dire need of reforms in multiple aspects ranging from allocation to financial health of companies. Comment
42. No detention policy helps in improving the learning outcomes of children. Discuss in the light of recent amendments to RTE act.
43. Compare and contrast strategic importance of China's and India's role in the African continent.
44. Reviving pre-legislative scrutiny will produce laws that better reflect the will of the people. Comment
45. Pakistan election is a plot by military in the guise of Democracy. What can India expect from Pakistan elections?
46. The draft Data protection Bill is not just about the protection of the rights of citizens. Analyse the statement
47. Climate change has emerged as a significant challenge to urban planning. Suggest ways to deal with the challenge
48. Discuss the significance of ethics in civil services and outline the differences between civil services ethics and professional ethics.
49. The basic objective of the Citizens' Charter is to empower the citizen in relation to public service delivery. Critically analyse.
50. Public sector should involve as much as Private sector in manufacturing of medicines. Explain
51. Knowledge is power, but access to knowledge is another kind of power. Explain in reference to E governance. Also, comment how India improved its ranking in e participation Index
52. India is a land of tolerance and melting pot of cultural values. Illustrate with examples

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