



INSIGHTS IAS

SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

- I A S S E L F S T U D Y G U I D E -

CURRENT AFFAIRS

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GS PAPER - I

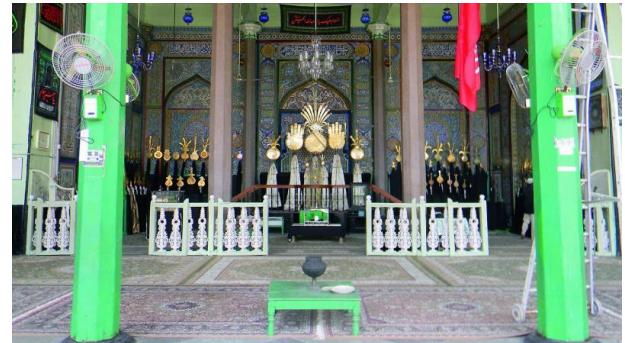
Paper 1 Topic: Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

1. BADSHAHI ASHOORKHANA

- **Context:** Telangana government and Aga Khan Trust are working to restore Hyderabad's 17th century Badshahi Ashoorkhana.

About Hyderabad's 17th century Badshahi Ashoorkhana:

- The 400-year old Ashoorkhana was built by **Muhammed Quli Qutub Shah**.
- **It was a house of mourning**, where large congregations of Muslims gathered in memory of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain during the month of Muharram.
- **The building consists of** a Kaman, Naqqar Khana (where ceremonial drums are beaten), Niyaz Khana (where visitors are fed), Sarai Khana (place to rest), Abdar Khana (drinking water is stored), the chabutra (platform) and a guard room.
- During the rule of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, in 1178 Hijri (about 1764 AD), the Ashoorkhana was converted into a **bandikhana**. For 80 years, it was used as a stable where horses were kept, before it was restored as a place of worship by the then mutawalli Mir Nawazish Ali Khan.
- The eight wooden pillars were reconstructed and the alams were reinstalled. During this time, the main entrance, Bab-e-Faiz-e-Imam-e-Alamiyan, was also constructed.



What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Ashoorkhana, important contributions of Quli Qutub Shah to India's art and architecture, Aurangzeb's restoration works.

Sources: the hindu.

2. SANCHI STUPA OF INDIA AND PHO MINH PAGODA OF VIET NAM

- **Context:** Cabinet approves MoU between India and Viet Nam on Joint issue of postage stamp. Joint Issue depicts Sanchi Stupa of India and Pho Minh Pagoda of Viet Nam.

About Sanchi Stupa:

- **When was it built:** Commissioned in 3rd century BCE, Expansion/ additions/restoration works/ made in different periods.
- **Who built it:** Commissioned by Emperor Ashoka of the Maurya Dynasty.
- **Where is it located:** Located 46 km north-east of Bhopal, the capital city of Madhya Pradesh, India.
- **Architectural Style:** Buddhist Art and Architecture.
- **Other facts:** It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

About Pho Minh Pagoda:

- The pagoda was originally built during the Ly Dynasty and later expanded in 1262 during the Tran Dynasty.
- It was a place for high-ranking mandarins and the aristocracy of the Tran Royal Court to worship and lead their religious life.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Sanchi Stupa- features and significance, Pho Minh Pagoda- location and its significance.
- **For Mains:** Development of Art and Architecture during Mauryan period.

Viet Nam-India: Joint Stamp Issue 2018

Ancient Architecture – Sanchi Stupa (India) & Pho Minh Pagoda (Viet Nam)



Sources: pib.

3. NALANDA UNIVERSITY

- Context:** The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for withdrawal of Nalanda University (Amendment) Bill, 2013 pending in the Rajya Sabha.

Background:

- The Nalanda University was established on the basis of a Joint Press Statement at the 4th East Asia Summit held in Thailand in October, 2009, which supported its establishment as a non-state, non-profit, secular and self-governing international institution.
- Subsequently, the Nalanda University Act, 2010 was passed by the Parliament and came into effect from 25th November 2010.

Highlights of Nalanda University (Amendment) Bill, 2013:

- It establishes Nalanda University in Bihar as a result of decisions taken at the East Asia Summits.
- Under the Act, the University is a non-profit public-private partnership, supported by each member country as well as other sources. The Bill amends the Act to provide for the Government of India to meet the university's capital and recurring expenditure to the extent required.
- The powers of the University are amended to include the power to set up a consortium of international partners to meet the objectives of the University, and appoint persons working in any other University or academic institution, including those located outside India, as faculty of the University.
- The size of the Governing Board of the University is being increased to include two persons of eminence and two members from the academic faculty of the University. The Bill also makes provision for the appointment of Deans and Provosts.



Key facts:

- Nalanda stands out as the most ancient university of the Indian Subcontinent. It engaged in the organized transmission of knowledge over an uninterrupted period of 800 years.
- The historical development of the site testifies to the development of Buddhism into a religion and the flourishing of monastic and educational traditions.
- It was a major Mahavihara or a large Buddhist monastery that also doubled up as an important centre of learning from the 5th to 1200 AD in the erstwhile kingdom of Magadh.
- The construction of Nalanda university began in 5th century AD and flourished under the Gupta rulers. It came to an end in the 12th century when it was destroyed in 1193 AD by the invading Turkish army led by its commander Bakhtiar Khilji.
- UNESCO has declared Bihar's much awaited ancient site – the ruins of Nalanda Mahavihara – a World Heritage Site.

What's Important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Nalanda Mahavihara- Historical importance, Highlights of the Bill.

Sources: pib.

4. AMBUBACHI MELA

- **Context:** Ambubachi Mela, a four-day fair to mark the annual menstruation of the goddess is being held at Kamakhya temple in Guwahati.

About Ambubachi Mela:

- The Ambubachi Mela symbolises the **fertility cult of goddess Kamakhya**.
- There is **no idol in the temple**, the goddess is worshipped in the form of a yoni-like stone over which a natural spring flows.
- Also known as **Siddha Kubjika**, the goddess is a Hindu tantric goddess of desire who evolved in the Himalayan hills. She is also identified as Kali and Maha Tripura.
- The festival is also known as '**Mahakumbh of the East**' as it draws lakhs of devotees from all over the world.

**Social significance of the festival:**

- The ritualistic fair celebrating the goddess' period is one of the reasons why the taboo associated with menstruation is less in Assam compared with other parts of India.
- The attainment of womanhood of girls in Assam is celebrated with a ritual called 'Tuloni Biya', meaning small wedding. Ambubachi Mela serves as an occasion to promote awareness on menstrual hygiene.

Facts for Prelims:

- Kamakhya, **atop Nilachal Hills in Guwahati**, is one of 51 shaktipeeths or seat of Shakti followers, each representing a body part of the Sati, Lord Shiva's companion.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Ambubachi festival and Nilachal Hills.
- **For Mains:** Significance and the role of festival in promoting awareness on menstrual hygiene.

Sources: the hindu.

5. SANT KABIR

- **Context:** June 28 marks **Sant Kabir's 500th** death anniversary and is celebrated as **Kabir Jayanti** across the country.

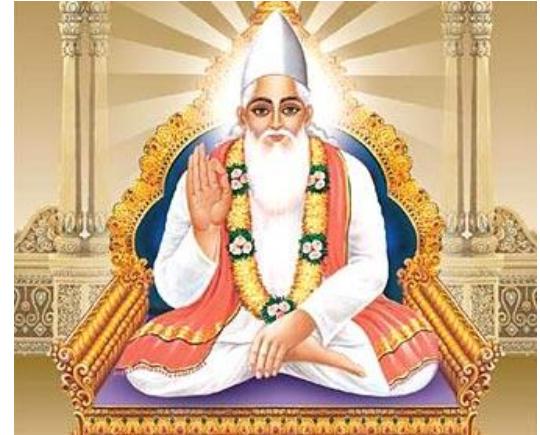
About Kabir:

- Sant Kabir Das was a very renowned **saint, poet and social reformer** of India who lived during the 15th century. His esteemed works and poems describe the greatness and oneness of the Supreme Being.

- ***He did not believe in any religious discrimination and readily accepted all the religions.*** Sant Kabir Das propagated that there is the presence of same Supreme Being in all religions.
- Sant Kabir Das was a highly acclaimed poet of his time. His writings significantly ***influenced the Bhakti movement.*** Some of his famous writings include '*Sakhi Granth*', '*Anurag Sagar*', '*Bijak*' and '*Kabir Granthawali*'.
- A religious community known as '***Kabir Panth***' was founded by him and the members of this forum are referred as '***Kabir Panthis***', implying the followers of Kabir Das. He was admired by individual of all faiths and his teachings are still alive and passed from generations.
- ***Swami Ramananda influence:*** Kabir Das' ideologies were greatly influenced by Vaishnava saint Swami Ramananda who accepted Kabir as his disciple.
- The UP Tourism department has initiated to promote ***Maghar*** as a tourist destination where Hindus have built a temple in memory of Kabir, while Muslims have constructed a mausoleum in his memory.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Sant Kabir- beliefs, works and places associated.
- **For Mains:** Teachings of Sant Kabir and their relevance today.



Sources: the hindu.

Paper 1 Topic: Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present-significant events, personalities, issues.

1. AITUC

- **Context:** Accusing the Centre of running an “anti-worker government”, leading trade union body AITUC is planning to launch a nationwide campaign against the government.

About AITUC:

- The All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) is the oldest trade union federations in India.
- It was founded in **1920** in Bombay by **Lala Lajpat Rai, Joseph Baptista, N. M. Joshi, Diwan Chaman Lall** and a few others.
- Until 1945 when unions became organised on party lines, it was the primary trade union organisation in India. Since then, it has been associated with the Communist Party of India.
- **AITUC is a founder member of the World Federation of Trade Unions.**

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** AITUC- founders and objectives of the union.

Sources: the hindu.

2. PIETERMARITZBURG

- **Context:** External Affairs Minister recently undertook a train journey from Pentrich to Pietermaritzburg.

Significance of the place:

- It is a railway station in South Africa where a young Mahatma Gandhi was thrown out of a “Whites-only” compartment 125 years ago.
- On June 7, 1893, Gandhi, then a young lawyer, was thrown off the train’s first class compartment at Pietermaritzburg station after he refused to give up his seat as ordered by racially prejudiced officials.

Outcomes:

- The incident led him to develop his Satyagraha principles of peaceful resistance and mobilize people in South Africa and in India against the discriminatory rules of the British.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** The incident and its outcomes, the impact it had on Gandhi's future actions.

Sources: the hindu.

3. BANKIM CHANDRA

- **Context:** The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in West Bengal is planning to celebrate the achievements of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay.

Bankim Chandra- important contributions:

- Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay wrote the national song **Vande Mataram**.
- The 19th century author's novel **Anandamath** — which was set in the background of the Sanyashi Bidroho (rebellion of monks in late 18th century) — is considered to be one of key works on Bengal's nationalism.
- His first Bengali fiction is called '**Durgeshnondini**' published in 1865.
- He also wrote other famous novels like Kapalkundala in 1866, Mrinalini in 1869, Vishbriksha in 1873, Chandrasekhar in 1877, Rajani in 1877, Rajsimha in 1881 and Devi Chaudhurani in 1884. He brought out a monthly magazine called Bangadarshan in 1872.

**What's important?**

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Bankim Chandra- Important literary works and role in Indian National movement.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 1 Topic: *Role of women and women's organization.*

1. INDECENT REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN (PROHIBITION) ACT (IRWA)

- **Context:** Based on the observations made by Parliamentary Standing Committee and recommendation made by the National Commission for Women on the basis of consultation with civil society groups and likeminded individuals, WCD has proposed amendments in IRWA keeping in mind the recent technological advancement in the field of communications such as social media platforms, over the top services etc.

Reforms proposed:

- Amendment in definition of term advertisement to include digital form or electronic form or hoardings, or through SMS, MMS etc.
- Amendment in definition of distribution to include publication, license or uploading using computer resource, or communication device or in.
- Insertion of a new definition to define the term publish.
- Amendment in section 4 to include that No person shall publish or distribute or cause to be published or cause to be distributed by any means any material which contains indecent representation of women in any form:
- Penalty similar to that provided under the Information Technology Act, 2000.

Creation of new authority:

- Creation of a Centralised Authority under the aegis of National Commission of Women (NCW). This Authority will be headed by Member Secretary, NCW, having representatives from Advertising Standards Council of India, Press Council of India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and one member having experience of working on women issues.
- This Centralised Authority will be authorized to receive complaints or grievances regarding any programme or advertisement broadcasted or publication and investigate/ examine all matters relating to the indecent representation of women.

What necessitated this?

- Reforms have been proposed keeping in mind the recent technological advancements.
- The need was felt to widen the scope of the law so as to cover such forms of media on one hand and to strengthen the existing safeguards to prevent indecent representation of women through any media form on the other.
- Hence, the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Amendment Bill, 2012 was introduced in Rajya Sabha December, 2012 which referred the Bill to Department related Parliament Standing Committee for consideration.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** Salient provisions of IRWA and the amendments proposed.
- For Mains:** Indecent representation of women- concerns, challenges and solutions.

Sources: the hindu.

2. U.K. WOMEN CELEBRATE 100 YEARS OF VOTING RIGHTS

- Context:** June 10, 2018 marked 100 years since the first women won the right to vote in Britain.

Background:

- The Representation of the People Act, 1918 granted property-owning British women over age 30 the right to vote.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** Right to Vote for women in Britain.
- For Mains:** Significance of voting rights for women, historical position of women across the world.



Sources: the hindu.

3. PRADHAN MANTRI MATRU VANDANA YOJANA (PMMVY)

- Context:** After initial hiccups in implementing the maternity benefit programme Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), the government has finally made some headway and provided cash incentives to nearly 23.6 lakh beneficiaries out of an estimated 51.6 lakh a year.

Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyaan
A new initiative
On the 9th of every month

Shri Narendra Modi
Hon'ble Prime Minister

Private medical practitioners are requested to join this campaign on voluntary basis

At all Government Health Facilities (Free of charge)

Additional protection to ALL pregnant women along with the routine Antenatal check-up

Special Antenatal check-up by a DOCTOR

To detect high risk pregnancies

Maternal Mortality Ratio in India declined by 70.2% compared to global decline of 44.7%

Year	India (Maternal Mortality Ratio)	Global (Maternal Mortality Ratio)
1990	140	140
2000	100	100
2010	70	70
2015	50	50

About PMMVY:

Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), previously Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY), is a maternity benefit program run by the government of India.

- PMMVY is **implemented by the Ministry of Women & Child Development** in collaboration with State Governments.
- It is **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** under which the cost sharing ratio between the Centre and the States & UTs with Legislature is 60:40, for North-Eastern States & three Himalayan States, it is 90:10 and 100% Central assistance for Union Territories without Legislature.
- It is **a conditional cash transfer scheme** for pregnant and lactating women of 19 years of age or above for first two live births.
- It provides a **partial wage compensation** to women for wage-loss during childbirth and childcare and to provide conditions for safe delivery and good nutrition and feeding practices.
- In 2013, **the scheme was brought under the National Food Security Act, 2013** to implement the provision of cash maternity benefit of ₹6,000 stated in the Act.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Key features of PMMVY.

Sources: the hindu.

4. 'WOMEN WIZARDS RULE TECH' PROGRAMME

- **What is it?** It is **a programme for women techies unveiled by NASSCOM**. It aims to increase the number of women in senior levels in the Information Technology (IT) industry.

Background:

- The Women Wizards Rule Tech was announced in March at the Nasscom Diversity and Inclusion Summit in Chennai as a joint initiative by the Nasscom Sector Skills Council and the Data Security Council of India.

Facts for Prelims:

- **About Nasscom:** The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) is a trade association of Indian Information Technology (IT) and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry. Established in 1988, NASSCOM is a non-profit organisation.

Details of the programme:

- The programme is designed to support women who are moving up the career ladder, while also paving the way for potential leaders of the future.
- The initiative will aid women techies in core technologies like IT-Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES), Business Process Management (BPM), product and research and development (R&D) sectors by equipping them with the skills required for an edge in their career.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** About NASSCOM and 'Women Wizards Rule Tech' programme.
- **For Mains:** Women in IT industry- status, challenges and efforts in this regard.

Sources: the hindu.

5. 'WOMEN IN PRISONS' REPORT

- **Context:** The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) has come up with its report titled '**Women in Prisons**' which aims to build an understanding of the various entitlements of women in prisons, the various issues faced by them and possible methods for resolution of the same.

Highlights of the report- important recommendations:

- **Who is vulnerable?** Women- elderly, disabled, pregnant, mothers who have recently given birth but whose children are not with them in prison, those who have miscarried, or those who have recently undergone abortion.
- **Arrangements for women with care-giving responsibilities:** Prior to their imprisonment, women with care-giving responsibilities must be allowed to make arrangements for their children, and a reasonable suspension

- of detention may also be provided for this purpose. Provisions for extended and frequent visits, and admission of children into Childcare institutions have also been proposed.
- **Bail:** Bail should be granted to those under-trial women who have spent one-third of their maximum possible sentence in detention, by making necessary changes in Section 436A of the CrPC which provides for release after half of the maximum sentence has been served.
 - **Special care for pregnant and lactating women:** A separate accommodation for mothers in post-natal stage to maintain hygiene and protect the infant from contagion, for at least a year after childbirth has been proposed. There are special provisions relating to health and nutrition to be made for women who have recently given birth outside prison, or who have undergone abortion or miscarriage. Instruments of restraint, punishment by close confinement or disciplinary segregation should never be used on pregnant and lactating women. Pregnant women must be given information and access to abortion during incarceration, to the extent permissible by law.
 - **Legal aid:** To make legal aid more effective, legal consultations must be conducted in confidentiality and without censorship. For persons with language barriers or sensory disabilities, adequate arrangements must be made by the prison administration to ensure that such persons do not face any disadvantage by providing an independent interpreter.
 - **Rehabilitation:** A comprehensive after-care programme to be put in place, covering employment, financial support, regaining of child custody, shelter, counselling, continuity of health care services etc. Counselling should also be provided to family members and employers to adequately receive the woman after release.
 - **Grievance redressal:** Apart from the prisoner herself, her legal adviser or family members should be allowed to make complaints regarding her stay in prison. An inmate register can also be placed at an accessible spot in the prison for submitting grievances. All official visitors must hold special one-on-one interviews with prisoners away from prison authorities during inspection visits.

Challenges faced by women in prisons:

- Women in prisons face **greater hardships than their male counterparts** due to many factors such as social stigma, financial dependence on their families or husbands etc. These difficulties are further exacerbated when the woman has children.
- Women have to face numerous problems in prisons owing to **inadequacy of female staff** which often translates to the reality that male staff becomes responsible for female inmates, which is undesirable.
- Women are not provided with **meals that are nutritious** and according to their bodily requirements.
- Women are at a most disadvantageous position when it comes to **their reintegration in society after release**. Many are abandoned or harassed post-release, mainly due to the stigma attached with incarceration, which is even more pronounced in cases of women.
- Women also tend to **lose ties with their children** over the years, due to inadequate child custody procedures. Also, a robust grievance redressal mechanism was required to tackle cases of sexual harassment, violence and abuse against women in jails.

Way ahead:

- Reforms are needed for improving the lives of women under incarceration including the elderly and the disabled, addressing a wide range of issues pertaining to pregnancy and childbirth in prison, mental health, legal aid, reintegration in society and their caregiving responsibilities among others. In this regard, changes in the National Model Prison Manual 2016 have also been suggested to bring it in line with international standards and norms.

Stats:

- As of 2015, there are 4,19,623 persons in jail in India, of which, 17,834 (about 4.3%) are women. Of these, 11,916 (66.8%) are undertrial prisoners.
- There is an increasing trend in the number of women prisoners – from 3.3% of all prisoners in 2000 to 4.3% in 2015.
- A majority of female inmates are in the age group of 30-50 years (50.5%), followed by 18-30 years (31.3%).
- Of the total 1,401 prisons in India, only 18 are exclusive for women, housing 2,985 female prisoners. Thus, a majority of women inmates are housed in women's enclosures of general prisons.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Who published "Women in Prisons" report?
- **For Mains:** Women in prisons- concerns, challenges, issues, need for reforms and recommendations made.

6. WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS PLATFORM (WEP)

- Context:** NITI Aayog's Women Entrepreneurs Platform (WEP) has signed five separate Statement of Intent (SoIs) with Financial Institutions & Social Organisations. These SOIs will provide financial assistance to women entrepreneurs and address the finance related challenges faced by them through WEP.

Need for economic empowerment of women:

- Economically empowered women are major catalysts for development. There is greater recognition of the positive relationship between increased economic activity by women and improved social outcomes.
- Women often tend to reinvest their income in their children's education, health and nutrition. This has a positive impact on the potential for economic growth.

Challenges:

- India presents lower opportunities for women to assume leadership roles, participation in the workforce or engagement in entrepreneurial activities.
- Lack of education, technological know-how and cultural bias coupled with stringent business and government regulations are some key impediments that happen to undermine women's ability to rise to positions of leadership and take advantage of entrepreneurial opportunities in India.

Way ahead:

- Women entrepreneurs have been carving out a niche for them across the globe, including India especially in niche and unconventional businesses.
- However, there is significant potential to harness the untapped potential of women's entrepreneurship in India.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** Women Entrepreneurship Platform.
- For Mains:** Women entrepreneurs- need, significance, challenges and solutions.

Paper 1 Topic: Population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

1. GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON ACADEMIC NETWORK (GIAN)

- Context:** In a bid to make Indian cities more sustainable, the NITI Aayog has launched a new course on 'Urban Analytics – Evaluating and Measuring Sustainability of Cities' at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Roorkee. **The course was launched under Global Initiative on Academic Network (GIAN).** The course will provide an understanding and analysis on the urbanisation and its impacts that would help in evaluating the conditions of sustainability in Indian cities.

GIAN is envisaged to achieve the following objectives:

- To increase the footfalls of reputed international faculty in the Indian academic institutes.

About the Women Entrepreneurship Platform:

- Aim:** The initiative is aimed at building an ecosystem for women across India to realize their entrepreneurial aspirations, scale-up innovative initiatives and chalk-out sustainable, long-term strategies for their businesses. This will be done through an enabling network of industry collaborations, partnerships, mentors and peer-to-peer connect.
- What it does?** From providing unique services such as credit evaluation of women-led startups by CRISIL and potential equity investments through an INR 10 crore fund established by DICE Districts, the WEP opens up avenues of growth and opportunity for women entrepreneurs.

- Provide opportunity to our faculty to learn and share knowledge and teaching skills in cutting edge areas.
- To provide opportunity to our students to seek knowledge and experience from reputed International faculty.
- To create avenue for possible collaborative research with the international faculty.
- Develop high quality course material in niche areas, both through video and print that can be used by a larger body of students and teachers.
- To document and develop new pedagogic methods in emerging topics of national and international interest.

What needs to be done to make our cities sustainable?

- There is a need to harness the potential of urban information system and urban planning for making Indian cities more sustainable.
- All stakeholders should come forward with innovative and contextual solutions for Indian cities and create a model of a “living lab” by adopting a rural agglomeration in a nearby area which will transform into a township in the near future.



TECHNOLOGY, URBAN SPACE AND CULTURE: EMERGING PARADIGMS FOR GLOBAL INDIA

Way ahead:

- India is the global host of the World Environment Day 2018, where the focus is on Sustainability and achievement of Sustainable Development Goals including SDG 11 which has a goal to “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”.
- Now, it is the responsibility of all the stakeholders involved to achieve this goal in a timely manner.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** GIAN and its objectives.
- **For Mains:** Significance of GIAN and reforms in higher education, sustainable cities- need, significance, challenges and solutions.

Sources: pib.

2. SWACHH BHARAT MISSION

- **Context:** Sanitation coverage in rural India, under the Swachh Bharat Mission, has now risen to 85%. As per the data released by Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, through mobilisation of rural communities, 7.4 crore toilets were built across rural India, and as an outcome, over 3.8 lakh villages and 391 districts were declared Open Defecation Free (ODF).

About Swachh Bharat Mission- Gramin:

- The Swachh Bharat Mission is the first sanitation programme in the country to measure outcomes (ODF) instead of output (toilets) alone.
- The aim of Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) is to achieve a clean and Open Defecation Free (ODF) India by 2nd October, 2019.

Objectives:

- To bring about an improvement in the general quality of life in the rural areas, by promoting cleanliness, hygiene and eliminating open defecation.
- To accelerate sanitation coverage in rural areas to achieve the vision of Swachh Bharat by 2nd October 2019.
- To motivate communities to adopt sustainable sanitation practices and facilities through awareness creation and health education.
- To encourage cost effective and appropriate technologies for ecologically safe and sustainable sanitation.
- To develop, wherever required, community managed sanitation systems focusing on scientific Solid & Liquid Waste Management systems for overall cleanliness in the rural areas.

- To create significant positive impact on gender and promote social inclusion by improving sanitation especially in marginalized communities.

Swachh Bharat Mission: Gramin Areas

- The Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan has been restructured into the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin).
- Under the mission, One lakh thirty four thousand crore rupees will be spent for construction of about 11 crore 11 lakh toilets in the country.
- Technology will be used on a large scale to convert waste into wealth in rural India in the forms of bio-fertilizer and different forms of energy.
- The mission is to be executed on war footing with the involvement of every gram panchayat, panchayat samiti and Zila Parishad in the country, besides roping in large sections of rural population and school teachers and students in this endeavor.
- As part of the mission, for rural households, the provision for unit cost of individual household latrine has been increased from Rs 10,000 to Rs 12,000 so as to provide for water availability, including for storing, hand-washing and cleaning of toilets.
- Central share for such latrines will be Rs 9,000 while state share will be Rs 3,000. For North Eastern states, Jammu & Kashmir and special category states, the Central share will be 10,800 and the state share Rs 1,200. Additional contributions from other sources will be permitted

What's important?

- For Prelims:** SBM- components, objectives and outcomes, ODF states.
- For Mains:** Significance of the mission and outcomes, challenges ahead and solutions therein.

Sources: the hindu.

3. SWACHH ICONIC PLACES

- Context:** The government has selected ten new iconic sites under Phase III of the flagship project Swachh Iconic Places (SIP) of the Swachh Bharat Mission.

Key facts:

- Phase I iconic places are: Ajmer Sharif Dargah, CST Mumbai, Golden Temple, Kamakhya Temple, MaikarnikaGhat, Meenakshi Temple, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi, Shree Jagannath Temple, The Taj Mahal and Tirupati Temple.
- Phase II included Gangotri, Yamunotri, Mahakaleshwar Temple, Charminar, Convent and Church of St. Francis of Assissi, Kalady, Gommateswara, BaidyanathDham, Gaya Tirth and Somnath temple.
- Phase III includes RaghavendraSwamy Temple (Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh); Hazardwari Palace (Murshidabad, West Bengal); Brahma Sarovar Temple (Kurukshetra, Haryana); VidurKuti (Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh); Mana village (Chamoli, Uttarakhand); Pangong Lake (Leh-Ladakh, J&K); Nagvasuki Temple (Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh); Imakeithal/market (Imphal, Manipur); Sabarimala Temple (Kerala); and Kanvashram (Uttarakhand).

Swachh Iconic Places

Goal: To achieve a higher level of sanitation / cleanliness in and around Iconic Places in the country

- 10 Iconic places selected in Phase-I in 2016-17 (one year implementation is completed)
- Further 10 Places were selected in Phase-II (implementation started from Jan 2018)
- Phase-III under conceptualization that would include sites on the bank of Ganga

Central PSUs and other corporates supporting through CSR

About Swachh Iconic Places (SIP):

- What is it?** Swachh Iconic Places (SIP) is an initiative of Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation under Swachh Bharat Mission. Initiated as a project to implement Prime Minister's vision to take iconic places and

their surroundings to higher standards of Swachhata, so that all visitors benefit and also take away home the message of cleanliness, Swachh Iconic Places is now in its second phase.

- **Implementation of the project:** SIP is a truly collaborative project with three other central Ministries: Urban Development, Culture, Tourism; all levels in the concerned States and more importantly, Public Sector and Private companies as partners.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** SIP and SBM- key features, brief overview of places chosen for SIP project.
- **For Mains:** SBM- features, significance, challenges and sub- missions.

Sources: pib.

4. INDIA SMART CITIES AWARDS

- **Context:** Nine awards have been announced under the India Smart Cities Awards.

What are Smart Cities Awards?

- India Smart Cities Award were launched on 25 June 2017 with an objective to reward cities, projects and innovative ideas, promoting sustainable development in cities.
- Eligible Participants were Smart Cities only, where respective ULBs / Smart City SPVs were to submit proposals.
- **There are 3 categories of awards-** Project Award, Innovative Idea Award and City Award.

Winners:

- **The city award** is being given to Surat for showing great momentum in implementation of projects especially in the categories of urban environment, transport and mobility and sustainable integrated development.
- **The Innovative Idea award** is being given to a project/idea particularly remarkable for its innovative, bottom-up and transformative approach towards achievement of sustainable integrated development. Joint winners in this category are Bhopal for their Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) and Ahmedabad for Safe and Secure Ahmedabad (SASA) Project.
- **The Project awards** are being given to most innovative and successful projects in seven categories that have been completed by April 1, 2018.

The Projects selected are:

- PMC Care from Pune under 'Governance' category.
- Smart Place Making from Pune under 'Built Environment'.
- Smart Class rooms from NDMC and Jabalpur, Smart Campus from Visakhapatnam, Lighthouse from Pune under 'Social Aspects' category.
- B Nest Incubation Centre from Bhopal and Conservation of Rajasthan School of Arts from Jaipur under 'Culture and Economy' category.
- Public Bike Sharing from Bhopal, Pune, Coimbatore and Waste to Energy Plant in Jabalpur under 'Urban environment' category.
- Integrated Transit Management System (TMS) from Ahmedabad and Surat under 'Transport and Mobility' category.
- Smart Water Management through SCADA from Ahmedabad under 'Water and Sanitation' category.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Smart Cities Mission and Smart Cities awards- features and significance.

Sources: pib.

5. INDIA IS STILL A POOR COUNTRY

- **Context:** *India is no longer the country with the largest number of people living in extreme poverty* as per the latest World Poverty Clock study compiled by Brookings Institute. The dislodging of India from the ignominious number one position is a feat that took over fifty years to achieve.
- **Definition:** The study defines poverty as *living on less than \$1.9 a day*.

Highlights of the study:

- India has finally shed the dubious distinction of being home to the largest number of poor, with **Nigeria taking that unwanted position in May 2018**.
- Nigeria had about 87 million people in extreme poverty, compared with India's 73 million. What is more, extreme poverty in Nigeria is growing by six people every minute.
- **About 44 Indians come out of extreme poverty every minute**, one of the fastest rates of poverty reduction in the world. If present trends continue, India could drop to No. 3 later this year, with the Democratic Republic of the Congo taking the number 2 spot.
- **The study showed global income increases in the last decades have led to systematic decreases in poverty rates worldwide**, with the experience in India and China having played the most important role when it comes to the overall number of persons escaping absolute poverty.
- **The study said that Africa accounts for about two-thirds of the world's extreme poor**. If current trends persist, they will account for nine-tenths by 2030. Fourteen out of 18 countries in the world where the number of extreme poor is rising are in Africa.

What the World Bank says?

- The estimates of extreme poverty reduction may not match with Indian numbers because of differences in how poverty is measured. According to the World Bank, between 2004 and 2011 poverty declined in India from 38.9% of the population to 21.2% (2011 purchasing power parity at \$1.9 per person per day).

Way ahead:

- In the last four years, Indian government initiated some structural reforms but it must do more to achieve a double-digit growth rate, create more jobs, revamp land and labour markets, implement the recommendations of Niti Aayog on the ease of doing business in India and accelerate privatization.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** An overview of the study and India's position.
- **For Mains:** Poverty related measures in India.

Sources: the hindu.

6. RANKING OF ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS

- **Context:** The NITI Aayog has launched the **first Delta ranking (incremental progress)** for the Aspirational Districts.

Delta ranking:

- The ranking is based on self-reported data of districts across five developmental areas of Health and Nutrition, Education, Agriculture and Water Resources, Financial Inclusion and Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure. Districts to provide real-time data points by filling up the Champions of Change Dashboard.

Significance of delta ranking:

- The ranking is also a tool to identify sectors and indicator specific challenges so that **Team India**, which is driving this programme, can take immediate corrective measures.
- This Delta ranking takes a step further and looks into specific aspects of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and analyses how districts have performed in last two months across important sectors.
- This grouping and positioning would aid the District Magistrates/Collectors to focus more on these sectors and improve their ranking in future.

Performance of various districts:

- Dahod district of Gujarat improved 19.8 points to rank first.
- West Sikkim district in Sikkim stood second with 18.9 points.
- Bijapur district in Chhattisgarh is ranked 6th position.

About the scheme:

- Launched in January this year, the ‘Transformation of Aspirational Districts’ programme aims to **quickly and effectively transform** some of the most underdeveloped districts of the country.
- The broad contours of the programme are Convergence (of Central & State Schemes), Collaboration (of Central, State level ‘Prabhari’ Officers & District Collectors), and Competition among districts driven by a Mass Movement or a Jan Andolan.
- With States as the main drivers, this program will focus on the strength of each district, identify low-hanging fruits for immediate improvement, measure progress, and rank districts.

Focus of the programme:

- To enable optimum utilization of their potential, this program focuses closely on improving people’s ability to participate fully in the burgeoning economy. Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure are this programme’s core areas of focus.

Significance of the scheme:

- If these districts are transformed, there would be tremendous improvement in the internal security environment of the country.
- If Prabhari officers can bring convergence in the development efforts of different Ministries and state Governments and the schemes specially launched by Home Ministry in these districts, it would serve as a great opportunity to ensure rapid development in the country.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** About the scheme for transformation of backward districts.
- **For Mains:** Development of backward districts- need, challenges and efforts.

Sources: the hindu.

GS PAPER - II

Paper 2 Topic: Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

1. CITIZENSHIP BILL MAY HAVE TO WAIT FOR HOUSE NOD

- The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, is unlikely to be tabled in the monsoon session of Parliament because the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) that is examining the legislation intends to have wider consultations.

WHAT IS THE CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT BILL 2016?

- Introduced on July 19 in the Lok Sabha, the Citizenship Amendment Bill 2016 seeks to allow illegal migrants from certain minority communities in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan eligible for Indian citizenship. In other words, it amends the Citizenship Act of 1955.

WHAT DOES IT WANT?

- The Citizenship Amendment Bill seeks to allow illegal migrants belonging to the **Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian** religious communities coming from **Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan** to not be imprisoned or deported.
- It also appeals for the minimum years of residency in India to apply for citizenship to be lessened from at least 11 to six years for such migrants.
- The Bill, however, does not extend to illegal Muslim migrants. It also does not talk about other minority communities in the three neighbouring countries, such as Jews, Bahais etc.

WHY ARE PEOPLE IN ASSAM NOT HAPPY ABOUT IT?

- The Citizenship Amendment Bill has not been sitting well with the Assamese as it contradicts the **Assam Accord of 1985**, which clearly states that illegal migrants heading in from Bangladesh after March 25, 1971, would be deported.

WHO ARE THE ILLEGAL MIGRANTS?

- Under the Citizenship Act of 1955, foreigners who come into India without valid travel documents, or stay in the country beyond their visa period, are considered illegal migrants.
- Over the years, certain exceptions have been made to this law. In September 2015, illegal migrants belonging to minority communities in Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan and coming to India on or before December 31, 2014, were allowed to stay.
- This allowed the illegal migrants to stay in India without being imprisoned or deported. This exception was sought again in July this year.

HOW DOES ONE GET INDIAN CITIZENSHIP AT THE MOMENT?

- Anybody who is born in India, has an Indian parent, or has lived in India for over 11 years, is eligible for Indian citizenship. At present, illegal migrants do not fit this category.

WHAT ELSE DOES THE CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT BILL SAY?

- The Bill also seeks to cancel the registration of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders if they violate any law.

What's important?

- Prelims:** Citizenship provisions in constitution
- Mains:** CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT BILL 2016

2. ARTICLE 35A

- **Context:** The Centre has decided not to file any “counter-affidavit” on Article 35A, which has been challenged in the Supreme Court through a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) petition. The Supreme Court has scheduled further hearing for August 6.

What you need to know about Article 35A?

- Article 35A is a provision in the Constitution that empowers the Jammu and Kashmir legislature to define permanent residents of the state. It was added through the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954, issued under Article 370.
- Article 35A empowers Jammu and Kashmir legislature to define “permanent residents” of the state along with their special rights and privileges. This Article has an intricate relationship with Article 370.

WHAT IS ARTICLE 35A?

ARTICLE 35A (1954) was incorporated in the Indian Constitution through a Constitutional amendment even much before the Constitution of J&K came into existence (1956).

The Article allows the state of Jammu and Kashmir to grant special privi-

leges and rights to permanent residents but denies rights to several others who too have genuine claims.

It debars non-residents of J&K from buying land or property getting a government job or voting in Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

WHO ARE PERMANENT RESIDENTS?

- Jammu and Kashmir Assembly defined Permanent Resident as a person who was a state subject on May 14, 1954 or who had been a resident of the state for 10 years and has “lawfully acquired immovable property in the state.”
- A person who is not a permanent resident of Jammu and Kashmir is not allowed to buy or own properties in the state or vote in state Assembly election or contest election to the state Assembly. An outsider cannot get a job in the Jammu and Kashmir government.

Arguments against Article 35A:

- The petition says Article 35 A is against the “very spirit of oneness of India” as it creates a “class within a class of Indian citizens”. Restricting citizens from other States from getting employment or buying property within Jammu and Kashmir is a violation of fundamental rights under Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution.
- Also, the parliamentary route of lawmaking was bypassed when the President incorporated Article 35A into the Constitution. Article 368 (i) of the Constitution empowers only Parliament to amend the Constitution.

What's the case now?

- Attempts to undo Article 35A of the Indian Constitution would strike a fatal blow to the nationalists in the state. Kashmiris are apprehensive that such a move would open the sluice gates for a demographic transformation of the Valley.
- The J&K government is also concerned at the reluctance of the Union government to file a counter affidavit in the Supreme Court. Against the backdrop of the escalating protests in Kashmir, this issue could potentially be explosive.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Article 35A- features and permanent residents, Article 370.
- **For Mains:** Issues associated.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 2 Topic: Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions.

1. CAUVERY MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

- **Context:** Acting on the Supreme Court's direction, the Centre recently constituted a Cauvery Water Management Authority (CMA) to address the dispute over sharing of river water among Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Puducherry.

About the Cauvery Management Authority:

- **Composition:** The authority would comprise a chairman, eight members besides a secretary. Out of eight members, two each will be full-time and part-time members, while the rest four would be part-time members from states.
- **Powers:** The authority will exercise power and discharge such duty for "sufficient and expedient for securing compliance and implementation" of the Supreme Court order in relation to "storage, apportionment, regulation and control of Cauvery waters". It can also seek the help of the central government for implementation of the award and take appropriate action.

Other functions:

- The authority will supervise operation of reservoirs and with regulation of water releases therefrom with the assistance of regulation committee.
- The authority will also look at regulated release of water by Karnataka, at the inter-state contact point presently identified as Billigundulu gauge and discharge station, located on the common border of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.
- The authority at the beginning of the water year (June 1 each year) would determine the total residual storage in the specified reservoirs.
- The authority has also been tasked to advise the states to take suitable measures to improve water use efficiency, by way of promoting micro-irrigation (drip and sprinkler), change in cropping pattern, improved agronomic practices, system deficiency correction and command area development.
- It has to also prepare an annual report covering the activities of the authority for the preceding year. The Centre will initially contribute a sum of Rs 2 crore for the functioning of the authority.

Background:

- The apex court, in its verdict delivered on February 16, had asked the Centre to frame the Cauvery management scheme, including creation of the Cauvery Management Board, for release of water from Karnataka to Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry.

Modifications made by the Court:

- The top court had modified the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT) award of 2007 and made it clear that it will not be extending the time for this on any ground.
- It had raised the 270 tmcft share of Cauvery water for Karnataka by 14.75 tmcft and reduced Tamil Nadu's share, while compensating it by allowing extraction of 10 tmcft groundwater from the river basin, saying the issue of drinking water has to be placed on a "higher pedestal".

Facts for Prelims:

- **Cauvery River** rises on **Brahmagiri Hill** of the **Western Ghats** in south-western **Karnataka state**. It flows in a south-easterly direction for 475 miles through the states of **Karnataka** and **Tamil Nadu**.
- Before emptying into the Bay of Bengal south of **Cuddalore**, Tamil Nadu, the river breaks into a large number of distributaries forming a wide delta called the "**garden of southern India**." The river is important for its irrigation canal projects.
- In the upper course, at the **Krishnaraja Sagara**, the Kaveri is joined by two tributaries, the **Hemavati** and **Lakshmantirtha**, where a dam was constructed for irrigation.
- Upon entering Tamil Nadu, the Kaveri continues through a **series of twisted wild gorges** until it reaches **Hogenakkal Falls**. There the **Mettur Dam** was constructed for irrigation and hydel power.
- Its main tributaries are the **Kabani** (Kabbani), **Amaravati**, **Noyil**, and **Bhavani** rivers.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 2 Topic: Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

1. CENTRE NOTIFIES CAUVERY AUTHORITY

- **Context:** Union government on Friday issued a notification for the Cauvery Water Management Authority
- **Background:** On 16th February, 2018 the apex court had directed the government to form the authority within six weeks. The Supreme Court through its verdict marginally increased Karnataka's share of Cauvery water, reduced the allocation for Tamil Nadu and sought to settle the protracted water dispute between the two southern states.
- **Composition of Cauvery Water Management Authority:** It would comprise a chairman, eight members besides a secretary. Out of eight members, two each will be full-time and part-time members, while the rest four would be part-time members from states.

Mandate of Cauvery Water Management Authority:

- To monitor the storage, apportion shares, supervise operation of reservoirs and regulate water releases with assistance of the regulating authority.
- The authority has also been tasked to advise the states to take suitable measures to improve water use efficiency, by way of promoting micro-irrigation (drip and sprinkler), change in cropping pattern, improved agronomic practices, system deficiency correction and command area development.
- Cauvery Water Management Authority is also expected to look at regulated release of water by Karnataka, at the inter-state contact point presently identified as Billigundulu gauge and discharge station, located on the common border of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

Significance of notification:

- This would help to solve the long running conflict on distribution of Cauvery waters.
- It will make the management of Cauvery water scientific.

What's important?

- **For prelims:** Mandate and composition of Cauvery Management Authority
- **For mains:** How Cauvery Water Management Authority will solve the problem of inter state water conflict?

2. GOVERNOR'S RULE IN J&K

- **Context:** The state of Jammu and Kashmir is all set to see a governor's rule following the sudden break in ties between BJP and PDP and subsequent resignation of chief minister Mehbooba Mufti.

What's so special about this?

- The imposition of governor's rule in J&K is slightly different than that in other states. In other states, the president's rule is imposed under the Article 356 of Constitution of India. In J&K, governor's rule is mentioned under Article 370 section 92 – 'Provisions in case of failure of constitutional machinery in the State.'

Article 370 section 92: Provisions in case of failure of constitutional machinery in the State:

1. If at any time, the Governor is satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the Government of the State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution, the Governor may by Proclamation-
2. Assume to himself all or any of the functions of the Government of the State and all or any of the powers vested in or exercisable by anybody or authority in the State.
3. Make such incidental and consequential provisions as appear to the Governor to be necessary or desirable for giving effect to the objects of the Proclamation, including provisions for suspending in whole or in part the operation of any provision of this Constitution relating to anybody or authority in the State.
4. Any such Proclamation may be revoked or varied by a subsequent Proclamation.
5. Any such Proclamation whether varied under subsection (2) or not, shall except where it is a Proclamation revoking a previous Proclamation, cease to operate on the expiration of six months from the date on which it was first issued.

6. If the Government or by a Proclamation under his section assumes, to himself any, of the powers of the Legislature to make his laws, any law made by him in the exercise of that power shall, subject to, the terms there of continue to have effect until two years have elapsed from the date on which the proclamation ceases to have effect, unless sooner.
7. No Proclamation under this section shall, except where it is a Proclamation revoking a previous Proclamation, be laid before each House of the Legislature as soon as it is convened.

What is President's Rule in the Indian context?

- **The imposition of Article 356 of the Constitution** on a State following the failure of constitutional machinery is called President's Rule in India. Once the President's Rule has been imposed on a state, the elected state government will be temporarily dissolved, and the Governor, who is appointed by the government at the Centre, will replace the Chief Minister as the chief executive of the State.
 - The state will fall under the direct control of the Union government, and the Governor will continue to be head the proceedings, representing the President of India – who is the Head of the State.
 - The imposition of the President's rule requires the sanction of both the houses of Parliament. If approved, it can go on for a period of six months. However, the imposition cannot be extended for more than three years, and needs to be brought before the two houses every six months for approval.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Difference between President's Rule under Article 356 and Governor's Rule in J&K, Special status for J&K under Article 370.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 2 Topic: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.

1. DEFENCE ACQUISITION COUNCIL (DAC)

- **Context:** The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has approved procurement of high powered radars for the Indian Air Force and air cushion vehicles for the Army and the Coast Guard together worth over ₹5,500 crore.
- The 12 high power radars will be procured indigenously under the '**Buy (Indian) IDDM**' category.

Facts for Prelims:

- A new category of procurement 'Buy {Indian-IDDM (Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured)} has been introduced in Defence Procurement Procedure-2016 and the same has been accorded top most priority for procurement of capital equipment.
- Under the new category, indigenously designed equipment with 40% indigenous content (IC), or equipment not necessarily designed in-house but having a 60% IC, is intended for procurement from the local industry.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** composition of DAC, Buy (Indian) IDDM category.
- **For mains:** not much.

Defence Acquisition Council (DAC):

- **What is it?** To counter corruption and speed up decision-making in military procurement, the government of India in 2001 decided to set up an integrated DAC. It is headed by the Defence Minister.
- **Objective:** The objective of the DAC is to ensure expeditious procurement of the approved requirements of the Armed Forces, in terms of capabilities sought, and time frame prescribed, by optimally utilizing the allocated budgetary resources.
- **Functions:** The DAC is responsible to give policy guidelines to acquisitions, based on long-term procurement plans. It also clears all acquisitions, which includes both imported and those produced indigenously or under a foreign license.

Sources: the hindu.

2. NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS (NCPCR)

- **Context:** Indian Railways and the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) have jointly launched an awareness campaign on Protection of children in contact with Railways.

Significance of the campaign:

- This is an endeavour to spread awareness about large number of vulnerable children coming in contact with Railways as passengers or abandoned, trafficked, run away children separated from their family.

About NCPCR:

- The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) was set up in March 2007 under the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005.
- It works under the administrative control of the Ministry of Women & Child Development.
- The Child is defined as a person in the 0 to 18 years age group.
- The Commission's Mandate is to ensure that all Laws, Policies, Programmes, and Administrative Mechanisms are in consonance with the Child Rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.



What's important?

- **For Prelims:** NCPCR- Statutory status and mandate of the commission.
- **For Mains:** Protection of vulnerable section of the society.

Sources: The Hindu.

3. VIGILANCE COMMISSIONER

- **Context:** Former NIA chief Sharad Kumar is the new vigilance commissioner for a term of four years or till he attains the age of 65.

About CVC:

- It is the apex vigilance institution. It was created via executive resolution (based on the recommendations of ***Santhanam committee***) in 1964 but was conferred with statutory status in 2003. It submits its report to the President of India.
- **Composition:** Presently, the body consists of central vigilance commissioner along with 2 vigilance commissioners.
- **Appointment:** They are appointed by the President of India on the recommendations of a committee consisting of Prime Minister, Union Home Minister and Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha (if there is no LoP then the leader of the single largest Opposition party in the Lok Sabha).
- **Term:** Their term is 4 years or 65 years, whichever is earlier.
- **Removal:** The Central Vigilance Commissioner or any Vigilance Commissioner can be removed from his office only by order of the President on the ground of proved misbehavior or incapacity after the Supreme Court, on a reference made to it by the President, has, on inquiry, reported that the Central Vigilance Commissioner or any Vigilance Commissioner, as the case may be, ought to be removed.



What's important?

- **For Prelims:** CVC- eligibility, appointment and removal.
- **For Mains:** Corruption- issues, challenges and ways to prevent.

Sources: the hindu.

4. KHADI & VILLAGE INDUSTRIES COMMISSION (KVIC)

- **Context:** KVIC has created a world record of distributing maximum number of bee-boxes in one day.

Key facts:

- The record was achieved by the KVIC in the Zangalee Army area at Kupwara in Kashmir beating its previous best of 1000 bee boxes distributed in Kaziranga forest area among the Mishing tribe on the occasion of World Honey Bee Day.
- Two thousand three hundred thirty (2330) bee-boxes were distributed among 233 beneficiaries in the Zangalee Army area.

About Khadi & Village Industries Commission (KVIC):

KHADI AND VILLAGE INDUSTRIES COMMISSION (KVIC)

- Khadi & Village Industries Commission (KVIC) established under the Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act, 1956
- The functions of the Commission is to plan, promote, organize and assist in the establishment and development of khadi and village industries in the rural area in coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development wherever necessary.

- The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is **a statutory body** established by an Act of Parliament (Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act of 1956). In April 1957, it took over the work of former All India Khadi and Village Industries Board.
- **Functions:** It is an apex organization under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, with regard to khadi and village industries within India, which seeks to – “plan, promote, facilitate, organise and assist in the establishment and development of khadi and village industries in the rural areas in coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development wherever necessary.”

The Commission has three main objectives which guide its functioning. These are:

- The Social Objective – Providing employment in rural areas.
- The Economic Objective – Providing salable articles.
- The Wider Objective – Creating self-reliance amongst people and building up a strong rural community spirit.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** KVIC and its important functions.

Sources: pib.

5. NORTH EASTERN COUNCIL

- **Context:** The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal of Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) for the nomination of the Union Home Minister as ex-officio Chairman of North Eastern Council (NEC). The Cabinet has also approved that Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of DoNER would serve as Vice Chairman of the Council.
- **Under the new arrangement,** Home Minister shall be the Chairman and Minister of DoNER as Vice Chairman, NEC and all the Governors and Chief Ministers of North Eastern States will be Members.

Benefits:

- This would provide a forum for discussing inter-state matters more comprehensively and also consider common approaches to be taken in future.
- NEC can now also perform the tasks undertaken by the various Zonal Councils to discuss such inter-State issues as drug trafficking, smuggling of arms and ammunition, boundary disputes etc.

About NEC:

- NEC was established under the North Eastern Council Act, 1971 as an apex level body for securing balanced and coordinated development and facilitating coordination with the States.
- Subsequent to the Amendment of 2002, NEC has been mandated to function as a regional planning body for the North Eastern Area and while formulating a regional plan for this area, shall give priority to the schemes and projects benefiting two or more states provided that in the case of Sikkim, the Council shall formulate specific projects and schemes for that State.

- This repositioning of NEC will help it to become a more effective body for the North Eastern Region. The Council shall, from time to time, review the implementation of the projects/schemes included in the project; recommend effective measures for coordination among the state Governments for these projects etc.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** NEC, its functions and composition.
- **For Mains:** Significance of North Eastern region of the country and efforts by government for the development of the region.

Sources: pib.

6. NITI AAYOG GOVERNING COUNCIL

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently chaired the fourth meeting of Governing Council of NITI Aayog. The meeting was yet another attempt to take India – a federation of states forward with equal participation of all the stakeholders.

About NITI Aayog:

- The Government, in January 2015, replaced Planning Commission with NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India).
- It established with the aim to achieve Sustainable Development Goals and to enhance cooperative federalism by fostering the involvement of State Governments of India in the economic policy-making process using a bottom-up approach.

Role of NITI Aayog:

- The institution has to provide governments at the central and state levels with relevant strategic and technical advice across the spectrum of key elements of policy.
- This includes matters of national and international import on the economic front, dissemination of best practices from within the country as well as from other nations, the infusion of new policy ideas and specific issue-based support.
- The institution has to be able to respond to the changing and more integrated world that India is part of.

Composition of NITI Aayog:

- **Chairperson:** Prime Minister of India as the Chairperson.
- **Governing Council** comprising the Chief Ministers of all the States and Lt. Governors of Union Territories.
- **Regional Councils** will be formed to address specific issues and contingencies impacting more than one state or a region. These will be formed for a specified tenure. The Regional Councils will be convened by the Prime Minister and will comprise of the Chief Ministers of States and Lt. Governors of Union Territories in the region. These will be chaired by the Chairperson of the NITI Aayog or his nominee.
- Experts, specialists and practitioners with relevant domain knowledge as special invitees nominated by the Prime Minister.

The full-time organizational framework will comprise of, in addition to the Prime Minister as the Chairperson:

- Vice-Chairperson: To be appointed by the Prime Minister.
- Members: Full-time.
- Part-time members: Maximum of 2 from leading universities research organizations and other relevant institutions in an ex-officio capacity. Part time members will be on a rotational basis.
- Ex Officio members: Maximum of 4 members of the Union Council of Ministers to be nominated by the Prime Minister.
- Chief Executive Officer : To be appointed by the Prime Minister for a fixed tenure, in the rank of Secretary to the Government of India.
- Secretariat as deemed necessary.

Facts for Prelims- Initiatives by NITI Aayog:

- Its important initiatives include “15 year road map”, “7-year vision, strategy and action plan”, AMRUT, Digital India and Atal Innovation Mission.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Composition of NITI Aayog, various initiatives.
- **For Mains:** Cooperative federalism- meaning, significance and efforts by the government.

Sources: pib.

7. NATIONAL TESTING AGENCY

- **Context:** The National Testing Agency, which is being set up to relieve the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) of the burden of conducting multiple examinations, will also train paper setters to set better question papers and provide better model answers.

About NTA:

- In pursuance of the Budget Announcement 2017-18, the Union Cabinet, in November 2017, approved creation of the National Testing Agency (NTA) as an ***autonomous and self-sustained premier testing organization*** to conduct entrance examinations for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the country.
- **Composition:** It will be chaired by an educationist who will be appointed by the MHRD. The agency will have a board of governors who will represent the member institutions.
 - The NTA would initially conduct those entrance examinations which are currently being conducted by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). The examinations will be conducted in online mode twice a year in order to give adequate opportunity to candidates to bring out their best.
 - Among the examinations that will be transferred to the NTA are the prestigious Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) for admission to engineering colleges like the IITs and NITs and the National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test (NEET) for admission to all medical colleges in the country, except AIIMS and JIPMER, Puducherry.
 - In order to serve the requirements of the rural students, NTA would locate the centres at sub-district/district level and as far as possible would provide hands-on training to the students.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** NTA- need, significance and functions.

Sources: pib.

8. ENFORCEMENT DIRECTORATE

- **Context:** The Enforcement Directorate has zeroed in on some non-government organisations (NGOs) that are suspected to have funded Naxal operatives in Chhattisgarh. The action is being taken following several rounds of multi-agency meetings on devising a coordinated strategy to choke funding to Naxal operatives in various States.

About Enforcement Directorate:

- **What is it?** It is a law enforcement agency and economic intelligence agency responsible for enforcing economic laws and fighting economic crime in India. It is part of the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance.
- **Objectives:** The prime objective of the Enforcement Directorate is the enforcement of two key Acts- the Foreign Exchange Management Act 1999 (FEMA) and the Prevention of Money Laundering Act 2002 (PMLA). Other objectives are primarily linked to checking money laundering in India.
- **Composition:** It comprises officers of the Indian Revenue Service, Indian Police Service and the Indian Administrative Service.
- **Background:** The origin of this Directorate goes back to 1 May 1956, when an 'Enforcement Unit' was formed, in Department of Economic Affairs, for handling Exchange Control Laws violations under Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, 1947. In the year 1957, this Unit was renamed as 'Enforcement Directorate'.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** ED- composition and objectives.
- **For Mains:** Extremism- spread, challenges, funding and efforts by security forces.

Sources: the hindu.

9. EXPORT CREDIT GUARANTEE CORPORATION

- **Context:** Cabinet has approved the capital infusion of Rs.2000 crore for strengthening of Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC).

Benefits:

- The infusion would enhance insurance coverage to MSME exports and strengthen India's exports to emerging and challenging markets like Africa, CIS and Latin American countries.
- With enhanced capital, ECGC's underwriting capacity and risk to capital ratio will improve considerably.
- With a stronger underwriting capacity, ECGC will be in a better position to support Indian exporters to tap new and unexplored markets.
- Increased capital infusion will help ECGC to diversify its product portfolio and provide cost effective credit insurance helping exporters to gain a stronger foothold in the difficult markets.

About Export Credit Guarantee Corporation:

- ECGC is a premier export credit agency of the Government of India to provide Export Credit Insurance Services to facilitate exports from the country.
- The ECGC offers credit insurance schemes to exporters to protect them against losses due to non-payment of export dues by overseas buyers due to political and / or commercial risks.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** ECGC – roles and functions.
- **For Mains:** Export promotion- need, challenges and initiatives by government.

Sources: pib.

10. HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION OF INDIA

- **Context:** A Higher Education Commission of India (Repeal of University Grants Commission Act) Bill 2018 which seeks to repeal UGC Act and provides for setting up of Higher Education Commission of India has been prepared by the Ministry of HRD.

Roles and functions of Higher Education Commission of India:

- The focus of the Commission will be on improving academic standards and quality of higher education, specifying norms for learning outcomes, lay down standards of teaching/research etc.
- It will provide a roadmap for mentoring of institutions found failing in maintaining the required academic standards.
- The Commission will encourage higher education institutions to formulate a Code of Good Practices covering promotion of research, teaching and learning.
- The Commission will also specify norms and processes for fixing of fee chargeable by higher education institutions and advise the Central Government or the State Governments, as the case may be, regarding steps to be taken for making education affordable to all.
- The Commission will monitor, through a national data base, all matters covering the development of emerging fields of knowledge and balanced growth of higher education institutions in all spheres and specially in promotion of academic quality in higher education.

Composition:

- The proposed commission will have 12 members appointed by the central government, apart from the chairperson and vice-chairperson.

Powers:

- It shall have the power to enforce its decisions through legal provisions in the Act.
- It shall have the power to grant authorization for starting of academic operations on the basis of their compliance with norms of academic quality.
- It will also have the powers to revoke authorization granting to a higher education institution where there is a case of wilful or continuous default in compliance with the norms / regulations.

- It will also have the power to recommend closure of institutions which fail to adhere to minimum standards without affecting students' interest.

Brief history of UGC:

- Previously, UGC was formed in 1946 to oversee the work of the three Central Universities of Aligarh, Banaras and, Delhi. In 1947, a Committee was entrusted with the responsibility of dealing with all the then existing Universities.
- After independence, the ***University Education Commission was set up in 1948 under the Chairmanship of S. Radhakrishnan*** and it recommended that the UGC be reconstituted on the general model of the University Grants Commission of the United Kingdom.
- The UGC was however, formally established in November 1956, by an Act of Parliament as a statutory body of the Government of India.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** HECL- composition, powers and functions.
- For Mains:** UGC related issues and the need for HECL.

Sources: pib.

Paper 2 Topic: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

1. ODISHA STARTS HEALTH INSURANCE SCHEME FOR JOURNALISTS

- Context:** Odisha government has launched "Gopabandhu Sambadika Swasthya Bima Yojana" for working journalists. The health insurance scheme for working journalists will be implemented with effect from June 1, 2018.

About Gopabandhu Sambadika Swasthya Bima Yojana:

- Under the scheme, journalists from across the state will get health insurance coverage up to Rs 2 lakh.
- At least five members of a journalist's family would be covered under the scheme.
- The scribes will get their health insurance card from the District Information and Public Relations Officer (DIPRO) in their respective districts.

Reform works:

- He started a discussion group, called Kartavya Bodhini Samiti (Duty Awakening Society), in which he and his friends considered social, economic and political problems.
- He established a school at Sakhigopala, near Puri. Popularly known as Satyabadi Bakul Bana Bidyalaya, but called the Universal Education League by Das, it was inspired by the Deccan Education Society, operated in the gurukula tradition and aimed to impart a liberal education on a non-sectarian basis, despite opposition from orthodox Brahmins.
- He was influenced by Swadeshi movement and took part in the non-cooperation movement.
- He also launched and acted as editor for a short-lived monthly literary magazine titled Satyabadi from the campus of his school. Through this he was able to indulge his childhood aspirations to be a poet.

What's important?

- For Prelims and Mains:** About Gopabandhu Sambadika Swasthya Bima Yojana and Gopabandhu Das.

Sources: the hindu.

Gopabandhu Das:

- Gopabandhu Das (1877–1928) was a social worker, reformer, political activist, journalist, poet and essayist from Odisha. He was popularly known as **Utkalamani** (Jewel of Utkal or Orissa).
- He won election to the Legislative Council that had been created in 1909 under the terms of the Morley-Minto Reforms.
- He became the first president of Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee in 1920, holding the post until 1928, and he welcomed Gandhi to the province in 1921.

2. JANAUSHADHI SUVIDHA

- Context:** The government has launched the 'JANAUSHADHI SUVIDHA', the Oxo-biodegradable Sanitary Napkin, under the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP). The affordable sanitary napkins will now become available at over 3600 Janaushadhi Kendras functional in 33 States/UTs across India.

About Janaushadhi Suvidha:

- Jan Aushadhi Suvidha comes with a special additive, which makes Sanitary napkin biodegradable when it comes in contact with oxygen after being discarded.
- This would ensure 'Swachhta, Swasthya and Suvidha' for the underprivileged Women of India and go a long way in the achievement of vision of Affordable and Quality Healthcare for All.



Significance of the move:

- The average price of sanitary napkins available in the market today is around Rs. 8 per pad, whereas now with the launch of the SUVIDHA napkins at Rs. 2.50 per pad, this will go a long way in making the basic hygiene requirement aid for Women affordable for the underprivileged sections.
- This is one of the most important requirement in ensuring the Health Security to that section of Women in India who still use unhygienic aids during menstrual period due to non-affordability of some of the popular brands of sanitary napkins available in the market today.
- Such unhygienic aids cause fungal infections, Reproductive Tract Infection, Urinary Tract Infection, Cervical cancer and also make women vulnerable to infertility.

Background:

- According to the National Family Health Survey 2015-16, about 58% of women aged between 15 to 24 years use locally prepared napkins, sanitary napkins and tampons.
- Further, about 78% women in urban areas use hygienic methods of protection during menstrual period; only 48% women in rural areas have access to clean sanitary napkins.

About PMBJP:

- 'Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana' is a campaign launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. Of India, to provide quality medicines at affordable prices to the masses through special kendra's known as Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra. Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra (PMBJK) have been set up to provide generic drugs, which are available at lesser prices but are equivalent in quality and efficacy as expensive branded drugs.
- Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI)** is the implementing agency of PMBJP. BPPI (Bureau of Pharma Public Sector Undertakings of India) has been established under the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. of India, with the support of all the CPSUs.

What is a Generic Medicine?

- Generic medicines are unbranded medicines which are equally safe and having the same efficacy as that of branded medicines in terms of their therapeutic value.
- The prices of generic medicines are much cheaper than their branded equivalent.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** Features of PMBJP and Janaushadhi Suvidha.
- For Mains:** Health facilities for the underprivileged- need and efforts by the government, generic medicines and their increasing popularity worldwide.

Sources: pib.

3. DEEN DAYAL UPADHYAY GRAMIN KAUSHAL YOJANA (DDU-GKY)

- **Context:** Ministry of Shipping in association with Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gramin Kaushal Yojana (DDU-GKY), Ministry of Rural Development recently conducted a workshop on “Skill Development in the Port and Maritime Sector”.



Significance:

- India is one of the leading suppliers of seafarers in the world and now want to be the leading supplier for all talent in the Port and Maritime sector. Skill Development in the Port & Maritime sector is an opportunity to improve India's coastal areas, usher in port led prosperity and provide the world with skilled youth.

About DDU GKY:

- The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) announced the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) Antyodaya Diwas, on 25th September 2014. DDU-GKY is a part of the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), tasked with the dual objectives of adding diversity to the incomes of rural poor families and cater to the career aspirations of rural youth.
- DDU-GKY is uniquely focused on rural youth between the ages of 15 and 35 years from poor families. As a part of the Skill India campaign, it plays an instrumental role in supporting the social and economic programs of the government like the Make In India, Digital India, Smart Cities and Start-Up India, Stand-Up India campaigns.

In order to ensure complete social and regional inclusion the following special schemes have been launched:

- **Himayat:** A special scheme for the youth (rural & urban) of Jammu & Kashmir.
- **Roshni:** A special initiative for the rural youth of poor families in 27 Left-wing Extremist (LWE) districts across 9 states.

Facts for Prelims- Center of Excellence in Maritime and Ship Building (CEMS):

- Under the Ministry of Shipping's flagship Sagarmala Programme a world class Center of Excellence in Maritime and Ship Building (CEMS) is being set up in partnership with Siemens and Indian Register of Shipping (IRS).
- It will have campuses at Vishakhapatnam and Mumbai and will train 10,512 students per year.
- The CEMS aims to become an international nodal Centre in South Asia, attracting students from neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia for skill development in the Port and Maritime sector.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** DDU- GKY- key features of the scheme, about CEMS- location of the institute and objectives, Himayat and Roshni.
- **For Mains:** Need for skill development and human capital creation, various efforts by the government.

Sources: pib.

4. DEENDAYAL ANTYODAYA YOJANA – NATIONAL RURAL LIVELIHOOD MISSION (DAY-NRLM)

- **Context:** Ministry of Rural Development recently conferred National Awards on Best Performing Self Help Groups under DAY – National Rural Livelihood Mission.



National awards:

- Conferring awards to best performing SHG and Village Organizations was initiated by DAY-NRLM in 2016-17.
- The National Awards to the Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are intended to provide public recognition to the outstanding performance of the community institutions and incorporate a sense of pride among the poor community members.

Significance of SHGs:

- The SHGs are a perfect example of how livelihoods of households can transform through a collective approach, managed in line with core democratic and financial principles.
- The SHG has contributed to several community level activities for the common good.
- These include awareness promotion for constructing household toilets using SBM funds, environmental sanitation, liquid waste management and support for maintenance of village commons.
- SHG has demonstrated strong features of a progressive community based institution.

Facts for Prelims:

- **SARAS Aajeevika Mela** is an annual event of DAY-NRLM and it aims to provide a platform to the rural artisans to showcase their skills and products and also develop market linkages for their products.
- **Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana**, under DAY- NRLM, aims to provide an alternative source of livelihoods to members of SHGs by facilitating them to operate public transport services in backward rural areas, as identified by the States. It also aims to provide safe, affordable and community monitored rural transport services to connect remote villages with key services and amenities for the overall economic development of the area.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** DAY- NRLM- key features, SARAS Aajeevika Mela, Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana.
- **For Mains:** Schemes for overall rural economic development and the importance of rural development for overall country's growth.

Sources: pib.

5. KASHMIR SUPER 50

- **Context:** A group of 30 students, part of Kashmir Super 50 recently visited New Delhi and interacted with General Bipin Rawat, Chief of the Army Staff.

About Project Kashmir Super 50:

- Project Kashmir Super 50 is a joint initiative by Indian Army, Center for Social Responsibility and Leadership (CSRL) and PETRONET LNG Limited (PLL).

- It was launched on 22 March 2013 to transform the educational status of children from economically weaker sections in the Kashmir region.
- As part of the 11-month program, selected students are provided with complete free residential coaching for IIT-JEE, JK CET and other premier Engineering Institutes.

Significance of the scheme:

- Kashmir Super 50 has been one of the most successful projects undertaken by the Indian Army in the valley and has directly impacted the lives of number of youths in J&K by providing them the right guidance and opportunity to make a career for themselves.
- The project has equally helped the families of these youths in their growth and prosperity. It is a major initiative towards bringing normalcy in the valley.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Project Kashmir Super 50- objectives and significance of the project.

Sources: the hindu.

6. VAN DHAN VIKAS KENDRAS

- **Context:** Government proposes to set up 3000 Van Dhan Kendras involving 30,000 SHGs across the country.

About Van Dhan Vikas Kendras initiative:

- The initiative **aims to promote MFPs-centric livelihood development of tribal gatherers and artisans.** It mainstreams the tribal community by promoting primary level value addition to MFP at grassroots level.
- Through this initiative, the share of tribals in the value chain of Non-Timber Forest Produce is expected to rise from the present 20% to around 60%.

Implementation:

- The scheme will be implemented through Ministry of Tribal Affairs as Nodal Department at the Central Level and TRIFED as Nodal Agency at the National Level.
- At State level, the State Nodal Agency for MFPs and the District collectors are envisaged to play a pivot role in scheme implementation at grassroot level.
- Locally the Kendras are proposed to be managed by a Managing Committee (an SHG) consisting of representatives of Van Dhan SHGs in the cluster.
- Composition: As per the plan, TRIFED will facilitate establishment of MFP-led multi-purpose Van Dhan Vikas Kendras, a cluster of 10 SHGs comprising of 30 tribal MFP gatherers each, in the tribal areas.

Significance of MFP:

- Minor Forest Produce (MFP) is a major source of livelihood for tribals living in forest areas. The importance of MFPs for this section of the society can be gauged from the fact that around 100 million forest dwellers depend on MFPs for food, shelter, medicines and cash income.
- It provides them critical subsistence during the lean seasons, particularly for primitive tribal groups such as hunter gatherers, and the landless. Tribals derive 20-40% of their annual income from MFP on which they spend major portion of their time.

Van Dhan Scheme

**Empowering Tribal Communities
Through Value Addition**

Features of the Scheme:

- 10 SHGs*** of 30 tribal gatherers is constituted
- To be trained and provided with working capital
- SHGs will market their products within and across states
- To form clusters to aggregate their stock and link with facility of primary processing in Van Dhan Vikas Kendras
- Involvement of big corporates under PPP** model

*Self Help Groups **Public Private Partnership

- This activity has strong linkage to women's financial empowerment as most of the MFPs are collected and used/sold by women. MFP sector has the potential to create about 10 million workdays annually in the country.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** Van Dhan Vikas Kendras.
- For Mains:** MFP and its significance.

Sources: pib.

7. PRADHAN MANTRI AWAS YOJNA (URBAN)

- Context:** The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has approved construction of another 3,18,900 affordable houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna (Urban) with an investment of Rs 8,692 crore. With this, 51 Lakh Houses have been sanctioned under the scheme in three years of implementation.

About PMAY-Urban:

- The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) Programme launched by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA)**, in Mission mode envisions provision of Housing for All by 2022, when the Nation completes 75 years of its Independence.

The Mission seeks to address the housing requirement of urban poor including slum dwellers through following programme verticals:

- Slum rehabilitation of Slum Dwellers with participation of private developers using land as a resource.
- Promotion of Affordable Housing for weaker section through credit linked subsidy.
- Affordable Housing in Partnership with Public & Private sectors.
- Subsidy for beneficiary-led individual house construction /enhancement.

Key facts:

- The beneficiaries are poor and people living under EWS and LIG categories in the country.
- The scheme is divided into three phases. In the first phase, a total of 100 cities will be covered from April 2015 to March 2017. In phase two, 200 cities will be covered from April 2017 to March 2019. In the third phase, the leftover cities will be covered from April 2019 to March 2022.
- The government is providing an interest subsidy of 6.5% on housing loans which can be availed by beneficiaries for 15 years from start of loan date.
- The government will grant Rs 1 lakh to all the beneficiaries of the scheme. In addition, Rs 1.5 lakh will be given to all eligible urban poor who want to construct their houses in urban areas or plan to go for renovation in their existing houses. One can also avail loans under this scheme to build toilets in existing houses.

What's important?

- For Prelims and Mains:** PMAY- key features and significance.

Sources: pib.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana

- Housing Loan for Urban Poor (EWS: Annual Household Income up to ₹ 3 lakhs; LIG: Annual Household Income above ₹ 3 lakhs and upto ₹ 6 lakhs).
- Maximum carpet area of the property not to exceed 30 sq. mtrs. for EWS and 60 sq. mtrs. for LIG.
- Interest subsidy is available for housing loan for purchase and construction purpose.
- Interest subsidy for loan amount up to ₹ 6 lakhs for maximum period of 15 years @ 6.5% on Net Present Value (NPV) basis.
- Scheme is valid up to 31.03.2022.

8. PRADHAN MANTRI SURAKSHIT MATRITVA ABHIYAN (PMSMA)

- **Context:** ‘IPledgefor9’ Achievers Awards were given recently to the individuals and teams of doctors from the private sector and States for their exemplary services, outstanding support of institutions and commitment from support partners in achieving PMSMA’s objectives of safe motherhood to every woman in the country.
- ‘IPledgeFor9’ Achievers Awards have been devised to celebrate individual and team achievements and acknowledge voluntary contributions for PMSMA in states and districts across India.

Background:

- Data indicates that Maternal Mortality Ratio (**MMR**) in India was very high in the year 1990 with 556 women dying during child birth per hundred thousand live births as compared to the global MMR of 385/lakh live births.
- As per RGI- SRS (2011-13), MMR of India has now declined to 167/lakh live births against a global MMR of 216/lakh live births (2015). India has registered an overall decline in MMR of 70% between 1990 and 2015 in comparison to a global decline of 44%.

Way ahead:

- While India has made considerable progress in the reduction of maternal and infant mortality, every year approximately 44000 women still die due to pregnancy-related causes and approximately 6.6 lakh infants die within the first 28 days of life.
- Many of these deaths are preventable and many lives can be saved if quality care is provided to pregnant women during their antenatal period and high risk factors such as severe anemia, pregnancy-induced hypertension etc are detected on time and managed well.

Facts for Prelims:

- SDG 3.1 By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100 000 live births.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** ‘IPledgefor9’ Achievers Awards, PMSMA- key features.
- **For Mains:** Efforts by government to achieve SDG 3 target.

Sources: pib.

Paper 2 Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

1. ATAL BHUJAL YOJANA (ABHY)

- **Context:** The World Bank has approved Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABHY). The scheme is to be implemented over a period of five years from 2018-19 to 2022-23, with World Bank assistance.

About Atal Bhujal Yojana:

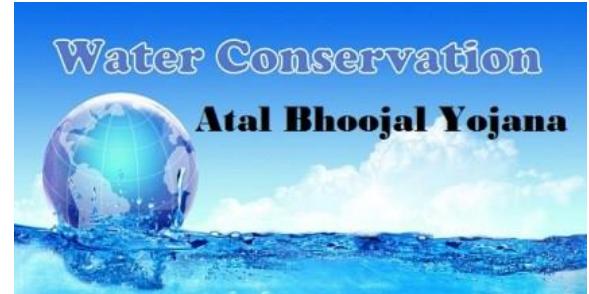
- It is a Rs.6000 crore Central Sector Scheme of the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation. The scheme aims to improve ground water management in priority areas in the country through community participation.

About PMSMA:

- The Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan has been launched by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW), Government of India.
- *The program aims to provide assured, comprehensive and quality antenatal care, free of cost, universally to all pregnant women on the 9th of every month.*
- PMSMA guarantees a minimum package of antenatal care services to women in their 2nd/3rd trimesters of pregnancy at designated government health facilities.
- The programme follows a systematic approach for engagement with private sector which includes motivating private practitioners to volunteer for the campaign; developing strategies for generating awareness and appealing to the private sector to participate in the Abhiyan at government health facilities.
- Different colour stickers will be Red Sticker for Serious patients, Blue Sticker for High blood pressure and Yellow Sticker for Other diseases.

Priority areas:

- The priority areas identified under the scheme fall in the states of Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. These States represent about 25% of the total number of over-exploited, critical and semi-critical blocks in terms of ground water in India.
- They also cover two major types of groundwater systems found in India – alluvial and hard rock aquifers- and have varying degrees of institutional readiness and experience in groundwater management.

**Implementation of the scheme:**

- Funds under the scheme will be provided to the states for strengthening the institutions responsible for ground water governance, as well as for encouraging community involvement for improving ground water management to foster behavioural changes that promote conservation and efficient use of water. The scheme will also facilitate convergence of ongoing Government schemes in the states by incentivizing their focussed implementation in identified priority areas.

Expected outcomes:

- The implementation of the scheme is expected to have several positive outcomes like better understanding of the ground water regime, focused and integrated community based approach for addressing issues related to ground water depletion, sustainable ground water management through convergence of on-going and new schemes, adoption of efficient water use practices to reduce ground water use for irrigation and augmentation of ground water resources in targeted areas.

Status of groundwater in India:

- Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA) is regulating ground water development in 23 States/UTs.
- As per the assessment of dynamic ground water resources of country carried out jointly by CGWB and State Ground Water Departments, out of the total 6584 numbers of assessment units (Block/ Taluks/ Mandals/ watershed/ Firkka), 1034 units have been categorized as 'Over-exploited'.
- This may be due to increase in population, rapid urbanization & industrialization and other related factors.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** Atal Bhujal Yojana- Objectives, funding and implementation, CGWA.
- For Mains:** Groundwater crisis- reasons, challenges, concerns and solutions, various efforts by the government.

Sources: pib.

2. SEVA BHOJ YOJNA

- Context:** The **Union Ministry of Culture** recently introduced a new scheme called 'SevaBhojYojna' to reimburse the central share of CGST and IGST on items for food/prasad/langar/bhandara offered free of cost by charitable religious institutions.

About Seva Bhoj Yojana:

- The scheme seeks to reimburse the central government's share of Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) and Integrated Goods and Service Tax (IGST) on purchase of raw items such as ghee, edible oil, atta, maida, rava, flour, rice pulses, sugar and jaggery, which go into preparation of food/prasad/langar/bhandara offered free of cost by religious institutions.
- The main objective of the scheme is to lessen the financial burden of such charitable religious institutions, which provide free of cost without any discrimination to the general public and devotees.

The charitable religious institutions including temples, gurudwara, mosque, church, dharmik ashram, dargah, monasteries, which fulfill the following criteria are eligible for the grant:

- The institutions that have been in existence for at least five years before applying for financial assistance/grant.
- The institutions that serve free food to at least 5000 people in a month.
- The institutions covered under Section 10(23BBA) of the Income Tax Act or those registered as Society under Societies Registration Act (XXI of 1860) or as a Public Trust under any law for the time being in force of statutory religious bodies constituted under any Act or institutions registered under Section 12AA of Income Tax Act.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Main features of the scheme.

Sources: the hindu.

3. WORKING CAPITAL LOAN NORMS TO BE TIGHTENED

- **Context:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has proposed a minimum 40% loan component for working capital funding of ₹150 crore and above to bring in greater credit discipline and improve monetary transmission.
- This will come into effect from October 1 and will be increased to 60% from April 1, 2019.

Background:

- Currently, working capital is mostly in the form of cash credit for which interest rate is reset once a year. Also, cash credit does not have a tight repayment schedule.

The proposed new norm will address the following issues:

- If there is a loan component then there will be a repayment schedule which will put pressure on borrowers to manage their liquidity.
- Since the loan component will have a fixed tenure, the reset clause can be invoked at the end of each tenure period.

Significance of the move:

- By making it mandatory to have a loan component associated with all working-capital facilities, it will be easier to control the possible volatility which arises on account of cash credit limits.

Need for reforms:

- The working capital requirements of borrowing entities are met by banks through a cash credit limit, which is a revolving facility. The cash credit facility places undue burden on the banks in managing their liquidity requirements, with corresponding repercussions for RBI's liquidity operations.
- Currently, banks do not charge any commitment fee and do not maintain any capital on the unknown portion of the cash credit and, thus, it is classified as an unconditionally cancellable facility, which does not have any risk weight under the marking rules.

Concerns:

- While cash credit has its benefits, it also poses several regulatory challenges such as perpetual roll-overs, transmission of liquidity management from the borrowers to banks/RBI, hampering of smooth transmission of monetary policy, etc.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** nothing much.
- **For Mains:** ease of doing business and government efforts in this regard.

Sources: the hindu.

4. CREDIT ENHANCEMENT FUND

- **Context:** The government is likely to launch a Rs 500-crore credit enhancement fund next month to facilitate infrastructure investments by insurance and pension funds.

About the proposed fund:

- The fund was first announced in the financial budget for fiscal year 2016-17.
- It will help in upgrading credit ratings of bonds issued by infrastructure companies and facilitate investment from investors like pension and insurance funds.
- The initial corpus of the fund, ***to be sponsored by IIFCL*** (India Infrastructure Finance Company), will be Rs 500 crore, and it will operate as a non-banking finance company.
- IIFCL will hold a 22.5% stake in the NBFC, while the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has offered to pick up a 10% stake. State-run SBI, Bank of Baroda and LIC will also have stakes in the firm.

Need for a dedicated fund:

- At present, only \$110 billion is being invested in infrastructure, against a requirement of \$200 billion, leading many analysts to classify India as an infrastructure deficit country.
- At present, the banking system does a bulk of infrastructure project financing and exposes itself to asset liability management (ALM) mismatches and hence, alternatives like raising of money through corporate bonds is necessary.
- Also, bank lending to the infra segment has slowed down in the past few years and the annual growth rates plummeted to 3% between FY14 and FY17, against 43% from FY2000 to FY13. The NPAs from the segment have also ballooned to 9% in FY17, from 3% in FY13.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** About the proposed credit enhancement fund and the promoters.
- **For Mains:** Need for the fund and its significance.

Sources: the hindu.

5. AYUSHMAN BHARAT HEALTH SCHEME

- **Context:** Around 20 states have so far signed memoranda of understanding to implement Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission which aims to provide health protection to around 10 crore poor families in the country.

Highlights of the scheme:

- **Coverage:** The scheme has the benefit cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family per year. To ensure that nobody is left out (especially women, children and elderly) there will be no cap on family size and age in the scheme. The benefit cover will also include pre and post-hospitalisation expenses.
- **Target:** The target beneficiaries of the proposed scheme will be more than 10 crore families belonging to poor and vulnerable population based on SECC database. Benefits of the scheme are portable across the country and a beneficiary covered under the scheme will be allowed to take cashless benefits from any public/private empanelled hospitals across the country.
- **Role of state governments:** State Governments will be allowed to expand AB-NHPM both horizontally and vertically. States will be free to choose the modalities for implementation. They can implement through insurance company or directly through Trust/ Society or a mixed model.
- **Council:** For giving policy directions and fostering coordination between Centre and States, it is proposed to set up Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission Council (AB-NHPC) at apex level Chaired by Union Health and Family Welfare Minister.



Who is eligible?

- It will be an entitlement based scheme with entitlement decided on the basis of deprivation criteria in the SECC database.
- The different categories in rural area include families having only one room with kucha walls and kucharoof; families having no adult member between age 16 to 59; female headed households with no adult male member between age 16 to 59; disabled member and no able bodied adult member in the family; SC/ST households; and landless households deriving major part of their income from manual casual labour.
- Also, automatically included families in rural areas having any one of the following: households without shelter, destitute, living on alms, manual scavenger families, primitive tribal groups, legally released bonded labour. For urban areas, 11 defined occupational categories are entitled under the scheme.

Implementation Strategy:

- At the national level to manage, an Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission Agency (AB-NHPMA) would be put in place. States/ UTs would be advised to implement the scheme by a dedicated entity called State Health Agency (SHA).
- They can either use an existing Trust/ Society/ Not for Profit Company/ State Nodal Agency (SNA) or set up a new entity to implement the scheme. States/ UTs can decide to implement the scheme through an insurance company or directly through the Trust/ Society or use an integrated model.

Benefits of the scheme:

- This will lead to increased access to quality health and medication. In addition, the unmet needs of the population which remained hidden due to lack of financial resources will be catered to.
- This will lead to timely treatments, improvements in health outcomes, patient satisfaction, improvement in productivity and efficiency, job creation thus leading to improvement in quality of life.

Way ahead:

- The scheme, if implemented properly could be a game changer by enhancing access to health care including early detection and treatment services by a large section of society who otherwise could not afford them.
- The identification of beneficiaries can be done by linking with Aadhar and similarly following up for services received and health outcomes achieved, thereby helping to monitor and evaluate the impact of the programme.
- Ultimately, the scheme could help country move towards universal health coverage and equitable access to healthcare which is one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Ayushman Bharat- details of the scheme.
- **For Mains:** Need for universal health coverage.

Sources: pib.

6. INDIA BPO PROMOTION SCHEME

- **Context:** The Union government is planning to expand its BPO promotion scheme under the Digital India initiative. The government has proposed to more than double the number of seats under the scheme.

About India BPO Promotion scheme (IBPS):

- The India BPO Promotion Scheme (IBPS), envisaged under Digital India Programme, seeks to incentivize establishment of 48,300 seats in respect of BPO/ITES operations across the country.
- It is distributed among each State in proportion of State's population with an outlay of Rs. 493 Crore. This would help in capacity building in smaller cities in terms of infra & manpower and would become basis for next wave of IT/ITES led growth.

Salient Features:

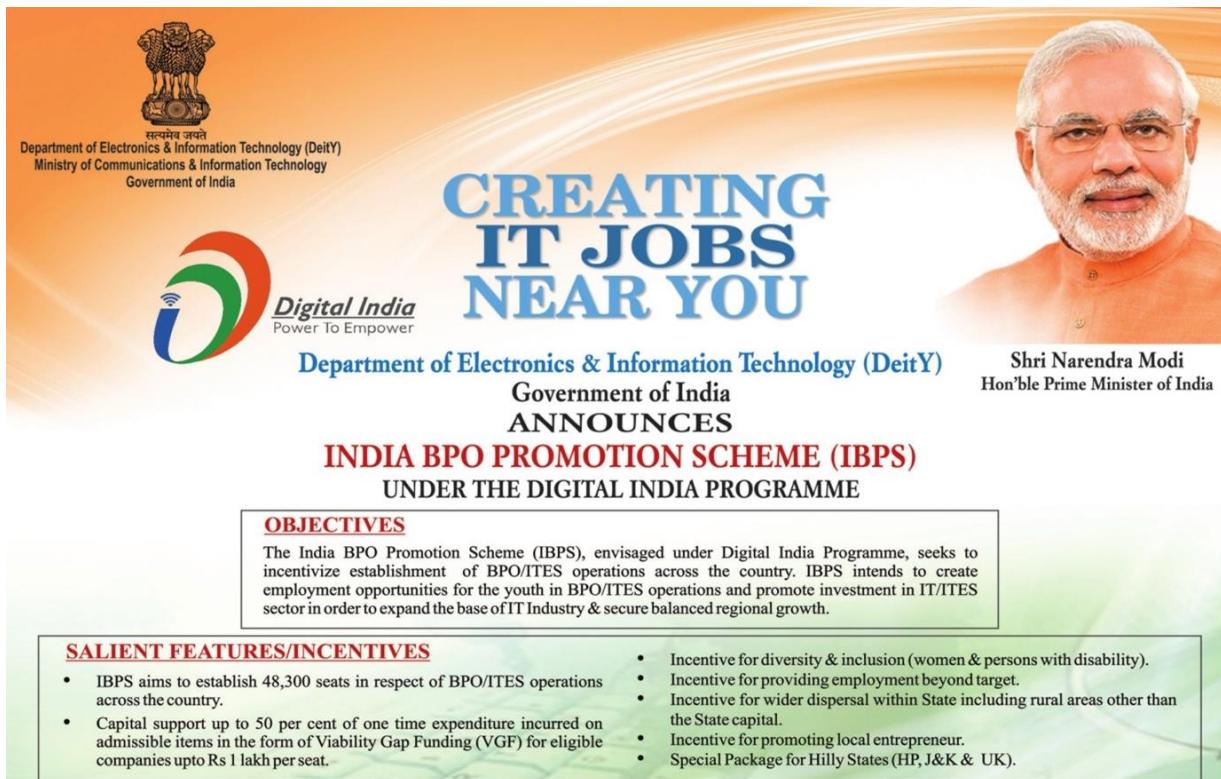
- Financial Support: Up to 50% of expenditure incurred on BPO/ITES operations towards capital expenditure (CAPEX) and/or operational expenditure (OPEX) on admissible items, subject to an upper ceiling of Rs. 1 Lakh/Seat.
- Special incentives toward employment of women & specially enabled persons.
- Incentive for generating employment beyond target & wider dispersal within state including rural areas.
- Encouragement for local entrepreneurs.
- Special consideration for Hilly states of HP, J&K and UK.

Significance of the scheme:

- This scheme has potential to create employment opportunities of around 1.5 lakh direct jobs considering three shift operations. It may also create good number of indirect jobs.

Background:

- BPO / ITES Industry is one of the fastest growing segments under the Information Technology sector in the country. It has immense potential to grow and expand further because of its readiness to deliver at par with global standards and inherent cost advantage.
- Currently, most revenue by this sector is generated from, in and around, the metropolitan areas of Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi NCR, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai and Pune. Other parts of the country, having availability of talent pool and infrastructure, are yet to reap the benefits of this global boom.



CREATING IT JOBS NEAR YOU

Department of Electronics & Information Technology (DeitY)
Government of India
ANNOUNCES
INDIA BPO PROMOTION SCHEME (IBPS)
UNDER THE DIGITAL INDIA PROGRAMME

OBJECTIVES

The India BPO Promotion Scheme (IBPS), envisaged under Digital India Programme, seeks to incentivize establishment of BPO/ITES operations across the country. IBPS intends to create employment opportunities for the youth in BPO/ITES operations and promote investment in IT/ITES sector in order to expand the base of IT Industry & secure balanced regional growth.

SALIENT FEATURES/INCENTIVES

- IBPS aims to establish 48,300 seats in respect of BPO/ITES operations across the country.
- Capital support up to 50 per cent of one time expenditure incurred on admissible items in the form of Viability Gap Funding (VGF) for eligible companies upto Rs 1 lakh per seat.
- Incentive for diversity & inclusion (women & persons with disability).
- Incentive for providing employment beyond target.
- Incentive for wider dispersal within State including rural areas other than the State capital.
- Incentive for promoting local entrepreneur.
- Special Package for Hilly States (HP, J&K & UK).

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** IBPS scheme- objectives and features.
- **For Mains:** BPO industry- development in the country, challenges and significance.

Sources: the hindu.

7. NATIONAL TARGETS FOR OFF-SHORE WIND POWER

- **Context:** To give confidence to wind industry, Government has declared national targets for off-shore wind power.

The targets:

- Medium target of 5 GW by 2022.
- Long term target of 30 GW by 2030.

Significance of the move:

- Offshore wind power would add a new element to the already existing basket of renewable energy for the country.

Why off- shore wind farming is beneficial?

- The offshore wind faming is attractive because of several reasons such as stronger winds for efficient generation of power; no impact on real estate value of land as in case of onshore wind farming; its ability to fulfil the demand of the heavily populated coastal regions and no significant environment costs.

Challenges:

- It is difficult to install large wind power turbines in open seas. Offshore wind turbines are of much larger dimensions and capacities than onshore turbines.
- The **PLF (plant load factor)** of off-shore wind turbines will be higher than the on-shore projects.
- The **cost per MW** of off-shore wind power project will be higher by 50-100% as compared to on-shore projects depending on the water depth.
- Further deep sea wind farms come with the challenges of assigning **no-go areas for commercial shipping**. There would be a need to devise new lanes, proper lightning for ships to pass on.



National Off-Shore Wind Policy:

- The Ministry of New & Renewable Energy had notified National Off-Shore Wind Policy in October 2015 to realize the offshore wind power potential in the country.
- With this, ***the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE) has been authorized as the Nodal Ministry*** for use of offshore areas within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the country and the ***National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE) has been authorized as the Nodal Agency*** for development of offshore wind energy.
- Government has paved way for development of the offshore wind farms up to the seaward distance of 200 Nautical Miles (within its Exclusive Economic Zone) from the base line.

Way ahead:

- India is making significant progress in the development of the onshore wind power plants. However, so far progress in the offshore wind power generation has been almost nil. Since India has more than 7600 Kilometres of coast, the prospects of development of offshore wind power are very bright. At global level, it has been observed that, offshore wind energy while being better than onshore wind in terms of efficiency is also becoming competitive and comparable in terms of tariffs.
- With the introduction of the National Offshore Wind Energy Policy, India is trying to replicate the success of the onshore wind power development in the offshore wind power development.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** India's renewable energy targets, highlights of National Off- Shore Wind Policy.
- **For Mains:** Off- shore wind energy- benefits, challenges and India's efforts in this regard.

Sources: pib.

8. NATIONAL DIGITAL LIBRARY OF INDIA

- **What is it?** National Digital Library of India (NDLI) is a project of the Ministry of Human Resource Development under the aegis of National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT). It is developed by IIT Kharagpur.
- **Objective:** The objective of NDL is to make digital educational resources available to all citizens of the country to empower, inspire and encourage learning.

Key facts:

- NDL is the Single Window Platform that collects and collates metadata from premier learning institutions in India and abroad, as well as other relevant sources.
- It is a digital repository containing textbooks, articles, videos, audio books, lectures, simulations, fiction and all other kinds of learning media.
- It makes quality learning resources available to all learners and has 1.7 Crore content from more than 160 sources, in over 200 languages.

About NMEICT:

- The National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been envisaged as **a Centrally Sponsored Scheme** to leverage the potential of ICT, in teaching and learning process for the benefit of all the learners in Higher Education Institutions in any time anywhere mode.
- **The Mission has two major components** – providing connectivity, along with provision for access devices, to institutions and learners; and content generation.
 - **The Mission aims** to extend computer infrastructure and connectivity to over 25000 colleges and 2000 polytechnics in the country including each of the departments of 419 universities/deemed universities and institutions of national importance as a part of its motto to provide connectivity up to last mile.
 - LAN of up to 400 nodes on average has also been envisaged to be provided to the universities under the NMEICT scheme. The Mission, in addition to utilize the connectivity network of service providers, shall explore the possibility to provide connectivity utilizing Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT), Virtual Private Network (VPN) and EduSat channels.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** NMEICT and NDLI- key features and significance.

Sources: pib.

9. SURYASHAKTI KISAN YOJANA (SKY) SCHEME

- **Context:** In an attempt to promote solar energy, the **Gujarat government has announced Suryashakti Kisan Yojana (SKY) scheme** under which farmers would be encouraged to generate electricity and sell their surplus to power distribution companies.

Highlights of the project:

- Under the first phase of project, **the state government would provide financial assistance** to 12,400 farmers out of the state's total 15 lakh farmers to generate an estimated 175 MW of power.
- **The state government and the Centre would jointly share 60% of the cost** of installing a solar generating unit in the fields, while the farmers would need to chip in only 5%. The remaining 35% would be in the form of a loan by the state government at the rate of four to 4.5%.
- **The government would also enter in a 25-year power purchase agreement with the farmers.** Till the farmers repay their loan, the distribution companies would buy electricity from them at the rate of Rs 7 per unit and at Rs 3.5 per unit once the loans are settled. After that, the farmers would get ownership of the solar system.

Significance of the project:

- At present, the farmers consume power purchased from power companies.
- The project will help them set up solar systems in their fields. After they consumer power according to their requirement, they can sell the surplus back to the distribution companies.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Suryashakti Kisan Yojana (SKY) scheme – features and significance.

Sources: the hindu.

10. STRATEGIC PETROLEUM RESERVE (SPR) PROGRAMME

- **Context:** The Union Cabinet has approved establishment of additional 6.5 Million Metric Tonne (MMT) Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) facilities at two locations, i.e. Chandikhol in Odisha and Padur in Karnataka, including construction of dedicated SPMs (Single Point Mooring) for the two SPRs.
- The SPR facilities at Chandikhol and Padur will be underground rockcaverns and will have capacities of 4 MMT and 2.5 MMT respectively.

Need for strategic oil reserves:

- In 1990, as the Gulf war engulfed West Asia, India was in the throes of a major energy crisis. By all accounts India's oil reserves at the time were adequate for only three days. While India managed to avert the crisis then, the threat of energy disruption continues to present a real danger even today.
- It is unlikely that India's energy needs will dramatically move away from fossil fuels in the near future. Over 80% of these fuels come from imports, a majority of which is sourced from West Asia. This is a major strategic risk and poses a massive financial drain for an embattled economy and its growing current account deficit.
- To address energy insecurity, the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government mooted the concept of strategic petroleum reserves in 1998. Today, with India consuming upwards of four million barrels of crude every day (January 2015 figures), the case for creating such reserves grows stronger.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** India's strategic oil reserves- locations, ISPRL.
- **For Mains:** Energy security, need for SPR.

Sources: pib.

About SPR programme:

- To ensure energy security, the Government of India had decided to set up 5 million metric tons (MMT) of strategic crude oil storages at **three locations namely, Visakhapatnam, Mangalore and Padur (near Udupi)**. These strategic storages would be in addition to the existing storages of crude oil and petroleum products with the oil companies and would serve as a cushion during any external supply disruptions.
- In the 2017-18 budget, it was announced that two more such caverns will be set up Chandikhole in Jajpur district of Odisha and Bikaner in Rajasthan as part of the second phase.
- **The construction of the Strategic Crude Oil Storage facilities is being managed by Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL), a Special Purpose Vehicle, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB) under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.**

11. ETHANOL BLENDED PETROL (EBP) PROGRAMME

- **Context:** Cabinet approves Mechanism for procurement of ethanol by Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) to carry out the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme- Revision of ethanol price for supply to Public Sector OMCs.

Significance:

- Remunerative price to ethanol suppliers will help in reduction of cane farmer's arrears, in the process contributing to minimizing difficulty of sugarcane farmers.
- Ethanol availability for EBP Programme is expected to increase significantly due to higher price for C heavy molasses based ethanol and enabling procurement of ethanol from B heavy molasses and sugarcane juice for first time.

Benefits of ethanol blending:

- Increased ethanol blending in petrol has many benefits including reduction in import dependency, support to agricultural sector, more environmental friendly fuel, lesser pollution and additional income to farmers.

Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme:

- It was launched by the Government in 2003 on pilot basis which has been subsequently extended to the Notified 21 States and 4 Union Territories to promote the use of alternative and environmental friendly fuels.
- It aims at blending ethanol with petrol, thereby bringing it under the category of biofuels and saving millions of dollars by cutting fuel imports.
- Ethanol Blended Petrol Programme is being implemented by the Ministry or Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs).
- This intervention also seeks to reduce import dependency for energy requirements and give boost to agriculture sector.

Demand:

- India is the third largest consumer of energy in the world after China and the US. Currently, the country is dependent on imports for about 82.1% of its crude oil requirement and to the extent of about 44.4% in case of natural gas.
- India is expected to need 10 billion litres of ethanol annually to meet the 20% blending target in 2030 if petrol consumption continues to grow at the current pace. At present, the capacity stands at 1.55 billion litres a year.

Concerns and challenges:

- There has been a consistent shortfall in supply of ethanol in the past, mainly on account of the cyclical nature of the sugarcane harvests in the country. There is “lack of an integrated approach in the EBP across its value chain.”

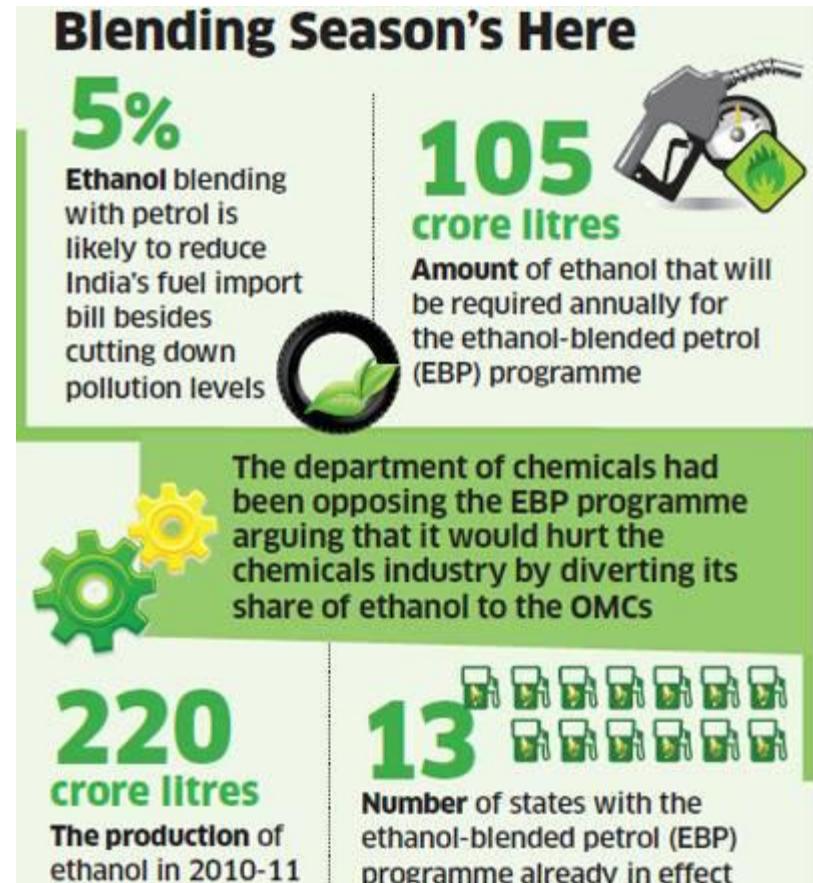
Way ahead:

- The National Policy on Bio-fuels has set a target of 20% blending of biofuels, both for bio-diesel and bio-ethanol. This will require an integrated approach in the Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP).
- The time is ripe for a cogent and consistent policy and administrative framework in the program implementation for the success of EBP.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** Ethanol blended petrol programme, National Policy on Bio-fuels.
- For Mains:** Ethanol blending- significance, potential, challenges and solutions.

Sources: pib.

**12. NATIONAL EXPORT INSURANCE ACCOUNT TRUST**

- Context:** Cabinet approves a Corpus to National Export Insurance Account Trust. The Corpus would strengthen NEIA to support project exports from the country that are of strategic and national importance.

What is NEIA?

- National Export Insurance Account (NEIA) is a trust set up by the Ministry of Commerce and administered by Export Credit & Guarantee Corporation of India (ECGC).

Paper 2 Topic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

1. WORLD BEST UNIVERSITIES RANKING

- **Context:** The 15th edition of the QS World University Rankings has been released by global higher education analysts QS Quacquarelli Symonds. QS ranks the world's top 1,000 universities, across 85 countries.
- Being the only international ranking to have received International Ranking Expert Group (IREG) approval, the QS ranking is viewed as one of the three most-widely read university rankings in the world, along with Academic Ranking of World Universities and Times Higher Education World University Rankings.

QS World University Rankings 2018: Top 10			
2018	2017	Institution Name	
1	1	MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (MIT)	US
2	2	STANFORD UNIVERSITY	US
3	3	HARVARD UNIVERSITY	US
4	5	CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (CALTECH)	US
5	4	UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE	UK
6	6	UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD	UK
7	7	UCL (UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON)	UK
8	9	IMPERIAL COLLEGE LONDON	UK
9	10	UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO	US
10	8	ETH ZURICH (SWISS FEDERAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY)	CH

Global performers:

- Globally, Massachusetts Institute of Technology remains the top university for the seventh consecutive year.
- Stanford University, Harvard University and California Institute of Technology (Caltech) all retain their positions at second, third and fourth in the world respectively.
- From Asia, National University of Singapore (11) Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (12) and Tsinghua University, China (17) have been ranked the best.

Performance of Indian institutions:

- Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IIT-B), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, and Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi (IIT-D) are in the top 200.
- The number of Indian universities in the top 1,000 increased from 20 to 24. 9 Indian institutions have been individually ranked in the top-500 as against 6 last year.
- IIT-Bombay is now the top institute in the country rising 17 positions from 2018 to 162. Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bangalore, rises 20 places to 170th.
- 17 of India's 24 ranked universities improved their rank for Academic Reputation, while 13 improved their rank for Employer Reputation.

Way ahead for India:

- The rankings are an affirmation of faith in the premier Indian higher educational institutions.
- The Human Resource Development (HRD) ministry has been taking several steps to improve the global rankings, especially the world-renowned IITs by providing more funds and launching the Institutes of Eminence scheme under which institutes would be freed from regulatory framework.

- However, there's still work to be done beyond the top universities.

Facts for Prelims:

- International Ranking Expert Group (IREG) emerged as a joint initiative of the UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education (UNESCO-CEPES) and a group of international ranking experts concerned with the quality of academic ranking.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** IREG, QS World University Rankings and India's top performers.
- **For Mains:** Reforms in higher education.

Sources: pib.

2. NEW NORMS FOR COLLEGE TEACHERS

- **Context:** The University Grants Commission (UGC) has brought out a new set of regulations to alter the conditions for recruitment and promotion of college and university teachers, so as to make universities more focussed on research and colleges on the teaching-learning process.

New norms:

- Research will no longer be mandatory for college teachers for promotion. However, university promotions will offer weightage to research done. College teachers will be graded on teaching rather than research. College teachers can still do research and earn higher grades for it.
- Other than research, college teachers can earn grades for other activities too — like social work, helping in adoption of a village, helping students in extra-curricular activities, contributing teaching material to Swayam, the MOOCs platform for online material.
- College teachers can become professors now. Till now, a college teacher could not rise above the rank of associate professor, the professor post being limited to university departments.
- To become an assistant professor in a college, the requirement remains the same: Ph.D or NET plus a master's degree. However, for promotion to the post of associate professor, a Ph.D will be mandatory even at the college level.
- Indians who had been awarded a doctoral degree from any of the top 500 global universities would be eligible to teach in Indian universities without the requirement of any equivalence certificate or NET as soon as the regulations are notified.

WHAT THE NEW RULES SAY

- Institutions have to seek UGC recognition afresh to offer courses in distance mode
- Applications have to be submitted six months before commencement of academic session. This has practically frozen admission for distance mode programmes for the next six months
- 150 universities barred from offering such courses in distance mode that they do not offer in the conventional mode
- Institutions to display on website course structure, fee, faculty details
- Institutions may allow up to twenty per cent of a course online
- Unique Identification or Aadhaar number of learner to be mandatorily mentioned in certificates
- Standalone institutions not affiliated to any university will not get fresh recognition to offer courses in distance mode

University Grants Commission (UGC):

- The University Grants Commission of India (UGC India) is a statutory body set up in accordance to the UGC Act 1956 under Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- It is charged with coordination, determination, and maintenance of standards of higher education. It provides recognition to universities in India and disburses funds to such recognized universities and colleges.

Sources: the hindu.

3. INDIA AMONG OVER 90 NATIONS WITHOUT PAID PATERNITY LEAVE

- **Context:** According to a new UNICEF analysis, India is among almost 90 countries in the world without national policies in place that ensure new fathers get adequate paid time off with their newborn babies.

Highlights of the report:

- Almost two-thirds of the world's children under one-year-old, nearly 90 million, live in countries where their fathers are not entitled by law to a single day of paid paternity leave.
- India and Nigeria, which have high infant populations, are among the 92 countries do not have national policies in place that ensure new fathers get adequate paid time off with their newborn babies.
- In eight countries across the world, including the United States which is home to nearly four million infants, there was no paid maternity or paternity leave policy.
- Other countries with high infant populations, including Brazil and Congo, all have national paid paternity leave policies, albeit offering relatively short-term entitlements.



Need for paternity leave:

- Evidence suggests that when fathers bond with their babies from the beginning of life, they are more likely to play a more active role in the child's development. Research also suggests that when children positively interact with their fathers, they have better psychological health, self-esteem and life-satisfaction in the long-term.
- Also, positive and meaningful interaction with mothers and fathers from the very beginning helps shape children's brain growth and development for life, making them healthier and happier, and increasing their ability to learn.

Way ahead:

- Around the world, momentum for family-friendly policies is growing. For example, India has proposed a Paternity Benefit Bill for consideration in the next session of Parliament which would allow fathers up to three months of paid paternity leave.
- UNICEF has urged governments to implement national family-friendly policies that support early childhood development, including paid paternity leave, to help provide parents with the time, resources and information they need to care for their children.

Facts for Prelims:

- UNICEF has launched 'Super Dads' campaign which aims to break down barriers preventing fathers from playing an active role in their young children's development.
- The campaign celebrates Father's Day – recognised in more than 80 countries in June – and focuses on the importance of love, play, protection and good nutrition for the healthy development of young children's brains.

Sources: the hindu.

4. INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF DISEASES (ICD-11)

- **Context:** The World Health Organization (WHO) has released its new International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11).

What is ICD?

- The ICD is the global health information standard for mortality and morbidity statistics.
 - ICD is increasingly used in clinical care and research to define diseases and study disease patterns, as well as

ICD-11

- WHO is currently revising the ICD towards ICD-11
- The development is taking place on an internet based workspace called "icat" platform.
- The draft of the ICD-11 system → submitted to WHO's world health assembly (WHA) → by 2017 and a final version → in 2018

- manage health care, monitor outcomes and allocate resources. ICD has been translated into 43 languages.
- More than 100 countries use the system to report mortality data, a primary indicator of health status. This system helps to monitor death and disease rates worldwide and measure progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.
- About 70% of the world's health expenditures (USD \$ 3.5 billion) are allocated using ICD for reimbursement and resource allocation.

Highlights of ICD- 11:

- ICD-11 identifies health trends and statistics worldwide, and contains around 55,000 unique codes for injuries, diseases and causes of death.
- ICD-11, which has been over a decade in the making, provides significant improvements on previous versions.
- Also for the first time, it is completely electronic and has a much more user-friendly format. And there has been unprecedented involvement of health care workers who have joined collaborative meetings and submitted proposals.
- The new ICD-11 also reflects progress in medicine and advances in scientific understanding. For example, the codes relating to antimicrobial resistance are more closely in line with the Global Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance System (GLASS).
- ICD-11 is also able to better capture data regarding safety in health care, which means that unnecessary events that may harm health – such as unsafe workflows in hospitals can be identified and reduced.
- The new ICD also includes new chapters- one on traditional medicine and another new chapter on sexual health.
- Gaming disorder has been added to the section on addictive disorders.

ICD purpose and uses:

- The ICD is the foundation for the identification of health trends and statistics globally. It is the international standard for defining and reporting diseases and health conditions. It allows the world to compare and share health information using a common language.
- The ICD defines the universe of diseases, disorders, injuries and other related health conditions. These entities are listed in a comprehensive way so that everything is covered. It organizes information into standard groupings of diseases, which allows for:
- Easy storage, retrieval and analysis of health information for evidenced-based decision-making;
- Sharing and comparing health information between hospitals, regions, settings and countries; and
- Data comparisons in the same location across different time periods.

Background:

- The first international classification edition, known as the International List of Causes of Death, was adopted by the International Statistical Institute in 1893. WHO was entrusted with the ICD at its creation in 1948. The ICD is revised periodically and is currently in its 10th revision.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** ICD- what is it, uses and significance.

Sources: the hindu.

5. NATIONAL HEALTH RESOURCE REPOSITORY (NHRR)

- **Context:** The Union ministry of health and family welfare (MoHFW) has launched the National Health Resource Repository (NHRR).

About the NHRR project:

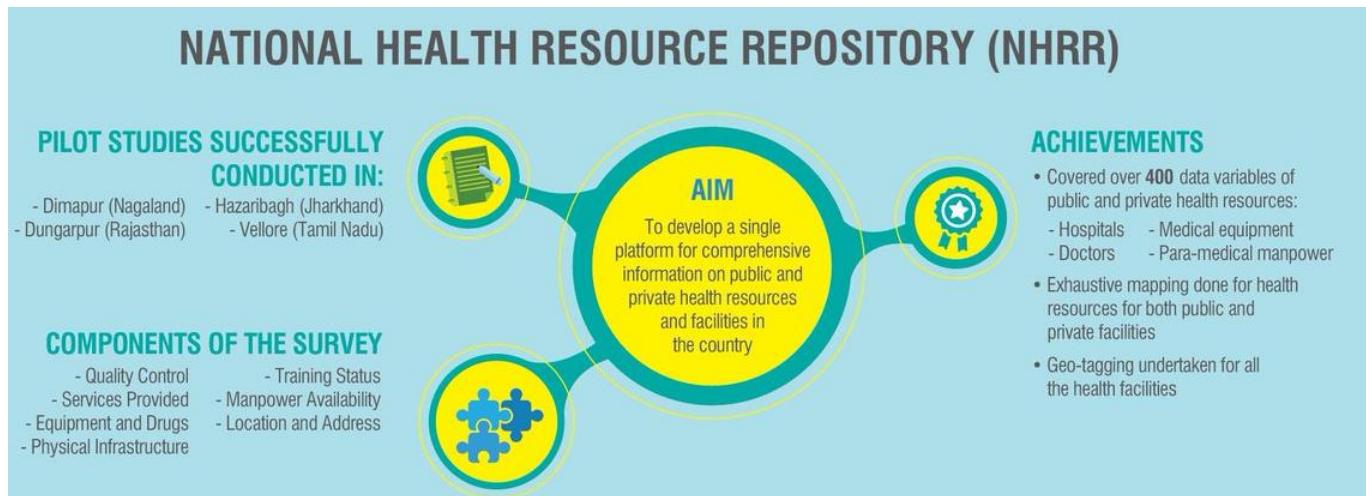
- The NHRR project aims to strengthen evidence-based decision making and develop a platform for citizens and provider-centric services by creating a robust, standardised and secured Information Technology (IT)-enabled repository of India's healthcare resources.
- **The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is the project technology partner** for providing data security.
- NHRR shall be the registry of authentic, standardised and updated geo-spatial data of all public and private healthcare.

Uses:

- This resource repository shall enable advanced research towards ongoing and forthcoming healthcare challenges arising from other determinants of health such as disease and the environment.
- It shall also enhance the coordination between central and state government for optimisation of health resources, making 'live' and realistic state project implementation plans (PIPs) and improving accessibility of data at all levels, including state heads of departments, and thus decentralise the decision making at district and state level.

Benefits:

- Some key benefits of the NHRR project are to create a reliable, unified registry of country's healthcare resources showing the distribution pattern of health facilities and services between cities and rural areas.
- Additionally, it shall generate real-world intelligence to identify gaps in health and service ratios, and ensure judicious health resource allocation and management.
- It shall also identify key areas of improvement by upgrading existing health facilities or establishing new health facilities keeping in view the population density, geographic nature, health condition, distance.

**What's important?**

- **For Prelims and Mains:** NHRR- features, significance and uses.

Sources: pib.

6. TALENT SURPLUS IN INDIA BY 2030

- **Context:** According to a report- '*The Salary Surge*', India would be the only economy that will not face an upward revision of wages by 2030, as it has a talent surplus, bucking the global trend of a talent crunch.

Highlights of the report:**Global Scenario:**

- Globally, a shortage of highly skilled employees could dramatically drive up salaries for the most in-demand workers by 2030. This is likely to add more than USD 2.5 trillion in annual labour costs by 2030, for organisations around the world.
- Globally, US companies can expect to pay the most globally facing a wage premium of more than USD 531 billion by 2030, while Germany will be the worst affected, facing a potential wage premium of approximately USD 176 billion by 2030.
- Meanwhile, in the Asia Pacific, the salary surge could add more than USD 1 trillion to annual payrolls by 2030, jeopardising companies' profitability and threatening business models if kept unchecked.
- The study also found that Japan would be expected to pay the most, an additional USD 468 billion by 2030.

Emerging concerns:

- The trend shows scarcity in abundance. There are plenty of people, but not enough with the skills their organisations will need to survive.

- While overall wage increases are just keeping pace with inflation, salaries for in-demand workers will skyrocket if companies choose to compete for the best and brightest on salary alone.
- In this trend, smaller markets with limited workforces are likely to feel the most pressure and by 2030.
- At a sector level, manufacturing, a critical driver of growth for emerging economies, may be stalled by the huge impact of the salary surge.

Indian scenario:

- Unlike any other country in the study India will have a highly skilled talent surplus by 2030.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Meaning of talent surplus.
- **For Mains:** Talent surplus- challenges, issues and solutions by the government.

Sources: [toi](#).

7. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG) 2018 REPORT

- **Context:** The U.N. has released its *annual checkup report on the SDGs*, accompanied by a call from U.N. Chief António Guterres that, "*we must inject a sense of urgency*" in making good on the ambitious 2030 development agenda. The SDG Report presents an overview of progress toward achieving the Goals, which were unanimously adopted by countries in 2015.

Highlights of the report:

- **Concerns:** Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals remains uneven, and is not moving fast enough to meet the ambitious 17 goals on poverty, health, and equality by 2030.
- **Challenges:** A fast-changing climate, conflict, inequality, persistent pockets of poverty and hunger and rapid urbanization are challenging countries' efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- **The hunger challenge:** There are now approximately 38 million more hungry people in the world, rising from 777 million in 2015 to 815 million in 2016. According to the report, conflict is now one of the main drivers of food insecurity in 18 countries.
- **Sanitation and Health:** In 2015, 2.3 billion people still lacked even a basic level of sanitation service and 892 million people continued to practice open defecation. In 2016, there were 216 million cases of malaria compared to 210 million cases in 2013 and close to 4 billion people were left without social protection in 2016. The under-five mortality rate dropped by almost 50% and in the least developed countries.

Individual SDG highlights include:

- **On SDG 2** (zero hunger), the number of hungry people in the world has risen from 777 million in 2015 to 815 million in 2016, mostly as a result of conflicts and disasters and droughts linked to climate change. In 18 countries, the report finds that conflict is a main driver of food insecurity.
- **On SDG 4** (quality education), more than half of children and adolescents are not meeting minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics, with disparities persisting along gender, urban-rural and other divides.
- **On SDG 6** (clean water and sanitation), in 2015, 2.3 billion people lacked a basic level of sanitation, and 892 million people practiced open defecation.
- **On SDG 11** (sustainable cities and communities), 91% of the global urban population breathes air that does not meet the World Health Organization's (WHO) air quality guidelines for particulate matter.
- **On SDG 14** (life below water), global trends suggest declining marine fish stocks and deterioration of coastal waters, due to pollution and eutrophication.
- **On SDG 15** (life on land), the report finds that the world's forest areas continue to shrink.
- **On SDG 16** (peace, justice and strong institutions), more than 570 different flows involving trafficking in persons were found between 2012 and 2014.
- **On SDG 17** (partnership for the Goals), official development assistance (ODA) for capacity building and national planning has been stable since 2010.

Way ahead:

- Transitioning towards more sustainable and resilient societies requires an integrated approach that recognizes that these challenges—and their solutions—are interrelated.

- As the global community moves forward to achieve the SDGs and address existing challenges, reliable, timely, accessible and disaggregated data is critically needed.
- This requires technology and innovation, increased resources and political commitment to build strong data and statistical systems in all countries.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** SDGs.
- For Mains:** Significance and efforts towards achieving SDGs.

Sources: the hindu.

8. GLOBAL REALTY TRANSPARENCY INDEX

- Context:** Jones Lang LaSalle Inc. (JLL) has released the Global Real Estate Transparency Index 2018.

About the index:

- The 2018 Global Real Estate Transparency Index covers 100 markets and is based on 186 indicators.
- These variables are divided into six areas** –performance measurement, market fundamentals, governance of listed vehicles, regulatory & legal frameworks, transaction process and environmental sustainability.
- The Index scores markets on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1.00 being the highest possible score). Depending on their overall performance, markets are assigned to one of five transparency tiers.
 - Highly Transparent.
 - Semi-Transparent.
 - Low Transparency.

Performance of various countries:

- India has moved up just one spot from 36 in 2016 to 35 in 2018.
- The UK, Australia, the US, France and Canada are the top five countries.
- Sri Lanka is at the 66th position and Pakistan at 75th among south Asian countries. Venezuela is the least transparent market with 100th rank.
- Among BRICS nations, both China and South Africa remained on the same rank 33rd and 21st position, respectively, while, Brazil slipped to 37th position and Russia remained at 38th rank.

Way ahead for India:

- India is one of the 10 countries that have registered maximum improvement in transparency in real estate over the last two years. Since 2014, India has moved up by five spots from 40th in the global real estate transparency index.
- However, India has moved up just one spot despite the implementation of the Real Estate (Regulation And Development) Act or RERA. RERA was implemented in May 2016 to bring accountability and transparency into the sector. However, unlike a few states such as Maharashtra and Karnataka, several states have been slow in its implementation.
- India is thus yet to figure among the transparent markets, despite the regulatory changes and the possibility of a Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) listing.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** Global realty transparency index- features and rankings of various countries, RERA.
- For Mains:** RERA- performance, challenges its implementation.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 2 Topic: Development processes and the development industry the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.

1. SMART CITIES MISSION

- **Context:** Naya Raipur is now the 10th Smart City to be operational in the country, along with 9 other cities including Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat, Pune, Nagpur, Rajkot, Visakhapatnam, Bhopal and Kakinada. Naya Raipur is one of the three smart cities of Chhattisgarh selected under the smart cities mission.

Key facts for Prelims:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi also recently inaugurated India's first integrated greenfield smart city project at Naya Raipur.
- Naya Raipur is the first integrated city in India and aims to develop four pillars of Smart city across, institutional (including Governance/Legal Framework), physical, social and economic infrastructure.
- Under the ambitious Smart City Mission, Integrated Command & Control Centres in 9 cities had already become operational in the cities of Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat, Pune, Nagpur, Rajkot, Visakhapatnam, Bhopal and Kakinada.
- Naya Raipur is one of the 3 Smart Cities of Chhattisgarh selected under the Smart Cities Mission. The other two cities are Raipur and Bilaspur.

About Smart City mission- Key facts:

Under the scheme that was launched in 2014, around 100 cities in the country will be developed.

- **Selection of cities:** The selection is based on the scores cities get for carrying out urban reforms in areas including sanitation and governance. Cities that score the highest will be picked for the project, to be implemented over a 10-year period.
- **Development:** These cities will be developed to have basic infrastructure through assured water and power supply, sanitation and solid waste management, efficient urban mobility and public transport, IT connectivity, e-governance and citizen participation. Bottom-up approach has been the key planning principle under Smart City Mission.
- **Funding:** Under the scheme, each city will get Rs 500 crore from the Centre for implementing various projects. An equal amount, on matching basis, will have to be contributed by the state or urban local bodies. The mission will provide central funding of Rs 48,000 crore to the selected cities.
- **Implementation:** The implementation of the Mission at the City level will be done by a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) created for the purpose. The SPV will plan, appraise, approve, release funds, implement, manage, operate, monitor and evaluate the Smart City development projects. Each smart city will have a SPV which will be headed by a full time CEO and have nominees of Central Government, State Government and ULB on its Board.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Features of Smart cities mission.
- **For Mains:** Significance of ICCC and smart cities mission.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 2 Topic: Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance-applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

1. PUBLIC CREDIT REGISTRY

- **Context:** To provide a single-point and real-time source for financial liabilities of a person or entity, the Reserve Bank of India has decided to set up a public credit registry (PCR) in a modular and phased manner. The decision is based on the report of **RBI appointed task force led by YM Deosthalee**.

Need for a public registry:

- Credit information is spread over multiple systems in bits and pieces, making it difficult to get a comprehensive view of the financial liabilities of a person or entity. A PCR aims to remove information asymmetry to foster the level of access to credit, and to strengthen the credit culture in the economy.
- Also, a comprehensive credit information repository covering all types of credit facilities (funded and non-funded) extended by all credit institutions – commercial banks, cooperative banks, NBFCs, MFIs – and also covering borrowings from other sources, including external commercial borrowings and borrowing from market, is essential to ascertain the total indebtedness of a legal or natural person.

Benefits of having a PCR:

- A PCR can potentially help banks in credit assessment and pricing of credit as well as in making risk-based, dynamic and counter-cyclical provisioning.
- The PCR can also help the RBI in understanding if transmission of monetary policy is working, and if not, where are the bottlenecks.
- Further, it can help supervisors, regulators and banks in early intervention and effective restructuring of stressed bank credits.
- A PCR will also help banks and regulators as credit information is a ‘public good’ and its utility is to the credit market at large and to society in general.

Recommendations made by the task force:

- The PCR should be structured as an independent unit within the RBI so that it may be hived off to a separate non-profit at an appropriate time. It should eventually achieve an autonomy and agility to move with the evolving environment and cater to the changing demands.
- The registry should facilitate linkage to related ancillary credit information available outside the banking system, such as corporate balance sheet information and GSTN, depending on the legal provisions.
- The registry should not include elements of judgment such as credit scoring services and had also called for strict privacy guidelines.

Present status:

- Currently, there are multiple granular credit information repositories in India, each with distinct objective and coverage. Within the RBI, CRILC is a borrower-level supervisory dataset with a threshold in aggregate exposure of Rs 5 crore. Also, there are four privately-owned credit information companies (CICs) in India.
- The RBI has mandated all its regulated entity to submit credit information individually to all four CICs. CICs offer, based on this unique access to the credit data, value added services like credit scoring and analytics to the member credit institutions and to the borrowers.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Credit information repositories in India and the role of RBI in credit information management, YM Deosthalee committee recommendations.
- **For Mains:** PCR- need, challenges and its significance.

What is a PCR?

- The PCR will be the single point of mandatory reporting for all material events for each loan, notwithstanding any threshold in the loan amount or type of borrower. The PCR will serve as a registry of all credit contracts, duly verified by reporting institutions, for all lending in India and any lending by an Indian institution to a company incorporated in India.

2. NATIONAL DATA CENTRE

- **Context:** The Centre will set up the ***country's biggest data centre*** in Bhopal with a capacity to host five lakh virtual servers. It will be set up by the National Informatics Centre (NIC), under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).

Facts for Prelims:

- This will be the ***fifth National Data Centre*** after the ones at Bhubaneswar, Delhi, Hyderabad and Pune.

NIC and NIC Data Centres:

- **NIC, under the Department of Information Technology of the Government of India, is a premier Science and Technology Organization**, at the forefront of the active promotion and implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) solutions in the government. The NIC is a part of the Indian Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology's Department of Electronics & Information Technology.
 - With the increased expectations from citizens for online services and the number of e-Governance Projects being launched by the Government, the Data Centre requirements are growing exponentially. There is a need to set up strategic infrastructure that facilitates high availability, quick scalability, efficient management & optimized utilization of resources.
 - **To fulfil this requirement, NIC has set up state-of-the-art National Data Centres to provide services to the Government at all levels.** These Data Centres combine round-the-clock operations and management of systems with onsite skilled personnel. The National Data Centres host Government websites, services and apps.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** NIC and NDC- features and objectives.
- **For Mains:** ICT and its development in the country.

Sources: the hindu.

3. SOFTWARE TO HELP STRENGTHEN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POSHAN ABHIYAN

- **Context:** ICDS-CAS (Common Application Software)- It is a Specially designed software to help in strengthening service delivery and improving nutrition outcomes through Effective monitoring and Timely interventions in POSHAN Abhiyaan.

Common Application Software (ICDS-CAS):

- The POSHAN Abhiyaan empowers the frontline functionaries i.e. Anganwadi Workers and Lady Supervisors by providing them with Smartphones.
- The Common Application Software (ICDS-CAS) especially developed for this purpose enables data capture, ensures assigned service delivery and prompts for interventions wherever required.
- This data is then available in near real time to the supervisory staff from Sector, Block, District, State to National level through a Dashboard, for monitoring.

POSHAN Abhiyaan:

- POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission) was launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 8th March, 2018 in Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan.
- The programme through use of technology, targeted approach and convergence strives to reduce the level of Stunting, Under-nutrition, Anemia and Low Birth Weight in Children, as also, focus on Adolescent Girls, Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers, thus holistically addressing malnutrition.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** POSHAN Abhiyaan and ICDS-CAS – features and significance.
- **For Mains:** Healthcare reforms in India- need, challenges and initiatives by government.

Sources: pib.

4. REUNITE

- **What is it?** It is a mobile application launched by Indian Railways which helps to track and trace missing and abandoned children in India. The application has been developed by Bachpan Bachao Andolan & Capgemini.

Key features of this app:

- The app is multiuser where parents and citizens can upload pictures of children, and provide detailed description like name, birth mark, address, report to the police station, search and identify missing kids.
- Amazon Rekognition, web facial recognition service, is being used to identify missing kids. The app is available for both Android and iOS.

What is Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA)?

- It is India's largest movement for the protection of children and works along with law enforcement agencies and policymakers. It was founded by Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi.
- BBA has played a very important role in formulation of several laws for protection of child's rights. It began from the Nithari case in 2006 which finally culminated with the Supreme Court passing the landmark judgement in 2013 ordering that FIR has to be lodged in all cases of missing children.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** BBA and its significance, ReUnite.

Sources: pib.

Topic: Role of civil services in a democracy.

1. LATERAL ENTRY INTO CIVIL SERVICES

- **Context:** In an apparent bid to bring in expertise from the private sector individuals and infuse talent into the country's bureaucracy, the government has invited "outstanding individuals" to join the government at the joint secretary level at the Centre.
- In this regard, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has invited applications for 10 senior level positions in the Departments of Economic Affairs, Revenue, Commerce and Highways among others.

Eligibility:

- The eligibility criteria includes "Individuals working at comparable levels in Private Sector Companies, Consultancy Organisations, International/Multinational Organisations with a minimum of 15 years' experience" besides those working in central public sector undertakings, autonomous bodies, statutory organisations, research bodies and universities.
- The notification specifies a minimum age of 40 years and minimum qualification of graduation from a recognised university or institute while higher qualification will be an added advantage.
- The recruitment will be on contract basis for three to five years.

Background:

- So far, these posts were held by joint secretary level officers, who were career bureaucrats, who join the service after passing UPSC exam.
- The post of joint secretary (JS) is crucial for policy making and implementation of government programmes and schemes, with most crucial decisions in ministries and departments taken by bureaucrats appointed JS.

Significance of this move:

- Though the idea of lateral entry of private individuals into the administrative framework has been under discussion for some years now, this is the first move towards implementing the idea, which is generating curious debate on the pros and cons of the move.

Need for lateral entry in civil services:

- **Shortfall in numbers:** There is an overall 20% shortfall of IAS cadre officers alone in 24 state cadres. The Baswan Committee (2016) has shown how large states such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have a deficit of 75 to over 100 officers and their unwillingness to sponsor officers to go to the Centre on deputation

is understandable. Lateral induction is, therefore, a small step towards essential housekeeping in central government staffing and ought to be supported.

- **Target oriented:** Outside talent from the private sector is more likely to be target-oriented, which will improve the performance of the government. Also, more competition will encourage career civil servants to develop expertise in areas of their choice.
- **Improved governance:** The conventional wisdom on lateral entry is that it infuses fresh energy and thinking into an insular, complacent and often archaic bureaucracy. It enables the entry of right-minded professionals and the adoption of best practices for improving governance.

Challenges and concerns:

- **Disturbed balance:** The proposal for lateral entry at senior decision-making levels, besides increasing the disconnect between policymaking and implementation, will also result in inequitable sharing of the benefits and burdens of government service, with permanent civil servants left to bear the burden of “humble” implementation and lateral entrants getting access to “glamorous” policymaking positions, without having roughed it out in remote and rural India in the rough and tumble of Indian democracy.
- **Deters the available talent:** By suggesting a contract-based system for positions of joint secretary and above, the signal would be sent out that only mid-career positions would be within reach in about 15-18 years of service and there would be considerable uncertainty about career progression thereafter. Coupled with unattractive salary scales and non-entitlement to defined pension since 2004, this would become a potent trinity to deter talented persons from aspiring to civil service careers.
- **Difficulty in assessing performance:** Also, it is not easy to assess the performance of a secretary to the government, given the sheer complexity and amorphous nature of the job. The induction of lateral entrants would not by itself suffice for better performance orientation and enhanced accountability. It would be as difficult to measure the performance of lateral entrants as it would of career civil servants.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Nothing Much.
- **For Mains:** Lateral entry, pros, cons, concerns, challenges and solutions.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 2 Topic: India and its neighbourhood- relations.

1. MAITRI IRRIGATION PROJECT

- **Context:** India has extended a financial aid of about Rs 10 crore to Nepal for the construction of 2,700 shallow tube well irrigation systems to boost agricultural productivity. The assistance has been extended as part of the final payment for the Nepal-Bharat Maitri Irrigation Project.

About Maitri irrigation project:

- The project was launched in January last year to boost growth to the Himalayan nation’s agricultural sector through enhanced facilities.
- The project is aimed at installing 2,700 shallow tube wells in 12 districts of Nepal.
- The project would ensure all-season irrigation facility to about 8,115 hectares of farm land, augment productivity of wheat, rice and seasonal fruits, vegetables and other crops, it said.
- It would also uplift the socio-economic status of farming families in the 12 districts covered under the project.

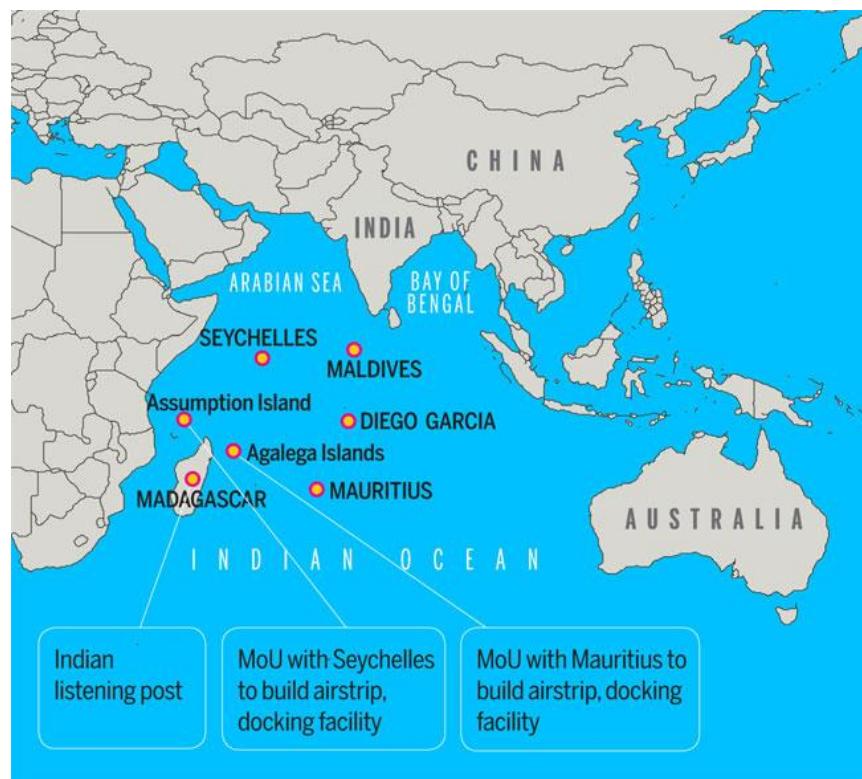
What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Maitri irrigation project and its significance.

Sources: the hindu.

2. ASSUMPTION ISLAND

- Context:** After a growing political opposition, Seychelles President Danny Faure has cancelled the agreement with India for the development of Assumption Island.



Why should India be worried about this?

- The decision by the Seychelles President to drop the deal in the face of protests over a perceived loss of sovereignty is a blow to the government's "SAGAR" (Security and Growth for All in the Region) programme, announced by PM Modi during a visit to Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) countries in March 2015.
- It also comes amid India's troubles with another IOR country, the Maldives, where the government has demanded that India withdraw two helicopters, pilots and personnel from its atolls that had been sent there to help with maritime patrols.

Background:

- Discussions regarding development of Assumption Island began in 2003, but were formalised in 2015. The deal was to include a 20-year access to the base, as well as permission to station some military personnel on ground with facilities on the island funded by India, owned by the Seychelles and jointly managed by both sides.

Why A Base On Assumption Island Is Crucial For Securing The Indian Ocean Region?

- The deal is seen as important for India because it enhances its surveillance capabilities over the Indian Ocean.
- In concert with a coastal surveillance radar station already operating in Seychelles, a naval base at Agalega in Mauritius, a coastal radar station in Madagascar, an array of radars in Maldives, and a strong presence in the littoral waters of Mozambique, Delhi's acquisition of facilities on one of the 67 raised coral islands of the Aldabra group will create an impermeable surveillance net in the southwestern and central Indian Ocean.
- Assumption Island's position dominating the Mozambique channel, a key sea lane for merchant ships, adds to India's kitty a second potential choke point after the Strait of Malacca; the latter is dominated by India's augmented presence in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands chain as well as with naval agreements with Vietnam and Singapore.

The Indian Ocean is important for the following reasons:

- It enjoys a privileged location at the crossroads of global trade, connecting the major engines of the international economy in the Northern Atlantic and Asia-Pacific. This is particularly important in an era in which global shipping has burgeoned.
- Indian Ocean is also rich in natural resources. 40% of the world's offshore oil production takes place in the Indian Ocean basin. Fishing in the Indian Ocean now accounts for almost 15% of the world's total.

- Mineral resources are equally important, with nodules containing nickel, cobalt, and iron, and massive sulphide deposits of manganese, copper, iron, zinc, silver, and gold present in sizeable quantities on the sea bed. Indian Ocean coastal sediments are also important sources of titanium, zirconium, tin, zinc, and copper. Additionally, various rare earth elements are present, even if their extraction is not always commercially feasible.

SAGAR Programme (Security and Growth for All in the Region):

- It is a maritime initiative which gives priority to Indian Ocean region for ensuring peace, stability and prosperity of India in Indian Ocean region. The goal is to seek a climate of trust and transparency; respect for international maritime rules and norms by all countries; sensitivity to each other's interests; peaceful resolution of maritime issues; and increase in maritime cooperation.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** Location of Assumption Islands, SAGAR and IORA.
- For Mains:** Significance of IOR and significance of base in Assumption Island for India.

Sources: the hindu.

3. CHABAHAR PORT

- Context:** India is trying to make Chabahar Port in Iran operational by 2019 despite a threat of renewed US sanctions against Tehran.

Background:

- The Indian-backed Chabahar port complex in Iran is being developed as part of a new transportation corridor for land-locked Afghanistan that could potentially open the way for millions of dollars in trade and cut its dependence on Pakistan, its sometimes-hostile neighbour.



Where is Chabahar port?

- Iran's Chabahar port is located on the Gulf of Oman and is the only oceanic port of the country. The port gives access to the energy-rich Persian Gulf nations' southern coast and India can bypass Pakistan with the Chabahar port becoming functional.

Why Chabahar port is crucial for India?

- The first and foremost significance of the Chabahar port is the fact that **India can bypass Pakistan in transporting goods to Afghanistan**. Chabahar port will boost India's access to Iran, the key gateway to the International North-South Transport Corridor that has sea, rail and road routes between India, Russia, Iran, Europe and Central Asia.
- Chabahar port will be beneficial to India in **countering Chinese presence in the Arabian Sea** which China is trying to ensure by helping Pakistan develop the Gwadar port. Gwadar port is less than 400 km from Chabahar by road and 100 km by sea.
- With Chabahar port being developed and operated by India, **Iran also becomes a military ally to India**. Chabahar could be used in case China decides to flex its navy muscles by stationing ships in Gwadar port to reckon its upper hand in the Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf and Middle East.
- With Chabahar port becoming functional, there will be **a significant boost in the import of iron ore, sugar and rice to India**. The import cost of oil to India will also see a considerable decline. India has already increased its crude purchase from Iran since the West imposed ban on Iran was lifted.
- Chabahar port will ensure in the establishment of a politically sustainable connectivity between India and Afghanistan**. This is will, in turn, lead to better economic ties between the two countries.
- From a diplomatic perspective, Chabahar port could be used as a point from where **humanitarian operations could be coordinated**.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** Location of Chabahar port.

- **For Mains:** Significance of the port.

Sources: the hindu.

4. INDIA, BANGLADESH NAVIES TO JOIN HANDS

- **Context:** India and Bangladesh have agreed to institute a Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT) as an annual feature between the two Navies.

Significance of this move:

- The commencement of CORPAT is a major step towards the enhanced operational interaction between both Navies.
- It is aimed to consolidate bilateral defense relations between India and Bangladesh and to explore new avenues for naval cooperation.

Facts for Prelims:

- The Navy regularly conducts CORPATS with Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand. It also conducts EEZ surveillance of Maldives, Mauritius, and Seychelles on their request.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** CORPAT.
- **For Mains:** India's defense cooperation with Bangladesh, Indian Navy's increasing engagement with its neighbours.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 2 Topic: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

1. PM'S SINGAPORE VISIT

- ✓ PM Modi hailed Singapore as a strategic partner of India.
- ✓ India and Singapore agreed to deepen their economic and defense ties as they signed 8 agreements including an agreement on logistic cooperation's.
- ✓ The two countries signed an implementation agreement between their navies on mutual coordination, logistics and services support for visits of naval ships, submarines and naval aircraft including ship borne aviation assets.
- ✓ India has formalised a **Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA)** in nursing with Singapore which would allow nurses trained in seven nursing institutions across India to gain employment in the South-East Asian country.
- ✓ **India and Singapore** recently concluded the second review of **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA)**.

PM's Shangri-La Dialogue address

Key points:

1. Singapore is our springboard to ASEAN:

- Singapore, for centuries has been a gateway for India to the broader east. We have a growing political, economic and defence ties with each Southeast Asian country.

2. India and China must work together:

- With trade between both the countries growing, Indo-China cooperation is expanding. We have displayed maturity and wisdom in managing issues and ensuring a peaceful border. There is growing intersection in our international presence.

3. Global transit routes must be peaceful

- The Indian Ocean has shaped much of India's history. It now holds the key to our future. The ocean carries 90 per cent of India's trade and energy sources. It is also the lifeline of global commerce. India's vision for the Indo-Pacific region is a positive one and it has many elements.
- India stands for a free, open, inclusive Indo-Pacific region, which embraces us all in a common pursuit of progress and prosperity. It includes all nations in this geography as also others beyond who have a stake in it.

4. Globalisation key to development

- This is a world of inter-dependent fortunes and failures. No nation can shape and secure it on its own. It is a world that summons us to rise above divisions and competition to work together.

5. Equal access as a right

- The Prime Minister also called for equal access as a right under international law to the use of common spaces on sea and in the air that would require freedom of navigation, unimpeded commerce and peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law.

What's important?

- For prelims: What is Shangri-La Dialogue?

2. HAGUE ABDUCTION CONVENTION

- **Context:** The government has clarified that it is not yet ready to sign the Hague treaty on inter-country abduction of children by parents fleeing a bad marriage. On the other hand, the government is planning to follow the Japan example and put safeguards in place before acceding to the Hague treaty.

Background:

- There has been immense pressure from the U.S. on the government to sign the treaty though the government has long held the view that the decision could lead to harassment of women escaping marital discord or domestic violence.

Recommendations of the committee:

- A Committee headed by Justice Rajesh Bindal, in April, had submitted its report on legal issues related to Inter-country removal & retention of children to the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

'Inter Country Parental Child Removal Disputes Resolution Authority':

- The Committee has recommended that the Government may establish an 'Inter Country Parental Child Removal Disputes Resolution Authority'.
- Composition of the authority: The Authority may be chaired by a retired High Court Judge, with Members from Legal and Social sector background along with representatives from key Ministries.
- Functions of the authority: The authority has been envisaged to provide a one window solution in cases of inter country removal and retention of Children. The Authority may examine the inter country cases of removal and retention of children vis-a-vis the cultural context, merit of the case, and the best interest of the Child.

Need for a policy:

- Over three crore Indians living abroad have cross-border marriages. When such a diverse family unit breaks down, children suffer as they are dragged into an international legal battle between their parents.
- Inter-spousal child removal is one of the most unfortunate outcomes of such break ups.
- Children are "abducted" by one parent and taken to a country with a different culture.
- This can be traumatic as they are also cut off from the other parent.

The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (1980):

- The Hague Convention is a multilateral treaty whereby the contracting states will have to cooperate with each other in expeditiously sending back the runaway parent and the child to the country of the child's 'habitual residence'.

- It seeks to return children abducted or retained overseas by a parent to their country of habitual residence for the courts of that country to decide on matters of residence and contact.
- The convention shall apply to any child, up to the age of 16 years who is a habitual resident of any of the contracting states.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** International Child Abduction Bill, Hague convention.
- **For Mains:** Need for law on Child Abduction.

Sources: the hindu.

3. SAARC FUND

- **Context:** Thimpu-based SAARC Development Fund will soon be launching a social enterprise development programme (SEDP) to fund 80 entities annually across eight-member states, including India.

What is social enterprise development programme (SEDP)?

- The SEDP is being launched as part of its SAARC Development Fund's social window.
- The programme will be implemented in all the SAARC member states with the objective of identifying and building social enterprises by using a mix of grants and concessional returnable capital.
- The programme intends to fund around 80 enterprises across the 8 SAARC member states annually.

About SAARC Development Fund:

- SDF which was established by the heads of the eight SAARC Member States in April 2010. SDF have three Windows. They are Social, Economic and Infrastructure Windows.
- Its governing council comprises finance ministers of the SAARC countries.

The aim of the fund is to:

- Promote the welfare of the people of SAARC region.
- Improve their quality of life.
- Accelerate economic growth, social progress and poverty alleviation in the region.

Background:

- A primary reason for establishing SDF was that the existing South Asian Development Fund (SADF) was found to be inadequate i.e. in terms of required quantum of funds and its limited scope of work.
- The Thirteenth SAARC Summit decided to reconstitute the SADF into SDF to serve as the “umbrella financial mechanism” for all SAARC projects and programmes.

Facts for Prelims:

- In 1996, a first funding mechanism was created in SAARC, ‘South Asian Development Fund (SADF), merging the SAARC Fund for Regional Projects (SFRP) and the SAARC Regional Fund.
- SADF objectives were to support industrial development, poverty alleviation, protection of environment, institutional/human resource development and promotion of social and infrastructure development projects in the SAARC region.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** SDF, SADF, SFRP and SAARC Regional Fund- objectives and areas of investment.
- **For Mains:** Need for regional cooperation in developmental activities.

Sources: the hindu.

4. NUCLEAR SUPPLIERS GROUP (NSG)

- **Context:** 28th NSG plenary meeting was held recently in Jurmala, Latvia. With this, Latvia has become the first Baltic state to Chair the NSG. There was no headway in India's application for NSG entry in the meeting.

India and the NSG:

- India sought membership of the NSG in 2008, but its application hasn't been decided on, primarily because signing the NPT or other nuclear moratoriums on testing is a prerequisite. However, India has received a special waiver to conduct nuclear trade with all nuclear exporters.

Why India should be granted NSG membership?

- In this game of developing nuclear weapons India has not indulged in any dubious/clandestine activity and its programme has been developed solely by years of hard work indigenously. By this single act India has shown that developing a credible nuclear weapons programme through honest and civilian means is possible for any country having high-level scientific manpower and materials.
- Besides, by declaring a voluntary moratorium on further underground nuclear tests India has effectively acted in sense and spirit of NPT/CTBT provisions. By steering its programme only as a minimum deterrence and pledging NFU unless faced with an attack of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), India has established itself as a responsible nuclear state.

Benefits associated with NSG membership- Once admitted, an NSG member state gets:

- Timely information on nuclear matters.
- Contributes by way of information.
- Has confirmed credentials.
- Can act as an instrument of harmonization and coordination.
- Is part of a very transparent process.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** NSG- objectives and members.
- **For Mains:** Why India should be granted NSG membership.

Sources: the hindu.

What is NSG?

- Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is a multinational body concerned with reducing nuclear proliferation by controlling the export and re-transfer of materials that may be applicable to nuclear weapon development and by improving safeguards and protection on existing materials.
- Interestingly, the NSG was set up in 1974 as a reaction to India's nuclear tests to stop what it called the misuse of nuclear material meant for peaceful purposes. Currently, it has 48 members.

5. INDIA 2+2 DIALOGUE

- **Context:** The inaugural U.S.-India 2+2 Dialogue will take place in the month of July.

What is 2+2 Dialogue?

- The new dialogue format was agreed to between the two sides during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Washington D.C. in June, 2017.
- The dialogue mechanism includes defence and foreign ministers of the two countries.
- It replaced India-U.S. Strategic and Commercial Dialogue for trade and commercial issues.

Significance of “2 by 2” Dialogue:

- The objective of this dialogue mechanism is to raise defence and security issues to the forefront and centre of the relationship between India and the U.S.
- It is aimed at enhancing peace and stability across the Indo-Pacific region by elevating strategic consultations in the dialogue.
- The shared priorities include job creation, improving the business and investment climate and sustaining a rules-based global order.

- The U.S. has strategic consultations in this format with key partners and allies including Australia, Japan and the Philippines.

Facts for Prelims:

- Similarly, India has 2+2 (diplomatic and security) dialogue with Japan. It was launched in 2010. The 2+2 format provides for the annual consultations over a range of overlapping security and political issues between the foreign and defence ministers of both the countries.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** “2 by 2” Dialogue- meaning and countries with which India has developed this mechanism.
- For Mains:** “2 by 2” Dialogue- need and significance.

Sources: pib.

6. CHINA PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC)

- Context:** India has again opposed the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a part of Beijing’s One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative, as it “encroaches” on sovereignty and territorial integrity.

What is CPEC?

- CPEC is clutch of projects valued at \$51 billion project which aims at rapidly expanding and upgrading Pakistan’s infrastructure and strengthening the economic ties between the People’s Republic of China (China) and Pakistan.
- The 3,000 km-long China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) consisting of highways, railways, and pipelines is the latest irritant in the India–China relationship.
- CPEC eventually aims at linking the city of Gwadar in South Western Pakistan to China’s North Western region Xinjiang through a vast network of highways and railways.
- The proposed project will be financed by heavily-subsidised loans, that will be disbursed to the Government of Pakistan by Chinese banking giants such as Exim Bank of China, China Development Bank, and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China.

But, why is India concerned?

- Many experts are not in favour of India supporting CPEC. This is so because any Indian participation would inextricably be linked to the country’s legitimate claims on PoK.
- CPEC rests on a Chinese plan to secure and shorten its supply lines through Gwadar with an enhanced presence in the Indian Ocean. Hence, it is widely believed that upon CPEC’s fruition, an extensive Chinese presence will undermine India’s influence in the Indian Ocean.
- It is also being contended that if CPEC were to successfully transform the Pakistan economy that could be a “red rag” for India which will remain at the receiving end of a wealthier and stronger Pakistan.
- Besides, India shares a great deal of trust deficit with China and Pakistan and has a history of conflict with both. As a result, even though suggestions to re-approach the project pragmatically have been made, no advocate has overruled the principle strands of contention that continue to mar India’s equations with China and Pakistan.

Way ahead:

- Only by respecting the sovereignty of countries involved, can regional connectivity corridors fulfil their promise and avoid differences and discord.
- China is a country which is very sensitive on matters concerning its sovereignty. So it is expected that they would have some understanding of other people’s sensitivity about their sovereignty.
- Meanwhile, India must uphold its specific reservations on the project and draft a strategy to revert suitably in case CPEC is offered formally through official channels.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** CPEC- key features.
- For Mains:** CPEC- concerns expressed by India, significance and what should India do?

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 2 Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.

1. NEW UAE VISA RULES

- **Context:** The United Arab Emirates has announced sweeping changes in its labour and visa rules that will ensure the better protection of workers' rights and do away with bank guarantees for recruitment in the private sector.

Eight moves to enhance the UAE's economic competitiveness:

- A new system in place to replace the bank guarantees required for private sector employees' visas.
- Release the current bank guarantees totaling AED 14 billion back to private sector companies.
- Implement a new insurance system for private sector employees valued at AED 60 per year to replace the AED 3,000 bank guarantee per employee.
- Facilitate the process for job seekers in the UAE and grant a six-month temporary visa without fee.
- Exempt transit tourists from entry visa fees for the first 48 hours of their stay.
- Grant a two-year visa for talented and outstanding students.
- Allow visa status adjustment without having to leave and re-enter the country.
- Facilitate the voluntary departure of people overstaying their visa without incurring a ban.

Benefits for Indians:

- Indian workers are expected to be among the major beneficiaries of the measures. These will go a long way in easing the financial burden on Indian workers, professionals and entrepreneurs.
- The low-cost insurance policy which replaces the bank guarantees will cut costs for employers and offer greater protection to vulnerable low-income workers.
- The employee will have better protection as he or she can complain to the ministry of human resources and emiratisation in the event of non-payment of minimum entitlements and then the ministry can draw on the insurance to provide a pay out.
- The insurance policy will cover end of service benefits, holiday and overtime allowances, unpaid wages, return air ticket and cases of work injury, with the maximum pay out capped at 20,000 dirhams per person. The current system of bank guarantees doesn't cover entitlements such as gratuity and holiday allowances.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Location and neighbours of UAE.
- **For Mains:** A brief overview of new visa rules.

Sources: the hindu.

2. NUCLEAR ARSENALS AROUND THE GLOBE

- **Context:** Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has released its 2018 edition of the yearly report on the current state of armaments, disarmament and international security.

Key findings:

- There are nine countries which have nuclear warheads. They include Russia, the US, the UK, France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea.
- China continues to modernise its nuclear weapon delivery systems and is slowly increasing the size of its nuclear arsenal. The country now has an estimated 280 nuclear warheads. In 2017 report, the number was 270.
- The US and Russia still constitute a major share of approximately 14,465 nuclear weapons that exist in the world. Both together account for nearly 92% of all nuclear weapons despite reducing their strategic nuclear forces pursuant to the implementation of the 2010 Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms.
- Despite the overall decrease in global nuclear weapons year-on-year, India and Pakistan have increased their stockpiles. India, which had an estimated 120-130 nuclear warheads as per 2017 report, now has 130-140 warheads. Similarly, Pakistan, which had 130-140 warheads now has increased to 140-150 warheads. Both countries are also developing new land, sea and air-based missile delivery systems.

- Nuclear warheads in other countries: UK (215 warheads), France (300 warheads), Israel (80 warheads) and North Korea (10-20 warheads). The figures for North Korea are uncertain.

Way ahead:

- Nuclear weapons remain uniquely dangerous because they are uniquely destructive. The renewed focus on the strategic importance of nuclear deterrence and capacity is a very worrying trend.
- The world needs a clear commitment from the nuclear weapon states to an effective, legally binding process towards nuclear disarmament.

Facts for Prelims:

- SIPRI** is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.
- Established in 1966, SIPRI provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.
- Based in Stockholm, SIPRI also has a presence in Beijing, and is regularly ranked among the most respected think tanks worldwide.



What's important?

- For Prelims:** SIPRI and nuclear- weapon states.
- For Mains:** Nuclear disarmament- need, challenges and global efforts.

Sources: the hindu.

3. GREECE CRISIS

- Context:** Eurozone nations have agreed on the final elements of a plan to get Greece out of its eight-year bailout program and make its massive debt more manageable.

What's the issue?

- Greece has been surviving primarily on loans from the eurozone since 2010, when it lost market access to funds because of a ballooning budget deficit, huge public debt and an underperforming economy, matched with an expansive welfare system. Greece's third bailout is due to end in August.

Causes of the Greece Crisis:

- The seeds were sown back in 2001 when Greece adopted the euro as its currency. Greece had been an EU member since 1981 but couldn't enter the eurozone. Its budget deficit had been too high for the eurozone's Maastricht Criteria.

- All went well for the first several years. Like other eurozone countries, Greece benefited from the power of the euro. It lowered interest rates and brought in investment capital and loans. In 2004, Greece announced it had lied to get around the Maastricht Criteria. The EU imposed no sanctions. Post that, Greek debt continued to rise until the crisis erupted in 2009.

About Eurozone:

- It is a monetary union of 19 of the 28 European Union (EU) member states which have adopted the euro (€) as their common currency and sole legal tender.
- The countries in the eurozone as of 2018 are: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain.

The European Union's Maastricht Treaty "convergence criteria," or requirements for a member country to use the euro as currency:

- Annual budget deficits must not exceed 3% of gross domestic product.
- Public debt must be under 60% of gross domestic product.
- The country must have exchange rate stability.
- Inflation rates must be within 1.5% of the three EU countries with the lowest rate.
- Long-term interest rates must be within 2% of the three lowest interest rates in the EU.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Eurozone- features and members.
- **For Mains:** Greece crisis- reasons, challenges and efforts by Euro Group.

Sources: et.

4. COMCASA AND BECA

- **Context:** The US side has pressed the Indian side to sign the two foundational agreements for defence cooperation: Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), earlier known as the Communications and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA); and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA).

Background:

- India and the US have so far signed only one foundational agreement: Logistical Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA).

What is COMCASA?

- COMCASA is a "technology enabler" to help transfer high-tech avionics, encrypted communication and electronic systems to India as well as ensure secrecy of its C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) systems from leaking to other countries like Russia. This agreement would allow the interoperability of India and United States equipments.

What is BECA?

- BECA refers to Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation. This agreement would facilitate exchange of geospatial information between India and United States for both military and civilian use.

Significance of COMCASA:

- COMCASA is needed if any classified military information is required to be exchanged between US and Indian armed forces, and would allow India to fully utilise the communication security equipment on military platforms it imports from the US.
- Signing COMCASA would help because such advanced technologies and sensitive equipments are generally installed on US procured systems only. This agreement could also be important for multinational operations related to rescue, disaster relief etc.

Why is India hesitant to sign these agreements?

- There are widespread fears that the use of American C4ISR systems could compromise India's tactical operational security, enabling the US to keep track of Indian warships and aircraft.

Way ahead:

- India has asked the United States for a binding assurance in the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (Comcasa) to ensure that the secured communication equipment covered by the pact are available to India and kept operational at all times.
- Besides availability of equipment at all times, India wants it put down in the agreement that the US will not share data from Indian platforms with another country and nor will it access this data without prior permission. Also, the choice to upgrade would rest with India and not determined by the US.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** LEMOA, COMCASA and BECA- key features.
- For Mains:** Concerns expressed by India over signing of these agreements, demands by India.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 2 Topic: Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate.

1. INTERNATIONAL AIR TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION (IATA)

- Context:** International Air Transport Association (IATA) recently castigated India for taxing international tickets, as it asked governments to facilitate the growth of worldwide connectivity by avoiding creeping re-regulation, maintaining the integrity of global standards and addressing a capacity crisis.

Background:

- The government had announced the implementation of the GST from July 1, 2017. The tax covers airline products and services including tickets, ancillary, change, refund and other products and fees.



About IATA:

- What is it?** The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is the trade association for the world's airlines, representing some 280 airlines or 83% of total air traffic. Formed in April 1945, it is the successor to the International Air Traffic Association, which was formed in 1919.
- What it does?** IATA supports airline activity and helps formulate industry policy and standards. It also provides consulting and training services in many areas crucial to aviation.
- Headquarters:** It is headquartered in Montreal, Quebec, Canada with Executive Offices in Geneva, Switzerland.

What's important?

- For Prelims and Mains:** IATA and its structure.

Sources: the hindu.

2. GEO-INTELLIGENCE ASIA – 2018

- Context:** The Eleventh edition of GeoIntelligence Asia 2018 is being held in New Delhi. It is organised by GeoSpatial Media and Communication with Directorate General of Information System as Knowledge Partners and Military Survey as Co-organisers.
- Aim of the seminar:** The seminar brings together the military, security officials including BSF and Police Forces, Government and industry together to examine the latest technology solutions and on the critical role of geospatial technology in military and security applications.
- Theme:** 'GeoSpatial: A Force Multiplier for Defence and Industrial Security'.



Geospatial Intelligence and its significance:

- Geospatial intelligence is a critical foundation for many aspects of defense and internal security. It offers the capability of monitoring, predicting and countering threats, while helping strategize and support various field operations.
- It facilitates multi-source information sharing and integration across agencies and organizations by providing a common framework on which other information is based.
- The use of big data, advanced geospatial analytics software and sophisticated imaging technologies from (very) high-resolution remote sensing satellites, UAVs and other sensors, enables seamless flow of information in pre-, real-time and post-combat operations.
- Real-time views and insights of impacted regions are key to improving emergency response times, especially in vulnerable areas such as a country's border.
- Geospatial data is invaluable to the border security operations, to deliver accurate situational awareness information, enabling quick and secure decision-making, while mitigating risks, and increasing national security.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Geo intelligence Asia- 2018- the seminar and its objectives.
- **For Mains:** Geo intelligence- need, significance, challenges and applications.

Sources: pib.

3. IBSA SUMMIT

- **Context:** 2018 IBSA Ministerial meet was recently held in Pretoria, South Africa. The outcome of this meeting was a document titled IBSA Declaration on South-South Cooperation. This document calls for contribution of each of the member of IBSA forum to contribute to greater understanding of development cooperation as a common endeavour of the global south.

About IBSA forum:

- The establishment of IBSA was formalised by **the Brasilia Declaration** of 6 June 2003. IBSA is a coordinating mechanism amongst three emerging countries, three multi ethnic and multicultural democracies, which are determined to:
 - Contribute to the construction of a new international architecture.
 - Bring their voice together on global issues.
 - Deepen their ties in various areas.

Significance of the platform:

- The success of IBSA reflects an important demonstration effect. It demonstrates, most vividly, the desirability and feasibility of South-South cooperation beyond the conventional areas of exchange of experts and training.
- IBSA success in contributing to discourse on global issues also shows the importance of engaging with the countries of the South.

Sources: the hindu.

4. GLOBAL PEACE INDEX 2018

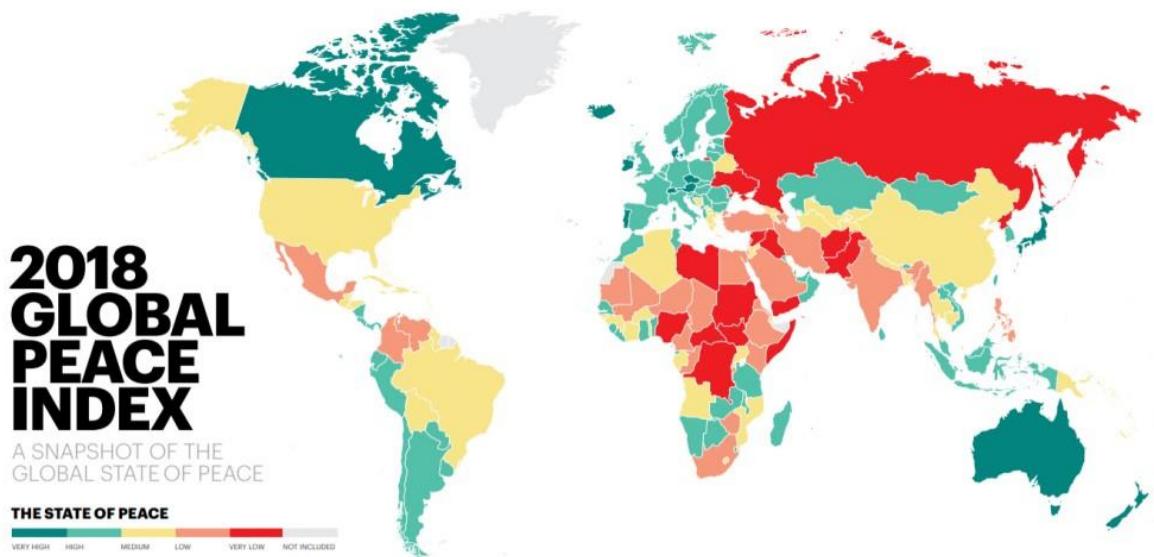
- **Context:** Australia-based Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), world's leading think tank that develops metrics to analyse peace and quantify its economic value, has released the 12th edition of the Global Peace Index (GPI), or measure of global peacefulness.

Performance of India:

- India has moved up four places to the 137th rank among 163 countries. The improvement is due to a reduction in the level of violent crime driven by increased law enforcement. India was ranked 141 last year.
- India was also among the countries with the biggest decreases in the number of deaths, along with Sri Lanka, Chad, Colombia, and Uganda.

Global performance:

- Iceland remains the most peaceful country in the world, a position it has held since 2008. New Zealand, Austria, Portugal and Denmark also sit in the top five most peaceful rankings.
- Syria remains the least peaceful country in the world, a position it has held for the past five years. Afghanistan, South Sudan, Iraq and Somalia comprise the remaining least peaceful countries.



State of world peace:

- Amid continuing social and political turmoil, the world continues to spend enormous resources on creating and containing violence but very little on peace.
- The countries that displayed the most significant growth in heavy weapons capabilities over the last 30 years are primarily in unstable regions where there are high tensions with neighbouring countries. These include Egypt, India, Iran, Pakistan, South Korea, and Syria.
- Overall, the global level of peace has deteriorated by 0.27% in the last year, marking the fourth successive year of deteriorations. Ninety-two countries deteriorated, while 71 countries improved.
- The four most peaceful regions – Europe, North America, Asia-Pacific, and South America – all recorded deteriorations, with the largest overall deterioration occurring in South America, owing to falls in the safety and security domain, mainly due to increases in the incarceration rate and impact of terrorism.

Sources: the hindu.

5. UN SECURITY COUNCIL

- **Context:** The UN General Assembly has elected Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Indonesia and South Africa to serve as non-permanent members on the Security Council for two years starting in January.
- The five new members will replace Bolivia, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands and Sweden on the council.

Selection of members:

- There are 15 members on the UN Security Council, including the five permanent ones — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — and 10 non-permanent members, half of which are elected each year.
- Each candidate country needed to secure two thirds of the votes in order to clinch a seat.

About UNSC:**What is it?**

- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the organs of the United Nations and is charged with the maintenance of international peace and security.
- Its powers include the establishment of peacekeeping operations, the establishment of international sanctions, and the authorization of military action through Security Council resolutions; it is the only UN body with the authority to issue binding resolutions to member states.

Members:

- The Security Council consists of fifteen members. Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, and the United States—serve as the body's five permanent members. These permanent members can veto any substantive Security Council resolution, including those on the admission of new member states or candidates for Secretary-General.
- The Security Council also has 10 non-permanent members, elected on a regional basis to serve two-year terms. The body's presidency rotates monthly among its members.

Proposed reforms:

- Reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) encompasses five key issues: categories of membership, the question of the veto held by the five permanent members, regional representation, the size of an enlarged Council and its working methods, and the Security Council-General Assembly relationship.
- There is also a proposal to admit more permanent members.

Why India should be given a permanent seat in the council?

- India was among the founding members of United Nations.
- It is the second largest and a one of the largest constant contributor of troops to United Nations Peacekeeping missions.
- Today, India has over 8,500 peacekeepers in the field, more than twice as many as the UN's five big powers combined.
- India, since long time, has been demanding expansion of UNSC and its inclusion as permanent member in it. It has been a member of UNSC for 7 terms and a member of G-77 and G-4, so permanent membership is a logical extension.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** UNSC- composition, new members and role of the organization, G- 77, G- 4.
- **For Mains:** UNSC reforms and related issues.

Sources: the hindu.

6. G7 BLOC

- **Context:** 44th annual G7 Summit is being held in Quebec, Canada.

What is G7 Summit?

- G7 Summit is an event conducted annually where world leaders from seven powerful economies of the world, US, Canada, UK, France, Germany, Japan and Italy come together to discuss burning issues happening around the globe.
- They, by mutual understanding, also form policies or figure out remedies for the concerned issue.

What is the 44th G7 Summit all about?

- Every year few international issues which need to be tackled are taken into account and policies are formed around them. Canada has put forward the following 5 themes for this year's summit:
 - Investing in growth that works for everyone.
 - Preparing for jobs of the future.
 - Working together on climate change, oceans and clean energy.
 - Building a more peaceful and secure world.
 - Advancing gender equality and impacting women's empowerment.

Sources: the hindu.

7. GLOBAL ALLIANCE TO ELIMINATE LYMPHATIC FILARIASIS

- **Context:** India is hosting the 10th meeting of Global Alliance to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis. India has highest burden of Lymphatic Filariasis and there is need of taking leadership role to Eliminate lymphatic filariasis.
- **Theme:** Celebrating progress towards elimination: Voices from the field on overcoming programme challenges.

About Lymphatic Filariasis:

- LF or commonly known as Elephantiasis is one of the oldest and most debilitating neglected disease, which is currently endemic in 73 countries of the world, including India.
- LF is a devastating parasitic infection spread by mosquitoes. The parasites are thread-like worms (filariae) that develop in and then damage the human lymphatic system and associated tissues.
- It is usually contracted in childhood, often before the age of five. The lymphatic system is a network of vessels and specialised tissues that are essential to the maintaining the overall fluid balance and health of organs and limbs and importantly are a major component of the body's immune defence system.

Effects:

- The damage caused by the filaria or adult worms living in the lymphatic system upset this delicate fluid balance and fluid remains in the tissues causing chronic swelling usually of the lower limbs.
- The disease affects the poorest population in society, particularly those living in areas with poor water, sanitation and hygiene. LF does not kill the affected people, but may cause permanent disfigurement, reduced productivity and social stigma.

About GAELF:

- It is an alliance of partners from 72 LF endemic national country programmes, NGOs, private sectors, academic and research institutes and international development agencies that assists WHO's Global Programme to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** About Elephantiasis and GAELF.
- **For Mains:** Global disease burden and the need for coordinated efforts in this regard.

Sources: the hindu.

8. CENTRE FOR UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING (CUNPK)

- **Context:** The Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK), India and the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect have jointly started the pilot "Training of Trainers (ToT) Course on Civilian Protection and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)" in Delhi.

Key facts:

- The course is being attended by 30 officers including eight from Friendly Foreign Countries.
- The course is designed for mid-level military officials from the countries that are active "Troop Contributing Countries" to the UN peacekeeping operations.

About CUNPK:

- The Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK), has been set up in New Delhi, drawing on India's vast experience in the field of UN Peacekeeping.
- It functions under the directions of a Board of management under the Chairmanship of Vice Chief of the Army Staff.

Role and important functions:

- The Centre conducts International Training Capsules for Military Contingent Officers, Military Observers, and Staff and Logistics Officers.
- The Centre regularly organizes Seminars, Joint Working Groups and Command Post Exercises at the National and International level.
- It is also a repository of information on India's involvement in UN Peacekeeping and is continuing to build and update its research on peacekeeping related issues.

What you need to know about UN Peacekeeping?

- United Nations Peacekeeping was created in 1948. Its first mission involved the establishment of the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), which served to observe and maintain ceasefire during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.
- UN Peacekeeping maintains three basic principles: Consent of the parties, impartiality and non-use of Force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.
- The UN Peacekeepers are led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DKPO).
- There are currently 17 UN peace operations deployed on four continents.
- UN Peacekeepers are from diverse backgrounds, from areas all around the world. They include police, military and civilian personnel. They are often referred to as Blue Berets or Blue Helmets because of their light blue berets or helmets.
- The UN Peacekeeping Force won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1988.
- The United Nations Charter gives the United Nations Security Council the power and responsibility to take collective action to maintain international peace and security. For this reason, the international community usually looks to the Security Council to authorize peacekeeping operations.

Facts for Prelims:

- **The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect** seeks to transform the principle of the Responsibility to Protect into a practical guide for action in the face of mass atrocities.
- The Global Centre was founded by a number of supportive governments, leading figures from the human rights community, as well as by International Crisis Group, Human Rights Watch, Oxfam International, Refugees International, and WFM-Institute for Global Policy.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** About UN Peacekeeping, About CUNPK and the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

Sources: pib.

9. UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

- **Context:** The United States withdrew from the United Nations Human Rights Council accusing it of a "chronic bias against Israel". Washington's withdrawal is the latest US rejection of multilateral engagement after it pulled out of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

Why does the US have a problem with the UNHRC?

- The US problem with the body is twofold: the make-up of its membership and what it considers a disproportionate focus on allegations of human rights abuses committed by its ally, Israel.
- In 2006, when the council was established, then-US President George W Bush refused to join because the organisation included members accused by Washington of human rights violations.
- The country changed tack under the former Obama administration, but the ascent of Trump put Washington's continued membership back under the spotlight.

Concerns:

- Rights groups have criticized the Trump administration for not making human rights a priority in its foreign policy. Critics say this sends a message that the administration turns a blind eye to human rights abuses in some parts of the world.
- The US withdrawal from the body could bolster countries such as Cuba, Russia, Egypt and Pakistan, which resist what they see as UN interference in sovereign issues.

About UNHRC:

- The UN body was established in 2006 with the aim of promoting and protecting human rights around the globe, as well as investigating alleged human rights violations.
- It is made up of 47 member states, which are selected by the UN General Assembly on a staggered basis each year for three-year-long terms.
- Members meet around three times a year to debate human rights issues and pass non-binding resolutions and recommendations by majority vote.
- The council also carries out the Universal Periodic Review of all UN member states, which allows civil society groups to bring accusations of human rights violations in member states to the attention of the UN.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** UNHRC- functions.
- **For Mains:** Implications of withdrawal by the US.

Sources: the hindu.

10. ASIAN INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT BANK (AIIB)

- **Context:** The board of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has approved \$100 million investment in the National Infrastructure and Investment Fund (NIIF).

What is AIIB?

- Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a multilateral development bank with a mission to improve social and economic outcomes in Asia and beyond.
- It is headquartered in Beijing.
- It commenced operations in January 2016 and has now grown to 84 approved members from around the world.
- By investing in sustainable infrastructure and other productive sectors today, it aims to connect people, services and markets that over time will impact the lives of billions and build a better future.

Various organs of AIIB:

- **Board of Governors:** The Board of Governors consists of one Governor and one Alternate Governor appointed by each member country. Governors and Alternate Governors serve at the pleasure of the appointing member.
- **Board of Directors:** Non-resident Board of Directors is responsible for the direction of the Bank's general operations, exercising all powers delegated to it by the Board of Governors. This includes approving the Bank's strategy, annual plan and budget; establishing policies; taking decisions concerning Bank operations; and supervising management and operation of the Bank and establishing an oversight mechanism.
- **International Advisory Panel:** The Bank has established an International Advisory Panel (IAP) to support the President and Senior Management on the Bank's strategies and policies as well as on general operational issues. The Panel meets in tandem with the Bank's Annual Meeting, or as requested by the President. The President selects and appoints members of the IAP to two-year terms. Panelists receive a small honorarium and do not receive a salary. The Bank pays the costs associated with Panel meetings.

Significance of AIIB:

- The United Nations has addressed the launch of AIIB as having potential for "scaling up financing for sustainable development" for the concern of global economic governance.
- The capital of the bank is \$100 billion, equivalent to 2/3 of the capital of the Asian Development Bank and about half that of the World Bank.

About NIIF:

- **NIIF was set up in 2015 as an investment vehicle for funding** commercially viable greenfield, brownfield and stalled projects in the infrastructure sector. NIIF will invest in areas such as energy, transportation, housing, water, waste management and other infrastructure-related sectors in India.
- **The corpus of the fund is proposed to be around Rs40,000 crore**, with the government investing 49% and the rest to be raised from third-party investors such as sovereign wealth funds, insurance and pension funds, endowments etc.

Facts for Prelims:

- India is hosting the annual meeting of AIIB for the first time in June 2018.
- India is the second largest shareholder in AIIB after China and is also the largest recipient of funds from the multilateral agency.
- Nearly 25% of the total funds committed by AIIB have been committed for projects in India, both in the government sector and the private sector.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** AIIB- structure, voting and share of countries, NIIF.
- **For Mains:** AIIB- significance, need for infrastructure funding.

Sources: the hindu.

11. OPEC AGREES TO INCREASE OIL PRODUCTION

- **Context:** The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has agreed to increase its daily output to address the problem of rising crude oil prices. ***The cartel's output would be increased by about a million barrels a day beginning in July.***

What necessitated this move?

- Countries across the world have been vocal in recent months about the need to bring down rising oil prices that threaten to put the global economy under stress.
- Emerging markets such as India that have been affected by the rising cost of oil imports, have also been exerting pressure.

Implications:

- The present deal could help the Saudis appease major oil consumers to some extent.
- Meanwhile, Iran, which has been opposed to raising OPEC output as it would lower prices, is set to suffer a marginal loss as it lacks spare capacity to ramp up production.
- This works in favour of its rival, Saudi Arabia, which can recover from the impact of lower prices by capturing market share.

Concerns:

- OPEC has failed to address two uncertainties that will shape the oil market over the coming months and years.
- ***The first is the situation in Venezuela***, which has gone from bad to worse over the past two months. In the short term, the situation remains the greatest uncertainty hanging over the oil market.
 - The second, and potentially more destabilising, issue in the longer term is the prospect of ***a sharp increase in the production of so-called "tight oil"*** from shale rocks in the US.

About OPEC:

- The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is a group of oil-producing nations that was first established in Baghdad, Iraq, in 1961.
- OPEC is one of the most powerful international organizations in the world and was a major player in the shift towards state control over natural resources.

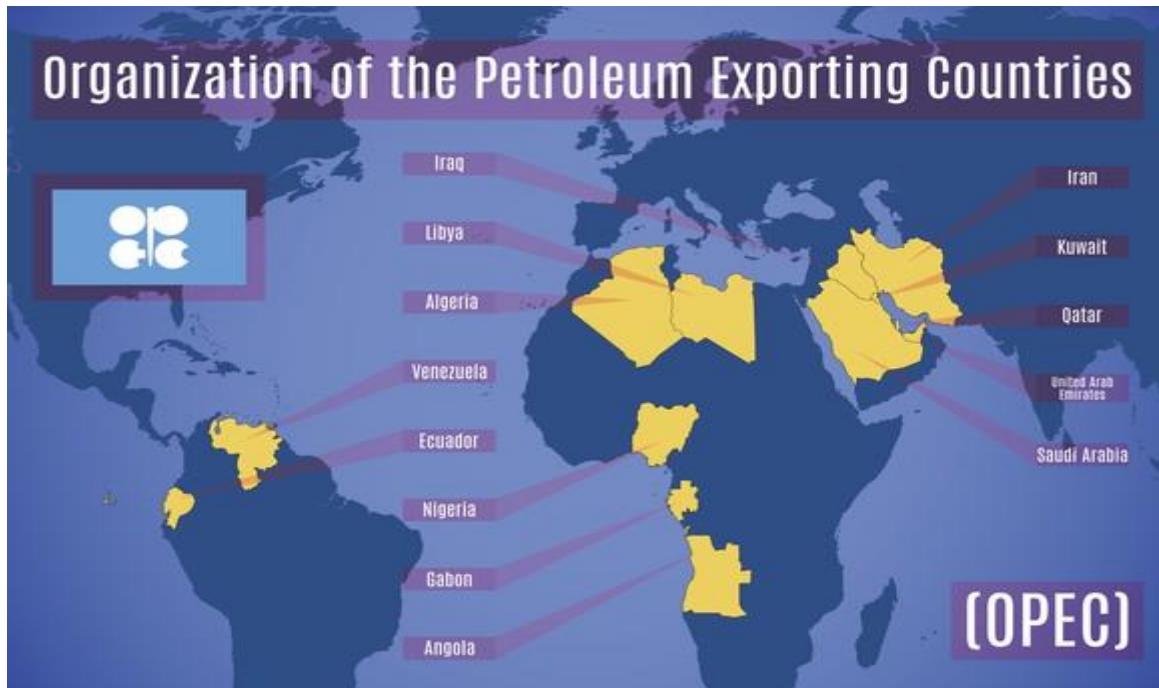
Membership:

- The OPEC Statute distinguishes between the Founder Members and Full Members – those countries whose applications for membership have been accepted by the Conference.

- The Statute stipulates that “any country with a substantial net export of crude petroleum, which has fundamentally similar interests to those of Member Countries, may become a Full Member of the Organization, if accepted by a majority of three-fourths of Full Members, including the concurring votes of all Founder Members.”
- The Statute further provides for Associate Members which are those countries that do not qualify for full membership, but are nevertheless admitted under such special conditions as may be prescribed by the Conference.

Facts for Prelims:

- Tight oil** (also known as shale oil, shale-hosted oil or light tight oil, abbreviated LTO) is light crude oil contained in petroleum-bearing formations of low permeability, often shale or tight sandstone.
- Relative to conventional sources, shale oil typically produces more pollution to extract**, though the extent depends on whether or not the operators avoid wasteful and unnecessary emissions.



What's important?

- For Prelims:** Tight oil, OPEC.
- For Mains:** Rising oil prices- concerns, challenges and the need for international cooperation.

Sources: the hindu.

12. GLOBAL SOLAR BANK

- Context:** ISA is planning global solar bank to finance \$150 billion of power projects.

World Solar Bank:

- The International Solar Alliance (ISA) plans to approach multilateral development banks (MDBs) such as Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to create a special purpose vehicle (SPV) to specifically finance solar projects. This SPV aimed at financing \$150 billion would become a World Solar Bank.

Background:

- The proposal for a World Solar Bank comes against the backdrop of ISA’s mission to undertake joint efforts required to reduce the cost of finance and the cost of technology. It needs to mobilize more than \$1,000 billion of investments by 2030 for massive deployment of solar energy and pave the way for future technologies.

About ISA:

The ***Paris Declaration*** establishes ISA as an alliance dedicated to the promotion of solar energy among its member countries.

- **Objectives:** The ISA's major objectives include global deployment of over 1,000GW of solar generation capacity and mobilisation of investment of over US\$ 1000 billion into solar energy by 2030.
- **What it does?** As an action-oriented organisation, the ISA brings together countries with rich solar potential to aggregate global demand, thereby reducing prices through bulk purchase, facilitating the deployment of existing solar technologies at scale, and promoting collaborative solar R&D and capacity building.
- **When it entered into force?** When the ISA Framework Agreement entered into force on December 6th, 2017, ISA formally became a de-jure treaty based International Intergovernmental Organization, headquartered at Gurugram, India.

Way ahead:

- The ISA is not only expected to spur innovation in the RE space but also help make India a technological hub with independent manufacturing capabilities of RE equipment like solar panels, rather than being dependent on imports, through initiatives like 'Make in India'. India's Ministry of External Affairs is expected to play a role in "marrying Indian tech and finance capabilities with specific projects around the world".
- India announced a goal of obtaining 40% of its electricity from non-fossil fuels by 2030 at the Paris climate change summit. It is close to achieving 20 GW grid connected solar power generation capacity this fiscal year (2018), in pursuit of achieving its target of 100 GW by 2022.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** ISA.
- **For Mains:** Renewable energy and its significance, India's leadership in the sector and the proposed World Solar Bank and its significance.

Sources: livemint.

13. FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE (FATF)

- **Context:** In a blow to Pakistan, the Financial Action Task Force has placed it on the 'grey list' for failing to curb anti-terror financing. The decision was taken at the global financial watchdog Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) plenary session held recently in Paris.

Implications:

- The placement on the 'grey list' could hurt Pakistan's economy as well as its international standing.

Developments so far:

- The process began in February 2018 when FATF approved the nomination of Pakistan for monitoring under its International Cooperation Review Group (ICRG) commonly known as 'grey List'.
- Pakistan was asked to prepare a plan to address international body's concerns and get its approval or it could risk being moved to the black list.
- It presented a 26-point plan of action to the FATF plenary with the commitment to implement it over a period of 15 months to address the concerns of the global community.
- The endorsement of the plan means that FATF formally placed Pakistan on the list. In case it had rejected the plan, Pakistan would have been on FATF's Public Statement, also called as the black list.

Efforts by Pakistan:

- On June 20, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan issued Anti Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism Regulations 2018, in compliance with FATF recommendations.
- On June 8, the National Security Committee (NSC) reaffirmed its commitment to cooperate with the FATF.
- By January next year, Pakistan will publish updated lists of persons and entities proscribed under the Anti-Terrorism Act and the UN-designated entities.

About FATF:**What is it?**

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

**Objectives:**

- The objectives of the FATF are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.

Functions:

- The FATF monitors the progress of its members in implementing necessary measures, reviews money laundering and terrorist financing techniques and counter-measures, and promotes the adoption and implementation of appropriate measures globally.
- In collaboration with other international stakeholders, the FATF works to identify national-level vulnerabilities with the aim of protecting the international financial system from misuse.

Facts for Prelims:

- Pakistan remained on the FATF grey list from 2012 to 2015.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** FATF, Grey list, G7.
- For Mains:** What is Grey list and Black list, how are countries in the list affected?

Sources: the hindu.

14. UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY (UNRWA)

- Context:** A total of 20 countries, including India, announced contributions to the 2018 budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine Refugees. India has pledged USD 5 million. The contributions are to help bolster “severe funding crisis” following US’ cut in its annual aid to UNRWA.

Background:

- UNRWA has been providing health, education, relief and social services, as well as emergency humanitarian assistance, to some 5.3 million Palestinian refugees across its five fields of operation — Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip — for 65 years.
- However, in January, the agency’s financial situation became catastrophic due to the sudden loss of USD 300 million in voluntary contributions. The Trump administration in January US said it would withhold USD 65 million of USD 125 million it had planned to send to UNRWA.

About UNRWA:

- Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, UNRWA was established by United Nations General Assembly to carry out direct relief and works programmes for Palestine refugees. The Agency began operations on 1 May 1950.
- In the absence of a solution to the Palestine refugee problem, the General Assembly has repeatedly renewed UNRWA’s mandate, most recently extending it until 30 June 2020.
- UNRWA is the only UN agency dedicated to helping refugees from a specific region or conflict** and is separate from UNHCR.
- Funding:** The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions from UN Member States. UNRWA also receives some funding from the Regular Budget of the United Nations, which is used mostly for international staffing costs.
- The Agency’s services encompass** education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance, including in times of armed conflict.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** UNRWA- functions, funding and significance.

Sources: the hindu.

15. UN MIGRATION AGENCY

- **Context:** António Manuel de Carvalho Ferreira Vitorino of Portugal was recently elected by the member States of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to serve as the agency's Director General.

About IOM:

- IOM is the leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration with over 10,000 staff serving in over 400 offices across more than 150 countries.
- It was initially established in 1951 as the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) to help resettle people displaced by World War II.
- It provides services and advice to Governments and migrants, such as humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced people.
- The agency works with its partners in the international community to help ensure orderly and humane migration management and to promote international cooperation and understanding on migration issues.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** IOM- key facts.

Sources: the hindu.

16. ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS (OPCW)

- **Context:** OPCW has granted itself new powers to assign blame for attacks, despite protests by Russia. Until now, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) could only say whether chemical weapons were used – but not who had used them.

Significance of the move:

- This is an important step forward for arms control. It strengthens the unravelling consensus against the use of chemical weapons. It marks a victory for the rules-based international order, which itself is under increasing strain given the rise of populists and nationalism in many countries.

About OPCW:

- The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is the implementing body of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which entered into force in 1997.
- The organisation was awarded the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize "for its extensive efforts to eliminate chemical weapons".



The Convention contains four key provisions:

- Destroying all existing chemical weapons under international verification by the OPCW.
- Monitoring chemical industry to prevent new weapons from re-emerging.
- Providing assistance and protection to States Parties against chemical threats.
- Fostering international cooperation to strengthen implementation of the Convention and promote the peaceful use of chemistry.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** OPCW.
- **For Mains:** Chemical weapons- threats, concerns and international efforts to regulate them.

Sources: the hindu.

GS PAPER - III

Paper 3 Topic: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

1. PURCHASING MANAGERS' INDEX (PMI)

- The Nikkei India Manufacturing PMI fell to 51.2 in May of 2018 from 51.6 in the preceding month and below market consensus of 51.5.
- Growth in output, new orders and employment softened while business sentiment dropped from the previous month's nine-month high.
- Also, purchasing activity declined for the first time in seven months, albeit only fractionally.
- Amid reports of greater demand from the international markets Indian manufacturers reported the strongest gain in new exports order since February.
- On the price front, a build-up of inflationary pressures re-emerged with input cost and output charge inflation rates at the strongest since February, due to the upswing in global oil prices.

What is PMI?

- PMI or a Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) is an indicator of business activity — both in the manufacturing and services sectors.
- It is a survey-based measure that asks the respondents about changes in their perception of some key business variables from the month before.
- It is calculated separately for the manufacturing and services sectors and then a composite index is constructed.

How is the PMI derived?

- The PMI is derived from a series of qualitative questions. Executives from a reasonably big sample, running into hundreds of firms, are asked whether key indicators such as output, new orders, business expectations and employment were stronger than the month before and are asked to rate them

What are its implications for the economy?

- The PMI is usually released at the start of the month, much before most of the official data on industrial output, manufacturing and GDP growth becomes available.
- It is, therefore, considered a good leading indicator of economic activity.
- Economists consider the manufacturing growth measured by the PMI as a good indicator of industrial output, for which official statistics are released later.

What does it mean for financial markets?

- The PMI also gives an indication of corporate earnings and is closely watched by investors as well as the bond markets.
- A good reading enhances the attractiveness of an economy vis-a-vis another competing economy.

What's important?

- **Prelims:** What, WHEN AND WHO is PMI?
- **Mains:** Economic growth indicators and significance.

2. BAD BANK

- **Context:** The concept of having a 'bad bank' to take over the troubled loans of public sector banks (PSBs) is being considered by the government to enable them to get back to business.
- Finance minister Piyush Goyal recently announced that a bankers' panel would look at the feasibility of setting up a new asset reconstruction company (ARC) or asset management company (AMC) to take over bad loans of PSBs. The panel is headed by Punjab National Bank non-executive chairman Sunil Mehta.

Background:

- The Bad Bank concept was pioneered at the Pittsburgh-headquartered Mellon Bank in 1988 in response to problems in the bank's commercial real-estate portfolio.
- According to McKinsey & Co, the concept of a "bad bank" was applied in previous banking crises in Sweden, France, and Germany.

How does a bad bank work?

- While the government has not charted out any guidelines on the structure of a bad bank, such an institution would be largely based on the principles of an asset restructuring company (ARC), which buys bad loans from the commercial banks at a discount and tries to recover the money from the defaulter by providing a systematic solution over a period of time.
- Since a bad bank specialises in loan recovery, it is expected to perform better than commercial banks, whose expertise lies in lending.

Why a bad bank is likely to succeed?

- A single government entity will be more competent to take decisions rather than 28 individual PSBs.
- Capacity building for a complex workout can be better handled by the government which has regulatory control and has management skillsets in public sector enterprises.
- Foreign investors with both risk capital and risk appetite would be more in a government-led initiative, knowing that regulatory risks would stand considerably mitigated in various stages of resolution, including take outs.

What needs to be done now?

- Whether or not the knots in the bad bank idea are sorted out, the government should focus on other reforms as well.
- One, amend the Prevention of Corruption Act to shield bankers and officers from investigative witch-hunts.
- Two, back bankers to take demonstrable action against wilful defaulters. And three, take a hard look at what ails the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** What is a bad bank?
- **For Mains:** Bad bank- concept, pros, cons, challenges and alternatives.

Sources: the hindu.

3. INSOLVENCY CODE

- **Context:** Recently, President Ram Nath Kovind gave his nod to promulgate the Insolvency and Bankruptcy code (Amendment) Ordinance 2018.

Significant changes introduced:**1. Homebuyers as financial creditors:**

- Homebuyers would now be treated as financial creditors or, in other words, on par with banks, with the power to initiate insolvency proceedings against errant builders.
- Homebuyers shall have the right to be represented in the committee of creditors (CoC), which takes the key decision regarding revival of the company or its liquidation.

2. Definition of a related party:

- The amendment now defines related party in relation to an individual running the firm and they would be barred from bidding for the firm under the resolution process. Prior to the amendment, related party was defined only with reference to a company facing insolvency.

3. Changes in voting share of committee of CoC:

- The amendment has changed the voting share required in CoC meetings. For extending the insolvency process beyond 180 days till 270 days and for appointment of the resolution professional (who oversees the process), now a voting share of 66% is sufficient, compared with earlier requirement of 75%. Unless a

specific approval is required in the Code, all other decisions of the CoC can be taken with 51% voting share against the earlier norm of 75%.

- Withdrawal from the insolvency process is permitted with the approval of 90% of voting share of the CoC.

4. If a financial creditor is a related party:

- If a financial creditor (banks and other financial institution) or his authorised representative is a related party to the company facing insolvency, it shall not have any participation or voting during a meeting of the CoC.
- However, exemption is provided in case the financial creditor has become a related party on account of conversion or substitution of debt to equity shares or instruments convertible into equity shares prior to the date of commencement of insolvency proceedings.

5. Moratorium period:

- For a company under insolvency, a moratorium period is provided during which no parallel proceedings are allowed.
- Whether such moratorium is available to guarantors of the company was a subject of debate. Now the amendment has said that the moratorium is not available to persons who provided guarantee for the loans availed by the corporate debtor.

6. Tenure of an insolvency resolution professional:

- Under the insolvency process, an interim resolution professional (IRP) is appointed first and then, a resolution professional.
- As per the amendment, the tenure of the IRP would continue till the appointment of the resolution professional (RP), compared with the earlier 30-day fixed tenure. Also, for the appointment of the RP, a written consent from the professional is required in a specified format.

Sources: the hindu.

4. BANKS BOARD BUREAU

- Context:** The Banks Board Bureau (BBB) has recommended 22 general managers to be elevated as executive directors at various public sector banks. These recommendations are based on interactions held by the Banks Board Bureau with eligible candidates from PSBs towards appointment against vacancies in PSBs for the period 2018-19.
- The Appointments Committee of Cabinet headed by Prime Minister will take the final decision in this regard. There are already some vacancies at executive director level and more would be created during the course of the year.



About Banks Board Bureau (BBB):

- It was set up in February 2016 as an **autonomous body**—based on the recommendations of **the RBI-appointed Nayak Committee**. It was the part of Indradhanush Plan of government.
- Its broad agenda was to improve governance at state-owned lenders. Its mandate also involved advising the government on top-level bank appointments and assisting banks with capital-raising plans as well as strategies to deal with bad loans.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Mandate, objectives and composition.
- **For Mains:** Indradhanush plan, recommendations of Nayak Committee.

Sources: the hindu.

5. RBI ALTERS 'RELATIVE' DEFINITION

- **Context:** Concerned over funds sent abroad under the 'maintenance of close relative' category of the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS), the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has narrowed the definition of relatives to check the flow of funds.

The new definition:

- RBI has aligned the definition of 'relative' with the definition given in Companies Act, 2013 instead of Companies Act, 1956. Hence, funds under the 'maintenance of close relative' category can be sent only to immediate relatives such as parents, spouses, children and their spouses.

What necessitated this move?

- Outward remittances under maintenance of close relatives shot up to almost \$3 billion in 2017-18 from a mere \$174 million in 2013-14. In fact, funds sent under this category have more than doubled since 2015-16. Overall outward remittances under LRS went up to \$11 billion from \$1 billion in the same period.

About Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS):

- Under LRS, all resident individuals can freely remit \$250,000 overseas every financial year for a permissible set of current or capital account transactions.
- **Permitted:** Remittances are permitted for overseas education, travel, medical treatment and purchase of shares and property, apart from maintenance of relatives living abroad, gifting and donations. Individuals can also open, maintain and hold foreign currency accounts with overseas banks for carrying out transactions.
- **Not permitted:** However, the rules do not allow remittances for trading on the foreign exchange markets, margin or margin calls to overseas exchanges and counterparties and the purchase of Foreign Currency Convertible Bonds issued by Indian companies abroad. Sending money to certain countries and entities is also barred. Under LRS, people can't send money to countries identified as 'non cooperative' by the Financial Action Task Force. Remittances are also prohibited to entities identified as posing terrorist risks.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Liberalised remittance scheme.
- **For Mains:** Need for control of foreign exchange movements.

Sources: the hindu.

Relatively stricter

Funds under the 'close relatives' category can now be sent only to kin such as parents, spouses, children and their spouses. Earlier, the term had multifarious interpretations

Year	Outward remittances*	Maintenance of close relatives
FY14	1,093.9	173.9
FY15	1,325.8	174.4
FY16	4,642.6	1,372.1
FY17	8,170.7	2,169.5
FY18	11,333.6	2,937.4

All figures in \$million

* Under LRS



Source: RBI

6. BOARD OF MANAGEMENT FOR COOPERATIVE BANKS

- **Context:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has come out with draft guidelines on constituting **a board of management (BoM)** in addition to the board of directors, **for urban cooperative banks (UCBs)**, with the aim of strengthening the governance in these banks.

What you need to know?

- **Need:** As UCBs are accepting public deposits, it is imperative that a separate mechanism be put in place to protect the interests of depositors.
- **Applicability:** Existing UCBs with deposit sizes exceeding Rs100 crore shall put in place the BoM within one year, while others banks may take two years. UCBs with deposit sizes up to Rs100 crore will have BoMs of a

minimum of three members, while those with deposit sizes of more than Rs100 crore will have at least five members in the BoMs. The maximum number of members in the management shall not exceed 12.

Composition:

- It will consist of members with special knowledge and practical experience in banking to facilitate professional management and focused attention to banking related activities of UCBs.
- The circular also said that at least 50% of the members of the BoM should have specialisation or practical experience in fields such as accountancy, agriculture, law.
- The chief executive officer of the bank will be an ex-officio member of the BoD and BoM and he will be under the general superintendence, direction and control of the board.
- **Functions:** The BoM will be responsible for credit, risk and liquidity management of the bank. It will be responsible for the day-to-day functions, including considering loan proposals, recovery of bad loans, borrowings and overseeing audit and inspection functions.
- **Management:** The BoM will report to the BoD, which will continue to oversee the general direction and control of a UCB. RBI shall have powers to supersede the BoM if the functioning of BoM is found unsatisfactory.

Facts for Prelims:

- The move follows the recommendation of a 2010 expert committee, headed by **Y.H. Malegam**, on the licensing of UCBs.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Board of management (BoM)- features, composition and functions.
- **For Mains:** Need for Management of UCBs.

Sources: the hindu.

7. SOLAR CHARKHA MISSION

- **Context:** President Ram Nath Kovind recently launched the Solar Charkha Mission covering artisans in 50 identified clusters.

About Solar Charkha Mission:

- The Solar Charkha Mission will generate employment in rural areas and contribute to the green economy. The mission will entail a subsidy of Rs 550 crore in the initial two years for 50 clusters and every cluster will employ 400 to 2000 artisans.
- The scheme also aims at linking five crore women across the country to the initiative. The mission is expected to create one lakh jobs during the first two years.

Significance of MSMEs:

- MSME account for around 60% employment in India.
- MSME have registered over 10% growth in recent times which is much more compared to large enterprises.
- This is one sector where people not only exhibit their entrepreneurial skills, become part of large value chains but also become job creators in the process.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Features and significance of the mission.

Sources: pib.

8. TREASURY BILL

- **Context:** After reviewing the cash position of the Central Government, the Government of India, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to notify the amounts for the issuance of Treasury Bills for the Quarter ending September 2018.

What you need to know about Treasury bills?

- T-bills are short term securities issued on behalf of the government by the RBI and are used in managing short term liquidity needs of the government.
- 91-day T-bills are auctioned every week on Wednesday and 182-day and 364-day T-bills are auctioned every alternate week on Wednesdays.
- Treasury bills are issued at a discount and are redeemed at par.

- Treasury bills are issued only by the RBI on behalf of the Government.
- Treasury bills are issued for meeting temporary Government deficits.
- The Treasury bill rate of discount is fixed by the RBI from time-to-time.
- It is the lowest one in the entire structure of interest rates in the country because of short-term maturity and degree of liquidity and security.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 3 Topic: Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

1. CROSS-BORDER INSOLVENCY

- **Context:** The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) is planning to introduce a globally accepted and well-recognised cross-border insolvency framework, fine-tuned to suit the needs of aspirational Indian economy. The Government has taken initiative for Cross-Border Insolvency within the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (the Code) to provide a comprehensive legal framework.

Need for cross-border insolvency framework:

- As the size of the Indian economy grows, business and trade have adopted an increasingly international character. Creditors and corporates frequently transact business in more than one jurisdiction. Foreign banks and creditors finance Indian companies and Indian banks have foreign exposure. Also, as part of its Ease of Doing Business and Make in India policies, India seeks to attract foreign companies to set up manufacturing facilities in India.
- Besides, global experience demonstrates that cross-border investment decisions and their outcomes, are considerably affected by the insolvency laws in force in a country. Towards this end, even though the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 has resulted in significant improvement in India's insolvency regime, there is a need to include cross-border insolvency in the Code to provide a comprehensive insolvency framework.

Benefits associated:

- Inclusion of cross-border insolvency framework will further enhance ease of doing business, provide a mechanism of cooperation between India and other countries in the area of insolvency resolution, and protect creditors in the global scenario.
- Also, it will make India an attractive investment destination for foreign creditors given the increased predictability and certainty of the insolvency framework.

Global scenario:

- On the global scale, the UNCITRAL (United Nations Commission on International Trade Law) Model Law on Cross-Border Insolvency, 1997 (Model Law) has emerged as the most widely accepted legal framework to deal with cross-border insolvency issues while ensuring the least intrusion into the country's domestic insolvency law.
- Due to the growing prevalence of multinational insolvencies, the Model Law has been adopted by 44 States till date, including Singapore, UK and US.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code, 2016- key features.
- **For Mains:** Cross-Border Insolvency- need, challenges and global practices.

Sources: pib.

Paper 3 Topic: Inclusive growth and issues arising out of it.

1. SMALL FINANCE BANKS

- **Context:** The Reserve Bank of India has decided to allow urban co-operative banks (UCB) to convert into small finance banks (SFB), a move aimed at bringing these entities into mainstream banking. It has been decided to allow voluntary transition of UCBs meeting the prescribed criteria into SFBs.

Significance of this move:

- UCBs currently face regulation by both the RBI and the respective State governments. By turning into SFBs, they will be regulated only by the RBI.

What are small finance banks?

- The small finance bank will primarily undertake **basic banking** activities of acceptance of **deposits** and lending to **unserved and underserved sections** including **small business units**, small and marginal **farmers**, micro and small industries and unorganised sector entities.

What they can do?

- Take small deposits and disburse loans.
- Distribute mutual funds, insurance products and other simple third-party financial products.
- Lend 75% of their total adjusted net bank credit to priority sector.
- Maximum loan size would be 10% of capital funds to single borrower, 15% to a group.
- Minimum 50% of loans should be up to 25 lakhs.

What they cannot do?

- Lend to big corporates and groups.
- Cannot open branches with prior RBI approval for first five years.
- Other financial activities of the promoter must not mingle with the bank.
- It cannot set up subsidiaries to undertake non-banking financial services activities.
- Cannot be a business correspondent of any bank.

The guidelines they need to follow:

- Promoter must contribute minimum 40% equity capital and should be brought down to 30% in 10 years.
- Minimum paid-up capital would be Rs 100 cr.
- Capital adequacy ratio should be 15% of risk weighted assets, Tier-I should be 7.5%.
- Foreign shareholding capped at 74% of paid capital, FPIs cannot hold more than 24%.
- Priority sector lending requirement of 75% of total adjusted net bank credit.
- 50% of loans must be up to Rs 25 lakh.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Small Finance Banks- management, functions and features.
- **For Mains:** Financial inclusion- need, challenges and efforts by the government.

Sources: the hindu.

2. BUSINESS CORRESPONDENTS

- **Context:** The government is planning to make all CSCs across the country Business Correspondents of Banks. 2.90 lakh CSCs will be able to work as Business Correspondents (BCs).

Who are Business Correspondents?

- Business Correspondents are **retail agents** engaged by banks for providing **banking services at locations other than a bank branch/ATM**.
- Banks are required to take full responsibility for the acts of omission and commission of the BCs that they engage and have, therefore, to ensure thorough due diligence and additional safeguards for minimizing the agency risk.

- Basically, BCs enable a bank to expand its outreach and offer limited range of banking services at low cost, as setting up a brick and mortar branch may not be viable in all cases. BCs, thus, are an integral part of a business strategy for achieving greater financial inclusion.

What they can do?

- BCs are permitted to perform a variety of activities which include identification of borrowers, collection and preliminary processing of loan applications including verification of primary information/data, creating awareness about savings and other products, education and advice on managing money and debt counseling, processing and submission of applications to banks, promoting, nurturing and monitoring of Self Help Groups/Joint Liability Groups, post-sanction monitoring, follow-up of recovery.
- They can also attend to collection of small value deposit, disbursal of small value credit, recovery of principal/ collection of interest, sale of micro insurance/ mutual fund products/ pension products/ other third party products and receipt and delivery of small value remittances/ other payment instruments.

Who can be engaged as BCs?- The banks may engage the following individuals/entities as BC:

- Individuals like retired bank employees, retired teachers, retired government employees and ex-servicemen, individual owners of kirana / medical /Fair Price shops, individual Public Call Office (PCO) operators, agents of Small Savings schemes of Government of India/Insurance Companies, individuals who own Petrol Pumps, authorized functionaries of well run Self Help Groups (SHGs) which are linked to banks, any other individual including those operating Common Service Centres (CSCs).
- NGOs/ MFIs set up under Societies/ Trust Acts and Section 25 Companies.
- Cooperative Societies registered under Mutually Aided Cooperative Societies Acts/ Cooperative Societies Acts of States/Multi State Cooperative Societies Act.
- Post Offices.
- Companies registered under the Indian Companies Act, 1956 with large and widespread retail outlets, excluding Non Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs).

Benefits:

- Corporates with large and widespread retail network bring in larger resources, higher organizational strength and financial backing needed for a large network of BCs besides providing financial security to the bank.
- Corporates as BC would be more suitable to render banking services in accordance with the bank's internal policies and standards than individuals and other small entities.
- Over years, these companies have developed efficient systems of monitoring and control over the retail outlets/franchises, including cash management, which could be used to advantage. These outlets are already dealing with the local population and are familiar with them.
- The shopkeepers and other retail agents of the large corporates may be more comfortable dealing with the company that they are already used to and familiar with, rather than with the bank.
- Failure of large companies as BCs would mean a reputation risk to the company and endanger its substantive business. As such, the companies could be relied upon to ensure that their agents do not jeopardize their reputation.
- A corporate is likely to continue as BC for a longer period than individuals, thus ensuring continuity of services.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** What are CSCs and who are BCs, BCs- objectives, eligibility and functions.
- **For Mains:** Significance and measures for financial inclusion.

Sources: pib.

3. UN MSME DAY 2018

- **Context:** UN MSME Day is celebrated on June 27th across the world.

Background:

- The General Assembly, in 2017, recognizing the need to improve small business access to microfinance and credit, decided to designate 27 June as Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Day. The goal is to encourage member states to facilitate observance of the day by increasing awareness and actions to support small business.

- The resolution was introduced by the delegation of Argentina, co-sponsored by 54 member states and adopted without a vote by the 193-member General Assembly on 6 April 2017.

What is a micro-, small, or medium-sized enterprise?

- The criteria for defining the size of a business differ from country to country. As a reference, the European Commission's definition of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises is established according to the number of employees and the annual turnover or balance sheet:
 - Micro-enterprise:** fewer than 10 employees and an annual turnover (the amount of money taken in a particular period) or balance sheet (a statement of a company's assets and liabilities) below €2 million.
 - Small enterprise:** fewer than 50 employees and an annual turnover or balance sheet below €10 million.
 - Medium-sized enterprise:** fewer than 250 employees and annual turnover below €50 million or balance sheet below €43 million.
- The choice of MSME definition could depend on many factors, such as business culture, the size of the country's population, industry and the level of international economic integration.



Significance of MSMEs:

- Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises are the backbone of most economies worldwide and play a key role in developing countries.
- According to the data provided by the International Council for Small Business (ICSB), formal and informal Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) make up over 90% of all firms and account on average for 60-70% of total employment and 50% of GDP.
- These types of enterprises are responsible for significant employment and income generation opportunities across the world and have been identified as a major driver of poverty alleviation and development.
- MSMEs tend to employ a larger share of the vulnerable sectors of the workforce, such as women, youth, and people from poorer households. MSMEs can even sometimes be the only source of employment in rural areas. As such, MSMEs as a group are the main income provider for the income distribution at the "base of the pyramid".

How they contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals?

- Micro-, small and medium sized enterprises are vital in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular in promoting innovation, creativity and decent work for all.
- Efforts to enhance access to finance for SMEs across key sectors of national economies are an important element of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG targets 8.3 and 9.3 call for enhancing the access of SMEs to financial services. In addition, SMEs are an important element in the implementation of SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) and SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure).

What's important?

- For Prelims:** UN MSME Day 2018.
- For Mains:** MSME- significance, challenges they are facing and government support.

Sources: pib.

Paper 3 Topic: Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing.

1. FARMER'S GAON BANDH HITS FRESH SUPPLIES ACROSS STATES

- Thousands of Indian farmers began 10-day protests on Friday demanding farm loan waivers and higher prices for produce, such as cereals, oilseeds and milk.
- Farmers from the states of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan are also asking for a guaranteed minimum income for farmers.

- This is the third major protest by farmers in less than a year. In March, more than 40,000 marched from far-flung districts in the state of Maharashtra to reach the seat of government in the state capital, Mumbai.

Major demands:

- Minimum Support Prices (MSP)** – the price at which the government buys farm produce. At least 94 percent of farmers sell their produce below MSP, data compiled by the farmers' federation shows.
- Farm Loan Waiver**
- Fixed minimum income**
- Implementation of **Swaminathan Commission** recommendations.

Paper 3 Topic: Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

1. FAME SCHEME

- Context:** Discussions on the FAME-II scheme, a subsidy programme for purchase of electric vehicles in India, seems to have hit another roadblock after Finance Ministry returned the scheme's draft proposal raising questions on funding and policy structure. Finance Ministry has sought a more comprehensive scheme framework.

About FAME India scheme:

- What is it?** With an aim to promote eco-friendly vehicles, the government had launched the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India (FAME-India) scheme in 2015. It was launched by union ministry for heavy industries.
- Aim:** The FAME India Scheme is aimed at incentivising all vehicle segments, including two-wheeler, three wheeler auto, passenger four-wheeler vehicle, light commercial vehicles and buses. The scheme covers hybrid and electric technologies like a strong hybrid, plug-in hybrid and battery electric vehicles.
- Facts:** FAME India – Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric vehicles in India – is a part of the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan. The scheme envisages Rs 795 crore support in the first two fiscals. It is being administered by the Heavy Industries Ministry.

Way ahead:

- Electric vehicles (EVs) seem to be gaining in prominence as part of the renewable energy zeitgeist. However, mainstreaming electric vehicles will require an overhaul of the country's energy and transport infrastructure.
- For example, EV charging stations will have to be set up on a war footing, and electricity generation will have to improve significantly even as its piggybacks on the push for solar energy.
- EV technology (especially the battery) will have to become much cheaper before it can perform well in a price-sensitive market like India.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** FAME scheme and its significance.

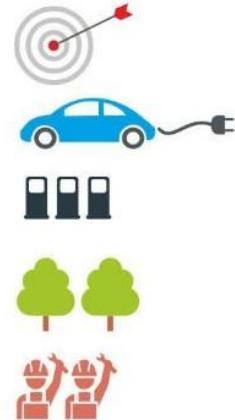
Sources: the hindu.

WHAT IS FAME?

Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric (Hybrid) Vehicles in India is a scheme under **National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP)**

Target of NEMMP - 2020

- 6-7 million Hybrid & Electric Vehicle sale by 2020
- 9500 million litres of estimated cumulative fuel saving
- 2 million tonnes reduction in pollution & green house gas emissions
- 65,000 Direct & 3,00,000 Indirect jobs



2. PARIWARTAN SCHEME

- Context:** The Rural Electrification Corporation has finalised a plan to revitalise stressed power sector assets in a joint venture with the Power Finance Corp and lenders. The plan is named **Pariwartan and stands for power asset warehousing and revitalisation.**

How it works?

- Under the plan, the REC has proposed that a special purpose vehicle, a subsidiary company to securitise assets, be set up with PFC and the lending banks, which would be overlooked by an asset management company.
- The asset management firm will take on assets with a capacity of about 40,000 MW at net book value, and seek between 4-5% of equity from the National Infrastructure Investment Fund to run power projects under the scheme.
- The goal of this scheme is to run these power assets to service their current debt, and look at breaking even before the lenders decide to takeover or sell the assets.
- Most of the assets that would be brought under the scheme face coal supply shortages and suffer from a lack of power purchase agreements. The scheme looks to solve these issues by providing special coal supply assistance with assistance from the coal ministry.
- Electricity produced during a 48 month period under the plan would also be sold at power exchanges and short term power purchase agreements would be sought from state governments.

Facts for Prelims:

- The ‘Pariwartan’ scheme is inspired by the Troubled Asset Relief Programme, or TARP, which was introduced in the US during the 2008 financial crisis.

What's important?

- For Prelims and Mains:** Key features of the scheme.

Sources: livemint.

EASING THE STRESS



- REC has identified projects with total debt of **around ₹1.8 trillion** to be part of a so-called ‘warehousing’ scheme
- The projects will be housed under an **asset management and rehabilitation company** which will be jointly owned by financial institutions
- The scheme is inspired by the **Troubled Asset Relief Program**, which was introduced in the US during the 2008 financial crisis
- The plan is driven by concerns that stressed projects have drawn bids for around ₹1-2 crore per MW under the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code**, much less than the amount needed to build them

3. SAGARMALA

- Context:** The Ministry of Shipping’s flagship programme for port-led-prosperity ‘Sagarmala’ received the ‘Gold Award’ in infrastructure sector in the recently concluded 52nd Skoch Summit 2018. The Sagarmala Programme also received the ‘Order of Merit’ at the Summit.

About Sagarmala:

What is it?

- The Sagarmala project seeks to develop a string of ports around India’s coast. The objective of this initiative is to promote “Port-led development” along India’s 7500 km long coastline.
- It aims to develop access to new development regions with intermodal solutions and promotion of the optimum modal split, enhanced connectivity with main economic centres and beyond through expansion of rail, inland water, coastal and road services.
- Nodal ministry:** The Union Ministry of Shipping has been appointed as the nodal ministry for this initiative.

The Sagarmala initiative will address challenges by focusing on three pillars of development, namely:

- Supporting and enabling Port-led Development through appropriate policy and institutional interventions and providing for an institutional framework for ensuring inter-agency and ministries/departments/states' collaboration for integrated development.
- Port Infrastructure Enhancement, including modernization and setting up of new ports.
- Efficient Evacuation to and from hinterland.

Facts for Prelims:

- The Skoch Awards celebrate human excellence and agents of change in Indian society. They are the highest independently instituted civilian honours in India.
- Only end-user departments and domain ministries may apply including State undertakings.
- The Skoch Awards have become the only independent benchmark of best practices in India in the fields of governance, finance, banking, technology, corporate citizenship, economics and inclusive growth.
- Skoch Consultancy Services is a think tank dealing with socio-economic issues with a focus on inclusive growth.

Sources: pib.

Paper 3 Topic: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life
Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

1. METHANOL ECONOMY

- **Context:** The NITI Aayog is working on a roadmap for full-scale implementation of methanol economy in the country in near future, which would not only curb pollution, but reduce India's dependence on oil imports as well.

The Methanol Economy

The infographic has a yellow header and a green body. The title 'The Methanol Economy' is at the top. Below it, two columns of bullet points list the benefits and uses of methanol.

Benefits/Properties	Uses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad range of sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methane, bio-methane, organic wastes Useable in both Spark Ignition Engines and Diesels Can be mixed with ethanol and gasoline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher octane Burns cooler Higher Flash point Burns cleaner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emissions Fuel for furnaces, turbines Fuel for fuel cells.

The cheapest liquid fuel, with the largest number of non-food sources

Methanol as an alternative fuel:

- Methanol is a promising fuel as it is clean, cheaper than fossil fuels and a good substitute for heavy fuels. India imports methanol from Saudi Arabia and Iran at present. Across the world, methanol is emerging as a clean, sustainable transportation fuel of the future.

Why Methanol?

- Methanol can be used as an energy producing fuel, transportation fuel and cooking fuel, cutting down India's oil import bill by an estimated 20% over the next few years. Unlike CNG, using methanol as a transportation fuel would require minimal alteration in the vehicles.

- Methanol is a clean-burning fuel that produces fewer smog-causing emissions — such as sulphur oxides (SOx), nitrogen oxides (NOx) and particulate matter — and can improve air quality and related human health issues.
- Methanol is most commonly produced on a commercial scale from natural gas. It can also be produced from renewable sources such as biomass and recycled carbon dioxide.
- As a high-octane vehicle fuel, methanol offers excellent acceleration and power. It also improves vehicle efficiency.

Advantages of methanol:

- Methanol is a clean burning drop in fuel which can replace both petrol & diesel in transportation & LPG, Wood, Kerosene in cooking fuel. It can also replace diesel in Railways, Marine Sector, Gensets, Power Generation and Methanol based reformers could be an ideal complement to Hybrid and Electric Mobility.
- Methanol is a scalable and sustainable fuel, that can be produced from a variety of feedstocks like Natural Gas, Coal (Indian High Ash Coal), Bio-mass, Municipal Solid waste and most importantly from CO₂.
- Methanol burns efficiently in all internal combustion engines, produces no particulate matter, no soot, almost nil SOX and NOX emissions (NEAR ZERO POLLUTION). The gaseous version of Methanol – DME can be blended with LPG and can be excellent substitute for diesel in Large buses and trucks.
- Methanol 15 % blend (M15) in petrol will reduce pollution by 33% & diesel replacement by methanol will reduce by more than 80%.

In energy sector:

- Other major area where methanol can reduce pollution is the Energy sector. India has an installed capacity of 22000 MW on HFO (Heavy fuel oil) alone.
- HFO is one of the dirtiest fuel and most countries of the world have abandoned it. The entire HFO usage can be replaced by Methanol.
- Power Modules of Mobile Towers (about 750000) in India can fully be replaced by Methanol Reformer / Fuel Cell based platforms in the next two years.
- Diesel industrial Gensets, Gas Turbines running on Naptha, LFOI (Light Fuel Oil) and other dirty fuels can also be fully replaced. Industrial boilers which are running on diesel will also be replaced with Methanol.

Methanol as an enduring solution to human energy needs?

- Methanol has the potential to be an enduring solution to human energy needs because the belched out CO₂ (greenhouse gas emission) both from using Methanol and while producing Methanol can be tapped back to produce Methanol.
- Thereby a seamless loop of CO₂ sequestration cycle is created to perpetually burn fuels without polluting the environment at all. CO₂ from steel plants, Thermal Power plants, Cement Plants etc. can be tapped in large quantities to produce Methanol.

Way ahead:

- The Concept of “Methanol Economy” is being actively pursued by China, Italy, Sweden, Israel, US, Australia, Japan and many other European countries.
- 10% of fuel in China in transport Sector is Methanol. Methanol Economy, if adopted by India can be one of the best ways to mitigate the Environmental hazards of a growing economy.
- NITI Aayog is preparing a road map for a full-scale implementation in the near future.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** All about Methanol- uses, advantages, significance and future potential.

Sources: pib.

2. POLAR SATELLITE LAUNCH VEHICLE

- **Context:** In a big boost to the country's space programme, the Union Cabinet has given the financial approval of Rs 10,911 crore for the launch of 30 PSLV and 10 GSLV Mk III rockets in the next four years.

About PSLV:

- PSLV has emerged as a versatile launch vehicle to carry out Sun-Synchronous Polar Orbit (SSPO), Geo-synchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) and low inclination Low Earth Orbit (LEO) missions.

- It is the first Indian launch vehicle to be equipped with liquid stages.
- With the recent successful launch of PSLV-C41, PSLV has completed three developmental and forty three operational flights and the last forty one flights have been successful.

Significance of PSLV:

- The operationalisation of PSLV has made the country self-reliant in the launching capability of satellites for earth observation, disaster management, navigation and space sciences. The PSLV Continuation programme will sustain this capability and self-reliance in the launching of similar satellites for national requirements.

About GSLV Mk III rockets:

- GSLV Mk III is a three-stage heavy lift launch vehicle developed by ISRO. The vehicle has two solid strap-ons, a core liquid booster and a cryogenic upper stage.
- GSLV Mk III is designed to carry 4 ton class of satellites into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) or about 10 tons to Low Earth Orbit (LEO), which is about twice the capability of GSLV Mk II.
- This is India's first fully functional rocket to be tested with a cryogenic engine that uses liquid propellants — liquid oxygen and liquid hydrogen.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Differences between GSLV and PSLV, features of various launch vehicles by ISRO.

Sources: pib.

3. KATRIN EXPERIMENT

- **Context:** Researchers in Germany with the Karlsruhe Tritium Neutrino experiment have started collecting data to determine the mass of the universe's lightest particle- neutrino. Those are sometimes called "ghost particles" because they're so difficult to detect.

Background:

- Determining the mass of neutrinos is one of the most important open questions in particle physics and will help scientists better understand the history of the universe.



About KATRIN experiment:

- The KATRIN experiment is currently set up and commissioned on the Campus North of the Karlsruhe Institute for Technology.
- The experiment is a collaboration between national and international partners with currently more than 150 scientists, engineers, technicians and students.
- KATRIN measures the neutrino mass in a model-independent way via ultrahigh precision measurements of the kinematics of electrons from beta-decay.

About Neutrinos:

- Neutrinos are the most abundant massive elementary particles in nature. Due to their minimalistic properties they are key particles for understanding physics on the smallest scale (elementary particle physics) up to the largest scale – the universe (cosmology).
- Neutrinos are the only elementary particles of matter, which do not carry electrical or strong charge and thus are blind to the electromagnetic and the strong interaction and cannot be bound.
- In the context of particle physics they participate only in the weak interaction. This made neutrinos the most prominent candidate to explore with them the properties of the weak interaction.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** KATRIN experiment- objectives, about neutrinos.

Sources: the hindu.

4. ATAL TINKERING LABS

- **Context:** NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) has selected 3,000 additional schools for the establishment of Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs), bringing the total number of ATL schools to 5,441.
- The selected schools shall receive a grant of Rs 20 lakh spread over the next five years to establish Atal Tinkering Labs for nurturing innovation and entrepreneurial spirit among secondary school children across India.



What are ATLs?

- With a vision to 'Cultivate one Million children in India as Neoteric Innovators', Atal Innovation Mission is establishing Atal Tinkering Laboratories (ATLs) in schools across India.
- **Objective:** The objective of this scheme is to foster curiosity, creativity and imagination in young minds; and inculcate skills such as design mindset, computational thinking, adaptive learning, physical computing etc.
- **Financial Support:** AIM will provide grant-in-aid that includes a one-time establishment cost of Rs. 10 lakh and operational expenses of Rs. 10 lakh for a maximum period of 5 years to each ATL.
- **Eligibility:** Schools (minimum Grade VI – X) managed by Government, local body or private trusts/society can set up ATL.

Significance of ATLs:

- Atal Tinkering Labs have evolved as epicenters for imparting these 'skills of the future' through practical applications based on self-learning.
- Bridging a crucial social divide, Atal Tinkering Labs provide equal opportunity to all children across the spectrum by working at the grassroot level, introducing children to the world of innovation and tinkering.

About AIM:

- The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) is the Government of India's flagship initiative to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in the country.
- AIM is mandated to create an umbrella structure to oversee innovation ecosystem of the country and revolutionizing the innovation eco-system – touching upon the entire innovation life cycle through various programs.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** AIM, ATL and their important features.
- **For Mains:** Various initiatives to promote innovation and their significance.

Sources: pib.

5. PINAKA ROCKET

- **Context:** The indigenous Pinaka rocket system of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is being evolved into a precision-guided missile, with enhanced range and accuracy to hit its targets.

About Pinaka:

- The rocket has been developed by the Armament cluster of the DRDO, with a lead from Pune-based Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE).
- It is used to neutralize the enemy's positions that are strategically important for the enemy. The advanced versions of this system can also be used to conduct surgical strikes even without entering into the enemy area.
- The launcher can fire 12 rockets with 1.2 tonnes of high explosives within 44 seconds and destroy a target area of 4-square km at a time.
- Pinaka is capable of working in different modes – autonomous mode, stand-alone mode, remote mode and manual mode.
- The second variant of Pinaka, known as Mark-II, has a maximum range of 75 km.
- DRDO is working with Israel's IMI to develop Pinaka Mark-III which will use IMI's Trajectory Correction System (TCS) that will enhance the accuracy of the attack.



6. ARTILLERY GUN DHANUSH

- **Context:** The indigenously upgraded artillery gun Dhanush has successfully completed final user trials and is ready for induction into the Army.

Key facts:

- Dhanush is an upgraded version of the Swedish Bofors gun procured by India in the mid-1980s.
- Dhanush is a 155-mm, 45-calibre gun with a maximum range of 40 km in salvo mode.
- It has been developed by Ordnance Factory Board (OFB).



7. EUROPE'S FIRST SOLAR PANEL RECYCLING PLANT

- **WHERE?** Europe's first solar panel recycling plant was recently inaugurated in France. The new plant is located in Rousset, southern France.

Key facts:

- Waste management firm Veolia signed a contract with solar recycling group PV Cycle France to recycle 1,300 tonnes of solar panels this year.
- The plant in Rousset uses robots to take panels apart and recover glass, silicon, plastics, copper and silver, all of which can be reused to create new panels.

Need for Solar panel recycling plant?

- Solar panels have an estimated lifespan of 25 to 30 years, meaning that many of the first generation built in the 1990s are now being decommissioned.
- The huge growth in solar power in recent years also means that finding a sustainable and circular solution to ageing panels is of prime importance.

Way ahead:

- The International Renewable Energy Agency estimates that by 2050 there will be between 60 to 78 million tonnes of PV panel waste around the world.
- China and the US, as leaders in solar installation, will also need to establish recycling plants to deal with this waste, but that this could unlock significant economic benefits.
- At the moment, however, only the European Union has adopted waste regulations specifically aimed at tackling future solar PV waste.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Europe's first solar panel recycling plant.
- **For Mains:** Need for solar panel recycling.

Sources: *toi*.

8. ISRO IS PLANNING TO MINE MOON

- **Context:** Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)'s second moon mission — the Rs 800 crore 'Chandrayaan-2' — will hunt for deposits of Helium-3 — a waste-free nuclear energy that could answer many of Earth's energy problems.

Why Helium- 3?

- The isotope of Helium, which is abundant on the moon, could theoretically meet global energy demands for three to five centuries.
- This kind of energy is also expected to be worth trillions of dollars (one expert estimated Helium-3's value at about five billion US dollars a ton).
- There are approximately 1 million metric tons of Helium-3 embedded in the moon, although only about a quarter of that can realistically be brought to Earth.
- Since the isotope is not radioactive, it could be used in fusion reactors for nuclear energy without dangerous nuclear by-products.

Concerns and challenges:

- Even if ISRO finds helium-3 on the moon, there are obstacles that need to be addressed before it can be utilised. The space agency will have to figure out how it will mine and bring back the isotope to Earth. Building fusion power plants to convert this resource into energy is another issue that has to be looked at.
- Additionally, there is no international treaty on commercial entities allowed to keep what they have mined from space, said the report. Only the US and Luxembourg have passed legislations to this effect.

Way ahead:

- He-3 fusion is untested technology. Considering prevailing commitments like the Paris Agreement, it would simply be foolish for India to attempt stewarding a nuclear fusion programme involving heavier isotopes when a prototype hydrogen fusion experiment (**ITER**) itself has sucked in over Rs 96,550 crore (about 9% of which India contributes) while another billion-dollar facility in the US has been struggling to kickstart fusion chain reactions for over four years now.

About Chandrayaan-2:

- Chandrayaan-2 includes soft-landing on Moon and moving a rover on its surface. It is an advanced version of the previous Chandrayaan-1 mission. It consists of an orbiter, lander and rover configuration.
- The Orbiter spacecraft when launched from Sriharikota will travel to the Moon and release the Lander, which will in turn deploy a tiny Rover to roam the lunar surface — all three sending data and pictures to Earth.
- It is planned to be launched as a composite stack into the earth parking orbit (EPO) of 170 X 18,500 km by GSLV-Mk II.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Helium- 3, Chandrayaan- 2.
- **For Mains:** Mining on Moon- need, challenges and technological innovations needed.

Sources: *the hindu*.

9. STATISTICS DAY

- **Context:** On the eve of 12th Statistics Day (June 29th), a commemorative coin of Rs 125 and circulation coin of Rs 5 denomination have been released. The day marks 125th Birth Anniversary of Professor P. C. Mahalanobis.

National Statistics Day:

- In recognition of the notable contributions made by Late Professor Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis in the fields of statistics, statistical system and economic planning, Government of India in 2007, has designated 29th June as the “Statistics Day” in the category of Special Days to be celebrated every year at the National level.
- **The objective of celebration** of this Day is to create public awareness about the importance of statistics in socio-economic planning and policy formulation, to acknowledge the contribution of Prof. Mahalanobis, and to pay homage to him.
- **Theme this year:** “Quality Assurance in Official Statistics”.

Facts for Prelims:

- The Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) at Kolkata, set up by Prof. Mahalanobis in 1931, and was declared an autonomous “Institute of National Importance” through an act of Parliament in 1959.
- ISI celebrates 29th June as the “Worker Day”.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Statistics day, ISI.
- **For Mains:** Important contributions of PC Mahalanobis.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 3 Topic: Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

1. AGNI-5 BALLISTIC MISSILE

- **Context:** India recently successfully test-fired its indigenously developed nuclear capable Long Range Ballistic Missile Agni-5 from Dr Abdul Kalam Island off the Odisha coast.

About Agni-5 Ballistic Missile:

- It is a surface-to-surface missile which can carry nuclear warhead weighing 1.5 tonnes to a distance of over 5,000 km and is the longest missile in India’s arsenal capable of reaching most parts of China.
- The missile features many new indigenously-developed technologies, including the very high accuracy Ring Laser Gyro based Inertial Navigation System (RINS), and the most modern and accurate Micro Navigation System (MINS) which improves the accuracy of the missile.

Facts for Prelims:

- **Agni series:** At present, India has in its armoury the Agni series — Agni-1 with 700 km range, Agni-2 with 2,000 km range, Agni-3 and Agni-4 with 2,500 km to more than 3,500 km range.
- **India joins the elite club:** With this missile, India has joined an elite club of nations that possess the ICBM launch capability. Only the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council – China, France, Russia, the United States and Britain, along with Israel, have so far possessed such long-range missiles.

Significance of the Agni project:

- The successful development of Agni proved India’s capacity and technical expertise. This missile put India into an advanced stage of technology.
- Agni has not only technologically, scientifically and in the fields of security but also in international politics, put India on a noticeable platform.
- Agni missiles would be a game changer, transforming the way the world looks at India’s defence arsenal.

Sources: the hindu.

2. FORTIFIED RICE

- **Context:** The government is planning to provide fortified rice (enriched with essential vitamins and minerals) to all the poor under National Food Security Act (NFS) across the country, which would cost about Rs 12,000 to Rs 14,000 crore annually. To begin with the scheme is likely to cover the 115 'aspirational' districts across the country.
- The proposal is being prepared with the support of NITI Aayog under the National Nutrition Mission.

FORTIFIED RICE

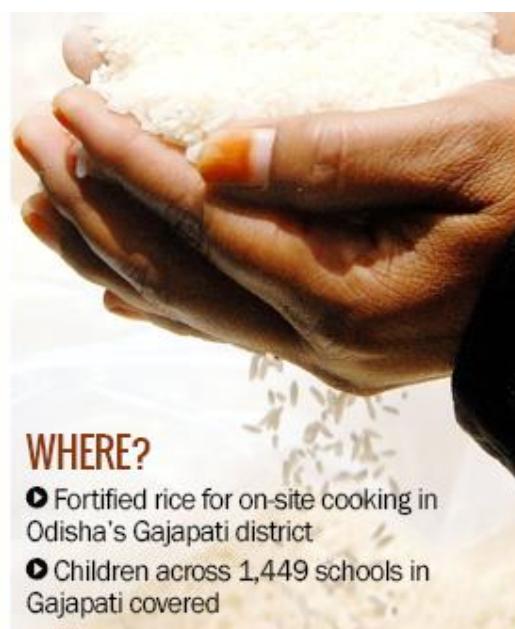
ODISHA MODEL TO BOOST MIDDAY MEALS

WHAT?

- Fortified kernels blended at ratio 1:100 with ordinary rice
- 100g of fortified rice has 10mg iron

HOW?

- Manufactured by combining rice powder with iron
- Powder converted into rice-like kernels
- Micronutrient fortified kernels resemble regular rice



WHERE?

- Fortified rice for on-site cooking in Odisha's Gajapati district
- Children across 1,449 schools in Gajapati covered

/// Source: UN WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME //

/ TIMES INTERNET //

Why Rice Fortification?

- Rice is the world's most important staple food. An estimated 2 billion people eat rice every day, forming the mainstay of diets across large of Asia and Africa.
- Historians have found evidence of rice being eaten in parts of China some 8,000 years ago and it even has the same word as "food" in Chinese. In Bangladesh, home of 160 million people, rice is the main stable food with a daily average consumption of 416 grams per capita.
- Regular milled rice is low in micronutrients and serves primarily as a source of carbohydrate only. The fortification of rice is a major opportunity to improve nutrition.
- Fortified rice contains Vitamin A, Vitamin B1, Vitamin B12, Folic Acid, Iron and Zinc.

What is Rice Fortification?

- Fortification is the practice of deliberately increasing the content of an essential micronutrient, i.e. vitamins and minerals (including trace elements) in a food, so as to improve the nutritional quality of the food supply and provide a public health benefit with minimal risk to health.
- Rice fortification is the practice of increasing the content of essential micronutrients in rice and to improve the nutritional quality of the rice.

Food fortification in India:

- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has formulated a comprehensive regulation on fortification of foods namely 'Food Safety and Standards (Fortification of Foods) Regulations, 2016'.
- These regulations set the standards for food fortification and encourage the production, manufacture, distribution, sale and consumption of fortified foods.
- The regulations also provide for specific role of FSSAI in promotion for food fortification and to make fortification mandatory. This sets the premise for the national summit on fortification of food.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** What is food fortification, FSSAI.
- **For Mains:** Food fortification and food security.

Sources: the hindu.

3. COOPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

- **Context:** The Union Cabinet was recently apprised of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between India represented by the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and Oman represented by the Ministry of Transport and Communications on Cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, in February, 2018 at Muscat (Oman's port capital).
- This MoU shall enable the following areas of cooperation such as, space science, technology and applications including remote sensing of the earth; satellite based navigation; Space science and planetary exploration; use of spacecraft and space systems and ground system; and application of space technology.

Value addition for Prelims and Mains- Treaty on Outer space:

- Space exploration is governed by a complex series of international treaties and agreements which have been in place for years. The first and probably most important of them is the Outer Space Treaty.
- The treaty was initially signed by the United States of America, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union on January 27, 1967 and it came into effect from October 10, 1967.
- The treaty was initially called 'Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and other Celestial bodies.'

Treaty Terms:

- The treaty forbids countries from deploying "nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction" in outer space. The term "weapons of mass destruction" is not defined, but it is commonly understood to include nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.
- The treaty, however, does not prohibit the launching of ballistic missiles, which could be armed with WMD warheads, through space.

The treaty's key arms control provisions are in Article IV. States-parties commit not to:

- Place in orbit around the Earth or other celestial bodies any nuclear weapons or objects carrying WMD.
- Install WMD on celestial bodies or station WMD in outer space in any other manner.
- Establish military bases or installations, test "any type of weapons," or conduct military exercises on the moon and other celestial bodies.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** MoU on outer space, key features of the outer space treaty, location of Muscat.
- **For Mains:** Need for international cooperation in peaceful management of outer space.

Sources: pib.

4. 'EPIC' PLANET

- **Context:** Scientists from ISRO have spotted for the first time a distant planet six times bigger than Earth and revolving around a Sun-like star about 600 light years away.

Key facts:

- The planet has been named EPIC 211945201b (or K2-236b). The host star is named EPIC 211945201 or K2-236.
- The planet is smaller in size than Saturn and bigger than Neptune. Its mass is about 27 times Earth's and six times that of Earth at radius. The scientists estimate that over 60% of its mass could be made up of heavy elements like ice, silicates and iron.
- With this discovery India has joined a handful of countries which have discovered planets around stars.
- The discovery was made using a PRL-designed spectrograph, PARAS, to measure and confirm the mass of the new planet.

About PARAS:

- PARAS is an echelle spectrograph (with resolution of 60,000) designed and developed by the members of the Astronomy and Astrophysics Division of PRL.

- The primary aim of PARAS is to search for planets around a sample of 100s of Dwarf main-sequence G,K,M type stars within a volume of 100pc using the Simultaneous ThAr calibration technique. It has wavelength coverage of 400nm to 680nm.

What's important?

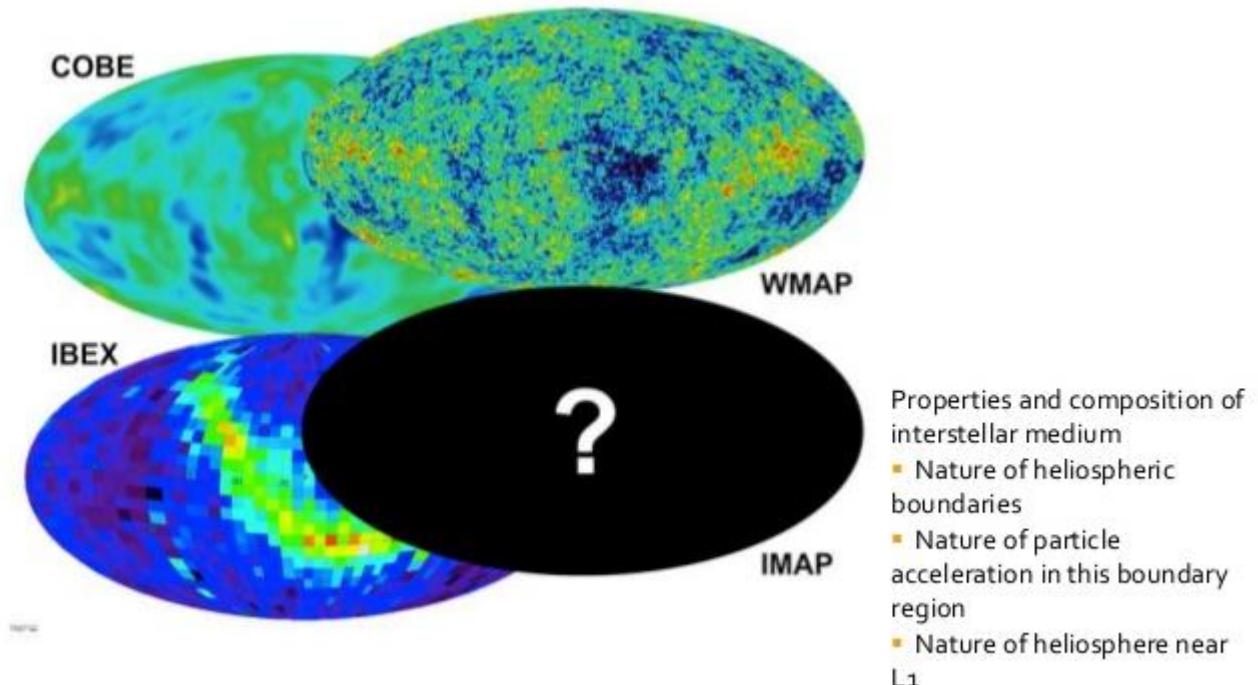
- For Prelims and Mains:** What are EPIC and PARAS?

Sources: the hindu.

5. INTERSTELLAR MAPPING AND ACCELERATION PROBE

- What is it?** It a science mission of NASA planned for launch in 2024 that will sample, analyze, and map particles streaming to Earth from the edges of interstellar space.

IMAP – Interstellar Mapping & Acceleration Probe



About IMAP mission:

- The Interstellar Mapping and Acceleration Probe (IMAP) mission will help researchers better understand the boundary of the heliosphere, a sort of magnetic bubble surrounding and protecting our solar system. This is the fifth mission in NASA's Solar Terrestrial Probes (STP) Program portfolio.
- Another objective of the mission is to learn more about the generation of cosmic rays in the heliosphere. Cosmic rays created locally and from the galaxy and beyond affect human explorers in space and can harm technological systems, and likely play a role in the presence of life itself in the universe.
- The spacecraft will be positioned about one million miles (1.5 million kilometers) away from Earth towards the Sun at what is called the first Lagrange point or L₁. This will allow the probe to maximize use of its instruments to monitor the interactions between solar wind and the interstellar medium in the outer solar system.

Why study Heliosphere?

- This region is where the constant flow of particles from our Sun, called the solar wind, collides with material from the rest of the galaxy. This collision limits the amount of harmful cosmic radiation entering the heliosphere.

What's important?

- For Prelims and Mains:** Heliosphere, IMAP mission- key objectives, Lagrange points.

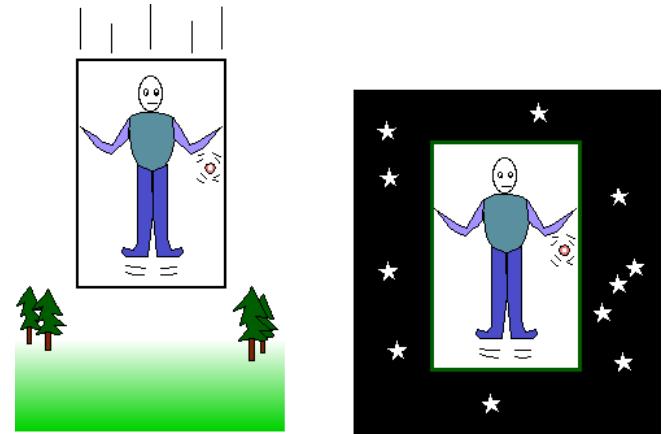
Sources: nasa.

6. EINSTEIN'S THEORY: EARTH IS A FREE-FALLING ELEVATOR IN SUN'S GRAVITY

- Context:** Physicists at NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology) pulled out a 14-year-long experiment to test a key principle underlying Einstein's famous theory of general relativity – that describes how gravity relates to space and time.

Know about the experiment:

- The test conducted by the NIST physicists is being considered as the most accurate test ever which confirms the 'earth elevator' phenomenon. They used the solar system as a laboratory, where they treated Earth as an elevator falling through the Sun's gravitational field.
- They monitored 12 high-precision atomic clocks spread around the world for 14 years, from 1999 to 2014. The experiment tested whether all parts of the earth would have the same acceleration at the same rate. The clocks remained synchronized for over 14 years, proving the earth elevator theory.



Things falling freely in a gravity field all accelerate by the same amount, so they move the same way as if they were in a region of zero gravity – "weightlessness"

EINSTEIN'S THEORY: EARTH IS A FREE-FALLING ELEVATOR:

- According to Albert Einstein, the earth is a free-falling elevator in Sun's gravity. He theorised that all objects located in such an elevator would accelerate at the same rate as if they were in a uniform gravitational field or no gravity at all. He also predicted that the properties of these objects relative to each other would remain constant during the elevator's free-fall.
- In other words, the **general relativity theory** carries the principle of local position invariance (LPI), which holds that in a falling elevator, measures of non-gravitational effects are independent of time and place and the test confirmed the same.

Sources: [toi](#).

7. ATACAMA LARGE MILLIMETER/SUBMILLIMETER ARRAY

- Context:** Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array has uncovered convincing evidence for three young planets orbiting within a protoplanetary disk – or planet-forming disk – around an infant star.
- The star is called HD 163296. It's 330 light-years from Earth in the direction of the constellation Sagittarius.

About ALMA telescope:

- The Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA) is an international partnership of the European Southern Observatory (ESO), the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institutes of Natural Sciences (NINS) of Japan, together with NRC (Canada), NSC and ASIAA (Taiwan), and KASI (Republic of Korea), in cooperation with the Republic of Chile.
 - ALMA -the largest astronomical project in existence- is a single telescope of revolutionary design, composed of 66 high precision antennas located on the Chajnantor plateau, 5000 meters altitude in northern Chile.
 - ALMA allows scientists to unravel longstanding and important astronomical mysteries, in search of our Cosmic Origins.

What's important?

- For Prelims and Mains:** About ALMA telescope.

Sources: [the hindu](#).

8. ARTIFICIAL LEAF THAT CREATES BIOFUEL

- **Context:** IISc scholars have developed an artificial 'leaf' that'll help reduce carbon footprint and create biofuel.

How the leaf was made?

- The researchers used copper aluminium sulphate and zinc sulphide. The two materials, which are otherwise wide band gap semiconductors, became low band gap semiconductors when combined.
- Simply put, the lower the band gap, the better conductivity a substance will have.

How the 'leaf' works?

- Basically, for photosynthesis or the process of plants taking in carbon dioxide to produce oxygen and glucose. For this process to happen, a high energy photon, electron and sunlight are needed. The electron needs to have a lot of kinetic energy.
 - The semiconductor they made by combining copper aluminium sulphate and zinc sulphide fulfilled the requirements to convert sunlight into energy, which is how they decided to try and replicate photosynthesis.
 - In the process, they also found that this quantum leaf had a much better rate of energy conversation compared to natural leaves – 20% as compared to 0.4-0.5% in photosynthesis.
 - The team then harnessed this capacity to produce a sulphate format bio fuel which not only allows for 100% combustion but whose carbon dioxide emissions can be recycled by the quantum leaves.

Potential applications:

- Given that the world is searching for environment friendly and renewable alternatives to fossil fuels, the technology has huge potential. It will also help in reducing the carbon footprint.

Sources: the hindu.

9. GLONASS OF RUSSIA

- **Context:** Russia has successfully launched a Glonass-M positioning satellite using a Soyuz-2.1b carrier rocket from Plesetsk space center. With this launch, there are now 26 Glonass satellites in orbit.

What is GLONASS?

- GLONASS is an acronym, which stands for Globalnaya Navigazionnaya Sputnikovaya Sistema, or Global Navigation Satellite System. **GLONASS is Russia's version of GPS (Global Positioning System).**

The various versions of GLONASS are:

- GLONASS – launched in 1982, the satellites launched were intended to work for weather positioning, velocity measuring and timing anywhere in the world or near-Earth space by the military and official organisations.
- GLONASS-M – launched in 2003 add second civil code. It is important for GIS mapping receivers.
- GLONASS-k – started in 2011 again has 3 more types namely k1, k2 and km for research. Adds third civil frequency.
- GLONASS-K2.
- GLONASS-KM – will be launched after 2025 (currently in research phase).

How is GLONASS different from GPS?

- GPS developed by USA has a network of 31 satellites covering this planet and has been widely used in commercial devices like mobile phones, navigators etc.
- GLONASS is developed by Russia originally started by Soviet Union in 1976. This has a network of 24 satellites covering the earth.

Facts for Prelims: List of Global Navigation Satellite Systems:

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

Sources: the hindu.

10. UNISPACE+50

- **What is it?** UNISPACE+50 was held recently to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and highlight past and future Agency activities in support of the UN's space-related actions.

Key facts:

- UNISPACE+50 was celebrated at the Vienna International Centre, bringing together the international community, and reflecting on the past and future of space activities around the world.
- It was a chance to assess results following the three prior UNISPACE conferences, held in 1968, 1982 and 1999, and consider how the future course of global space cooperation can benefit everyone on Earth.

Facts for Prelims:

- The United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) works to promote international cooperation in the peaceful use and exploration of space, and in the utilisation of space science and technology for sustainable economic and social development.
- The Office assists any United Nations Member States to establish legal and regulatory frameworks to govern space activities and strengthens the capacity of developing countries to use space science technology and applications for development by helping to integrate space capabilities into national development programmes.
- UNOOSA is also responsible for implementing the Secretary-General's responsibilities under international space law and maintaining the United Nations Register of Objects Launched into Outer Space.
- UNOOSA is the current secretariat of the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems (ICG).

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** UNISPACE + 50, UNOOSA.
- **For Mains:** Regulation of outer space.

Sources: the hindu.

'Space2030' agenda:

- The event aimed at shaping the UN's comprehensive 'Space2030' agenda. The Space2030 agenda will map out how spaceflight and space-related activities can help achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (**SDGs**), addressing overarching, long-term development concerns, through the peaceful exploration and uses of outer space.

11. NASA PLANS TO PROTECT EARTH FROM GIANT ASTEROIDS

- **Context:** NASA has released a report outlining the federal government's response in the event that an asteroid or comet flying through space should ever impact Earth.
- **"The National Near-Earth Object Preparedness Strategy and Action Plan"** shows how the U.S. federal government would protect and prepare the planet for such an event, and outlines five strategic goals for reducing the risk of an impact.

The five strategic goals include:

- Enhance NEO detection, tracking, and characterization capabilities.
- Improve NEO modeling prediction, and information integration.
- Develop technologies for NEO deflection and disruption missions.
- Increase international cooperation on NEO preparation.
- Establish NEO impact emergency procedures and action protocols.



Potentially hazardous asteroids:

- Asteroid-hunting astronomers have already found more than 8,000 near-Earth objects measuring at least 460 feet (140 meters) across — large enough to wipe out an entire state if one were to hit the U.S. But asteroids that size make up only one-third of the estimated population of near-Earth asteroids. Smaller asteroid impacts may be less catastrophic, but they can still cause significant damage.
- NASA and its partners have identified more than 95% of all asteroids that are large enough to cause a global catastrophe, and none of those found poses a threat within the century.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Action plan proposed.
- **For Mains:** Threats posed by asteroids.

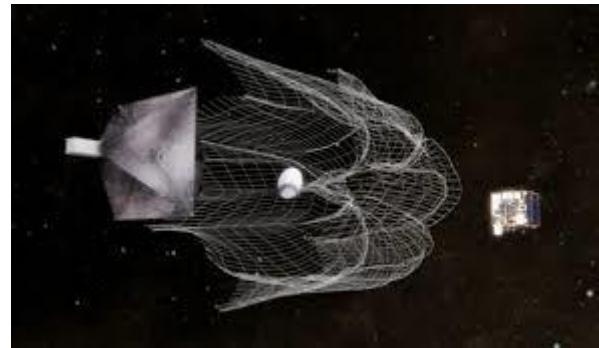
Sources: the hindu.

12. REMOVEDEBRIS

- **Context:** The first spacecraft to demonstrate active space debris-removal technologies — such as a harpoon, a net and a drag sail — in orbit has been released from the International Space Station to commence its mission.

About the RemoveDebris mission:

- **RemoveDebris** is an EU (**European Union**) research project to develop and fly a low cost in-orbit demonstrator mission that aims to de-risk and verify technologies needed for future ADR (Active Debris Removal) missions.
- RemoveDebris is aimed at performing key **ADR technology** demonstrations (e.g., capture, deorbiting) representative of an operational scenario during a low-cost mission using novel key technologies for ADR. The project is based on and aimed at contributing to global/European ADR roadmaps.



How it works?

- A microsatellite called here **RemoveSAT**, will release, capture and deorbit two space debris targets, called DebrisSats, in sequence using various rendezvous, capture and deorbiting technologies thus demonstrating in orbit, key ADR technologies for future missions in what promises to be the first ADR technology mission internationally.

Background:

- Space junk is an ever-growing problem with more than 7,500 tonnes of redundant hardware now thought to be circling the Earth. Ranging from old rocket bodies and defunct spacecraft through to screws and even flecks of paint – this material poses a collision hazard to operational missions.
- The rising population of space debris increases the potential danger to all space vehicles, but especially to the International Space Station (ISS), space shuttles, satellites and other spacecraft.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** RemoveDebris.
- **For Mains:** Space junk menace- threats and missions in this regard.

Sources: the hindu.

13. BAN ON OXYTOCIN

- **Context:** The **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** has restricted the manufacture of Oxytocin formulations for domestic use to **public sector only**. Coupled with this, it has also banned the import of Oxytocin and its formulations. The order comes into effect from July 1.

Who can manufacture?

- Only Karnataka Antibiotics & Pharmaceuticals Ltd. (KAPL), a public sector company, will manufacture this drug for domestic use. It will supply the drug to registered hospitals and clinics in public and private sector directly.

Why a ban on oxytocin?

- The drug is misused in the dairy industry where livestock is injected with Oxytocin to make them release milk at a time convenient to farmers.
- Oxytocin is also used to increase the size of vegetables such as pumpkins, watermelons, eggplants, gourds, and cucumbers.

About Oxytocin:

- Oxytocin has also been dubbed the hug hormone, cuddle chemical, moral molecule, and the bliss hormone due to its effects on behaviour, including its role in love and in female reproductive biological functions in reproduction.
- Oxytocin is a hormone that is made in the brain, in the hypothalamus. It is transported to, and secreted by, the pituitary gland, which is located at the base of the brain.
- It acts both as a hormone and as a brain neurotransmitter.
- The release of oxytocin by the pituitary gland acts to regulate two female reproductive functions: Childbirth and Breast-feeding.

Facts for Prelims:

- Carbetocin:** The World Health Organization (WHO) has come up with a safe and effective alternative to the controversial drug oxytocin.
- While Oxytocin, must be stored and transported at 2–8 degrees Celsius, and becomes less effective when exposed to heat, Carbetocin does not require refrigeration and retains its efficacy for at least three years even if it is stored at 30 degrees Celsius, and in 75% relative humidity.

Sources: the hindu.

What is oxytocin



- Oxytocin is a hormone secreted by the pituitary gland.
- It plays a role in reproduction, child birth and lactation, apart from social interaction.
- Oxytocin is used both for humans and animals, to accelerate normal labour.
- It is supposed to act directly on the uterus to induce rhythmic contractions.
- In certain animals, especially farm animals, it is used to achieve 'milk let down'.
- Oxytocin is believed to stimulate the mammary gland and induce milk production in farm animals, provided the udder is prepared to do so.

Paper 3 Topic: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

1. ODISHA BEACH IS ASIA'S FIRST TO GET 'BLUE FLAG' TAG

- Context:** The Chandrabhaga beach on the Konark coast of Odisha will be the first in Asia to get the Blue Flag certification.

Similar efforts:

- Twelve more beaches in the country are being developed by the Society for Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM), an Environment Ministry's body working for the management of coastal areas, in accordance with the Blue Flag standards.

About Blue flag project:

- Launched in December 2017 by the Environment Ministry, the prime objective of the project is to enhance standards of cleanliness, upkeep and basic amenities at beaches. Under the project, each state or union territory has been asked to nominate a beach which will be funded through the ongoing Integrated Coastal Management Programme.

Criteria for certification:

- To achieve the Blue Flag standards, a beach has to strictly comply with 33 environment and tourism-related conditions.

- The standards were established by the Copenhagen-based Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) in 1985.
- For example- a beach must be plastic-free and equipped with a waste management system. Clean water should be available for tourists, apart from international amenities. The beach should have facilities for studying the environmental impact around the area.

Facts for Prelims:

- **Society of Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM)** has been established under the aegis of **Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate change**.
- The main objective of the Centre is to promote research and development in the area of coastal management including addressing issues of coastal communities.
- It also supports implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) activities in India and implements the World Bank assisted India ICZM Project.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** All about the Blue Flag project.

Sources: the hindu.

2. RESOURCE EFFICIENCY CELL

- **Context:** MoEFCC and TERI have entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to set up a resource efficiency cell in the Ministry.

Aims and objectives:

- The main objectives of the Cell are to provide a platform to mainstream resource efficiency in public policy.
- It aims to achieve this through coordinated thinking among the various relevant Ministries and agencies for promoting resource efficiency in the use of materials in the country.
- It also aims to ensure a ‘systems’ thinking based on materials, products and processes, apart from enabling the preparation of an overarching resource efficiency policy for India and coordinated sectoral policies and regulatory mechanisms.

Strategy on Resource Efficiency:

- NITI Aayog in collaboration with the European Union delegation to India have released the Strategy on Resource Efficiency. The strategy aims to promote resource efficiency in India.
- This strategy is the first policy document to emphasize resource productivity in the country. The Strategy emphasizes on Sustainable Public Procurement (SSP) as an action agenda which will be the market transformation tool to transform to a resource efficient economy.
- It is developed with the recommendations from the Indian Resource Efficiency Programme (IREP), launched by the Indian Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and Indian Resource Panel (InRP) in April 2017.

What is Resource Efficiency and why do we need it?

- Resource efficiency very simply put is making more with fewer materials. In practice, through a life-cycle approach, it leads to minimizing impact on environment & the associated societal burdens, transforming ‘waste’ into ‘resources’ fostering circular economy, and strengthening resource security.
- Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy are important goals and central principles for achieving sustainable development. Sustainability is a global priority and SDGs commitment and 11th Five year plan also clearly enunciate importance of Resource efficiency (RE).

Way ahead:

- India’s large population, rapid urbanization and expanding industrial production have led to exploitation of available limited natural resources with concerns regarding resource depletion and future availability becoming more pronounced.
- Ensuring resource security requires an integrated, concerted and collaborative approach in order to fulfill the needs of a vast and growing population.

- Also, the environmental burdens emanating due to resource extraction, utilization and disposal, including land degradation, biodiversity loss, as well as air and water pollution remain of great concern. Enhancing resource efficiency (RE) and promoting the use of secondary raw materials (SRM) is a pertinent strategy to address these challenges and reduce dependence on primary resource.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** TERI and aims and objectives of Resource efficiency cell.
- For Mains:** Resource efficiency- need, significance, challenges and means to achieve it, NITI Aayog's strategy on resource efficiency.

Sources: the hindu.

3. GANGA PRAHARIS

- Context:** A group of 427 trained volunteers, called Ganga Praharis, are reaching to each and every house in areas along river Ganga to educate them about the importance of protecting river's bio-diversity. They are spread over Ganga basin states of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal.

About Ganga Praharis:

Who are Ganga Praharis?

- They are new grassroot-level **volunteers** to protect the bio-diversity of river Ganga.
- They are roped-in by Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun as 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.

Skills:

- Ganga Praharis are well trained in ecological monitoring of Ganga aqua life, plantation techniques, awareness creation and community mobilization. They are trained through a series of national, state and site level workshops in diverse skills such as ecological surveys, rescue and rehabilitation of aquatic species, awareness meetings, social interactions and green livelihood skills.

Roles and functions:

- 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.
- Not only do these Ganga Praharis performing the task of conserving the deteriorating biodiversity of river Ganga, they are also motivating other people to spread the clean Ganga message, thus, contributing in making clean Ganga mission a mass movement.
- The Ganga Praharis will be the role models in inspiring other members of the community to join hands in the efforts for conservation of the biodiversity of river Ganga. Thus, each Prahari shall work on the model of 'Each One Make Ten'.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** Who are Ganga praharis and their role.
- For Mains:** Efforts to conserve river ganga and involvement of various stakeholders.

Sources: the hindu.

4. NATIONAL MISSION FOR CLEAN GANGA (NMCG)

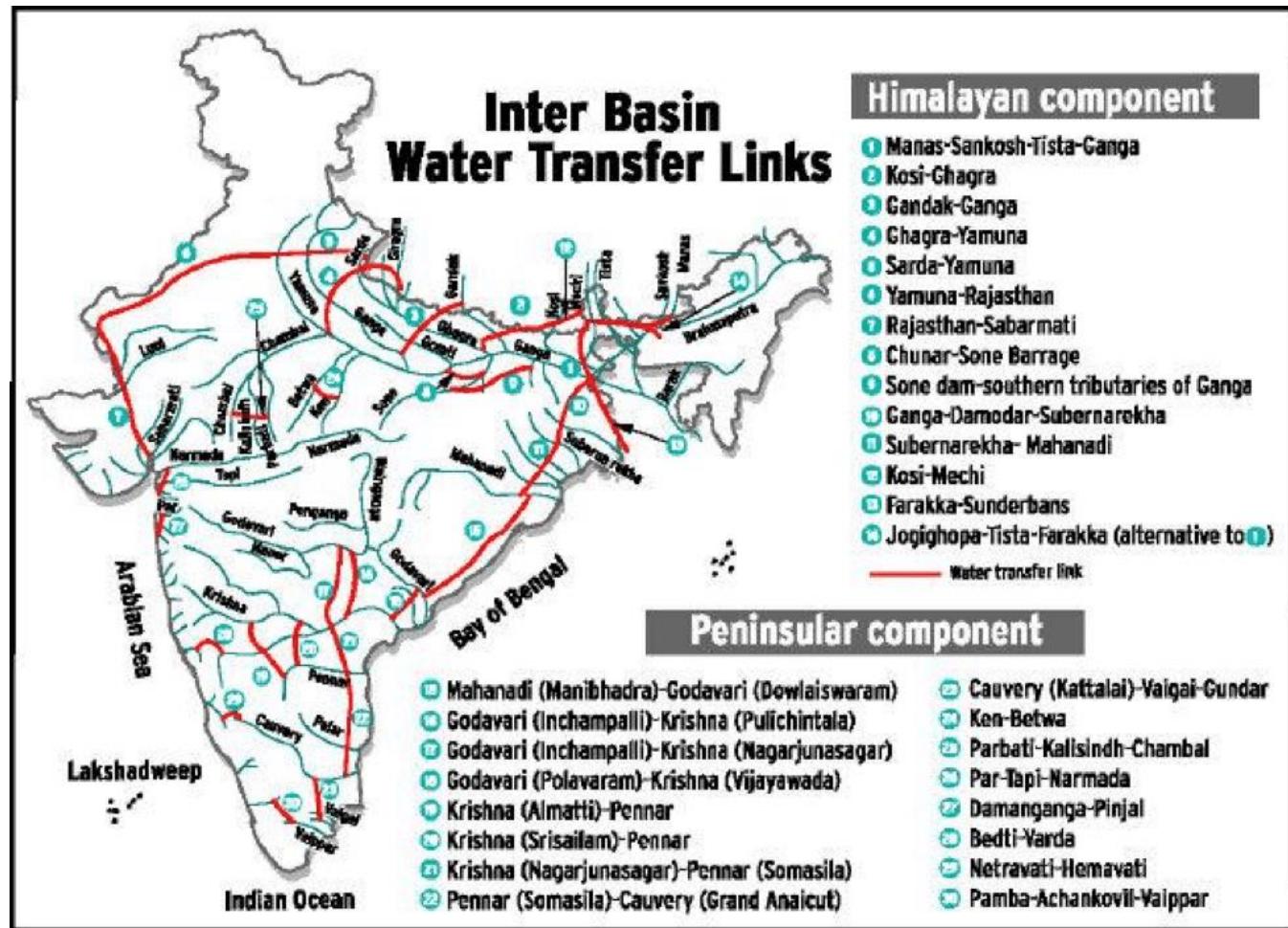
- The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) is the implementation wing of National Ganga Council which was set up in October 2016 under the River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Authorities order 2016. The order dissolved National Ganga River Basin Authority.
- NMCG has a two tier management structure and comprises of Governing Council and Executive Committee. Both of them are headed by Director General, NMCG. Executive Committee has been authorized to accord approval for all projects up to Rs.1000 crore.

The order envisages five tier structure at national, state and district level to take measures for prevention, control and abatement of environmental pollution in river Ganga and to ensure continuous adequate flow of water so as to rejuvenate the river Ganga as below:

1. National Ganga Council under chairmanship of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.
2. Empowered Task Force (ETF) on river Ganga under chairmanship of Hon'ble Union Minister of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation.
3. National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG).
4. State Ganga Committees and
5. District Ganga Committees in every specified district abutting river Ganga and its tributaries in the states.

5. INTER-LINKING OF RIVERS

- **Context:** The Union Cabinet was recently apprised of the progress report of Special Committee for Inter-Linking of Rivers.



Source: National Water Development Agency

Background:

- The progress report on interlinking of rivers has been submitted to the Cabinet in compliance of the Hon'ble Supreme Court judgement. The court had directed the Union Government of India to constitute a Special Committee for Interlinking of Rivers.

Need for interlinking of rivers:

- The interlinking project aims to link India's rivers by a network of reservoirs and canals that will allow for their water capacities to be shared and redistributed. According to some experts, this is an engineered panacea that will reduce persistent floods in some parts and water shortages in other parts besides facilitating the generation of hydroelectricity for an increasingly power hungry country.

Benefits associated:

- **Redistribution:** India receives most of its rain during monsoon season from June to September, most of it falls in northern and eastern part of India, the amount of rainfall in southern and western part are comparatively low. It will be these places which will have shortage of water. Interlinking of rivers will help these areas to have water throughout the year.
- **Boost to agriculture:** The main occupation of rural India is agriculture and if monsoon fails in a year, then agricultural activities come to a standstill and this will aggravate rural poverty. Interlinking of rivers will be a practical solution for this problem, because the water can be stored or water can be transferred from water surplus area to deficit.
- **Disaster mitigation:** The Ganga Basin, Brahmaputra basin sees floods almost every year. In order to avoid this, the water from these areas has to be diverted to other areas where there is scarcity of water. This can be achieved by linking the rivers. There is a two way advantage with this – floods will be controlled and scarcity of water will be reduced.
- **Transportation:** Interlinking of rivers will also have commercial importance on a longer run. This can be used as inland waterways and which helps in faster movement of goods from one place to other.
- **Employment generation:** Interlinking also creates a new occupation for people living in and around these canals and it can be the main areas of fishing in India.

Concerns associated:

- Interlinking of rivers will cause huge amount of distortion in the existing environment. In order to create canals and reservoirs, there will be mass deforestation. This will have impact on rains and in turn affect the whole cycle of life.
- Usually rivers change their course and direction in about 100 years and if this happens after interlinking, then the project will not be feasible for a longer run.
- Due to interlinking of rivers, there will be decrease in the amount of fresh water entering seas and this will cause a serious threat to the marine life system and will be a major ecological disaster.
- Due to the creation of Canals and Reservoirs, huge amount of area which is occupied by the people will be submerged leading to displacement of people and government will have to spend more to rehabilitate these people.
- The amount required for these projects is so huge that government will have to take loans from the foreign sources which would increase the burden on the government and country will fall in a debt trap.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Differences between Himalayan and Peninsular rivers, geographical features associated with these rivers.
- **For Mains:** Interlinking of rivers- need, benefits, challenges and solutions.

Sources: pib.

6. URANIUM CONTAMINATION

- **Context:** Scientists have found widespread uranium contamination in groundwater from aquifers across 16 states in India, much above the WHO provisional standard for the country. The main source of uranium contamination was “natural,” but human factors such as groundwater table decline and nitrate pollution could be worsening the problem.

WHO prescribed limit:

- The WHO has set a provisional safe drinking water standard of 30 micrograms of uranium per litre, a level that is consistent with the U.S. EPA standards.
- However, uranium is not yet included in the list of contaminants monitored under the Bureau of Indian Standards' Drinking Water Specifications.

Main factors responsible for uranium contamination:

- When over-pumping of aquifers' groundwater occurs and their water levels decline, it induces oxidation conditions that, in turn, enhance uranium enrichment in the shallow groundwater that remains.

- While the primary source of uranium is geogenic (naturally occurring), anthropogenic (human caused) factors such as groundwater table decline and nitrate pollution may further enhance uranium mobilisation.
- Other factors include the amount of uranium contained in an aquifer's rocks; water-rock interactions that cause the uranium to be extracted from those rocks; oxidation conditions that enhance the extracted uranium's solubility in water; and the interaction of the extracted uranium with other chemicals in the groundwater, such as bicarbonate, which can further enhance its solubility.

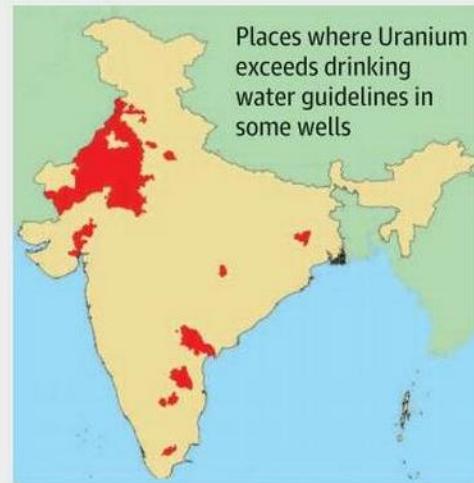
What needs to be done?

- There is a need for revision of the current water quality monitoring program in India, evaluation of human health risks in areas of high uranium prevalence, development of adequate remediation technologies, and, above all, implementation of preventive management practices to address this problem.
- Including a uranium standard in the Bureau of Indian Standards' Drinking Water Specification based on uranium's kidney-harming effects, establishing monitoring systems to identify at-risk areas, and exploring new ways to prevent or treat uranium contamination will help ensure access to safe drinking water for tens of millions in India.

Unsafe aquifers

Sixteen States show a high prevalence of uranium concentrations above the WHO provisional guideline value (30 µg/L)

- India has no standards for uranium levels in groundwater
- There have been reports of high levels of uranium in Andhra Pradesh
- Over-pumping of groundwater causes a decline in water levels
- This induces oxidation conditions that enhance uranium enrichment in shallow groundwater



Source:
"Large-Scale Uranium Contamination..." Rachel M. Coyte et al.

What's important?

- For Prelims and Mains:** Uranium contamination- causes, concerns, effects and solutions.

Sources: the hindu.

7. WORLD OCEANS DAY- 8 JUNE

- Context:** World Ocean Day is celebrated every year on June 8th.
- Action focus for 2018:** preventing plastic pollution and encouraging solutions for a healthy ocean.
- Background:** The concept of a 'World Oceans Day' was first proposed in 1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro as a way to celebrate our world's shared ocean and our personal connection to the sea, as well as to raise awareness about the crucial role the ocean plays in our lives and the important ways people can help protect it.
- The **UN General Assembly** recognized the important contribution of sustainable development and management of the resources and uses of the oceans and seas to the achievement of international development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, and designated 8 June as World Oceans Day.
- SDG:** The Ocean Conference was convened to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.



8. COMPOSITE WATER MANAGEMENT INDEX (CWMI)

- **Context:** NITI Aayog has released its report on Composite Water Management Index (CWMI).

About CWMI:

- The Composite Water Management Index report is a step in a direction that aims to create awareness among people and governments about the realities of water crisis in the country.
- CWMI aims to enable effective water management in Indian states in the face of this growing crisis.
- The index would provide useful information for the states and concerned Central ministries and departments enabling them to formulate and implement suitable strategies for better management of water resources.
- NITI Aayog has ranked all states in the index on the composite water management, comprising 9 broad sectors with 28 different indicators covering various aspects of ground water, restoration of water bodies, irrigation, farm practices, drinking water, policy and governance.

Benefits of the Index:

- The index can be utilised to formulate and implement suitable strategies for better management of water resources.
- The index would provide useful information for the States and also for the concerned Central Ministries/Departments enabling them to formulate and implement suitable strategies for better management of water resources.

Significance of the index:

- This index is an attempt to inspire States and UTs towards efficient and optimal utilization of water, and recycling thereof with a sense of urgency. It will be a useful tool to assess and improve the performance in efficient management of water resources.

Best and worst performers:

- The report ranks **Gujarat** at the top in managing its water resources in the reference year (2016-17) followed by Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra.
- The worst states include **Jharkhand**, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.
- Among North Eastern and Himalayan states, Tripura has been adjudged number one in 2016-17 followed by Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Assam.
- In terms of incremental change in the index (over 2015-16 level), Rajasthan holds number one position in general states and Tripura ranks at first position amongst Northeastern and Himalayan states.



Concerns:

- India is suffering from the worst water crisis in its history and millions of lives and livelihoods are under threat. Currently, 600 million Indians face high to extreme water stress and about 200,000 thousand people die every year due to inadequate access to safe water.
- The crisis is going to get worse and by 2030, the country's water demand is projected to be twice the available supply, implying severe water scarcity for hundreds of millions of people and an eventual 6% loss in the country's GDP.

Way ahead:

- Water scarcity is one of the biggest problems the country is facing today and that more than the scarcity of water, it is an issue of management of water resources.
- Water management is often currently viewed as a zero-sum game by states due to limited frameworks for inter-state and national management. However, Centre-state and inter-state cooperation can help address the issue.
- There is a need to reward those states which are doing well in managing their water resources and also to bring in the public domain the names of those states which are not managing their resources properly.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** CWMI- key features, best and worst performing states.
- **For Mains:** Water crisis- concerns, challenges and solutions.

Sources: the hindu.

9. SWAJAL SCHEME

- **Context:** The government recently launched Swajal schemes in 115 aspirational districts of the country. It will involve an outlay of Rs 700 crores through flexible-funds under the existing National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) budget.

About NRDWP:

- The NRDWP was started in 2009, with a major emphasis on ensuring sustainability (source) of water availability in terms of potability, adequacy, convenience, affordability and equity.
- NRDWP is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with 50: 50 fund sharing between the Centre and the States.

Facts for Prelims:

- Water is a State subject and rural water supply has been included in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution among the subjects that may be entrusted to Panchayats by the States.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Key features of SWAJAL and NRDWP.

Sources: pib.

What is Swajal?

- Swajal is a **community owned drinking water programme** for sustained drinking water supply.
- Under the scheme, **90%** of the project cost will be taken care by the **Government** and the remaining **10%** of the project cost will be contributed by the **community**. The Operations and management of the project will be taken care by the **local villagers**.

10. PAR-TAPI-NARMADA INTER-STATE RIVER LINK PROJECT

- **Context:** Gujarat government has expressed its inability to divert 434 MCM water for Maharashtra in Tapi basin as requested by Maharashtra as part of the Par-Tapi-Narmada inter-state river link project. The project has been mired in controversy for years now.

About Par-Tapi-Narmada inter-state river link project:

- The projects envisages transfer of surplus water of rivers in Maharashtra and south Gujarat to feed the command area of the Miyagam branch of Narmada canal. It will save water in Narmada dam, which will be taken to Saurashtra and Kutch.

- The project is aimed at diverting “surplus” water from parts of west flowing rivers like the Par, the Nar, the Ambika and the Auranga basins in Maharashtra.
- Besides providing irrigation benefits to the enroute command and Narmada command, the link will generate hydropower of the order of 93.00 Mwh through the power houses installed at four dam sites viz. Jheri, Paikhed, Chasmandva and Chikkar and in two feeder canals taking off from Dabdar and Kelwan dams. The reservoirs will also provide flood relief to the people residing in downstream areas.
- The project of Par-Tapi-Narmada link generally falls in the state of Gujarat except Jheri reservoir which falls in Maharashtra state. Jheri dam is located in Nasik district of Maharashtra, while remaining dams viz. Mohankavchali, Paikhed, Chasmandva, Chikkar, Dabdar and Kelwan dams are located in Valsad and Dang districts of Gujarat.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** Important dams and rivers.
- For Mains:** River linking- need, significance, challenges and solutions.

Sources: the hindu.

11. WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT: 17 JUNE

- Context:** The World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought is observed every year to promote public awareness of international efforts to combat desertification. The day is a unique moment to remind everyone that land degradation neutrality is achievable through problem-solving, strong community involvement and co-operation at all levels.
- 2018 Theme:** “Land has true value – invest in it.”

The Gender Action Plan:

- The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) recently created a new plan to support and enhance gender-responsive policy needs.
- The Gender Action Plan (GAP) that will increase and strengthen the participation and leadership of women at all levels of decision-making and local implementation of the UNCCD, including drought management as well as sand and dust storms and land degradation neutrality interventions, with the aim to reach gender parity by 2030.



Turn deserts into forests, and we provide an ecosystem that produces food, fuel, medicines, herbs, and so much more.



Desertification: “The transformation of land once suitable for agriculture into desert. Desertification can result from climate change or from human practices such as deforestation and overgrazing.”

Desertification and the Sustainable Development Goals:

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development declares that “we are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations”.
- Specifically, Goal 15 states our resolve to halt and reverse land degradation.

What is Desertification?

- Desertification is the degradation of land in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas. It is caused primarily by human activities and climatic variations. Desertification does not refer to the expansion of existing deserts.
- It occurs because dryland ecosystems, which cover over one third of the world's land area, are extremely vulnerable to overexploitation and inappropriate land use. Poverty, political instability, deforestation, overgrazing and bad irrigation practices can all undermine the productivity of the land.

Facts for Prelims:

- The WDCD2018 global observance** will be hosted by the Government of Ecuador. The country promotes sustainable land management as one of the pillars of bio-economy.
- About UNCCD:** Established in 1994, the United Nations to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management. The Convention addresses specifically the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, known as the drylands, where some of the most vulnerable ecosystems and peoples can be found.

Sources: the hindu.

12. INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR ACTION: WATER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, 2018-2028

- Context:** Republic of Tajikistan and United Nations are jointly organizing a high-level Conference on "International Decade for Action: Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028". The Conference will discuss key water related issues of sustainable development goals adopted by UN member countries.

International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028:

- In order to accelerate efforts towards meeting water-related challenges, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2018-2028 as the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development".
- The Water Action Decade commenced on World Water Day, 22 March 2018**, and will end on World Water Day, 22 March 2028.

Objectives:

- The objectives of the Decade focus on the sustainable development and integrated management of water resources for the achievement of social, economic and environmental objectives and on the implementation and promotion of related programmes and projects.
- It will also focus on the furtherance of cooperation and partnership at all levels in order to help to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- The Decade also highlights the importance of promoting efficient water usage at all levels, taking into account the water, food, energy, environment nexus; and stresses the importance of the participation and full involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including women, children, young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and local communities.

Facts & Figures:

- 1 billion people lack access to safely managed drinking water services (WHO/UNICEF 2017).
- 5 billion people lack safely managed sanitation services (WHO/UNICEF 2017).
- Water scarcity already affects four out of every 10 people (WHO).
- 90% of all natural disasters are water-related (UNISDR).
- 80% of wastewater flows back into the ecosystem without being treated or reused (UNESCO 2017).

Facts for Prelims:

- SDG 6** calls for clean water and sanitation for all people.

Sources: pib.

13. FAME (FASTER ADOPTION AND MANUFACTURING OF HYBRID AND ELECTRIC VEHICLES)

- **Context:** The Centre plans to scrap cash incentives currently offered to buyers of electric cars under FAME scheme. The move, experts said, will further dampen sales of private electric cars.

Why?

- The government seeks to withdraw the cash incentives for private electric cars because it neither makes a “substantial difference in promoting sales nor serves the purpose of a clean environment”.

What next?

- Instead, the government has now decided to give cash subsidies to electric vehicles used by shared-mobility operators such as Ola and Uber, as their vehicles will run much more than private cars.
- The government feels that the addition of cab aggregators like Ola and Uber to the list of subsidy beneficiaries would prompt these companies to go for electrics, which offer highly-lucrative running costs as compared with conventional diesel/petrol or CNG alternatives.

Background:

- Currently, the government offers a discount of up to Rs 1.3 lakh on an electric car as part of its clean-energy programme, FAME (faster adoption and manufacturing of hybrid and electric vehicles). This is being proposed to be removed in the new FAME Phase 2 draft policy drawn up by the heavy industries ministry.

Concerns:

- The stance runs contrary to the broader mobility vision that the government had projected just a few months back. As pollution rises across many top cities and smog and poisonous gases are difficult to control, the government had said it wants the entire car industry in India to switch to electric by year 2030. Last year, only around 1,500 electric passenger vehicles were sold against petrol/diesel/CNG car sales of 32 lakh.

About FAME India scheme:

- **What is it?** With an aim to promote eco-friendly vehicles, the government had launched the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India (FAME-India) scheme in 2015. It was launched by union ministry for heavy industries.
- **Aim:** The FAME India Scheme is aimed at incentivising all vehicle segments, including two-wheeler, three wheeler auto, passenger four-wheeler vehicle, light commercial vehicles and buses. The scheme covers hybrid and electric technologies like a strong hybrid, plug-in hybrid and battery electric vehicles.
- **Facts:** FAME India – Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric vehicles in India – is a part of the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan. The scheme envisages Rs 795 crore support in the first two fiscals. It is being administered by the Heavy Industries Ministry.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** FAME scheme and its significance.

Sources: the hindu.

14. CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN THE AREA OF AIR-CONDITIONING

- **Context:** Union Power Ministry has launched a campaign to promote energy efficiency in the area of air-conditioning. **This initiative is launched on voluntary basis** to increase awareness and encourage consumers to adopt the guidelines. It will save energy and reduce greenhouse gases.

Need for energy efficiency in the area of air-conditioning:

- Every one degree increase in the air-conditioner temperature setting results in saving of 6% of electricity consumed. The new campaign will result in substantial energy savings and also reduce greenhouse gas emission.

- Besides, normal human body temperature is approximately 36-37 degree Celsius, but large number of commercial establishments, hotels and offices maintain temperature around 18-21 degree Celsius. This is not only uncomfortable but is actually unhealthy.
- Setting the temperature in the range of 18-21 degree Celsius compels people to wear warm clothing or use blankets; therefore, this is actually wastage of energy.

Expected outcomes:

- After an awareness campaign of 4-6 months, followed by a survey to gather public feedback, the Ministry of Power would consider making this mandatory.
- If all the consumers adopt, this will result in savings of 20 billion units of electricity in one year alone.

Way ahead:

- Under the guidance of Ministry of Power, the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) has carried out a study and has recommended that the default setting in the air-conditioning should be at **24 degree Celsius**.
- Manufacturers have also been advised to keep the default setting of air conditioners at 24 degree Celsius and also to carry out labelling indicating the optimum temperature setting for the benefits of consumers both from financial and their health points of view. These temperatures setting will be in the range of 24-26 degree Celsius.

Facts for Prelims:

- Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) was established in March 2002, as a statutory body by the Government of India under the Energy Conservation Act 2001.
- It is responsible for spearheading the improvement of energy efficiency of the economy through various regulatory and promotional instruments. The primary goal of BEE is to reduce the energy intensity in the Indian economy.
- It coordinates with State level agencies and energy consumers to perform functions and exercise powers that may be necessary for efficient use of energy and its conservation in India.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** BEE.
- **For Mains:** Need for energy efficiency in air conditioning.

Sources: pib.

15. PLASTIC BAN IN MAHARASHTRA

- **Context:** Maharashtra government recently began enforcing a ban on plastic, a decision it announced in March. The government had given the manufacturers, distributors, and consumers a period of three months to dispose their existing stock and come up with alternatives to plastic usage.

What all plastic products are covered under the ban?

- Under the notification products manufactured from plastic and thermocol have been covered under the ban. As a result usage of plastic bags with a handle and without handle, disposable cups, and plates, spoons, forks, glasses, and containers is prohibited in the state. Plastic packaging used to wrap and store the product is also included in the ban.
- Apart from this plastic straw, non-woven polypropene bags, pouches and any other plastic used to store, package and transfer food items will no longer be permitted in the state. Besides, it has banned the use of plastic and thermocol for decoration purposes.

Plastic items excluded from the ban:

- Plastic used for packaging medicines and drugs.
- Food grade virgin plastic used for packaging milk.
- Compostable packaging bags used for horticulture and agriculture purposes.
- Plastic bags used for exporting goods.
- Plastic used at the manufacturing stage.
- Plastic used for handling of solid waste.

Who will implement and monitor the ban?

- Officials from Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) and district and local administration have been authorised to implement it. For regulating this law at tourist locations, tourism police, or Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation has been made responsible.
- The government has also formed an association comprising of plastic manufacturers, ministry officials and environmental experts to oversee the implementation of the ban.

Way ahead:

- While environmentalists welcomed the cabinet's decision, the plastic industry has slammed the government calling it "retrograde step."
- With its huge dependence on plastic and lack of alternatives to the banned products, many also wonder if the plan would be a success.

Facts for Prelims:

- On World Environment Day, June 5, India was the host nation, with the theme for this year being 'Beat plastic pollution.'

Sources: the hindu.

16. CHILIKA LAKE

- Why in News?** The Airports Authority of India has proposed to set up a water aerodrome in Chilika Lake for starting amphibious aircraft operations in Odisha.

About Chilika Lagoon:

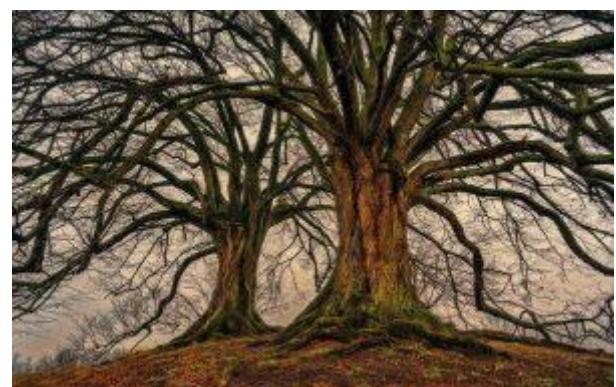
- It is the **largest coastal lagoon in India** and the second largest lagoon in the world after The New Caledonian barrier reef in New Caledonia.
- It is the **largest wintering ground** for migratory **waterfowl** found anywhere on the Indian sub-continent.
- It is one of the **hotspot of biodiversity** in the country, and some rare, vulnerable and endangered species listed in the IUCN Red List of threatened Animals inhabit in the lagoon for atleast part of their life cycle.
- On account of its rich bio-diversity and ecological significance, Chilika was designated as the **1st "Ramsar Site"** of India.
- The **Nalaban Island** within the lagoon is notified as a Bird Sanctuary under Wildlife (Protection) Act, the National Wetlands, mangroves and coral reefs Committee of Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India, have also identified the lagoon as a priority site for conservation and management.
- Chilika Lagoon lies in the districts of Puri, Khurda and Ganjam of Odisha State along the eastern coast of India. It is well connected to the Chennai and Kolkata through National Highway No 5, and the Chennai Kolkata rail line passes along the western bank of the Lagoon Balugaon, with Balugaon, Chilika and Rambha being the main stations along the Western shoreline of the lagoon.

17. TOXIC AIR IS CAUSING MALNUTRITION IN TREES

- Context:** Besides affecting human health, air pollution is also causing malnutrition in trees by harming Mycorrhizal fungi.

Importance of Mycorrhizal fungi:

- Mycorrhizal fungi is hosted by the trees in their roots to receive nutrients from the soil.
- These fungi provide essential nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium from soil in exchange for carbon from the tree.
- This plant-fungal symbiotic relationship is crucial for the health of the tree.



How air pollution affects this symbiotic relationship?

- High levels of the nutrition elements like nitrogen and phosphorus in the mycorrhizae changes them to act as pollutants rather than nutrients.

Concerns:

- The characteristics of the tree — species and nutrient status — and the local environmental conditions like the atmospheric pollution and soil variables were the most important predictors of which species of mycorrhizae fungi would be present and their numbers. These also proved to have a large impact on the fungi.
- The signs of malnutrition can be seen in the form of discoloured leaves and excessive falling of leaves. Ecosystem changes can also negatively affect tree health.

Way ahead:

- The results should be used to design new studies into the link between pollution, soil, mycorrhizae, and tree growth.

Sources: the hindu.

18. ALDABRA GAINT TORTOISE

- **Why in News?** In a goodwill gesture, Seychelles has gifted a pair of giant Aldabra tortoise to India. The pair will be kept at Hyderabad Zoo.

Key facts:

- The Aldabra Giant Tortoise (*Aldabrachelys gigantea*) from the Aldabra Atoll in the Seychelles is said to be one of the **largest species of tortoises** on the planet.
- It is also one of the **world's longest living animals**, with one Aldabra Giant Tortoise reaching the age of **255 years**.
- The Aldabra giant tortoise's current IUCN conservation status is '**vulnerable**'.
- The atoll has been protected from human influence and is home to around 100,000 giant tortoises, the world's largest population of the animal.



19. GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY (GEF)

- **Context:** India has announced it will increase for the next four years the money it pays to the Global Environment Facility (GEF), a mechanism to provide grants for environment projects. India will increase its commitments from \$12 million to \$15 million to the GEF's new four-year investment cycle, known as GEF-7.

About GEF:

- The Global Environment Facility was established on the eve of **the 1992 Rio Earth Summit** to help tackle our planet's most pressing environmental problems.
- It is **an international partnership of 183 countries, international institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector** that addresses global environmental issues.
- GEF funds are **available to developing countries and countries with economies in transition** to meet the objectives of the international environmental conventions and agreements.
- **The World Bank serves as the GEF Trustee**, administering the GEF Trust Fund.
- It is a **FINANCIAL MECHANISM for five major international environmental conventions**: the Minamata Convention on Mercury, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (**POPs**), the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (**UNCBD**), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (**UNCCD**) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (**UNFCCC**).



Sources: the hindu.

Paper 3 Topic: Disaster management.**1. ENSEMBLE PREDICTION SYSTEMS (EPS)**

- **Context:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has commissioned two very high resolution (12 km grid scale) state-of-the-art global Ensemble Prediction Systems (EPS) for generating operational 10-days probabilistic forecasts of weather. The EPS involves the generation of multiple forecasts using slightly varying initial conditions.

About Ensemble forecasting:

- Ensemble forecasting provides localised predictions of a 12 km resolution compared to 23 kilometers in the earlier system.
- The new model has been developed jointly by Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology and National Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting.
- With this new model, India joins the US with a model that predicts with a 12 km resolution. Only the 'European Center for Medium Range Weather Forecast' has a better, nine-kilometer resolution.

Need for better forecasts:

- Better forecasts lead to better management agriculture and water resources. It also helps promote tourism, solar and wind energy.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** EPS model and its significance, IMD and its role.
- **For Mains:** Significance of weather forecasting in disaster management.

Sources: the hindu.

2. DAM REHABILITATION & IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (DRIP)

- **Context:** The Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) has approved revised cost estimate of Dam Rehabilitation & Improvement Project (DRIP) for Rs. 3466 crore and has extended time period for conclusion till June, 2020.

About DRIP:

- The Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR), Government of India, with assistance from the World Bank, is implementing the DAM REHABILITATION AND IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (DRIP), which would be a six-year project. The Central Dam Safety Organisation of Central Water Commission, assisted by a Consulting firm, is coordinating and supervising the Project implementation.
- **Goals:** The project originally envisaged the rehabilitation and improvement of about 223 dams within four states namely, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Tamil Nadu and later Karnataka, Uttarakhand (UNVNL) and Jharkhand (DVC) joined DRIP and total number of dams covered under DRIP increased to 250. The project will also promote new technologies and improve Institutional capacities for dam safety evaluation and implementation at the Central and State levels and in some identified premier academic and research institutes of the country.

The project development objectives of DRIP are:

- to improve the safety and performance of selected existing dams and associated appurtenances in a sustainable manner, and
- to strengthen the dam safety institutional setup in participating states as well as at central level.

Facts for Prelims:

- **About CWC:** Central Water Commission is a premier Technical Organization of India in the field of Water Resources and is presently functioning as an attached office of the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Government of India.
- **Functions:** The Commission is entrusted with the general responsibilities of initiating, coordinating and furthering in consultation of the State Governments concerned, schemes for control, conservation and utilization of water resources throughout the country, for purpose of Flood Control, Irrigation, Navigation,

Drinking Water Supply and Water Power Development. It also undertakes the investigations, construction and execution of any such schemes as required.

Facts for Prelims- DHARMA:

- It is a software programme – Dam Health and Rehabilitation Monitoring Application (DHARMA).
- DHARMA is a web tool to digitize all dam related data effectively.
- It will help to document authentic asset and health information pertaining to the large dams in the country, enabling appropriate actions to ensure need based rehabilitation.
- It is a new stride in asset management aspect by India.

What's important?

- For Prelims:** CWC, DRIP project- goals, participants and coordinating agency, other World Bank aided projects.
- For Mains:** Need for Dam rehabilitation and challenges therein.

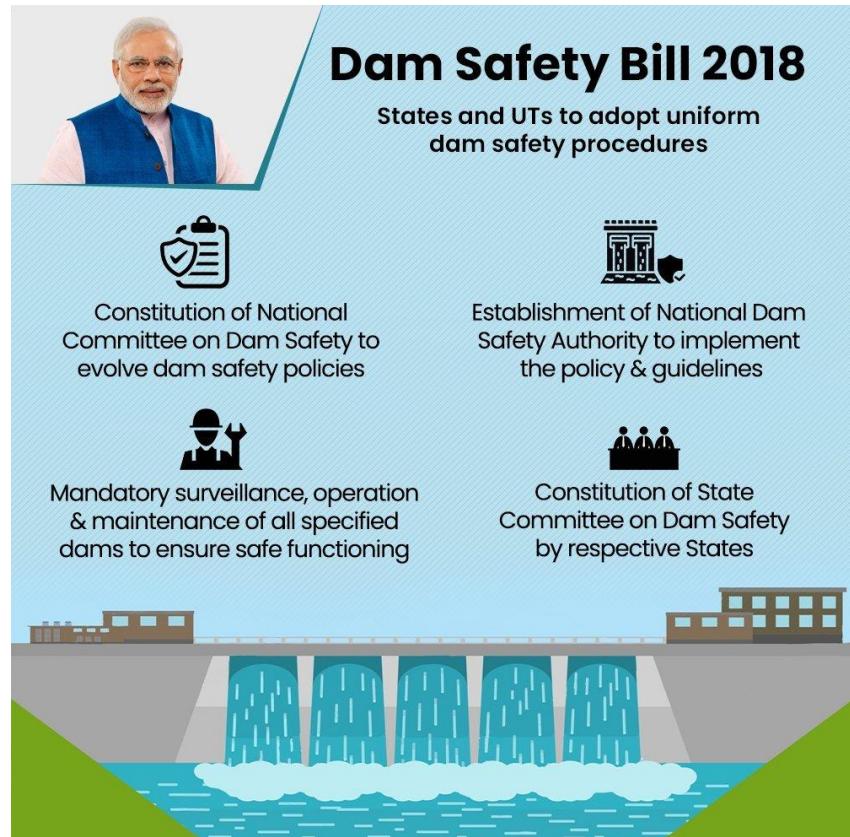
Sources: pib.

3. DAM SAFETY BILL, 2018

- Context:** The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for introduction of Dam Safety Bill, 2018 in the Parliament.

Highlights of the Bill:

- The Bill provides for proper surveillance, inspection, operation and maintenance of all specified dams in the country to ensure their safe functioning.
- The Bill provides for constitution of a National Committee on Dam Safety which shall evolve dam safety policies and recommend necessary regulations as may be required for the purpose.
- The Bill provides for establishment of National Dam Safety Authority as a regulatory body which shall discharge functions to implement the policy, guidelines and standards for dam safety in the country.
- The Bill provides for constitution of a State Committee on Dam Safety by State Government.



Functions of the National Dam Safety Authority:

- It shall maintain liaison with the State Dam Safety Organisations and the owners of dams for standardisation of dam safety related data and practices.
- It shall provide the technical and managerial assistance to the States and State Dam Safety Organisations.
- It shall maintain a national level data-base of all dams in the country and the records of major dam failures.
- It shall examine the cause of any major dam failure.
- It shall publish and update the standard guidelines and check-lists for the routine inspection and detailed investigations of dams and appurtenances.
- It shall accord recognition or accreditations to the organisations that can be entrusted with the works of investigation, design or construction of new dams.
- It will also look into unresolved points of issue between the State Dam Safety Organisation of two states, or between the State Dam Safety Organisation of a State and the owner of a dam in that State, for proper solution.

- Further, in certain cases, such as dams of one State falling under the territory of another State, the National Authority shall also perform the role of State Dam Safety Organization thereby eliminating potential causes for inter-state conflicts.

Significance:

- It will help all the States and Union Territories of India to adopt uniform dam safety procedures which shall ensure safety of dams and safeguard benefits from such dams. This shall also help in safeguarding human life, livestock and property.
- The Dam Safety Bill, 2018 address all issues concerning dam safety including regular inspection of dams, Emergency Action Plan, comprehensive dam safety review, adequate repair and maintenance funds for dam safety, Instrumentation and Safety Manuals. It lays onus of dam safety on the dam owner and provides for penal provisions for commission and omission of certain acts.

Need for a legislation:

- There are over 5200 large dams in India and about 450 are under construction. Plus there are thousands of medium and small dams.
- Due to lack of legal and institutional architecture for dam safety in India, dam safety is an issue of concern. Unsafe dams are a hazard and dam break may cause disasters, leading to huge loss of life and property.

Issues:

- The Tamil Nadu Assembly has unanimously adopted a special resolution urging the Centre to keep the Dam Safety Bill, 2018, in abeyance until the concerns raised over the legislation by Tamil Nadu and other States are addressed.
- Tamil Nadu contended that certain clauses of the Bill affected the interests of Tamil Nadu and could potentially affect the State's rights on control and maintenance of dams located in neighbouring States.
- Tamil Nadu is worried because the draft Bill, in the guise of facilitating dam safety, would affect the State's prospects in controlling the Mullaperiyar, Parambikulam, Thoonakkadavu and Peruvirappallam dams.

What's important?

- **For Prelims and Mains:** Highlights of the Bill and key functions of the National Dam Safety Authority.

Sources: pib.

4. GOOGLE FOR FLOOD FORECASTING

- **Context:** Central Water Commission (CWC), India's apex technical organization in the field of Water Resources, has entered into a Collaboration Agreement with Google for flood forecasting. This initiative is likely to help crisis management agencies to deal extreme hydrological events in a better manner.



The screenshot shows a landing page for 'The Google Flood Forecasting Initiative'. At the top, a blue header bar displays the title. Below it, a large image of a landscape with a rising sun. To the left of the image, a bulleted list details why Google is suitable for the initiative:

- Why Google?
 - Computational resources
 - Access to global data (Elevation, user-generated data, etc.)
 - Scalability
 - Machine learning expertise

Below this, another section asks 'Why not (just) Google?' followed by three points: Hydrologic expertise, Operational expertise, and Relationship with organizational consumers. At the bottom of the page, a call to action reads 'We're looking for collaborators!'.

Under this Agreement:

- CWC and Google will share technical expertise in the fields of artificial intelligence, machine learning, geospatial mapping and analysis of hydrological observation data to collaborate on:
 - Improving flood prediction systems, which will help provide location-targeted, actionable flood warnings.
 - High priority research project utilizing Google Earth Engine to help visualize and improve flood management.
 - A cultural project to build online exhibitions on the Rivers of India.

Benefits of the agreement:

- The collaborative arrangement is likely to result in saving of crore of rupees which otherwise would have to be spent by the government on acquiring high resolution DEM, high end computational resources and developing dissemination platforms widely used by the masses.
- This would enable the Government as well as disaster management organisations to identify well in advance the locations and population, which are at risk from floods and require warnings and information.
- This collaborative initiative is expected to be a milestone in flood management and in mitigating the flood losses.

About Central Water Commission:

- Central Water Commission is a premier Technical Organization of India in the field of Water Resources and is presently functioning as an attached office of the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Government of India.
- The Commission is entrusted with the general responsibilities of initiating, coordinating and furthering in consultation of the State Governments concerned, schemes for control, conservation and utilization of water resources throughout the country, for purpose of Flood Control, Irrigation, Navigation, Drinking Water Supply and Water Power Development. It also undertakes the investigations, construction and execution of any such schemes as required.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** CWC, agreement between CWC and Google for flood forecasting.
- **For Mains:** Water crisis in India- causes, effects, challenges and solutions, flood management in the country.

Sources: pib.

Paper 3 Topic: Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security.

1. 'COP CONNECT'

- **WHAT is it?** It is a mobile application developed by Telangana police for their internal communication purpose. It has been developed on the lines of WhatsApp. Police have developed this app keeping in view the safety of their information besides having hassle free communication.

Features:

- The app is a secure communication channel, with no limit on the number of members in any individual group (unlike the regular WhatsApp which has a restriction of 256 numbers) and has all the features of WhatsApp.
- Other features of the Cop-Connect app are chatting, group chats, file sharing (image, audio, video and documents) and location sharing. A unique feature, iMeeting, can help in creating and scheduling department meetings in an easy way.

Benefits:

- The app will help in connecting 60,000 plus police force, spanning over 31 revenue districts across the state.
- COP Connect's has end-to-end encryption with server being with Police Department and it ensures absolute security and confidentiality of internal police communication.

Sources: the hindu.

2. UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES (PREVENTION) ACT (UAPA)

- **Context:** The Centre has banned terror organisation al-Qaida in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and all its manifestation under the stringent anti-terror law – Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. A notification in this regard has been issued by the home ministry.

Background:

- Both al-Qaida in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham-Khorasan (ISIS-K), an Afghanistan-based affiliate of ISIS, have been declared unlawful by the Union home ministry as they were found to be radicalizing Indian youths for ‘global jihad’ and encouraging terror acts on Indian interests.
- Currently, 39 terror outfits including ISIS, LeT, Jaish and BKI have been banned under the UAPA (Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act).

About the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA):

- This law is aimed at effective prevention of unlawful activities associations in India.
- Its main objective is to make powers available for dealing with activities directed against the integrity and sovereignty of India.
- The Act makes it a crime to support any secessionist movement or to support claims by a foreign power to what India claims as its territory.
- The UAPA, framed in 1967, has been amended twice since: first in 2008 and then in 2012.

The draconian provisions of the UAPA:

- The Act introduces a vague definition of terrorism to encompass a wide range of non-violent political activity, including political protest. It empowers the government to declare an organisation as ‘terrorist’ and ban it. Mere membership of such a proscribed organisation itself becomes a criminal offence.
- Furthermore, it allows detention without a chargesheet for up to 180 days and police custody can be up to 30 days. It also creates a strong presumption against bail and anticipatory bail is out of the question. It creates a presumption of guilt for terrorism offences merely based on the evidence allegedly seized.
- In addition, the Act authorises the creation of special courts, with wide discretion to hold in-camera proceedings (closed-door hearings) and use secret witnesses but contains no sunset clause and provisions for mandatory periodic review.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** UAPA- features.
- **For Mains:** UAPA reforms.

Sources: the hindu.

Paper 3 Topic: Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.

1. DIRECTORATE OF REVENUE INTELLIGENCE (DRI)

- Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, formed in **1957**, is the major intelligence agency which **eradicates smuggling** of drugs, gold, diamonds, electronics, foreign currency, counterfeit Indian currency, etc.
- The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence functions under the Central Board of Excise and Customs (**CBEC**) in the **Ministry of Finance, Department of Revenue**.
- The Directorate is run by officers from Central Excise and Customs. Though its early days were committed to combating smuggling in of gold, it has now tuned itself to the changing nature of crimes in the field of narcotics and economic crimes.

Paper 3 Topic: Role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.

1. SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION HUB

- **Context:** Public sector firm Broadcast Engineering Consultants India Ltd., which is supposed to be handling the Social media communication hub project, has extended the last date for tenders. This is the fourth time the date has been extended.

What is Social media communication hub?

- 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 categorise 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.



Social media managers:

- As per the proposal, the project is meant to strengthen the social media division and recruit social media managers to be deployed in 712 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 and supporting media units at the regional level for social media publicity.

Role of social media managers:

- 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).

Concerns:

- The proposal to set up such a hub had turned controversial, as many called it an indirect measure to “snoop” on and influence voters.

What's important?

- **For Prelims:** Social Media Hub- features and concerns, Social media managers- roles.
- **For Mains:** Controversy surrounding the proposed Social Media Hub.

Sources: the hindu.

Facts for Prelims

1. FINANCIAL LITERACY WEEK

- **What is it?** To emphasize the importance of financial literacy, **RBI** is observing Financial Literacy Week in the month of June.
- **Focus:** It will focus on creating awareness among customers of banks about financial products and services, good financial practices and going digital.
- **Theme:** Consumer protection.

2. HUMSAFAR EXPRESS

- **Context:** Indian Railways has introduced a new Humsafar Jodhpur Bandra express.



- **Humsafar express:** Humsafar would be fully air-conditioned third AC service with an optional service for meals. Humsafar Express coaches have mobile charging points and reading lights for each passenger along with easy upper berth climbing arrangement. The coaches also have facilities such as baby nappy changing pads and tea/coffee-makers, among other features.

3. INDIA'S FIRST ADVANCED FORENSIC LAB IN CHANDIGARH DEDICATED TO WOMEN RELATED CASES

- **Context:** Sakhi Suraksha Advanced DNA Forensic Laboratory, **India's First Advanced Forensic Lab** dedicated to women related cases will be set up in Chandigarh.
- **Background:** Forensic science plays a vital role in the **criminal justice delivery system** by providing investigators with scientifically based information through the analysis of physical evidence.
- With increasing reports of crime against women such as sexual assault, foeticide,

homicide etc. there is an increasing demand for better scientific analysis of physical evidence.

- Scrutiny by Hon'ble courts demands more admissible, accurate and powerful forensic proof for human individualisation.

4. OP NISTAR

- **What is it?** It is an evacuation of Stranded Indians from Socotra, Yemen.
- **What happened?** 38 Indian nationals were stranded on the Yemeni island of Socotra in the aftermath of cyclone Mekunu.

5. CHANGI BASE

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently visited the Changi Naval Base in Singapore.
- **About Changi naval base:** Changi Naval Base (CNB) is the latest naval facility of the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) and was built to replace Brani Naval Base.

6. KALESHWARAM PROJECT AND UPPER PRAVARA (NILWANDE-II) PROJECT

- **Context:** Ministry of Water Resources has accepted two major irrigation projects from states.
- The Kaleshwaram Project of Telangana: It involves diversion of Godavari water for irrigation and drinking water purposes.
- The Upper Pravara (Nilwande-II) Project of Maharashtra: It involves diversion water for irrigation and drinking water purposes.

7. VARIOUS FLOOD MANAGEMENT SCHEMES APPROVED (CAN BE ASKED IN MATCH- THE- FOLLOWING QUESTIONS)

- The Mahananda Flood Management Scheme: Bihar.

- Seer Khad Project: Himachal Pradesh.
- Yanam Flood Protection Works: Union Territory Puducherry.
- Ghatal Master Plan: West Bengal.

8. TRIPURA'S "STATE FRUIT"



- President Ram Nath Kovind has declared **Tripura's queen variety pineapple as "state fruit".**

9. MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD (MAKA) TROPHY

- **Context:** With a view to rationalize and simplify the selection of top performing university in sports for award of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy, the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports has approved the revised guidelines for MAKA Trophy.



- Under the revised guidelines, the applications from the universities, which were hitherto used to be invited and scrutinized by the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), will now be invited and scrutinised by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports/Sports Authority of India.
- **Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy:** Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Trophy was instituted in 1956- 57 as a running trophy by the Ministry of Education, Govt. of India. This running trophy is awarded by the President of India each year to a University which has all

round best performance in sports at Inter-University, National and International competitions.

10. DEOCHA-PACHAMI COAL BLOCK

- **Context:** The Centre has handed over the Deocha-Pachami coal mines to the West Bengal government.

Facts:

- It is said to be second largest coal block in the world.
- The coal block is located in Birbhum district in West Bengal.
- **Power to auction non-coal mines:** As per the new mining law — the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2015 — which came into effect from January 2015, the non-coal mines have to be auctioned by the respective state governments.

11. RAIL MADAD

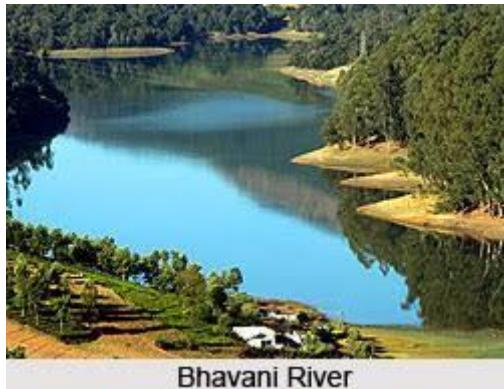
- **What is it?** It is a recently launched App by Indian Railways which aims to expedite & streamline passenger grievance redressal. It is a part of RPGRAMS (Railway Passenger Grievance Redressal and Management System), which has been developed by Northern Railway (Delhi Division).

Salient features of Rail Madad application are:

- Rail MADAD (Mobile Application for Desired Assistance During travel) registers a complaint with minimum inputs from passenger (option of photo also available), issues unique ID instantly and relays the complaint online to relevant field officials for immediate action. The action taken on complaint is also relayed to passenger through SMS, thus fast tracking the entire process of redressal of complaints through digitisation.
- Rail MADAD also displays various helpline numbers (e.g., Security, Child helpline etc) and provides direct calling facility for immediate assistance in one easy step.

12. RIVER BHAVANI

- Why in News?** Flood alert has been sounded to people living along River Bhavani banks in Mettupalayam taluk, Tamil Nadu.



About Bhavani river:

- Bhavani River, is a tributary of the River Cauvery originating from the South West Corner of the Nilgiri hills of the Western Ghats in Tamil Nadu. It drains Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka.
- It is the second longest river in Tamil Nadu. It enters Kerala through Palakkad district. It passes through the Silent Valley National Park in Kerala.
- Twelve major rivulets including West and East Varagar rivers join Bhavani draining the southern Nilgiri slopes.

13. HURRICANE BUD

- Context:** Hurricane Bud is expected to hit the Pacific coast of Mexico.

14. WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR – 12 JUNE 2018

- The International Labour Organization (ILO) launched the World Day Against Child Labour in 2002 to focus attention on the global extent of child labour and the action and efforts needed to eliminate it.
- Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals** calls on the global community to: "Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms."

- Theme this year:** "Generation Safe & Healthy".

15. NIKKEI ASIA PRIZE

- Context:** Noted social reformer and founder of Sulabh International **Bindeshwar Pathak** was recently honored with Japan's prestigious 'Nikkei Asia Prize for Culture and Community'.
- The award was given to him for his significant work in tackling poor hygiene and discrimination.

Nikkei Asia Prize for Culture and Community:

- The Nikkei Asia Prize is an award which recognizes the achievements of people and organizations that have improved the lives of people throughout Asia.
- The awards were created and presented by Nikkei Inc, one of the largest media corporations in Japan.
- Launched in 1996, the program honors people in Asia who have made significant contributions in one of the three areas: regional growth; science, technology and innovation; and culture.
- Former PM Manmohan Singh and Infosys Chairman Narayan Murti are among the few Indians who have won the prize in the past.

16. "WATER PRODUCTIVITY MAPPING OF MAJOR INDIAN CROPS"

- What is it?** It is a book published by NABARD.
- The book is based on study of 10 important crops. The ten important crops include rice, wheat, maize, pulses, oilseeds, sugarcane, cotton and potato etc.
- The book suggests to realign cropping pattern keeping in view water scarcity of irrigation, ration irrigation supplies in canal irrigation system, improve micro-irrigation and invest in water harvesting and artificial recharge and encourage participatory irrigation management through water user association and farmer's producer organisation.

17. MT DEOTIBBA

- Why in News?** An all women Naval mountaineering team recently summited Mount Deotibba.

- **About Mt Deotibba:** Mt Deotibba is the second highest peak (6001M) in the Pir-Panjal range in Himachal Pradesh.

18. APACHE HELICOPTERS

- **Context:** The US has approved a deal to sell six AH-64E Apache helicopters to India for \$930 million as well as Hellfire and Stinger missiles to bolster the country's ability to defend its homeland and deter "regional threats".



About Apache helicopters:

- The AH-64 Apache is a multi-role combat helicopter and is used by the US Army and a number of international defence forces.
- It is equipped with all-weather and night-fighting features apart from an advanced weapons system.
- The Apache has advanced laser, infrared, and target acquisition designation, including other systems, to locate, track and attack targets.
- It also has stealth characteristics, advanced sensors and beyond-visual-range missiles.

19. INSTITUTIONS IN NEWS- DRI

- The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence is the apex anti-smuggling agency of India, working *under the Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs, Ministry of Finance*, Government of India.
- It is tasked with detecting and curbing smuggling of contraband, including drug trafficking and illicit international trade in wildlife and environmentally sensitive items, as well as combating commercial frauds related to international trade and evasion of Customs duty.

20. YEAR OF DISABLED SOLDIERS

- **WHAT is it?** To honour soldiers who have been disabled in line of duty, while serving the Nation and to celebrate the undying spirit of 'Soldiering', Indian Army is observing the year 2018 as the '**Year of Disabled Soldiers in Line of Duty**'.
- **WHY?** The primary focus is towards alleviating the sufferings of these soldiers, who have done their duty with utmost dedication to the Nation and have been disabled for life.
- **HOW?** The endeavour this year is to provide a **onetime financial assistance to disabled soldiers** who have been boarded out from service on medical grounds and are rendered non-employable due to their medical or physical conditions.

21. WORLD'S TALLEST GIRDER RAILWAY BRIDGE

- **Context:** SAIL is supplying Steel for World's Tallest Girder Rail Bridge.



Key facts:

- World's tallest girder railway bridge is being built in the North East as part of the upcoming 111-kilometres long Jiribam-Tupul-Imphal railway line.
- Bridge No.164 is being built across the valley of river Ijai near Noney and has been designed to take a maximum train speed of 120 kmph.
- The Jiribam–Tupul–Imphal railway line cuts across the lower Himalayan ranges necessitating series of tunnels through the hills and tall bridges across the deep valleys. The line will connect Manipur's state capital Imphal to Jiribam which is on the western-most boundary of the state. Jiribam is an area that adjoins the Cachar district of Assam. As of now Manipur's capital Imphal has no railway connectivity.
- It is located in Seismic Zone-V, making it highly vulnerable to earthquakes.

22. CHRYSILLA VOLUPES

- **What is it?** It is a spider belonging to the family of jumping spiders (Salticidae).



- **Why in news?** Scientists recently rediscovered this species, which was believed to have become extinct, from Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (WWS) located in the Western Ghats region of Kerala. It was previously discovered in Periyar Lake in Gujarat in 1868. But subsequently it had vanished.

23. 100TH SMART CITY

- Shillong, the capital city of Meghalaya has been selected as 100th Smart City after evaluating the proposal submitted by it.
- So far, 99 smart cities have been selected in four rounds of competition and with Shillong, selection of 100 cities has been completed under the Smart Cities Mission.

24. 4TH INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY 2018

- The International Yoga Day is celebrated every year on June 21. It was first introduced by the United Nations on June 21, 2015. The main aim is to create an awareness worldwide on the importance of staying fit and healthy.
- **This year, the theme** is 'Yoga for peace'.
- **Why was June 21 selected to be International Yoga Day?** June 21 is the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere and has special significance in many parts of the world. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had proposed this date at the United Nations General Assembly 2014.

25. GUJARAT GETS WORLD'S 1ST CENTRE FOR HUMANITARIAN FORENSICS

- International Centre for Humanitarian Forensics (ICHF) was recently inaugurated at the Gujarat Forensic Sciences University (GFSU).

Key facts:

- This will be the world's first international centre for humanitarian forensics.
- It is a joint venture of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Regional Delegation for India, Bhutan, Nepal and the Maldives, and GFSU.
- It was inaugurated at the Gujarat Forensic Sciences University (GFSU).
- This centre will help in proper management of bodies in times of crisis.

Gujarat Forensic Sciences University (GFSU) is a state university in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. It is the first university in the world solely dedicated to forensic and investigative science.

26. CANADA BECOMES SECOND NATION IN THE WORLD TO LEGALIZE MARIJUANA

- Canada has become the second nation in the world the first G7 nation to legalize marijuana.
- Uruguay was the first country to legalize marijuana's production, sale and consumption in December 2013.

27. 'RANI RASHMONI' COMMISSIONED

- **Context:** The last of the five Fast Patrol Vessel (FPV) project of Indian Coast Guard 'Rani Rashmoni' was recently commissioned into the Indian Coast Guard. The FPV was indigenously built by Hindustan Shipyard.
- The FPVs are equipped with advanced sensors and state-of-the-art equipment and are designed to perform multifarious tasks such as surveillance, interdiction, search and rescue, anti-smuggling and anti-poaching, operations.
- **Other vessels:** So far four such ships such as ICGS Rani Abbakka, ICGS Rani Avanti Bai, ICGS Rani Durgavati and ICGS Rani Gaidinliu, have

been commissioned and are in active service at various locations on the eastern seaboard.

28. SKOCH AWARD

- **Context:** Ministry of Women & Child Development has received the 'Best Performing Social Sector Ministry' SKOCH Award for its Achievements and Initiatives.

Key facts:

- The Skoch Awards celebrate human excellence and agents of change in Indian society. They are the highest independently instituted civilian honours in India.
- Only end-user departments and domain ministries may apply including State undertakings.
- The Skoch Awards have become the only independent benchmark of best practices in India in the fields of governance, finance, banking, technology, corporate citizenship, economics and inclusive growth.
- Skoch Consultancy Services is a think tank dealing with socio-economic issues with a focus on inclusive growth.

29. BHARAT 22 EXCHANGE TRADED FUND (ETF)

- **Context:** The government has announced the first Further Fund Offer (FFO) of Bharat 22 Exchange Traded Fund (ETF). This is in pursuance of its disinvestment policy targeting an initial amount of Rs.6,000 crore.

BHARAT 22:

- Bharat 22 consists of 22 stocks of CPSE's, PSB's & strategic holding of SUUTI. Bharat 22 is a well Diversified portfolio with 6 sectors (Basic Materials, Energy, Finance, FMCG, Industrials & Utilities).
- The Bharat 22 Index will be rebalanced annually. ICICI Prudential AMC will be the ETF Manager and Asia Index Private Limited (JV BSE and S& P Global) will be the Index Provider.

30. DORNOGOVI PROVINCE

- **Why in news?** Mongolia has launched construction of its first strategically important oil refinery funded by India in southern Dornogovi province.

- The strategically important oil refinery will make Mongolia independent from energy imports and stabilise fuel and commodity prices in its domestic markets.

31. 'CHIPKO' MOVEMENT IN DELHI

- **Context:** To save about 16,500 fully grown trees from being chopped down in the city, locals and social organisations have come together to hold a campaign on the lines of 'Chipko' movement for tree protection in Delhi.

32. WORLD FOOD PRIZE 2018

- **Context:** Dr. Lawrence Haddad and Dr. David Nabarro will receive the 2018 World Food Prize for their individual and complementary global leadership in elevating maternal and child undernutrition.

World Food Prize:

- The World Food Prize is considered one of the most prominent global awards for individuals whose breakthrough achievements alleviate hunger and promote global food security.
- It carries \$250,000 cash prize. The Prize is presented each October on or around UN World Food Day (October 16).
- Norman E. Borlaug, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970 for his work in global agriculture, envisioned a prize that would honor those who have made significant and measurable contributions to improving the world's food supply.

33. UDYAM SANGAM-2018

- **What is it?** Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) launched Udyam Sangam-2018 on June 27, 2018 to celebrate the 2nd United Nations Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Day. It is an important effort in developing effective eco-systems for MSME sector.

34. SAMPARK PORTAL

- **What is it?** It is a digital platform to connect five lakh job seekers with recruiters. It will be useful in creating a skill pool of workers and connecting trained youth with job opportunities.

35. POLICE MEDALS FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS

- Union Home Ministry has instituted ‘Home Minister’s Special Operation Medals’ to honour officers of state police, central paramilitary forces and other security organisations engaged in special operations.
- ***The three medals are*** — Antarik Suraksha Medal, Asadharan Aashuchan Padak and Utkrisht & Ati-Utkrisht Seva Medal.
- While the Home Minister’s Special Operation Medal and Asadharan Aashuchan Padak will be awarded on August 15, Antarik Suraksha Medal and Utkrisht & Ati-Utkrisht Seva Medal will be announced on Republic Day.

- It was a joint initiative of the state Tribal department and Chandrapur Collectorate to scale Everest.

36. ‘MISSION SHAURYA’

- ***Context:*** Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently met a group of ten tribal students from Maharashtra who were a part of a team of the ‘Mission Shaurya’ initiative of the Adivasi Vikas Vibhag of the Maharashtra State Government.

What is it?

- Under Mission Shaurya expedition, 10 tribal students from “ashram shalas” (residential schools) in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra conquered Everest.