

Current Affairs

"A MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICES EXAMINATION"



Electricity Sector in India :
An Analysis

Chandrayaan-2

MSME: Challenges and
Opportunities

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Shivansh Awasthi



Khushboo Gupta



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Himadree Kaushik



Dhruv Mittal

NEXT IAS
Centres:

Old Rajinder Nagar Centre (Delhi) :
Ph : 011-49858612, 8800338066

Saket Centre (Delhi) :
Ph : 011-45124642, 8800776445

✉ info@nextias.com
🌐 www.nextias.com

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Chief Editor

B. Singh (Ex. IES)

CMD, MADE EASY Group

Editor

Aniruddh Pratap Singh



MADE EASY Publications

Corporate Office: 44-A/4, Kalu Sarai, New Delhi-110016

Visit us at: www.madeeasypublications.org

☎ 011-45124660, 8860378007

E-mail: infomep@madeeasy.in

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Message to the Readers

The August 2019 Issue of the Next IAS Current Affairs Magazine (hereafter called 'The Magazine'), covers news events from **26th June 2019 to 25th July, 2019** (hereafter called 'Coverage Period'). The Magazine has comprehensive coverage of all the topics from current affairs neatly categorized into major sections like Economy, International Issues, Polity & Governance, and so on.

This issue of the Magazine has in-depth analysis of three issues from the coverage period viz. '**Union Budget 2019-20**', '**Electricity Sector in India: An Analysis**' and '**MSME: Challenges and Opportunities**'. These topics have been covered as they have been persistently in news and are poised to drive the growth of Indian Economy in the years to come. The Magazine also covers the **Chandrayaan-2** as it is India's milestone in the age of New Space.

This Magazine has a Guest Article contributed by Shri K.P. Shashidharan (IAAS, Former Director General, CAG Office) on the subject of **India's Foreign Policy: Continuity and Change**. As promised in the July Magazine, this is the second part of the two-part series.

The Magazine works on the principle of learning by doing and testing the readers' understanding and retention via model questions papers (included in the magazine) based on the lines of Prelims and Mains examinations of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) Civil Services Examination.

The Magazine is designed for the needs of the students who are preparing for UPSC Civil Services Examinations. However, it is also helpful for Engineering Services Examinations, Banking Examinations and other government or Public Sector Enterprises examinations.

Any suggestions for further improvement of the Magazine is welcome and may be e-mailed to currentaffairs@nextias.com

Team NextIAS

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UNION BUDGET 2019-20

The thrust of this Budget is on physical and social infrastructure, ease of living and on the roadmap for India becoming a 5 trillion dollar economy.

About:

- Finance Minister (FM) Nirmala Sitharaman presented the maiden budget of Narendra Modi 2.0 government with a 10-year vision in mind.

Ten Points Vision for the Decade

- Building physical and social **infrastructure**.
- Digital India** reaching every sector of the economy.
- Pollution free India** with green Mother Earth and Blue Skies.
- Make in India** with particular emphasis on MSMEs, Start-ups, defence manufacturing, automobiles, electronics, fabs and batteries, and medical devices.
- Water, water management**, clean Rivers.

Blue Economy:

- Space programmes**, Gaganyaan, Chandrayan and Satellite programmes.
- Self-sufficiency and export of food-grains**, pulses, oilseeds, fruits and vegetables.
- Healthy society** – Ayushman Bharat, well-nourished women & children. Safety of citizens.
- Team India** with Jan Bhagidari. Minimum Government Maximum Governance.

SECTORAL HIGHLIGHTS

I. Infrastructure:

Roads and Port Connectivity

- Massive push to all forms of physical connectivity through Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, industrial corridors, dedicated freight corridors, Bharatmala and Sagarmala projects, Jal Marg Vikas and UDAN Schemes.
- FAME Scheme:**
 - Phase-II of **FAME Scheme** has commenced from 1st April, 2019 with an outlay of Rs. 10,000 crore for a period of 3 years. The main objective of the Scheme is to encourage faster adoption of **Electric vehicles** by way of offering upfront incentive on purchase of Electric vehicles and also by establishing the necessary charging infrastructure for electric vehicles.
 - Only advanced battery and registered e-vehicles will be incentivized under the Scheme with greater emphasis on providing affordable & environment friendly public transportation options for the common man.

- To make electric vehicle affordable to consumers, government will provide additional income tax deduction of 1.5 lakh on the interest paid on loans taken to purchase **electric vehicles**.
- A comprehensive restructuring of **National Highway Programme** will be undertaken to ensure that the National Highway Grid of desirable length and capacity is created using financeable model.

Railways

- It is proposed to use **Public-Private Partnership for faster development** and completion of tracks, rolling stock manufacturing and delivery of passenger freight services.
- To make railway travel a pleasant and satisfying experience for the common citizen, a massive **programme of railway station modernization** will be launched.

Inland Waterways

- The **Jal Marg Vikas project** for capacity augmentation of navigation on National Waterways is aimed at **smoothing internal trade** carried through inland water transport.
- This Govt. envisions using the rivers for **cargo transportation**, which will also help to **decongest roads and railways**.
- Multi Modal Terminal:**
 - As part of the Jal Marg Vikas Project for enhancing the navigational capacity of Ganga, a **multi modal terminal at Varanasi** has become functional in November 2018.
 - Two more such terminals at **Sahibganj** and **Haldia** and a navigational lock at **Farakka** would be completed in 2019-20.
 - The movement of cargo volume on Ganga is **estimated to increase by nearly four times** in the next four years. This will make movement of **freight, passenger cheaper and reduce our import bill**.

Airways

- To enhance growth in aviation sector, following measures are proposed to be taken:
 - Aircraft financing and leasing** activities from Indian shores
 - Enabling ecosystem for growth in India of **Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO)** industry
 - Regulatory roadmap** for making India a hub for such activities.

National Common Mobility Card (NCMC)

- India's first indigenously developed payment ecosystem for transport, based on **National Common Mobility Card (NCMC)** standards, was launched in March, 2019.

- This will enable people to pay multiple kinds of transport charges, including metro services and toll tax, across the country.
- This inter-operable transport card runs on RuPay card and would allow the holders to pay for their bus travel, toll taxes, parking charges, retail shopping and even withdraw money.

II. Power Sector:

- Implementation of the recommendations of the **High Level Empowered Committee (HLEC)** on retirement of old & inefficient plants, and addressing low utilisation of Gas plant capacity due to paucity of Natural Gas.
- Issues with **UDAY scheme** such as cross subsidy surcharges, undesirable duties on open access sales or captive generation for Industrial and other bulk power consumers will be addressed with the help of state governments.
- A package of power sector tariff and structural reforms are proposed.

III. Housing:

- Current Rental Laws are archaic as they do not address the relationship between the Lessor and the Lessee realistically and fairly. **A Model Tenancy Law** will be finalized and circulated to the States.
- Through innovative instruments such as joint development and concession, **public infrastructure and affordable housing** will be taken up on land parcels held by Central Ministries and Central Public Sector Enterprises.

IV. MSMEs and Retail Traders:

- Under the Interest Subvention Scheme for MSMEs, 350 crore has been allocated for FY 2019-20 for 2% interest subvention for all GST registered MSMEs, on fresh or incremental loans.
- Govt. will create **a payment platform for MSMEs** to enable filing of bills and payment thereof on the platform itself. It will eliminate delay in Payment to suppliers and contractors.
- **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan Scheme.**
 - ♦ The Government of India has decided to extend the pension benefit to about three crore retail traders & small shopkeepers whose annual turnover is less than 1.5 crore under **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan Scheme.**
 - ♦ Enrolment into the Scheme will be kept simple requiring only Aadhaar and a bank account and rest will be on self-declaration.

V. Raising Capital:

Measures to Raise Capital for Infrastructure Financing

- A **Credit Guarantee Enhancement Corporation** for will be set up in 2019-20.

- An **action plan to deepen the market for long term bonds** including for deepening markets for corporate bond repos, credit default swaps will be put in place.
- It is proposed to permit investments made by FIIs/FPIs in debt securities issued by Infrastructure Debt Fund be transferred/sold to any domestic investor within the specified lock-in period.

Measures to Deepen Corporate Debt Market

- Government will work with regulators RBI/SEBI to enable stock exchanges to **allow AA rated bonds as collaterals.**
- **User-friendliness of trading platforms** for corporate bonds will be reviewed, including issues arising out of capping of **International Securities Identification Number (ISIN).**

Other Measures for Raising Investment

- It is proposed to rationalize and streamline the existing **Know Your Customer (KYC) norms** for FPIs to make it more investor friendly.
- It is proposed to create an electronic fund raising platform – a **social stock exchange** - under the regulatory ambit of SEBI for listing social enterprises and voluntary organizations.
- **Inter-operability of RBI depositories and SEBI depositories** to bring seamless transfer of treasury bills and government securities.

Proposals to Raise FDI/FPI

- India's FDI inflows in 2018-19 remained strong at **US\$ 64.375 billion** marking a 6% growth over the previous year.
- **100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for insurance intermediaries.**
- Easing Local sourcing norms for FDI in Single Brand Retail sector.
- **Increase the limit for FPI investment** in a company from 24% to sectoral foreign investment limit.
- FPIs will be permitted to subscribe to listed debt securities issued by REITs and InvIT.
- **NRI-Portfolio Investment Scheme Route will be merged** with the Foreign Portfolio Investment Route to provide NRIs with seamless access to Indian equities.

VI. Initiative for Space:

- A Public Sector Enterprise **New Space India Limited (NSIL)** has been created as a new commercial arm of Department of Space to tap the benefits of the Research & Development carried out by ISRO.
- The Company will **spearhead commercialization of various space products** including production of launch vehicles, transfer to technologies and marketing of space products.

VII. Initiatives for Rural India:

- It is important to upgrade roads connecting villages to rural markets. For this **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana** PMGSY-III is envisaged to upgrade 1,25,000 kms of road length over the next five years, with an estimated cost of Rs. 80,250 crore.
- 100 new clusters are proposed to be set up under **SFURTI (Scheme of Fund for Upgradation and Regeneration of Traditional Industries)** scheme during 2019-20 which should enable 50,000 artisans to join the economic value chain.
- To improve the technology of such industries, the Scheme for Promotion of Innovation, Rural Industry and Entrepreneurship' (**ASPIRE**) has been consolidated for setting up of Livelihood Business Incubators.
- Under the **Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan**, over two crore rural Indians have so far been made digitally literate.
- To **bridge rural-urban digital divide**, **Bharat-Net** is targeting internet connectivity in local bodies in every Panchayat in the country. This will be speeded up with assistance from **Universal Service Obligation Fund** and under a **Public Private Partnership** arrangement.

VIII. Agriculture and Allied Activities:

- **10,000 new Farmer Producer Organizations** would be set up to ensure economies of scale for farmers over the next five years.
- **Zero Budget Farming** need to be replicated which can help in doubling our farmers' income by 2022.

Zero Budget Natural Farming

- Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) is a set of farming methods, and also a grassroots peasant movement, which has spread to various states in India.
- It has attained wide success in southern India, especially the southern Indian state of **Karnataka** where it first evolved.
- Zero budget farming **promises to end a reliance on loans and drastically cut production costs**, ending the debt cycle for desperate farmers.
- The word '**budget**' refers to **credit and expenses**, thus the phrase 'Zero Budget' means **without using any credit**, and without spending any money on purchased inputs.
- Natural farming' means farming **with** Nature and **without** chemicals.
- The movement in Karnataka state was born out of collaboration between **Subhash Palekar**, who put together the ZBNF practices, and the state farmers association **Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS)**.

- New Scheme '**Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)**' to establish robust fisheries management framework and to address critical gaps in the value chain, including infrastructure, modernization, traceability, production, productivity, post-harvest management, and quality control.

IX. Water Security:

- A major step ensuring water security for India has been the **constitution of the**.
- Newly constituted **Jal Shakti Mantralaya** will look at the management of water resources and water supply in an integrated and holistic manner, and will ensure Har Ghar Jal (piped water supply) to all rural households by 2024 under the **Jal Jeevan Mission**.
- The **Jal Jeevan Mission** will focus on integrated demand and supply side management of water at the local level, including creation of local infrastructure. It will converge with other Central and State Government Schemes to achieve its objectives of sustainable water supply management across the country.
- The Government has identified 1592 Blocks which are critical and over exploited for the **Jal Shakti Abhiyan**. The Government will explore using additional funds available under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) for this purpose.

X. Initiatives for Urban India

- Development of a Gandhipedia by National Council for Science Museums to sensitize youth and society at large about positive Gandhian values.
- Enhancing the metro-railway initiatives (like RRTS) by encouraging more PPP initiatives and ensuring completion of sanctioned works, while supporting **Transit Oriented Development (TOD)** to ensure commercial activity around transit hubs.

XI. Youth, Education and Entrepreneurship:

- **New National Education Policy** is proposed to transform India's higher education system to one of the global best education systems.
- Establishment of **National Research Foundation (NRF)** to fund, coordinate and promote research in the country.
- Programme, '**Study in India**', will focus on bringing foreign students to study in our higher educational institutions.
- A draft legislation for setting up **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)** would be presented in the year ahead.
- To popularize sports at all levels, a **National Sports Education Board** for Development of Sportspersons would be set up under **Khelo India Scheme**.

- It is proposed to start a **television programme exclusively for start-ups**.
- The **Stand-Up India Scheme** would be continued for the entire period coinciding with the 15th Finance Commission period of 2020-25.

XII. Initiatives for Women

- **Women SHG interest subvention programme** is proposed to be expanded to all districts.
- For every verified women SHG member having a Jan Dhan Bank Account, an overdraft of 5,000 shall be allowed.
- One woman in every SHG will also be made eligible for a loan up to Rs 1 lakh under the MUDRA Scheme.

XIII. Banking and Financial Sector:

- Capital infusion to the tune of Rs. 70,000 crore in Public Sector Banks to boost credit for a strong impetus to the economy.
- NBFCs have to maintain a Debenture Redemption Reserve (DRR). To allow NBFCs to raise funds in public issues, the requirement of creating a DRR will be done away with.
- Steps will be taken to allow all NBFCs to directly participate on the TReDS platform.
- It is proposed to return the regulation authority over the housing finance sector from the National Housing Bank (NHB) to RBI.
- Steps will be taken to separate the NPS Trust from PFRDA with appropriate organizational structure.

XIV. Disinvestment Policy, CPSEs:

- Government has been following the policy of disinvestment in nonfinancial public sector undertakings maintaining Government stake not to go below 51%.
- Government is considering **going below 51%** to an appropriate level on case to case basis.
- Government has also decided to modify present policy of retaining 51% Government stake to retaining 51% stake inclusive of the stake of Government controlled institutions.
- Government is setting an enhanced target of 1,05,000 crore of disinvestment receipts for the financial year 2019-20.
- Government will offer an investment option in ETFs on the lines of **Equity Linked Savings Scheme (ELSS)**. This would also encourage long term investment in CPSEs.

XV. Taxation:

- The direct tax revenue has increased by over 78% from Rs. 6.38 lakh crore in 2013-14 to around Rs. 11.37 lakh crore 2018-19.
- Currently, the lower rate of 25 % **Corporate tax** is only applicable to companies having annual turnover up to Rs. 250 Crore. It is proposed to widen this to include all companies having **annual turnover up to 400 crore**.

- **Pre-filled tax returns** will be made available to taxpayers which will contain various details which will significantly reduce the time taken to file a tax return.
- A scheme of **faceless assessment for Income tax in electronic mode** involving no human interface is being launched this year. Cases selected for scrutiny shall be allocated to assessment units in a random manner and notices shall be issued electronically by a Central Cell, without disclosing the name, designation or location of the Assessing Officer.
- It is proposed to **enhance surcharge on individuals having taxable income from 2 crore to 5 crore and 5 crore and above** so that effective tax rates for these two categories will increase by around 3 % and 7 % respectively.
- A **fully automated GST refund module** shall be implemented. Taxpayer having annual turnover of less than 5 crore shall file quarterly return.
- It is also proposed to move to an **electronic invoice system** wherein invoice details will be captured in a central system at the time of issuance. There will be **no need for a separate e-way bill**.
- It is proposed to constitute a **Legacy Dispute Resolution Scheme** that will allow quick closure of pre-GST litigations.

XVI. Start-Ups:

- To resolve the '**angel tax**' issue, the start-ups who file requisite declarations and provide information will not be subjected to any kind of scrutiny.
- **Special administrative arrangements** shall be made by **Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)** for pending assessments of startups and redressal of their grievances.
- At present, start-ups are not required to justify fair market value of their shares issued to **Category-I Alternative Investment Funds (AIF)**. It is proposed to extend this benefit to **Category-II Alternative Investment Funds** also.

XVII. Interchangeability of PAN and Aadhaar

- For ease and convenience of tax payers, PAN and Aadhaar will be made interchangeable.
- Those who do not have PAN will be allowed to file Income Tax returns by simply quoting their Aadhaar number and also use it wherever they are required to quote PAN.

XVIII. Digital Payments

- To discourage the practice of making business payments in cash, it is **proposed to levy TDS of 2% on cash withdrawal** exceeding Rs. 1 crore in a year from a bank account.
- The **business establishments with annual turnover more than Rs. 50 crore shall offer low cost digital modes of payment** to their customers and **no charges or Merchant Discount Rate shall be imposed** on customers as well as merchants.

ELECTRICITY SECTOR IN INDIA: AN ANALYSIS

India emerges as the world's third-largest electricity producer.

India's Current Status:

- India emerges as the **world's third-largest electricity producer**.
- India's rank jumped to **24** in 2018 from 137 in 2014 on **World Bank's Ease of doing business - "Getting Electricity"** ranking.
- In May 2018, India ranked **4th** in the **Asia Pacific region** out of 25 nations on an index that measures their **overall power**.
- Energy deficit reduced to 0.7 per cent** in 2018 from 4.2 per cent in 2014.
- As of April 28, 2018, **100 per cent village electrification** achieved under **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY)**.
- India is an **exporter of electricity to Nepal and Bangladesh**.

Administration:

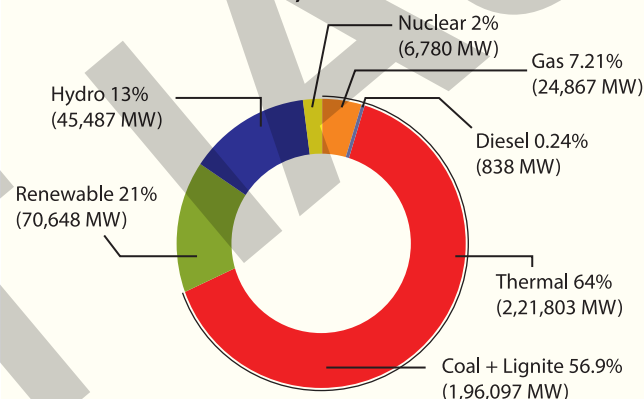
- Development of electrical energy in India is governed by the **Ministry of Power**.
- Central Electricity Authority (CEA)** is the **nodal authority** for **supply of electricity data** under the ministry.
- Three major pillars of power sector**
 - Generation** - Central Sector, State Sector, and Private Sector
 - Transmission** - **PowerGrid Corporation of India** is responsible for the inter-state transmission of electricity and the development of national grid.
 - Distribution** - Power is a **Concurrent subject** and the responsibility for distribution and supply of power to rural and urban consumers' rests with the states.

Demand and Supply:

- India's **electricity consumption** was 980 Terawatt hours (TWh) in 2015 and has been **increasing at an average rate of 8.84%**.
- Electricity consumption is highest in the industrial sector (46%) and shows the highest growth in electricity consumption (11%).
- Despite the thrust on transforming electricity supply, **India's per capita electricity consumption remains amongst the lowest in the world**, with vast latent demand and high room for efficiency.
- Increase in maximum demand to an estimated 178.25 GW. But supply during the day was 177.7 GW, around 12% higher than that a year ago because of 40% higher supply from solar, wind and hydel projects, helping spot prices remain stable.

- Rise in demand was met by an average 55% rise each in solar and wind power generation. Hydel power generation rose 30%.
- Hydel, solar and wind power generation touched a total of 831 million units, equivalent to 10 GW of power.

Power Generation Capacity as on 30.09.2018
344,718 MW



Source	Thermal	Renewable	Hydro	Nuclear	Total
Share (MW)	2,21,803	70,648	45,487	6,780	344,718

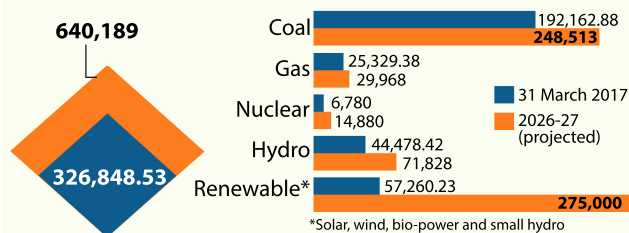
Future Demand:

- Electricity demand in the country has increased rapidly and is expected to rise further in the years to come. In order to meet the increasing demand for electricity in the country, massive addition to the installed generating capacity is required.
- Demand for electricity **projected to triple between 2018 and 2040**.
- Electric Vehicles (EVs):** Overall electricity demand from EVs of in India is projected to touch 69.6 TWh by 2030. **National e-Mobility Programme to promote EVs and build charging infrastructure.**
- 'New loads'** that are expected to gain prominence in the future 'Inorganic' household demand from **new houses constructed under the affordable housing programme** and **electric cooking**.
- Air-conditioning loads** in buildings will more than double in share, becoming by far the largest consuming application.
- Domestic manufacturing via **Make in India** could add 15-20 percent in industrial electricity demand.

India's Changing Energy Mix

India is moving towards a robust energy mix, focusing on sustainable energy sources such as solar and wind. By the end of 2026-27, India is projected to get 56% of its installed power capacity from clean energy sources.

India's Total Installed Power Capacity (in MW)



Source: Central Electricity Authority, Draft National Electricity Plan

What is India's plan to meet this demand?

- At present, the **country's peak demand for power stands at 1.81 lakh MW**. The current installed power generation capacity can comfortably meet this demand. But with more reliable power supplies, we expect annual power demand to grow at 7 per cent.
- India plans to add **500 GW of renewable energy to its electricity grid by 2030** in a bid to clean up air in its cities and lessen the rapidly growing economy's dependence on coal.
- India has set a target to achieve **175 GW installed capacity of renewable energy by 2022**.
 - Solar Energy** - 100 GW (Rooftop solar power in India)
 - Wind energy** - 60 GW (Largest source)
 - Biomass Gasifier & Biomass Power** – 10 GW
 - Small Hydro Project** – 5 GW
- The Union Government of India is preparing a '**rent a roof**' policy for supporting its target of generating 40 gigawatts (GW) of power through solar rooftop projects by 2022.
- India targeting 40% of power generation from non-fossil fuel by 2030.**
- '**One nation - One grid**' for affordable and seamless transfer of power to states throughout the country.
- Smart Electricity Meters** – to replace all old electricity meters.

Problems and Challenges in Electricity Sector in India:

- Fuel Security Concerns:**
 - Thermal plants face fuel availability issues and are idle due to non-availability of fuel.
 - Coal supplies by CIL** is restricted to around 65% of actual coal requirement by coal based thermal plants, leading to increased dependence on imported coal with the cascading result of high power generation costs.
- Financial Health of State Discoms:**
 - Populist tariff schemes, mounting AT&C (Aggregate Technical & Commercial) losses and operational inefficiencies have resulted in out-standing debts of state discoms.

- Under-procurement of Power by States:**

- Increasing power generation costs has suppressed demand projections by State Discoms.

- Inimical Financing Environment:**

- Leading rates have increased significantly from the time of project appraisal resulting in project cost overrun and hence higher end tariffs.

- Policy Paralysis:**

- Micro level policies** governing the fuel cost pass-through, mega power policy, competitive bidding guidelines are **not in consonance** with **macro framework** like **The Electricity Act 2003** and the **National Electricity Policy**.

- High Transmission and distribution (T&D) losses:**

- Correspond to electricity produced but not paid for.
- Caused by a variety of problems, including energy sold at low voltage, pilferage, sparsely distributed loads over large areas, inadequate investments in the distribution system, improper billing, uneconomic tariff and theft.

- Poor Performance of State Electricity Boards (SEBs).**

- Non-remunerative tariff structure:**

- Pricing across the country has come to such a pass that tariffs provide only about 78% of the total cost of supply.
- Caused by inefficient collection of money, a lack of metering and theft of power.

- Power subsidies**

- Wealthy farmers are able to hide income, engage in fictitious paper-based division of assets and use local political capital to ensure that any targeted power subsidy is most unlikely to reach its intended beneficiaries.
- Agricultural electricity customers resist metering of pump sets, therefore utility revenues deteriorate and less resources are available for maintenance and rehabilitation of distribution systems.

- Deficiencies in revenue collection of utilities:**

- The **main source** of **revenue** of utilities is from **sale of electricity to consumers which require prompt and correct billing and realization**. This is particularly important since in power sector, **consumers pay after availing the service**.
- Causes** - high energy losses and poor billing, revenue collection and financial management.

- Scope for Commercialization of Power Sector:**

- Power sector is characterized by a predictable and stable pattern of demand and high level of private investors' interest, both Indian and foreign.
- Despite such advantages, the task of commercialization of power projects in the current state of the sector is extremely complex.

- Equipment Shortage.**

- Land Acquisition and Environment Clearance.**

- Gap between user charges and the cost of supply.
- Over-staffed institutions.
- Non-implementation of new plans and projects.

Steps taken by the Government to resolve these problems:

• Electricity Act, 2003

- ♦ **Aim:** To introduce competition, protect consumer's interests and provide power for all.
- ♦ The Act provides for **National Electricity Policy, Rural Electrification, Open access in transmission**, phased open access in distribution, mandatory SERCs, **license free generation and distribution**, power trading, mandatory metering and stringent penalties for theft of electricity.
- ♦ Recent amendment discusses separation of content & carriage, direct benefit transfers of subsidy, 24*7 Power supply is an obligation, penalisation on violation of PPA, setting up **Smart Meter and Prepaid Meters** along with regulations related to the same.

• Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)

- ♦ **Aim:** For harnessing renewable power, renewable energy to rural areas for lighting, cooking and motive power, use of renewable energy in urban, industrial and commercial applications and development of alternate fuels and applications.
- ♦ It also supports **research**, design and development of new and renewable energy technologies, products and services.

• UDAY (Ujwal Discoms Assurance Yojana):

- ♦ Launched to encourage operational and financial turnaround of State-owned Power Distribution Companies (DISCOMS), with an aim to reduce Aggregate Technical & Commercial (AT&C) losses to 15 per cent by 2019.

• National Policy on Biofuels – 2018:

- ♦ Expected benefits of this policy are health benefits, cleaner environment, employment generation, reduced import dependency, boost to infrastructural investment in rural areas and additional income to farmers.

• UJALA Scheme:

- ♦ Household LED bulb distribution program & **SLNP (Streetlight National Project)** for replacing conventional streetlights with smart efficient LED bulbs.

• SAUBHAGYA Scheme - Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana:

- ♦ Provide energy access to all by **last mile connectivity** and **electricity connections to all remaining un-electrified households** in rural as well as urban areas to achieve universal household electrification.
- ♦ **Expected outcome of the Scheme:**

- ❖ Environmental upgradation by substitution of Kerosene for lighting purposes
- ❖ Improvement education services
- ❖ Better health services
- ❖ Enhanced connectivity through radio, television, mobiles, etc.
- ❖ Increased economic activities and jobs
- ❖ Improved quality of life especially for women

• Ujwal Bharat:

- ♦ Joint programme of the Ministry of Power, Coal and New & Renewable Energy aims is to ensure 24X7 Power for all by 2019.

• '24x7 Power for All':

- ♦ Joint initiative with the states covering all segments of power sector i.e. Power generation, transmission and distribution, energy efficiency, health of Discom etc. to finalise State/UT specific roadmap and action plan to ensure 24x7 power for all in consultation with States/UTs.

• DDUGJY (Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana):

- ♦ 100% village electrification.
- ♦ (DDUGJY) envisage creation of basic electricity infrastructure in villages/habitations, strengthening & augmentation of existing infrastructure, metering of existing feeders'/distribution transformers/consumers to improve quality and reliability of power supply in rural areas.

• Integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS):

- ♦ In urban areas, provides for creation of necessary infrastructure to provide electricity access but some households are not yet connected mainly on account of their economic condition as they are not capable of paying the initial connection charges.

• National Wind-Solar Hybrid Policy:

- ♦ Large grid connected wind - solar PV hybrid system for optimal and efficient utilization of transmission infrastructure and land, reducing the variability in renewable power generation and achieving better grid stability.
- ♦ Policy also aims to encourage new technologies, methods and way-outs involving combined operation of wind and solar PV plants.

Way Forward:

India currently ranks as one of the top energy consumers in the world. With India's population and GDP expected to grow in the future, energy demand will see a significant rise and with that associated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as well. In keeping with these developments, numerous policy measures are being discussed, which though focused on increasing access to energy, also aim to keep emissions in check.

MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (MSME): CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

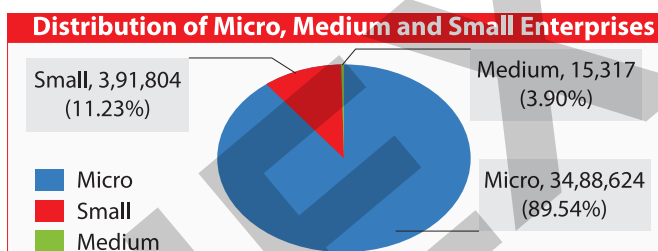
Expert Committee headed by former SEBI chairman U.K. Sinha on MSME sector, has submitted its report.

Definition of MSME:

- As per the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (MSMED) Act, 2006.

Definition of MSME		
	Manufacturing Sector (Investment in plant and machinery)	Service Sector (Investment in equipments)
Micro Enterprises	Less than Rs 25 Lakh	Less than Rs 10 Lakh
Small Enterprises	Rs 25 Lakh to Rs 5 Crore	Rs 10 Lakh to Rs 2 Crore
Medium Enterprises	Rs 5 Crore to Rs 10 Crore	Rs 2 Crore to Rs 5 Crore

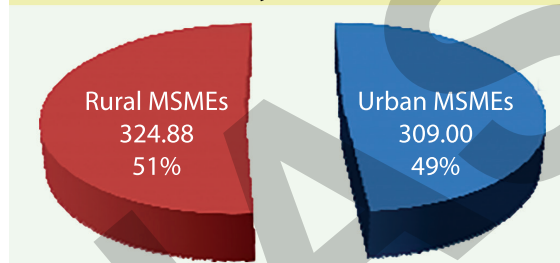
- Note:** The MSME Development (Amendment) Bill, 2018 proposed to change the definition of micro, small and medium enterprises based on annual turnover.



Role of MSME in Indian Economy:

- MSME sector provided **large-scale employment opportunities** at comparatively lower capital cost than large industries.
 - As per the National Sample Survey (NSS) 73rd round conducted during the period 2015-16, MSME sector has been creating **11.10 crore** jobs across the country.
- The sector contributed in **industrialisation of rural and backward areas**.
- MSMEs are **complementary to large industries** as **ancillary units** and this sector contributes significantly in the **inclusive industrial development** of the country.
- The MSME sector accounts for about **45 percent** of **manufacturing output** and around **40 percent** of **total exports** of the country.
- MSME sector accounts for over 28% of Gross Domestic Product.

Percentage Share of Rural and Urban MSMEs in the Country (number in Lakh)



Major Challenges Faced by the MSME Sector:

- Policy and institutional interventions**
 - Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises formulates policies for overall growth of the sector.
 - The institutions like SIDBI, RBI and SEBI are also involved in financial and other developmental support to the sector.
 - However, formulation of targeted policies in the areas of infrastructure development, formalisation, technology adoption, backward and forward linkage, credit gap reduction and timely payments to MSMEs and their effective implementation has been a challenge for all the stakeholders.
- Lack of adequate capital,**
 - Lack of access to timely and adequate credit is a major obstacle in the growth of MSMEs.
 - Economic Survey 2017-18 pointed out that the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) received only **17.4%** of the total credit outstanding.
- Poor infrastructure**
 - Inadequate availability of basic amenities such as work sheds, tool rooms, product testing laboratories, electricity, rural broadband and innovation hubs is acting as a deterrent to the growth of the sector.
- Information asymmetry**
 - Lack of information about various schemes deprives MSMEs from availing benefits offered by Government, banks and other agencies.
 - Access to information about market opportunities is sub optimal and unstructured.
 - In many cases, they also lack managerial, legal and technical knowhow and the necessary wherewithal to function effectively.
 - Lack of Access to modern technology

- **Access to markets**
 - ♦ MSMEs face the twin challenge of limited access to quality raw material and market for finished product.
- Getting statutory clearances related to power, environment, labour etc.
- **Adverse Impact of demonetization:** About 97 per cent of MSMEs operate in the informal sector. Demonetization adversely affected the informal sector.
- **Adverse Impact of GST roll-out:**
 - ♦ The introduction of GST led to increase in compliance costs and other operating costs for MSMEs.
 - ♦ There were reports of delays in receiving **Input Tax Credit (ITC)**, which directly affected the MSME industry.
- **Delayed payment of Bills:**
 - ♦ MSME faces the problem of delayed payment of their bills by large corporates, which creates liquidity problem for the MSME units.
- **Policies favouring Dwarfism:** Economic survey 2018-19 has observed that
 - ♦ Our policies to provide size based incentives create a "perverse" incentive for firms to remain small.
 - ♦ If the firms grow beyond the thresholds that these policies employ, then they will be unable to obtain the said benefits. Therefore, rather than grow the firm beyond the said threshold, entrepreneurs find it optimal to start a new firm to continue availing these benefits.
 - ♦ As economies of scale stem primarily from firm size, these firms are unable to enjoy such benefits and therefore remain unproductive.
- **Interest Subvention Scheme:** Under the Interest Subvention Scheme for MSMEs, 350 crore has been allocated for FY 2019-20 for 2% interest subvention for all GST registered MSMEs, on fresh or incremental loans.
- **Trade Receivables e-Discounting System (TReDS):** This mechanism facilitates the financing of trade receivables of MSMEs from corporate and other buyers, including Government Departments and Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).
- **Payment Platform for MSME:** Budget 2019-20 has announced that Government will create a payment platform for MSMEs to enable filing of bills and payment thereof on the platform itself.
- **Pradhan Mantri Karam Yogi Maandhan Scheme:** This new scheme announced in budget 2019-20 extends the pension benefit to about three crore retail traders & small shopkeepers whose annual turnover is less than 1.5 crore. Enrolment into the Scheme will be kept simple requiring only Aadhaar and a bank account and rest will be on self-declaration.
- **Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana:** This scheme provides loans up to 10 lakh to the non-corporate, non-farm small/micro enterprises.
- **Priority Sector Lending:** As per extant policy, certain targets have been prescribed for banks for lending to the Micro, Small and Medium (MSME).
- **Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme:** This scheme makes available collateral-free credit to the micro and small enterprises.
- **Mandatory public procurement:** Public sector companies have been mandated to compulsorily procure 25%, (earlier 20%) of their total purchases, from MSMEs.
- **Marketing Assistance Scheme:** This scheme provides assistance to MSMEs for the following activities: organization of exhibitions abroad, co-sponsoring of exhibitions organized by other organizations, organizing buyer-seller meets, intensive campaigns and marketing promotion activities.
- **GeM Portal:** All public sector undertakings of the Union Government must now compulsorily be a part of GeM. They should also get all their vendors registered on GeM.
- **GST Composition scheme:** Scheme allows MSME firms to pay GST at a flat rate. The turnover limit for businesses availing of the GST composition scheme is set at Rs 1.5 crore.
- **Exemption from applicability of Labour laws:** India has a plethora of labour laws, regulations and rules, both at the centre and the state levels that govern the employer-employee relationship. Each of these legislations exempts smaller firms from complying with these legislations. For Example, Employees' Provident Fund & Miscellaneous



Various Incentives/Govt. Measures for Promotion of MSME:

- **59-minute loan portal to enable easy access to credit for MSMEs:** For ease of access to credit for MSMEs, Government has introduced providing of loans upto 1 crore for MSMEs within 59 minutes through a dedicated online portal.

Provisions Act, 1952 applies to establishment employing 20 or more workers.

- **Scheme of Fund for Upgradation and Regeneration of Traditional Industries' (SFURTI)** aims to set up more Common Facility Centres (CFCs) to facilitate cluster based development to make the traditional industries more productive, profitable and capable for generating sustained employment opportunities. Budget 2019-20 has targeted setting up of 100 new clusters during 2019-20.
- **ASPIRE:** To improve the technology of such industries, **A Scheme for Promotion of Innovation, Rural Industry and Entrepreneurship' (ASPIRE)** has been consolidated for setting up of Livelihood Business Incubators (LBIs) and Technology Business Incubators (TBIs).

Recommendations of U.K. Sinha Committee:

- **Review of the legislative framework-** The Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises Development (MSMED) Act, 2006 may be reimagined as a comprehensive and holistic MSME Code having a provision for sunset on plethora of complex laws scattered all over the legislative framework.
- **Change in the definition of MSMEs-** from current investment based to **turnover-based definition**, as it would be more transparent, progressive, easier to implement.
- **Establishment of Distressed Asset Fund:** Expert committee suggested establishment of a Rs.5,000 crore stressed asset fund for domestic micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The fund would go into reviving MSMEs in which a change in the external environment has led to them becoming non-performing asset (NPA).
- **Amendment to MSME Act to prevent delayed payment-** An amendment may be made to the MSMED Act, 2006 requiring all MSMEs to mandatorily upload all their invoices above an amount to be specified by Government, from time to time on Information Utilities (IU) set up under IBC.
- A Government sponsored **Fund of Funds (FoF)** of ₹10,000 crore may be established to support venture capital and private equity firms investing in MSMEs.
- **SIDBI to deepen credit market for MSME:** The committee has recommended expanding the role of the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI). It called for SIDBI to deepen credit markets for MSMEs in underserved districts and regions.
- **MUDRA Loan Limit:** Revision in loan limit sanctioned under MUDRA to ₹20 lakh from ₹10 lakh.
- **Unique Enterprise Identifier:** Presently, MSMEs must do multiple registrations with various entities such as Udyog

Aadhaar portal, GSTN, NSIC, etc. Government should make PAN as a Unique Enterprise Identifier (UEI) and the same should be used for various purposes like procurement, availing government sponsored benefits, etc.

Way Forward:

- There is need to realign the policies and programmes for the sector along the following seven pillars, to bridge the gaps in the development of MSME sector.
- The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise should be the Nodal Ministry for all interventions pertaining to the MSME Sector, rather than multiple schemes being run by different Ministries for promotion of MSMEs in their respective domain.
- **Economic Survey 2018-19 recommended that**
 - ♦ **Policy focus should be on infant firms** (i.e. firms less than ten years of age,) rather than dwarfs (firms with less than 100 workers despite being more than ten years old. age-based policies can be implemented to ensure removal of the perverse incentives.
 - ♦ **Re-orienting Priority sector lending:** Under MSME's PSL targets, it is necessary to prioritize 'start ups' and 'infants' in high employment elastic sectors.
 - ♦ **Sunset Clause for Incentives:** With appropriate grandfathering, every incentive for fostering growth should have a 'sunset' clause, say, for a period of five to seven years after which the firm should be able to sustain itself.
 - ♦ Focus on High Employment Elastic Sectors such as manufacture of rubber and plastic products, electronic and optical products, transport equipment, machinery etc.





K.P. Shashidharan, IAAS
Former Director General,
CAG Office

INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY - II

- The foreign policy of India is designed taking into account India's strategic geopolitical situation. India's land border is 15,200 km; the coastline of the mainland combined with the islands (Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar) is 7,517 km. India shares its land borders with seven countries Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, China, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. India has maritime borders with Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. India's 'extended neighborhood' in the Central Asian Region (CAR) consists of five nations namely; Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, who became independent after the disintegration of erstwhile USSR in 1991. India's extended neighborhood is also vital for providing natural resources. India, therefore, needs to have the best possible political and diplomatic engagements with its immediate and extended neighborhood to safeguard its national interests.
- Economic development and welfare of the people is the most significant objective of a nation-state, which can be possible only when there is security, stability, peace, understanding, and cooperation among the countries in the neighborhood. India's immediate neighborhood must, therefore, be the lynchpin of India's foreign policy initiatives. India, therefore, attempts to build the best possible relations with its neighborhood. The foreign policy aims to protect the territorial integrity and sovereignty by effectively managing the borders and safeguarding India's economic, trade, connectivity, maritime and transit interests in the land and Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

India's Neighbourhood First Policy

- Former PM Vajpayee dictum that; 'You can change your friends but not neighbors' pinpoints the need to develop the best possible foreign policy option with neighbors. PM Modi's 'neighborhood first' policy is for strengthening India's relations with its immediate neighbors as a priority area. India engages with its neighbors through bilateral, multilateral, and regional mutually beneficial agreements for peace, security and enhanced trade, investment, aid and partnership in development through diplomatic engagements. The "Neighbourhood First" policy is critical for India to become a credible regional and global power too. After assuming power for the second term, PM Modi visited the Maldives and Sri Lanka in June 2019. It heralded a new impetus to India's "neighborhood first" foreign policy initiative, redefining its neighborhood policy advocated in 2014. Considering India's regional hegemonic position among its neighbors and China's aid and investment policy in the region through its ambitious Belt Road Initiative (BRI), PM's visit to the Maldives and Sri Lanka marked India's strategic security concerns in the Indian Ocean Region. India's regional preponderance and growing global aspirations require security, peace, stability and maritime trade and connectivity with a clearly defined neighborhood first policy.
- Being the largest country in South Asia in geographical area and population and as the fastest growing world economy, India assumes its responsibility for the region as a "big brother". As the political regimes in the Maldives and Sri Lanka have, in recent years, showed closer affiliation to China, India cannot neglect these countries. The Chinese BRI finally pushed them into a debt trap. President Sirisena in Sri Lanka and President Mohamed Solih of Maldives are now relatively well-disposed towards India. India must consolidate the diplomatic gains to check further Chinese inroads into the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- India's utmost priority lies in its immediate neighborhood is demonstrated by creating a strategic partnership with these countries. Sri Lanka and the Maldives are a critical part of for safeguarding India's maritime interests Indo-Pacific region. The Solih government in the Maldives propounded an "India first" policy, "re-igniting the India-Maldives friendship" and "exploring new avenues while strengthening existing links". Indian foreign policy aims at making Indian Ocean countries to be strategic partners of an India-led maritime security initiative to maintain peace and stability in the region. Maldives is an important partner for the Coastal Surveillance Radar System (CSRS) built by India. Maldives joins other Indian Ocean littorals like Seychelles, Mauritius, and Sri Lanka as part of India's strategic network of CSRS. The Indian Navy and Maldives National Defence Force signed a Technical Agreement on Sharing White Shipping Information to strengthen India's maritime interest in the Indian Ocean region (IOR). India and Maldives also pledged for "coordinated patrolling and aerial surveillance, exchange of information, and capacity building" in the IOR. India's inclusive vision of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) in the Indo-Pacific is in contrast to China's development model creating debt burden in these countries. PM said that India's development partnerships are directed to empower people, and not to weaken them. India offered

Maldives a USD \$800 million lines of credit agreement for social and economic development, grant assistance of USD \$5.5 million, and a cash grant of USD \$6.9 million significantly demonstrates that New Delhi is focusing on people-centric and need-based projects in the region.

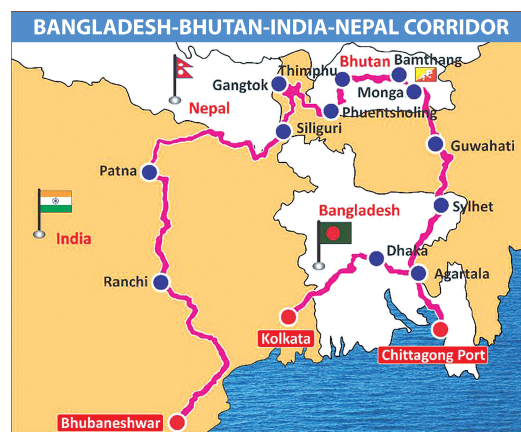
- PM Modi's daylong stopover in Sri Lanka shows India's support in combating terrorism when Sri Lanka faced terrorist attacks. PM's visit to the Maldives and Sri Lanka facilitate to revive the trilateral National Security Adviser (NSA)-level security dialogue to contain terrorism in the IOR, which may be further expanded to include Mauritius and Seychelles. A recent deal between Sri Lanka, Japan, and India to jointly develop the East Container Terminal at the Colombo Port, close to the China-backed Colombo International Financial City, indicates that India's intent to join with other like-minded powers like Japan, the US or the EU to provide an alternative to Chinese projects. The unique geographical position of the Maldives and Sri Lanka as India's neighbors and being located amid busy maritime trade lanes and transit in the IOR makes them critical nodes of India's Indo-Pacific strategy.

India's Relations with BBIN:

- PM Modi's neighborhood policy drives to create a peaceful, stable and economically inter-linked neighborhood. His regional diplomacy, while asserting India's primacy in the subcontinent, directs towards building strategic relations with South Asian, Southeast Asian and Central Asian and West Asian extended neighborhood with high-level diplomatic engagements.
- Modi's visit to Bhutan after becoming PM in 2014 recognized the 'unique and special relationship' that the two countries shared. Doubling scholarships to Bhutanese students, setting up a digital library in Bhutan, credit line of \$1 billion for infrastructure, irrigation, and energy projects in Nepal, India emphasized trans-Himalayan regionalism during PM's visit to Bhutan and Nepal. PM Modi's visit to Bangladesh and ratification of the 41-year-old boundary dispute by the Land Boundary Agreement and a fresh line of credit of \$2 billion solidified relations between the countries. In 2016, India offered to supply 100 MW of electricity daily to Bangladesh. Bangladesh allowed access to the Chittagong port and rail connectivity between Agartala and Akhaura junction in Bangladesh. Bangladesh granted India road transit facility through its territories to Agartala under the Bhutan-Bangladesh-India-Nepal (BBIN) motor vehicles agreement reducing road travel distance by less than half from the existing over 1,500 km.
- Nepal was embroiled in political turmoil, as the Madhesis residing in the south of the country protested against the new constitution in 2015. The blockade caused a humanitarian crisis. Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's bilateral

visit to India in 2016 helped to improve the relations between the two countries. The two sides signed nine agreements, ranging from infrastructure to rail and road transit. China has successfully made inroads in South Asia over the last decade. China's trade volume with SAARC countries expanded significantly. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) through Gilgit-Baltistan extending to Gwadar Port in Pakistan giving China access to the Indian Ocean and beyond is a concern.

- The strategic India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway will enhance regional cooperation between South Asia and South-East Asia. Commissioning of the BBIN pact and the 3,200-km trilateral highway enhancing connectivity between Mekong and India are considered as game-changer for India's "Look East" and "Act East" policy. In a Joint Working Group (JWG) meeting on water resources management and power/hydropower and on connectivity and transit held in Dhaka in 2016, BBIN countries identified areas for deepening sub-regional cooperation. The power trade and inter-grid connectivity cooperation in future power projects and water resources management between the four countries and BBIN Rail Agreement between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal (BBIN) will intensify diplomatic, cultural and political ties between these countries. Indian universities are a choice for students from Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan. India provides scholarships and research funding to students from neighboring countries. Cultural diplomacy through educational exchange initiatives, cinema, sports and games, exchange of diverse religious, cultural and philosophical traditions, literature, music, and people-to-people contact can foster regional cooperation. PM Modi projected India's 'soft power' including yoga in a big way and used "Buddha" connect in both political and economic diplomacy. India's efforts to engage its neighbors by making use of its soft power, alternative regional arrangements and newer prospects of integration such as education and culture, can win the trust among neighbors for mutual benefits of the region as a whole.



India's Relations with BIMSTEC

- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) policy was given a stimulus during the swearing-in ceremony of PM Modi for the second term on 30 May 2019. BIMSTEC, as the acronym indicates a group of seven nations; Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal depending on the Bay of Bengal for access to maritime trade. Except for India and Bhutan, other BIMSTEC countries are associated with China's BRI. BIMSTEC leaders at the swearing-in signaled India's change in focus from South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). BIMSTEC was formed in 1997.
- India called off foreign secretary talks with Pakistan because of its support to terrorist groups like Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) who attacked Indian Air Force (IAF) Station at Pathankot and Indian Army camp at Uri in 2016, and Indian paramilitary convoy at Pulwama in 2019. Pakistan's cross-border terrorism against India, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh and obstruction led to SAARC a "dysfunctional" grouping. India had to try other "multilateral regional and sub-regional organizations without Pakistan like BIMSTEC parallel to SAARC. India engaged BIMSTEC in bilateral and multilateral engagements diplomatically isolating Pakistan showing solid commitment to transform "Look East" to "Act East" policy. India's "Act East policy" enables opening up of markets in India to Thailand. China's BRI led to debt forcing India's neighbors to hand over assets to China. Sri Lanka handed over the strategic Hambantota port to China. China's likely development of Kyaukpyu port in Myanmar resulted in Chinese naval vessels docking there with Chinese military presence in the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean threatening India's security.
- India's diplomatic engagements with BIMSTEC are generally cordial. India may have to invest more resources in BIMSTEC budget. India's "neighborhood first" policy gives priority to BIMSTEC now by promoting trade, connectivity, and people-to-people contact. The leaders of BIMSTEC countries and Kyrgyzstan, the current chair of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and Mauritius in the swearing-in of the new government demonstrated changed in emphasis in India's foreign policy. Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation with these countries indicate India's extended neighborhood policy including Central Asia and the IOR as a priority in the changed geopolitical strategy in world politics. India's foreign minister Jaishankar referred to BIMTEC as an alternative to Pakistan's blocking efforts at regional integration and trade. The "new" India is moving towards occupying its rightful place in the world comity of nations with the growing military, economic and technological power, and international stature. India's proactive role in resolving global

issues like climate change, economic cooperation, world trade negotiations, antiterrorism, and anti-cybercrime, action against corruption and black money and energy security and success in the designation of Masood Azhar, as a global terrorist by United Nations, is a testimony. India's surgical strikes in 2016 after a cross border terrorism by Pakistan in 2016 and airstrikes in Pakistan's Balakot after 2019 Pulwama attack demonstrate India's determination to protect its citizens by ensuring territorial integrity, sovereignty, peace, stability, and security. India's intention to equip the defense personnel with most sophisticated weaponry from the US, Russia, France and going ahead with the manufacture of modern armaments in under "Make in India" program will be oriented to strengthen nations' security at land, air, water, coastal, cyber and space.

India's Relations with ASEAN

- The 10-nation ASEAN is central to India's Look East policy. Look East has now moved towards Act East Policy in fostering an Asian Economic Community as "the bridge to the East". A separate ASEAN-India Trade & Investment Centre and ASEAN-India Business Council are strengthened by transnational security threats including drug trafficking, crime, maritime security, disaster management and mitigation and non- proliferation partnership in the region. Russia and the US joined the EAS in 2011. ASEAN wants India to play a more active role in maritime security and freedom of navigation in the sea lanes of communication (SLOC) to safeguard energy and economic security. India's strategic location overlooking vital trade arteries require it to play a greater role in maritime security and cooperation in combating piracy, dealing with maritime emergencies, and disaster relief, freedom of navigation, and safety of sea lanes and unfettered movement of trade in accordance with international law. India's engagement with ASEAN and East Asia region is what our Prime Minister says "an arc of prosperity" across the region by collaborating to create an inclusive, pluralistic and balanced multi-polar Asia by shared values, economic, security and strategic partnership.

India's Relations with SAARC

- India's neighborhood policy comprising the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) had also emphasized regional cooperation in trade, energy, security, infrastructure, connectivity and culture and implementing various mutually beneficial projects. India's geographical proximity, historical, religious, economic, ethnic and cultural linkages with SAARC actually facilitated its relationships with its neighbors. Idealism in India's foreign policy of the 1950s and 1960s under the first PM Jawaharlal Nehru with non-alignment in a bipolar world driven by Cold War received a jolt in 1962 Indo-Chinese war and subsequent Indo-Pakistan

War of 1965. Then PM Indira Gandhi had to redefine India's foreign policy goals de-novo and made sub-continental hegemony an overriding goal. The Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971 precipitated by the humanitarian crisis in East Pakistan and India's militarily involvement in Sri Lanka in 1987 and 1988 in the Maldives reinforced India's realistic approach.

India's Relations with Pakistan

- Strained relations between India and Pakistan led to the failure of SAARC for promoting regional cooperation, advocated by 'The Gujral Doctrine' without seeking reciprocity. National Democratic Alliance (1998-2004) and United Progressive Alliance (2004-2014) governments pursued expanding economic and security links with SAARC countries. Afghanistan became a member of SAARC. India's ties with Sri Lanka and Nepal deteriorated. After the 26/11 terrorist attack in Mumbai, followed by many instances of cross border terrorism culminating in Pulwama attack of 2019 and India's response by surgical strikes in Pakistan occupied Kashmir and Balakot pre-emptive airstrikes in Pakistan crossing the Line of Control demonstrated new India's firm commitment to defend its territorial integrity, sovereignty, and its people.
- Pakistan violated Line Control and intensified cross-border terrorism as an instrument of its foreign policy. China assumes the biggest foreign policy challenge for India because of mismatch in economic, technological and military capabilities to China's favor. India's interests are to be protected by managing China. Working together on issues of convergence is critical for India's national security.
- "Neighbourhood First" policy needs regular political-level engagement with economic and trade relations coupled with investment in physical connectivity and efficient passage of goods and peoples across borders. Confrontation with Pakistan is a major constraining factor. Pakistan has Chinese shield. The US looks for Pakistani support for its withdrawal from Afghanistan. India's efforts to isolate Pakistan diplomatically in international fora have some success. To bring normalcy with Pakistan without it giving up terrorism will not be acceptable. India's interests are to be protected by managing China by working together on issues of convergence. "Neighbourhood First" policy needs constant review and regular political-level engagement with economic and trade relations coupled with investment in connectivity for efficient passage of goods and peoples across borders. Confrontation with Pakistan is constraining with Chinese backing and the US looking for Pakistani support for its withdrawal from Afghanistan. India's efforts to isolate Pakistan diplomatically in international fora has been successful.

India's Relations with Central Asia

- Central Asia is a vital part of India's extended neighborhood considering the geo-strategic position of the region and energy security. TAPI project and innovative solutions in connectivity and partnership in the development of energy and natural resources and setting up an e-network on the lines of pan-Africa e-network for tele-education and telemedicine to around 60 million people of Central Asia, India is playing a greater role for the SCO. Given vast energy resources of the Central Asia region, India's relations with Iran and construction of the Chabahar port will be game-changer to transform its relations with the region. The fructification of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline (TAPI) is a big step in win-win opportunities.
- Despite challenges, India's relationship with its extended neighborhood is going to deepen and diversify in days to come considering the geostrategic and economic facet of the relationship. India's relationship with its extended neighborhood will manifest itself in increasing defense and security cooperation as a logical expansion of economic interests. The role of Asian players like China and Japan and the interest of US and multiplicity of external powers in the region demand greater tact and foresight to handle India's relationship with its extended neighborhood and immediate neighbors. MEA will evaluate the situation and refine India's engagement with India's foreign policy imperatives.

India's Relations with West Asia

- India's economic and strategic interests require engagement with West Asia as an integral part of India's extended neighborhood and pivotal to India's overarching national interests. West Asia accounts for nearly 60 percent of India's imports of crude and home to around 7 million Indian diaspora, accounting for over 40% of remittances of US\$ 70 billion a year. India has been expanding its economic relationship with West Asia and the Gulf region. India's exports have also increased to the region. The region is a game-changer for India's aspirations. Travel and tourism are growing. India and Saudi Arabia signed a strategic partnership during the visit of King Abdullah in 2006 for counter-terror cooperation between the two countries. Increasing cooperation in areas like counter-terrorism, money laundering, organized crime, anti-piracy and security interests are becoming intertwined with peace, stability, and prosperity of West Asia.
- With India's economic reforms in the 1990s, the world's fastest-growing India's economy needs closer ties with energy-rich West Asia and Central Asia. India's energy security necessitates redefining India's foreign policy to include India's extended neighborhood from the Suez Canal to the South China Sea, including West Asia, the Gulf, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and IOR. The geo-economic and geo-

strategic interests dictate closer economic integration through trade and investment, technology transfer and innovation to carve out an interlinked free trade and to deal with common global challenges such as terrorism, maritime piracy, transnational crime, disaster mitigation and combating transnational pandemics.

Emerging Challenges

- "India's Extended Neighbourhood" is geographically, economically and strategically significant. As a regional and an emerging global power India's interests go beyond its immediate South Asia neighborhood with trade, investment, and strategic concerns. Besides, the East and Act East policy initiatives, India looks far beyond its borders to north, west, south, and Indian Ocean Region (IOR) as part of India's 360 degrees integrated foreign policy in a rapidly changing world order. India sees as its extended neighborhood is inextricably interwoven into the ancient Vedic ideal of **"Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam,"** meaning the whole world as one family. As a growing global power, India must have closer interaction with its extended neighborhood.
- Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit helped to strengthen India's relations with the US, Japan, Australia, and Southeast Asia as part of countervailing and constraining Chinese power. The Quad is a consultative forum on security cooperation and remains short of a full-fledged military alliance. Australia has a significant role to secure IOR. India's relations with Russia as a friendly power is critical to balance power equations. Deepening relations with Europe, Africa, and Latin America will be important to achieve India's foreign policy goals. India-US relations have been consolidated with

defense and counter-terrorism cooperation despite irritants on trade and Visa issues. India needs to strengthen further its economic and trade relationship with the US and China to meet its economic goals.

- The latest G20 summit in Osaka, Japan against the backdrop of the US-Iran standoff over Iran's nuclear ambitions and US-China trade war deliberated inter alia women's empowerment, environment, financial stability, artificial intelligence, energy security, reforming multilateralism and common efforts to address terrorism. India engaged tri-laterals talks with Russia-India-China and Japan-America-India on the sidelines of the G20 summit with an objective of balancing power relations among the world powers.
- It is important for India to be a permanent member in the UN Security Council to better reflect contemporary realities and "strategic" priorities to the UN Security Council. India's representation is absolutely needed to move towards a fairer representation of the Security Council along with some other world nations like Japan, Brazil, Germany to form the core of today's global governance and to reform of the Security Council. The UN needs to be more effective, more representative and more reflective of the current balances of power realities in the world order. France pushes for the expansion of the UNSC with permanent seat for Germany, Brazil, India, Japan, as well as a greater presence of African countries. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is fully geared to focus on constant engagements with South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia, West Asia and Central Asia and world powers for assuming the legitimate position of India in the game of global politics among The comity of nations.

**Vasudhaiva
Kutumbakam**
The World Is One Family



DIGITAL TAX

G20 Finance Ministers agreed to push ahead with digital tax.

Digital Tax:

- A new tax model that is adapted to the **digital economy**.
- Under the system, digital companies like Amazon, Facebook, Google etc. will be taxed on the basis of,
 - ♦ Their revenue and
 - ♦ Number of users in every market where they operate.
- Presently, these companies are taxed on the basis the location where they are headquartered.

Need for the Digital Tax:

- The present taxation system has **loopholes** that global technology giants such as Facebook use to reduce their corporate taxes.
- For cutting their tax bills Tech companies book their profits in **low-tax countries** regardless of the location of the end customer.
- **Ever growing and rapid digitization** created a need for countries to develop a framework to regulate and to get a '**fair**' share of **taxes** from the revenues generated by such businesses.
- **Loss of revenue for some governments:** According to the **Organisation for Economic Growth and Development (OECD) estimate** in 2015, the present taxation system has cost governments up to \$ 240 billion.

Progress Made in this Direction:

- The **OECD** first released an '**Action Plan**' to address the challenges of the digital economy.
- Since then the organization has been working relentlessly with an intention of developing the **consensus based long term solution by 2020**.
- In 2019, the OECD released a document to provide an update on the proposed solution to deal with tax aspects arising on account of the digital economy.
- Earlier in 2019, countries and territories agreed a roadmap aimed at overhauling **international tax rules**, which have been overtaken by development of digital commerce.
- In June 2019, **G20 nations** have agreed to push ahead on compiling common rules to lock tax havens' door for tech giants.
- **Steps taken by India**
 - ♦ Since 2016, India has been imposing **Equalization Levy** at a rate of six per cent on the payments made by Indian businesses to non-residents providing **digital advertising services**.

- ♦ In 2018, India recognized **virtual presence** as constituting nexus for the purpose of asserting taxing rights and introduced the concept of **Significant Economic Presence (SEP)** in its tax laws.

Do You Know?

The SEP is defined based on **certain revenue** and **user thresholds**, that remains to be prescribed.

Arguments in Favour:

- The move will rationalize the **international taxation system**, to suit the needs of digital economy.
- Updating of corporate tax code would be in congruence of the spirit of OECD's **Base Erosion and Profit Shifting ('BEPS')** guidelines.
- This can potentially have far-reaching consequences for India as well, as it has one of the largest internet users in the world.

Arguments Against:

- The new rules mean **higher tax burdens** for large multi-national firms.
- It will make more difficult for countries like Ireland to attract **foreign direct investment** with the promise of ultra-low corporate tax rates.

G20's debate on Changes to the Tax Code Focus on Two Pillars

- **First pillar:** Dividing up the rights to tax a company where its goods or services are sold even if it does not have a physical presence in that country.
- **Second pillar:** If companies are still able to find a way to book profits in low tax or offshore havens, countries could then apply a global minimum tax rate to be agreed upon.

Way Forward:

- With newer technologies such as blockchain, virtual reality and artificial intelligence on the rise, the pace of digitalization is only going to accelerate. Any new legislative enactment must be fully considered, and its broader impact fully evaluated, before being implemented.
- The OECD believes that a **consensus-based solution** is the ideal solution since unilateral measures by countries lead to unintended double taxation or double non-taxation among other undesirable results.

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FDI IN INDIA

Recently in the Budget 2019-20, the government of India announced slew of measures to boost FDI investment in India.

About:

- FDI is an investment from a party in one country into a business or corporation in another country with the intention of establishing a lasting interest. Lasting interest differentiates FDI from foreign portfolio investments, where investors passively hold securities from a foreign country.
- **Purpose:** When a company directly invests in properties such as plant and machinery in foreign countries with a view to undertaking production and marketing of goods and services in those countries.
- It provides the investor a controlling interest in a foreign company.

Significance of FDI in India:

- It is a major source of **non-debt financial resource** for the economic development of India.
- It is a critical driver of **economic growth** in India.
- This in turn creates the **employment opportunities**.
- Along with FDI, there is the transfer of **advanced technical know-how** from developed countries.

FDI Entry Routes:

- **FDI under sectors is permitted either through**
 - ♦ **Automatic route:** The non-resident or Indian company does not require any approval from Government of India.
 - ♦ Government route –
 - ❖ Approval from the Government of India is required prior to investment.
 - ❖ The respective Administrative Ministry/Department considers proposals for foreign investment under the Government route.

Favorable Factors Attracting FDI in India:

- Relatively lower wages,
- Special investment privileges such as tax exemptions, and
- Liberal policy stance and strong economic fundamentals.

Important measures related to FDI, announced in the Budget

- Local sourcing norms will be relaxed for the single-brand retail sector.
- Government to open FDI in aviation, insurance, animation AVGC and media.
- 100% FDI to be permitted for insurance intermediaries.

Recent Major Investments/Developments:

- As per a **trade review** released by The **Commonwealth** in 2018 India emerged as the **top recipient** of **green-field FDI** Inflows from the Commonwealth.
- In June 2018, Idea's appeal for **100 per cent FDI** was approved by **Department of Telecommunication (DoT)** followed by its Indian merger with Vodafone making Vodafone Idea the largest telecom operator in India.
- **International Finance Corporation (IFC)**, the investment arm of the World Bank Group, is planning to invest about **US\$ 6 billion by 2022** through several **sustainable and renewable energy programmes** in India.
- In May 2018, **Walmart** acquired a 77 per cent stake in Flipkart for a consideration of **US\$ 16 billion**.

Government Initiatives:

- As of Feb. 2019, the Government of India is working on a **road map** to achieve its goal of **US\$ 100 billion** worth of FDI inflows.
- In February 2019, the Government of India released the Draft National e-Commerce Policy which encourages FDI in the marketplace model of e-commerce.
- Government of India is planning to consider 100 per cent FDI in **Insurance intermediaries** in India to give a boost to the sector and attracting more funds.
- In September 2018, the Government of India released the **National Digital Communications Policy, 2018**, which envisages increasing FDI inflows in the telecommunications sector to US\$ 100 billion by 2022.
- The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India has eased the approval mechanism for foreign direct investment (FDI) proposals by:
 - ♦ Doing away with the approval of Department of Revenue and mandating clearance of all proposals requiring approval within 10 weeks after the receipt of application.

Way Ahead:

- Annual FDI inflows in the country are expected to rise to US\$ 75 billion over the next five years, as per a report by UBS.
- As per a recent **market attractiveness survey** conducted by Emerging Market Private Equity Association (EMPEA), India has become the most attractive emerging market for global partners (GP) investment.

INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURE

Recently, Prime Minister of India pitched for structural reforms in agriculture to boost investment.

Need for the Investment:

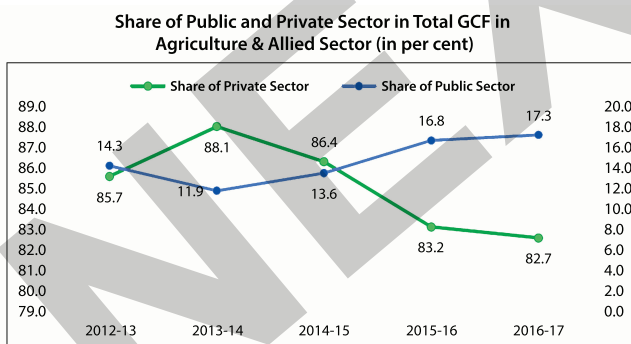
- Like all sectors, agriculture too depends upon attracting investment for rapid growth.
- The ministry of agriculture estimates that to double farmer incomes by 2022-23, private investment in agriculture must jump two times to almost Rs 1,40,000 crore.

Private Investments

It refers to investments made by farmers themselves, inclusive of their own savings and borrowings from institutional and non-institutional sources.

Status of Investment:

- The gross capital formation (GCF) in agriculture and allied sectors as a ratio of gross value added (GVA) has fallen to 15.2% in 2017-18 from a high of 17.7% in 2013-14.
- The share of private investment in agriculture has come down to 82.7 per cent in 2016-17.
- In 2013-14, 88.1 per cent of total investment in agriculture came from private investors.



- **Small land holders (with up to 2 hectares of land)**
 - ♦ Run 85% of the total farms in India and own more than 50% of the livestock.
 - ♦ However, on an average their share in the total private investment in farming is less than 10%.

Reasons for Decline in Investment:

- **The fall in GCF can be attributed to the decline in private investment.**
 - ♦ Falling profitability is keeping investors away from agriculture.
 - ♦ Lack of market incentives also deters investors.

- The myopic **policy regime** in the past several decades has resulted in sluggish investment growth in the farm sector.
- Lack of technology and small landholdings have worsened challenges.
- Bottlenecks in implementation and a high degree of uncertainty have further reduced investor appetite for agricultural investments.
- **Leased land with uncertain and informal tenure:**
 - ♦ It discourages to take long-term capital loans for investments, such as micro-irrigation, which mitigate risk.

Way Forward:

- Rules should be relaxed for companies investing in **contract farming**, transport, marketing, warehouses and food processing.
- **Agriculture Extension services:** Investment need to be strengthened in both public and private **extension advisory systems**. It would improve quality of agri-education and research.
- **Investment in renewable energy generation** on fallow farmland.
- **Farm business organization:** It will be the source of routing private investment to agriculture like Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO).
- **Development of commodity exchanges** would provide agriculture commodities more space on international trading platforms.
- **Infrastructure status for agriculture value chains:** Warehousing, pack-houses, ripening chambers, and cold storages, including those set up at the village level, should be accorded full-fledged infrastructure status to enable them to avail of the fiscal benefits that come with infrastructure status.
- **Focus on Agripreneurs:** A greater focus should be placed on the food processing industry for enhancing value addition in vegetable and fruit crops. Attention to promoting "agripreneurs" will result in rapid modernization of the agriculture sector.
- **Incentivize private investment in farm implements:** Private entrepreneurs should be incentivized to establish small farm implement mechanization hubs.
- **Develop export oriented clusters:** Development of export-oriented clusters with common infrastructure facilities like a functional, end-to-end cold chain system along with processing facilities.

REMITTANCES IN INDIA

According to the World Bank Data, India is the top recipient of remittances

About:

- A remittance is money that is sent to another party, usually one in another country; typically, the sender is an immigrant, and the recipient a relative "back home."
- According to the World Bank, in 2018, the top remittance recipients were India (\$79 billion), followed by China (\$67 billion), Mexico (\$36 billion).
- For India it is an **annual increase of nearly 10%**.
- As per RBI **India's Inward Remittances Survey 2016-17**:
 - ♦ **82 per cent of the total remittances received by India originated from eight countries**, viz., the United Arab Emirates, the United States, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, the United Kingdom and Malaysia.
 - ♦ **Kerala (19%), Maharashtra (16.7%), Karnataka (15%) and Tamil Nadu (8%)** together received 58.7% of total remittances.

Reasons why India Receives High Remittances:

- **Number of Indian expats**
 - ♦ Over 16 million Indians live abroad, more than any other country. Gulf region accounts for the majority.
 - ♦ A significant chunk of the diaspora is also present in more developed countries.
- **Cultural Aspects of Indian Society**
 - ♦ Indians generally feel quite a deep affiliation to their native country and retain strong ties, irrespective of how long ago they left.
 - ♦ This also applies to second and third generation Indians who may have never been to India but maintain their connection, for example through marriage.
 - ♦ Indians have a reputation for maintaining a relatively high level of remittances.
- **Number of Indian migrants in the Gulf region**
 - ♦ According to Khaleej Times, more than half of the total Indian diaspora, live in the Gulf region with United Arab Emirates having the largest number.
 - ♦ Most of the Indian migrants in these countries fall under the blue-collar segment.
 - ♦ The families of these blue-collar remitters tend to be dependent on the remittances and use the money for essentials including food, medicines or pay for school expenses and better housing.
- **Upsurge is driven by a stronger economic conditions in advanced economies** and the increase in oil prices having a positive impact on outflows.

Benefits of Remittances:

- It can increase the well-being of receiving households.
- **It can facilitate the accumulation of human capital** by making possible improved sanitary conditions, healthier life styles, proper healthcare, and greater educational attainment.
- **It can ease the credit constraints of unbanked households** in poor rural areas, facilitate asset accumulation and business investments, promote financial literacy, and reduce poverty.
- It represents one of the **largest sources of income for the population of low-income and developing nations**, often exceeding the amount of direct investment and official development assistance.
- **Funding during Disaster** - Remittances grew by more than 14% in India, where a flooding disaster in Kerala likely boosted the financial help that migrants sent to families.
- Microfinance institutions can play a significant role by capturing and transferring remittances to entrepreneurs.
- Greater mobilisation of resources as deposits would enable the banks to recycle them as **credit to entrepreneurs in rural areas**.
- Remittances, being in foreign exchange, are **additions to India's foreign exchange reserves**.

Disadvantages of Remittances:

- It can **reduce domestic labour supply** and **create a culture of dependency** that inhibits economic growth.
- **Can damage country's competitiveness in world markets**: Remittances can increase the consumption of non-tradable goods, raise their prices, appreciate the real exchange rate, and decrease exports.
- Remittances can be curtailed, along with international migration, by escalating anti-immigrant sentiment and tougher enforcement practices in host countries.

What has been done to Attract more Remittances:

- **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)** is celebrated once in every two years to strengthen the engagement of the overseas Indian community with the Government of India and reconnect them with their roots.
- **Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS)**: Under LRS, all resident individuals, including minors, are allowed to freely remit up to USD 2,50,000 per financial year.
- **Rupee remittances** have been becoming easier with online transactions and the spread of remittance points in Singapore.

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ECONOMIC CAPITAL FRAMEWORK (ECF) FOR RBI

The report of the Committee on recommending the appropriate economic capital framework for RBI has been delayed.

About:

- The report has been delayed due to lack of consensus among members regarding the transfer of surplus from RBI to the Central Government.
- ECF refers to the **risk of capital** required by the central bank while taking into account different risks.
- Essentially, it reflects the capital that an institution requires or needs to hold as a **counter against unforeseen risks** or events or losses in the future.
- The concept of economic capital has gained significance especially after the global financial crisis in 2008 which exposed many central banks in the world to multiple risks.

Economic Capital Framework in India:

- Section 47** of the **RBI Act** states that the profits of the RBI shall be transferred to the Government, after making provisions 'which are usually provided by the bankers'.
- In 2013-14, the RBI constituted a **Technical Committee** under the chairmanship of **Y. H. Malegam** to review
 - The level and adequacy of internal reserves and
 - Surplus distribution policy of the RBI.
- Based on the recommendations of the above committee, the RBI put in place a **draft Economic Capital Framework** in 2015.
- It sought to cover the **balance sheet risks** and **contingent risks**.

Balance Sheet Risks

- Foreign exchange risks:** The risks arising out of the valuation of the foreign securities it holds against a huge pile of foreign exchange reserves and
- Risks as lender of last resort.
- Contingent risks:** These risks arise from RBI's public policy role in fostering monetary and financial stability.

- Rational for ECF:** An adequate capital buffer is critical
 - To achieve the objectives of the central bank,
 - To cover the increased risks to its balance sheet and
 - To ensure the credibility of the central bank.

Transfer of Surplus in the Past:

- Based on the report of the **Malegam Committee**, it was decided that RBI at that time held excess reserves.
- The committee recommended that till such time the reserves were considered "excess" the complete surpluses should be

transferred to the government as dividends. The following table shows the transfer of surplus to the government:

Particulars	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Surplus Transferred	526.79	658.96	658.76	306.59	500
%age of gross surplus transferred	99.99%	98%	98%	70%	78%

Recent Issue related to ECF:

- The government felt that the RBI's reserves exceeded its requirements and these could be used for productive purposes such as recapitalizing public sector banks.
 - Government officials had maintained that the global norm was to have reserves of 14 percent of total assets.
 - At present, the RBI has 27 percent of total assets.
- The RBI has maintained the view that it needs to have a stronger balance sheet to deal with a possible crisis and external shocks.
- This issue of transfer reserves had generated tension between the Ministry of Finance and Reserve Bank of India.
- In response, the RBI has formed an **expert committee** under former governor Bimal Jalan.

Terms of reference of Bimal Jalan Committee:

- To review status, need, and justification of various reserves and buffers maintained by RBI.
- Review global best practices followed by central banks in making provisions for risks.
- Suggest an adequate level of risk provisioning that RBI needs to maintain.
- Determine whether RBI is holding provisions, reserves, and buffers in surplus or deficit.
- Propose suitable profits distribution policy.

Way Forward:

- Capital transfer from the RBI to the government also assumes importance in the wake of dwindling tax collections.
- However, there need to be due deliberations before reducing the reserves of the Central Bank as India is an oil importer and dependent on capital inflows which requires larger reserves under the authorization of the RBI.

FOREIGN SOVEREIGN BONDS

Union government plans to raise a portion of its gross borrowing from overseas markets.

About:

- Budget 2019-20 proposed to raise part of the Indian govt's borrowings in the external markets in other currencies.

What is Sovereign bond/Government Bond?

- A government bond or sovereign bond is a form of debt that the government undertakes wherein it issues bonds with the promise to pay periodic interest payments and also repay the entire face value of the bond on the maturity date.
- They are government securities issued in order to finance the fiscal deficit and manage the temporary cash mismatches of the government.

What is an Overseas/Foreign Sovereign Bond?

- Overseas bonds are the government securities/bonds issued in foreign currencies.
- This shifts the currency risk from investor to issuer (in this case, the government).

Arguments for Issue of Overseas Sovereign Bonds:

- **Low Sovereign External debt to GDP ratio:** India's sovereign external debt-to-GDP level is among the lowest globally at less than 5 per cent.
- **Stable Macro Economic Indicators:**
 - ♦ Current account deficit as percentage to GDP was 2.1 per cent in 2018-19, which was financed comfortably by capital flows (both debt and equity)
 - ♦ Most of the **external sector vulnerability indicators** such as debt to GDP (19.7 per cent), debt to forex reserve (76 per cent), debt service ratio (6.4 per cent) and forex reserve to import cover (eight months) have been at a steady state and stabilized.
 - ♦ Volatility of the rupee is least among the emerging market economies.
- **Higher Foreign Inflows:** It may facilitate the inclusion of India's government bonds in the global debt indices. India's representation in global debt market indices is small compared to other emerging markets. This may lead to higher foreign inflows into India.
- Inclusion in global benchmarks would also **improve the attractiveness of rupee-denominated sovereign bonds.**
- The rates at which the government borrows overseas will act as a **yardstick for pricing of other corporate bonds**, helping Indian corporate raise money overseas.

- **Reduce crowding out:** Issuance of government bonds overseas in foreign currency would significantly reduce dependence on the domestic market leaving room for private sector to raise capital for investment as crowding out will be checked to some extent.
- **Cheap source of raising money:** Sovereign external borrowing is also considered a cheap source of raising money by the govt. as interest rates in advanced countries are very low.
- Foreign trading would enhance liquidity in govt. issuances.

Arguments against/Risks Involved:

- **Currency Risk:** While dollar borrowings are cheaper in terms of interest costs, these could be offset by higher principal payments if the rupee falls against the dollar at the time of redemption.
- This would lead to a **quicker increase to its foreign exchange reserves**, which would lead to a stronger rupee at a time when it is already appreciating against the dollar. This would encourage imports at a time when the government is trying to curb them, and discourage exports at a time when they are being encouraged.
- Ex-RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan argued that India's overall low sovereign external debt position is not a good enough reason to borrow more abroad.
- If the idea was to fund domestic borrowings from foreign sources, this can be done as easily by raising the limit on foreign investments in government rupee bonds.
- **Forex Risk:** It would expose the country to the forex risks.
- **High volatility in Indian bond markets** due to variable foreign flows of funds.
- Onshore sovereign debt can always be repaid by printing money, which is not possible in respect of overseas debt, which would have to be repaid in hard currency.

Way Forward:

- Ideally, the government should have enough revenue that it does not need to borrow as much. In such a scenario, it is a welcome move for the private sector that the government is leaving it room to borrow in the domestic Market.
- Government along with the RBI may consider an appropriate amount of sovereign debt that may be held by foreigners (the aggregate of FPI investment limit for domestic sovereign debt and sovereign debt to be issued overseas) over 3-5 years.

August, 2019

INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made her first official visit to China after the formation of her government in Dhaka.

About:

- The purpose of the visit was establishing Bangladesh's strategic relationship with China.
- Some political analysts also commented that Bangladesh is trying to overcome the dependency on India.
- But on a positive note Indian foreign ministry sources confirmed that India is the biggest gainer in improving relations between China and Bangladesh.
- In this light, let us comprehensively analyse the relations between India and Bangladesh.

India-Bangladesh:

- India shares the longest land boundary with Bangladesh of 4097 km. Bangladesh is bordered by the five Indian states of **West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram**.
- The two countries share a **multi-faceted relation**—geographical proximity, shared history, common culture and heritage.

Significance of Bangladesh for India:

- It has a pivotal geographic location on the Indian Ocean.
- Both countries are among the fastest growing economies.
- Most populous Least Developed Country (LDC)- recently became eligible to graduate to developing country status by 2024.
- Development — both physical (large-scale infrastructure and military capabilities) and social (human resources and services) — is likely to remain a central national priority for Bangladesh.

Notable Achievements in India Bangladesh Relations:

- Signing of protocol to Bangladesh **Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) 1974**, in 2015 – aimed to settle all outstanding land boundary issues including enclaves, undemarcated sections of the boundary and adverse possessions.
- Grant of **24-hour access to Bangladeshi enclave** of Dahagram - Angarpota through the Tin Bigha Corridor.
- Conclusion of the **Coordinated Border Management Plan** signed in 2011.

Issues of Convergence between India and Bangladesh:

- **Strong stand against Terrorism and Extremism:** Denial of safe havens to Indian insurgents from the North East led to the surrender of many insurgent leaders to Indian authorities

- **Security Cooperation** between the two countries led to uncovering arms caches, stopping cross-border smuggling of fake currency along with positive developments like conclusion of a border management agreement (2011) and signing of an Extradition Treaty (2013).
- **Economic Ties:** In 1982 Bangladesh embarked upon the path of liberalisation. India ensured duty-free access of Bangladeshi goods to Indian market leading to an increase of Bangladesh's ready-made garments exports to India.
 - Trade transactions, credit arrangements, joint ventures, development of transit facilities further enhanced our economic ties.
 - Infrastructure development projects in Bangladesh with the help of **\$ 8 billion of Indian Line of Credit**.
- **Connectivity Cooperation:** **Ashuganj** in Bangladesh was declared a **port of call for multimodal connectivity** under the old Protocol of Inland Water Transit & Trade:
 - India to develop connectivity network to facilitate sub-regional integration that includes Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan.
 - **Maitree Express** – Fully AC passenger train service between Kolkata and Dhaka
 - **BBIN-MVA** - Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) – Enables cargo movement across borders without changing the truck.
- **Defence Cooperation** included conducting training programmes, joint military exercises (Sampriti) and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR).
- Overall there has been a conclusion of over 90 agreements including in high tech areas, such as space, IT, electronics, cyber security and civil nuclear energy and increase of bilateral trade from \$ 7 billion to \$ 9 billion (an increase of 28.5 per cent).

Issues of Concern:

- **Rohingya Issue:** India is uncomfortable about the security implications of many Rohingya refugees from Myanmar being housed across the border in Bangladesh.
- **Assam's citizen census:** National Register of Citizen (NRC) identifies the illegal immigrants residing in the state who are to be sent to their country of origin
 - A majority of immigrants in Assam are understood to be Muslims who migrated from Bangladesh in 1971 and after.

- **Water Dispute:** India and Bangladesh share 54 trans-border rivers, varying in sizes but only has one agreement viz. the **1996 Agreement** on sharing of the **Ganga waters**.
 - ♦ Major dispute that has become a **bone of contention** has been India's plans to construct and operate the **Farakka Barrage** which is aimed at increasing the lean period flow of the Bhagirathi-Hooghly branch of river Ganga. This will also to increase the water depth at the Kolkata port which has been threatened by siltation.
 - ♦ Tensions over a water-sharing agreement for the **Teesta River**, which flows from India through Bangladesh. Dhaka has pushed for finalizing the accord for years, and New Delhi is on board, too. However, in India **water is a state issue**, and West Bengal had refused signing the accord for years.
- **China's efforts to deepen its influence in Bangladesh:** This is considered to be the biggest irritant in India-Bangladesh relations as China is India's core strategic rival.
- **Border Dispute:** Porous borders are often used as a route for smuggling fake currency, food items, livestock, drugs, arms, ammunition and medicines from India to Bangladesh.
 - ♦ This is a major challenge for the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) — the border guarding forces of the two countries.
- **Illegal Migrations:** Illegal immigrants pose a direct threat to the country's internal security, while also impacting the social fabrication in the northeast of India.
 - ♦ Since 1971, millions of Bangladeshi immigrants crossed into the neighbouring states in India illegally.
- **Insurgency:** Since 1956, Northeast India has been the worst hit region facing insurgency due to growing ethnic separatism among the inhabitants.
 - ♦ Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), National Liberation of Tripura (NLFT) and National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFM) are major insurgent groups that have created an atmosphere of terror in Northeast India.

What has been done to mend these Issues:

- **India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline**
 - ♦ Between Siliguri region of West Bengal in India and Parbatipur region of Dinajpur in Bangladesh
 - ♦ Third and fourth double-gauge railways will also be built between Dhaka and Tongi and between Tongi and Joydebpur in Bangladesh.
- **Agartala - Akhaura Rail Link Project**
 - ♦ 1650 km distance between Dhaka and Kolkata has been reduced to only 550 km with the laying of Akhaura - Agartala rail track.
 - ♦ Part of India's \$4.5 billion third line of credit extended to Bangladesh for its infrastructure and social sector development.
- Cross Border Train between India & Bangladesh, the **Kolkata-Khulna Bandhan Express**
- India jointly inaugurated the **rehabilitation of Kulaura-Shahbazzpur section of railway line**. Restoration of this line will provide direct rail connectivity to Karimganj district of Assam and other north eastern states.
- **Indian Assistant High Commission office has been recently opened in Sylhet**. This new office will facilitate **faster development of visa** to the people of Sylhet and adjoining areas and open new opportunities for promotion of trade, commerce and tourism between Sylhet and north east India and people-to-people contact.
- Welfare measures and schemes have been **introduced to commemorate the spirit of Liberation War of 1971** and honour the invaluable contribution of **Muktijoddhas** (freedom fighters) towards building a better future for Bangladesh.

Others Measures:

- Bhairab bridge and Titas bridge connecting Dhaka with Sylhet and Chittagong.
- Additional supply of 660 MW of electricity from India to Bangladesh
- Ongoing construction of 1320 MW Rampal coal-fired power plant in Bangladesh as a joint venture between National Thermal Power Company (NTPC) of India and the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB).
- Training of 4000 Bangladeshi officials in India from 2015 to date.
- Training of 1500 Bangladeshi judicial officers in India
- Three-fold increase in number of Indian visas to Bangladeshi nationals from nearly 5 lakh in 2015 to 14 lakh in 2017.

Way Ahead:

- To maintain the momentum, it is crucial that the **two countries implement all the MoUs and agreements that have been signed**.
- **Signing of the Teesta Agreement**, pending since 2011 after India withdrew at the last moment, following the West Bengal Chief Minister's objection to the draft agreement.
- Industry-to-industry deliberations should be fostered to facilitate commercial relations in defence.

Conclusion:

- Current state is at its height and they are further consolidating ties based on the principles of **'mutual benefit' and 'a shared future'**.
- Bangladesh remains India's key partner in the region, and is crucial both for stability in the North-Eastern region and as a bridge to South-East Asia. It is also a Lynchpin in India's **'Look East Policy'**.
- PM Modi has termed the present period of relationship between the two countries as **'Sonali Adhyay' (golden chapter)**.

■■■■■

INDIA-US DEFENCE COOPERATION

The U.S. House Committee on Rules voted to send a watered-down version of an amendment to enhance defence cooperation with India to the full House floor for a vote.

About:

- New India **NDAA** amendment, a part of the House's version of the **National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) FY 2020**, replaces a significantly stronger amendment (the "**Sherman Amendment**") that sought to place India on a par with the U.S.A's NATO allies by amending the **Arms Export Control Act (AECA)**, a U.S. law that governs the sale of high-end defence equipment to other countries.
- **Reason:** Differences over India's contract for the **Russian S-400 Triumf Air Defence Missile System** and **pending progress** on the remaining two foundational agreements — the **Industrial Security Annex (ISA)** and the **Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA)**.

Issue with S-400:

- India's contract for the S-400 air defence missile system has been red-flagged by the US as potentially significant for triggering sanctions under **Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)**.
- Beyond the fact that Russian and US platforms are incompatible in terms of communications security, the US is particularly apprehensive about the potential for compromising US platforms when operating alongside the Russian S-400 system.

India-USA Defense Ties:

- 2018 saw the **first-ever 2+2 dialogue** against the backdrop of burgeoning joint exercises such as:
 - Cope-India (Air Force)
 - Yudh Abhyas (Army)
 - Vajra Prahar (Special Forces).
- The two sides are also increasingly engaged in multi-lateral exercises such as the **MALABAR, RED FLAG and RIMPAC**, covering the broad expanse of the Indo-Pacific.
- The **US** has recently **renamed** its **Pacific Command as the US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM)**.
 - An acknowledgement of the seamless connectivity that binds the Pacific and Indian Oceans and India's growing importance.
- The Indian Navy and the US Naval Forces Central Command (**NAVCENT**) are set to deepen their maritime cooperation in the Western Indian Ocean.
- **Significance:** Chinese presence in island nations and strategic ports such as Gwadar and Djibouti are of concern to India.

Way Forward:

- The foundational agreements with the US such as **General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA, 2002)**, **Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA, 2016)** and **Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA, 2018)** are path-breaking.
- However, the true potential for high technology transfer involving the Indian private sector would be realised only after the conclusion of the ISA.
- Looming large over the Indo-US defence co-operation is the shadow of India's continued reliance on Russia for key defence imports.

Do You Know?

- **Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA)** facilitates exchange of geospatial information between India and United States for both military and civilian use.
- The Information Security Agreement stops India from sharing US technology with other countries.
- CISMOA (Communication Interoperability and Security Memorandum Agreement) deals with communication interoperability both for civilian and military purposes. This has been changed to COMCASA.
- The Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) deals with logistics support.
- **CAATSA:** Enacted on August 2, 2017.
- It aims to counter the aggression by Iran, Russia and North Korea through punitive measures.
- Title II of the Act primarily deals with sanctions on Russian interests such as its oil and gas industry, defence and security sector, and financial institutions, in the backdrop of its military intervention in Ukraine and its alleged meddling in the 2016 US Presidential elections.
- Section 231 of the Act empowers the US President to impose at least five of the 12 listed sanctions on persons engaged in a "significant transaction" with Russian defence and intelligence sectors.
- Two of the most stringent of these sanctions are the export licence restriction by which the US President is authorised to suspend export licences related to munitions, dual-use and nuclear related items; and the ban on American investment in equity/debt of the sanctioned person.

INDIA-AFRICA RELATIONS

India-Africa engagement was ad hoc in nature until the cooperation was institutionalised through India-Africa.

About:

- India-Africa engagement was ad hoc in nature until the cooperation was institutionalised through **India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS)** when specific targets were established and a **SWOT analysis** was done.
 - IAFS I - 2008 in New Delhi
 - IAFS II – 2011 in Addis Ababa.
 - IAFS III – 2015 in New Delhi
- India-Africa Strategic Dialogue** with objective to build on existing partnerships between African countries and India, and to **explore new areas of convergence** for mutual engagement.

Importance of Africa for India:

- Fastest growing countries – boost Indian investment
- Growth and opportunities - with the young and fastest growing **youth population** in the world and considerable **natural resources** and **human capital** at its disposal, Africa is poised to be a **significant growth factor** in the global economy.
- Geostrategic** location as stronghold in Africa can provide easy access to European and American markets.
- Africa is a resource rich** continent. It provides expansion possibilities in hydrocarbons.
- Promising potential in the field of **renewable energy**.
- Africa remains vital for India's emergence as a **global actor in the international institutional arena**.
- India aims to **revive the Indian Ocean's historical maritime routes** and further India's soft power in the region through cultural initiatives such as **Project Mausam**.

Recent Developments:

- South African President Cyril Ramaphosa's chief guest at India's Republic Day 2019 parade
- At the **3rd India-Africa Forum Summit 2015**, India announced
 - \$10 billion lines of credit along with a \$100 million Indian Development Fund
 - \$ 500 million in Grants-in-aid
 - 50,000 scholarships for training and higher education
- Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Program:** Providing technical assistance by focussing on manpower development.
- Team 9**
 - Meeting between eight countries of West Africa and India.
 - Techno-Economic Approach for Africa-India Movement

Pan Africa e-Network Project

- To bridge digital divide in African countries
- e-VidhyaBharati** and **e-ArogyaBharati Network Project (E-VBAB)**, which aims to provide 5 years' free tele-education to 4000 students, free medical education to 1000 doctors/nurses/paramedics and free medical consultancy

Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC)

- To **develop industrial corridors and industrial network** for the growth of Asia and Africa
- Trilateral Partnership with **Japan**
- Based on the premise that the direction of **global economic activities is indeed shifting towards the Indo-Pacific region**
- Based on four pillars:**
 - Enhancing capacity and skills
 - Quality infrastructure and institutional connectivity
 - Development and cooperation projects
 - People-to-people partnership

New Trends in relations - role played by sub-national organisations and State governments

- Kerala** is planning on importing cashew from African countries for its processing plants that are running low on raw material.
- Ethiopia and South Africa are working with **Kudumbashree**, a self-help group movement created by the Government of Kerala aimed at eradicating poverty and empowering women, to find ways to localise and adapt the model in their respective countries.

Indian Navy sent three naval vessels INS Sujatha, INS Shardul, and INS Sarathi to deliver humanitarian assistance/ disaster relief after a recent tropical cyclone hit Mozambique

Duty Free Tariff Preference Scheme announced by India for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) benefitted African nations and has contributed towards steady increase in our trade figures by extending duty-free access to 98.2 % of India's total tariff lines. 38 African countries enjoy the benefits of our DFTP Scheme.

Africa is a continent which receives nearly 20% of India's pharmaceuticals. India hosted the first India-Africa Health Sciences Meet in 2015.

India initiated new Public-Private-Partnership training programs for medical professionals of Africa with some of the prestigious hospitals in India.

- **Other projects by India**
 - ♦ Power projects and dams in Sudan and Rwanda
 - ♦ Water treatment in Tanzania
 - ♦ Sugar factories in Ethiopia
 - ♦ IT Parks in Mozambique and Swaziland
 - ♦ Presidential Palace built in Ghana
 - ♦ National Assembly building in the Gambia.

Challenges to be Overcome:

- Some Indian companies have come under scrutiny for **tax evasion, violating environmental regulations and ignoring labour laws**.
- Agri-business and mining firms have been criticised for **land-grabbing and displacing local populations**.
- **Cumbersome bureaucracy** on both ends which often means that funds are not disbursed on time. This slows down the execution of critical infrastructure projects in Africa.
- India engages with authoritarian or un-elected regimes such as Sudan and Gabon. This legitimises their oppressive rule.
- Although the student schemes have been applauded, sporadic incidents of violent racism against African students have damaged India's reputation as a country.
- **China**
 - ♦ India in the past, due to lack of a concerted strategic approach, lost out on key economic opportunities while ceding space to other countries including **China**.
 - ♦ China set up its first overseas **military base in Djibouti**. Therefore, relations with the continent will also take on a strategic quality.
 - ♦ China has been in the lead for their Africa outreach for decades through their "**Chequebook Diplomacy**" with consequent debt traps for their local clients.
 - ♦ Chinese engagement being treated as "ne-colonialism" has its downside and some examples of high indebtedness and discomfort of the host countries attested to the fact leading to some correction in their "Cheque book diplomacy" approach which also has its limitations. Whichever way one looks at it China is there to stay.

Trilateral Partnerships:

Major players that would like to ride the Indian train through mutually beneficial trilateral partnerships

- **Germany:** With its "Compact for Africa in G20 and EU" and Pro Africa Marshal Plan.
- **France:** With its colonial linkages and cultural assimilation especially in West and Central Africa and Saudi Arabia.
- **UAE:** With their "Food Security" projects and proximity to Eastern and Horn of Africa apart from their engagements in North Africa are other.

Way Forward:

- India's relationship with Africa in future will have to become much more fine-tuned to the various differences among the African states.
- Africa's economies are increasingly diversified and so should the profile of Indo-African economic relations.
- India will have to tailor its policies to the fact that Africa is a mosaic of countries occupying very different points along the development and the governance spectrums.
- Focus on increasing agricultural productivity in a resource-constrained world as food security and agricultural development are major imperatives for both India and Africa.
- With appropriate regulatory and policy changes, and innovative financing mechanisms, the renewable energy sector can prove to meet institutional investors' needs more fully. India and African nations can and need to leverage this golden opportunity to not only achieve universal energy access, one of the Sustainable Development Goals, but also their climate change commitments under the Paris Agreement.

Conclusion:

- While India still continues to enjoy the affection and confidence of the Africans in general we shall have to mitigate race related incidents and violence against African students in India which in turn can damage that goodwill in no time at the grass root level. Likewise, the trilateral or multilateral Perception Management has to be a priority at all times as we raise the stakes in the continent. India cannot take a one-size-fits-all approach. It must understand the political and cultural contexts of each country with which it engages.

African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

- On May 30, 2019 the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) officially went into force. The agreement, signed by all but one of Africa's fifty-five nations, establishes the largest free trade area in the world since the creation of the World Trade Organization in 1995.

AfCFTA and its impact on India-Africa trade:

- AfCFTA will provide a number of **opportunities for the Indian firms and investors** to tap into a larger, unified, simplified and more robust African market.
- It is critical for India to view Africa not just as a destination for short-term returns but as a partner for medium and long-term economic growth.

Way Forward:

- Despite the remaining hurdles, AfCFTA's potential impact should not be diminished. With free trade under attack in much of the developed world, Africa is forging a new path for itself to foster sustainable wealth and development for the continent.

EXTRADITION

The number of ongoing extradition related cases is on the rise.

About:

- **Extradition:** It is the formal process of one state surrendering an individual to another state for prosecution or punishment for crimes committed in the requesting country's jurisdiction.
 - ♦ It is enabled by a bilateral or multilateral treaty. In rare cases, some states extradite without a treaty.
- **Extradition treaty:** Treaties define instances when extradition is to be made and denied.
- **Ongoing cases of extradition globally:**
 - ♦ **Julian Assange** (wikileaks owner): U.S. wants him from British authorities after Ecuador withdrew its asylum.
 - ♦ **Meng Wanzhou** (Huawei executive): Canadian authorities arrested him on the request of U.S.
 - ♦ **Fetullah Gulen** (Cleric): Turkey filed an extradition request to the U.S. alleging his involvement in 2016 coup attempt against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.
 - ♦ One of the biggest protests was witnessed in **Hong Kong** due to the proposed **Extradition treaty** in the country.
- **Extradition requests made by India:**
 - ♦ **Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi**- \$2 billion Punjab National Bank fraud.
 - ♦ **Vijay Mallya**- Money laundering case amounting to INR 9,000 crore
 - ♦ **Abu Salem**- 1993 Mumbai blasts
 - ♦ **Christian Michel**- Augusta Westland Helicopter case

Significance:

- Provides a defined legal framework for the return of fugitives between countries.
- Important for maintaining peace and order in the society.
- Prevent and reduce the crimes in the international field and provide timely justice.
- Promotes harmony and cooperation at international level.
- Serves as a deterrent against potential fugitives.
- Gained more important with the spread of transnational criminal organizations (terrorism, drug trafficking, counterfeiting, and cybercrime).

Present Indian provisions related to Extradition:

- **The Extradition Act 1962** provides India's legislative basis for extradition.

- **Nodal authority:** Ministry of External Affairs is the nodal authority that processes incoming and outgoing extradition requests.
- **In case of urgency,** India may request the provisional arrest of the fugitive, pending presentation of an extradition request.
- Extradition cases are decided on the basis of the conduct alleged against the defendant.
- An alleged offender may not be extradited to the requesting state in the following cases:
 - ♦ **No treaty** – In absence of a treaty, States are not obligated to extradite aliens/nationals.
 - ♦ **No treaty crime** – Extradition is generally limited to crimes identified in the treaty which may vary in relation to one State from another, as provided by the treaty.
 - ♦ **Military and Political Offences** – Extradition may be denied for purely military and political offences. Terrorist offences and violent crimes are excluded from the definition of political offences for the purposes of extradition treaties.
 - ♦ **Want of Dual Criminality** – Dual criminality exists when conduct constituting the offence amounts to a criminal offence in both India and the foreign country.
 - ♦ **Procedural considerations** – Extradition may be denied when due procedure as required by the Extradition Act of 1962 is not followed.
- India allows extraditing its own nationals on the basis of reciprocity, i.e., if the other treaty State does not extradite, India also bars extradition of own nationals. Thus, Indian cannot be extradited to Gulf countries, France, Germany and more.
- **Current status:** India has extradition treaties with 43 countries and extradition arrangements with 10. Latest treaty was concluded with Malawi.
- **Other Conventions that mandates extradition**
 - ♦ United Nations Convention Against Corruption (2003)
 - ♦ United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000)
 - ♦ United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988)
 - ♦ Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft (1970) and more

Problems faced by India in extraditing someone:

- **Low rate of extradition:** India's success rate in extraditing fugitives is low- **only one in every three fugitives is being successfully extradited to India.** The number is lower for economic and financial offenders.

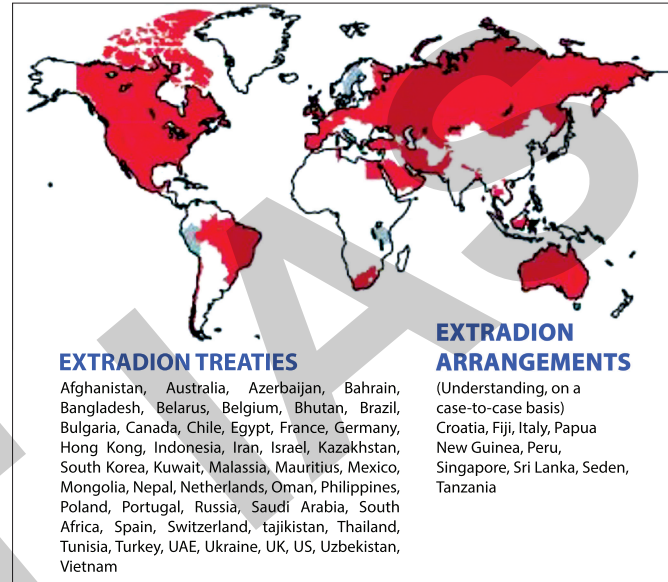
Reasons for low rate of extradition:

- **Fewer number of bilateral extradition treaties** India has compared to other countries.
- Delays in completion of documentary and evidence requirements of foreign countries.
 - ♦ It took India 3 yrs to extradite Abu Salem from Portugal.
- **Absence of depth in bilateral relations** and limited use of diplomacy and negotiations to push for the process by the requested country.
 - ♦ **For instance:** Netherlands took 8 years to initiate the extradition process for Neils Holck (Purulia Arms drop case)
- **Difficulty in establishing treaty principles** for crimes peculiar to India's socio-cultural conditions like dowry harassment.
- **Lack of dual criminality approach:** Indian treaties with many countries being based on list system rather than dual criminality approach leading to exclusion of crime like cybercrime.
- Categorizing financial irregularities as a civil offence rather than a criminal one.
- Challenges arising in front of the court against extradition order.
- **Clause of no extradition in various cases such as:**
 - ♦ Political offences
 - ♦ Death penalty can be awarded
 - ♦ **Double jeopardy (debars punishment of the same crime twice):** India has not been able to extradite David Headley (26/11 Mumbai attacks) because of the same.
- **Concerns of human rights violation:** The U.S. follows 'non-inquiry' principle and does not take into account the conditions awaiting the requested person but European countries are very particular about it.
 - ♦ The UK and other European countries have often denied extradition requests fearing poor conditions or custodial violence in India's prisons.
- **Issues with compliance of treaty terms:** Rule of speciality mandates that the extradited fugitive to be prosecuted only for the offence for which he was surrendered.
 - ♦ Portugal criticized India when after surrendering Abu Salem additional charges were framed against him.
- **Rule of reciprocity:** Dubai has not positively responded to Indian request to extradite Dawood Ibrahim based on

reciprocity as India did the same on Dubai's request to extradite Indian required in Dubai.

Legal concerns of the requested country:

- ♦ U.S. denied extradition request for Warren Anderson (Bhopal gas tragedy) as it was a case of civil liability but India was imposing criminal liability.



Way Forward:

- India needs to work on a targeted approach to resolve issues and improve its success rate.
- India should conclude extradition treaties with as many countries as possible.
- It can leverage dedicated diplomacy and bilateral negotiations to persuade countries to expedite the process requests.
- To address investigational delays, capacity and organisational efficiencies of law enforcement agencies can be improved.
- For ensuring compliance of India's extradition requests with treaty conditions and documentary requirements, a suitable organisational mechanisms to familiarise itself with laws and regulations of treaty states must be put in place.
- Other mechanisms can be undertaken to facilitate arrest and extradition of offenders such as mutual legal assistance treaties.
- India also needs to take steps to improve poor prison conditions and potential human rights violations of the requested person.
- As a precautionary measure, India can tighten its legal framework to prevent escaping of offenders in the first place. The recently passed Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, 2018 will go a long way in this regard.

INDIA-ISRAEL-PALESTINE RELATIONS

India pledges to contribute USD 5 million in 2019 to UN Palestine refugee agency.

About:

- Government of India has increased its annual financial contribution fourfold to the UNRWA core budget, from USD 1.25 million in 2016 to USD 5 million in 2018.
- **Significance:** It marks India's solidarity with the Palestine refugee.
- **Need:** There is a projected shortfall of more than USD 200 million against a funding requirement of approximately USD 1.2 billion for UNRWA this year, causing concerns among the Agency about its ability to provide essential services to the Palestine refugees.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

- It is a relief and human development agency.
- UNRWA has been providing health, education, relief and social services, as well as emergency humanitarian assistance, across its five fields of operation Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip since 1950.
- The Agency currently serves 5.4 million Palestinian refugees 20 per cent of the world's refugees.
- It is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions from UN Member States.

India's stand on Palestine Issue:

- **Support for Palestine:**
 - ♦ India's support to Palestinian cause is an integral part of its foreign policy.
 - ♦ Jawaharlal Nehru, even after NAM, inclined slightly towards Palestine.
 - ♦ India is the first non-Arab State to recognize Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinians (1974).
 - ♦ India is among one of the first countries to recognize the Palestinian State. (1988)
 - ♦ While with Israel, India's diplomatic relations are only 25 years old.
- **De-hyphenation:**
 - ♦ Moving away from idealistic foreign policy, India in recent years has de-hyphenated its relations with Israel and Palestine.
 - ♦ India still supports Palestine in its cause but engages with Israel for economic and national interest.

Significance of Israel for India:

- **Cultural link:** India has a long history of Jewish migration without any persecution of the Jews from the indigenous population.
- **Diaspora:** Presently, about 80,000 Indian Jews are settled in Israel. Contributing to India's soft power, they are great ambassadors for India there.
- **Similar territorial disputes:** India, like Israel, has territorial disputes with its neighbours and is trying to peacefully manage its territories especially Kashmir. India closely watches how Israel manages its own disturbed areas.

Global stand on the Matter:

International community considers East Jerusalem as occupied territory whose status must be decided through negotiation between Israel and Jerusalem.

- **UN:** It condemned Israel's annexation of Jerusalem continues to pass resolution against Israel's violence on Palestinians.
- **Neighbours:** Israel now has peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, but its relations with Syria and Lebanon are still strained.
- **Iran:** It holds Israel's claim as illegitimate and supports anti-Israeli Arab factions.
- **Saudi Arabia:** It is yet to recognize Israel. It supports the Palestinian Authority through financial aids. It also promotes an Arab League peace plan as an alternative to traditional Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.
- **US:** America has been mediator of Israel-Palestine conflict since inception. However, it has supported Israel with financial aids and reliable diplomatic backing for long. Although, Trump administration has led to renewed warmth in the relationship. Recently, it officially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. It also backed Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights.

Israel Issue

Israel-Palestine conflict is primarily conflict over territory dating back 70 years.

- **Zionism:** It is Israel's national ideology which promotes Judaism as a nationality as well as a religion. It holds that Jews deserve their own state in their ancestral homeland, Israel.

- **Jerusalem:** Located between Israel and West bank, it is a holy site for both Islam and Judaism. Israel and Palestine both wants to make it their capital. Israel controls Jerusalem since 1949.
- **West bank:** Located in East Israel, it is home to nearly three million Palestinians. Currently, it is nominally controlled by the Palestinian Authority (run by Palestinian Liberal Organization) and is under Israeli occupation.
- **Settlements:** They are communities of Jews that have been moving to the West Bank since it came under Israeli occupation in 1967 owing to religious, political and property reasons. It violates the **Fourth Geneva Convention**, which prohibits the transfer of population into occupied territories.
- **Gaza:** Gaza is a densely Palestinian populated strip of land that is mostly surrounded by Israel. It is currently under Israeli blockade following the political victory of Hamas.
- **Hamas:** They are a Palestinian Islamist political organization and militant group that has waged war on Israel since 1987. The US and European Union have designated them as a terrorist organization.
- **Intifadas:** They are two Palestinian uprisings against Israel, the first in the late 1980s and the second, and bloodier, as a result of collapse of peace process in the early 2000s.
- **Peace process:** It is an ongoing American-mediated effort to broker a peace treaty between Israelis and Palestinians. It aims to establish a Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank in exchange for Palestinians agreeing to permanently end attacks on Israeli targets.
- **Some solutions that are proposed:**
 - ♦ **Two-state solution:** It will establish Palestine as an independent state in Gaza and most of the West Bank, leaving the rest of the land to Israel.
 - ♦ **One-state solution:** All of the land becomes either one big Israel or one big Palestine.

Steps taken by India to resolve the issue:

- **Backed Palestine:** India has played a proactive role in garnering support for the Palestinian cause at multilateral forums.
 - ♦ **2015:** Supported the Bandung Declaration on Palestine at the Asian African Commemorative Conference.
 - ♦ **2015:** Supported the installation of the Palestinian flag at UN's premises.
 - ♦ **2017:** Voted against the United States' resolution in the UN to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.
- **Backed Peace Process:**
 - ♦ India has maintained a consistent and clear position on the Middle East Peace Process.

- ♦ It supports 2-state formula as endorsed in the Quartet Roadmap and relevant UNSC Resolutions.
- **Braking pro-Palestine voting pattern:**
 - ♦ PM Narendra Modi became the first Indian leader to visit Israel and enjoys good chemistry with Israeli PM.
 - ♦ Since their engagements, India has been abstaining on votes against Israel at the UNGA, UNHRC and at the UNESCO.
 - ♦ Recently, it voted in favour of Israel in the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to deny the Palestinian non-governmental organisation 'Shahed' the observer status.
 - ♦ It is the first time that India has voted on a resolution at the UN that is pro-Israel.



Way Ahead:

- India has been one of the only countries outside the Middle East region to have cultivated ties with most actors in the region.
- But, in this realpolitik era, bilateral relations are fast changing. Long-term strategy must be balanced against the need for more immediate needs.
- Therefore, India will have to weigh the moral high ground it gives to Palestine against the demands of self-interest.
- It needs to maintain a flexible position and to refrain from rigid policy commitments.
- Thus, it is in India's interest to engage with several partners at the same time.

NEED FOR MORE HUMANE IMMIGRATION POLICY

Recent deaths of 23-month-old Valeria in Rio Grande in an attempt to cross over US is a reminder for a more humane politics around immigration.

About:

- The **United States** has a very **harsh immigration policy**. Many **immigrants** are **gunned down, kidnapped, harassed, robbed, trafficked** while attempting to crossover to the US every year.
- Across **Europe**, the far-right has been gaining popularity by claiming that the **refugees from Syria**, consumed by civil war and political turmoil, will **dilute local culture and pose threats to national security**.
- In **India**, **Muslim** migrants, often from **Bangladesh**, are referred as "**infiltrators**", while those from the majority community are treated as refugees, this duality may well be enshrined in law with the proposed amendment to the **Citizenship Act**.

Who is a Migrant?

- Any person moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of:
 - ♦ The person's legal status
 - ♦ Whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary
 - ♦ What the causes for the movement are (or)
 - ♦ What the length of stay is.
- An **estimated 258 million people**, approximately **3 per cent of the world's population**, currently live outside their country of origin, many of whose migration is characterised by varying degrees of compulsion.

Perils Face by Migrants:

- Smuggling of migrants with the aim of making a financial or other material profit.
- Suffer assaults, robbery and abduction by criminal gangs.
- Extortion and ill-treatment by police and immigration officials.
- Kidnapping
- Sexual violence and human trafficking
- Abducted women and girls are vulnerable to trafficking.
- Injury and death

How Immigrants benefit their Adopted Economy?

- **Germany**, which left its borders open to **Syrian refugees**, is finding that with some training, the new residents are **bridging the labour gap in the country**.
- The **US**, which is largely a country of migrants, has also benefited from Hispanic immigrants.
- **Migrants increase GDP per person and productivity:**

- ♦ 1% increase in the share of migrants in the adult population increases GDP per person in advanced economies by up to 2% in the longer term.
- ♦ This increase comes primarily from an **increase in labour productivity**, instead of an increase in the workforce-to-population ratio.
- ♦ Both high and low-skilled migrants improve productivity.
- **Prosperity is broadly shared by the population:** Increase in the migrant share benefits the average income per person of both the bottom 90% and the top 10% of earners.

Towards More Humane Immigration Policy:

- **Develop Humane Economic Policies:** International economic policies, including trade agreements, need to be consistent with **human rights, trade justice, and sustainable approaches to the environment and economic development** in order to prevent labour displacement and its consequences such as forced economic migration.
- **Protecting the labour rights of all workers:** All workers are entitled to humane policies that protect their labour and employment rights.
- **Develop a clear path to citizenship:** Inclusive measures must be enacted that lead to permanent residence and citizenship for undocumented immigrants.
- **Respect civil and human rights of immigrants:** Regardless of status, immigrants deserve the same civil and human rights.
- **Make family reunification a top priority:** Recognize the distinctly important and valuable role of family ties by supporting the reunification of immigrant families.
- **Ensure that immigrants and refugees have access to services:** Our values should not be contingent on immigration status. Public programs and services to address needs like public health or to fulfil our societal sense of fairness and compassion should never be dependent on a person's race, ethnicity or place of birth.

Way Forward:

- The policies to accomplish this include **language training, job search support, better recognition of the education and work experience of migrants, and lower barriers to entrepreneurship**.
- At the same time, native workers, too, require some help to adjust, including by upgrading their skills.
- **Policymakers** also need to avoid possible overburdening of public services to contain the possible build-up of social tensions.

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INDIA'S NON-PERMANENT SEAT AT UNSC

India has won the unanimous support of all countries in the 55-member Asia-Pacific Group at the United Nations in support of its bid for a non-permanent seat at the UNSC for a two-year term in 2021-22.

About:

- **Significance:** The development is particularly significant given that **Pakistan and China** supported the move.
- India has been a non-permanent seat for 7 terms before this.

UNSC:

- UNSC is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations (UN) charged with **ensuring international peace and security**.

Current Members:

- **The Council is composed of 15 Members**
 - ♦ **Five permanent members (P-5):** China, France, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
 - ♦ **Ten non-permanent members** elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly.

What is the Process for Security Council Reform?

- **According to Article 108 of the United Nations Charter**, the Charter can be amended by a General Assembly decision approved by two thirds of General Assembly membership and ratified by two thirds of Member States, including the permanent members of the Security Council.

Why UNSC Reforms needed?

- Constituted in accordance with the geopolitical architecture of 1945.
- The lack of reform has affected the **credibility and effectiveness of the Security Council**.
- While membership of the UN has increased nearly fourfold since its birth in 1945, the UNSC has been expanded only once in 1965 by increasing the number of non-permanent seats from 6 to 10.
- To give **equitable representation** to different geographical regions in the world.

Hurdles to Indian Aspiration:

- Lack of enough Indian government resources for multilateral diplomacy.
- **Insufficient engagement** with the normative aspects of many UN Security Council issues.
- **Over-reliance on entitlement** as the bedrock of India's claims to permanent membership, at the cost of more hard-nosed realpolitik bargaining in the UN.

- **With India as part of G4**, it seems to have limited its options to negotiate a seat for itself as great power and regional politics would circumscribe the G4 attempts to win permanent seats for all as a group.
- UNSC expansion would require charter **amendment which cannot go through if opposed by any P-5 country**

India's Credentials to Seek UNSC Membership:

- Second largest population
- Third largest economy in PPP terms
- Leading IT power
- Largest troop contributor to UN Peace Keeping operations

India's Strategy:

- **Maximising support in the UN General Assembly (UNGA)** and **Minimising resistance** in the UN Security Council.
- India hopes that its **continued leadership of various Global South forums such as G 77 and NAM**, would garner much needed numbers in the UNGA.
- India's growing **strategic partnerships with the P5**.
- India has joined the **L-69**, the 42-member grouping of developing countries from Asia, Africa and Latin America.
- India, in late 2016, joined as a member the newly founded group of Friends on UN Security Council Reform, created to accelerate the negotiating process of Council reforms.

What Benefits would India have had from the Permanent Seat at UNSC?

- **UNSC is the premier decision making body of UN.**
 - ♦ Decisions like **imposing sanctions or the implementation of the verdict of ICJ**, it needs the endorsement of UNSC.
 - ♦ Permanent seat would have given India a greater say in the global geopolitics.
- **UNSC permanent membership would have provided India with the veto power.**
 - ♦ This would have enabled India in tailoring the decisions of the UNO according to its interests.
- UNSC permanent membership would have **strengthened India's resolve to act as the net security provider in the region.**
- UNSC permanent membership would have added strengthening of the **mechanisms to address the external security threats and addressing of state sponsored terrorism** against India especially in the case of Pakistan.

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PRO-KHALISTAN MOVEMENT

The Central Government banned a separatist group, Sikhs for Justice, on grounds of secessionism under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

About:

- **Sikhs for Justice (SFJ)**, formed in 2007, is a **US-based group** seeking a separate homeland for Sikhs, a "Khalistan" in Punjab.

Referendum 2020:

- SFJ in its **London Declaration** (in August 2018) has announced to hold the first ever non-binding referendum among the global Sikh community.
- **'Referendum 2020' has a dedicated website, which notes:** "Once there is a consensus within the Punjabi people that independence from India is desired, we will then approach the UN and other international forms and bodies with the goal of re-establishing Punjab as a nation state."
- SFJ has announced to hold polling for referendum in November 2020.

Reasons why SFJ is banned:

- Government believe that in the garb of the so-called referendum for Sikhs, SFJ is actually espousing secessionism and militant ideology in Punjab and is actively supported by inimical forces in other countries.
- **The activities of SFJ over the years include –**
 - ♦ Asserting that the Pulwama attack "cannot be termed as an act of terrorism" to backing Kashmiri separatists;
 - ♦ From extending legal help to stall extradition of fugitives wanted by India including UK resident.
 - ♦ In the World Cup semifinal, pro-Khalistani supporters with 'Referendum 2020' T-shirts in Manchester may have been another flashpoint leading to the ban.

The Pakistan Link:

- SFJ and 'Referendum 2020' are supported by Pakistan.
- Intelligence officials said the websites of SFJ share their domain with and source content from a Karachi-based website.
- The issue of Sikh radicalism has been worrying India, especially in view of the presence of Khalistan sympathisers in the Pakistani side who play a role in the management of holy Sikh places in Pakistan.
 - ♦ India had earlier protested after such individuals featured in Pakistan's team for the Kartarpur corridor project.

Way Forward:

- Indian diplomats should take up the need for **insulating Indian pilgrims from pro-Khalistan propaganda and activists** after the

Kartarpur corridor grants access to Indians to travel to the holy shrine which is in the Pakistani territory.

- The SFJ group has been championing "subversive activities." Such fringe groups who are into spreading hate and communal disharmony, should not be given any importance. India should continue to build bridges with Indians living abroad.

Khalistan Movement: A Peek Into History

- The Khalistan movement was a **secessionist movement** that aimed to create an independent Sikh country named Khalistan in the Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent.
- The Indian government refused to consider the idea of the formation of a separate state based on religion, however, they did divide the already broken Punjab along linguistic lines into Punjab and Haryana as they had with other states.

Reasons for the demand of Khalistan:

- The Sikhs were unsatisfied with the decision as many Hindus continued to reside in their area while the proportion of water-distribution also remained unequal between Haryana and Punjab.
- In the 1980s, Sikhs expressed their **feelings of alienation** following which they proposed a quest for a separate identity from the predominant Hindu regions due to a sense of discrimination.
- The wish to **gain more political and economic autonomy** from the government.

How the movement ended?

- The Khalistan secessionist movement saw its end when police commissioner K.P.S Gill, supported by the army, employed his harsh tactics to eliminate terrorist and militant activities.
- People of the state grew to reject the idea of violence and militancy which marked the end of the Khalistan movement.
- The lack of substantial reasons such as geographical limitations, fewer numbers to fight for the cause and a decline in external support led to the end of the struggle for the Sikhs' demand for an independent state - except for some fringe groups like SFJ.

MINIMUM GOVERNMENT, MAXIMUM GOVERNANCE

While the idea of 'minimum government, maximum governance' is very much needed in India, the focus must remain on maximising governance.

The Concept: Minimum Government, Maximum Governance:

- The concept of reducing role of state emerges from the **neo-liberal idea of allowing markets to function unhindered** as government interventions are often inefficient.
- In Indian context, **Mahatma Gandhi** also called for a **stateless society**, where individuals are governed not by **threat of violence**, but by **self-discipline and moral force**.
- **PM Modi's version** of minimum government refers to **reforming governance on two fronts**.
 - ♦ **Minimum government means reduction of government role** in many areas making it an **enabler rather than a provider**. It calls for **retreat of the state** from those activities that are **counterproductive** and where private participation is much more efficient.
 - ♦ **Maximum governance means to maximise service delivery** for betterment of the people.
 - ♦ In essence, this concept suggests that in order to **enhance quality and magnitude of public service delivery**, it is **not important to increase the size of government** officials. The idea is to reduce human interface in delivering services to the people.

Measures to Promote Minimum Government:

- **Abolishing the Group of Ministers (GoM)** that the previous government formed to take some important decision.
- **Decision to merge the Central Statistical Office and National Sample Survey Office** under the ministry of statistics and programme implementation into a single entity, the National Statistical Office.
- **Merging of the ministry of overseas Indian affairs with the ministry of external affairs.**
- **Synergies were also explored in state-owned companies** for achieving efficiency and cost competitiveness.
- **Promoting Direct Benefit Transfer** to reduce human interface and discretion in transfer of subsidies and benefits to the people.

Measures to Promote Maximum Governance:

- The **attempt to reduce discretion through instruments like JAM** (the Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile) that bypass the corrupt, inefficient bureaucrat and transfer benefits directly to citizens.
- The attempt initiated by the NITI Aayog to **move policy measurement away from infrastructure and inputs to performance and outcomes**.

- The effort to discipline bureaucrats by introducing **biometric attendance** for central government employees.
- A **360-degree review** that goes beyond the officers' **annual confidential reports**.
- **Initiating the platform called "PRAGATI"** where PM with his union secretaries hold monthly meeting through video conference with state secretaries about the progress and hurdles in key project like power and road.
- **Right to Information Act (RTI) is now online** and also available on mobile.
- **Promoting e-governance and digital India** is another step to achieve minimum government, maximum governance.
- **Grievance cells have been formed in** Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (**DARPG**). Central Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (**CPGRAMS**) monitors grievance redressals.
- Measures to promote **cooperative and competitive federalism** through **GST, Inter-State Councils**, among other measures.

Issues in Conception and Implementation:

- **Lack of adequate number of officers:** On a per-capita basis, the **US government has about 668 employees per 100,000** of its population but **India has about 139 only**.
- Our policy landscape **favours capital expenditure over revenue expenditure**. Such a mind-set leads to a large number of roads, schools, universities and hospitals, **without a corresponding increase in the number of staff** — teachers, doctors, etc — manning them.

Way Ahead:

- India's fundamental challenge is to maintain reasonable size of government needed to provide quality public services.
- The **Second Administrative Reforms Commission** highlighted **top-heavy government departments**, with overstaffing at the headquarters for most institutions and ministries, and **shortage at the field level**.
- While following the theme of minimising government and maximising governance, **we must ensure that there is enough government expenditure to meet the country's defence, law and order, healthcare, nutrition and education needs**.
- Moreover, the **reform agenda needs to move beyond technological quick fixes and focus on changing mind-sets of officers** by empowering them to act as real-time problem solvers, not merely rule-followers.

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'ONE NATION-ONE RATION CARD' SCHEME

Recently, the Centre has given states and Union Territories target to roll out the 'one nation, one ration card' system by June 2020.

About:

- Ration cards are a document issued under an order or authority of **the State Government** for the purchase of essential commodities from the fair price shops under the Public Distribution System (PDS) or Targeted Public Distribution System.
- 'One nation, one ration card' is an initiative of the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution** which allows **portability of food security benefits** across the country.
- This means poor migrant workers will be able to buy subsidized rice and wheat from any ration shop in the country, so long as their ration cards are linked to Aadhaar.

Important Features:

- All the States have been given one more year to use point of sale (PoS) machines in the ration shops and implement the scheme.
- Linking all the ration cards all over the country with Aadhaar cards and organizing food grain distribution mechanism in its entirety through Point of Sale (PoS) machine.
- Beneficiaries are required to show their Aadhaar card to buy food grains from any ration shop in the country.
- Only ration card will suffice if beneficiaries want to get their PDS entitlement only from a particular registered ration shop.
- Currently, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Telangana, and Tripura are 10 states where 100% POS machines have been arranged for grain distribution and all PDS shops have been connected to the Internet.

Food Rationing in India

- The food rationing and PDS system was begun during the famine of 1940 and was revived in 1970 as a universal food entitlement program for Indian citizens.
- Post-liberalization, in 1997, the universal food scheme was made a targeted one, covering poor and vulnerable people.
- Later, in 2013, due to civil society and judicial influence, the landmark **National Food Security Act (NFSA)** was passed by Parliament. It made **the right to food a legal entitlement** for two-thirds of poor households in India.

Types of Ration Cards under NFSA:

- **Priority ration card** – priority ration cards are issued to households that meet the eligibility criteria set by their state government. Each priority household is entitled to 5 kilograms of food grain per member.
- **Antyodaya (AAY)** ration cards are issued to "poorest of poor" households. Each AAY household is entitled to 35 kilograms of food grain.

Other Food Security Schemes

Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)

- A household with a disabled adult and no assured means of subsistence.
- E.g. landless laborers, marginal farmers, artisans, craft men, widows, terminally ill persons, etc.

Annapurna Yojana (AY)

- A destitute person with more than 65 years of age having no source of income and not availing the benefit of national Old Age Pension or State Pension Scheme are covered.
- Eligible are entitled to 10 Kg of food grains free of cost every month.

Advantages:

- **Improve Access to PDS:**
 - ♦ According to some academic estimation, the seasonal rural-to-urban migration in India is somewhere around 10 crore people, who work as informal workers in urban areas.
 - ♦ It will **create inclusion in food schemes**, both, at source and destination, without negating the very spirit of ensuring household food security of the migrant family.
 - ♦ It will ensure all beneficiaries, especially migrants, can access PDS (public distribution system) across the nation from any ration shop of their own choice.
- **Portability:** Under the Integrated Management of PDS (IMPDS) system beneficiaries can buy subsidized food grains from ration shops in any part of the country.
- **Check leakages:** The system will also help remove fake ration cardholders.
- The new mechanism will ensure no poor are deprived of PDS entitlement if that person shifts from one place to another.

National Food Security Act, 2013

It was enacted with an objective to provide for **food and nutritional security** in human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity.

Important Features:

- To provide for food and nutritional security in the human life cycle
- To ensure access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity.

Legal Entitlement:

- To receive foodgrains at subsidized prices by persons belonging to priority households and
- To generate general households under TPDS. The entitlement shall be provided up to 75% of the rural population and up to 50% of the urban population.

Particulars	Priority Households (more than 46% rural & 28% urban)	General Households (less than 64% rural & 72% urban)
Quantity	7 kg per person per month	4 kg per person per month
Price	Rice: Rs. 3/kg Wheat: Rs. 2/kg Millers: Re. 1/kg	<= 50% of Minimum Support Price (MPS)

Challenges:

- There is a need to have exact data on the mobility of poor households migrating to work, locating intra- and inter-state destinations and sectors employing the workers.
- There is a requirement of **domicile-based legislation** for accessing government before making 'One Nation, One Ration Card' portable.
- Aadhar and digital ration card may exclude either a person who migrates alone or migrates with his family or the left-behind vulnerable family member who stays back in the village.
- There are Multiple social security, welfare, food and anti-poverty schemes in India, in addition to an array of labor laws.
- **Beneficiary Identification:** So far, Aadhaar cards of about 89 percent of beneficiaries have been linked with the system, while 77 percent of ration shops have installed PoS machines. Thus, identifying legitimate beneficiaries, fix per capita food grain, including the most vulnerable people, digitalize and authenticate, in order to improve its target and efficiency will be a daunting task.

Way Ahead:

- While this scheme would bring perceptible changes to the lives of India's internal migrant workers, challenges lie ahead in designing and implementing it.
- NFSA defines food security as nutritional security. Therefore, portability of Integrated Child Development Services, Mid-Day Meals, immunization, health care and other facilities for poor migrant households can't be neglected and should be made portable. One nation one ration card is a welcome step in that direction.



COLOR CODING FOR FOOD PRODUCTS

Recently, FSSAI issued draft guidelines on labeling packaged food products for simplifying health quotient of food and beverages through colour coding.

About:

- Food labelling serves as a primary link of communication between manufacturers and consumers and covers both food safety and information of consumer interest.
- Food labelling standards are given by FSSAI under **Food Safety and Standards (Packaging and labelling) Regulations, 2011**. It states that every packaged food must possess a label displaying information which shall not be false, deceptive or misleading in any manner.

FSSAI

- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India has been established under the Food Safety & standard Act, 2006.
- It aims to consolidate the laws relating to food in India and laying down science-based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import, to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption.
- Major Duties and Functions:** To regulate and monitor the manufacture, processing, distribution, sale and import of food to specify the standards and guidelines in relation to articles of food and specifying an appropriate system for enforcing those standards.
- Besides, FSSAI also provides scientific advice and technical support to the Central Government and the State Governments in matters of framing the policy and rules in areas which have a direct or indirect bearing on food safety and nutrition.

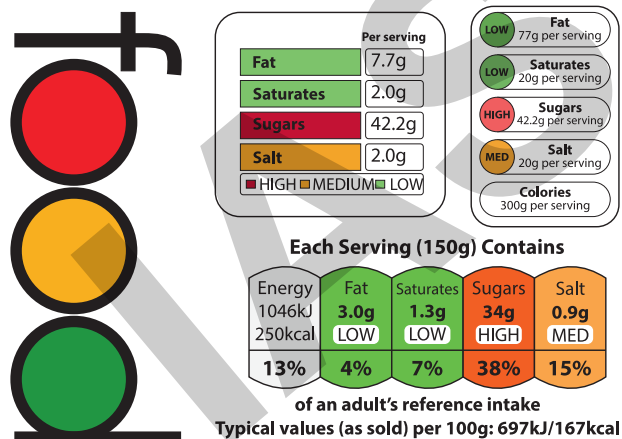
New Labelling Norms:

- The idea behind the new labelling regulations is to enable citizens to know more about the composition of food products, so that they can make informed choices.

Codex Alimentarius

- It is a collection of internationally adopted food standards and related texts presented in a uniform manner.
- Its guidelines are developed and maintained by the **Codex Alimentarius Commission**, a body established by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 1961.
- It was later joined by the WHO in June 1962, and held its first session in Rome in October 1963.
- The Codex Alimentarius includes standards for all the principal foods, whether processed, semi-processed or raw, for distribution to the consumer.

Fssai: Traffic Light Food Labeling



Proposed Provisions:

- Packaged food companies will need to declare nutritional information such as calories, saturated fat, trans-fat etc.
- The food labels to declare, per serve %age, contribution to RDA (Recommended Dietary Allowance) on the front of the pack.
- Mandatory to display red colour-coding on front-of-the-pack labels on packaged food products that have high-fat, high-sugar and high-salt content levels.
- Proposal to put date marking, including date of manufacturing and date of expiry must be at one place.
- Mandatory labelling requirements like information relating to allergens and logo of veg, non-veg food, etc for the prepared food as well.
- Nutritional information may additionally be provided in the form of barcode/ Global Trade Identification Number (GTIN).
- New logo for vegetarian food which consists of a green colour filled triangle inside a square with green outline to enable the colour blind people to identify.
- Every package of food material which is not meant for human consumption shall bear a [X] symbol.

Way Ahead:

- In the changing global scenario, food piracy and food adulteration, stringent safety standards for food especially packed food products becomes the need of hour.
- Provision of having three different regulations dealing separately to packaging, labelling and advertisement & claims requirements is a welcome step.

JAL SHAKTI ABHIYAN

Jal Shakti Abhiyan is launched as a campaign for water conservation and water security in India.

About:

- Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA) is a collaborative effort of various Ministries of the Government of India and State Governments, being coordinated by the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation.
- It is a time-bound, mission-mode campaign that would focus on 1,592 “water-stressed” blocks in 257 districts.
- The campaign will run through citizen participation during the monsoon season, from 1st July 2019 to 15th September 2019.
- Teams of officers from the central government will visit and work with district administration in water-stressed blocks, to ensure five important water conservation interventions-
 - ♦ Water conservation and rainwater harvesting,
 - ♦ Renovation of traditional and other water bodies/tanks,
 - ♦ Reuse bore well recharge structures,
 - ♦ Watershed development
 - ♦ Intensive afforestation.
- These water conservation efforts will include the development of Block and District Water Conservation Plans, promotion of efficient water use for irrigation and a better choice of crops through Krishi Vigyan Kendras.
- Jal Shakti Abhiyan campaign will involve mass mobilization of different groups. It will include school students, college students, swachhagrahis, Self Help Groups, Panchayati Raj Institution members, youth groups (NSS/NYKS/NCC), defense personnel, ex-servicemen and pensioners, among various others.

National Rural Drinking Water Programme:

- National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) was launched in 2009.
- It aims to provide safe and adequate water for drinking, cooking and other domestic needs to every rural person on a sustainable basis.
- It has a provision of 50 : 50 fund sharing between Centre and the States.
- The program was to cover all the Rural Population across the country.
- It will enable the country to reach the goal of increasing coverage of sustainable Piped Water Supply.

- Its focus will be on piped water supply, increase the level of service delivery, thrust on coverage of water quality affected habitations, coverage of Open Defecation Free (ODF) declared villages, Integrated Action Plan (IAP) districts. NRDWP under Union Budget 2019-20.
- The govt. allocated Rs 9,150.36 crore for National Rural Drinking Water Programme — increase of 69% from last year.
- Major Indian states, including Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat, and Maharashtra, **are suffering from major water crisis.**

Jal Jeevan Mission:

- Finance Minister announced **Jal Jeevan Mission** to achieve **Har Ghar Jal** (piped water supply) to all rural households by 2024.
- The Budget mentioned that 1,592 critical and over-exploited blocks were identified under Jal Shakti Abhiyan.
- The focus will also be on integrated demand and supply-side management at a local level, creation of local infrastructure for rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, and household wastewater management.
- The Jal Jeevan Mission will be implemented by the Jal Shakti Ministry, into which the ministries of Drinking Water and Sanitation and Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation were recently merged.

Har Khet Ko Pani:

- Aiming to address the agrarian crisis in rural India, schemes under the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana —for irrigation — received an allocation of Rs 4,115.56 crore, an increase of 659 crores from last year.
- Har khet ko pani provides for the implementation of projects like repair, renovation, and restoration of water bodies, surface minor irrigation schemes, and groundwater irrigation.

Way Forward:

- Water scarcity is a reality that India is staring at now. There are thousands of villages across the length and breadth of the country facing severe water scarcity. The monsoon has failed from time to time. In such a scenario, the new initiative from the government augurs well.
- Rainwater harvesting, afforestation, watershed management, efficient irrigation, etc, are time-tested mechanisms for conserving water. The initiative with its broad mandate is planning to involve all stakeholders in water conservation.

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INITIATIVES FOR WOMEN SAFETY

Only 20% of Nirbhaya Fund has been used by States until 2018

About:

- The States and UTs have **utilised less than 20% of the budget allocated** to them under the **Nirbhaya Fund for safety of women** by the Central government between 2015 and 2018.
- Of the ₹854.66 crore released by the Centre until 2018, a mere ₹165.48 crore has been spent by various States and UTs.
- Nirbhaya Fund was set up by the UPA-II govt. in the aftermath of the Delhi gang rape in 2012 with an initial corpus of ₹1,000 crores.
- As many 21 States have not used any money under the Central Victim Compensation Fund for providing support to victims of rape, acid attacks, human trafficking and women killed or injured in cross border firing.
- Funds allocated for the **Emergency Response Support System, which envisages a Pan-India emergency number for police, rescue, health and fire services**, also remain unused by 18 States.
- **Key schemes** under which the States have been allocated money include
 - ♦ Emergency Response Support System
 - ♦ Central Victim Compensation Fund
 - ♦ Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children
 - ♦ Mahila Police Volunteer
 - ♦ Universalisation of Women Helpline Scheme
- **Top five States** ranked in terms of utilisation of money across various schemes under the Nirbhaya Fund
 - ♦ **Chandigarh (59.83%)** utilised more than allocated for Central Victim Compensation Fund and Women Helpline Scheme Mizoram (56.32%), Uttarakhand (51.68%), Andhra Pradesh (43.23%) and Nagaland (38.17%).
- **Worst five States** which didn't spend even a single penny include Manipur, Maharashtra, Lakshadweep, West Bengal (0.76%) and Delhi (0.84%).

Initiatives for Women's Safety:

- **Panic Button**
 - ♦ Emergency Response Support System (ERSS)
 - ♦ On the **smart phones**, the **power button (which is dedicated panic button) when pressed three times quickly** to activate panic call to ERC.
 - ♦ Dialling 112 from any phone.
 - ♦ In case of **feature phone**, **long press of "5" or "9" key on the phone** will activate the panic call.
 - ♦ Use **112 India Mobile App**, which is available free on Google Playstore and Apple store.

One Stop Centre Scheme

- ♦ Popularly known as '**Sakhi**,' it was implemented on 1st April 2015 with the 'Nirbhaya' fund.
- ♦ **Centres are established at various locations** in India for providing shelter, police desk, legal, medical and counselling services to victims of violence under one roof integrated with a 24-hour Helpline.
- ♦ The **toll-free 24-hour helpline number is 181**.

SCIM portal under Safe City Project

- ♦ Safe City Implementation Monitoring Portal
- ♦ Identification of sensitive hot spots in each city,
- ♦ Installation of **CCTV surveillance** covering the entire hot spot, buses, public places.
- ♦ **Automated Number Plate Reading (ANPR)** and **drone-based surveillance** to be deployed in extremely sensitive areas.
- ♦ Intensive **patrolling** by Women police in vulnerable areas beyond the identified hot spots.
- ♦ Improving **street lighting** in identified Hot Spot areas and **public toilet facilities** for women.
- ♦ Augmentation of existing women support centers like **Asha Jyoti Kendra or Bharosa centers** etc.

Investigation Tracking System for Sexual Offences (ITSSO)

- ♦ It is meant for **Law Enforcement Agencies** in the country.
- ♦ It is an **online module** available to law enforcement agencies at all levels- National, State, District and Police Station that allows State to undertake **real-time monitoring and management for completion of investigation in rape cases in 2 months**.
- ♦ It leverages the existing **CCTNS data base**, which covers nearly 15000 police stations in the country.
- ♦ ITSSO would greatly **strengthen States ability for analytics and prognosis for timely investigation and prosecution in rape cases**.

DNA Analysis Facilities in States

- ♦ In view of the complaints of delay in cases of sexual assault investigations, it was proposed that dedicated DNA analysis facilities should be created in the forensic science laboratories on a mission mode.
- ♦ **Timely testing of DNA samples** from the crime scene is the quickest process of obtaining forensic evidence in cases of sexual assault on women.

MENTAL HEALTH CASES IN INDIA

According to a study conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, 1 in 40 and 1 in 20 people are suffering from the past and current episodes of depression in India.

About:

- Health is important for development of the country.
- World health Organization (WHO) defines health as "a state of physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".

What is Mental Health?

- WHO defines **mental health as mental well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.**
- In this positive sense, **mental health is the foundation for individual well-being and the effective functioning of a community.**
- **Mental health has impact on**
 - ♦ Educational outcome
 - ♦ Productivity at work
 - ♦ Development of Positive personal relationships
 - ♦ Crime rate
 - ♦ Alcohol & drug abuse

Challenges Associated with Mental Health in India:

- **Stigma** is associated with mental illness and patients are **discriminated** in the **society** in all aspects like education, employment, marriage etc., which leads to delay in seeking medical advice.
- **Vagueness in concepts of mental health and illness**, with **lack of definitive signs and symptoms** which result in diagnostic confusion.
- People feel that **mental illnesses occur in those who are mentally weak or due to spirits.**
- Many people are in the opinion that **mental illness is irreversible** that lead to therapeutic nihilism.
- Many people believe that **drugs used to treat mental illness may cause many side effects and leads to addiction.** They feel that these drugs merely induce sleeping.
- Data collected by WHO demonstrated that there is large **gap between burden caused by mental health problems** and the resources available in countries to prevent and treat them.
- **Psychiatric patients and their families fail to act like pressure groups** as they are reluctant to come together because of severe social stigma and lack of knowledge about their rights.

- Even Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) consider this as a difficult field as it needs long term commitment and they are scared to deal with mentally handicapped.

What has the Government Done?

- **National Mental Health Programme (NMHP)**
 - ♦ **Launched in 1982**, keeping in view the heavy burden of mental illness in the community, and the absolute inadequacy of mental health care infrastructure in the country to deal with it.
 - ♦ **NMHP has 3 components:**
 - ❖ **Treatment** of Mentally ill
 - ❖ **Rehabilitation**
 - ❖ **Prevention** and promotion of positive mental health.
 - ♦ **Aims**
 - ❖ **Prevention and treatment of mental and neurological disorders** and their associated disabilities.
 - ❖ Use of **mental health technology** to improve general health services.
- **Mental Healthcare Act 2017**
 - ♦ The new Mental Healthcare Act 2017 rescinds/revoked the existing **Mental Healthcare Act 1987 which had been widely criticized for not recognizing the rights of a mentally ill person.**
 - ♦ Aims to provide **mental healthcare services** for persons with mental illness.
 - ♦ It ensures that these persons have a **right to live life with dignity** by not being discriminated against or harassed.
 - ♦ Ensures every person shall have a **right to access mental health care and treatment** from mental health services run or funded by the appropriate government.
 - ♦ **Assures free treatment for such persons if they are homeless or belong to Below Poverty Line**, even if they do not possess a BPL card.
 - ♦ A **person who attempts suicide shall be presumed to be suffering from mental illness** at that time and will **not be punished under the Indian Penal Code.**

Way Forward:

There is a **desperate need for mental health literacy.** An **ecosystem of care, empathy and inclusion** requires involvement of politicians, celebrities, activists, scholars and citizens. Only then can we change the way we address mental illnesses. The conversation must start.

FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR WOMEN

Aam Aadmi Party-led (AAP) Delhi government has proposed to make travel by buses and metro rail free for all women.

Analysis of Free Rides to Women:

- **Gender-based public transport fare subsidy programme**, announced by the AAP government, has not been tested anywhere in India in the past.
- **Proponents** claim that the policy will **protect and liberate women**.
- **Critics** argue that it is **financially unviable and unfair**.
- In **India**, however, **urban transport fare discounts are less common**, although **concessions for seniors, students**, and other **socio-economic groups** are available for **government-operated flights and long-distance railway services**.
- **Article 13** in the **United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights** recognises **freedom of movement** as a **basic human right**.
- If we consider transportation as a fundamental social need and providing mobility for the transportation-disadvantaged as our **collective responsibility**, then any **urban transport policy** should include **subsidies targeted at the disadvantaged and free for some sections of the society**.
- Specific supply-side investments or fare price discounts to help the disadvantaged travel, conduct activities and prosper are therefore justified.

Why Free Travel for Women?

- Findings suggestive of **gender differences in travel choices and patterns**
 - ♦ **Women in India travel far less than men**, and this has significant **impacts** on their **education, employment, and enjoyment**.
 - ♦ **According to the 2011 Census**, an estimated **60% of women workers** in India choose to **work from home or at a place which is less than a km from home**.
 - ♦ According to a World Bank Study conducted in Delhi, the remaining working women tend to rely excessively on public transport.
 - ♦ When **Delhi Metro hiked fares last year**, around **70% of women** surveyed in a study suggested that they would have to **choose a less safe travel option for work, or travel less**.
- **Wage discrimination, gender segregation in employment, and household labour divisions** contribute to **gender inequality** in transportation.
- Compromises on education and jobs for travel purposes is one of the reasons for women earning less than men.
- **Limited money to travel** also means that women are willing to **forgo hospital visits, significantly affecting their health**.

Benefits:

- Women might consider **taking up jobs for which they are better suited** but are **further away from home**.
- They can engage in a range of activities that **promote their wellbeing**.
- Free public transport can therefore **bring more women to public spaces**, and, consequently, make those spaces safer for women.

Arguments:

- Free rides will, undoubtedly, increase the use of public transport by women as **metro rides have become rather expensive** after May 2017.
- Women who should ideally benefit from free rides might still not use the metro or the buses, simply because such modes of transport do not connect their place of residence and place of work including domestic helps.
- It **discriminates against poor men and boys**.
- Just because a ₹10 ticket is now free, all women will leave whatever else work they have and start thronging the metro stations.
- **Why should a woman not feel safe even if she is alone in an entire metro? What happens to her if she steps out of the metro or bus and heads to her home through a desolate street?** We need to **ensure that women feel safe 24x7** and all streets and not merely in metros and buses.

What can be done Instead?

- State government should spend **1200 crores of tax payer's money for the free ride scheme**.
- If **security CCTV cameras** are set up for every 7 meters with this amount, **not only women safety but also the issue of vehicle theft, robberies, thefts and arson** can all be resolved with such a setup.
- There would also be an increase in the GDP of the state and job created in the process.
- **Recruit women constables** which could effectively almost double the police strength. **International best practices**.
- **Singapore**: Offers a **discount to rail commuters who are willing to travel before the morning rush-hour**.
- **Estonia**: Public transport is **free for residents**.
- **Luxembourg**: Public transport **free** for those **under the age of 20** (population about 600,000).

■■■■

CHANDRAYAAN-2

Exploring the boundaries of human knowledge

About:

- **GSLV-F10** or more popularly **Chandrayaan-2**, though **ISRO's second mission** to the moon, will be **ISRO's first mission to land a spacecraft on moon** and explore its surface with a rover.
- Chandrayaan-2 **will be the year's third bid at a moon landing**, following **China's Chang'e 4** successful landing on the moon's far side (near the south pole) and the **Israeli spacecraft Beresheet** that crashed on the moon in April.
- The **3,840-kg Chandrayaan-2 spacecraft** is a **totally indigenous mission** and consists of an Orbiter, Lander and Rover.
 - ♦ The **orbiter** will circle the moon at 100 km height and perform the objectives of remote sensing the moon;
 - ♦ The **five-legged lander** called **Vikram**, named after Vikram Sarabhai - the father of the Indian Space Research Organisation, will descend on the moon on or around September 6 and
 - ♦ The robotic rover, **Pragyan**, that will be used mostly for in-situ experiments. The **six-wheeled Rover** will move around the landing site in semi-autonomous mode, about 500m over the next 14 earth days — or one day on the moon, as decided by the ground commands; It will use solar energy for its functioning.
 - ♦ **Note:** Unlike Earth, which turns on its axis every 24 hours, the Moon takes about 30 days to make a complete rotation. This means that days and nights on the Moon last two weeks.
- **GSLV-F10/Chandrayaan-2** Mission will be taken to the moon by a Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle called **GSLV-Mk III**.
- Chandrayaan-2, the lunar lander mission launched in July 2019, has **14 Indian payloads or study devices** to perform mineralogical and elemental studies of the lunar surface.
- **It is the country's first space mission headed by women:** Ritu Karidhal, the mission director, and M. Vanitha, the project director.
- July 2019 is a special year for space history. Other than it being the successful launch of Chandrayaan-2 into earth orbit, it also marks the 50th anniversary of the famed **Apollo 11 mission** of July 1969 that for the first time saw humans land on the moon.

Where will Vikram Land?

- Most of the Moon landing missions so far were done on equatorial region of the Moon as:

1. Lunar south pole is shadowy and dark in places. Without Sunlight, the lander and rover spacecrafts cannot work for long.
 2. The landing manoeuvre on this region is very difficult.
- ISRO has chosen a landing area at the hitherto unexplored lunar south pole, making it the **first agency to touch down at the south pole** if it succeeds in its first landing attempt.
 - **Only Russia, the U.S. and China** have soft-landed on moon so far (not at the South Pole).

Tale of Two Lunar Missions

A look at how Chandrayaan-2 is different than its predecessor

	Chandrayaan-1	Chandrayaan-2
Launch Year	October 2008	July 2019
Launch Vehicle	PSLV (C11, Light Lift Vehicle)	GSLV MkIII [far more powerful]
Spacecraft Size	1,380 kg	3,850 kg
Mission & Life	Orbiter 1 year [failed 4 months prematurely]	Orbiter 1 year; lander and rover 14 earth days
Cost	₹ 540 crore	₹ 978 crore
Payloads	11, Indian & International	14 Indian (many same as on Cy1) 1 from NASA 8 on orbiter 4 on lander 2 on rover
What it achieved	Detected presence of water	Aims to be first country to land on and explore the lunar south pole
Specialty	Crashed the tri-coloured Moon Impact Probe near the southern lunar hemisphere	Will try to safely place the Vikram lander near the south pole



The GSLV MkIII launch vehicle

Why did the ISRO choose the Moon's South Pole as the Landing site for Chandrayaan-2?

- The lunar South Pole is one of the most compelling places in the entire Solar System.
- The towering massifs of the **South Pole-Aitken Basin** can be accessed, and these massifs contain impact melt that will allow scientists **to unambiguously determine the age of this huge basin** and could provide **insights into planetary formation**.

- Permanently shadowed craters may harbour reservoirs of ices and other volatile compounds that could serve as a tremendously **valuable resource** for future explorers.
- Additionally, these volatile deposits could contain a priceless **record of water composition dating back to the beginning of our Solar System**, an incomparable dataset for astrobiology investigations.
- **A few mountain peaks** near the pole are **illuminated for extended periods of time**, which could provide near-constant solar power for a permanent lunar outpost sometime in the far future.
- Chandrayaan-1 discovered water on Moon earlier. Now for deeper understanding and knowledge about Lunar water, it requires to explore this icy region.

Why not North Pole?

- The south pole of moon has a large shadowy region (larger than that in North pole).
- It contains places that remains in permanent darkness where Sunlight never reaches.
- Further, the South Pole is at the edge of the Aitken basin, the largest impact basin in the Solar System.
- **Note:** NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter is still flying over the South Pole region at an altitude of only 30 km, collecting a wealth of data.

Why should we Study the Moon?

To Push the Boundaries of Scientific Knowledge

- Clues to some of the most fundamental questions about our Solar System lie hidden in the craters, hills, and valleys of the moon.
- Studying these will help us unravel the mysteries of our Universe.

To Unleash Innovation

- Throwing grand challenges to the youth will unleash the innovation, spurring future research and development.

Explore Economic Possibilities

- Industry has always been a partner in ISRO's space programme and the future holds bigger opportunities for strengthening the alliance.

Engage with the Public

- Chandrayaan-2 will inspire the whole nation and motivate the youth to undertake real-life applications of science and technology - to be second to none in solving the problems of man and society.

Expand India's Footprint in Space

- Moon is the perfect test-bed for proving technologies required for future space explorations, as well as in-situ resource utilization.

Foster Shared Aspirations of International Community

- India will be a key contributor in exploring and uncovering the secrets of the Universe - an association shared by the global community.

Do You Know?

- ISRO had created a proto-Lunar Terrain Test Facility at its advanced satellite testing unit, ISITE, in Bengaluru.
- A few sites (Sithampoondi and Kunnamalai) near Salem in Tamil Nadu had the 'anorthosite' rock that somewhat matches lunar soil in composition and features, which was used by the ISRO to create Moon's surface like conditions.
- ISRO has prepared a site named **Challakere** in Karnataka to resemble lunar craters and to conduct preliminary tests of Chandrayaan-2 lunar lander's sensors.

Chandrayaan-3:

- After the Chandrayaan-2 mission launch, another lunar journey is in the offing around 2024 **to bring soil and rock samples back from the South Pole of the Moon**.
- **China's Chang'e 5** mission in December this year will be China's first sample return mission, it aims to come back with least 2 kg of lunar soil and rock samples back to the Earth.

Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle or GSLV:

- It is an expendable launch system;
- It is a 3 stage vehicle with solid, liquid and cryogenic stages; it has three variants - GSLV MK-I, MK-II and GSLV MK-III.
- GSLV MK-III, **the most powerful indigenous rocket**, is conceived and designed to make ISRO fully self reliant in launching heavier communication satellites of INSAT-4 class, which weigh 4500 to 5000 kg.

Cryogenic Stage:

- A cryogenic engine/cryogenic stage is the last stage of space launch vehicles which makes use of Cryogenics.
- Cryogenics is the study of the production and behaviour of materials **at extremely low temperatures** (below -150 degree Centigrade) to lift and place the heavier objects in space.
- A cryogenic engine provides **more force with each kilogram of cryogenic propellant** it uses compared to other propellants, such as solid or earth-storable liquid propellant stages and is **more efficient**.
- Cryogenic engine makes **use of Liquid Oxygen (LOX) and Liquid Hydrogen (LH2)** as propellants - which liquefy at -183 deg C and -253 deg C respectively, which are **stored separately**.
- However, cryogenic stage is **technically a very complex system** compared to solid or earth-storable liquid propellant stages due to its use of propellants at extremely low temperatures and the associated thermal and structural problems.

CLASSICAL LANGUAGES OF INDIA

Marathi may become the next classical language in India

About:

- A proposal for granting Classical status to Marathi Language was received from Marathi Language Department, Government of Maharashtra.
- The proposal is again under active consideration in consultation with other Ministries and Committee of Linguistic Experts through Sahitya Akademi.

Criteria for Classical Language:

- The Sahitya Akademi's expert committee mentioned four criteria for a classical language.
 - ♦ **One** is the high antiquity of early texts/recorded history of over 1500 to 2000 years.
 - ♦ **The second** is a body of ancient literature/texts that is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers.
 - ♦ **The third** criterion is that the literary tradition should be original and not borrowed from another speech community.
 - ♦ **Fourthly**, the classical language and literature should be distinct from the modern, and there may also be a discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms or offshoots.
- Six Indian languages – **Tamil (2004), Sanskrit (2005), Kannada (2008), Telugu (2008), Malayalam (2013) and Odia (2014)** – have been given the classical language status.

Classical Languages of India:

Tamil

- The Tamil language belongs to the **Dravidian family** and is mainly spoken by the Tamil people in both India and Sri Lanka.
- It is also the official language of **Singapore and Sri Lanka**, and is an official language in India's Tamil Nadu state and Union Territory of Puducherry.
- Tamil is **among the 20 most spoken languages in the world** and is also among the longest-surviving languages as it dates back to 500 BC.

Sanskrit

- Sanskrit is a dialect of the **Old Indo-Aryan language**.
- It dates back to the 2nd millennium BC and is considered the oldest Indo-European language.
- Sanskrit evolved from the Vedic form currently known as Vedic Sanskrit.
- Most Sanskrit speakers are found in Mattur, Odisha, Banswara, and Shimoga District.

Kannada

- Kannada is a predominant language in the states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu.
- The history of the language dates back to 450 BC and is considered **one of India's oldest surviving languages**.

Telugu

- Telugu is a **Dravidian language** and one of the official primary languages in Indian states.
- It is an official language in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Puducherry Territory.
- Telugu has the third highest number of native speakers. Telugu language dates back to 1500 and 1000 BC, when it split from the **Proto-Dravidian language**.
 - ♦ However, early inscription dates back to between 400 and 100 BC.

Malayalam

- Malayalam is a **Dravidian language** that is mainly spoken in the Indian states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka.
- Its development is credited to **Thunchaththu Ezhuthachan**.
- However, the language's origin remains a subject of dispute, as some scholars suggest it developed from Middle Tamil, while others claim it originated from Proto-Tamil-Dravidian.

Odia

- The Odia language is spoken by approximately 4.2% of the population of India, the majority of which live in the eastern part of the country, including the state of Odisha and West Bengal.
- The history of Odia language dates back to 10 AD and is thought to have originated from Odra Magadhi Prakrit.

Benefits of Classical Languages:

- Languages in India declared as classical receive three primary benefits.
- First, two major international awards for scholars who have made significant contributions to Classical Indian Languages are awarded annually.
- Second, the government has also set up a Center of Excellence for the Study of Classical Languages.
- Last, Central Universities have also been requested to provide grants for Professional Chairs for Classical Languages.





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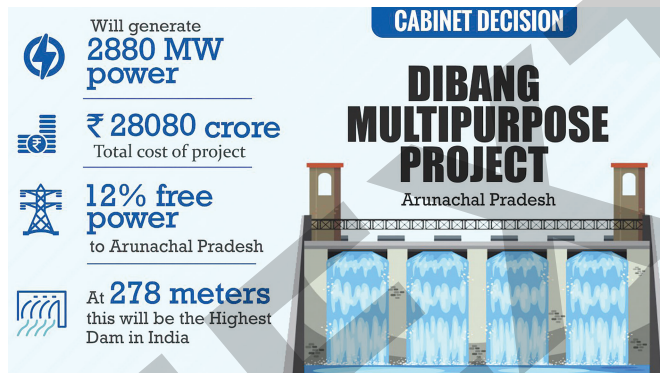
ECONOMY

DIBANG MULTIPURPOSE PROJECT

CCEA approves 2880 MW Dibang Multipurpose Project.

About:

- Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister approved the expenditure on pre-investment activities and various clearances for Dibang Multipurpose Project. (MPP) in Arunachal Pradesh for an amount of Rs. 1600 crore.
- Estimated time:** The estimated completion period for the project shall be nine years.
- Location:** The Project is located on river Dibang, in Lower Dibang Valley District of Arunachal Pradesh.
- This is the **largest ever** Hydro Electric Projects to be constructed in India.
- The dam is 278 metres high and will be the **highest dam in India** once completed.



Benefits:

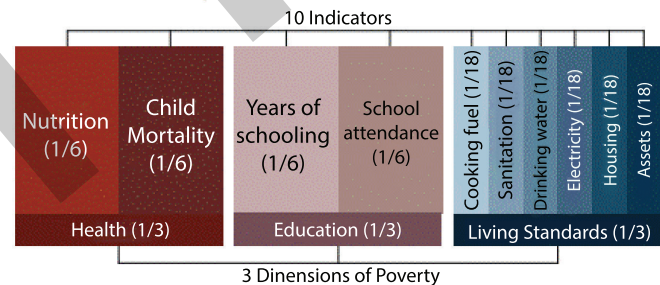
- The project shall generate **2880MW** (12x240MW) power to produce 11223MU of energy in a 90% dependable year.
- On completion, the Government of Arunachal Pradesh will get 12% free power from the project i.e. 1346.76 MU.
- 1% free power (i.e. 112 MUs will be given in Local Area Development Fund (LADF).
- Dibang Multipurpose Project (Dibang MPP) is envisaged as a storage based hydro-electric project with flood moderation as the key objective.

GLOBAL MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX

India lifted 271 million people out of poverty between 2006 and 2016.

About:

- The global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is an international measure of acute multidimensional poverty covering over 100 developing countries.
- It complements traditional monetary-based poverty measures by capturing the acute deprivations that each person faces at the same time with respect to **education, health and living standards**.
- The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) was developed in 2010 by the **Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI)** and the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**.
- It uses different factors to determine poverty beyond income-based lists. It replaced the previous Human Poverty Index. The global MPI is **released annually by Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI)**



Facts to Remember:

- 1.3 billion people in the world are still multi-dimensionally poor.
- Level of Inequality and poverty is very high in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
- Bangladesh, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru and Vietnam (10 selected countries have a combined population of around 2 billion people) have shown significant progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 1 i.e ending poverty in all its forms, everywhere.
- One in every three children (under the age of 10) and every second child below the age of 18 years is multi-dimensionally poor in the world.
- One adult in six is multi-dimensionally poor compared with one child in three, hence **children are more prone to multidimensional poverty than adults**.
- Multi-dimensionally poor children are concentrated more in the Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

- Trends in poverty reduction is uneven in all 10 countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru and Vietnam) as **rural areas are poorer than urban areas.**

India's Picture:

- India lifted 271 million people out of poverty between 2006 and 2016, (reduced from 0.283 in 2005-06 to 0.123 in 2015-16) recording the fastest reductions in the multidimensional poverty index values during the period with strong improvements in areas such as assets, cooking fuel, sanitation and nutrition.
- MPI reduced from 640 million people (55.1%) in 2005-2006 to 369 million people (27.9%) in 2015-16.

MILK PRODUCTION

Government of India has shown its support for increasing Milk Production in the country.

About:

- Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying is implementing World Bank assisted **National Dairy Plan-I** in 18 States including Uttar Pradesh to support milk cooperatives and milk producer companies along with breeding improvement initiative.

Milk Production in India:

- India ranks first in Milk production, accounting for 20 percent of world production.
- The milk production in India has been increasing steadily over the years from 55.6 Million tonne in 1991-92 to 176.35 million tonnes in 2017-18, at an average growth rate of 4.5%.

Scheme/Initiatives for Dairy Sector:

- **Rashtriya Gokul Mission** with the aim to develop and conserve **indigenous breeds** and enhancing their production and productivity-Central assistance.
- **Dairy Entrepreneurship Development Scheme** is being implemented with the objective of generation of self-employment opportunities in the dairy sector, covering activities such as enhancement of milk production, procurement, preservation, transportation, processing and marketing of milk-Central assistance.
- **National Programme for Dairy Development** is being implemented with objective to create infrastructure for milk procurement, processing and marketing-Central assistance.
- **E Pashu Haat Portal:** Under the scheme National Mission on Bovine Productivity, E Pashudhan Haat portal was developed for connecting breeders and farmers regarding availability of quality bovine germplasm.

LOSS LEADER

It is a pricing strategy generally used by businesses to improve their profitability.

About:

- Under the strategy, certain products are sold at a **minimal profit** or **even at a price that is well below their cost price** in order to boost the sale of other products that are more profitable.
- For **example**, a supermarket chain might decide to sell certain common household goods at a low profit so that more customers feel attracted to its store. It may believe that customers coming to the store to buy these commonly used items may in turn decide to purchase other goods in the store which can add to profits.

Other Common Pricing Strategies

- **Premium pricing:**
 - ♦ **High price** is used as a defining criterion.
 - ♦ Suited for segments and industries where a strong **competitive advantage** exists for the company.
 - ♦ **Examples:** Porche in cars and Gillette in blades.
- **Penetration pricing:**
 - ♦ Price is set **artificially low** to gain market share quickly. This is done when a new product is being launched.
 - ♦ Prices will be raised once the **promotion period** is over and market share objectives are achieved.
 - ♦ **Example:** Mobile phone rates in India; housing loans etc.
- **Economy pricing**
 - ♦ It is also called **no-frills price**.
 - ♦ **Margins** are wafer thin;
 - ♦ **Overheads** like marketing and advertising costs are very low.
 - ♦ Targets the **mass market** and **high market share**.
 - ♦ **Example:** Friendly wash detergents; Nirma; local tea producers.
- **Skimming strategy:**
 - ♦ The idea is to recover maximum money before the product or segment attracts more competitors who will lower profits for all concerned.
 - ♦ High price is charged for a product till such time as competitors allow.
 - ♦ **Example:** the earliest prices for mobile phones, VCRs and other electronic items where a few players ruled attracted lower cost Asian players.

JAL JEEVAN MISSION

Jal Jeevan mission has been announced in the Union Budget this year and Independence day Speech of Prime Minister

About:

- **Objective:** To ensure HarGharJal (piped water supply) to all rural households by 2024 under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

Strategy:

- This Mission will focus on integrated demand and supply side management of water at the local level, including creation of local infrastructure for source sustainability like rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge and management of household wastewater for reuse in agriculture.

Important features of New Jal Jeevan Mission:

- **Integrated water management solutions:** The creation of the Jal Shakti Mantralaya in the Government of India to integrate the management of India's water resources and supply of drinking water is a landmark step in diagnosing and addressing the problem.
- **Source sustainability:** The proposed Jal Jeevan Mission will make source sustainability measures mandatory prior to pumping and distributing water to households.
- **Management of Water at Local level:** With adequate capacity building and training, water can be most efficiently managed at the lowest appropriate level.
- **Treatment of household waste water:** It is planned to include a mandatory provision under the Jal Jeevan Mission for the effective channeling and treatment of household waste water (known as grey water), through appropriate and low cost drainage and treatment systems.
- **Extensive information, education and communication strategy:** On the lines of the Swachh Bharat Mission, extensive information, education and communication will be needed to create a Jan Andolan for water management.

Implementing Agency:

- Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation under the Jal Shakti Mantralaya.
- The Mission will converge with other Central and State Government Schemes to achieve its objectives of sustainable water supply management across the country.
- **Coverage:** Government has identified 1592 Blocks which are critical and over exploited, spread across 256 Districts for the Jal Shakti Abhiyan.
- **Finances:** Besides using funds available under various Schemes, the Government will also explore possibility of using additional funds available under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) for this purpose.

KAUSHAL YUVA SAMWAAD

The Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship has announced launch of "Kaushal Yuva Samwaad".

About:

- Commemorating World Youth Skills Day on July 15, 2019 and celebrating 4th Anniversary of the Skill India Mission, a Youth Dialogue has been announced.
- **Aim:** It is aimed at creating an open dialogue with the youth across all skill training centres to hear their ideas and recommendations to help scale up existing programmes.
- **Time period of dialogue:** It will be organized between 8th and 10th July 2019.
- **Coverage:** It is being organized across all Skill India training centres, namely, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKK), Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), Polytechnics, Institutes under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Jan Shikshan Sansthan, DDU-GKY Centres and other fee-based training centres across the country.

World Youth Skills Day (WYSD)

- To raise awareness about the importance of investing in youth skills development, the United Nations General Assembly commemorates July 15th every year, as World Youth Skills Day (WYSD).
- The United Nations, at its General Assembly in November 2014, declared 15 July as World Youth Skills Day.
- This UN designated day seeks to generate greater awareness of and discussion on the importance of technical, vocational education, and training and development of marketable skills relevant to both local and global economies.

National Skill Development Mission (Skill India Mission):

- It was launched on July 15, 2015 by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has been steadily making progress.
- Nearly One Crore youth are being presently imparted skills training annually under various programs of the Government through Skill India Mission.
- The mission also envisages convergence, coordination and harmonization of the fragmented skilling efforts of various Ministries in Government of India and other key stakeholders like State Government, Industry, Training ecosystem etc. through the instruments of Common norms, implementation of National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), data integrations through the Skill India Portal and quality assurance through the SMART (Skill Management and Accreditation of Training Centre) portal.

Way Forward:

- India is a young nation and a skilled workforce will be able to cater to not only the market demand within the country but also the global market. Following measures need to be taken for skill development:
 - Labour Market Information System (LMIS)** is important for identifying skill shortages, training needs and employment created.
 - Industry-relevant skill training** through the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY).
 - Training institutions in PPP mode should be established
 - There is need to focus on skill sets needed abroad including **language training**.
 - We may focus on **new-age skills** like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things, Big Data, 3D Printing, Virtual Reality and Robotics, which are valued highly both within and outside the country, and offer much higher remuneration.
 - Improving training delivery and quality- teacher training institutes, **Evaluation** of Training institute would be effective.
 - Vocational education** in secondary school
 - Alternative financial sources** like CSR, CAMPA funds, MPLAD, MGNREGA should be tapped for skill development
 - Wider use of **apprenticeship programmes** by all enterprises
 - The working of **Sector skill council** should be improved as recommended by **Sharda Prasad committee**.
 - MUDRA loans** may be provided to PMKVY certified candidates.

NHAI SIGNS MOU WITH NIIF FOR FUNDING HIGHWAY PROJECTS

NIIF is a fund promoted by Government of India to give boost to the infrastructure sector in the country.

About:

- The MoU is related to co-operation in formation of SPVs to execute the fund arrangement for large size road projects particularly green field projects to be executed by NHAI in future.
- It will provide innovative financial models including for the 24,000 km 7.5 lakh crore Bharatmala Pariyojana.
- This arrangement of innovative alternate source of funding is being looked into by NHAI to attract international investors and fund houses who are willing to invest in road projects in India but not very keen to take risk related to the project execution.

- This arrangement is expected to bring huge amount of investment at economical rate for highway development in India and reduce the stress of borrowing

National Investment and Infrastructure Fund:

- In 2015, Centre had set up NIIF to fund commercially viable greenfield, brownfield and stalled projects, thereby giving boost to the country's infrastructure sector.

UNION GOVERNMENT RATIFIES CONVENTION TO CURB COMPANY PROFIT SHIFTING

Ratification by India of the Multilateral Convention to Implement Tax Treaty Related Measures to Prevent Base Erosion and Profit Shifting.

About:

- MLI was signed by the Hon'ble Finance Minister at Paris on 7th June, 2017.
- The Multilateral Convention is an outcome of the OECD and G20 Project to tackle Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS Project).
- The BEPS Project objective is to tackle base erosion and profit shifting where companies shift their profits to other tax jurisdictions which usually have lower rates, thereby eroding the tax base in India.
- India was part of the Ad Hoc Group of more than 100 countries and jurisdictions from G20, OECD, BEPS associates and other interested countries, which worked on an equal footing on the finalization of the text of the Multilateral Convention.

Do You Know?

Depending on the position taken under Multilateral Convention/MLI by a country, India's DTAA with it shall get modified in the following prominent ways:

- The minimum standard under BEPS Action 6 to tackle treaty abuse, i.e., insertion of **new Preamble and the Principal Purposes Test (PPT)** in the DTAAs shall be achieved.
- The minimum standard under BEPS Action 14 relating to the **mutual agreement procedure** shall get implemented.
- Artificial avoidance of Permanent Establishment (PE)** status through commissionaire arrangements and similar strategies would be prevented. Avoidance of PE formation through specific activity exemptions and splitting up of contracts would also be prevented.
- Avenues leading to **avoidance of capital gains** from alienation of shares / interests deriving value principally from immovable property would be plugged.
- Certain **dividend transfer transactions** that are intended to lower withholding taxes payable on dividends artificially would be prevented.

COMPULSORY LOCALIZATION OF PAYMENT DATA

Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued clarifications on certain implementation issues sought by payment system operators on the data regulations.

About:

- The RBI in **April 2018** put out a **circular** requiring that all "data relating to payment systems" are "stored in a system only in India" within six months.
- The move affected players such as Visa, Mastercard, American Express and the likes of Pay-Pal, Google Pay, Amazon Pay, among others.

Clarifications on Storage of Payment System Data:

- All payments-related data has to be stored within India.
- In cases where data gets processed outside the country, it needs to be brought back within 24 hours.
- These directives were applicable not only to payment entities but also to all banks operating in India.
- There is no bar on processing of payments transactions outside India if so desired by the payment system operators (PSOs).
- In cases of charge back or any other reconciliation processes that might need to be undertaken, it can be done by accessing the data from servers in India.
- **Foreign Banks out of the ambit:** Foreign banks can continue to store banking data outside India, but their domestic payments data needs to be stored here.
- **For cross-border payments:** The data related to the **domestic component** of the transaction may be stored abroad, but a **copy** of the data needs to stay in India.

Need:

- The data stored in India can be **accessed or fetched whenever required**.
- It would enable better handling **customer disputes** as well as for any other related **processing activity**, such as chargeback.
- It will prevent the **foreign companies** for trying to find ways to **avoid taxes and scrutiny**.
- It will help **Law Enforcement agencies** track transactions and social media details during inquiries.
 - ♦ **For example**, in recent Bank Fraud cases, the security agencies believe that they could have dug deeper in investigation, if financial data were available in India.
- It would help in protecting the Citizen's Fundamental Right to Privacy.

Concerns:

- Storing data in India or bringing back data into India within stipulated time could pose significant **logistic challenges**.

- Bringing payments data into India for storage is a humongous task for multinationals. It will result in higher **operational cost**.
- These rules might also be in conflict with **foreign laws**.
- These rules will hinder the '**Free flow of Data**', which can be counterproductive for the development of India's Payment ecosystem.

Way Forward:

- The focus should be on building a **robust data protection framework** that will achieve the **dual purpose** of privacy and innovation.
- There is a need for harmony across all policies of all ministries and the RBI which deal with digital trade.

GOVERNMENT EXTENDS KISAN CREDIT CARD

Government has extended the facility of Kisan Credit Card (KCC) to fisheries and animal husbandry farmers to help them meet their working capital needs.

About:

- The Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme was introduced in 1998 for issue of KCC to farmers so that farmers may use them to readily purchase agriculture inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, pesticides etc.
- Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme meets the financial requirements of farmers at various stages of farming. The scheme aims at providing adequate and timely credit support from the banking system.
- The model of the KCC scheme was prepared by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) on the recommendations of **RV Gupta committee**.
- The farmers eligible under the KCC scheme include small farmers, marginal farmers, share croppers, oral lessee and tenant farmers.

Key Features of the Scheme:

- Under Kisan Credit Card facility, for the existing KCC holders **the credit limit is 3 lakh rupees to meet their working capital requirements**.
- Under KCC, **interest subvention is available for animal husbandry and fisheries farmers** at the rate of 2% per annum.
- The crop loans given under KCC are covered under Crop Insurance Scheme to protect the farmer in case any crop loss due to natural calamities.
- KCC scheme is being implemented by all Public sector banks, Regional Rural Banks and cooperative banks.
- KCC is a revolving credit card facility with any number of transactions and repayment in sanctioned credit limit.

Conclusion:

The availability of agricultural credit through KCC has significantly contributed in fulfilling the objective of food security for our country but also increasing the farmer's income.

STATUS OF STALLED PROJECTS IN INDIA

According to the data provided by the Ministry of Finance, projects worth almost ₹11 lakh crore remain 'stalled' or have issues under consideration.

Criterion of Stalled Projects:

- There is **no prescribed criterion** for classifying a project as a Stalled Project.

Institutional Mechanism to Fast Track the Project Implementation:

- **Project Monitoring Group (PMG)**
 - ♦ It had been set up in **2013** under the **Cabinet Secretariat**.
- **Project Monitoring Invest India Cell (PMIC)**
 - ♦ In September 2015, the PMG got rechristened into PMIC.
 - ♦ PMIC has been working under the Prime Minister's Office.
 - ♦ **Objectives:**
 - ❖ For resolving of issues of large Public, Private and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Projects,
 - ❖ Fast tracking the setting-up of large Public, Private and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Projects and
 - ❖ Expeditious commissioning of large Public, Private and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Projects.
 - ♦ The **primary focus of PMIC** is on expediting the approvals for clearances from Central and State Authorities for setting-up of projects.
 - ♦ PMIC does not distinguish between a '**stalled**' or an '**under implementation**' Project in accepting a project for resolution of its issues.

Reasons for Stalled Projects:

- Lack of funds/financing particularly bank hesitation due to NPA crisis.
- Fuel/feedstock/raw material supply problem
- Unfavorable Market conditions
- Lack of Environmental clearance
- Land Acquisition problem
- Lack of other clearances.

Way Forward:

Following steps are needed to revive the stalled projects:

- **Stepping up infrastructure investment,**
 - ♦ Easing Exit conditions,
 - ♦ Designing new financing products.

- Improving productivity and quality of infrastructure spending.
- Restructuring the framework for Public-Private partnership.
- Financing structures for PPP projects should be able to attract **pension and insurance funds**, which are a natural funding source for long-term infrastructure projects.
- Removing procedural bottlenecks,
- Improving governance, and
- Maintaining consistency in government's infrastructure policies.

PRADHAN MANTRI KISAN SAMMAN NIDHI (PM KISAN) SCHEME

Recently, the Central government had taken the decision to broaden the ambit of the scheme.

Some Changes in the Scheme:

- **No restriction on size of land holding**
 - ♦ Now the scheme will cover all the farmers of the country, irrespective of the size of their landholdings.
 - ♦ Earlier, small and marginal farmers holding land up to 2 hectares were under the ambit of the scheme.
- The revised scheme will further cover **two crore more** farmers (Earlier the estimated number was 12.5 crore farmers).

About the PM Kisan Scheme:

- **Objective:** To provide an **assured income support** to all landholder farmers' families in the country except those covered under the exclusion criteria.
- The scheme was announced in the **Interim Budget 2019-20**.
- **Benefits:**
 - ♦ Provide **assured supplemental income** to the most vulnerable farmer families,
 - ❖ Direct income support at the rate of **Rs. 6,000 per year**, in **three equal instalments** of Rs. 2,000 each.
 - ❖ The amount will be transferred directly into the **bank accounts** of beneficiary farmers.
 - ❖ The programme would be made effective from **1st December 2018**.
 - ♦ Help in meeting the emergent needs of farmers especially before the harvest season.
 - ♦ Pave the way for the farmers to earn and live a respectable living.

Beneficiaries:

- **All the landholders except**
 - ♦ Institutional land holders,
 - ♦ Farmer families holding constitutional posts,

- Serving or retired officers and employees of State or Central government as well as Public Sector Undertakings and Government Autonomous bodies.
- Professionals like doctors, engineers and lawyers etc.
- Retired pensioners with a monthly pension of over ₹10,000 and
- Those who paid income tax in the last assessment year are also not eligible for the benefits.
- The responsibility of identifying the eligible beneficiary farmers and uploading their data on PM-KISAN portal lies entirely with the State Governments.

Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)

- Direct income support of 6,000 p.a for farmers, effective 0.1.12.2018.
- To benefit 12 cr small and marginal farmer families having cultivable land upto 2 ha.
- Direct transfer into the bank accounts in three equal installments.
- First installment upto 31.03.2019, to be paid this year itself.
- ₹ 75,000 cr in outlay for 2019-20 and ₹ 20,000 cr in RE 2018-19

Evaluation of the Scheme:

Arguments in Favour

- Direct cash transfers has merit over the loan waivers and subsidies as,
 - ♦ Greater efficiency and better targeting of beneficiaries,
 - ♦ Enabling poor households to directly purchase the required goods and services,
 - ♦ Enhance farmers' market choices

Arguments Against

- **Insufficient amount:** PM-KISAN offers the income support of ₹ 17 a day for a household, is largely insufficient for even bare minimum sustenance of vulnerable farmers.

Do You Know?

According to the Rangarajan Committee, India's poverty line is

- ₹ 47 per person per day in urban areas and
- ₹ 32 per person per day in rural areas

- Given the **volatile market** and **price fluctuations** in different regions, it is important to **index** the cash transfers to local inflation.
- While cash transfers to households may appear simple, the scheme requires significant **implementation capabilities**.
- **Identification of beneficiaries is challenging**
 - ♦ Majority of the States have incomplete tenancy records and

- ♦ Land data are not digitized.

- Besides, the scheme does **not** provide a **clear design of transfers** and a **framework for effective grievance redress**.
- In the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, for instance, State governments still struggle to resolve complaints and curb corruption.

Do You Know?

The results of a **joint study** conducted by **NITI Aayog** and the **Union government's Department of Food** in 2016 suggest that the **government's pilot programmes to replace subsidised food grains with cash** in three Union Territories (Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Puducherry) have failed due to **data inconsistencies**.

Way Forward:

- For the success of the scheme, **bottom-up strategy** and **well-planned implementation mechanism** is required.
- As, it would allow weaknesses to be identified and rectified at the local level and then the most effective modalities can then be scaled nationally.
- The schemes like **Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation scheme** in Odisha need to be studied in depth. The lessons learnt can be incorporated in the scheme in future.

DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

According to the Swedish telecom equipment maker Ericsson, India has the world's highest data usage per smartphone.

Digital Footprint in India:

- In 2018, there were around 1.2 billion **mobile phone subscriptions** with 354 million **smartphone users**. It points that India is emerging as a digitally empowered nation.
- The lifestyle of Indians has turned significantly 'digital'.
 - ♦ Basic services like banking, cab booking, shopping etc. are now being digitally consumed.
 - ♦ 294 million active users spend an average of 17 hours per week on social media platforms.
- **Potential:** Presently, around 40% of our population has internet subscriptions. Making the access of internet universal, creates an enormous potential for digitization.

Major Programmes to Promote Digital Empowerment:

- **Digital India Programme:**
 - ♦ The **vision** of the programme is to transform the country into a **digitally empowered society** and a **knowledge economy**.

- Following initiatives under the Digital India have promoted digital empowerment
- E-Pathshala:** Transforming Learning through Technology
 - eBiz platform
 - My Gov platform
 - Jeevan Praman Programme
 - Digital Locker System
- Aadhar:**
 - It is the largest single digital ID programme in the world.
 - Aadhaar has evolved beyond individual identity verification to spur consumer adoption of digital services.
 - McKinsey** estimates that
 - 85 per cent** of **bank accounts** between 2014 and 2017 used Aadhaar for identification, and
 - 82 per cent** of **public benefits disbursement accounts** are now linked to Aadhaar.
- Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN):**
 - GSTN has created **common** and **shared IT infrastructure** for taxpayers, the Central government, State governments and other stakeholders.
 - It has brought country's indirect tax paying businesses on the digital platform.
- Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)**
 - According to the World Bank figures, PMJDY has enabled more than 332 million people to open mobile phone based accounts.
 - Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** has linked multiple bank accounts facilitating banking services through a single mobile application.
- Digital initiatives for women empowerment**
 - Arogya Sakhi:** It is a mobile application which helps rural women entrepreneurs deliver preventive health care at rural doorsteps.
 - Women for Empowerment and Entrepreneurship (W2E2):** W2E2 is helping rural women with **digital tools, e-learning** and **internet connection**.
 - Common Service Centre (CSC):** CSCs act as access points for delivery of digital services. This initiative has turned many women across the country into micro-entrepreneurs.
- Government e-Marketplace 'GeM'**
 - It is the **national public procurement portal**.
 - It offers **end to end solution** for all procurement needs of Central and State govt. departments and PSUs.
 - As part of Inclusive Agenda initiatives like **Womania, SWATATT** etc. were launched as part of GeM.

Benefits of Digitally Empowered Society:

- Economic Benefits**
 - It is estimated a 10% increase in **internet penetration** can lead to 1.4% growth in GDP of a developing economy.
 - McKinsey reports** that by 2025, core digital sectors could double their GDP level to as much as \$435 billion.

Social Benefits

- The accessibility of basic services like education, health, banking etc. can be improved. For example – Tele-education, Tele-medicine, mobile banking etc.

Better governance

- Digital empowerment helps people to participate in governance.
- Discretionary powers of executives can be reduced, which would help in curbing corruption. For e.g., e-tendering.
- E-governance is expected to bring objectivity and transparency in the government processes.

Challenges:

- Internet Penetration:** Given the vast population, high demand and geographic divide, it seems a difficult task to provide **broadband connections to all**.
- E-literacy:** Making the large population **e-literate** is a great challenge.
- The availability of services through digital mode requires round the clock **Power** and **internet** availability and accessibility.
- No standardized operating systems** - different manufacturers use different operating systems and this leads to problems in data exchange in e-government applications.
- Cyber Security:** Hacking and denial-of-service attacks have led to disruption of services, both in the government and the private sector – banks and governments increasingly face security breaches.

Way Forward:

- BharatNet project** should be completed on time to ensure Broadband and internet services at Gram Panchayat levels for the rural population at affordable prices.
- As the sector regulator, TRAI should consider putting in place a credible system to track call drops, weak signals and outages to ensure the quality and reliability of telecom services.
- Government should also put in place **telecom ombudsman** for complaint redressal.
- Efficient spectrum allocation** in large contiguous blocks should be explored.
- The **National Digital Literacy Mission** should focus on introducing digital literacy at the primary school level in all government schools for basic content and in higher classes and colleges for advanced content.
- Content in Indian Languages:** State governments should pay special attention to creating content, particularly those relating to government e-services, in Indian regional languages.
- Comprehensive cyber security framework for data security, safe digital transactions and complaint redressal need to be developed to digitally empower the citizens.



2

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

HONG KONG PROTESTS

Hong Kong is set to push ahead with a highly controversial plan to allow extraditions to mainland China, despite mass protests

About:

- The protests kicked off in June 2019 when Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Carrie Lam (considered to be pro-mainland Chinese government), refused to scrap a highly controversial plan to extradite those convicted of crimes to mainland China and Taiwan.
- That bill has been shelved for now - but the protests have now mushroomed into a broader backlash against the government amid fears of the growing control of China's Communist party.
- The region is now in its ninth week of protests, and hundreds of protesters have been arrested.
- Protesters have said they will keep going until their demands are met.
 - ♦ Resignation of the city's leader, Carrie Lam
 - ♦ An amnesty for those arrested
 - ♦ Permanent withdrawal of the bill.
- Another reason for the protest is that **China's judicial system is seen as deeply flawed** - in 2015, almost 99.9 per cent of those accused in its courts were convicted.

Special Status of Hong Kong:

- Hong Kong, a former British colony in south-eastern China, has long enjoyed a special status under the principal "one country, two systems".
- The **Basic Law dictates that Hong Kong will retain its common law and capitalist system for 50 years after the handover in 1997.**
- It also says that the leader should be elected in a more democratic way.

Who is Protesting?

- A huge cross-section of society including lawyers, journalists, activists and business figures have joined in widespread protests across the region.
- China-backed "triad" mobsters marauded through the city brutally battering pro-democracy protesters with steel pipes and metal poles.
 - ♦ **Note:** A "triad" is an underground Chinese organised crime syndicate. Triads are common in China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan as well as countries with significant Chinese populations, including the UK.

History of Hong Kong

- Hong Kong was **ceded by China to the UK after the First Opium War 1842.**
- Slowly, Hong Kong became a **busy trading port**, and its **economy took off in the 1950s** as it became a **manufacturing hub**.
- The territory was also popular with migrants and dissidents fleeing instability, poverty or persecution in mainland China.
- The **two sides reached a deal in 1984 that would see Hong Kong return to China in 1997**, under the principle of "**one country, two systems**".
- This meant that **while becoming part of one country with China, Hong Kong would enjoy "a high degree of autonomy, except in foreign and defence affairs" for 50 years.**
- As a result, **Hong Kong has its own legal system and borders, and rights including freedom of assembly and free speech** are protected.

INDIA-US TRADE RELATIONS

Despite the US-India commercial relationship growing steadily over the years, both sides have been occasionally involved in moments of high tension in trade relations.

Issues of Contention:

- **Tariffs:** India had levied tariffs on 28 goods, starting June 16.
 - ♦ It was seen as a **retaliation** for the March 2018 tariffs the Trump administration had levied —on national security grounds — on steel and aluminium from a number of countries, including India.
 - ♦ U.S. had invoked **Section 232 (b) of the U.S. Trade Expansion Act of 1962 to impose 25% duties on steel and aluminium from India on grounds of national security.**
 - ♦ India had taken the issue to the World Trade Organisation (WTO)
- Further, on "free flow of data" - Curbs on taking data outside border, or '**data localisation**'.
- India's **purchase of oil from Iran**
- India's **decision to buy advanced weapons from Russia**
- Issues with **medical devices** sold in the country
 - ♦ **India has imposed price restrictions on medical devices imported from America.**
- U.S. has also challenged India at the WTO for its changes in its **export subsidy programmes**

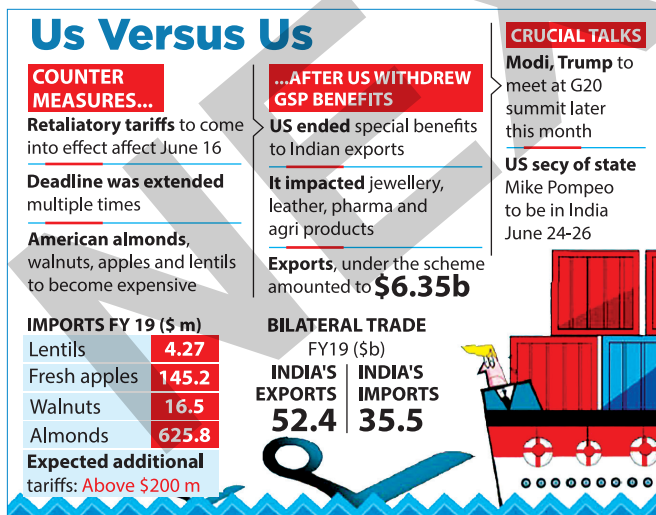
- US is in the process of terminating the **Generalised System Preferences (GSP) for India**, which allows many exporters to enjoy lower tariffs on specific exports to the U.S

What US wants?

- Trade partners **to lower tariff and non-tariff barriers to promote free, fair, and reciprocal trade.**
- Free flow of data:** US urges members of the G-20 to work together to advance an open, fair, market-based digital economy, which will benefit all our nations through the free flow of data.
- US is urging **reforms and modernisations to the World Trade Organization (WTO)**, while making sure the WTO functions as originally intended.
 - On the contrary critics see US hampering the smooth functioning of WTO by blocking the appointment of judges to the WTO's Appellate Body (trade court).

Present Situation:

- India is not alone in facing difficulties with US**
 - US ties with friends and foes are currently under scrutiny in the Trump Administration.
- In other areas too, **India is facing a crisis-like situation with US.**
 - Other issues like — Kashmir, South Asian security, human rights, India's rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and India's 1998 nuclear tests, etc.
- America's foreign policy has become transactional**
 - In this, the focus is on demystification of the issues involved and uninhibited bargaining based on self-interest.



Way Forward:

- The key to successful relations with US is to continue negotiations and make progress wherever possible. Present Modi Government determination to bargain hard and intense focus on practical outcomes has made contributions to India's strategic culture.

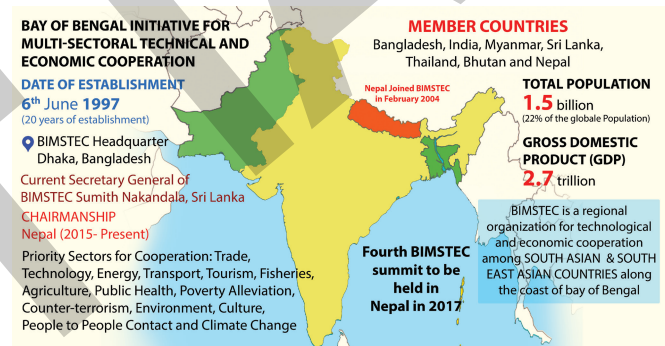
- A non-ideological approach to the negotiations would focus on breaking down the contentious issues into smaller parts, expanding the boundary conditions and creating linkages across sectors.

BIMSTEC DAY CELEBRATED IN DHAKA

Members of the 7 countries regional grouping Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) celebrated the 22nd BIMSTEC Day in Dhaka on 25th June.

About:

- BIMSTEC is a **regional organization comprising seven Member States** lying in the **littoral and adjacent areas of the Bay of Bengal** constituting a contiguous regional unity.



- This sub-regional organization came into being on 6 June 1997 through the Bangkok Declaration.
- It constitutes seven Member States:** five from South Asia, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and two from Southeast Asia, including Myanmar and Thailand.
- The BIMSTEC region is home to around **1.5 billion people** which constitute around **22% of the global population** with a **combined gross domestic product (GDP) of over 2.7 trillion.**
 - Unlike many other regional groupings, BIMSTEC is a **sector-driven cooperative organization.**

India's shift towards BIMSTEC:

- BIMSTEC leaders were invited for swearing-in of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2019.
- In 2014, PM Modi had invited leaders of the SAARC countries** for his swearing-in ceremony.
- However, since then, tensions between India and Pakistan have led to India shifting focus from SAARC to BIMSTEC.
- Reason:** According to India's external affairs minister there is **energy, mind-set and possibility** in BIMSTEC which fits in with India's optimistic vision of economic cooperation.,

Why there has been a shift towards BIMSTEC?

Issues with SAARC

- The **asymmetry between India and other member countries** in terms of geography, economy, military strength and influence in the global arena make the smaller countries apprehensive. They **perceive India as "Big Brother"** and fear that it might use the SAARC to pursue hegemony in the region.
- SAARC **does not have any arrangement for resolving disputes or mediating conflicts**.
- Given SAARC's failures, **member countries have turned to bilateralism**, which in turn has adversely affected the organisation.
- SAARC **faces a shortage of resources**, and countries have been reluctant to increase their contributions.
- In recent times, Pakistan's non-cooperation has stalled some major initiatives under SAARC.

Benefits of BIMSTEC over SAARC:

- The **member countries have cordial relationships**, something missing among the SAARC countries.
- The organisation is a **bridge between South Asia and South East Asia**.
- BIMSTEC's major strength comes from the fact that it **includes two influential regional powers: Thailand and India**.
 - ♦ This adds to the comfort of smaller neighbours by reducing the fear of dominance by one big power.
- BIMSTEC **emerged out of the necessities of the member countries**.
 - ♦ India was motivated to join BIMSTEC as it wanted to **enhance its connectivity with ASEAN countries**: a major component of its **Act East policy**.
 - ♦ For **Thailand**, BIMSTEC helps achieve the country's **Look West Policy**.
 - ♦ BIMSTEC also helps smaller countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan to develop connectivity with ASEAN countries.
- **As a trade bloc, BIMSTEC provides many opportunities**:
 - ♦ The region has countries with the fastest-growing economies in the world.
 - ♦ **Trade among the BIMSTEC member countries reached six percent in just a decade**, while in SAARC, it has remained around five percent since its inception.
- BIMSTEC could also **help in partially addressing India's growing energy requirements**.

Issues faced by BIMSTEC:

- In its 20 years of existence, the **BIMSTEC summit has taken place only four times**.
- The **delay in the adoption** of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), a framework that was agreed upon in 2004, fuels doubts about BIMSTEC's efficacy.

- Establishment of a **permanent secretariat** (Dhaka) took 17 years. However, the secretariat **faces a severe resource crunch**, both in terms of money and manpower, which has adversely affected its performance (SAARC has permanent secretariat in Kathmandu, Nepal).
- Observers of BIMSTEC consider the **lack of leadership** as the major drawback. India has already invested in the **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway**, the **Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project** and the **BIMSTEC Motor Vehicle Agreement**. However, these projects are long from being completed due to issues related to the allocation of resources, lack of political will and institutional coordination between countries.

Measures proposed to strengthen BIMSTEC:

- Consistency in the frequency of the summits to ensure regularity in decision-making.
- **Better connectivity projects** would help India leverage the untapped potential of BIMSTEC's possible trade linkages.
- **Improving the capacity of the secretariat**, both in terms of manpower and funding.
- Ensuring tangible results to motivate of the countries to concentrate on BIMSTEC. India should **improve its project delivery capabilities**.
- Projects in the areas of tourism, digital connectivity, energy connectivity and humanitarian assistance in disaster relief should be considered.
- Empowering BIMSTEC to be a **platform for dispute resolution** among member countries. This will require debates and discussions among the BIMSTEC countries to reach consensus.

INDIA-RUSSIA STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DIALOGUE (IRSED)

Second India-Russia Strategic Economic Dialogue held in July, 2019 at New Delhi.

About:

- It provides an **open platform for dialogue** on a host of areas where India and Russia can collaborate.
- **Background:** IRSED was established following a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between NITI Aayog and the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation during the 19th edition of the Annual India-Russia Bilateral Summit held in 2018 in New Delhi.

Focus and Collaboration Areas of IRSED:

- Development of Transport Infrastructure and Technologies
- Development of Agriculture and Agro-Processing sector
- Small and Medium Business support
- Digital Transformation and Frontier Technologies

- Cooperation in Trade, Banking, Finance, and Industry
- Tourism & Connectivity

Significance:

- It will help in increasing investment and international cooperation.
- The IRSED comes at an opportune moment as India embarks upon ensuring the fruits of development devolve to the grassroots.
- Will help enhance strategic economic cooperation between our countries.

INDIA-UAE RELATIONS

United Arab Emirates Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan visited India to hold talks with his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar to boost cooperation in key sectors such as trade and energy.

About:

- The visit comes at a time the **issue of energy security is high on India's agenda** due to the situation arising out of **US sanctions on importing oil from Iran**.
- The ties between India and the UAE are on an upswing in the last few years.

Significance of UAE for India:

- **Economy:** UAE is India's third-largest trade partner and fourth-largest energy supplier.
- **Diaspora:** The country is also home to **3.3 million-strong Indian community, largest in the Gulf region**.
 - ♦ With a large number of blue-collared Indian workers, focus of bilateral relations is also on developing efficient grievance-redressal mechanisms for the Indian workers in the UAE.
- **Strategic Petroleum Reserves:** UAE is the first foreign country to participate in India's 'Strategic Petroleum Reserves'.
- As the chair of **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**, UAE invited India as the '**Guest of Honour**' at the 46th Council of Foreign Ministers meeting of the grouping in Abu Dhabi in March, 2019.
- **Cultural:** The two nations share historical ties and have maintained regular cultural exchanges both at official and people to people levels.

Timeline:

- **Background:** India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) established diplomatic relations in **1972**.
- 2015 marked the beginning of a **new Comprehensive and Strategic partnership** when Indian Prime Minister visited UAE.

- **India-UAE expressed interest in South-South Cooperation** in February 2016. An MOU for cooperation between India and the UAE for cooperation in developmental projects in Africa was signed in December 2018.
- Crown Prince visited India in January **2017** as the **Chief Guest at India's Republic day celebrations**.
- Comprehensive Strategic Partnership was **upgraded in 2017**.
- Both sides signed **MoUs on strengthening cooperation** in Cyberspace, Defence, Maritime/road transport, SME, Agriculture, Manpower, Human trafficking, Entry visa exemption for diplomatic, Special and official passport holders, Media, Energy, etc.

BCIM

China is taking a lead in the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) corridor by extending a \$31 billion (about Rs 2.12 lakh crore) funding package for infrastructure development in Bangladesh.

About:

- The Chinese offer far exceeds India's assistance packages which are limited to a few billion dollars at a time.
- **Significance:** The move from Beijing indicates it is eager to take over the leadership of BCIM, at least in financial terms.
- China's financial investment in Bangladesh now appears to be its second-biggest, after the \$60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

BCIM:

- The **Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic corridor** has been **excluded** from the list of projects covered by the China-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) **umbrella**.
- This may have been caused by **India's decision to skip** the Belt and Road Forum (BRF).
- India did not attend the event **in protest against the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)** as it traverses through the disputed Kashmir held by Islamabad.
- Like the CPEC, **BCIM is also one of the major six corridors of the Belt and Road project**. It aims to connect China's eastern city of Kunming with India's Kolkata.
- **India had not opposed the BCIM** but its response to the project was weak as it said to have concerns about China expanding its influence in its eastern neighbouring countries.



BCIM Background

- The concept of economic cooperation within the BCIM region was first developed by **Rehman Sobhan**.
- He advocated that multi-modal transport connectivity supported by other initiatives and infrastructure development could significantly **reduce transaction costs, stimulate trade and investment** and consequently **accelerate growth and poverty alleviation in this region**.
- It eventually led to the development of the platform in the 1990s which came to be known as the "**Kunming Initiative**".
- Over the years, the Kunming initiative developed into what came to be popularly known as the **BCIM Forum**.

Significance of the BCIM Economic Corridor:

- BCIM is directed towards **developing sub-regional, regional and trans-regional corridors** of the four nations to further connect and integrate their economies.
- This zone is seen as the **meeting point of the three markets** of China, Southeast Asia and South Asia and thereby connecting two major markets of China and India and even the whole of Asia. For India, BCIM corridor can be pivotal for its **Act East Policy**.
- BCIM can also play effective role in the **energy trade**. The energy trade is feasible in the region as the southwestern provinces of China (Sichuan, Guizhou, and Yunnan), the northeastern states of India, Yadana, and the Shwe gas fields in Myanmar, all have large reserves of **natural gas**.
- Region's **rich natural resources** promise huge potential for large-scale development.
- In addition, this sub-region has **rich reserves of coal, petroleum, and manganese**.
- The BCIM region is dotted with a **number of tourist destinations**. Apart from facilitating easy travel and hassle-free visas among the members, the countries can also develop **religious tourism circuit**.
- BCIM can act as a means to improve India-China relations.

Issues with BCIM:

- There are two views emerging on the approach itself – one group arguing for an **economic-centric approach** and the other for a **more people-centric**, inclusive approach mindful of local social realities.
- The other dilemma is the **tension between centralisation and decentralisation**.
- While people in border regions are more concerned about **socio-economic and environmental impacts**, national governments are more concerned with **security and political issues**.

- Another dilemma is the **tension between regionalism and sub-regionalism**. Clarity on this question is important because it has policy implications in terms of framing the overall objectives of the BCIM project.
- **Trust issues with China's strategy:** there is a sense that **China's grand strategy of trans-boundary connectivity needs to be critically studied** to better understand its implications on India's strategic interests.

Way Ahead:

- There are various **political and security issues** at the **local, national, regional levels** that need to be addressed before discussing the commercial prospects of the BCIM-EC.
- While top-down governmental initiatives are important, it is equally **important to initiate people-centric projects** to ensure engagement and involvement of the society in projects developed under the BCIM.
- The BCIM **needs to be sub-regionalism from below** where small business houses have a role to play.
- The BCIM **needs to be a confidence building organisation**.
- The **crucial role of people-to-people contact** in fostering greater understanding, cooperation and goodwill should form the base of the BCIM.
- In the current context of **trust deficit between India and China**, the inclusion of people to people links is important as it **could play an important role in creating a favourable political environment** for sustaining this ambitious initiative.

EAST ASIA SUMMIT

Nations at ASEAN's East Asia Summit express concern over North Korea missile tests and trade war.

About:

- India's External Affairs minister attended the ASEAN-India Ministerial Meeting, 9th East Asia Summit Foreign Ministers' Meeting (EAS FMM), 26th ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and 10th Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok, Thailand.
- ASEAN leaders came out with their positions on the Indo-Pacific region in the **34th ASEAN summit** held in **Bangkok** in June 2019.
- According to ASEAN, no new structures will be created, but existing ones such as **East Asia Summit (EAS)** will be utilised for achieving some of the goals stated in the Outlook.

13th EAS (held in November 2018)

- EAS leaders discussed key regional issues including the South China Sea, the Korean Peninsula, the situation in Rakhine State, counter-terrorism, regional economic integration, maritime cooperation, and connectivity.
- It welcomed progress made on measures agreed in the **Phnom Penh Declaration** on the EAS Development Initiative and the adoption of the **Manila Plan of Action**.
- **EAS leaders adopted five statements in the summit on:**
 - ♦ ICT Security and the Digital Economy
 - ♦ Nuclear Security
 - ♦ Foreign Terrorist Fighters
 - ♦ Combatting Marine Plastic Debris
 - ♦ Smart Cities

About East Asia Summit:

- The East Asia Summit is a unique **Leaders-led forum of 18 countries** of the Asia-Pacific region established in 2005.
- EAS is an **initiative of ASEAN** and is based on the premise of the centrality of ASEAN.
- The **membership of EAS** consists of ten ASEAN Member States, Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the USA.
- It was formed to further the **objectives of regional peace, security and prosperity**.

Significance of East Asia Summit:

- EAS represents nearly **54 per cent of the world's population** and accounts for around **58 per cent of global GDP** worth an estimated US\$49.4 trillion.
- It is a **testimony to the rise of Asia** and how rapidly the world's politico-economic equations are shifting.
- The EAS is the **Indo-Pacific's premier forum** for strategic dialogue.
- It allows the principal players in the Asia-Pacific region to discuss issues of common interest and concern, in an **open and transparent manner, at the highest level**.

India and EAS:

- India has been a **founding member** of the East Asia Summit.
- The renaming of the erstwhile "Look East Policy" as the "**Act East Policy**" by the Modi government in 2014 only goes to show the importance accorded to EAS.
- Deeper integration with the EAS members can help India **sustain its external trade** amid growing trade wars and protectionism.
- From a somewhat outlying position, India has come to the **centre stage of geopolitics and geo-economics** in the region represented by the East Asia Summit countries.

- With the **United States under President Donald Trump making confusing noises** about American interests in the region, many of the EAS countries see in India a counter-balancing force in the region.
- Although most of the EAS nations have welcomed **China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, some of them are anxious about Beijing's growing influence on the region and see India as a key player.
- India has a long history of **people-to-people connectivity** with EAS countries, particularly with Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, which are home to large populations of the Indian diaspora.
- Better **regional connectivity** with EAS countries can unlock the huge potential of India's northeast region.
- EAS also provide an **alternative platform to the APEC** where India doesn't have membership yet.

Way Ahead:

- The East Asia Summit member countries are facing a host of challenges, both in the political and the economic realm.
- Though India is not a part of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) negotiations, it is an important part of the RCEP negotiation process.
- For India, EAS offers huge potential in areas such as maritime security, terrorism, non-proliferation, irregular migration etc. Similarly, for EAS, India's significance is rising.
- Hence, this growing partnership represents a win-win equation for both India and the EAS.

INDO-AFGHAN TRADE

In 2019-20 budget the government announced to slash its allocation for Iran's Chabahar port by two-thirds.

About:

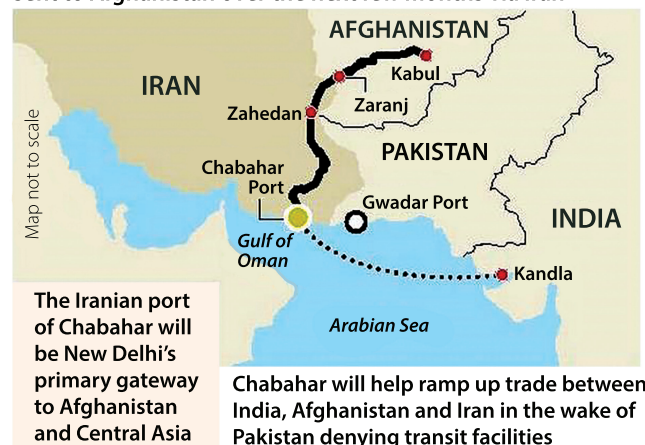
- India which had been allocating **₹150 crores for the port each year** for the past few years has slashed its allocation to just **₹45 crores in the Budget for 2019-2020**.

Chabahar Port:

- **Location:** It is a seaport in **Chabahar** located in **south-eastern Iran, on the Gulf of Oman**.
- It serves as **Iran's only oceanic port** and consists of two separate ports named Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti.
- The **India-Iran-Afghanistan** had entered into a three-way memorandum of understanding (MoU) committing at least \$21bn to **Chabahar-Hajigak development for trade purposes**.

GEO-STRATEGIC PUSH

The consignment of wheat is the first of six shipments to be sent to Afghanistan over the next few months via Iran



Impact on Indo-Afghan Trade and Relations:

Impact of U.S. Sanctions

- The U.S. had earlier issued India a waiver to develop Chabahar port, to promote trade with Afghanistan as a part of its "South Asia" strategy.
 - ♦ However, the Trump administration cancellation of all waivers for oil and crippling economic sanctions have frozen all deals.
- Afghan banks are hesitant to open credit lines for shipments, and shippers and cargo handlers are staying away from servicing the Iranian port.

Impact of India-Pakistan hostile relations:

- Pakistan has imposed its airspace curb in the wake of the Balakot Strikes on February 26th February 2019.
 - ♦ Afghan fruit and agricultural products that had made up a bulk of the cargo on flights between Kabul and Delhi are being shipped to other international markets.
 - ♦ Urgent travel for Afghan medical patients, students and businessmen have become virtually impossible, with most direct flights cancelled.
- Afghan government subsidises about 80% of the transport costs to promote India-Afghan trade.
- The downturn in trade will dampen hopes that had been raised by the introduction of the "air corridor" service (2017) between the two countries and trade through Chabahar port (2019). Since then Afghanistan had exported goods worth:
 - ♦ More than \$150 million to India through the air corridor.
 - ♦ \$2 million through Chabahar.
- With trade through both air and sea routes restricted, as well as Pakistan's refusal to give Afghan trucks passage to the Wagah land route, trade may come to a standstill for now.

INDO-PACIFIC

ASEAN member states articulated a collective vision for the Indo-Pacific region in a document titled "The ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific" in 34th ASEAN summit in Bangkok.

About:

- It is a **non-binding document**.
- It **underlines** the need for an inclusive and "rules-based framework" to "help to generate momentum for building strategic trust and win-win cooperation in the region".

Need of the Framework:

- At a time when the **geopolitical contestation between China and the United States is escalating**, it has become imperative for the ASEAN to reclaim the strategic narrative in its favour in order to underscore its centrality in the emerging regional order.
- ASEAN member states agreeing to push for a quick conclusion of a **Code of Conduct** in the **South China Sea**, an **increasingly contested maritime space** which is claimed largely by China and in parts by the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia.
- Tensions continue to rise over the **militarisation of this waterway**.
 - ♦ **For example:** in June, a Philippine fishing boat sank after it was rammed by a Chinese vessel.
- For a long time, the ASEAN has been reluctant to frontally engage with the Indo-Pacific discourse as the perception was that it may antagonise China.
- The final outlook that the ASEAN has come up with effectively seeks to take its own position rather than following anyone power's lead.

The Framework:

- While the **ASEAN outlook does not see the Indo-Pacific as one continuous territorial space**, it emphasises **development and connectivity**, underlining the need for **maritime cooperation, infrastructure connectivity** and broader **economic cooperation**.
- The ASEAN is signalling that it would seek to **avoid making the region a platform for major power competition**. Instead, its frame of reference is economic cooperation and dialogue.
- ASEAN's approach is aimed at placating China by not allowing itself to align with the U.S.'s vision for the region completely.

India's Stand:

- India has welcomed the ASEAN's outlook on the Indo-Pacific as it sees "**important elements of convergence**" with its own approach towards the region.

- **India continues to invest in the Indo-Pacific;** on the **sidelines of the recent G-20 Summit in Osaka, Japan**, Mr Modi held **discussions** on the Indo-Pacific region with **U.S.** and **Japan** with a focus on **improving regional connectivity and infrastructure development**.

Way Forward:

- With the ASEAN finally coming to terms with its own role in the Indo-Pacific, the ball is now in the court of other regional stakeholders to work with the regional grouping to shape a balance of power in the region which favours **inclusivity, stability and economic prosperity**.

INTERNATIONAL SEED TESTING ASSOCIATION (ISTA)

32nd Congress of the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA) was held in Hyderabad from June 26 to July 3.

About:

- Seed Congress is being held for the **first time in South Asia**.
- **ISTA: Founded in 1924**, ISTA is an **independent organisation supported by the non-profit cooperation** of experienced seed scientists and analysts.
- **The vision** of ISTA is worldwide uniformity in seed quality evaluation.
- **Objectives:**
 - ♦ To develop and publish internationally agreed rules and **standard procedures in the field of seed sampling and testing**.
 - ♦ Accredits laboratories
 - ♦ Promotes **research**
 - ♦ Provides international **seed analysis certificates and training**
 - ♦ Disseminates knowledge in **seed science and technology**
 - ♦ Facilitates **seed trading** nationally and internationally
 - ♦ Contributes to **food security**.

ISTA and India:

- Quality seed plays an important role in doubling farmers' income.
- Government is providing **assistance to farmers** for getting quality seed thus ensuring better yield.
- India is **world's fifth largest seed market** with **4.4%** share of global market.
- India is making **efforts to have at least 10% share** in global market over the **next 2 years**.
- **Indian seed market is worth \$3.6 billion (2017)** with annual growth rate of about 17% during 2010-17.

- Seed testing facilities in India are by and large fair and following the ISTA guidelines.

Way Forward:

- ISTA needs to establish system to test the genetically modified organisms (GMO), particularly in the backdrop of proliferation of unapproved genetically modified (GM) traits in cotton crop in India during the last few years.
- There is a need to bring uniformity in seed testing.
- **Uniformity in seed testing can be brought about by:**
 - ♦ Standardising methodologies,
 - ♦ Assessing the member laboratories' performance,
 - ♦ Exchange of scientific research and standardisation of reporting of seed testing results.

IRAN TO BREACH URANIUM ENRICHMENT CAP

Iran recently announced that it had breached the limits for stockpiling low-enriched uranium set by the 2015 nuclear deal.

About:

- In **2015**, Iran agreed to a long-term **deal** on its **nuclear programme** with **P5+1 - the US, UK, France, China, Russia and Germany**.
- It came after years of tension over Iran's alleged efforts to develop a nuclear weapon.
- **Reason for the breach:**
 - ♦ In May 2018, US President Trump unilaterally pulled the U.S. out of the nuclear deal.
 - ♦ In **November 2018**, he **reinstated sanctions targeting both Iran and states that trade with it**.
 - ♦ In **May 2019**, Iran suspended commitments under the agreement and gave the other signatories a **60-day deadline to protect it from US sanctions**, otherwise, it said it would resume production of highly enriched uranium.
 - ♦ **Pressure tactic:** The nuclear deal is a crucial bargaining card, and Iran has decided to use it as a pressure tactic.

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA):

- Under the **accord**, Iran agreed to **limit its sensitive nuclear activities and allow in international inspectors** in return for the **lifting of crippling economic sanctions**.
- Iran's uranium stockpile was reduced by 98% to **300 kg**, a figure that must **not be exceeded until 2031**.
- It must keep the **stockpile's level of enrichment at 3.67%**.
 - ♦ **Low-enriched uranium**, which has a **3%-4% concentration of U-235**, can be used to **produce fuel for nuclear power plants**.
 - ♦ "Weapons-grade" uranium is 90% enriched – prohibited.

- Iran said it would **redesign** the reactor so it could **not produce** any **weapons-grade plutonium**, and that all spent fuel would be sent out of the country as long as the modified reactor exists.
- Iran will **not be permitted to build additional heavy-water reactors** or **accumulate any excess heavy water until 2031**.
- Iran had committed to **"extraordinary and robust monitoring, verification, and inspection"**.
- Inspectors from the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)**, the **global nuclear watchdog**, continuously **monitor** Iran's declared nuclear sites and also verify that no fissile material is moved covertly to a secret location to build a bomb.

Effect of Sanctions on the Iran:

- **Sanctions previously imposed by the UN, US and EU in an attempt to force Iran to halt uranium enrichment crippled its economy**, costing the country more than \$160bn in oil revenue from 2012 to 2016 alone.
- The **deal had promised to lift all international sanctions** on Iran in return for the country **scuttling its nuclear programme**.
- The sanctions led to a **downturn in Iran's economy, pushing the value of its currency to record lows, quadrupling its annual inflation rate, driving away foreign investors, and triggering protests**.
 - ♦ **Iran's oil exports plummeted:** Now exports about 230,000 barrels of crude a day down from 2.5 million barrels a day in May 2018.
 - ♦ Inflation has soared to 35%
 - ♦ Rial, the Iranian currency, has fallen by 70% since early 2018

Way Forward:

- The **UK, Germany and France**, which all opposed the sanctions, have set up an **alternative payment mechanism** aimed at helping international companies trade with Iran without facing US penalties.
- UN sanctions remain lifted, but if Iran was confirmed to have violated any aspect of the deal, they would automatically "snap back" in place for 10 years, with the possibility of a five-year extension.
- If the **Joint Commission cannot resolve a dispute, it will be referred to the UN Security Council**.

KARTARPUR TALKS

The second rounds of talks between the officials of India and Pakistan were held at Wagah on July 14, 2019.

About:

- Pakistan agreed to allow visa-free travel for Indian passport holders and **Overseas Citizens of India (OCI)** through Kartarpur Corridor.

Kartarpur

- **Location:** Kartarpur is located in Narowal District in **Punjab, Pakistan**, on the **right bank of the Ravi River**.
- **Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur**, also called **Kartarpur Sahib**, is a gurdwara in Kartarpur.
- It is built on the **historic site** where Guru Nanak settled and assembled the Sikh commune after his missionary travels.

Kartarpur Corridor:

- Pakistan has agreed to let **5,000 pilgrims** visit the Kartarpur Sahib Gurdwara **every day for all seven days a week**.
 - ♦ Pakistan wanted to levy a fee and limit the number of pilgrims to 500-700 a day.
 - ♦ India had urged Pakistan to allow 5,000 pilgrims every day and 10,000 additional pilgrims on special occasions like Guru Nanak Dev Jayanti **under the 1974 bilateral Protocol**, with no restriction in terms of faith.
- The pilgrims will be allowed to travel as individuals or in groups and also on foot.
- **Pakistan highlighted infrastructural constraints on its side** and conveyed that it may be able to **accommodate many Indian proposals in a phased manner**, including a **bridge at the zero point**.
- **Pakistan also assured that no anti-India activity** would be allowed **using the corridor**.
- India had conveyed its strong concerns over the presence of pro-Khalistani elements in a 10-member committee Pakistan had set up for the Kartarpur project.
 - ♦ **Separatist leader** Gopal Singh Chawla was subsequently dropped from the panel. He was the secretary-general of the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, which would facilitate the pilgrims after opening of the corridor.
- **Consular presence:** India has also sought consular presence in the Kartarpur Sahib Gurdwara to assist the pilgrims.

RCEP

ASEAN leaders committed to conclude negotiations for the RCEP Free Trade Agreement by the end of 2019.

About:

- Malaysia suggested that **countries not ready to join the RCEP, notably India, Australia and New Zealand**, could join at a later date, allowing a truncated 13-member RCEP to go ahead.

- Others insist that all 16 members must agree on the final RCEP document.
- **FTA would encompass 40% of all global trade** among economies that make up a **third of global GDP**.

About RCEP

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between the

- **10 member states ASEAN** (Association of Southeast Asian Nations): Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam.
- **6 FTA partners:** China, Japan, India, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

India and RCEP Negotiations:

- **India has been keen to join.** But six years into negotiations, its concerns remain:
 - ♦ Opening its markets for cheaper goods from countries like China and South Korea.
 - ♦ Ensuring that RCEP countries open their markets for Indian manpower (services).
- India has a trade deficit with as many as 11 of the RCEP countries, and it is the only one among them that isn't negotiating a bilateral or multilateral free trade agreement with China at present.
- **Negotiators have agreed to India's demand for differential tariffs for its trade with China vis-à-vis the others.**
- India has also made **tagging the "Country of Origin" on all products** a sticking point in RCEP negotiations.

Way Forward:

- Giving up the chance to join RCEP would mean India would not just miss out on regional trade, but also lose the ability to frame the rules as well as investment standards for the grouping.
- At a time of global uncertainties and challenges to multilateralism and the international economic order, a negative message on RCEP would undermine India's plans for economic growth.

STATELESSNESS AROUND THE WORLD

An international conference in The Hague assessed progress on United Nations campaign called #Ibelong which aims to end statelessness by 2024.

About:

- The #Ibelong Campaign was launched in November 2014 with the goal of ending statelessness within 10 years.

- It aims to do so in accordance with the **Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: 2014-24**.
- It is under United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
 - ♦ UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people.
- **Definition:** The international legal definition of a stateless person is **"a person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law"**. Some people are born stateless, but others become stateless.
- **Status:** 10 to 15 million people are not recognised as nationals by any country depriving them basic rights.

Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: 2014-24

- This Global Action Plan sets out a strategy to put a definitive end to this human suffering within 10 years.
- Establishes a **guiding framework of 10 Actions to be undertaken by States**, with the support of UNHCR and other stakeholders to end statelessness by 2014.
 - ♦ Resolve existing situations of statelessness
 - ♦ Prevent new cases of statelessness from emerging
 - ♦ Better identify and protect stateless persons.

Causes:

- **Discrimination against particular ethnic or religious groups** or on the basis of **gender**.
- **The emergence of new States**, transfers between existing States and **changes in borders**.
- Conflict of nationality laws.
- **Policies** that aim to **exclude** people deemed to be **outsiders**.
Example: Rohingya in Myanmar.

Consequences:

- **Denied fundamental human rights** such as identity documents, employment, education, healthcare, housing and jobs.
- **Lead to forced displacement** leading to statelessness.
- Political and social tensions.
- Exclusion and denial of rights to large populations because they are stateless can impair the economic and social development of States.

TORTURE IN INDIA

India, Russia and 42 other nations abstain from voting on a General Assembly resolution aimed at examining options to end trade in goods used for capital punishment and torture.

About:

- The 193-member UN General Assembly adopted the resolution towards torture-free trade: examining the feasibility, scope and parameters for possible common international standards.

Why India backed out the Resolution?

- Incorporating capital punishment into the scope of this resolution **'raises concerns that it may be an attempt to place it on par with torture'**.
- India stated that in countries where capital punishment is statutorily provided for, it is **'exercised after following the due process of law'**.
- Every state has the sovereign right to determine its own legal system and appropriate legal penalties.
- In India capital punishment is a **statutory provision**, even though it is used in the **rarest of rare cases**.

Torture in India:

- India's commitment** to preventing and abolishing torture as well as punishing its perpetrators is **extremely weak**.
- 2015-2016 National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Annual Report states:** Custodial violence and torture continue to be rampant in the country.
- Supreme Court judgment indicates that despite formulation of different guidelines and stress of various judgments that **protection from torture is a fundamental right enshrined under Article 21 (Right of Life)** of the Indian constitution.

Why India is Ignorant about Torture?

- No consistent documentation** of torture-related complaints:
 - National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) does **not document cases of custodial torture**.
 - NHRC does deal with cases of torture in custody, but the annual figures related to such cases **do not get reported in its reports**.

India's Half-hearted Interest in Policy Against Torture:

- UN Convention against Torture or Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) in 1997; **Signed but not ratified** which is the most crucial aspect of the commitment and implies taking legal steps to make Indian laws correspond to the UN convention commitments.
- Prevention of Torture Bill 2017:** Though, provisions under IPC dealing with injury, hurt, hurt to extract confessions, malicious/corrupt confinement, wrongful confinement and the **Code of Criminal Procedure's (CrPC) provisions** with regard to confession, medical examination of the person in custody and production before court during custody are currently in place to deal with instances of torture.

- NHRC, Law Commission and Supreme Court of India have recommended on different occasions to the Government of India to enact a special law against torture.
- The **UN Committee Against Torture (CAT)** explains that a special law will necessitate that torture and ill-treatment is defined and criminalised distinctly from assault or other crimes by alerting everyone.
- The **Law Commission's bill** must be brought in the parliament for discussion and measures need to be taken towards its swift enactment.

Conclusion:

- Looking at the **history of denial of torture and delay in bringing legislature**, it is unlikely that change will occur soon.
- Our country has witnessed a strange discourse on torture. On the one hand, there is an **overt and covert public denial of existence** of torture by the state actors, and on the other there is a **silent acceptance of torture in the society**. Thus, **torture has become a "public secret"**.

UNHRC REPORT ON KASHMIR

OHCHR recently released a UN Human Rights Report on the situation in Kashmir and PoK from May 2018 to April 2019.

About:

- The report stated that civilian casualties reported in Kashmir and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) from May 2018 to April 2019 may be the highest in over a decade.
- India's stand:** India slammed the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) for misusing the United Nations's platform and coming out with a biased report on the situation in Jammu and Kashmir.

Major Findings of the Report:

- Neither India nor Pakistan have taken any concrete steps to address the numerous concerns raised.
- In Kashmir, accountability for violations committed by members of the Indian security forces remains virtually non-existent.
- India continues to use pellet-firing shotguns as a crowd control tool and criticised various laws that used for detention and arrest of political activists and civil society figures in Kashmir.

Why the Report Bothers India?

- India is bothered that the UN platform will now be used by Pakistan for mudslinging.
- While there was not much traction to the report last year, what has got India somewhat worried is that the follow-up report has come despite change of guard at the office of the High Commissioner.

- The report's failure to recognise an independent judiciary, human rights institutions and other mechanisms in J&K that safeguard, protect and promote constitutionally guaranteed fundamental rights to all citizens of India is unacceptable by India.

Way Forward:

- OHCHR urged the Human Rights Council (HRC) to explore possibilities of setting up an international commission of inquiry into the allegations of human rights abuse in Kashmir.

OHCHR

- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights)** is the leading UN entity on human rights.
- Aim:** UN Human Rights programme **aims to ensure that the protection and enjoyment of human rights is a reality in the lives of all people.**
- UN Human Rights also plays a crucial **role** in safeguarding the integrity of the **3 interconnected pillars** of the United Nations – **peace and security, human rights and development.**
- UN Human Rights is part of the United Nations Secretariat with its headquarters in **Geneva.**
- It has 3 substantive divisions:**
 - Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division (TESPRDD)**, which develops policy and provides guidance, tools, advice and capacity-strengthening support on thematic human rights issues.
 - Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division (CTMD)**, which provides substantive and technical support to the HRC and the Council's UPR mechanism, and supports the human rights treaty bodies.
 - Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division (FOTCD)**, which is responsible for overseeing and implementing the Office's work in the field.

EB-5 VISA

United States has decided to effect a steep increase in the application fee for its Immigrant Investor Visa Programme, EB-5.

About:

- EB-5 Visa stands for employment - based fifth preference category.
- EB-5 or Immigrant Investor Visa Programme** provides a method for eligible Immigrant Investors to become lawful permanent residents, informally known as "**Green Card**" holders.

- EB-5 investments are **monitored and regulated by the U.S. Immigration Services and Securities Exchange Commission.**



Revised Scheme:

- Application fee for projects under **Targeted Employment Areas**, will go up to **\$1.35 million** from the current \$500,000.
- Normal waiting period** used to be less than two years, but now it is likely to get longer up to **five years or more.**

Reason for Hike:

- Most EB-5 applications are high net-worth individuals, entrepreneurs and students from big cities.
- Since a whole family could receive green cards from just a single application, the arithmetic of EB-5 investment is being changed.

Impact:

- India recently reaching retrogression:** Investors from the country fully utilised the existing cap of 700 EB-5 visas for the October-September fiscal.
- The fee hike might cool off the investor interest for EB-5 adoption.
- As 50% of the Indian applicants of EB-5 are either students or parents who want their children to build their career in the US, and with the fee hike this group might seek other avenues.

WORLD PEACE FORUM

World Peace Forum opened up in Tsinghua University, Beijing, China.

About:

- Initiated in 2012, the World Peace Forum is organized by Tsinghua University with assistance from Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs.
- It is **China's first non-governmental high-level forum on international security.**
- Aim:** It was **institutionalized in 2013** and it is intended to provide a **platform for strategists to talk about international security issues.**

Objective:

- At the **high level**, we hope this forum functions as a platform where new concepts and thoughts are proposed and supported about international strategies.
- At the **medium level**, we hope the forum is a place where ideas and opinions are shared freely even if a consensus cannot be reached.
- At the **low level**, we hope this forum serves to raise awareness of international security and draw people's concern about world peace.

EASTERN ECONOMIC FORUM (EEF)

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been invited as the guest of honour to EEF 2019

About:

- **Eastern Economic Forum (EEF)** is scheduled to be held from September 4 to 6 in Vladivostok. It is held every year in Vladivostok.
- EEF was **established by decree** of the **President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin** in 2015. It has the following aims
 - ♦ To support the **economic development and encourage foreign investment** in **Russia's Far East** that is famous for the world's largest mineral and energy reserves.
 - ♦ To expand **international cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region**.
 - ♦ **Serves as a platform** for the discussion of key issues in the world economy, regional integration, and the development of new industrial and technological sectors, as well as of the global challenges facing Russia and other nations.
- EEF brings together representatives from a wide range of **industries**, including Oil and Gas, Education, Banking, Construction, Information Technology, Foreign Trade, Transport and so on.

US-NORTH KOREA SUMMIT

Stamps marking 1st US-North Korea summit on sale in Pyongyang.

About:

- **North Korea's pursuit of a nuclear arsenal** has been the predominant U.S. foreign policy concern on the Korean Peninsula, **threatening both regional stability and the global non-proliferation regime**.

- Although multiple countries have a major stake in the issue, the **U.S. has been both the most important interlocutor in attempts to resolve it diplomatically and the leader in global efforts to pressure and isolate North Korea**.
- Efforts to address North Korea's nuclear weapons program through various combinations of diplomacy and pressure have at times slowed or temporarily halted Pyongyang's progress, but have failed to roll it back or to fundamentally change the dynamics of conflict on the Peninsula.
- As a result of this, the US on the other hand has been threatening North Korea with following repercussions:
 - ♦ **Economic sanctions** or withholding of economic assistance
 - ♦ Criticism of the North Korean state and its institutions, particularly criticism of the country's human rights record
 - ♦ **Military threats**, particularly joint military exercises between the U.S. and South Korea and threats of U.S. use of nuclear weapons in a conflict

**1st US-North Korea Summit:**

- June 2018 in Singapore
- **Objectives**
 - ♦ Resolving long-term Korean conflict involving ICBM nuclear weapons
 - ♦ Denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

2nd US-North Korea Summit:

- February 2019 in Hanoi
- The meeting was cut short as **no agreement** was reached between the parties on denuclearization and complete lifting of sanctions.

Way Forward:

- Both sides have been engaged in dialogue in regard to a **3rd Summit**.
- U.S. had made a proposal for working-level talks urging North Korea to return to the negotiating table at the earliest.
- North Korea also in favour of finalising a denuclearisation process as soon as possible and to concentrate on economic development.



3 INTERNAL SECURITY

ARMED FORCES (SPECIAL POWERS) ACT (AFSPA) IN NAGALAND

Centre has declared the entire State of Nagaland a "disturbed area" for six more months under the AFSPA

About:

- The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act has been in force in Nagaland for several decades
- It empowers security forces to conduct operations anywhere and arrest anyone without prior notice.

AFSPA and the Special Powers Enjoyed by Armed Forces:

- In simple terms, AFSPA gives armed forces the power to maintain public order in "disturbed areas".
- They have the authority to prohibit a gathering of five or more persons in an area, can use force or even open fire after giving due warning if they feel a person is in contravention of the law.
- If reasonable suspicion exists, the army can also arrest a person without a warrant; enter or search a premises without a warrant; and ban the possession of firearms.
- Any person arrested or taken into custody may be handed over to the officer in charge of the nearest police station along with a report detailing the circumstances that led to the arrest.

Disturbed Area:

- A disturbed area is one which is declared by notification in the official Gazette **under Section 3** of the AFSPA.
- As per Section 3, it can be invoked in places where "the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary".
- Once declared 'disturbed', the region has to maintain status quo for a **minimum of three months**, according to The Disturbed Areas (Special Courts) Act, 1976.
- An area can be disturbed due to differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.
- The **Central Government, or the Governor of the State or administrator of the Union Territory** can declare the whole or part of the State or Union Territory as a disturbed area.

What's the Origin of AFSPA?

- The Act came into force in the context of increasing violence in the Northeastern States decades ago, which the State governments found difficult to control.
- The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Bill was passed in September 1958.

What about the State Government's Role?

- The state governments, as in Tripura's case, can suggest whether the Act is required to be enforced or not. But under Section (3) of the Act, their opinion can still be overruled by the governor or the centre.

Which States are, or had come under this Act?

- Presently, AFSPA, 1958 is operational in entire States of Assam, Nagaland, Manipur (except Imphal Municipal area), three districts namely Tirap, Changlang and Longding of Arunachal Pradesh and the areas falling within the jurisdiction of the eight police stations in the districts of Arunachal Pradesh, bordering the State of Assam.
- The Centre revoked it in Meghalaya on April 1, 2018.
- Tripura withdrew the AFSPA in 2015. Jammu and Kashmir too has a similar Act.

Is the Act Uniform in Nature?

- No. They may contain different sections as applicable to the situation in each state.

How has this Act been received by the people?

- It has been a controversial one, with human rights groups opposing it as being aggressive.
- Manipur's Irom Sharmila has been one of its staunchest opponents, going on a hunger strike in November 2000 and continuing her vigil till August 2016.
 - ♦ Her trigger was an incident in the town of Malom in Manipur, where ten people were killed waiting at a bus stop.

GARUDA-VI

Sixth edition of Garuda Exercise held at French Air Force Base, Mont-de-Marsan, France.

About:

- **Between:** It is a bilateral exercise between Indian and French Air Force.
- The last exercise, 'Garuda V' was held at Air Force Station Jodhpur in June 2014.
- **Significance:** Participation of IAF in the exercise will also promote professional interaction, exchange experiences and operational knowledge besides strengthening bilateral relations with the French Air Force.
 - ♦ It will also provide a good opportunity to the air warriors to operate in an international environment.

PROJECT-75 INDIA

The Indian Ministry of Defense (MoD) has invited proposals to local shipyards to participate in the construction of a new class of submarines.

About:

- Project-75 India (Project-75 I) **aims to domestically construct six diesel-electric attack submarines equipped with Air-Independent Propulsion (AIP) systems for the Indian Navy.**
- Shortlisted shipyards will be designated Strategic Partners (SPs) under the MoD's **strategic partnership (SP) model within the framework of the Defense Procurement Procedure 2016** that aims to boost the manufacturing of indigenous military hardware as part of India's "Make in India" policy.
- The **Defence Acquisition Council**, the Indian MoD's principal procurement body **chaired by the country's defense minister**, has approved the procurement of the six new submarines.
 - Notably, the Project 75-I acquisition program was first approved by the MoD already in November 2007.
- Once selected, the SPs will partner with an international ship maker, referred to as the original equipment manufacturer (OEM), in the construction of the boats. OEMs have now two months to respond.
 - Purpose:** The SPs in collaboration with OEMs have been mandated to set up dedicated manufacturing lines for these submarines in India and make India the global hub for submarine design and production.
- Project-75:** Under previous acquisition program, Project-75, six submarines are to be built by 2022.
 - To date, one out of six **Scorpene-class (Kalvari-class)** submarine has entered service with the Navy.

Strategic Partnership Model in Defence Acquisition:

- The policy is to **encourage broader participation of the private sector**, in the manufacture of defence platforms.
- Significance:** It will serve to enhance competition, increase efficiencies, facilitate faster and more significant absorption of technology, create a tiered industrial ecosystem, ensure the development of a wider skill base and trigger innovation, leading to a reduction in dependence on imports and greater self-reliance in meeting national security objectives.
- The following four segments have been identified for acquisition under the Strategic Partnership (SP) route:
 - Fighter Aircraft
 - Helicopters
 - Submarines
 - Armoured Fighting Vehicles (AFVs) / Main Battle Tanks (MBTs).

Defence Acquisition Council

- It aims to ensure expeditious procurement of the approved requirements of the Armed Forces.
- The functions of the DAC include:**
 - In-principle approval of 15 Year Long-Term Integrated Perspective Plan for Defence Forces;
 - Accord of Acceptance of Necessity to acquisition proposals;
 - Categorization of the acquisition proposals relating to 'Buy', 'Buy & Make' and 'Make';
 - Issues relating to Single vendor clearance;
 - Decision regarding 'offset' provisions in respect of acquisition proposals above Rs. 300 crores;
 - Decisions regarding Transfer of Technology under 'Buy & Make' category of acquisition proposals; and
 - Field Trial evaluation.

MONEY LAUNDERING AND TERROR FINANCING

Government tightens anti-money laundering laws, widens ambit of proceeds of crime.

About:

- The new amendment has been brought in with the Finance Bill passed in the Lok Sabha.
- The Finance Bill has amended eight clauses of the PMLA, 2002.

Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002:

- Aim:** To prevent money-laundering and to provide for confiscation of property derived from money-laundering.
- Amendments**
 - Expanding the ambit of the "proceeds of crime"**, which now includes **properties and assets created through any criminal activity** even if it is not under PMLA. These crimes will now be considered as **"relatable offence"**.
 - A **person shall be guilty** of offence of money laundering if such person is found to have **directly or indirectly attempted to indulge or knowingly assisted in possession, acquisitions, concealment or claiming as untainted property.**
- Purpose:** New provision added to only make sure that where a case exists in one court and the hearings are going on, and where in a different court there could be proceedings happening, this two cannot be clubbed together and treated as one.

Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967:

- Aims** at the effective **prevention of unlawful activities** across India and abroad.

- **Amendments:**
 - ♦ Centre may **designate an organisation as a terrorist organisation** if it commits or participates in acts of terrorism, prepares for terrorism, promotes terrorism, or is otherwise involved in terrorism.
 - ♦ Paved the way for the **National Investigation Agency (NIA) to seize property as part of investigations into terror cases**, adding that "if the investigation is conducted by an officer of the NIA, the approval of the Director General of NIA would be required for seizure of such property.
 - ♦ To **combat terror financing by criminalizing the production or smuggling or circulation of high quality counterfeit Indian currency** as a terrorist act and enlarge the scope of proceeds of terrorism to include any property intended to be used for terrorism.
 - ♦ **Terror Funding and Fake Currency (TFFC) Cell** has been constituted in NIA to **conduct focused investigation of terror funding and fake currency cases**.

INDIA-RUSSIA NEW DEFENCE DEAL

India signed a deal to acquire 'Strum Ataka' anti-tank missile from Russia for our Mi-35 attack choppers.

About:

- The acquisition deal was done after **emergency powers** were given to the Indian forces within few weeks after the February 14 **Pulwama attack** in which 40 CRPF personnel were killed, and **India started increasing vigil at the borders with Pakistan**.
- ♦ **Indian Air Force (IAF) has emerged as the frontrunner in terms of weapon acquisition** under the emergency procurement, followed by the Indian Army.
- ♦ **IAF has also acquired the Spice-2000 stand-off weapon system** along with a number of spare and air to air missile deals with multiple countries under the emergency provisions to equip itself for sudden war.
- ♦ **Note: Mi-35s** are the existing attack choppers of the Indian Air Force and are set to be **replaced with the Apache gunships** being acquired from the **US**
- **Indian Army** is in the process of acquiring the **Igla-S Very Short Range Air Defence Systems (VSHORAD)** from **Russia** and **Spike long range anti-tank guided missile** from **Israel** under the emergency provisions.
- In March 2019, India signed an **Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with Russia to lease another of its Akula-Class attack nuclear submarines (SSN)**. The nuclear submarine will join the Indian Navy in 2025, after a major refit of the hull in Russia's Arctic port of Severodvinsk.

Emergency Financial Powers of the IAFs:

- The defence Ministry feels that since the **forces** have to fight wars, they should **decide on their requirement** and **priority**

in the acquisition and procuring equipment, ammunition required to **enhance their operational capability**.

- The armed forces can now **buy equipment worth ₹300 crores** under each proposal from a single vendor **without the concurrence of the Integrated Financial Advisor** from the defence finance department.
- The emergency financial powers lay down the **time frame for procuring the weapon system** i.e. within three months from the date of approval of the proposal. This is extendable up to six months.
- It also allows procurement of entirely new systems that are not in use.

C-ATFM COMPLEX

India Gets World-Class Command Centre for Air Traffic Control.

About:

- Central Command Centre for Air Traffic Flow Management (C-ATFM) is a state-of-the-art **air traffic flow management system**.
- **Purpose:** C-ATFM will optimise utilisation of resources like airspace and aircraft at capacity-constrained Indian airports.

C-ATFM:

- The C-ATFM system is primarily meant to address the balancing of capacity against the demand to achieve optimum utilization of the major resources viz., airport, airspace and aircraft at every Indian airport where there is a capacity constraint.
- C-ATFM system integrates flight data from various subsystems like ATC Automation System, flight updates and flight update messages.
- The system also displays weather information along with static information about airports, airspaces and air routes.
- The system processes the demand and capacity information and provides decision-making tools to the ATFM Flow Manager for collaborative decision making and to ensure regulated flow of traffic at each airport in India.

Significance of C-ATFM:

- With the help of C-ATFM all aviation stakeholders can now access same information and everyone has same visibility towards each other's resource requirements and resource availability.
- After successfully implementing the Air Traffic Flow Management System, India has become the seventh country after the US, Europe, Australia, South Africa, Japan, Brazil.

OPERATION BANDAR

The preemptive non-military air strike by the Indian Air Force (IAF) on a terrorist training camp in Balakot, Pakistan, was code-named 'Operation Bandar'.

About:

- **Why this name?** The idea behind the name 'Operation Bandar' was to give a nondescript, mundane tag to the air strikes to maintain operational secrecy. It was chosen to make it sound like a routine, small-time affair.
- **Operation Zafran:** The Army, along with it, launched an operation code-named "Operation Zafran" to heightened operational alert and shoring up of defences along the border to thwart a possible Pakistan retaliation to the air strikes.

About the Strike:

- It was in response to Pulwama terror attack which claimed the lives of 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) security personnel.
- 12 IAF Mirage-2000 fighter jets struck on JeM training camp with precision-guided munitions.
- The IAF pilots carried out pre-dawn attacks by dropping five Spice 2000 bombs on their designated targets.
- The operations were ably supported by indigenous **Airborne Early Warning and Control Systems (AEW&C)** plane Netra

RECAAP ISC CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP

Indian Coast Guard (ICG) will co-host Capacity Building workshop with Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia.

About:

- **The main objective** of this workshop is to share updated situation of piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia and best practices of Asian countries.
- **The workshop aims to** deepen the knowledge of participants on various issues related with piracy and armed robbery such as international laws, prosecution process, forensics and emerging threats.

About ReCAAP:

- ReCAAP is a Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia.
- It is **first regional government to government agreement** to enhance and promote cooperation against piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia.
- Presently 20 countries are members of ReCAAP.

- **Members:** 14 Asian countries, 4 European countries (Norway, Netherlands, Denmark, and United Kingdom), United States and Australia.
- **Aim:** It strives towards developing cooperative framework to address menace of piracy and armed robbery by facilitating information exchange between various stakeholders.
- **3 pillars:** Information sharing, capacity building and mutual legal assistance are the three pillars of co-operation under the ReCAAP agreement.
- India played an active role in the setting up and functioning of ReCAAP ISC along with Japan and Singapore.

SHE TEAM – 'SAFETY, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT'

Gajapati police is all set to deploy special SHE teams to ensure safety and security of girls and women in the district.

About:

- 'SHE Team' is an innovative pilot project launched by Odisha's Gajapati district police started functioning to ensure safety and security of young girls and women.
- **SHE stands for** 'Safety, Health and Environment'. This project is modelled on the lines of Hyderabad 'SHE Team'.

About SHE Team:

- **Purpose:** They will patrol schools, colleges, other local institutions and public places, where young girls and women are allegedly subjected to eve teasing, stalking and harassment.
 - 'SHE Team' will also try to prevent harassment of working women at workplaces and public places where they move for their job. It will teach self defence and cyber space safety to young girls and children.
- Women in distress will be able to reach the team over phone on number mentioned on its vehicle.
- Girls, who are subjected to violence, will be rescued by the team and given counselling by the District Child Protection Unit.
- The team will also create awareness among women about their rights and help them realise their potential to the fullest to lead an independent lifestyle.
- **Other example:** The SHE project is a huge hit in Telangana where at least 100 teams are working incognito in Hyderabad city alone for the safety and security of women.
 - The teams merge in the crowd and nab miscreants after recording video of their act.
- Along with rescuing women and girls in distress, the teams keep a watch on offenders booked under petty cases and repeat offenders are booked under stringent sections of the IPC.



4

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

LAQSHYA (LABOUR ROOM QUALITY IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE)

Union ministry of Health and family welfare has launched "LaQshya" to improve quality of care in labour room and maternity operation theatres in public health facilities.

About:

- It's a multipronged approach focused at Intrapartum and immediate postpartum period.
- **Aim:** To reduce preventable maternal and newborn mortality, morbidity and stillbirths associated with the care around delivery in Labour room and Maternity Operation Theatre and ensure respectful maternity care.
- **Objectives:**
 - ♦ **To reduce maternal and newborn mortality & morbidity** due to hemorrhage, retained placenta, preterm, preeclampsia and eclampsia, obstructed labour, puerperal sepsis, newborn asphyxia, and newborn sepsis, etc.
 - ♦ **To improve Quality of care** during the delivery and immediate post-partum care, stabilization of complications and ensure timely referrals, and enable an effective two-way follow-up system.
 - ♦ **To enhance satisfaction of beneficiaries** visiting the health facilities and provide Respectful Maternity Care (RMC) to all pregnant women attending the public health facilities.
- **Following types of healthcare facilities have been identified for implementation of LaQshya program:**
 - ♦ Government medical college hospitals.
 - ♦ District Hospitals & equivalent health facilities.
 - ♦ Designated FRUs and high case load CHCs with over 100 deliveries/month (60 in hills and desert areas).

INTERNET SAATHI PROGRAMME

Internet Saathi Program is going to expand to villages in Punjab and Odisha.

About:

- The Internet Saathi Program was launched in the year 2015 with a pilot programme of 5,000 rural villages in Rajasthan.
- The programme is a joint initiative of Google India and Tata Trusts.
- **Aim:** To facilitate digital literacy among women in rural India.

Background:

- Data from the Internet and Mobile Association of India showed that of the countries internet users, only 18 percent were from rural areas in 2015.
- Among those 18 percent, only one in ten were women, making up only 1.8 percent of India's total internet users.
- With over 400 million internet users (IAMAI 2017), India has the world's second-largest online population.

About the Programme:

- **Implementation:**
 - ♦ In this ongoing program, "Saathis" are selected from among the village women and provided with internet training on smartphones.
 - ♦ They then pass on that knowledge, providing internet access, and becoming ambassadors of digital literacy in their communities.
- **Coverage:** The programme started as a pilot in Rajasthan has been expanded to states including Gujarat, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, West Bengal, Tripura, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh and Telangana. Punjab and Odisha will soon get added to this list.
- **Current picture:** It has, so far, trained 70,000 'Internet Saathis', who have in turn impacted 2.6 crore million women in the country.
- The program has contributed towards **bridging the digital gender divide in rural India** - female to male ratio was 1 in 10 in 2015 and in 2018, it increased to 4 in 10.

PAHAL SCHEME

There have been estimated savings of Rs. 59,599 crore upto March, 2019 under 'PAHAL' scheme.

About:

- This information comes under the statement of fiscal policy, as required under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2003, laid in Parliament along with other budget documents by the Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister.
- There are 1.86 crore non-subsidised LPG consumers, including 1.03 crore 'Give it up' consumers.

PAHAL Scheme:

- The Direct Benefit Transfer of LPG (DBTL) or PAHAL (Pratyaksh Hanstantrit Labh) scheme was earlier launched on June 1, 2013. It required the consumer to mandatorily have an Aadhaar number for availing LPG Subsidy.
- The modified scheme was re-launched on 15.11.2014. Modified scheme provided subsidy benefit to persons not having Aadhar.
- Under the 'PAHAL' scheme, beneficiaries buy LPG cylinders at market rate and subsequently received subsidy directly in their bank accounts.
- Direct Benefit Transfer ensures that benefits under various welfare and subsidy programmes of the country reach eligible and rightful beneficiaries.

About the GiveltUp Campaign:**Background:**

- Domestic LPG is heavily subsidized by the Government of India and every cylinder that we use in our kitchen carries a substantial subsidy. This translates to a huge annual subsidy burden on the Government, draining precious resources which otherwise could have been used in developmental activities.
- Many able and aware citizens are not in favor of subsidies and would rather pay the full price for the products and, thereby they also make a personal contribution towards nation-building.
- Accordingly, the Government has launched the '#GiveltUp' campaign which is aimed at motivating LPG users who can afford to pay the market price for LPG to **voluntarily surrender their LPG subsidy**.

Way Forward:

- Recent **Economic Survey 2018-19** has suggested **application of behavioral principles** to implement the **"Think about the Subsidy"**. (i.e. from 'Give it up' to 'Think about the Subsidy')
 - ♦ **Leverage default rules:** The default option can be modified so that households above a certain income threshold have to opt in to continue their subsidies with the default option being "opt out" of the subsidy.
 - ♦ **Make it easy to choose:** Use of Mobile phones and apps to voluntarily surrender the subsidy would improve the people participation for campaign.
 - ♦ **Emphasize social norms:** Making people feel good about giving up subsidies can help establish the correct social norm.
 - ♦ **Disclose outcome:** Displaying the names and photographs of people who give up subsidy on the website and while filling the form can bolster the act of giving it up.

- ♦ **Reinforce repeatedly:** Immediately and vividly showing gives the effect of them giving up the subsidy can make giving feel really good.
- ♦ **Leverage Loss aversion:** Loss aversion can be used to explain why majority of LPG users have not given up their subsidy.
- ♦ Match messages to mental models: Behavioural techniques can help achieve desirable outcomes from subsidy programmes and in turn reduce the effective costs of subsidy.

PARAMARSH SCHEME

Ministry of Human Resource Development launched the University Grants Commission (UGC) scheme 'Paramarsh'.

About:

- This scheme is launched for Mentoring NAAC Accreditation Aspirant Institutions to promote Quality Assurance in Higher Education.
- The scheme is expected to have a major impact in addressing a national challenge of improving the quality of Higher Education in India.
- **Hub & Spoke model:** The scheme will be operationalized through a "Hub & Spoke" model wherein the Mentor Institution, called the "Hub" is centralized and will have the responsibility of guiding the Mentee institution through the secondary branches the "Spoke" i.e. through the services provided to the mentee for self-improvement.
- This will allow a centralized control over operational efficiency, resource utilization to attain overall development of the mentee institution.
- **Target:** The scheme will target 1000 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for mentoring with a specific focus on quality as enumerated in the UGC "Quality Mandate".

Benefits:

- **Quality enhancement:**
 - ♦ It will lead to enhancement of **overall quality of the mentee institutions** and enhance its profile as a result of improved quality of research, teaching and learning methodologies.
 - ♦ It will help in **providing quality education** to the 3.6 crore students who are enrolling to Indian Higher Education system at present.
- **Knowledge sharing:** It will also facilitate the sharing of knowledge, information and opportunities for research collaboration and faculty development in Mentee Institutions.
- It will help the mentee institution in getting NAAC accreditation.

National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)

- It is an autonomous body funded by University Grants Commission of Government of India.
- NAAC was established in 1994.
- It is headquartered in Bangalore.
- It conducts assessment and accreditation of Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) such as colleges, universities or other recognised institutions to derive an understanding of the 'Quality Status' of the institution.

University Grants Commission

- The University Grants Commission of India (UGC India) is a statutory body set up by the Indian Union government in accordance to the UGC Act 1956 under Ministry of Human Resource Development, and is charged with coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of higher education.
- It provides recognition to universities in India, and disbursements of funds to such recognised universities and colleges.
- Its headquarters is in New Delhi, and has six regional centres in Pune, Bhopal, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Guwahati and Bangalore.

Other Pending Reforms

- Union Finance Minister in his budget speech 2010-20 announced that a draft legislation for setting up the **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)** would be presented later in the year.
- In year 2018, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) had announced its decision to replace the University Grants Commission (UGC) with the HECI by repealing the UGC Act, 1951.
- This will help to comprehensively reform the regulatory system of higher education to promote greater autonomy and focus on better academic outcomes.

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL OFFENCES AMENDMENT ACT (POCSO)

Parliament passed Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act, 2019 to provide stricter punishments for child sex abuse.

About:

- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act, 2019 entails amendments to the POCSO Act by **including death penalty for aggravated sexual assault on children**, besides providing stringent punishments for other crimes against minors.

- The proposed changes in the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act also provide for **finer and imprisonment to curb child pornography**.

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012

- This act deals with sexual offenses against persons below 18 years of age, who are deemed as children.
- The Act for the first time defines "penetrative sexual assault", "sexual assault" and "sexual harassment".
- The offense is considered graver if it is committed by a police officer, public servant, any member of the staff at a remand home, protection or observation home, jail, hospital or educational institution, or by a member of the armed or security forces.
- The Act is a comprehensive law to provide for the protection of children from the offenses of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and pornography, while safeguarding the interests of the child at every stage of the judicial process by incorporating child-friendly mechanisms for reporting, recording of evidence, investigation and speedy trial of offenses through appointment of Special Public Prosecutors and designated Special Courts.

Salient Features of the Amendment Act:

- **Penetrative sexual assault:** The Amendment act increases the minimum punishment for this offense from 7 years to 10 years. It also provides for with imprisonment between 20 years to life, with fine if the person commits penetrative sexual assault on a child below the age of 16 years.
- **Aggravated penetrative sexual assault:** The Bill adds two more grounds to the definition of aggravated penetrative sexual assault. These include:
 - ♦ assault resulting in the death of child and
 - ♦ assault committed during a natural calamity or in any similar situations of violence.
- It also increases minimum punishment from 10 years to 20 years, and maximum punishment to the death penalty.
- **Aggravated sexual assault:** The Amendment Act adds two more offenses to the definition of aggravated sexual assault. These include:
 - ♦ assault committed during natural calamity and
 - ♦ administering or help in administering any chemical substance or any hormone to a child for the purpose of attaining early sexual maturity.
- **Child Pornography:** The Amendment Act defines child pornography as any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct that involves child such as a photograph, video, digital or even computer-generated image indistinguishable from the actual child. It also enhances punishments for certain offenses related to child pornography.

- **Storage of pornographic material:** It increases punishment for storage of pornographic material with imprisonment between three to five years, or fine, or both. In addition, it also adds two other offenses for storage of pornographic material involving children. These include:
 - Transmitting, displaying, distributing such material except for the purpose of reporting it and
 - Failing to destroy or delete or report pornographic material involving a child.

BHARATNET

All panchayats to be connected with broadband under BharatNet by March 2020.

About:

- BharatNet project originally aimed to provide broadband services at 100 Mbps to around 2.5 lakh gram panchayats of the country.
- It is a highly scalable network infrastructure accessible on a non-discriminatory basis, to provide on demand, affordable broadband connectivity of 2 Mbps to 20 Mbps for all households of India especially in rural areas.
- It is the world's largest rural connectivity scheme to be connected by the **Optical Fibre network**.
- The entire project is being funded by **Universal service Obligation Fund (USOF)**, which was set up for improving telecom services in rural and remote areas of the country.
- The project is being implemented by **Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL)** through a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV).
- Central Public Sector in Undertakings (CPSUs) BSNL, RailTel, and PGCIL are providing the optical fibre network for broadband connections for the BharatNet project.

Objectives:

- To provide for **Broadband and internet services at Gram Panchayat levels** for the rural population at affordable prices.
- To provide access to bandwidth in a non-discriminatory manner to all eligible service providers to enable them to provide services in rural areas.
- The cost of broadband services and Wi-Fi Hotspots will be 75 percent lower in rural areas.
- To make the network available to Telecom providers for the transmission of voice, data, video, cable TV etc. in rural areas.
- To facilitate the **delivery of e-governance**, e-health, e-education, e-banking, Internet and other services to the rural India.

- To **remove the rural-urban gap of Digital divide** due to lack of broadband and internet services in rural areas.

Implementation:

- The project is a **Centre-State collaborative project**.
- States are contributing free Rights of Way for establishing the Optical Fibre Network.

Benefits:

- The BharatNet project would reduce the cost of broadband services in India.
- The project would have advantages like easy maintenance, faster implementation, and utilization of the present power line infrastructure.
- It would provide internet connectivity to citizens especially in rural areas via Wi-Fi Hotspots.
- The BharatNet project would provide a boost to the economy and would generate around 10 crore man-days of employment during the rollout of the project.
- It will help in the expedition of government's initiative such as, Make In India, Start-up India, Stand-up India etc,
- With the success of BharatNet and Digital India initiative, the life of Indian people is going to be changed in a way that has existed never before.

RAW AND IB

Government appointed new RAW, IB chiefs.

The New Chiefs of RAW and IB:

- The government named chiefs of two top intelligence agencies of the country.
- Samant Kumar Goel as head of foreign intelligence agency, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).
- Arvind Kumar as Director of Intelligence Bureau, internal intelligence agency.
- Both the named was by the Appointments Committee of Cabinet (ACC), is for two years.

The Intelligence Bureau:

- Intelligence Bureau (IB) was founded during the British colonial rule.
- The unsuccessful Sipoy's Mutiny in 1857 compelled the English to create an intelligence organisation that can have eyes on the activities of the Indian mutinous and rulers in different parts of India.
- IB was founded on December 23, 1887, as the "Central Special Branch" by the Secretary of State for India in London. It is renamed as Intelligence Bureau in 1920.

- The Intelligence Bureau (IB), considered the oldest surviving intelligence organization in the world, serves as India's internal security agency responsible for detecting domestic threats.
- IB technically falls under the authority of **Ministry of Home Affairs**.

Responsibilities:

- The IB is used to garner intelligence from within India and also execute counter-intelligence and counter-terrorism tasks.
- The Bureau comprises employees from law enforcement agencies, mostly from the Indian Police Service (IPS) or the Indian Revenue Service (IRS) and the military.
- However, the Director of Intelligence Bureau (DIB) has always been an IPS officer.
- In addition to domestic intelligence responsibilities, the IB is particularly tasked with intelligence collection in border areas.
- All spheres of human activity within India and in the neighborhood are allocated to the charter of duties of the Intelligence Bureau. The IB was also tasked with other external intelligence responsibilities as of 1951 until 1968, when the Research and Analysis Wing was formed.

Research and Analysis Wing (RAW):

- The Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) was founded in 1968 to counter primarily China & Pakistan.
- Until 1968, the Intelligence Bureau (IB), was responsible for India's internal intelligence and external intelligence.
- After the poor performance of Indian intelligence in the war of 1962 against China and 1965 against Pakistan the government felt the need of a separate external intelligence agency.
- RAW provides intelligence to policymakers and the army.
- Raw keeps close eyes on the activities of the neighbouring countries (China, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar etc.) of India.
- The primary focus of RAW remains on the China and Pakistan.
- RAW played a significant role in the formation of Bangladesh. RAW trained and armed Mukti Bahini, a group of East Pakistanis fighting for the separate state of Bangladesh.

Objectives:

- Monitoring the political, military, economic and scientific developments in countries which have a direct bearing on India's national security and the formulation of its foreign policy.
- Moulding international public opinion and influence foreign governments with the help of the strong and vibrant Indian diaspora.
- Covert Operations to safe guard India's National interests.

- Anti – Terror Operations and neutralising terror elements posing a threat to India.
- To watch the development of international communism and the schism between the two big communist nations, the Soviet Union and China.
- As with other countries, both these powers had direct access to the communist parties in India.
- To control and limit the supply of military hardware to Pakistan, from mostly European countries, America and more importantly from China.

SEZ AMENDMENT BILL PASSED

Parliament passed the Special Economic Zones (Amendment) Bill, 2019, that seeks to allow trusts to set up units in special economic zones.

About:

- The Bill will replace the Special Economic Zones (Amendment) Ordinance, 2019, promulgated in March.
- It seeks to allow trusts to set up units in special economic zones (SEZs) by amending the SEZ law.

Special Economic Zones

- SEZs are special demarcated areas in the country that have different regulations to attract foreign direct investment (FDI).
- Such areas are considered outside the customs territory.
- They are entitled to various tax incentives to boost manufacturing, promote exports as well as generate employment.
- The Act provides for the establishment, development and management of Special Economic Zones for the promotion of exports.

Key Features of the Bill:

- It amends definition of "person" under Section 2(v) of the SEZ Act 2005 to include 'trusts' in a bid to facilitate investments in SEZs.
- Under the Act, the definition of a person includes an individual, a Hindu undivided family, a company, a co-operative society, a firm, or an association of persons.
- The Bill adds two more categories to this definition by including a trust, or any other entity which may be notified by the central government.

Need for Amendment:

- The present provisions of the SEZs Act, 2005, do not permit 'trusts' to set up units in SEZs.

- The amendment will enable trusts to be considered for grant of permission to set up units in SEZs.
- The amendments will also provide flexibility to the central government to include in this definition of a person or any entity that the central government may notify from time to time.
- This will facilitate investments in SEZs.

UNIVERSAL SMART CARD DRIVING LICENSE

Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has decided to modify the format of driving licenses to smart card type driving licences.

About:

- Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has decided to modify the format of driving licenses to smart card type driving licenses so to follow a standardised format nationwide.
- The Ministry has prescribed a common standard format and design of the Driving Licence for whole of the country which includes the placement of information, standardization of fonts etc.

Proposed Changes:

- MoRTH seeks to modify current format of driving licenses to laminated card without chip or smart card type driving licences.
- It will include nationwide standardised format of placement of information, standardization of fonts etc.
- RTOs (Regional Transport Offices) should issue a uniform format of driving licenses across nation using a universal smart card driving license format.

SARATHI:

- The new changes to Pan India Licence format will be implemented through MoRTH's flagship application called SARATHI.
- The application is developed by NIC (National Informatics Centre).
- SARATHI will have a database with almost 15 crore driving licence records are available in its central repository (National Registry).
- The SARATHI application has the feature to **identify duplicate records in real-time online basis** and access information about the challans if any.
- It will facilitate the licencing authority that delinquent drivers do not get a duplicate driving licence,

Significance:

- It will curb the duplication and fake driving license.

- It will also help in identification of drivers who has been accused in any criminal cases.
- Around 30% of Indians drive with fake or bogus licenses.
- It will help in preventing juvenile driver cases and thus probable road accidents.
- The ministry's move to this new format is expected to help curb this situation to some extent.

PM NARENDRA MODI RECONSTITUTES NITI AAYOG

NITI Aayog was reconstituted by introducing key Cabinet ministers as ex-officio members.

About:

- The **National Institution for Transforming India**, also called NITI Aayog, was formed via a resolution of the Union Cabinet on January 1, 2015 and replaced the erstwhile Planning Commission.
- NITI Aayog is the premier policy 'Think Tank' of Government of India to bring States to act together in national interest, and thereby fosters **Cooperative Federalism**.

Composition of NITI Aayog:

- 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. Presently, defence minister, home minister, finance minister and agriculture minister have been nominated.



5

SOCIAL ISSUES

CONCEPT OF SELF CARE

World Health Organisation (WHO) launched its first guidelines on Self-care interventions for health.

What does Self-Care Mean?

- The **ability of individuals, families and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health-care provider.**
- The **scope** of self-care includes:
 - ♦ Health promotion
 - ♦ Disease prevention and control
 - ♦ Self-medication
 - ♦ Providing care to dependent persons
 - ♦ Seeking hospital/specialist/primary care if necessary
 - ♦ Rehabilitation, including palliative care

WHO Guidelines on Self-Care Interventions:

- Guidelines were launched in response to an **estimate that by 2035 the world will face a shortage of nearly 13 million healthcare workers.**
- Currently at least 400 million people worldwide lack access to the most essential health services.
- The **guidelines focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights.**
- Some of the **interventions** include
 - ♦ Self-sampling for Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)
 - ♦ Sexually transmitted infections
 - ♦ Self-injectable contraceptives
 - ♦ Home-based ovulation predictor kits
 - ♦ Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)
 - ♦ Self-testing and self-management of medical abortion
 - ♦ Home-based pregnancy testing
- These **interventions do not replace high-quality health services nor are they a shortcut to achieving universal health coverage.**

Why Self-Care?

- Millions of people, including in India, face the **twin problems of acute shortage of healthcare workers and lack of access to essential health services.** Therefore, **Self-Care could expand access to health services, including for vulnerable populations.**
- People are **increasingly active participants in their own health care and have a right to a greater choice of interventions** that meets their needs across their lifetime, but also should be able to **access, control, and have affordable options** to manage their health and well-being.

Benefits of Self-Care:

- Reduced health disparities and increased **equity**
- Increased **quality** of services
- Improved health, human rights and social outcomes
- **Reduced cost** and more efficient use of health-care resources and services
- **Ability to prevent disease, maintain health and cope with illness and disability** with or without reliance on health-care workers

Self-Care in India:

- **Home-based pregnancy testing** is the most **commonly used self-help diagnostics** in India.
- Self-managed abortions using approved drugs - **mifepristone and misoprostol** are scheduled drugs and need a prescription from a medical practitioner, thus defeating the very purpose of the drugs.
- Next commonly consumed drug to prevent illness and disease is the **Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)** for HIV prevention. India is yet to come up with guidelines for PrEP use and include it in the national HIV prevention programme.
 - ♦ Despite the WHO approving the **HIV self-test** to improve access to HIV diagnosis in **2016**, the **Pune-based National AIDS Research Institute** is still in the process of validating it for HIV screening.
 - ♦ One of the reasons why people shy away from getting tested for HIV is **stigma and discrimination.**
 - ♦ The home-based testing provides **privacy.**
 - ♦ India has in principle agreed that **rapid HIV testing helps to get more people diagnosed and opt for treatment, reducing transmission rates.**

Way Forward:

“Self-Care” is not a new term or concept, self-care interventions have the potential to increase choice, when they are **accessible and affordable**, and they can also provide more opportunities for individuals to make **informed decisions regarding their health and health care.**

PREVENTIVE CARE IN INDIA

Doctors must encourage the continuum-of-care approach among patients.

Preventive Healthcare:

- In India, a disappointing **9.6% of the overall healthcare expenditure goes towards preventive healthcare**, and **90% goes**

into treating diseases and their complications—amounting to more than ₹3.6 lakh crore per year.

- The healthcare industry is at a very crucial stage where **'preventive healthcare' is becoming an area of focus** at any international or national healthcare platform.
- The **preventive model of healthcare** is disruptive and makes sense across a lot of parameters – allowing us to manage health in a better manner, reducing the risk of diseases, helping us lead longer lives and of course - reducing the burden on traditional hospitals along with cutting the cost of public healthcare.
- **Non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** are a big challenge today and need serious tackling.
 - ♦ World Health Organization (WHO) has been ringing the warning bells for the last few years on the challenges that NCDs pose.
 - ♦ NCDs like **cancer, stroke, obesity and diabetes** are some of the ailments growing at an alarming pace.
 - ♦ But there are only finite manpower and resources to manage the problem.
 - ♦ **NCDs can be prevented more easily than communicable diseases**—such as malaria, tuberculosis, pneumonia or dengue.
 - ♦ According to WHO, **NCDs are responsible for 7 out of every 10 deaths worldwide**, while as many as **61% of deaths in India occur due to NCDs**.
- The **limited pool of medical professionals, technicians and nurses, equipment and hospital beds** will make it very difficult to tackle the onslaught of patients and diseases in the coming decade.

Why Preventive Care?

- India's **ratio of doctors and nurses per 1,000 people is dramatically lower** than the World Health Organisation (WHO) average of 2.5 doctors and nurses per 1,000 people.
- **Concentration of medical professionals in urban areas**, which have roughly 30% of the country's population.
- It is **estimated that India will require 2.07 million more doctors by 2030** in order to achieve a doctor-to-population ratio of 1:1,000 (according to the IBEF Healthcare, 2018).

NCDs also tend to have a better chance of getting successfully managed if detected early, What the Government has done:

- In the Union Budget of 2011-12, the government of India introduced tax benefits under Section 80D of the Income-tax Act on preventive health check-ups of up to Rs 5,000.
- Although the incentives provided were minimal, the intent was clear—the public at large must get into a routine of regular health check-ups.
- Health is on the national agenda for the first time after Independence with Ayushman Bharat.

- **PM Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)** is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** having central sector component under **Ayushman Bharat Mission** anchored in the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)**.

- ♦ It is an umbrella of **two major health initiatives**
 - ❖ Health and Wellness Centres
 - ❖ National Health Protection Scheme
- ♦ It will **cover the cost of medical care for almost 40% of India's population**
- ♦ 1,50,000 Health and Wellness Centres being developed will **strengthen the national focus on preventive healthcare**.

Way Forward:

As awareness spreads, the **focus will shift from a physician-centric approach to a customer-centric one**. While this shift is already palpable, we expect it to gather momentum as the **diagnostics service provider becomes the integrated healthcare solution provider**.

EDUCATION QUALITY UPGRADATION AND INCLUSION PROGRAMME (EQUIP)

Five-year vision plan 'Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Programme (EQUIP)' finalised and released by HRD Ministry.

About:

- This vision plan is being developed by a 10-member expert group.

Focus Areas:

- Strategies for **expanding access**
- Towards **global best teaching/learning process**
- Promoting **Excellence**
- Governance reforms
- Assessment, Accreditation & Ranking systems
- Promotion of **research & innovation**
- Employability & entrepreneurship
- Using **Technology** for better reach
- Internationalisation
- **Financing** higher education

Goals for Higher Education Sector:

- **Double the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)** in higher education and resolve the **geographically and socially** skewed access to higher education institutions in India.
- **Upgrade the quality** of education to global standards.
- Position at least 50 Indian institutions among the top-1000 global universities.

- Introduce **governance reforms in higher education** for well-administered campuses.
- **Accreditation** of all institutions as an assurance of quality.
- **Promote Research & Innovation** ecosystems for positioning India in the Top-3 countries in the world in matters of knowledge creation.
- **Double the employability** of the **students passing out** of higher education.
- Promote **India as a global study destination**.
- Achieve a quantum increase in investment in higher education.

NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES IN INDIA

In the States of Kerala, Goa and Tamil Nadu, fewer deaths are recorded for Communicable, maternal, neonatal and nutritional diseases, thereby raising share of NCDs in total deaths.

About:

- As per **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** report entitled "**India: Health of the Nation's States**", **Contribution of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) to total death in the Country was 61.8% in 2016, as compared to 37.9% in 1990.**

Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs):

- NCDs, also known as **chronic diseases**, tend to be of **long duration** and are the **result of a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental and behaviours factors**.
- NCDs are the leading cause of adult mortality and morbidity worldwide.
- **NCDs include:**
 - ♦ Cardiovascular diseases (Heart Attacks and Strokes)
 - ♦ Cancer (Oral, Breast, Cervical)
 - ♦ Chronic Respiratory Diseases (Asthma etc.)
 - ♦ Diabetes
 - ♦ Hypertension
- **Risk factors for NCDs:**
 - ♦ Ageing
 - ♦ Unhealthy diet
 - ♦ Lack of physical activity
 - ♦ High blood pressure
 - ♦ High blood sugar
 - ♦ High cholesterol
 - ♦ Overweight

Government Initiatives:

- **Health is a State subject**; Central Government supplements the efforts of the State Governments.
- **National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS)** is being implemented under the **National Health Mission (NHM)**.

- **Population based screening of common NCDs** has been initiated under NHM which include:
 - ♦ Community based risk assessment
 - ♦ Screening
 - ♦ Referral
 - ♦ Follow up of all individuals of 30 years and above for common NCDs.

National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS)

- Aims at **integration of NCD interventions in the NRHM framework** for **optimization of scarce resources and provision of seamless services** to the end customer / patients as also for ensuring long term sustainability of interventions.

Objectives

- **Prevent and control** common NCDs through behaviour and life style changes.
- Provide **early diagnosis** and **management** of common NCDs.
- **Build capacity** at various levels of health care for prevention, diagnosis and treatment of common NCDs.
- Train human resource within the public health setup.
- Establish and develop capacity for palliative and rehabilitative care.
- To **enhance the facilities for tertiary care of cancer**, the Central Government is strengthening and providing support for setting up of **State Cancer Institutes (SCI) and Tertiary Cancer Care Centres (TCCC)** in different parts of the country.
- Under **Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksh Yojna (PMSSY)**, Oncology in its various aspects has focus in case of new AIIMS and many upgraded institutions.
- **Affordable Medicines and Reliable Implants for Treatment (AMRIT) Deendayal** outlets have been opened at 159 Institutions/Hospitals with an objective **to make available Cancer and Cardiovascular Diseases drugs and implants at discounted prices to the patients.**
- **Jan Aushadhi stores** are set up by **Department of Pharmaceuticals** to provide **generic medicines at affordable prices.**

INDIA'S BATTLE AGAINST MEASLES

World Health Organisation (WHO) in July, 2019 has declared that Measles has been eliminated in Sri Lanka – 3 years free of new measles cases.

The Disease – Measles:

- **Measles (Khasra)** is a **serious and highly contagious disease** that can cause **debilitating or fatal complications**, including **encephalitis, severe diarrhoea and dehydration, pneumonia, ear infections and permanent vision loss.**

- The disease is **preventable** through **two doses of a safe and effective vaccine**.
- India currently gives a **measles rubella vaccine** in its **universal immunisation programme (UIP)** to tackle both measles and rubella.
- **Rubella**, more commonly known as **German measles**, can have severe consequences during pregnancy.
- A woman infected with the rubella virus early in pregnancy has a 90% chance of passing the virus to the foetus.

Scenario in India:

- **Measles cases up by 300% in 2019 as vaccinations dip** - India has 2.9 million children unvaccinated against measles, the second highest number after Nigeria, which is home to 4 million children not vaccinated against the disease.
- **India, as part of the global initiative**, has **targeted elimination of measles and control of rubella by 2020**.
- India has initiated the world's largest **Measles-Rubella (MR) Campaign** targeting vaccination of **410 million children and adolescents aged between 9 months and 15 years**.
- The MR campaign began in February 2017, and as of **November 2018, 135 million children have been vaccinated in 28 states/UTs**.
- Under the programme, two doses of measles and rubella vaccines are to be given at ages 9-12 months and 16-24 months.

MISSING OUT ON VACCINATIONS

Number of children under the age of one in low and middle-income countries who missed out on first dose of measles vaccine in 2017

4mn	2.9mn	1.2mn	1.2mn	1.1mn
Nigeria	India	Pakistan	Indonesia	Ethiopia



Children in high-income countries not vaccinated with measles vaccine dose from 2010 to 2017

United States: **2,593,000**
 France: **608,000**
 United Kingdom: **527,000**
 Argentina: **438,000**
 Italy: **438,000**

India has 2.9 million children unvaccinated against measles.

MODERNISATION OF MADRASAS IN INDIA

Government of India has initiated significant steps towards modernisation of 'madrasa' education and to link it with formal education.

About:

- A **madrasa** is an informal educational institute where generally **Islamic studies are imparted to the pupils**.
- The **Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madarasas (SPQEM)** is being implemented by the Ministry of Human Resource Development from the year **2008-09**.

Focus Areas:

- Training of teachers of such informal institutes (Madrasas) of Muslims will be provided **training in formal education**.
- To ensure that the students who come out of madrasas get formal and higher education in institutes like Jamia Millia Islamia and Delhi University.
- Government will also help the students who come out of madrasas with a 'bridge course' so that they get formal degrees.
- The bridge course will be available from eighth standard onwards so that the children coming out of the madrasas can at least get formal Secondary School or Higher Secondary School degrees.
- To introduce formal education in the form of subjects like English, Hindi, Science, Maths, Computer Sciences, among others.

SCHEME FOR TRANS-DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH FOR INDIA'S DEVELOPING ECONOMY (STRIDE)

University Grants Commission's (UGC) of Ministry of Human Resource Development (MoHRD) launched Scheme for Trans-Disciplinary Research for India's Developing Economy (STRIDE) in July, 2019.

About:

- It is a team effort of investigators from different discipline to **create new conceptual, theoretical, methodological innovations that integrates and transcends beyond discipline-specific approaches to address a common problem**.
- It **generates knowledge through use of multi and inter-disciplinary concepts and integrates new theories among science and society**.

Objectives of STRIDE:

- To broadly **provide support to research projects** that are **socially relevant, locally need-based, nationally important and globally significant**.
- It will promote creation, development and integration of new ideas, concepts and practices for public good and strengthening civil society.
- To **identify young talent, strengthen research culture, build capacity, promote innovation and support trans-disciplinary research** for India's developing economy and national development.

Components of STRIDE:

- **Component 1**
 - ♦ Will endeavour to identify the motivated young talents with research and innovation aptitude in universities and colleges.
 - ♦ Scheme will provide research capacity building in diverse disciplines by mentoring, nurturing and supporting young talents. This component is open to all disciplines for grant up to ₹ 1 crore.
- **Components 2**
 - ♦ Will mainly enhance problem solving skills with help of social innovation and action research to improve wellbeing of people and contribute for India's developing economy.
 - ♦ Collaborations between universities, government, voluntary organizations and industries is encouraged under this scheme.
 - ♦ This component is open to all disciplines for grant up to ₹50 lakhs – ₹ 1 crore.
- **Components 3**
 - ♦ Will fund high impact research projects in the identified thrust areas in humanities and human sciences through national network of eminent scientists from leading institutions.
 - ♦ Grant available for this component is up to ₹ 1 crore for one Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) and up to ₹ 5 crores for multi institutional network.

AMMA VODI SCHEME

'Amma Vodi' to be extended to Inter students

About:

- 'Amma Vodi' scheme of the Andhra Pradesh government will be extended to Intermediate students in both government and private colleges.
- It will also be applicable for residential schools and hostels.
- An annual financial assistance of Rs.15000 will be granted to each mother who sends her wards to school, under the scheme.
- Although the scheme was originally designed to support up to high school, it has been extended to intermediate education.

BHAMASHAH SWASTHYA BEEMA YOJANA (BSBY)

BSBY is a cashless health treatment scheme meant to provide financial security to poor families in Rajasthan.

About:

- **Rajasthan government** has decided to merge its flagship scheme Bhamashah Swasthya Beema Yojana (BSBY) with **Ayushman Bharat Scheme- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.**

Ayushman Bharat- PMJAY

- AB-PMJAY provides a defined benefit cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family per year.
- This cover will take care of almost all **secondary care** and most of **tertiary care** procedures.
- It is an **entitlement based scheme** with entitlement decided on the basis of deprivation criteria in the **SECC database.**
- The benefit cover will also include **pre and post-hospitalisation expenses.** All pre-existing conditions will be covered from day one of the policy. 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.
- The State is currently providing benefits under the BSBY to 97 lakh families, with a health insurance cover of ₹ 3 lakh per year.
- With the integration of the schemes, all eligible families will get benefits up to ₹ 5 lakh every year.
- The premium for new scheme would be paid by the Union and State governments in the 60:40 ratio.

Features of BSBY:

- BSBY is meant to provide **financial security to poor families** in Rajasthan.
- It is a **complete cashless treatment scheme** that pays for all health expenses incurred by the enrolled patients.
- The insurer gets Rs 30,000 for general illness and Rs 3 lakh for critical illness.
- Citizens covered under **the National Food Security Act (NFSA)** and **Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY)** are eligible to avail its benefits.
- There is **no age bar** to enrol for the scheme. Families of members are also eligible for enrolment.

DISABILITY PENSION FOR MILITARY NOW TAXABLE

The move has come under criticism from the military fraternity.

About:

- Disability pension for military personnel **who retired normally** from service and **not invalidated** will now be taxed, according to a notification issued by the Finance Ministry.

- The pension will be **non-taxable only to those personnel who have retired due to any kind of disability.**
- As per procedure, the **Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)** will now issue a circular to all the banks for implementation as they are the ones that disburse the pensions.

Disability Pension:

- Armed forces personnel who suffer any kind of disability due to their service receive separate disability pension. The amount depends on their rank and the kind of disability.
- Disability pension are of two types, **war and normal.**

Issue of Contention:

- Disability pension has long been an issue of contention **over the rates and different slabs for officers and jawans**, among others.
- There are also a **large number of litigations** filed by veterans against the Defence Ministry **over non-recognition of disability.**

FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY ANALYSIS REPORT

31.4% of Indian children will be stunted by 2022, according to the report.

About:

- A new report, '**Food and Nutrition Security Analysis, India, 2019**', by the Government of India and the United Nations was released.
- The report is a **baseline analysis** of the country's progress in achieving the **second Sustainable Development Goal** to end hunger.
- It was prepared by the **UN World Food Programme** in collaboration with the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.**
- It paints a **grim picture of hunger and malnutrition** amongst children in large pockets of India.

Key Findings of the Report:

- Almost **one in three Indian children under five years will still be stunted** by 2022 going by current trends.

What is Stunting?

Stunting is a measure of malnutrition that is defined as height that is significantly below the norm for age.

- Over the last decade, child stunting has reduced at a rate of about 1% per year, the slowest decline among emerging economies.

- At this rate, 31.4% of children will still be stunted by the 2022 deadline.
- **India must double its rate of progress** to reach the **target of 25% by that time.**

Reasons behind Rising Malnutrition

- For the poor and marginalised, access to food is impeded by social, administrative and economic barriers.
- In the case of children and their mothers, this could be anything from **non-functioning of governments at the State, district and local levels to entrenched social attitudes.**
- Stunting and malnourishment starts not with the child, but with the mother.
- An adolescent girl who is malnourished and anaemic tends to be a mother who is malnourished and anaemic. This in turn increased the chances of her child being stunted.

- **Foodgrain yields have risen** 33% over the last two decades, **but are still only half of 2030 target** yields, says the report.
- The **consumer's access** to rice, wheat and other cereals **has not increased at the same rate, due to population growth, inequality, food wastage and losses, and exports.**

Issues with Government's Approach:

- The government's **National Nutrition Mission**, renamed as **Poshan Abhiyaan**, aims to reduce stunting by 2% a year, bringing down the proportion of stunted children in the population to 25% by 2022.
- But even this modest target **will require doubling the current annual rate** of reduction in stunting.
- Anganwadis are key to the distribution of services to mothers and children. But **many States**, including Bihar and **Odisha are struggling to set up functioning anganwadis**, and recruit staff.
- **Fortified rice and milk** were to be introduced in one district per State by March this year. But this had not been done, and officials in charge of public distribution had not yet got their act together.

HEALTH INDEX 2019

Kerala tops the list for best performing State in health.

About:

- NITI Aayog's **Health Index** as an annual tool to **measure and understand the heterogeneity and complexity** of the nation's performance in Health was recently released.

- The **ranking was done under three categories**- larger states, smaller states and Union territories (UTs) - to ensure comparison among similar entities.
- **Kerala continued to top the list** for the best performing State sector among the 21 large States, while **Uttar Pradesh retained the worst performer tag**.
- The report added that among the eight **Empowered Action Group States**, only three States — **Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh** — showed improvement in the overall performance.

About Health Index:

- Health Index has been developed as a tool to leverage **co-operative** and **competitive federalism** to accelerate the pace of achieving health outcomes.
- It would also serve as an **instrument for "nudging" States & Union Territories (UTs)** and the Central Ministries to a **much greater focus on output and outcome** based measurement of annual performance.
- With the annual publication of the Index and its availability on public domain on a dynamic basis, it is expected to keep every stakeholder alert to the achievement of **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Goal number 3**.
- The Index ranks the States and Union Territories **based on 23 health-related indicators**.
- It is a **weighted composite Index** based on indicators in **three domains**: (a) Health Outcomes (70%); (b) Governance and Information (12%); and (c) Key Inputs and Processes (18%), with each domain assigned a weight based on its importance.

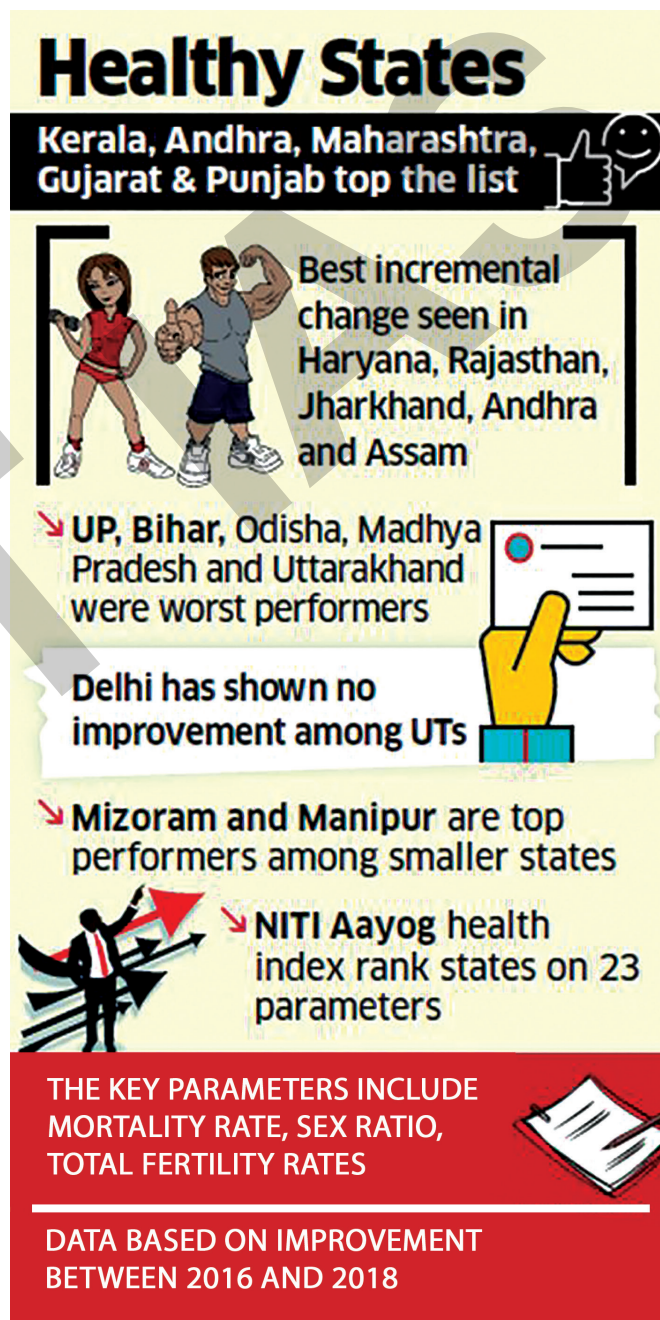
Issues:

- For the Health Index concept to spur States into action, **public health must become part of mainstream politics**.
- While the Centre has devoted greater attention to tertiary care, **several States remain laggards** when it comes to creating a **primary health care system**.
- The **Health Index does not capture other related dimensions**, such as non-communicable diseases, infectious diseases and mental health.
- It also **does not get uniformly reliable data**, especially from the growing private sector.

Way Ahead:

- State governments now have greater resources at their command under the new scheme of financial devolution.

- In partnership with the Centre, the state governments must use the funds to transform primary health care.
- Special attention is needed to improve standards of primary care in Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Assam and Jharkhand, which are at the bottom of the scale, as per the NITI Aayog assessment.





6

ENVIRONMENT, DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND GEOGRAPHY

SUB-GLACIAL LAKES

Recently, scientists have discovered nearly 60 subglacial lakes underneath Greenland's Ice Sheet.

About:

- Subglacial lakes are hydrologically active bodies of water that form beneath ice masses. These are some of the least explored and most important natural features on Earth.
- Subglacial lakes that have been found in Greenland are much smaller, ranging from just 200 meters in length to nearly 6 kilometers.

Important Features:

- They are generally stable and buried beneath relatively slow-moving ice, clustering around the margin of the ice sheet.
- The ice-water interface of subglacial lakes slopes higher than the ice-surface gradient.
- The density contrasts between meltwater and the main body of lake water results in circulation within the lake.

Source of Water for the Lake:

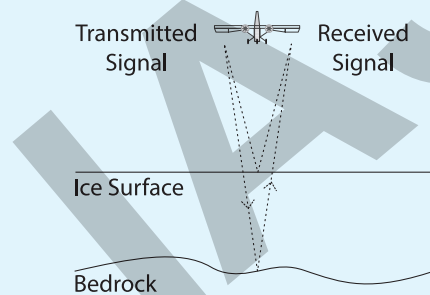
- The major source of water for subglacial lakes come from meltwater.
- These are derived from the pressure of the thick overlying ice, the heat generated by the flow of the ice, geothermal heat retained in the Earth, or water on the surface of the ice that drains to the bed.
- This water can become trapped in depressions or due to variations in ice thickness and remain trapped for thousands of years.

Cause of Concern:

- Greenland's ice sheet is multiple kilometers thick (roughly 1.9 miles) and it's still unclear what exactly goes on underneath its frozen exterior.
- As the world continues to warm, the frozen colossus has been losing an estimated 244 billion tonnes of ice each year. The Chain reaction of water drainage in Greenland could speed up ice flow by as much as 400 percent.
- The resulting increased input of meltwater to the bed at higher elevations could open new subglacial drainage pathways.
- Enhanced sliding can potentially connect the often-dormant storage to the ice sheet margin resulting in a huge influx of freshwater and mass ice melting.

Airborne Radio-Echo Sounding (RES)

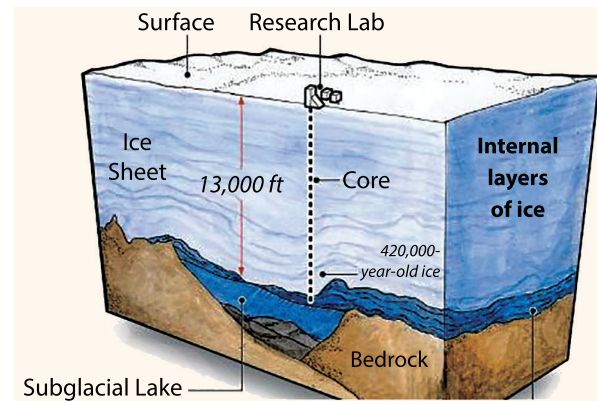
- It is an established geophysical technique is used to investigate a variety of ice-mass properties. It works by emitting a radio wave from an airplane.
- This is reflected off contrasting boundaries (such as air/ice, ice/water, ice/sediment). This radio wave is then received by the airplane and yields ice-thickness data.



Lake Vostok

It is the largest Antarctic subglacial lake on the East side of the Gamburtsev Mountains lying under 4000 meters of ice.

- It measures 250 km long, 50 km across at its widest, and 800 meters deep and at its deepest.
- The total size is close to that of Lake Ontario making it the sixth-largest lake in the world.



Way Ahead:

- As the climate continues to warm, the surface meltwater in Greenland may well start to form lakes and streams higher up in the ice sheet, as is happening with Antarctica. When these bodies of the water drain down to the bottom, they could 'reactivate' these subglacial lakes, reducing the overall stability of the ice sheet. Thus, any change in its hydrological equilibrium will play an important role in climate changes.

CORAL ON PLASTIC ROCK

NCCR's idea of using 'plastic rocks' to grow corals has drawn criticism from the Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park.

About:

- The National Centre for Coastal Research's (NCCR) proposed for dropping '**melted plastic rocks or slabs**' on the seabed for growing coral reefs and address the problem of disposal of plastic waste.
- This has drawn criticism from the Gulf of Mannar (GoM) Marine National Park, which has been implementing coral rehabilitation program since 2002.
- According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), at least eight million tonnes of plastic goes into oceans every year.
- In India, studies have shown that six lakh tonnes of plastic waste are dumped annually.

Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park

- The Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park is a protected area consisting of 21 small islands and adjacent coral reefs in the Gulf of Mannar in the Indian Ocean.
- It lies off the east coast of Tamil Nadu. It is the core area of the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve.

Criticism:

- The NCCR suggested that plastic waste materials could simply be wound around as hard substrates as a way of disposing of them and help build coral colonies.
- The proposal has been rejected on the grounds that corals in the GoM were already stressed and bleached under climate change and field testing would further destroy the existing coral reef colonies.
- In Florida and Costa Rica, worn-out tyres were tried as artificial reefs, but they left a disastrous impact.

Coral Rehabilitation Programme:

- In India, coral rehabilitation was first initiated in Tuticorin coast of Gulf of Mannar in 2002.
- Coral Rehabilitation Programme was initiated by Suganthi Devadason Marine Research Institute (SDMRI) with the support from Ministry of Environment and Forests and Coral reef Degradation in Indian Ocean (CORDIO).
- In India, coral reefs are located in 7 regions- Goa coast, Kerala coast, Palk Bay, Gulf of Kutch, Gulf of Mannar, Lakshadweep Islands, Andaman and Nicobar islands.
- Coral Rehabilitation Programme has so far covered 8 sq km areas in GoM region, where coral reefs suffered bleaching and degradation due to climate change.

- The program employs 'concrete frame slabs' method.
- As the sea would be rough during the southwest monsoon season, they commence the insertion of slabs after the end of the season.
- Corals would start growing in 60 days using the concrete frames as sub-state. The Acropora coral species grow by 10 to 12 cm per year on these slabs.

Way Forward:

- India is working on a national marine litter policy to clean up oceans.
- Researchers across the country have started conducting studies along the 7,500km coastline to identify the source of litter flowing into India's coastal waters.
- NCCR, through its field office in Mandapam, has been monitoring the health of corals along the 21 islands in the Gulf of Mannar.

FLY ASH

The National Green Tribunal sought a report from the authorities on the current status on disposal and management of fly ash.

What is Fly Ash?

- Fly ash is a fine powder, which is the by-product of burning coal in thermal power plants.
- Fly ash includes substantial amounts micron sized earth elements of oxides of silica, aluminum and calcium. Element like Arsenic, Boron, Chromium, lead etc. are also found in trace concentrations.

Environmental Concerns Associated with Fly Ash:

- Fly ash is a major source of PM 2.5, fine, pollution particles, in summer it causes air pollution.
- It becomes air borne, and gets transported to a radius of 10 to 20 kms. It can settle on water and other surfaces. It can also contaminate water and soil systems.
- Fly ash contains heavy metals from coal, a large amount of PM 2.5 and black carbon (BC). Proper disposal of fly ash is still not happening in many places.
- The wet disposal of Fly ash results in leaching of toxic heavy metals in ground water system.

Utilization of Fly Ash:

- Fly ash can be used as a replacement for some of the Portland cement contents of concrete. **It is environmentally beneficial** because it reduces the Portland cement, a major contributor of CO₂, required in concrete.

- Fly ash is a proven **resource material for many applications of construction industries** and currently is being utilized in manufacturing of bricks/blocks/tiles.
- Central Government has made it mandatory for use of fly ash bricks in construction activities happening 500km around thermal power plants.
- Fly ash is used as an agent for acidic soils, as soil conditioner. It improve some important physicochemical properties of the soil such as hydraulic conductivity, bulk density, porosity, water holding capacity, etc.

Fly Ash Management:

- Indian coal has much more ash content than other countries quality-wise. Diverse approaches must be needed for fly ash management.
- It includes washing coal at its place of origin will prevent ash from coming to power plant.
- **Promoting R&D** for increasing efficiency of power plants will also help in reducing ash generation.
- Proper management of fly ash is important for environment and also for power plants as it occupies a lot of land space.

Fly Ash Utilisation Policy in India:

- Maharashtra has become the first state to adopt Fly Ash Utilisation Policy, paving way for prosperity by generating "wealth from waste", and environment protection.
- The policy will create new employment opportunities in the power plant areas and also make available raw material for construction at low cost to help 'Housing for All' projects.
- The policy seeks 100% use of fly ash generated from thermal power plants and biogas plants for construction activities.
- The policy extends use of fly ash to 300 kms radius of power plant from earlier 100 kms radius of power plant.
- It will help in environment protection and save soil excavation.

FRESHWATER DOLPHINS IN INDIA

The population of endangered Gangetic river dolphins has been found for the first time in the Mahananda river.

Gangetic Dolphins in Mahananda River:

- A population of endangered Gangetic river dolphins has been found for the first time in the Mahananda river, a tributary of the Ganga, in Bihar's Kishanganj district.
- 14 Gangetic river dolphins were spotted by a team of scientists from Vikramshila Biodiversity Research and Education Centre (VBREC) of Tilka Manjhi Bhagalpur University.
- According to scientists, the number of dolphins in the Mahananda and its tributaries can be much more than this.

Post monsoon is a suitable season when there is an adequate water level.

- The presence of dolphins is the sign of a healthy river ecosystem.
- **Gangetic Dolphins:** The Gangetic river dolphin is one of the four freshwater dolphin species in the world. The other three are found in the Yangtze River in China, the Indus river in Pakistan and the Amazon river in South America.
- The Gangetic river dolphin is India's national aquatic animal.
- Gangetic dolphins live in a zone where there is little or no current, helping them save energy. If they sense danger, they can dive into deep waters.
- The dolphins swim from the no-current zone to the edges to hunt for fish and return,

Threats:

- Gangetic dolphins' habitats face serious threats from **climate change**.
- The increasing **pollution** due to largescale discharge of industrial and municipal waste, siltation, and mechanised boats pose the biggest threat to these freshwater dolphins.
- The Gangetic river dolphin is India's national aquatic animal but frequently falls **prey to poachers**. Their carcasses are found regularly on river banks.

Some Facts:

- The Gangetic **Dolphins are generally blind** and can detect only the direction of light.
- They emit an ultrasonic sound which reaches the prey. These dolphins live by echolocation and sound is everything to them. They navigate, feed, escape danger, find mates, breed, and nurse babies by echolocation.

IUCN Status:

- It is listed as an **endangered species**.
- It is listed on CITES **Appendix I**.
- It is classified under **Schedule 1, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** providing absolute protection as offences under these are prescribed the highest penalties.

'IMPRESSIVE' TORTOISE

A tortoise considered beautiful enough to be named 'impressed' has been discovered in Arunachal Pradesh.

About:

- A team of herpetologists have discovered a tortoise in near Yazali of Lower Subansari district in Arunachal Pradesh.
- It is named as '**Impressed Tortoise**'

- Its Scientific Name is 'Manouria Impressa.'
- The new species of tortoise are elusive and have never been previously sighted in India.



Impressed Tortoise

Characteristics:

- It is medium-sized species and has a spine which bent upwards and beautifully serrated.
- The species has a golden brown shell and skin.
- Adults are much smaller than their relatives the Asian forest tortoise (Manouria emys).

Distribution:

- They are considered to be restricted to western Myanmar, pockets of habitat in Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and southern China, and Peninsular Malaysia.
- It inhabits moist, primary forests of hilly tracts.

IUCN Status:

Impressed tortoise is listed as 'Vulnerable' in the IUCN Red List.

Significance of the Discovery:

- The discovery of impressed tortoise has increased the total number to 29 species of non-marine chelonians and five tortoises in India.
- Chelonian is an order of reptile that includes turtles, terrapins and tortoises.
- India was known to be the home of only the Asian Forest Tortoise (Manouria emys) until the discovery of the Impressed Tortoise.
- The Asian Forest Tortoise, the largest in mainland Asia, is found only in the northeast, as are 20 of the other 28 species of chelonians.

JAPAN RESUMES COMMERCIAL WHALING

Japanese fishermen have set sail to hunt whales commercially for the first time in more than three decades.

About:

- Japan has resumed hunting whales commercially for the first time in more than three decades after Tokyo's controversial decision to **withdraw from the International Whaling Commission (IWC)**.
- Whale is hunted for oil which is used for various purposes like producing candle wax, margarine and other products, like additives in motor oils, automatic transmission fluids, cosmetics, perfumes, detergents and vitamins.



Japan Resumes Commercial Whaling

- Japan was the target of international criticism for allegedly misusing Article VIII IWC which allows for the killing of whales "for purposes of scientific research" subject to some restrictions as to number.
- Meat from the hunts was sold on the open market, prompting claims that they were a cover for commercial whaling.
- Domestic consumption of whale meat in Japan was about 200,000 tonnes a year in the 1960s, when it was an important source of protein in the postwar years.
- Japan announced it would leave the IWC, frustrated by its failure to convince other members to support a return to "sustainable" commercial whaling.

Background:

- Whales were brought to the brink of extinction by hunting in the 19th and early 20th Century. In 1986, all IWC members agreed to a hunting moratorium to allow whale numbers to recover.
- Whaling countries - like Japan, Norway and Iceland - assumed the moratorium would be temporary until everyone could agree on sustainable quotas. Instead it became a quasi-permanent ban.
- Since 1987, Japan has killed between 200 and 1,200 whales each year under an exemption to the ban allowing scientific research.
- Critics say this was just a cover so Japan could hunt whales for food, as the meat from the whales killed for research usually did end up for sale.
- In 2018, Japan tried one last time to convince the IWC to allow whaling under sustainable quotas, but failed. So it left the body, effective from July 2019.

International Whaling Commission (IWC)

- IWC is an Inter-governmental Organisation charged with the conservation of whales and the management of whaling.
- Currently, it has 89 members.

- It works under “International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling” which was established in 1946.
- This Convention is the legal framework for IWC.
- All members are signatories to the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling.
- The commission is the pre-eminent global body leads international efforts to tackle the growing range of threats to whales globally, including by-catch, ship strikes, entanglement, noise, and whaling.
- India is a member of IWC.
- Uncertainty over whale numbers led to the introduction of a ‘moratorium’ on commercial whaling in 1986. This remains in place although the Commission continues to set catch limits for aboriginal subsistence whaling.

METHANE ON MARS

NASA's Curiosity rover discovered high amounts of methane in the air on Mars, leading to indication of life on the Planet, or beneath its surface.

NASA's Curiosity Mission:

- Curiosity Rover is a car-sized robotic rover exploring Gale Crater on Mars as part of NASA's Mars Science Laboratory mission (MSL).
- **The rover's objectives are:**
 - Investigation of the Martian climate and geology,
 - Assessment of whether the selected field site inside Gale Crater has ever offered environmental conditions favorable for microbial life,
 - Investigation of the role of water,
 - Planetary habitability studies in preparation for future human exploration.

About the recent findings:

- If the high concentration of methane is confirmed by Curiosity and orbiters around the Red Planet, the next step would be to locate the source of the gas and determine how it was produced.
- The finding came from the rover's Sample Analysis at Mars (SAM) tunable laser spectrometer.
- Methane gas had also been detected on Mars earlier by the Mars Express, a European Space Agency orbiter that was sent to the planet in 2003.
- An instrument on Mars Express, called the **Planetary Fourier Spectrometer** detected the first evidence of methane in the atmosphere.

- Subsequent observations by Earth-based telescopes as well as spacecraft on or around Mars have confirmed the presence of small concentrations of methane in the Martian atmosphere.

What is Methane Level?

- Methane (CH₄) is a naturally occurring gas on Earth.
- Most of the methane on Earth is produced in biological processes.
- It also occurs as underground natural gas that had been formed by earlier generations of microbial life.
- Many of these methane-producing microbes live in the digestive systems of animals, especially cows.
- However, methane can also be produced by abiotic processes.
- It has been found in formations such as rocks, springs and aquifers, and it was formed there by chemical reactions between carbon and hydrogen atoms at low temperature.
- Once it is released into the atmospheres of either Earth or Mars, methane is relatively short-lived.
- Methane has been detected by the Curiosity team many times over the course of NASA's Mars Exploration Program but this time unusually high levels of methane- about 21 parts per billion units by volume (ppbv) were reported.
- 1 ppbv means that if we take a volume of air on Mars then 1 billionth of volume of air is methane.

Importance of finding of Methane on Mars:

- High levels of methane could potentially be generated underground by microbes.
- Finding such high level of methane is exciting because microbial life is an important source of methane on Earth, thus it may help scientist to look for possibility of life outside Earth.
- Methane breaks down quickly in the presence of Sunlight and other chemical reactions taking place on the surface of Mars, which means it would have had to have been generated on Mars quite recently in historical terms.

Way Forward:

- Scientists involved in Curiosity Mission needs time to analyse these clues and conduct many more methane observations in near future.
- Also, they need time to collaborate with other science teams such as with European Space Agency's (ESA) Trace Gas Orbiter, which has been in its science orbit for just above 1 year.
- Combining previous observations and current measurements from surface and from orbit could help scientists locate sources of gas on red planet and understand how long it lasts in Martian atmosphere.

RESILIENT KERALA PROGRAM

Resilient Kerala Program is to enhance the State's resilience against the impacts of natural disasters and climate change.

About:

- The Government of India, the Government of Kerala and the World Bank have signed a Loan Agreement of USD 250 million for the First Resilient Kerala Program to enhance the State's resilience against the impacts of natural disasters and climate change.

Background:

- The 2018 floods and landslides in Kerala led to severe impact on property, infrastructure, and lives and livelihoods of people.
- One sixth of the State's population, about 5.4 million people was affected while 1.4 million were displaced from their homes, especially the poor and vulnerable segments of the population.

About the Program:

- It will focus on strengthening the State's institutional and financial capacity to protect the assets and livelihoods of poor and vulnerable groups through an inclusive and participatory approach.
- The New Program is part of the Government of India's support to Kerala's 'Rebuild Kerala Development Programme' aimed at building a green and resilient Kerala.
- The Program, which represents the First 'State Partnership' of the World Bank in India, is the First of two Development Policy Operations aiming to mainstream disaster and climate resilience into critical infrastructure and services.
- State partnership is a key pillar of the World Bank's new Country Partnership Framework for India.
- Through such partnerships, the world Bank will support select States striving to bring about systemic improvements in the way development initiatives are planned and executed.

The Objectives of the Program:

- Improved river basin planning and water infrastructure operations management, water supply and sanitation services.
- Resilient and sustainable agriculture, enhanced agriculture risk insurance.
- Improved resilience of the core road network.
- Unified and more up-to-date land records in high risk areas.
- Risk-based urban planning and strengthened expenditure planning by urban local bodies.
- Strengthened fiscal and public financial management capacity of the state.

- World Bank's support by this program will not only bring about additional financial resources but also help in leveraging other development partners and connect Kerala to lessons from global good practices.

Other initiative of World Bank in Kerala:

- World Bank has been supporting Kerala through programs such as:
 - Second Kerala State Transport Project
 - National Hydrology Project
 - Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project
 - National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project Phase 2
 - Kerala Local Government and Service Delivery Project.

TAMIL YEOMAN

Tamil Nadu has declared the Tamil Yeoman butterfly species as the state butterfly.

About:

- Butterfly species Tamil yeoman has been officially declared as state butterfly of Tamil Nadu.
- The scientific name of Tamil Yeoman Butterfly is *Cirrochroa thais* and it is also known as **tamil maravan** which means warrior.
- Tamil yeoman is endemic to Western Ghats. They occur in moist deciduous evergreen forest and along streams.
- The reason for its selection as state butterfly is the name of the butterfly which reflects Tamil culture.

Features:

- It is uniformly orange in colour with a dark brown outer ring.
- Tamil Yeoman Butterfly species moves in groups in large numbers, but at few places and are found mainly in hilly areas.

SPECIAL STATUS

TIDBITS ABOUT TAMIL YEOMAN BUTTERFLY SPECIES

Habitat | Endemic to Western Ghats. They occur in moist deciduous, evergreen forests and along streams

Size | 60-75 mm

Habit | Fast, straight flight with few wing beats and long glide

Larva | They lay eggs in vertical chains of 8-10. Larva initially stay in group, below the leaf and often in shady areas. They eat edges of soft tender leaves

No. of butterfly hotspots in TN | 32



Scientific Name | *Cirrochroa thais*

OTHER RECOGNIZED SPECIES IN TN

State Animal | Nilgiri Taal
State bird | Emerald Dove
State tree | Palm
State flower | Gloriosa
State fruit | Jackfruit

Key Facts:

- Butterflies are significant for environment as they play the main role in pollination and food chain.
- For many other species like birds and reptiles, butterflies become a prey.

- Tamil Nadu is the fifth state in the country to announce its state butterfly.
- There are 32 Butterfly Hotspot in Tamil Nadu.
- Maharashtra was the first in the country to announce its state butterfly (Blue Mormon) followed by Uttarakhand (Common Peacock), Karnataka (the Southern Birdwing) and Kerala (Malabar banded peacock or buddha butterfly).

THE WHEELS TO A LOW-CARBON TRANSPORT SYSTEM

Global Carbon Project reports that India's carbon emissions are rising more than two times as fast as the global rise in 2018.

About:

- The Global Carbon Project is a Global Research Project of Future Earth and a research partner of the World Climate Research Programme.
- It was formed to work with the international science community to establish a common and mutually agreed knowledge base to support policy debate and action to slow down and ultimately stop the increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Findings:

- India's road transport emissions are small in global comparison but increasing exponentially.
- Globally, the transport sector accounts for a quarter of total emissions, out of which three quarters are from road transport.
- Reducing CO₂ emissions of road transport leverages multiple co-benefits, for example, improving air quality and increasing physical activity, which are critical for well-being, particularly in urban areas.

Needs to be Done:

- The mayors and town planners should organise cities around public transport and cycling, thereby improving mobility for many, while limiting car use.
- The action requires an understanding of how emissions vary with spatial context.
- In India, income and urbanisation are the key determinants of travel distance and travel mode choice and, therefore, commuting emissions.
- Uptake of non-motorised transport emerges as a sweet spot of sustainable development, resulting in both lower emissions and better public health in cities.
- India should double down in its strategy to transition to electric two and three-wheelers and the third-largest market for automobiles.

Way Forward:

- To achieve this aim, decision-makers need to rethink how to deliver basic services such as education and health.
- Building schools and hospitals matters especially for informal settlements and are critical in achieving low carbon development as well as improving the quality of life.
- Providing access to public service, choosing rapid transit over car driving in cities and supporting the rise of electric two and three-wheelers will help drive India to a modern and low-carbon transport system fit for the 21st century.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF 'BEEKEEPING DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE'

Recently, the Beekeeping Development Committee under the Chairmanship of Professor Bibek Debroy has released its report for the development of beekeeping sector in India.

About: 'Bee-Keeping'

- Apiculture or Beekeeping is an art and science of rearing and managing honey bees in a box called "beehive" for production of honey and other products like beeswax, propolis, bee venom etc.
- The words 'apiculture' and 'beekeeping' tend to be applied loosely and used synonymously.

Apiculture in India:

- As per Food and Agricultural Organization database, in 2017-18, India ranked **eighth** in the world in terms of honey production.
- India has a potential of about 200 million bee colonies as against 3.4 million bee colonies today.
- **Per capita consumption** of honey of World is 200 grams, whereas, the per capita consumption of India is only 8 gms.
- This sector **employs more than 250,000** people living in 40,000 villages.
- Its Annual harvest is around **56,579 MT of honey**, valued at Rs 653.58 crore.

Major Recommendations:

- Recognizing honeybees as inputs to agriculture and considering landless **Beekeepers as farmers**.
- Plantation of bee friendly flora at appropriate places and **engaging women self-help groups** in managing such plantations.
- Recognition of apiculture as a subject for **advanced research** under the aegis of Indian Council for Agricultural Research.
- **Training and development** of beekeepers by state governments.

- Development of national and regional infrastructure for storage, processing and marketing of honey and other bee products.
- Simplifying procedures and specifying clear standards for ease of exporting honey and other bee products.
- Besides these, the Institutionalization of National Bee Board and rechristening it as the Honey and Pollinators Board of India under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare can help in the advancement of beekeeping through multiple mechanisms such as:
 - ♦ Setting up of new Integrated Bee Development Centres and strengthening the existing ones,
 - ♦ Creating a honey price stabilization fund
 - ♦ Collection of data on important aspects of apiculture.



Benefits of Bee-Keeping:

- Besides honey and wax, beekeeping has the benefit of providing products such as pollen, propolis, royal jelly and bee venom etc.
- It is an **eco-friendly practice** and plays a crucial role in sustainable management of environment.
- It is an excellent **source of employment** for the rural unemployed, landless farmers and forest dwellers.
- One of every three bites of food eaten worldwide depends on bees like pollinators, thus, they are critical for **food security**.
- The hives housing the bees occupy minimal spacing and minimal effort in construction thus, has the ability to **develop the economy** of a region or a country.
- It can be an important contributor in achieving the 2022 target of doubling farmer incomes.

Major problems associated with apiculture in India:

- Lack of well-trained man power and skilled management.
- High production cost
- Lack of institutional or market mechanism for price fixation
- Insufficient training facilities to the beekeepers
- Absence of government initiatives to popularize honey as a quality food in addition to medicinal purposes

- Non-availability of honey boxes to the beekeepers
- Poor Pests and Disease Management and preventive measures

Apiculture Development Initiatives in India

National Horticulture Mission

- Imparting training to beekeepers, farmers unemployed youth and SC/ST aspirants free of cost.
- Financial assistance for strengthening of infrastructure.
- Pollination Support through Beekeeping.

Rastriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY)

- Integrated Development of Scientific Bee-Keeping (IDSB)
- Integration of schemes of beekeeping & crop production

Important Institutes:

- Numbers of institutions are established to contribute to the development of beekeeping and disseminate information.

National Bee Board (NBB)

- Promote scientific beekeeping through bee pollination in crops.
- Enhancing the income of farmers and beekeepers from yield improvement & honey production.

NABARD

- Initiative for tribal women
- Assistance for adopting scientific approach in bee-keeping in tribal areas such as 'honey bee pollen trap'.
- **Agricultural Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)**, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, government of India,
- Nodal agency to promote exports of honey.

Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd (TRIFED)

- Providing training to tribals in the scientific cultivation and harvesting of wild honey.
- Working on Indian bees and beekeeping by associated individuals, agricultural experts, agricultural colleges and institutions.

Way Ahead

- There is a need to promote quality production and develop bee-keeping as an exporting sector. For this a suitable framework need to be developed.
- Application of advanced technology for collection, and processing of honey e.g. **Precision Beekeeping** and adhering strictly to the global quality standards can help in increasing the export of honey from the country.



7

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

ACHIEVEMENTS OF ISRO

ISRO has added one more feather in its cap with the launch of Chandrayan 2. Let us analyse the achievements of India's space agency in detail.

About:

- **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** was founded in 1969 to develop an independent Indian space program. Its **headquarters are in Bangalore** (Bengaluru).
- From a modest beginning in the 1960s, India's space programme has grown steadily, achieving significant milestones. These include fabrication of satellites, space-launch vehicles, and a range of associated capabilities.
- Today, ISRO's annual budget has crossed ₹10,000 crore (\$1.45 billion), growing steadily from ₹6,000 crore 5 years ago.

Thrust Areas of ISRO:

- **Satellite Communication**
 - ♦ **INSAT and GSAT** - to address the national needs for telecommunication, broadcasting and broadband infrastructure.
 - ♦ It provides services linked to areas like telecommunication, telemedicine, television, broadband, radio, disaster management and search and rescue services.
- **Earth Observation**
 - ♦ **Indian Remote Sensing (IRS)** series (1980s), **RISAT**, **Cartosat** and **Resourcesat** series provide wide-field and multi-spectral high resolution data for land, ocean and atmospheric observations.
 - ♦ It helps in forecasting, disaster management and national resource mapping and planning.
 - ♦ With higher resolution and precise positioning, **Geographical Information Systems'** applications today cover all aspects of rural and urban development and planning.
- **Satellite-Aided Navigation**
 - ♦ **GPS-aided GEO augmented navigation (GAGAN)** - joint project between **ISRO and Airports Authority of India**, augmented the GPS coverage of the region, improving the accuracy and integrity, primarily for civil aviation applications and better air traffic management over Indian airspace.
 - ♦ **Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS)**, a system based on **seven satellites in geostationary and geosynchronous orbits**.

- ♦ It provides accurate positioning service, covering a region extending to 1,500 km beyond Indian borders, with an accuracy greater than 20 metres.
- ♦ In 2016, the system was renamed **NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation)**.

Space Science and Exploration Missions

- ♦ **Chandrayaan**
- ♦ **Mangalyaan** missions
- ♦ Manned space mission, **Gaganyaan**, planned for its first test flight in 2021.
- **Launch Vehicles**
- **Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV) and Augmented Satellite Launch Vehicle (ASLV)**
 - ♦ ISRO has developed and refined the **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)** as its **workhorse** for placing satellites in low earth and sun synchronous orbits.
 - ♦ **Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV)** programme is with its **MkIII variant**.

Future Opportunities for ISRO:

- **Small Satellite Revolution**
 - ♦ Globally, 17,000 small satellites are expected to be launched between now and 2030.
 - ♦ ISRO is developing a **small satellite launch vehicle (SSLV)** expected to be ready in 2019.
- **New Space**
 - ♦ Developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and big data analytics has led to the emergence of 'New Space'
 - ♦ New Space entrepreneurship has emerged in India with about two dozen start-ups who seek to provide services to the end user using data from ISRO's satellites and big data techniques and data analysis.
 - ♦ They need an enabling ecosystem, a culture of accelerators, incubators, Venture Capitalists and mentors that exists in cities like Bengaluru which is where most New Space start-ups have mushroomed.

Way Forward:

- With the Ministry of Defence now setting up a Defence Space Agency and a Defence Space Research Organisation, ISRO should actively embrace an exclusively civilian identity.
- A new Space law for India should aim at facilitating growing India's share of global space economy to 10% within a decade which requires a new kind of partnership between ISRO, the established private sector and the New Space entrepreneurs.
- Private sector investment is critical, for which a suitable policy environment needs to be created.

- There is growing realisation that national legislation is needed to ensure overall growth of the space sector.
- The draft Space Activities Bill introduced in 2017 has lapsed and the government now has an opportunity to give priority to a new Bill that can be welcomed by the private sector, both the larger players and the start-ups alike.

CHANDIPURA VIRUS

Four cases of suspected Chandipura virus infection were reported in Gujarat.

About:

- The Chandipura Vesiculovirus (CHPV) **predominantly infects children aged below 14 years.**
- Of the four suspected cases, two children have already died while two others are under tertiary care, which is specialized medical care.

What is the Chandipura Virus?

- Named after the town in Maharashtra where the discovery was made and isolated, Chandipura virus is known to cause **inflammation of the brain, progress rapidly from an influenza-like illness to coma and death.**

Causes of Chandipura Virus:

- The virus spreads mainly through **the bite of sand flies**, and sometimes through **mosquitoes.**
- Animal studies show that **the virus affects neurons and causes neurodegeneration.**
- Sandflies, which are found in mud and in cracks of sand houses, mostly breed during monsoon and pre-monsoon months which is when the cases are generally reported.
- The likely vector (or carrier) of the virus is **the female phlebotomine sandfly.**
- The virus was detected in sandflies in **Senegal, Nigeria as well as in India.**
- In 2003, Chandipura virus was responsible for an **outbreak in southern India** in which 329 children developed acute encephalitis and 183 died.

Signs and Symptoms:

- The **symptoms include** sudden high fever accompanied by headache, convulsions and vomiting, sometimes leading to unconsciousness. Based on the symptoms, doctors recommend a blood test.

Treatment:

- There is **no specific medicine** for its treatment. However, with timely detection, hospitalisation and symptomatic treatment is given to the patient, which could help save lives.

Prevention:

- **Prevention is the best method to suppress CHPV infection.** According to NCBI (National Center for Biotechnology Information), for the containment of the disease-transmitting vectors, it is essential to maintain good nutrition, health, hygiene and awareness in rural areas.

Zoonotic Infection

- Zoonotic infection refers to an incursion of a virus from its natural host into a 'dead-end host' that has little chance to further disseminate the infection.
- Acute infection of the central nervous system (CNS) is an example of zoonotic infection that has apparently no selective advantage for the host or the pathogen.

NEW COMMERCIAL ARM OF ISRO

ISRO has formed a new PSU called New Space India Limited (NSIL)

About:

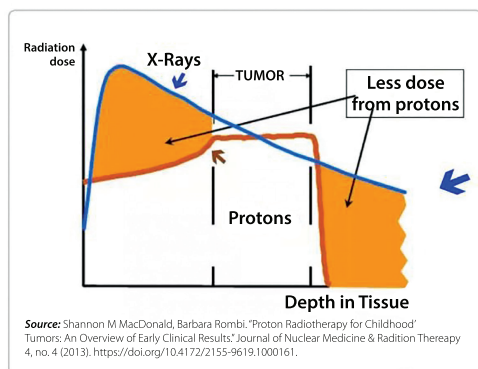
- NSIL is created to commercially exploit the research and development work of the space agency, co-produce PSLV and launch satellites through Small Satellite Launch Vehicles (SSLVs).
- The functions of NSIL will involve small satellite technology transfer to industry, manufacturing of Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) — a product which is being developed by the ISRO — in collaboration with the private sector and production of Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).
- The new company will also look after the production and marketing of space-based products and services, including launch and application, developed by ISRO centres and the constituent units of the Department of Space and marketing spin-off technologies and products and services both in India and abroad.
- NSIL would enable Indian Industries to scale up high-technology manufacturing and production base for meeting the growing needs of the Indian space program and would further spur the growth of Indian industries in the space sector.
- **Note:** Antrix Ltd is another PSU under the Department of Space that acts as a commercial arm of ISRO.

PROTON THERAPY

Recently, Apollo Hospital group installed south Asia's first proton therapy centre at its Chennai hospital.

About:

- Proton therapy, also called proton beam therapy, is a type of radiation therapy. It uses protons rather than x-rays to treat cancer.
- A proton is a positively charged particle. At high energy, protons can destroy cancer cells.
- Doctors may use proton therapy alone. They may also combine it with x-ray radiation therapy, surgery, chemotherapy, and/or immunotherapy.

**How proton therapy works:**

- A machine called a synchrotron or cyclotron speeds up protons.
- The high speed of the protons creates high energy.
- This energy makes the protons travel to the desired depth in the body.
- The protons then give the targeted radiation dose in the tumor.
- With proton therapy, there is less radiation dose outside of the tumor.
 - In regular radiation therapy, x-rays continue to give radiation doses as they leave the person's body. This means that radiation damages nearby healthy tissues, possibly causing side effects.
- People usually receive proton therapy in an outpatient setting. This means they do not need to have treatment in the hospital. The number of treatment sessions depends on the type and stage of the cancer.

Cancers Treated with Proton Therapy:

- Proton therapy is useful for treating tumors that have not spread and are near important parts of the body. For instance, cancers near the brain and spinal cord.
- It is also used for treating children because it lessens the chance of harming healthy, growing tissue. Children may receive proton therapy for cancers of the brain and spinal cord.
- It is also used for cancer of the eye, such as retinoblastoma and orbital rhabdomyosarcoma.

Risks and Benefits:**Compared with x-ray radiation therapy, proton therapy has several benefits:**

- Usually, up to 60% less radiation can be delivered to the healthy tissues around the tumor. This lowers the risk of radiation damage to these tissues.
- It may allow for a higher radiation dose to the tumor. This increases the chances that all of the tumor cells targeted by the proton therapy will be destroyed.
- It may cause fewer and less severe side effects such as low blood counts, fatigue, and nausea during and after treatment.

But there are also some drawbacks to proton therapy:

- Proton therapy requires highly specialized and costly equipment so it is available at just a few medical centers.
- It may cost more than x-ray radiation therapy.
- Not all cancers can be treated with proton therapy.

NASA'S PUNCH MISSION

Dipankar Banerjee, solar physicist from Indian Institute of Astrophysics is also a Co-Investigator of the PUNCH mission.

About:

- PUNCH mission will study the Sun using four microsats
- PUNCH, which stands for "Polarimeter to Unify the Corona and Heliosphere," is focused on understanding the ejection of particles from the Sun's outer corona.
- The Mission also plans to observe the Sun using Indian mission Aditya-L1, a mission to study the Sun's corona, which is underway.
- The PUNCH mission satellites will orbit the Earth in formation and study how the corona connects with the interplanetary medium.
- The mission is expected to be launched in 2022.

What is the Sun's Corona?

- The Sun's corona is the outermost part of the Sun's atmosphere.
- The corona is usually hidden by the bright light of the Sun's surface.
- That makes it difficult to see without using special instruments.
- However, the corona can be viewed during a total solar eclipse.

Potential Devastating Effects of Coronal Mass Ejections:

- Solar flares are energetic explosions of radiation released from the surface of the sun.
- Solar flares are often associated with coronal mass ejections, the ejections of electrons, protons and ions from the Sun. These charged particles have some other effects on Earth.

- Although rare, powerful solar flares have the potential to cause damaging magnetic storms on Earth; in the past, they have triggered regional blackouts.

What are the Effects of Solar Flare?

- The Earth rarely experiences solar flare effects, yet they can have dramatic effects when they occur.
 - ♦ In 1859, a plume of magnetized plasma shot 93 million miles from the sun to the Earth in less than a day. Known as the **Carrington Event**, it is the largest geomagnetic storm in history.
- The direct effects of solar flares are mainly related to communications and radio transmissions.
- **The Earth has a natural protection against these charged particles:** Its magnetic field and atmosphere that blocks most of them. However, some charged particles can enter the atmosphere at the magnetic poles.
- One of the most spectacular (and extremely beautiful) consequence of this are auroras.
 - ♦ When charged particles (especially electrons) find their way at the poles, they get accelerated along the lines of the magnetic field and collide with the particles in the atmosphere which makes them glow. That glow is what we see as an aurora.
- There are also health issues for airline pilots and astronauts.
 - ♦ For those of us that spend most of our time on the ground, the magnetic field and the atmosphere block out almost all of the harmful radiation and charged particles. This is not the case when you go up in the atmosphere.
 - ♦ Airline pilots that fly at great altitude, and especially near the poles, are exposed to more of these. The same goes for astronauts. This results in a higher incidence of cancer among airline pilots and cabin crew.
 - ♦ Astronauts have even reported seeing flashes of light because of high energy protons hitting their eyes!

Can We Prepare for Solar Flares?

- Scientists cannot stop these coronal mass ejections from happening. However, if scientists learn to predict coronal mass ejections, humans can take preventative measures here on Earth.

DESALINATION

ASEAN leaders committed to conclude negotiations for the RCEP Free Trade Agreement by the end of 2019.

About:

- Recently, Chennai laid the foundation stone for the 150 MLD-desalination plant.

What is Desalination Technology?

- To convert salt water into freshwater, the most prevalent technology in the world is reverse osmosis (RO).
- Osmosis involves 'a solvent (such as water) naturally moving from an area of low solute concentration, through a membrane, to an area of high solute concentration.'
- A reverse osmosis system applies an external pressure to reverse the natural flow of solvent and so seawater or brackish water is pressurised against one surface of the membrane, causing salt-depleted water to move across the membrane, releasing clean water from the low-pressure side'.

What are the Problems with RO plants?

- Because RO plants convert seawater to fresh water, the major environmental challenge they pose is the deposition of waste brine (highly concentrated salt water) along the shores.
 - ♦ Environmentalists second this saying that hyper salinity along the shore affects plankton, which is the main food for several of these fish species.
- Moreover, the high pressure motors needed to draw in the seawater end up sucking in small fish and life forms, thereby crushing and killing them — again a loss of marine resource.

Is RO Water Healthy?

- In the early days of RO technology, there were concerns that desalinated water was shorn of vital minerals such as calcium, magnesium, zinc, sodium, potassium and carbonates.
- Most RO plants, including the ones in Chennai, put the water through a 'post-treatment' process whereby salts are added to make TDS around 300 mg/l. Several of the home-RO systems that are common in affluent Indian homes, too employ post-treatment and add salts to water.

The Way Forward:

- What we need is improved desalination technologies. For example, David Binns of early-stage innovation company Epicuro uses solar collectors which heat water to boiling point, then condense it separately from the salt or dirt that rendered it undrinkable.
- Newer technology is also coming to the assistance of desalination advocates. For e.g. a graphene "sieve" was created two years ago at the University of Manchester which cleans salts from brine.



8

ETHICS, VALUES & INTEGRITY

MEDICAL ETHICS

The nationwide strike by doctors, which has been triggered by a brutal assault on a resident doctor in West Bengal, indicates a widespread problem that requires urgent redressal.

About:

- A survey by the Indian Medical Association (IMA) in 2015 revealed that nearly 75% of doctors in India have faced some form of violence or threat at some point in their careers.
- The IMA has been demanding a comprehensive law to deal with violence against healthcare personnel.
- The doctors' strike is over but the crisis remains. The protest has created a massive debate on the present state of healthcare system and medical ethics.

Reasons for increasing Violence against Doctors:

- Health experts have highlighted that the trust deficit between doctors and patients is gradually becoming a concern, with increasing competitiveness in health sector.
- The highlighting of errors by doctors, medical staff, and hospitals, as well as corruption among doctors, has further eroded the trust patients have in the medical facilities.
- With the proliferation of private clinics and the emergence of corporate hospitals, there is a growing perception that doctors are operating with the intention of fleecing patients.

Views on Doctors right to Strike:

- Peaceful protests and strikes are a basic human right, but for doctors, their proximity to life and death and the social contract between a doctor and a patient are stated as the reasons why doctors are valued more than the ordinary beings.
- However, Indefinitely Withhold of Healthcare Services is **Legally and Ethically Unacceptable**.
- In these strikes one perspective has been subverted that is the perspective of the sick and the public right to have access to healthcare and in effect, the fundamental right to life.

Right to Strike vs Right to Life:

- While on the subject of rights and the law, it is worth noting that **the Indian Constitution does not provide for the "right to strike" as a fundamental right**. In fact, it is only a statutory right under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947.
- Further, though the Constitution does provide for the fundamental

right to form associations under which a protest can be covered, constitutionally, even fundamental rights are not absolute and subject to reasonable restrictions—one of which is of public interest.

- Additionally, the Supreme Court in **T.K. Rangarajan vs. Government of Tamil Nadu and Others** held that government employees have no right to strike. If applied to this situation, government doctors being employed by a state hospital do not have the right to strike either.
- Finally, there is also the legal recourse i.e. ESMA, the **Essential Services Maintenance Act, 1968 that was passed by the Parliament to ensure the delivery of certain "essential services", including health and hospital services**, which if obstructed would affect the normal life of the people or would result in the infliction of grave hardship on the community.
 - ♦ Previous governments have invoked ESMA, to stop doctors from striking. Under it, one can be arrested without bail.
- Not only India, but also the International Labour Organization, a United Nations body, while recognizing the right to strike, has laid down a strict list of "essential services" that may not be denied, including hospital services.
 - ♦ It provides that it is "admissible to limit or prohibit the right to strike in essential services, defined as those the interruption of which would endanger the life, personal safety or health of the whole or part of the population."
- Thus, constitutionally, legally, ethically and even by international standards, one does not have the absolute right to strike.

The Classic Case of Professional Ethics vs Personal Safety:

- **The issue poses an ethical dilemma:**
 - ♦ On one hand, violence against any human being including against doctors by a patient mob and lack of accountability by the state are unacceptable.
 - ♦ On the other hand, an ultimate ethical consideration that comes with the job, the provider's first duty is to care for the patient.
- Superseding both is the consideration of basic and essential services to the public, in this case, it is upholding the medical ethics and people's access to care
- It is aggravatingly ironic that one is protesting against violence by causing real violence to the most vulnerable and poor of our society by cutting off their access to the only healthcare they can get in the government sector.

- Without rendering any alternative to the users of these services, that are disproportionately the poor of this country, is ethically and legally unacceptable.
- While their anger, demands, and call for action are completely understandable, **one cannot agree with their method of protest.**
- **From utilitarian perspective,** doctors' strikes are justifiable only if there is evidence of long-term benefits to the doctors, patients and an improvement in service delivery.
- Despite that, it is hard to justify such benefits against the risks to the patients.

Means vs Ends Debate:

- It is undeniable that there should be real change and a violence-free work environment for doctors but the means of depriving the public from all care for days with no respite in sight and without proper alternative coverage, do not justify the ends, not at the cost of real lives.
- The healthcare sector has a right to negotiate and rightfully demand a violence-free workspace, but patients also have a right to get uninterrupted access to care.
- While similar strikes occur globally, the impact on developing countries is always greater in severity given socio-economic conditions, stark infrastructural deficiencies, and lack of any alternative means of affording healthcare, and the poor are the only ones disproportionately affected.

Ethical Solutions:

- Doctors are envisaged as highly respectable due to their direct responsibility for human lives.
- **Under Hippocrates oath,** care of the patient is a contractual obligation for the doctors and is superior to all other responsibilities.
- In order to tackle the crisis and to uphold the medical ethics. The following ethical modes of procedure can be followed:
 - ♦ **Sensitising young doctors towards the problems of the poor** and underprivileged is a more workable and sustainable solution.
 - ♦ **Teaching behavioural sciences** at undergraduate and post-graduate levels can be helpful at bringing the compassion that is needed.
 - ♦ **Acquainting the young doctors to the prevailing social prejudices** could also be a way to inculcate compassion.
- **Medical colleges** also need to redefine their teaching in terms of knowledge, skill and behaviour by incorporating modules on humanitarian conduct, including etiquette and ethics.
- It is impossible to curb violence against doctors unless there is definitely a **complete overhaul of the existing economic system and healthcare system,** with increased communication between the doctors and patients and filling crucial gaps in communication between doctors, patients and relatives.

Do You Know?

Medical Ethics:

- Medical ethics involves examining a specific problem, usually a clinical case, and using values, facts, and logic to decide what the best course of action should be.
- Some ethical problems are fairly straightforward, such as determining right from wrong. But others can also be more perplexing, such as deciding between two "rights"—two values that are in conflict with each other—or deciding between two different value systems, such as the patients versus the doctor's

Indian Medical Association (IMA):

- IMA is the only representative, national voluntary organisation of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine in India.
- It looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well-being of the community at large.
- It was established in 1928 as the All India Medical Association, and renamed as Indian Medical Association in 1930.
- IMA, in 1946, helped in organisation of the World body, namely, World Medical Association, and thus became its founder member.

Doctors' Protection Act in India:

- At least 19 states — including West Bengal, the epicentre of the protests — have passed what is called the Protection of Medicare Service Persons and Medicare Service Institutions (Prevention Of Violence And Damage To Property) Act, also known as the Medical Protection Act (MPA).

Hippocratic Oath:

- It is an ethical code attributed to the ancient Greek physician Hippocrates stating the obligations and proper conduct of doctors, formerly taken by those beginning medical practice.
- Under the Hippocratic oath, the first duty of a doctor is to do no harm.

- **Doctors should not be overburdened** and should have enough time to exchange the prognosis, complications and side effects of treatment with patients and their relatives.
- Doctors should play a proactive role and ensure ethical medical practice. The medical curriculum should include soft-skills and communication skills required to empathise, remain calm and be patient irrespective of repeated prodding by the anxious patients.
- In a system of socialized medicine, government owing to greater control over resources and important managerial decisions should assume greater responsibility and do justice to all stakeholders including doctors as well as patients.



9

CULTURE

MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's sculpture was unveiled in Lahore to mark his 180th death anniversary

About:

- On the 180th death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the legendary ruler of Punjab, a statue was unveiled **at the Lahore Fort in Pakistan**.
- Around 500 people crossed the Wagah border to attend the unveiling event.
- While India has many statues of the famous Maharaja, **this will be his first sculpture in Pakistan**.
- The basic objective is to promote religious tourism, which is in line with the present government's policy as well. Kartarpur Corridor is one such initiative.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh:

- Maharaja Ranjit Singh was born in 1780 in Budrukhan, or Gujranwala [now in Pakistan] and died in 1839, Lahore [now in Pakistan].
- He was the founder and maharaja (1801–39) of the Sikh kingdom of the Punjab.
- Ranjit Singh turned the tide of invasion back to the Pashtuns (Afghans) territories, and he **thus became known as the Lion of the Punjab**.
- His domains extended from the Khyber Pass in the northwest to the Sutlej River in the east and from the Kashmir region at the northern limit of the Indian subcontinent southward to the Thar (Great Indian) Desert.
- Although he was uneducated, he was a shrewd judge of people and events, free from religious bigotry, and was mild in the treatment of his adversaries.

Early Life and Conquests:

- He was the only child of Maha Singh, on whose death in 1792 he became chief of the **Shukerchakias**, a Sikh group.
- In July 1799 he **seized Lahore**, the capital of the Punjab.
- He had **coins struck in the name of the Sikh Gurus** and administered the state **in the name of the Sikh commonwealth**.
- After capturing **Amritsar**, the most-important commercial city in northern India and sacred city of the Sikhs, he proceeded to subdue the smaller Sikh and Pashtun principalities that were scattered throughout the Punjab.

- His later forays eastward, however, were checked by the English. By a treaty with them, signed in 1806, he agreed to expel a Maratha force that had sought refuge in the Punjab.
- The English then thwarted his ambition to bring together all of the Sikh territories by compelling him to sign the **Treaty of Amritsar (1809)**, which fixed the Sutlej River as the eastern boundary of his territories.
- In July 1819 he finally **expelled the Pashtuns from the Valley of Kashmir**, and by 1820 he had consolidated his rule over the whole Punjab **between the Sutlej and Indus rivers**.
- All Ranjit Singh's conquests were achieved by **Punjabi armies composed of Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus**. His commanders were also drawn from different religious communities, as were his cabinet ministers.
- In 1820 Ranjit Singh **began to modernize his army, using European officers**—many of whom had served in the army of Napoleon I—to train the infantry and the artillery.
- Ranjit Singh's governance reforms, especially land reforms, were considered to be the most practical reforms made by any ruler.
- In little more than six years after his death, the Sikh state he had created collapsed because of the internecine strife of rival chiefs.

'GO TRIBAL' CAMPAIGN

Go Tribal campaign was launched by Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs and TRIFED in association with Amazon.

About:

- The collaboration aims to create awareness and promote tribal arts and crafts as well as aid in socio-economic welfare of over 700 Indian tribes.
- The event saw **the global Launch of "Tribes India" through Amazon Global selling**, under which Tribes India and Amazon Global Marketing will launch **TRIBES India products** globally under **Tribes of India Collection Heritage**.
 - ♦ Tribes India is a brand under TRIFED which came into existence in 1987.
- **The collection includes** handcrafted textiles like ikats, silks and pashminas; tribal jewellery like dokras. Natural collection includes Telangana coffees, Uttarakhand soaps, Karnataka spices etc.

Significance of the Campaign:

- The careful precision and handcrafted intricacy of works of tribal master craftsmen from all over India will be showcased through 'Go Tribal' campaign.
- Promotion of Indian tribal communities and their art while helping them to go global and providing them opportunities to attain a sustainable livelihood.

Do You Know?

Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) is an organization that functions under the aegis of Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs and is engaged in marketing development of tribal products including tribal art and craft under the brand name of **TRIBES INDIA**.

CHAMLIYAL FAIR

Annual Chamliyal fair begins on Indo-Pak border without Pak's participation.

About:

- Lakhs of devotees thronged the Chamliyal border shrine along the India-Pakistan border for the annual fair known for being a mark of Hindu-Muslim unity.
- The annual fair which is being held since centuries is organised at the shrine of **Baba Dalip Singh Manhas**, a saint popularly known as Baba Chamliyal.
- But there was no traditional exchange of 'chadars' and holy soil with Pakistan for the second successive year.
- It used to be an important meeting point for people and officials of both the countries, but the tradition stopped last year after a firing by Pakistani forces led to the death of 4 Border Security Forces (BSF) personnel.

MARKANDESHWAR TEMPLE

Restoration work of the temple in Maharashtra by Archaeological Survey of India is in full swing.

About:

- Known as the "Khajuraho of Vidarbha", the temple of Markandadeo is situated on the bank of River Wainganga in district Gadchiroli of Maharashtra.
- The temples belong to the **Nagara group of temples** of North India.
- On stylistic grounds, their date ranges in between 9-12th centuries CE.

- The temples belong to shaiva, vaishnava and sakta faith. Most of the temples have a simple plan, with ardhmandapa, mandapa, antarala and garbhagriha forming the component of the entire set up.
- Alexander Cunningham made a recording that - about 200 years ago the **shikhara** of the main shrine and **mahamandapa** was struck by a lightning which led to the partial collapse of the **shikhara**.

NATIONAL FILM HERITAGE MISSION (NFHM)

NFAI to add new film preservation and conservation facilities as part of NFHM.

About:

- Given the rapidly perishing condition of films and ancillary material in India, it was imperative that the process of Preservation, Conservation, Digitization and Restoration be fast-tracked.
- It was envisaged that the task be carried out in mission-mode, thus giving birth to the National Film Heritage Mission (NFHM) by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.

National Film Heritage Mission (NFHM):

- This mission includes preservation of film and non-film material including but not limited to celluloid, stills, glass slides, posters, lobby cards, scripts and song booklets.
- **The objectives of NFHM are:**
 - ♦ Condition assessment of film reels to ascertain the remaining life of the film,
 - ♦ 2K/4K picture and sound restoration of landmark films of Indian and recording of new picture and sound inter-negatives of each film,
 - ♦ Digitization of films,
 - ♦ Construction of archival and preservation facilities called vaults,
 - ♦ Trainings and workshops for in-house capacity building, and
 - ♦ Web-based end to end IT solution.
- To achieve these objectives, National Film Archive of India (NFAI) seeks to bring in industry perspective and expertise, as the success of the mission depends on an effective synergy with the industry.
- A Strategy Roadmap for the NFHM is also under preparation. Also, NFAI will have a dedicated children film club, benefiting children of different age groups.

National Film Archive of India (NFAI)

- It was set up in February, 1964 as a media unit of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India with the primary objective of acquiring and preserving Indian cinematic heritage.
- This includes preservation of film and non-film material including but not limited to celluloid, stills, glass slides, posters, lobby cards, scripts and song booklets.

SWADESH DARSHAN SCHEME

Recently, the tribal circuit has been identified as one of the fifteen thematic circuits under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme.

About:

- The Ministry of Tourism, under the **Swadesh Darshan Scheme**, has identified tribal circuit as one of the fifteen thematic circuits for development of tourism infrastructure in the country.
- The objective is showcasing tribal culture, art, handicrafts and providing livelihood and enhance employment opportunities for tribal populations in the country.
- For now, the tribal circuits under the scheme would be developed in the states of **Nagaland, Chhattisgarh, and Telanagana**.

Swadesh Darshan Scheme:

- Swadesh Darshan Scheme is envisioned to synergise with other Government of India schemes like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Skill India, Make in India, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) etc. with the idea of positioning the tourism sector as a major engine for job creation, driving force for economic growth, building synergy with various sectors to enable tourism to realise its potential.
- The duration of Swadesh Darshan Scheme is till the 14th Finance Commission Period i.e. March 2020.

Key Features:

- The Scheme, being a **central sector scheme**, is 100% centrally funded
- There are 15 tourist circuits that are proposed and started under the scheme.
- The scheme is a joint venture by the Central Government and Ministry of Tourism.
- By launching the scheme, the ministry will be able to develop the heritage cities of the nation and conserve them for the tourists from across the globe.

Definition of Tourist Circuit:

- Tourist Circuit is defined as a route having at least three major tourist destinations which are distinct and apart.
- Circuits should have well defined entry and exit points.
- A tourist who enters should get motivated to visit most of the places identified in the circuit.
- A Circuit could be confined to a State or could be a regional circuit covering more than one State/Union Territory.
- These circuits may have one dominant theme and other sub-themes.
- Suitable Public Private Partnerships to be taken up for improved sustainability of the projects.
- A Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) may be created for the purpose, wherever feasible.

Thematic Circuits:

- **In January 2015 the Scheme was launched as a Central Sector Scheme with following five circuits:**
 - ♦ Himalayan Circuit,
 - ♦ North East Circuit,
 - ♦ Krishna Circuit,
 - ♦ Buddhist Circuit, and
 - ♦ Coastal Circuit.
- **Later, 10 more thematic circuits namely:**
 - ♦ Desert Circuit,
 - ♦ Tribal Circuit,
 - ♦ Eco Circuit,
 - ♦ Wildlife Circuit,
 - ♦ Rural Circuit,
 - ♦ Spiritual Circuit,
 - ♦ Ramayana Circuit,
 - ♦ Heritage Circuit,
 - ♦ Tirthankar Circuit and
 - ♦ Sufi Circuit were added in the scheme making it to 15 thematic circuits.

What is a Central Sector Scheme?

- Central sector schemes are schemes with 100% funding by the Central government and implemented by the Central Government machinery. In these schemes, the financial resources are not shifted to states.
- The central sector schemes are formulated on subjects mainly from the Union List. Besides, there are some other programmes that various Central Ministries implement directly in States and UTs which also come under Central Sector Schemes.

SINDHU DARSHAN FESTIVAL

Recently the festival was celebrated in Leh.

About:

- The Sindhu Darshan Festival is an annual festival to celebrate River Indus (Sindhu) as an icon of communal harmony and unity of India.
- This is a **3-day festival**, which is held every year on full moon day (Guru Purnima) in the month of June in Leh in Ladakh district of Jammu & Kashmir.
- The celebrations of this festival were **started in the month of October 1997**, for the celebration of unity as well as communal harmony along with the national integration.
- There is **also a symbolic salute to the brave soldiers of the country**.
- At the time of the festival, the local artists from various parts of the country traditional dance performances.
- People from all religions, castes, and regions become a part of this festival.
- Visitors carry water from the river of their own state in earthen pots and immerse in the Sindhu River.
 - It is believed that as the waters from all the rivers mingle, thereby symbolizing multi-dimensional cultural identity.

MUSEUMS FOR TRIBAL FREEDOM FIGHTERS

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has decided to set up Museums to commemorate the contribution of Tribals in the freedom struggle.

About:

- The location of museum and tribal freedom fighters/heroes associated with the museum are as under:

Sl. No.	Name of State	Location of Museum	Tribal Freedom Fighters / Heroes
1	Gujarat	Garudeshwar, Rajpipla	Prominent freedom fighters from across the country.
2	Chhattisgarh	Raipur	Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh
3	Jharkhand	Ranchi	Birsa Munda
4	Andhra Pradesh	Lammasingi	Shri Alluri Seetha Ram Raju
5	Madhya Pradesh	Chhindwara	TantyaBheel, Bheema Nayak, KhajayaNayak, etc.
6	Kerala	Kozhikode	Thalakkal Chandu

7	Manipur	Makhal Village, Senapati	Rani Gaidinliu
8	Telangana	Hyderabad	Ramji Gond

ZONAL CULTURAL CENTRES

The Ministry of Culture has set up seven overlapping zones called 'Zonal Cultural Centres' (ZCCs) across the country.

About:

- The stated goal of ZCC is **"to strengthen the ancient roots of Indian culture and evolve and enrich composite national culture"**.
- These ZCCs organize various cultural activities & programs on a regular basis all over the country.
- At the national level, Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsavs (RSMs) have been organized as part of the scheme wherein artists of all the States have been provided a platform to perform.

Name of the Center	Headquarter	Member States
North Zone Cultural Centre	Patiala	Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Union Territory of Chandigarh
West Zone Cultural Centre	Udaipur	Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa, Union Territory of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli
South Zone Cultural Centre	Thanjavur	Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Union Territories of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Puducherry.
South Central Zone Cultural centre	Nagpur	Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra
Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre	Kolkata	Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Manipur, Orissa, Sikkim, Tripura, West Bengal and Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
North Central Zone Cultural Centre	Allahabad	Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and NCT of Delhi.
North East Zone Cultural centre	Dimapur	Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura.



10 MISCELLANEOUS

NAGALAND REGISTER FOR INDIGENOUS INHABITANTS

After Assam, Nagaland to set up a register of indigenous inhabitants. What is it?

About:

- The Government of Nagaland has decided to set up a **Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN)** with the aim of preventing fake indigenous inhabitants certificates.
- The RIIN will be the master list of all indigenous inhabitants of the state.

How will the list be Prepared?

- The RIIN list will be based on "an extensive survey". It will involve official records of indigenous residents from rural and (urban) wards and would be prepared under the supervision of the district administration.
- The preparation of the list will start from July 10, 2019, and the whole process will be completed within 60 days from the start.
- The database will note each family's original residence, current residence as well as the concerned Aadhaar numbers.
- **The process:** A provisional list will then be published in all villages, wards and on government websites by September, 2019.
 - ♦ By October, 2019, claims and objections will be entertained. Those whose name do not appear in the RIIN will get an opportunity to present their case which will be decided on the Deputy Commissioner by Dec., 2019.
 - ♦ Once the RIIN is finalised, no fresh indigenous inhabitant certificates will be issued except to new-born babies born to the indigenous inhabitants of Nagaland.

Unique ID for Indigenous Inhabitants:

- Based on the adjudication and verification, a list of indigenous inhabitants will be finalised and each person will be given a unique ID.
- The final list or the RIIN will be created and its copies will be placed in all villages and ward. Electronic copies of the list will also be stored in the State Data Centre.
- A mechanism or electronic and SMS-based authentication will be put in place.
- All indigenous inhabitants of the state would be issued a barcoded and numbered Indigenous Inhabitant Certificate.

- The process will be conducted across Nagaland and will be done as part of the online system of Inner Line Permit (ILP), which is already in force in Nagaland.

What is an ILP?

- Inner Line Permit (ILP) is an official travel document required by Indian citizens residing outside certain "protected" states while entering them.
- With the ILP, the government aims to regulate movement to certain areas located near the international border of India.

Background:

- ILP's origin dates back to the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations, 1873, which protected the British Crown's interest in tea, oil and elephant trade.
 - ♦ It prohibited "British subjects" or Indians from entering into these protected areas.
- After Independence, in 1950, the focus of the ban on free movement was explained as a bid to protect tribal cultures in north-eastern India.

MAHILA KISAN SAHAKTHIKARAN PARIYOJANA

A total of 35.95 lakh women farmers have been covered under the centrally-sponsored Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) in 24 states.

About:

- The MKSP was launched in 2011 as a sub component of Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM).
- **It aims** at meeting specific needs of women farmers to enable them to achieve socio economic empowerment.
- **The primary objective** of the MKSP is to empower women in agriculture by making systematic investments to enhance their participation and productivity, as also create and sustain their agriculture-based livelihoods.
- **Core focus:** To promote agriculture on sustainable basis where inputs are localised, risks are mitigated, productivity is enhanced and hence net income of family is increased.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Rural Development under DAY-NRUM in partnership with state rural livelihood mission/community based organisations/NGOs as implementing agencies.

- **Need:** 80% of rural women are engaged in agriculture.
- 20% of farm livelihood are female headed due to widowhood, desertion, male emigration etc.

Criteria for NGO to a Part of Implementing Agency:

- At least 3 years of experience in sustainable agriculture based livelihood activities.
- Minimum annual turnover of over 25lakhs.
- Be working with at least 500 farmers.
- Have formed at least 100 SHGs.
- Not in the blacklist of government.
- Should possess adequate infrastructure and human resources.

LONGEST ELECTRIFIED TUNNEL IN INDIA

Indian railway completes longest electrified tunnel.

About:

- **Length and location:** The total length of the tunnel is 6.6 kms and is situated between Cherlopalli and Rapuru stations which fall under the South Central Railways zone of Indian Railways in Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh.
- **Shape:** It is constructed in shape of 'Horse Shoe'.
- **Significance:** Tunnel will help in providing viable rail connectivity between Krishnapatnam Port and its hinterland for goods train services.
 - ♦ The newly constructed tunnel will help in reducing the travel time by 5 hours.

Other Tunnels:

- **India's longest rail tunnel (not electrified):** Pir Panjal railway tunnel in Jammu and Kashmir.
- **India's longest road tunnel:** Chenani-Nashri tunnel.

HENLEY PASSPORT INDEX

The Henley Passport Index 2019 ranks the Indian passport on the 86th position with a mobility score of 58.

About:

- The score points out that Indian passport holders can access 58 countries around the world without a prior visa.
- Japan and Singapore hold joint top spot on the Henley Passport Index.
- India shares the 86th position with Mauritania and Sao Tome and Principe.
- India's rank has slipped from 81th in 2018.



About Hanley Index:

- It is the global ranking of countries on the bases of travel freedom for their citizens.
- It is an collaborative effort with **International Air Transport Association (IATA)**.
- It ranks 199 passports and 227 travel destinations including micro state and territories.
 - ♦ **Based on** the number of countries a holder can go to without a visa (or) the number of countries a holder can go to and can obtain visa, visitor's permit, or electronic travel authority upon arrival (no need to get prior).

NATIONAL FREIGHT INDEX

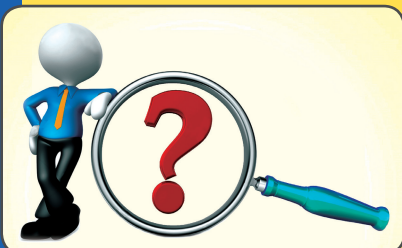
Rivigo, an Indian tech based logistics company has launched 'National Freight Index' (NFI).

About:

- NFI comprehensively measures the road freight spot market in India. It presents both live rates and historical price trends for different lanes and vehicles for freight across the country.
- The index is computed by adopting machine-learning and economics powered pricing algorithms.

Need:

- Logistics account for nearly 14% of India's GDP and 70% of it comes from road transportation. Despite this, there is no pricing transparency and high information asymmetry between customers and transport service providers.
 - ♦ The NFI intends to reduce this information asymmetry by providing live freight rates to customers so that they can take better logistic decisions.
- Additionally, the working conditions of drivers is deplorable which dissuades people from choosing this profession. It is estimated that India could face a 50% shortage of truck drivers by 2023.
 - ♦ The NFI also aims to improve this situation by bringing more regulation and transparency in this market.



11

CURRENT AFFAIRS QUESTIONS

Multiple Choice Questions

Q.1 With reference to, Ujwal Bharat, consider the following statement:

1. It is a programme initiated under Ministry of Power and Coal only.
2. Its aim is to ensure 24x7 Power for all by 2019.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.2 Match the following:

Scheme	Aim
A. UDAY	1. LED bulb distribution program
B. UJALA	2. 24X7 power to all
C. DDUGJY (Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana)	3. To encourage operation and functional turn-around of DISCOMS
D. Ujwal Bharat	4. 100% village electrification

Codes:

A	B	C	D
(a) 3	1	4	2
(b) 1	2	3	4
(c) 1	3	2	4
(d) 3	4	1	2

Q.3 Consider the following statement regarding National Common Mobility Card (NCMC):

1. This will enable people to pay multiple kinds of transport charges, including metro services and toll tax, across the country.
2. It runs on RuPay card and one can also withdraw money through this card.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.4 Consider the following statement regarding Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF):

1. It is a set of farming methods, and also a grassroots peasant movement in the Southern Indian States.
2. It can help in doubling our farmers' income by 2022.
3. Jeevamrutha and Mulching are some of the pillars of ZBNF.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1, 2 and 3 (d) 1 and 3 only

Q.5 Consider the following statement regarding Digital tax:

1. A new tax model that is adapted to the digital economy.
2. Digital companies like Amazon, Facebook, Google etc. will be taxed on the basis of, their revenue and location where they are headquartered.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.6 With reference to, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in India, consider the following statements:

1. FDI is a non-debt financial resource.
2. India is the top recipient of green-field FDI Inflows from the Common-wealth in 2018.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.7 Consider the following statement regarding Indian Agriculture:

1. Average share of small landholders in the total private investment in farming is less than 10%.
2. The share of private investment in agriculture has come down in recent years.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.8 Consider the following statement regarding Remittances in India:

1. Kerala is the top recipient of remittances in 2018.
2. India received 10% more remittance in the year 2018 from 2017.

Which of the statements given above is/are not correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.9 Consider the following pairs with reference to Chandrayaan-2:

Name	Purpose
1. Vikram	Lander
2. Pragyan	Rover
3. Chang'e 4	Crater

Which of pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.10 Which of the following is not a classical language in India?

- (a) Sanskrit (b) Urdu
(c) Tamil (d) Kannad

- Q.11** 'Y. H. Malegam' committee was seen in news is related to:
- To review the level and adequacy of internal reserves and surplus distribution policy of the RBI.
 - To review the scheme for Sustainable Structuring of Stressed Assets.
 - To look at selling of oil and ONGC fields to private company
 - To address issues of Stressed Thermal Power Projects.

- Q.12** Consider the following statement regarding 'One Nation-One Ration Card' Scheme:

- Aadhaar card is mandatory to avail the benefit of this scheme except if beneficiaries want to get their PDS entitlement only from a particular registered ration shop.
- This is an initiative of the Ministry of Finance.

Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

- Q.13** Consider the following statement regarding Annapurna Yojana (AY):

- A destitute person with more than 65 years of age having no source of income can avail the benefit.
- Eligible are entitled to 10 kg of food grains free of cost every month.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

- Q.14** 'Codex Alimentarius' was recently in news is related to:

- It is a collection of internationally adopted food standards.
- Mathematical code used in algorithmic trading.
- An asteroid detected by NASA.
- A software used to enhance video quality.

- Q.15** Consider the following statement regarding Jal Shakti Abhiyan:

- It is a mission mode campaign that would focus on stressed blocks in all districts of India.
- Its main aim is to achieve Har Ghar Jal (piped water supply) to all rural households by 2024.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

- Q.16** Consider the following statement regarding National Rural Drinking Water Programme:

- It aims to provide safe and adequate water for drinking, cooking and other domestic needs.
- It was launched in 2009.
- It is completely funded by central government.

Which of the statements given above is/are not correct?

- 1 and 2 only
- 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 2 and 3 only

- Q.17** S-400, recently seen in news, refers to which of the following?

- Indigenously developed Helicopter
- Air defence missile system
- Water disinfection system
- A Russian Submarine

- Q.18** Consider the following statements about the 'Swadesh Darshan Scheme':

- It is one of the 'Central Sponsored Schemes' to be implemented along with the State governments to increase domestic tourism.
- There are 15 tourist circuits that are proposed and started under the scheme.
- The duration of Swadesh Darshan Scheme is till the 14th Finance Commission period i.e. March 2020.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- 1 and 2 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- All of the above

- Q.19** With reference to Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN) in Nagaland, consider the following statements:

- The aim of RIIN exercise is preventing fake indigenous inhabitants certificates.
- It will replace inner line permit in Nagaland.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

- Q.20** Which of the following have been correctly matched?

Name of State	Tribal Freedom Fighter
1. Jharkhand	Birsa Munda
2. Manipur	Rani Gaidinliu
3. Odisha	Ramji Gond

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- 1 and 2 only
- 2 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 3 only

- Q.21** Consider the following statements about the Central Sector Schemes:

- These are schemes with 100% funding by the Central government.
- The central sector schemes are formulated on subjects mainly from the Union List.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

- Q.22** Which of the following statements correctly defines the term 'Tourist Circuit' under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme?

- Tourist Circuit is defined as a route having at least three major tourist destinations which are distinct and apart.
- Tribal circuit has been identified as one of the tourist circuit.
- One Tourist Circuit should be confined to one particular State.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- 1 and 2 only
- 2 only
- 1 and 3 only
- All of the above

- Q.23** Consider the following statements about the 'Inner Line Permit':
1. It is an official travel document required by foreign nationals to visit certain "protected" states in India.
 2. Requirement of Inner Line Permit has been removed by Nagaland to increase tourism.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

- Q.24** Through the Treaty of Amritsar (1809), the British fixed which of the following rivers as the eastern boundary of the territories of Maharaja Ranjit Singh?

- (a) Ravi River (b) Sutlej River
(c) Beas River (d) Yamuna River

- Q.25** Consider the following statements about the Sindhu Darshan Festival:

1. It is a 3-day festival, which is held every year in Leh in Ladakh district of Jammu & Kashmir.
2. The festival is unique for the celebration of unity as well as communal harmony along with the national integration.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

- Q.26** The aim of the National Film Heritage Mission (NFHM) is to:

- (a) Support at least one Indian film a year which is being made to promote the heritage of India.
- (b) Create awareness among the people about the 'heritage films' made in different regional languages including Hindi.
- (c) Preserve, conserve, digitise and restore film and non-film material like celluloid, stills, glass slides etc.
- (d) Produce at least one Oscar winning Indian film every year.

- Q.27** Consider the following statements about the 'Markandeshwar Temple':

1. It is known as the "Khajuraho of Marathwara."
2. It is situated on the bank of River Wainganga.
3. It belongs to the Nagara group of temples of North India.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

- Q.28** Consider the following statements about the Project-75 India (Project-75 I):

1. It aims to domestically construct six nuclear attack submarines.
2. These submarines will have advanced Air-Independent Propulsion (AIP) systems.
3. These submarines will be constructed under DRDO.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

- Q.29** Consider the following statements about the Gangetic River Dolphins:

1. Gangetic river dolphins are the only freshwater dolphins in the world.
2. They have an excellent eye-sight.
3. Gangetic dolphins live in a zone where there is river currents, helping them save energy.

Which of the statements given above is/are not correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

- Q.30** Consider the following statements about NASA'S PUNCH Mission:

1. It is focused on understanding the ejection of particles from the Sun's outer corona.
2. It is expected to be launched in 2022.
3. It also plans to observe sun using Indian mission Aditya-L1.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

- Q.31** Which of the following are among the functions of NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) - the new commercial arm of ISRO:

1. Look after the production and marketing of space-based products and services developed by ISRO.
2. Manufacturing of Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) in collaboration with the private sector.
3. Enable Indian Industries to scale up high-technology manufacturing and production base for meeting the growing needs of the Indian space program.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

- Q.32** By a treaty with the British signed in 1806, Maharaja Ranjit Singh agreed to expel whom of the following who had sought refuge in the Punjab?

- (a) Marathas (b) Pashtuns
(c) Rajputs (d) Mughals

- Q.33** "Go Global" campaign, which aims to create awareness and promote tribal arts and crafts as well as aid in socio-economic welfare of over 700 Indian tribes, is a collaboration of:

- (a) Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Tribal Affairs and TRIFED.
- (b) Ministry of External Affairs, Amazon and TRIFED.
- (c) Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Amazon and TRIFED.
- (d) Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Amazon.

- Q.34** Consider the following statements about the 'PUNCH' mission:

1. It is a collaboration between European Space Agency and Japanese Space Agency.
2. It aims to punch an asteroid with a robotic arm and bring the material so collected back to earth for research.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

- Q.35** Consider the following statements about the Sun's Corona:

1. It is the outermost part of the Sun's atmosphere.
2. It is usually hidden by the bright light of the Sun's surface.
3. It can be viewed during a total solar eclipse.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.36 Consider the following statements about the reign of 'Maharaja Ranjit Singh':

1. He had coins struck in the name of the Sikh Gurus.
2. He administered the state in the name of the Sikh commonwealth.
3. He tried to modernize his army using European officers, many of whom had served in the army of Napoleon I.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.37 Which of the following are among the effects of Solar Flare on earth?

1. Geomagnetic storm
2. Auroras in the Polar regions
3. Higher incidence of cancer among airline pilots and cabin crew.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.38 Consider the following statements:

1. Zoonotic infection refers to an incursion of a virus from its natural host into a 'dead-end host' that has little chance to further disseminate the infection.
2. Acute infection of the central nervous system (CNS) is an example of zoonotic infection.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.39 Consider the following statements:

1. A proton is a positively charged particle.
2. At high energy, protons can destroy cancer cells.
3. Cancer cells are negatively charged.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.40 Consider the following statements about the 'Proton Therapy' to treat cancers:

1. With proton therapy, there is less radiation dose outside of the tumor.
2. Proton therapy is useful for treating tumors that have not spread and are near important parts of the body.
3. It is generally not used for treating children.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.41 Consider the following statements:

1. The Chandipura Vesiculovirus (CHPV) predominantly infects children.
2. The Chandipura Vesiculovirus (CHPV) is known to cause weakening of bones in children.
3. India is the only country which has ever reported the outbreak of the Chandipura Vesiculovirus (CHPV).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 3 only (d) 1 and 3 only

Q.42 Solar flares are often associated with coronal mass ejections which result in the release of which of the following types of particles?

1. Electrons
2. Protons
3. Ions

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.43 Which of the following are/were among the 'Launch Vehicles' of ISRO?

1. Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV)
2. Augmented Satellite Launch Vehicle (ASLV)
3. Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)
4. Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV)

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
(c) 1, 3 and 4 only (d) All of the above

Q.44 Which of the following satellites are specifically used for earth observation by the ISRO?

1. INSAT
2. RISAT
3. Cartosat
4. Resourcesat

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
(c) 1, 3 and 4 only (d) All of the above

Q.45 The Global Carbon Project aims to:

- (a) Make coal-based power projects more environment friendly by using the latest technology.
- (b) Stop the increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.
- (c) Study the effects of the carbon-cycle on global warming.
- (d) Limit the global temperature rise below 1 degree Celsius at the end of 21st century.

Q.46 Recently, Japan withdrew from the International Whaling Commission (IWC) because:

- (a) It was removed from the IWC on the charge of misusing Article VIII IWC.
- (b) It was not allowed to hunt whales for scientific research.
- (c) IWC funded an international campaign against Japan for its consumption of whale meat.
- (d) It wanted to resume commercial whaling.

Q.47 Which of the following have been correctly matched?

State	State Butterfly
1. Maharashtra	Blue Mormon
2. Uttarakhand	Common Peacock
3. Karnataka	Southern Birdwing
4. Kerala	Malabar Banded Peacock

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
(b) 2, 3 and 4 only
(c) 1, 3 and 4 only
(d) All of the above

Q.48 Consider the following statements about Resilient Kerala Program:

1. It is to enhance the State's resilience against the impacts of natural disasters and climate change.
2. It is being implemented with the help of Asian Development Bank.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.49 Consider the following statements:

1. Methane (CH₄) is one of the most potent man-made gases on Earth.
2. Most of the methane on Earth is produced in abiotic processes.
3. Methane is one of the gases that may help scientist to look for possibility of life outside Earth.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 3 only (d) 1 and 3 only

Q.50 Consider the following statements:

1. Curiosity Rover is a car-sized robotic rover of European Space Agency exploring Gale Crater on Mars.
2. Recently, it became the first mission to detect methane on Mars.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.51 Article VIII of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) was recently in news in the context of:

- (a) It has banned Japan to conduct whaling expeditions.
- (b) Using this article, IWC has created world's largest no-ship zone around Antarctica.
- (c) It allows for the killing of whales for purposes of scientific research.
- (d) Using this article, IWC has recommended IUNC to declare all whales a critically endangered species.

Q.52 Consider the following statements:

1. Butterflies are significant for environment as they play the main role in pollination and food chain.
2. Recently, Tamil Nadu became the fifth state in the country to announce its state butterfly.
3. Sikkim was the first in the country to announce its state butterfly.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.53 Which of the following statements are correct regarding the Gangetic river dolphin- India's national aquatic animal?

1. It is listed as a vulnerable species under IUCN.
2. It is listed on CITES Appendix I.
3. It is classified under Schedule 1, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.54 Which of the following segments have been identified for acquisition under the Strategic Partnership (SP) route for defence procurement in India?

1. Fighter Aircraft
2. Helicopters
3. Guided Missiles
4. Armoured Fighting Vehicles

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
(c) 1, 2 and 4 only (d) All of the above

Q.55 Consider the following statements:

1. Fly ash is a major source of particulate pollution.
2. The wet disposal of Fly ash results in leaching of toxic heavy metals in ground water system.
3. Fly ash is used as an agent for acidic soils, as soil conditioner.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.56 In India, coral reefs are found in which of the following regions?

1. Goa coast
2. Kerala coast
3. Palk Bay
4. Sundarbans

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
(c) 1, 2 and 4 only (d) All of the above

Q.57 Consider the following statements about the Lake Vostok:

1. It is the largest subglacial lake in Greenland.
2. Its total size is close to that of Lake Ontario making it the sixth-largest lake in the world.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.58 Which of the following could be the benefits of Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways' flagship application called SARATHI?

1. It will curb the duplication and fake driving license.
2. It will help in identification of drivers who has been accused in any criminal cases.
3. It will help in preventing juvenile driver cases and thus probable road accidents.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.59 Consider the following statements about the Intelligence Bureau (IB):

1. The IB was created by the Government of India (GoI) after independence.
2. The IB is used to garner intelligence from within India.
3. RAW was formed by GoI after independence.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.60 Which of the following are among the objectives of the BharatNet project?

1. To provide for Broadband and internet services at Gram Panchayat levels for the rural population at affordable prices.
2. To provide access to bandwidth in a non-discriminatory manner to all eligible service providers to enable them to provide services in rural areas.
3. To provide broadband services and Wi-Fi Hotspots at about 75 percent lower price in rural areas.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.61 Consider the following statements about the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act, 2019:

1. It has provision of death penalty for aggravated sexual assault on children.
2. It also punishes the act of failing to destroy or delete or report pornographic material involving a child.
3. It considers all the persons below 16 years of age as children.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.62 Consider the following statements about the 'PARAMARSH' Scheme:

1. It is an initiative of the Ministry of Human Resource Development.
2. It is concerned with promotion of Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.63 Consider the following statements regarding PAHAL scheme:

1. It requires users to mandatorily have Aadhar Card to receive LPG subsidy.
2. Under PAHAL scheme, beneficiaries buy LPG cylinders directly at market rate and subsequently receive subsidy directly in their bank accounts.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.64 The Central Government has decided to develop the 'tribal circuits' under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme in which of the following States?

1. Nagaland
2. Chhattisgarh
3. Telanagana

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.65 Consider the following statements about 'Maharaja Ranjit Singh':

1. He came to be known as the Lion of the Punjab as he kept the British limited to the east of river Sutlej for quite a long time during his reign.
2. Thar (Great Indian) Desert was never a part of his territories.

3. He expelled the Pashtuns from the Valley of Kashmir.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.66 Which of the following are among the functions of the Defence Acquisition Council?

1. Accord of Acceptance of Necessity to acquisition proposals.
2. Categorization of the acquisition proposals relating to 'Buy', 'Buy & Make' and 'Make'.
3. Decisions regarding Transfer of Technology under 'Buy & Make' category of acquisition proposals.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.67 Who among the following has the power to designate an area as a "disturbed area"?

1. Central Government
2. Governor of the State
3. Administrator of the Union Territory

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.68 The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act has been in force in which of the following States?

1. Tripura
2. Nagaland
3. Arunachal Pradesh
4. Assam

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
(c) 1, 2 and 4 only (d) 1, 3 and 4 only

Q.69 Consider the following statements about the "The ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific":

1. It is a binding document for the ASEAN countries but a non-binding document for its free trade partners.
2. The ASEAN outlook does not see the Indo-Pacific as one continuous territorial space.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.70 Arrange the following towns from south to north:

1. Chababar
2. Zahedan
3. Kabul
4. Zaranj

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 > 2 > 4 > 3 (b) 2 > 1 > 3 > 4
(c) 3 > 2 > 1 > 4 (d) 1 > 2 > 3 > 4

Q.71 Who among the following are the members of the East Asia Summit?

1. ASEAN Member States
2. Australia
3. India
4. Russia

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
(c) 1, 3 and 4 only (d) All of the above

Q.72 Consider the following statements:

1. India has been a founding member of the East Asia Summit (EAS).
2. All the members of the proposed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) are also the members of EAS.
3. The EAS is the Indo-Pacific's premier forum for strategic dialogue.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.73 Consider the following statements:

1. The Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic corridor is a part of the China-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
2. It aims to connect China's eastern city of Kunming with India's city of Kolkata.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.74 Consider the following statements:

1. UAE is India's second-largest energy supplier.
2. UAE home to largest Indian community in the Gulf region.
3. UAE is the first foreign country to participate in India's 'Strategic Petroleum Reserves.'

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.75 Consider the following statements:

1. India's support to Palestinian cause is an integral part of its foreign policy.
2. India is among one of the first countries to recognize the Palestinian State in 1988
3. India backs two nation theory for the solution of Israel-Palestine conflict.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.76 The global 'Multidimensional Poverty Index' (MPI) covers which of the following dimensions of poverty?

1. Health 2. Education
3. Empowerment 4. Living Standard

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
(c) 1, 2 and 4 only (d) All of the above

Q.77 'Loss Leader' is a pricing strategy generally used by businesses to improve their profitability under which:

- (a) Certain products are sold at a minimal profit or even at a price that is well below their cost price in order to boost the sale of other products that are more profitable.
- (b) High price is used as a defining criterion.
- (c) Price is set artificially low to gain market share quickly.
- (d) The idea is to recover maximum money before the product or segment attracts more competitors who will lower profits for all concerned.

Q.78 Jal Jeevan Mission, announced in the Union Budget this year, aims to:

- (a) Explore desalinisation of sea water on an unprecedented scale in coastal cities in India.
- (b) Inter-link the Himalayan and Peninsular rivers in the next 20 years.
- (c) Ensure piped water supply to all rural households by 2024 under the Jal Jeevan Mission.
- (d) Install one lakh solar-powered vapour-to-water conversion machines in critical rural areas facing water scarcity.

Q.79 Which of the following types of projects can be considered under the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund?

1. Greenfield Projects 2. Brownfield Projects
3. Stalled Projects

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.80 Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) Project is concerned with:

- (a) Protectionist policies of the developed countries.
- (b) Loss of GDP to developing countries due to climate change.
- (c) Artificially shifting of profits to low or no-tax locations.
- (d) None of the above.

Q.81 Which of the following are the features of the 'Compulsory Localization of Payment Data' regulations issued by the RBI?

1. All payments-related data has to be stored within India.
2. In cases where data gets processed outside the country, it needs to be brought back within 24 hours.
3. These directives are applicable not only to payment entities but also to all banks operating in India.
4. There is no bar on processing of payments transactions outside India if so desired by the payment system operators (PSOs) and data need not to be stored in India after processing.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
(c) 1, 2 and 4 only (d) All of the above

Q.82 Consider the following statements:

1. There is fixed criterion for classifying a project as a Stalled Project.
2. Project Monitoring Invest India Cell (PMIC) has been working under the Prime Minister's Office.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.83 Consider the following statements about the Dibang Multipurpose Project:

1. This is located in Assam.
2. This will be the largest ever Hydro Electric Projects to be constructed in India.
3. The dam is 278 metres high and will be the highest dam in India once completed.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.84 Which of the following statements are correct regarding Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM KISAN) Scheme?

1. It covers both land-holder and land-less farmers.
2. It selects the beneficiaries using an inclusion criteria only.
3. It was announced in the Interim Budget 2019-20.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 3 only

Q.85 In recent years, there has been a shift from SAARC towards BIMSTEC because:

1. BIMSTEC has a permanent secretariat while SAARC does not.
2. SAARC does not have any arrangement for resolving disputes or mediating conflicts.
3. In recent times, Pakistan's non-cooperation has stalled some major initiatives under SAARC.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.86 Which of the following countries are members of both SAARC and BIMSTEC?

1. Bhutan 2. Myanmar
3. Nepal 4. Sri Lanka

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
(c) 1, 3 and 4 only (d) All of the above

Q.87 Consider the following statements about the Henley Passport Index 2019:

1. It is the global ranking of countries on the bases of travel freedom for their citizens.
2. It is an collaborative effort with International Air Transport Association (IATA).

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.88 Which of the following initiatives have been started under the Digital India programme?

1. eBiz platform 2. My Gov platform
3. Jeevan Praman Programme

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.89 Consider the following statements:

1. The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) is an intergovernmental body.
2. It was established by the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Trade Organization.
3. Its aim is to protect the health of consumers and to ensure fair practices in the food trade.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.90 Consider the following statements about the 'Food Safety and Standards Authority of India':

1. It has been established under the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954.
2. It has been created for laying down science based standards for articles of food.
3. It also specifies appropriate system for enforcing the food safety standards.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.91 'National Defense Authorisation Act (NDAA)' was in news in the context of:

- (a) It is an act recently passed by the Parliament to ensure greater participation of private sector in the defense equipment manufacturing.
- (b) It is a U.S. legislative provision that aims to bring India at par with America's NATO allies.
- (c) Under this Act, U.S. can declare war with Iran.
- (d) It is a mutual defense agreement recently signed between U.S. and Saudi Arabia.

Q.92 Both U.S. and India participate in which of the following exercises?

1. MALABAR 2. RED FLAG
3. RIMPAC

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) All of the above

Q.93 India is in talks with which of the following countries to acquire S-400 air defence missile system?

- (a) U.S.
- (b) Russia
- (c) Israel
- (d) France

Q.94 Arrange the following in decreasing order of their contribution in the India's power generation capacity:

1. Thermal 2. Renewable
3. Hydro 4. Nuclear

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 > 2 > 4 > 3 (b) 2 > 1 > 3 > 4
(c) 3 > 2 > 1 > 4 (d) 1 > 2 > 3 > 4

Q.95 CHAMLIYAL festival, recently seen in news is celebrated in which part of the country.

- (a) In the Northeastern states along the borders of Bangladesh
- (b) In the state of Jammu and Kashmir along the border with Pakistan
- (c) In the southern states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu
- (d) In the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar along Nepal border

- Q.96** Arrange the following in decreasing order of the top remittance recipients in 2018:

 1. China
 2. Mexico
 3. India

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 > 2 > 3 (b) 2 > 1 > 3
(c) 3 > 1 > 2 (d) 1 > 2 > 3

Q.97 Consider the following statements regarding Micro, Small Medium Enterprises in India

 1. A microenterprise in the manufacturing sector is one which has an investment of less than 50 lakh Rs.
 2. In India, the number of small enterprises is maximum among all the three categories of MSME.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.98 SFURTI is a scheme related to which of the following objectives:

 - (a) To promote youth to pursue sports and physical activities.
 - (b) To promote a healthy and nutrient-rich diet among the Indian children
 - (c) To upgrade and regeneration of traditional industries in India
 - (d) To promote active living and healthy lifestyle among the elderly population in India.

Q.99 Operation Bandar, recently seen in the news, is related to which of the below-mentioned subjects

 - (a) The hot pursuit by the Indian Army conducted of Naga terror outfit NSCN-Khaplang along the India-Myanmar border
 - (b) The preemptive non-military airstrike by the Indian Air Force (IAF) on a terrorist training camp in Balakot, Pakistan.
 - (c) The operation launched by the Indian army to rescue people in flood-hit Kerala.
 - (d) The surgical strike carried out by Indian Para Commandos inside of Pakistan occupied Kashmir.

Q.100 Consider the following statements

 1. Osmosis involves a solvent (such as water) naturally moving from an area of high solute concentration, through a membrane, to an area of low solute concentration.
 2. A reverse osmosis system applies external pressure to reverse the natural flow of the solvent.
 3. Standalone reverse osmosis removes only harmful substances but does not affect vital minerals such as calcium, magnesium, zinc, sodium, etc.

Which of the statements given above is/are not correct:

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

ANSWER KEY

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. (b) | 2. (a) | 3. (c) | 4. (c) | 5. (a) | 6. (c) | 7. (c) | 8. (d) | 9. (a) |
| 10. (b) | 11. (a) | 12. (a) | 13. (c) | 14. (a) | 15. (d) | 16. (b) | 17. (b) | 18. (b) |
| 19. (a) | 20. (a) | 21. (c) | 22. (a) | 23. (d) | 24. (b) | 25. (c) | 26. (c) | 27. (b) |
| 28. (b) | 29. (d) | 30. (d) | 31. (d) | 32. (a) | 33. (c) | 34. (d) | 35. (d) | 36. (d) |
| 37. (d) | 38. (c) | 39. (a) | 40. (a) | 41. (a) | 42. (d) | 43. (d) | 44. (b) | 45. (b) |
| 46. (d) | 47. (d) | 48. (a) | 49. (c) | 50. (d) | 51. (c) | 52. (a) | 53. (b) | 54. (c) |
| 55. (d) | 56. (a) | 57. (b) | 58. (d) | 59. (b) | 60. (d) | 61. (d) | 62. (c) | 63. (b) |
| 64. (d) | 65. (b) | 66. (d) | 67. (d) | 68. (b) | 69. (b) | 70. (a) | 71. (d) | 72. (d) |
| 73. (b) | 74. (b) | 75. (d) | 76. (c) | 77. (a) | 78. (c) | 79. (d) | 80. (c) | 81. (a) |
| 82. (b) | 83. (b) | 84. (d) | 85. (b) | 86. (c) | 87. (c) | 88. (d) | 89. (c) | 90. (b) |
| 91. (b) | 92. (d) | 93. (b) | 94. (d) | 95. (b) | 96. (c) | 97. (d) | 98. (c) | 99. (b) |
| 100. (c) | | | | | | | | |

Subjective Questions

GS Paper 1

- Q.1** India as a nation has multiple subdivisions, be it administrative, political, economic, socio-cultural or others. Examine the role that single ration cards may play in eroding these subdivisions. **(10 marks)**
- Q.2** The concept of health is inclusive of physical, mental and psychological health. Analyse the challenges associated with mental health in India and initiatives to resolve those challenges. **(15 marks)**

GS Paper 2

- Q.3** Good governance essentially means 'Minimum government and maximum governance'. Critically examine. What should be the optimum size of a government to achieve the target of minimum government? **(15 marks)**
- Q.4** Following the 2012 case and the public outrage that it provoked, public safety for women has been increasingly deemed an issue worthy of attention. While the government's initiatives for promoting women safety are appreciated, the issue is much more deep-seated. Evaluate. **(10 marks)**
- Q.5** Providing free transportation for women may be socially advantages but it has its economic costs. Provide a multidimensional evaluation of this idea while suggesting innovative ways to achieve the desired end. **(10 marks)**
- Q.6** Digital India needs Digital empowerment. Examine the status of Digital empowerment in India. **(10 marks)**
- Q.7** The philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' or 'the world is one family' has lost its significance in the present era of protectionism. Critically examine the above statement in light of the foreign policy of India. **(15 marks)**
- Q.8** Remittances are among the most tangible links between migration and development. Analyse this statement with reference to remittances received by India. **(10 marks)**
- Q.9** Bilateral relations between India and Bangladesh have improved significantly in the recent past but still there are some sections in Bangladesh who doubt India's intentions and the future of this relationship. Evaluate. **(15 marks)**
- Q.11** The economic growth of a nation is an interplay of multiple sectors and a focussed approach for all is needed for balanced growth. Analyse the recent initiatives announced in the Budget from the perspective of ushering in rapid growth. **(15 marks)**
- Q.12** Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) has been termed as "the engine of growth" for India but it cannot operate without the requisite inputs. Critically examine the role of MSME sector in the Indian growth story. **(15 marks)**
- Q.13** With the rising tide of digitalisation, a tax function must be part of the digital strategy, to be technology-enabled to address the increasingly challenging landscape. Examine. **(10 marks)**
- Q.14** Doubling farmer's income by 2022 also needs a commensurate increase in investment in agriculture. Critically examine the above statement in light of the financial issues faced by the agriculture sector in India. **(15 marks)**
- Q.15** The next Asia is Africa. Critically examine India's relation with African countries and the future prospects that it holds. **(10 marks)**
- Q.16** Migration has been part of human history since its very beginning and there is a need to see it from a humanitarian perspective. Critically examine the statement in light of growing protectionism across the world. **(15 marks)**
- Q.17** United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is a relic from World War II. Do you agree? Why should India strive for a permanent seat in the UNSC? **(10 marks)**
- Q.18** The failure of SAARC to nurture cooperation in South Asia has created the space for BIMSTEC as a viable option but with limited success so far. Discuss. **(10 marks)**
- Q.19** Chandrayan-2 is India's milestone in the age of New Space. Elucidate the benefits that may accrue from India's exploration of the moon. **(10 marks)**

GS Paper 4

- Q.20** What do you understand by Medical Ethics? Do doctors have the same rights as patients? Suppose you are a doctor of a public hospital who has been manhandled by a mob angry because of delay in the provision of medical services. What will be your reacting and how will you balance professional responsibilities and personal interests. **(15 marks)**

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