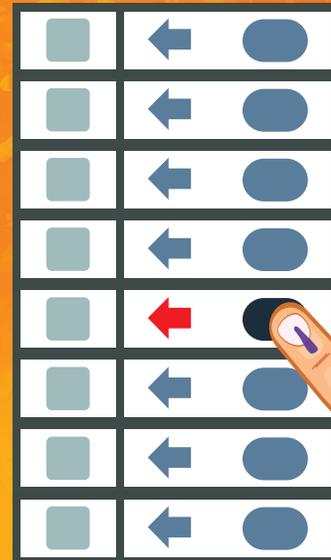


Current Affairs

"A MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICES EXAMINATION"



General Election 2019



Genetically Modified Crops

Iran Sanctions: Impact on India

Gender Equality in Jobs

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AIR
38

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AIR
40

Garima Agrawal



AIR
41

Alok Kumar



AIR
42

Nandini Maharaj



AIR
46

Deepak Kr. Dubey



AIR
52

Prateek Singh



AIR
53

Sumit Kumar



AIR
56

Dileep Mishra



AIR
57

Mohd Abdul Shahid



AIR
59

Chahat Bajpai



AIR
61

Girdhar



AIR
62

Anand Kr. Sharma



AIR
63

Vishal Sah



AIR
64

G Surya S P



AIR
70

Suraj Patel



AIR
72

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AIR
73

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76

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77

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AIR
80

Khushboo Gupta



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81

Jay Shivani



AIR
83

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87

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91

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NEXT IAS

Current Affairs

June, 2019

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Message to the Readers

The June 2019 Issue of the Next IAS Current Affairs Magazine (hereafter called 'The Magazine'), covers news events from **26th April 2019 to 25th May, 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.

The June issue of the Magazine has **in-depth analysis** of three issues from the coverage period viz. **'US Iran Tensions and its Impact'**, **'Low Female Labour Force Participation Rate: Causes and Solutions'** and **'Genetically Modified Crops'**. These topics have been covered as they have been persistently in news and are poised to impact India significantly in the near future.

The Magazine also covers the **landslide victory of the incumbent government in the 2019 General Election** along with an analysis of the possible reasons for this overwhelming show of support for the BJP. The 2019 General Election provide valuable learnings and insights about Indian Democracy at work and must be a subject of interest specially for those aiming to understand the Indian Political System and Party Dynamics more closely.

This Magazine has a **Guest Article contributed by Shri K.P. Shashidharan (IAAS, Former Director General, CAG Office)** on the subject of Election Commission of India (ECI) & Need for Electoral Reforms. The guest columns by such notable authors help readers to have nuanced understanding of these topics.

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 National and International events are covered in easy to understand manner using **simple but effective language, headings & sub-headings, engaging infographics, charts, tables and eye-catching diagrams**. 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 academicdirector@nextias.com

Team NextIAS

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US IRAN TENSIONS AND ITS IMPACT

Escalating tension between Iran and the United States has once again exposed India and Iran to new set of challenges to take their energy and trade ties forward.

About:

- United States announced that it would **not extend beyond May 1**, the 180-day waiver it had granted to eight countries, **including India**, to purchase oil from Iran.
- The US had earlier granted waivers, known as **Significant Reduction Exceptions (SRE)**, for six months to eight countries — **India, China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, Italy and Greece**.
- India **will stop importing crude oil from Iran** following the US move to end sanction waivers.
- It will use **alternate supply sources** such as Saudi Arabia to make up for the lost volumes.

Significance of Iran in India's Energy Security:

- India is the **third-largest oil consumer** in the world, and nearly 80 percent of its oil demand and around 40% of its natural gas needs is met with imports.
- India is also the **second-biggest purchaser of Iranian oil**, after China. In 2018-19, it imported 23.5 million tonnes from Iran; in the previous year, almost 10% of its total 220.4 million tonnes of crude imports was from Iran.
- Iran was the **third largest supplier of oil to India** in 2018-19, and other suppliers may not provide the same benefits in the form of price and credit facilities.
- Not only Iran was one of the largest suppliers of oil to India in 2018-19 (vs just 3% of oil imports from the US), it does so on very **sweet terms**:
 - ◆ 60-day credit
 - ◆ Free insurance
 - ◆ Free on board (FOB) basis
 - ◆ Barter-of-goods arrangement.
- The big concern is that the substitute crude suppliers — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Nigeria and the US — do not offer the attractive options that Iran does. The projected drop in Iranian exports could further squeeze supply in a tight market — given the US has also sanctioned Venezuela, and the OPEC and allied producers including Russia have voluntarily cut output, which has pushed up oil prices more than 35% this year.

Potential Impact of Iranian Sanctions on India

- **Economic impact:** Various aspects of Indian economy can be impacted with the sanctions including:
 - ◆ **Current Account Deficit:** Higher crude oil prices will widen the trade deficit and current account deficit. According to CARE, a permanent increase in crude oil prices by 10% could translate into the current account deficit increasing by 0.4-0.5% of GDP.
 - ◆ **Inflation:** There could be significant impact on inflation, given how crude oil prices move and the extent to which the government allows the pass-through to the consumer.
 - ◆ **Fiscal impact:** There could be a two pronged impact on government finances — both on the revenue side and on the expenditure side. On the revenue side, higher oil prices mean more revenue for the states as tax is ad valorem. The expenditure impact would primarily be on account of fuel subsidy outlays.
 - ◆ **Rupee:** The currency could be impacted if the trade and current account deficits were to widen. An increase in the import bill will tend to put pressure on the rupee. The coefficient of correlation between the absolute value of exchange rate and Brent between April 1, 2019 and April 22, 2019 was high at 0.62.
- **Geo-strategic impact:** India needs Iran both for its connectivity projects International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and Chabahar, support and engagement in **Afghanistan** and its cooperation to maintain **balanced ties** with China, Pakistan and Russia.
- **Chabahar:** U.S. sanctions could slow or even halt the Chabahar project as India has already committed about US\$85 million of the total \$500 million for the project.
- **Strait of Hormuz:** After the US said it would prevent five of Iran's biggest customers — including India — from buying its oil, Tehran threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz, the lane through which a third of the world's seaborne oil passes every day. Closing the Hormuz Strait will amount to an escalation with an unknown fallout.
- **INSTC:** India has been a founder of the **International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** since it was ratified in 2002. Plans for INSTC sped up after the JCPOA was signed in 2015 and sanctions on Iran were lifted and New U.S. sanctions will affect INSTC.

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Importance of Chabahar Project

- **Bypassing Pakistan:** India has strategically circumvented Pakistan which has opened up new opportunities for trade and transit from and to Afghanistan and enhance trade and commerce between the three countries.
 - **Access to Europe and Central Asia:** When linked to the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), it would connect South Asia and Europe & Central Asia, which would provide Indian business better opportunities to expand in Central Asia.
 - **Geostrategic location:** This port is located very close (around 100 kms) to **Pakistan's Gwadar Port**, which has been developed by China. Thus, the location is strategic to balance the increasing footprint of China in Asia through the policy of 'String of Pearls'.
 - **Reducing transportation cost:** The distance between India's Kandla Port and Chabahar Port is quite short, thereby reducing the transportation costs of the goods and freight time.
 - **Important for the stability of the region:** In the long term, the project is expected to improve the economic conditions of the region with the introduction of newer opportunities.
- **Rules-based order:** India has long been a proponent of a "rules-based order" that depends on multilateral consensus and an adherence to commitments made by countries on the international stage and must stick to them despite adversarial behaviour of some countries.
 - **Non-oil trade with Iran** may not be impacted as much, as New Delhi and Tehran have instituted **several measures** in the past few months, including allowing Indian investment in rupees, and initiating new banking channels, between them.
 - **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation:** Chinese officials are considering inducting Iran into the 8-member Eurasian security organisation. If the proposal is accepted by the SCO, which is led by China and Russia, **India will become a member of a bloc that will be seen as anti-American**, and will run counter to some of the government's other initiatives, for eg. the Indo-Pacific quadrilateral.

INSTC

- It is a multimodal transportation established in 2000 by **India, Russia and Iran**.
- It aims to link Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea via Iran, and onward to northern Europe via St. Petersburg in Russia.
- Later INSTC was expanded to include 10 new members namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, Belarus, Oman and Syria.

Impact of U.S. Sanctions on Iran

- The new series of sanctions is likely to hit the earnings of Iran's major metals companies.
- This will have an immediate impact on the Iranian government's revenues, but it will also deteriorate the balance sheets of Iran's heavily indebted metals and mining companies.
- This will be followed by mass unemployment, especially among blue-collar workers employed by state-owned enterprises who form the backbone of Iran's economy.
- For U.S., the outcome of their confrontation with Iran is to deprive the Iranian regime of the funds it can use to impose its hegemony around West Asia, but also to put pressure on the everyday life of Iranian citizens.

India's Diversification Plans:

- Indian refiners have **almost halved their Iranian oil purchases** since November, when the sanctions came into effect.
- According to market players, Indian refiners are **increasing their planned purchases** from the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Mexico, and **even the US** to make up for the loss of Iranian oil.
- As part of the diversification, India imported crude from the US for the first time two years ago.
- Indian companies have also contracted 8 million metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA) of liquified natural gas (LNG) and ethane condensate from the US.
- Also, Indian oil companies had until February 2018 acquired stakes in 27 countries including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Libya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Russia, and the UAE.
- Recently, an Indian consortium comprising OVL, IOC and Bharat Petroresources Ltd (a BPCL company), picked up 10% in the Lower **Zakhum offshore oil field in UAE**, and IOCL acquired 17% in **Oman's Makhaizna** oilfield.

Way Forward:

- India must necessarily make necessary efforts to limit the potential damage to India's energy security and economic stability.
- **India's task is two-fold:** One is take up Washington on its word to help India replace oil imports from Iran.
- And the other is to **leverage India's improved relations with Saudi Arabia and the UAE** to negotiate long-term alternatives to energy dependence on Iran.
- **Alternative approach** could be to get special exemptions like it has got for Chabahar port negotiating with US and secondly, finding innovative mechanism to sustain its current momentum of overall security and economic ties with Iran.

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- In any case, if India is to protect its interests in the ever-volatile global oil market, the government will need to take **steps to diversify its supplier base** and also work towards **increasing domestic sources of energy supplies**.
- Opening up the **renewable energy sector for more investments** will also help avoid over-dependence on oil from the global market to meet the country's ever-increasing energy needs.

Iran to Partially Withdraw from Nuclear Deal

- Iran announced that it **will withdraw partially** from the landmark nuclear deal of 2015 also known as the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)**.
- Iran's decision to reduce its commitments to the nuclear deal, comes as a reaction to the U.S.'s attempts to reduce Iran's oil exports to zero.
- With the U.S. having ended the sanctions-waiver it had given to certain countries, including India, on purchasing Iranian oil, the Iranian economy has come under more pressure.

- Iran is demanding that the remaining signatories of the deal — the **U.K., China, France, Germany and Russia** — ease the restrictions on its banking and oil sectors in the next 60 days.
- In case the five endorsers of the deal decide not to act in favour of Iran, it will remove the caps on uranium enrichment levels and resume work on the **Arak nuclear facility**.

Impact of Iran's Decision

- Iran will immediately stop shipping out excess enriched uranium and heavy water. It will **resume higher levels of enrichment** to build weapons unless its grievances are addressed in 60 days.
- If Europe doesn't do enough in 60 days and Iran sticks to its threat, **the deal will collapse**, giving more **reason to the U.S. to escalate hostilities**.
- There is **little likelihood of any flexibility** towards the Iranian regime from the American side till the November 2020 U.S. presidential election.
- Iran will certainly look for ways to inflict a cost on the U.S. directly or through militia proxies in the region.



June, 2019

LOW FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE: CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS

The elections manifesto of the BJP mentioned “women” 37 times. In this light it becomes important to analyse the position of Indian women in workforce.

About:

- The **participation of women in the workforce in India is one of the lowest globally**. The female labour force participation rate (LFPR) in India fell from 31.2% in 2011-2012 to 23.3% in 2017-2018.
- This decline has been sharper in rural areas, where the female LFPR fell by more than 11 percentage points in 2017-2018.
- **India's case is peculiar** as generally rapid economic growth leads to falling fertility rates and higher educational attainment among women. These advances often lead to an increase in women entering the labour force, but there has been a surprising decline on this front in India.
- India has also been ranked poorly in UN rankings like the Gender Development Index and Gender Inequality Index,
- Though India has historically had low shares of women participating in the labour market, the share of women in workforce **has been gradually falling** over the last 30 years.

International Trends for Female Labour Force Participation

- According to the latest estimates from the **UN's International Labour Organisation**, the worldwide labour force participation rate in 2018 for women aged 15-64 was 53% while it was 80.6% for similarly aged men.
- Interestingly, the number of women working in high income countries went up between 1990 and 2018, largely due to policies like better parental leave, subsidised childcare, and flexibility in jobs. But in South Asia's low and middle income countries, the number of women working has declined.

What Explains Low Participation in India?

- **Inadequate opportunities:** India has struggled to create labour-intensive manufacturing jobs, many of which favour women. The lack of jobs opportunities in India is more adversely affecting the female population of India.
- **Rural areas adversely affected:** The Unemployment Rate (UR) for women in the rural population is significantly higher when compared to male UR.
 - Even entrepreneurship opportunities for rural population are hard to come due to lack of banking infrastructure in the far-flung areas and weak market linkages in others.
- **Education effect:** The number of women staying in education in both urban and rural areas has increased, keeping them out of the workforce for longer. This is in contrast to men, for whom greater education leads to higher participation in the labour force.
- **Women avoiding menial jobs:** With better education, women are refusing to do casual wage labour or work in family farms and enterprises.
- **Wage disparity between men and women:** Most women in India are engaged in subsistence-level work in agriculture in rural areas, and in low-paying jobs such as domestic service and petty home-based manufacturing in urban areas.
- **Household responsibilities:** In India, there are cultural expectations that married women should not work and that they should prioritise housework and care work.
- **Gender violence:** Another factor keeping women out of the workforce is the wider problem of sexual violence against women and unsafe working environment.
- **Inadequate support for break in career:** Before the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017, the pregnant mothers faced issues in seeking adequate maternity leave.
- **Gender Disparity:** Male preference and consequently low regard for females leads to inadequate health and education opportunities, from a very young age. Improper nutrition and lack of education deters women from being healthy contributing members of the work force.
- **Income Effect:** The **household incomes** in India rose, especially after LPG reforms, which led to the reduction of women's participation in the labour force. This effect was termed as “income effect” and was more pronounced in subsidiary activities due to **change in preferences**.
- **Flawed measurement method:** Though most women in India work and contribute to the economy in one form or another, much of **their work is not documented or accounted for** in official statistics, and thus women's work tends to be under-reported.
- **Inadequate Political participation:** Low percentage of women in decision making institutions lead policies not conducive to women's participation in workforce.
- **Female Entrepreneurship in India:**
 - **India is not performing well on the index of female entrepreneurship** either, with only 21.49 percent of total establishments and 13.41 percent of non-agricultural establishments in India being owned by women.
 - The **most significant barrier** is posed by accessibility to finance for setting up businesses, followed by absence of business management skills which is closely linked to the structural challenges that women face given existing gender norms.



Benefits of Participation of Women in the Workforce:

- Empowering women in the economy and closing gender gaps in the world of work are key to achieving the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals**, particularly.
 - ♦ Goal 5, to achieve gender equality,
 - ♦ Goal 8, to promote full and productive employment and decent work for all;
 - ♦ Goal 10 on reducing inequalities.
- Women's economic empowerment boosts productivity, increases economic diversification and income equality in addition to other positive development outcomes.
 - ♦ For example, increasing the female employment rates in OECD countries to match that of Sweden, could boost GDP by over USD 6 trillion.
- Women's economic empowerment is also central to realizing **women's rights and gender equality**.
- Job opportunities for women also increase their bargaining power and this has been shown to increase the investments in child's health and education.

Government Interventions:

- **MGNREGS:** For rural employment, the MGNREGS (Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) provides a right-based programme to boost labour-force participation.
- The MGNREGS reserves minimum 33 percent for women participation and provides 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural HHS.
- As per the Economic Survey 2017-18, out of the total number, 54 percent of person days were generated by women. Further, recent trends from 2013-14 to 2017-18 highlight that participation by women in the total person days generated has been more than 50 percent.
- **Mahila E-Haat:** Further, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) has launched 'Mahila E-Haat', a **unique direct online marketing platform** leveraging technology for supporting women entrepreneurs/Self Help Groups/NGOs for showcasing the products/services which are made/manufactured undertaken by these women.
 - ♦ Currently, this platform has impacted directly and indirectly over 26,000 SHGs and 3.75 lakh beneficiaries.

Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017

- The Act has provided benefits such as:
 - ♦ Women working under the organised sector are now entitled to paid maternity leave of 26 weeks, up from 12 weeks, benefiting 1.8 million women.
 - ♦ Mothers who adopt a child below the age of 3 months will receive maternity leave of 12 weeks.
 - ♦ Women are now permitted to work from home, if the nature of work assigned permits her to do so.

- ♦ Creche facility made mandatory for organisations with 50 or more employees.
- However, concerns continue to exist regarding this act. The primary concern with the Act is that additional maternity benefits come at a cost to companies. This additional cost associated with hiring women employees may result in companies becoming even more unwilling to hire women.
- India's legislation has also come under scrutiny for placing the complete burden of childcare on the female by not including any provision for **paternity leave**.

Initiatives to Promote Women Entrepreneurship:

- **The Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY):**
 - ♦ It was initiated to provide micro or small businesses with access to institutional finance up to Rs.10 lakhs.
 - ♦ The scheme prioritises women entrepreneurs with almost 75 percent of loans under PMMY catering to women borrowers.
 - ♦ In addition to providing loans, the PMMY refinancing agency MUDRA (Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency) offers a 0.25 percent rebate on refinance interest rate to women borrowers.
- **Stand Up India scheme:**
 - ♦ The scheme aims to provide institutional financing in the manufacturing, services or trading sector between Rs. 10 lakh and Rs. 1 crore to **at least one Scheduled Caste(SC)/ Scheduled Tribe(ST) borrower and one-woman borrower per bank branch**.
 - ♦ With an overall target of at least 2.5 lakh borrowers, it should provide credit to around 1.25 lakh women borrowers.
- **Udyam Sakhi:**
 - ♦ The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) has launched a portal called 'Udyam Sakhi' **to address the issue of business management skills**.
 - ♦ Despite these multi-dimensional efforts spearheaded by the government, the **Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs (MIWE) 2018**, India ranks 52nd out of 59 countries on the availability of conditions to promote female entrepreneurship.
- **Women Entrepreneurship Platform:**
 - ♦ NITI Aayog has launched the **Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP)**, on the occasion of International Women's Day in 2018.
 - ♦ The initiative is aimed at building an ecosystem for women across India to realize their entrepreneurial aspirations, scale-up innovative initiatives and chalk-out sustainable, long-term strategies for their businesses.
 - ♦ This will be done through an enabling network of industry collaborations, partnerships, mentors and peer-to-peer connect.

June, 2019

International Experience: Japanese Success in Enhancing Female Employment

- Japan faces many structural problems in terms of gender norms, that are similar to the Indian scenario. Japan introduced a number of policies to improve female labour force participation.
- A series of reforms in 1992 and 1995 expanded maternity leave from 12 weeks to one year of paid leave available to both parents.
- In 2014, as part of 'Womenomics', the number of day care slots were further increased and the state made provisions to replace 2/3rd of workers' earnings over the first six months of paid leave.
- Along with progressive child care policies, Japanese labour laws were also changed **considerably to remove earlier restrictions on women's employment**. For example, until the 1990s, there were women's protection provisions that restricted women's labour market involvement by limiting the nature of occupation accessible, as also the hours of work that women could engage in.
- The 'Womenomics' campaign also intervened at a broader level with **lower tax rates for married women and fixed targets for representation of women in business houses**. It is clear therefore that a series of positive policy changes preceded the increase in female employment metrics.

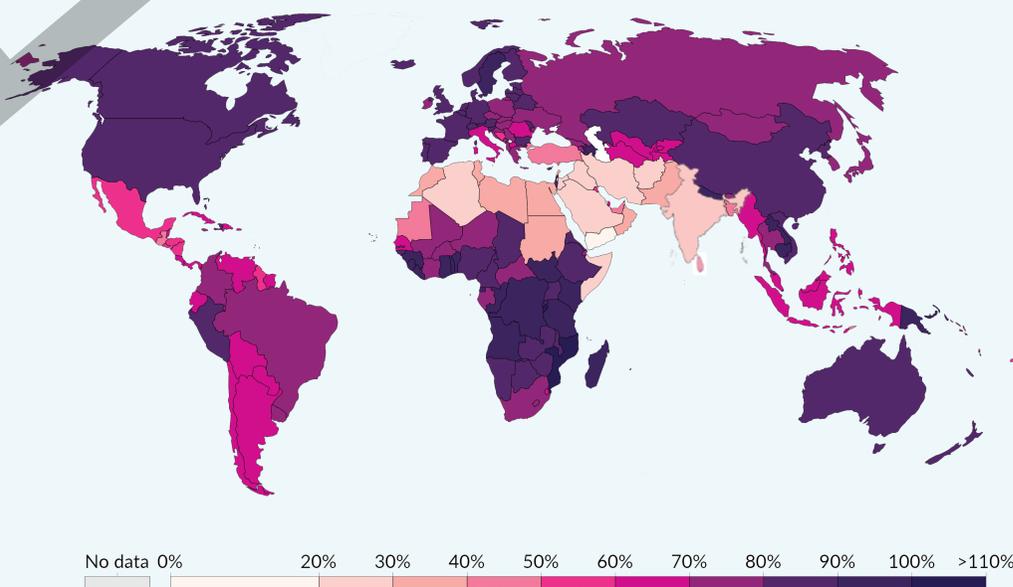
Way Ahead:

- The decision of and ability for women to participate in the labour force is the **outcome of various economic and social factors** that interact in a complex fashion at both the household and macro-level.

- Improving access to and relevance of education and training programs, skills development, access to child care, maternity protection, and provision of safe and accessible transport, eliminating discrimination in hiring, ensuring equal and decent wages, along with the promotion of a pattern of growth that creates job opportunities will help improve female labour force participation.
- In addition, women have strongly articulated the need **to enumerate and remunerate the unpaid and underpaid work they undertake** in sectors such as agriculture and fisheries. Their fundamental demand is that **women must be recognised as farmers in accordance with the National Policy for Farmers**; this should include cultivators, agricultural labourers, pastoralists, livestock rearers, forest workers, fish-workers, and salt pan workers.
- **Ensuring equal rights and entitlements** over land and access to inputs, credit, markets, and extension services will also enhance opportunities for women.
- It is clear from the analysis and from the Japanese experience that policy actions, while essential, cannot be fully effective in the absence of deeper structural changes in society with regard to attitudes towards women.
- The economic strategy, as pioneered in other Asian countries (such as Bangladesh and Vietnam) would be to promote new industries that are drivers of women's employment. In light of this, there is a need to focus on and incentivize industries (such as textiles and footwear) that can usher in social transformation.
- While attitudes and values cannot change overnight, it is apparent that targeted economic incentives can overcome the pull of tradition. The right incentives for industry and entrepreneurship will provide the necessary impetus to overcome the barriers to female employment.

Ratio of Female-to-Male Labor Force Participatio Rates (%), 2017

The female-to-male ratio of labor force participation rates is calculated by dividing the labor force participation rate among women, by the corresponding rate for men. The labor force participation rate is defined as the proportion of the population ages 15+ that is economically active. All figures correspond to 'modeled ILO estimates' (See source



Source: World Bank

GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS

Genetically modified brinjal illegally cultivated in Haryana

About:

- Genetically modified (GM) brinjal is being illegally grown in the **Fatehabad district of Haryana**, according to anti-GM activists. They demanded that the Central and the State regulatory agencies immediately take action to stop the cultivation, investigate the spread of the illegal variety and destroy all such crops, seeds and saplings as **dangerous biohazards** are entering the food chain.



Genetically Modified Crops:

- “Genetic modification” or “genetically modified” short for GM involves altering the genes of an organism, be it a **plant, animal or microorganism**.
- This can be done by:**
 - altering an existing section of DNA, or
 - inserting a gene from another organism.
- When a scientist performs genetic modification to a plant, they insert a foreign gene (called transgene) in the plant's own genes. This could be introduced from:
 - one plant to another plant,
 - from a plant to an animal, or
 - from a microorganism to a plant.
- An organism that undergoes genetic engineering is considered to be a Genetically Modified Organism (GMO).
- Genetic engineering can be applied to any organism, **from a virus to a sheep**.
- Bacteria and GM mice were the **first GMOs** generated in 1973 and 1974 respectively.
- In 1982, insulin-producing bacteria were the first to be commercialized and genetically modified food has been sold since 1994.

Altering Genes:

- Apart from genetic modification, there are other ways to alter genes.
- Chemicals, radiation, spontaneous changes and traditional processing can also alter the characteristics of an organism without targeting a specific gene.
- Spontaneous alterations most of the time have little-to-no effect on the genes and takes place naturally and is non-specific.
- It is not a reliable method if the intention is to bring about changes in specific gene.
- It can lead to the development of both positive as well as negative characteristics.

How does Genetic Modification Work?

DNA Extraction

- An organism carrying the desired trait is identified.
- The specific gene responsible for the desired trait is located and cut out of the plant's DNA.

Gene Cloning

- The gene needs to be attached to the carrier to get the **desired gene** into the cells of the plant being modified.
 - A bacterial piece of DNA called the **'plasmid'** is joined to the gene to act as a carrier.
- To ensure that the gene works properly when it is put into the modified gene, a type of switch called a **'promoter'** is also combined with the gene and the carrier.
 - Often, the carrier package also includes a **'selectable marker gene'** to identify the **'transformants'**, i.e. the plant cells that have taken up the new gene against the non-transformants.

Transformation:

- After transformants are picked, they've to be inserted into the bacterium/a proper host that'll generate multiple copies of the gene package.
- For modification of plants, the gene packages are transferred in either of two ways:
 - By attaching the gene packages to tiny particles of gold or tungsten and bombard them at high speed into the plant tissue. Gold or tungsten is preferred over others as they're chemically inert, that is, they aren't reactive with their surroundings.

- ♦ Another way is by using **Agrobacterium tumefaciens**, a soil bacterium used to infect the plant tissue with the desired gene.

Adoption of Biotech Crops across the World:

- Top **five biotech crop growing countries**, in decreasing order of the area under biotech crops, are USA, Brazil, Argentina, Canada, and India.
 - ♦ These top five countries (**USA, Brazil, Argentina, Canada and India**) planted 91.3% of the global biotech crop area of 189.8 million hectares.
- The four major biotech crops – **soybeans, maize, cotton, and canola** – in decreasing area, were the most adopted biotech crops.
- **Biotech crops can contribute to food security, sustainability and climate change by:**
 - ♦ increasing crop productivity.
 - ♦ conserving biodiversity by saving millions of hectares of land and by reducing the use of chemicals.
 - ♦ reducing CO₂ emissions.
 - ♦ helping alleviate poverty through uplifting the economic situation.
- Crops can be genetically modified to contain additional nutrients that are lacking from the diets of many people in developing countries. One example is Golden Rice, which has been modified to have enhanced levels of β-carotene, in order to help to prevent vitamin A deficiency.
- Plants could be genetically modified to produce vaccines or other medicines. Potatoes have been modified to produce edible vaccines against E. coli bacteria which cause diarrhoea.
- Crops that can withstand environmental stresses can be produced.

GM Crops in India:

- The approval of any new genetically modified crop is given on a case to case basis after thorough scientific evaluation of health and environment safety as per applicable guidelines made under **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986** and Rules, 1989.
- Top five biotech crop growing States in India, in decreasing order of the area under biotech crops, are Maharashtra, Gujarat, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Haryana.

Bt Cotton:

- Bt cotton is an insect-resistant transgenic crop designed to combat the bollworm. Bt cotton was created by genetically altering the cotton genome to express a microbial protein from the bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis*.
- Bt cotton occupies greater than 95% of India's cotton acreage.

- While Bt cotton wholly dominates India's GM crop acreage – this is not the case with major countries.
 - ♦ For example, Brazil has millions of hectares under crops such as soybean, maize and cotton.
 - ♦ Bt. cotton is the only GM crop approved for commercial cultivation in the Country.

GM Mustard:

- Transgenic mustard, which was recently in the news, has been developed by the University of Delhi's Centre for Genetic Manipulation of Crop Plants (CGMCP).
- If approved GM mustard would be the first transgenic food crop to be allowed for commercial cultivation in India.
- Bt cotton that was modified to produce an insecticide that could kill any invading pest, that's not the case with GM mustard **wherein modification has been effected to simplify the breeding process.**
- It uses a system of genes from soil bacterium that makes mustard –a self-pollinating plant, to better adapt it to hybridization than the current Indian gene pool.

Bt Brinjal:

- Brinjal has been **genetically modified by inserting a protein gene from the soil bacterium** *Bacillus thuringiensis* to give **protection against certain pests, especially the fruit and shoot borer (FSB).**
 - ♦ Brinjal is prone to attack from insect pests and diseases, the most serious and destructive of which is the fruit and shoot borer (FSB) *Leucinodes orbonalis*.
- FSB feeds predominantly on brinjal and is prevalent in all brinjal producing states.
- Bt brinjal has been developed in India by Maharashtra-based seed company Mahyco.
- It **was on the verge of becoming India's first GM food crop**, when the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) cleared it for commercialisation in 2009, before doubts about the long-term impact on consumer health and plant biodiversity led then-Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh to slap an indefinite moratorium on the crop.
- If found safe, GM mustard has much to offer. India is hugely deficient in edible oils; over 60 per cent of its requirement is imported. It is claimed that GM mustard has yields that are 25-30 per cent higher than the best current varieties, which will help close the demand-supply gap.

Brinjal:

- India is the second largest producer of Brinjal after China.
- Brinjal, being a hardy crop that yields well even under drought conditions, is grown in almost all parts of the country.

- Major brinjal producing states include: West Bengal (30% production share), Orissa (20%), Gujarat and Bihar (around 10% each).
- **'Matti or Mattu Gulla' from Karnataka** has been awarded a geographical indication (GI) tag. **It is a type of brinjal, rich in iron.**

Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC):

- It is the biotech regulator in India under the **Ministry of Environment and Forests.**
- The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) decides on field-trial approvals for the genetic crops in India.
- The committee or any persons authorized by it has powers to take punitive action under the **Environment Protection Act.**

The following are among the reasons hindering the successful implementation of genetically modified (GM) food crops in India:

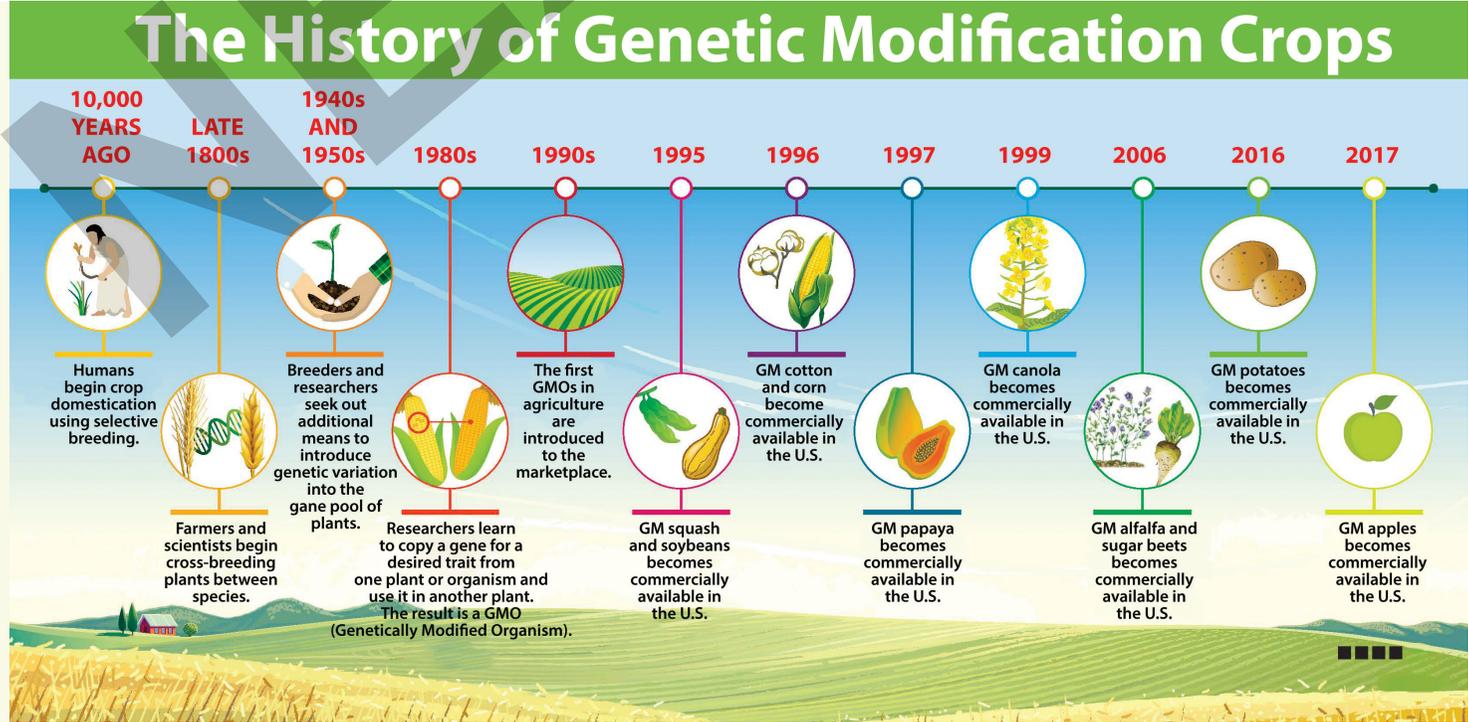
- The first is an **ideological opposition** to tweaking the genetic makeup of crop plants, especially through the introduction of alien genes. The expressed fear is that this would adversely affect biodiversity as well as human and animal health.
- The **second** – and more valid – ground for opposing GM mustard is the **opaque functioning of the GEAC.** Neither the records of its meetings nor data concerning safety trials of GM seeds have been made public. Transparency is crucial for public and scientific confidence in the GEAC's decision-making process.
- Besides, there is a lack of trust in the industry that promotes and benefits from GM technologies. For eg, the safety tests for regulatory approvals are typically conducted by the same party that applies for commercialisation of GM crops in India.
- Fourthly, scientific uncertainty is also delaying the decision making – i.e. the govt is applying the Precautionary Principle.

Way Forward:

- GM crops have never been a purely scientific issue. They are situated at a socioeconomic and political nexus, and involve understandable fears about long-term human and environment safety, market monopolies in seeds and food sovereignty.
- If the government wants to lay ground for a measured, tested introduction of GM crops, it can start with transparency by putting biosafety data in the public domain.
- It is high time that the process of putting in place such an autonomous regulator, insulated against pulls and pressures, was taken forward. Otherwise, controversies over approval of biotechnology products will recur.
- Taking up the proposed Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India Bill again is a must.
- So is resolving IPR issues that have again reared up with the Andhra Pradesh government seeking compulsory licensing or revocation of the Bt cotton technology patent in its struggle with Monsanto in recent years. Such interventions create regulatory uncertainty and deter the entry of competitors that could check monopolistic conditions.

CRISPR/Cas9

- CRISPR/Cas9 is a simple but powerful gene-editing technology that can be harnessed to precisely modify, delete or correct disease-causing abnormalities at their genetic sources.
- CRISPR refers to Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats of genetic information, which some bacterial species use as an antiviral mechanism in combination with the Cas9 enzyme.
- Cas9 – a CRISPR-Associated endonuclease – acts as “molecular scissors” to cut DNA at a specific location.





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

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA (ECI) & NEED FOR ELECTORAL REFORMS

The 7th Phase of 17th Lok Sabha elections is going on in full swing across India from April to May, with **23 May 2019 for declaration of results**. The world's largest democracy – India has many unique features: More than 50 parties are contesting these elections including regional parties. There is 900 million eligible voters, the largest-ever election in the world with 15 million voters in the age group of 18–19 years eligible to vote for the first time. There are 38,325 transgender individuals voting for the first time as members of the third-sex and 71,735 overseas voters enrolled.

Democracy Index shows India a Flawed Democracy:

It is interesting to note how the quality of Indian elections is rated by the **Democracy Index compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)**, a UK-based company. The index is designed to compare government in 167 countries based on 60 indicators arranged in five broad categories; viz. electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation, and political culture. There are four regimes - full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes and authoritarian regimes.

India falls in the group of flawed democracies with rank 41.

The significant issues for determination of the overall score to classify a country include free and fair national elections, the voter's security, the influence of external powers on government, and the competence of the bureaucrats to implement policies. Flawed democracies, where India is included, there is **free and fair elections** with basic civil liberties but may have **constraints like freedom of media, underdeveloped political culture, low levels of participation in politics and governance**.

The questions coming to the forefront are: **What is the role of the Election Commission (EC)?** How does EC conduct free and fair elections? What steps have been taken by EC for conducting free and fair elections? What are the constraints EC faces in ensuring free and fair elections? Why is it important to have electoral reforms in the world's largest democracy?

The Constitutional Mandate of EC:

EC is an autonomous constitutional body mandated to administer the entire election processes in India and ensure the conduct of free and fair elections in the country. EC is responsible for conducting elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, state Legislative Councils, and the

offices of the President and Vice President of the country as per Article 324 of the Constitution of India and the Representation of the People Act, 1950. EC is provided functional autonomy and independence like other important constitutional institutions like the higher judiciary, the Union Public Service Commission and the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

EC was established in 1950 with a Chief Election Commissioner to begin with and 2 more Commissioners as members to EC were added to make EC a three-member body on 16 October 1989. The Election Commissioner Amendment Act, 1989 superseded the earlier EC. Decisions are taken by EC by majority vote. The Chief Election Commissioner and the two Election Commissioners are usually appointed from the retired civil service officers mostly IAS officers. They draw salaries and allowances at par with Judges of the Supreme Court of India in accordance with the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Conditions of Service) Rules, 1992.

The commission secretariat is located in New Delhi. The Chief Electoral Officer of a state administers the concerned state. At the district and constituency levels, the District Magistrates function as District Election Officers, Electoral Registration Officers and Returning Officers and perform election work. The service of the Chief Election Commissioner of India is safeguarded by the Constitution of India as CEC can be removed from office as in case of a judge of the Supreme Court of India: a two-thirds majority resolution passed by the Parliament of India (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha) stating the grounds. However, there is no constitutional protection for other two Election Commissioners as they can be removed by the President of India on the advice of CEC.

Modernisation of the Electoral Process:

The vibrancy of Indian democracy is reflected in holding regular free and fair elections. EC initiated many measures to improve the electoral process. In 1971 before the 5th Lok Sabha elections, EC announced a Model Code of Conduct providing guidelines to be adhered to by political parties and candidates. The code has no specific statutory basis. It acts as guidelines for ensuring electoral morality. Instances of violation of the code by various political parties have been received frequently. EC has the power to designate political party emblem. It prohibits the same insignia by two different parties.

EC controls poll expenses. It appoints **Election Observers (Expenditure)** for all elections and fixes limits on candidate's expenditure. EC obtains the details of the candidate's assets on affidavit at the time of submitting nomination paper, details of election expenditure within 30 days of the declaration of results. It maintains the electoral rolls and announces schedules of elections. EC prohibits dissemination or publication of any matter seeking to influence voters like opinion polls or exit polls. EC reduces the campaign period from 21 to 14 days for Lok Sabha and Assembly elections to cut down election expenditure.

The Commission approached the Supreme Court to put a lifetime ban on convicted politicians from contesting elections. EC introduced **Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)** in all elections and launched its web site to provide prompt information relating to election and results. In 1993, it introduced Electors Photo Identity Cards and made mandatory by the 2004 elections. In 1998, EC went for computerisation of the electoral rolls and made **Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)** mandatory in eight Lok Sabha constituencies in 2014 onwards. In 2014, **NOTA or None of the above** was added as an option on the voting machines. EC came under severe criticism about its ill-preparedness to safeguard electors with disabilities in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections.

EVMs are used for 2019 voting with a voter-verified paper audit trail (VVPAT) system in all 543 Lok Sabha constituencies. It organised an open hackathon in 2017, to attempt hacking of EVM used by the commission in various Indian elections and demonstrated how EVMs are foolproof. The opposition parties accuse EC as being partisan compromising its own model code of conduct violations by PM Modi and the ruling BJP party during 2019 election campaign. The EC banned the release of exit polls from 11 April to 19 May, the last phase of the elections and predictions made by astrologers and tarot card readers.

Need for more Electoral Reforms:

Need for electoral reforms has been felt since 1952 after the very first election ended. First, the elections have become very expensive for the country's exchequer and to the political parties. Second, a comparison of audited income with projected spending of political parties in the election established the significant role of unaccounted money to meet election expenses. Despite all restrictions, all political parties tend to spend a huge amount of black money to meet election expenses.

The influence of money in elections has been commented by expert committees from the 1960s. Spending 'Speed money' to get things done has been growing over the years. 'Parallel economy' facilitates mostly unsuitable candidates to win elections. Way back in **1964, the Santhanam Committee** recommended setting up of a Central Vigilance Commission

(CVC) as the apex body to address governmental corruption. The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) Act was enacted in 2003 after 39 years. The Finance Bill 2017 dealt political party funding to some extent. In 1970 the Wanchoo committee reported that elections are financed greatly by wealthy persons with black money and donations by companies to political parties. 1990 the Dinesh Goswami committee commented on the role of money, muscle power and criminalisation of politics in elections.

In 1993, the government appointed Vohra committee to examine the mafia links with government functionaries and political personalities. The report recommended the setting up of a Nodal Cell for sharing information collected by government regulatory bodies such as the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Research And Analysis Wing (R&AW), Intelligence Bureau (IB), Central Board of Excise & Customs (CBEC), Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), Central Economic Intelligence Bureau (CEIB), Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) instead of working in isolation and not in an integrated way to curb corruption. RTI Act failed to elicit significant information as the government refused to part with sensitive information stating it as "secret". The Supreme Court in its judgement in 1997 in the case of the **murder of Naina Sahni** observed that criminals 'have developed an extensive network of contacts with bureaucrats, government functionaries at lower levels, politicians, media personalities, strategically located persons in the non-governmental sector and members of the judiciary'.

The Representation of People Act (RPA) 1951 & the Companies Act, 2013:

The Representation of the People Act (RPA) of 1951 provides with the rules for the conduct of elections to the Houses of Parliament and State Legislatures. The Act has been amended from time to time to reflect changing circumstances. The political funding issue has been addressed by making changes in the Company Law, the Income Tax Law, and Supreme Court orders. The Anti-Defection Law was passed in 1985 vide 52nd Amendment to the Constitution to combat political defections. In 1994, the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court to implement the recommendations of the Law Commission's 170th report for debarring candidates from contesting elections if charges have been framed against him/her by a Court in respect of certain offences. Candidates are required to provide information regarding criminal cases against them and true and correct statement of assets owned by them.

In 2015, ADR filed a PIL for the constitution of an independent body to administer the enforcement of **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (FCRA)**. The Central Information Commission

(CIC) in 2008 insisted that tax filings of political parties as per the Right to Information Act 2005. In 2013, the CIC ruled that political parties come within the ambit of the Right to Information Act and the Companies Act. The Companies (Amendment) Act, 1985 permitted companies to make political contributions up to 5% of the average net profit of the last three years. The cap was increased to 7.5% in 2013. CII recommended that corporate contribution must be made tax-deductible and state funding of elections.

The limit for election expenditure has been revised from time to time. A study by ADR indicated that the average election expenditure was 49% of the limit imposed by EC showing that these limits have no practical value because of the role of unaccounted money in election campaigns in several innovative and clandestine modus operandi. The income Tax exemption was allowed when audited accounts were maintained and the party maintains a record of the names and addresses of all contributors donating Rs. 20,000 or above.

There must be legitimate ways for political parties for sourcing funds to meet election expenditure. Ideally, voters must have essential information on political activities' finance before casting their votes. Effective monitoring of election funding is a must. An appropriate method must be devised for that. Most importantly, there should be the rigorous implementation of existing laws to prosecute and disqualify politicians breaking the law on time.

Electoral reforms can contribute towards better electoral practices by mitigating corruption, the evil influence of 3Ms in elections and thereby strengthen democracy in India. The root cause of corruption must be addressed by effective electoral reforms rather than concentrating on mere symptoms of corruption. Apart from the strict implementation of existing laws, proactive judiciary, it is important to have vigilant civil society and common people' involvement to root out multifarious innovative and clandestine corruption practices in elections. The growing influence of 3Ms, money, muscle/mafia and media including the electronic, internet and social media in the electoral process in India is the grandmother of all corruptions in the country.

Need for the Constitutional Amendment and the People's Representation Act, 1951:

Indian democracy succeeded despite odds since independence. India conducted regular elections with the largest number of voters in the world. EC has been striving hard to keep the election free and fair. EC has been writing to the government for electoral reforms. The Parliament, the central government, the Judiciary, the media are seized of the issue. Maintaining transparency in the election process is a Herculean task in

the largest democracy in the world with many inherent issues, constraints and complexities. The lacunae in the law need to be addressed. Electoral reforms are inevitable for making India a fully functional, vibrant democracy to represent truly the majority of the people of India to fulfil their growing aspirations. Appropriate changes in the People's Representation Act, 1951 and its effective enforcement are indispensable to address innumerable flaws in the electoral process.

EC suggested many reforms in the Constitution of India and the Representation of the People Act, 1950 to enable EC to improve its functioning. There are a few amendments needed for empowering EC. The Constitution of India needs to be amended to provide constitutional protection to the other two members of EC as in the case of CEC. It is important to make the budget of EC under the 'charged' expenditure like other constitutional bodies like the Supreme Court, UPSC and CAG of India. Need to establish an independent Secretariat for the Commission is a justifiable demand to exercise full control over all the functionaries of EC.

Some significant issues like de-Criminalization of politics, misuse of religion for electoral gain, making bribery in elections a cognizable offence, registration and de-registration of political parties, tax relief for political parties under the Income Tax Act, enforcing proper maintenance of audited accounts by political parties, prohibition of anonymous donations, maintenance of separate bank accounts by each contesting candidate for poll expenses, enforcing cap on expenditure by political party on a candidate for election campaign, ceiling of campaign expenditure by political parties, limit the number of star campaigners, advertisements, ban on exit polls and opinion polls, government-sponsored advertisement before elections, paid news in connection with elections, appointment of additional judges in the High Courts for settlement of election disputes expeditiously.

What is the Way Forward?

The people of India are eagerly waiting for the results of the election, which will decide the political destiny of the country until the next election. Once the new government takes over, EC may approach the new government to carry out much needed electoral reforms to make Indian democracy not only the largest democracy taking into account the number of eligible voters and the magnitude of the electoral process, but also a vibrant quality democracy where the people of India would be able to choose candidates of honesty, integrity and unblemished track record in serving the people and thereby the aspirations of the majority of the people are translated into good governance.

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GENERAL ELECTIONS 2019

The BJP-led NDA government became the only non-Congress government to return to power in the Indian political history after a historic win in the 17th Lok Sabha elections.

About:

- The NDA surpassed its last tally of 336 to achieve a super-sized number of 350 seats, out of the total 542 Lok Sabha seats.
- BJP itself won 303 seats across the country.

17th Lok Sabha Elections:

- The 2019 Indian general election was **held in seven phases** from 11th April to 19th May 2019 to constitute the 17th Lok Sabha.
- The counting of votes took place on 23rd May, and on the same day the results were declared.
- About **900 million Indian citizens were eligible** to vote in one of the seven phases depending on the region.

Voter Profile in General Election 2019		
	Group	Voter Population
1	Male	468 million
2	Female	432 million
3	Third Gender	38,325
	Total	900 million

- The 2019 elections attracted a **turnout of over 67%** – the **highest ever in the history of Indian general elections**, as well as the highest recorded participation in Indian elections by **women**.
- The **highest turnout** was recorded in **Lakshadweep** at 84.96% whereas the **lowest turnout** was in **J&K** at 29.39%.
- Legislative Assembly elections in the states of **Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim** were held simultaneously with the general election.

Some Trends from the 17th Lok Sabha Elections:

- The Bharatiya Janata Party garnered 37.4% of the votes in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.
- This is the highest vote share received by the party nationwide in any Lok Sabha election since the party was (re) formed in 1980.
- After **Jawaharlal Nehru** and **Indira Gandhi**, **Narendra Modi** also became the **third prime minister of India** who **retained power for a second term** with full majority in Lok Sabha.

Major Factors which Shaped the Election Result:

- **Leadership:** The BJP remodelled Brand Modi from a development-oriented leader from Gujarat to a leader of

international stature. It was repeatedly stated that India's international standing has risen since PM Modi took over in 2014. However, the opposition did not have a credible leadership of similar stature.

- **Organisational strength:** The BJP formed **small teams of four to five workers** in areas covered by **every single booth** in all the Lok Sabha constituencies giving it **last mile connectivity**. However, opposition failed to revive its organisational structure.
- **Welfare schemes:** The BJP government claims to have built more than 9 crore toilets for the poor of the country through the **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan** and provided free LPG connection to the families having no access to cooking gas under the **PM Ujjwala Yojana**. These two schemes together benefited directly or indirectly more than 25 crores of India's 90 crore voters. In contrast, **NYAY scheme** of Congress came too late and was inadequately highlighted.
- **National narrative:** Before the Pulwama attack, the **Rafale deal**, 45-year-high **unemployment rate** and **farm distress** seemed to be building election narrative. **Balakot air strike** worked in favour of the Modi government, which built on its nationalistic narrative and connected it with the pride of the Indian nation. Opposition failed to counter this narrative.
- **Divided opposition:** Opposition could not even unite for tactical reasons for defeating BJP. Though some alliance were forged, such as SP-BSP in Uttar Pradesh, it was simply not enough to contain the BJP.
- **Negative politics of opposition:** The negative politics of opposition also led to its defeat. Instead of presenting their own plan, they focussed on personal attack on PM Modi.

Way Forward:

- This result is being viewed as an **endorsement of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's persona**.
- BJP certainly got some things wrong in the last five years but it got one central aspect of a changing India right: the **new age Indian voter is an aspirational one**, she wants a confident leadership to represent an increasingly confident and self-assured nation.
- BJP's dramatic victory is also a **mandate for business-friendly policies** and **tougher national security stance**.
- At the same time, **gaining the trust of all citizens** will be a necessary prerequisite for the government to drive India's continuing journey to become a global leader.

JUDICIARY AND RTI

If the higher judiciary is brought under RTI, the ordinary citizen would be empowered to seek details of judicial appointments and transfers, which may open a judicial Pandora's Box.

About:

- The **basic objective of the Right to Information Act** is to empower the citizens, promote transparency and accountability in the working of the Government, and contain corruption.
- The Supreme Court has lauded the role of the Right to Information (RTI) Act as an **"integral part of any vibrant democracy."**
- But the apex court itself has refused to come under the ambit of the information transparency law for the past one decade.
- The court has firmly resisted back-to-back decisions of the **Central Information Commission (CIC)** and the Delhi High Court to open up to the RTI regime as far as **the issues of Collegium and judicial appointments** are concerned.
- In fact, the appeal filed by the Supreme Court against public disclosure under RTI has been pending in the SC since 2010.

RTI and Supreme Court Rules:

- Petitions seeking information from the court under RTI are asked to be applied under the SC Rules.
- Although the courts were included in the definition of public authorities under **Section 2(h) of the RTI Act**, most of the High Courts did not even appoint **Public Information Officers (PIOs)** even months after this act came into force.
- Though SC claims that SC Rules are consistent with RTI, there are several ways in which SC Rules undermine the RTI. Unlike the RTI Act, the SC Rules do not provide for:
 - ♦ A **time frame** for furnishing information
 - ♦ An **appeal mechanism**
 - ♦ **Penalties for delays** or wrongful refusal of information
 - ♦ Makes **disclosures to citizens contingent** upon 'good-cause' shown
- This shows that the SC Rules allow the judiciary to provide information at its own questionable discretion, violating the letter and spirit of the RTI.

Arguments for Exclusion of Judiciary from RTI:

- It **may compromise secrecy and security** involved in certain cases.
- Disclosure of highly sensitive communication under RTI **will risk the very existence** of the judicial way of functioning.
- It **may compromise independence of judiciary** as specified by the Constitution and may lead to politicization of judiciary.
- It **may create extra burden on judiciary** and **lead to further delays** in judicial appointments and transfers as an over cautious approach may be adopted to avoid conflicts.

- The dissemination of information under SC Rules is part of judicial function, excise of which cannot be taken by any law. SCR have been framed under **Article 145** of the Constitution and they provide for regulating the practice and procedure established by law.
- If the RTI was to be applied to the **collegium**, its member judges would not be able to sit back and have a free and frank discussion for fear that their confidential views may later come into the public domain.
- Even **disclosure of personal assets of judges** under RTI was an "unwarranted intrusion" into their privacy.
- The right to know is part of the right to free speech. However, the right to free speech is subject to reasonable restrictions.
- A large number of requests under the RTI Act asked for 'frivolous' and 'unnecessary' details, which may derail the functioning of judiciary.

Arguments in Favour of including Judiciary under RTI:

- It will increase the amount of **transparency in judiciary** in case of appointment of judges. This is likely to reduce the practice of nepotism and despotism as criticized to be practiced in judiciary.
- The public has a **right to know** why a certain person was appointed or rejected as a judge or the reason to transfer or not transfer a judge.
- RTI may help place yardstick among judiciary for **timely disposal of justice**.
- It will increase **accountability of judiciary** as judges can be held accountable for their decisions.
- It will **increase the faith of people** in judiciary as they would become more familiar with the functioning of the judiciary. This would facilitate rule of law.

Way Forward:

- The Supreme Court collegium seems to have finally given in to the mounting pressure for ensuring transparency in the process of appointment and transfer of Judges.
- For the first time ever, the **Collegium** has decided to place its **decisions in the public domain**.
- After the **NJAC judgment**, various High Court and Supreme Court Judges have also started to declare their assets voluntarily.
- In the **Raj Narain versus Indira Gandhi case**, the SC had itself laid down the **foundation of RTI** in India. It held that the people of the country have right to know about every public act.



ESCALATION OF LIBYAN CRISIS

The Libyan tragedy, like those in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and in Afghanistan, illustrates limitations of the interventionist policies of the West.

About:

- Libyan National Army, led by Field Marshal **Khalifa Haftar**, has launched a surprise offensive in the country.
- Haftar forces had launched airstrikes targeting rival militias on the **outskirts of Tripoli**.
- Thousands are fleeing towards **Tunisia**, and at least 205 people have been killed in the battle for the control of Tripoli, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).
- **India evacuated an entire contingent of Central Reserve Police Forces (CRPF)** personnel from the region as the situation in Tripoli has worsened.
- External Affairs Minister of India urged Indians living in the capital Tripoli to leave the war-ravaged country immediately.
- The foreign minister further informed that **500 Indian nationals continue to be in the Libyan capital despite the travel ban** to the North African country.

Who is General Haftar?

- Khalifa Haftar is the **most prominent warlord** who launched an advance towards the Libyan capital on April 4 in order to capture power from the **Government of National Accord (GNA)** which is recognised by the United Nations.
- Gen. Haftar had **helped Muammar Qaddafi seize power** in 1969 before going into exile in the U.S. in the 1980s, but returned to Libya in 2011 to join in Qaddafi's overthrow.
- He has the backing of **Egypt, Saudi Arabia and some West Asian states**, apart from **Russia** (openly) and **France** (covertly).

What has led to the recent Crisis of Libya?

- **Power vacuum:** In the wake of Gaddafi's ouster, dozens of militias led by multiple war-lords sought to occupy the power vacuum left behind by Gaddafi's death. As a result, Libya turned into a war zone.
- **Failure of R2P:** This is also seen as failure of western initiatives such as **humanitarian intervention** and **Responsibility to Protect (R2P)**.
- **Mistrust of the U.N backed government:** General Haftar accuses the UN-recognised government to be sympathetic for the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist umbrella organisation that has been associated with globally recognised terrorist organisations.

Responsibility to Protect Doctrine (R2P)

- R2P doctrine obligates individual states and the international community to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.
- R2P, as it's commonly known, is a set of principles based on the idea that **sovereignty is not a privilege**, but a responsibility.
- R2P was universally endorsed at the **2005 World Summit** and then re-affirmed in 2006 by the U.N.
- **International support to Haftar:** Haftar has been able to challenge GNA because foreign powers reportedly support him in some capacity. These countries include Russia, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Both the United States and Russia said they were presently not ready to support a UN Security Council resolution that demands for a ceasefire in Libya.
- **Poor capacity of the U.N. backed government:** The U.N. backed government called the **Government of National Accord (GNA)** commands no security forces, public administration scarcely exists, water, petrol and power shortages abound, and few banks operate.

Impact of the Libyan Crisis:

- **Implosion of Libyan society:** The collapse of the state undermined the social contract Qaddafi built over the years.
- **Migration:** The oil-rich country, now a departure point for thousands of migrants travelling to Europe, once had one of Africa's highest standards of living, free health care and education, with high female literacy and percentage of women in the workplace.
- **Crisis in Mali:** Qaddafi had ethnic Tuaregs from Mali in his forces. When the leader fell, they fled to Mali and launched a full-blown rebellion against the government. This rebellion morphed into a powerful **Islamist insurgency as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb**.
- **Strengthened Islamic State:** The crisis in Libya had also strengthened the operations of the Islamic State in the region.

Way Ahead:

- Crisis can't be resolved if outside powers take sides in the ongoing civil war between the two competing governments.
- Instead, **the West** and their Gulf allies should use their influence over their allies in Libya to **facilitate real meaningful talks** and **disarm private militias**.



COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN TREATY

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) invites India to be an observer at meetings.

About:

- CTBTO has invited India to become an "Observer" with access to International Monitoring System data.
- Owing to its multiple reservations with the treaty, India has till date not signed CTBT.
- As per CTBTO, this move will provide India opportunity to make an informed decision on ratifying much-debated CTBT.

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

- It is a global treaty that aims to ban all nuclear explosions, for both civilian and military purposes, in all environments.
- **Achievement:** Validating its efforts, the number of nuclear test around the world has reduced to 10 after it opened for signature in 1996, from over 2,000 such nuclear tests between 1945 and 1996.
- **Reason for not being in force:** A procedural requirement of all 44 specific States (States that had nuclear facilities at the time of negotiation and adoption of the treaty) signing and ratifying the Treaty is still pending.
- **States that have not ratified:** China, Egypt, Iran, Israel, and the United States.
- **States that have not even signed:** India, North Korea and Pakistan.
- Upon entering into force, **it will provide a legally binding norm against nuclear testing.**
- **CTBTO:** It was founded in 1996 to support CTBT enter into force. It constantly monitors the planet through its verification regime for nuclear explosions and shares its findings with Member States. The CTBT verification includes
 - ◆ International Monitoring System (IMS),
 - ◆ International Data Centre (IDC)
 - ◆ On-site inspections (OSI).

India's Reservations with CTBT:

- **Discrimination:** India has alleged CTBT to be discriminatory as it favours five nuclear weapon states (the United States, United Kingdom, China, France and Russia) when it comes to fulfilling obligations for eliminating nuclear weapons.
- **Complete disarmament clause:** India emphasized on CTBT having a clause on complete nuclear disarmament in a time-bound manner because there are technological differences between the 'have' and 'have not' countries.

- India is concerned about the likelihood of those already possessing nuclear weapons upgrading their arsenals through sub-critical and laboratory simulated testing.
- **Entry-into-force (EIF) clause:** It requires the signature and ratification of all 44 countries listed as nuclear technology capable. India considers it as a violation of its right to voluntarily withhold participation in an international treaty.
- **Security concerns:** As party to the CTBT, India would be waiving the possibility of testing and developing its own nuclear weapons whereas China would be able to retain its arsenal as per the NPT. This brings uncertain dangers, especially among the deepening relations between China and Pakistan.

Advantages of being an Observer:

- **Help in decision-making:** It will allow India to attend CTBTO meeting, observe how the organization works, and accordingly use the time to make a better informed decision.
- **Access to information:** The CTBTO runs the International Monitoring System (IMS), which can detect nuclear tests anywhere across the world. Being an observer, India would get access to data from the IMS. When complete,
 - ◆ IMS will consist of 337 facilities (321 monitoring stations and 16 radionuclide labs) located in 89 countries.
 - ◆ It can detect even small nuclear explosions using seismology, hydroacoustics, infrasound and radionuclide technology.
 - ◆ The IMS also helps in warning of earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic ash, and identifies plane crash sites.

Difference between Signing and Ratification of Treaty

Signature to a Treaty

- It indicates that the country accepts the treaty.
- Country commits to not take any actions that would undermine the treaty's vision.
- A treaty is signed by a senior representative of a country such as the President or the foreign minister.

Ratification of a Treaty

- It involves the treaty's adoption by the legislature of a country such as the parliament.
- Adjustments are made in a country's legislation, to make it legally binding for the government of a country.
- It also includes the submission of the so-called instrument of ratification to the treaty's depository.
- Only then is the process of ratification officially concluded.

BEPICOLOMBO

European Space Agency's first mission to Mercury is being conducted in cooperation with Japan

About:

- BepiColombo started its **seven-year long journey** to the solar system's innermost planet in October 2018, lifting off on an Ariane 5 rocket from **Europe's spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana**.
- When it will arrive at Mercury in late 2025, it will endure temperatures in excess of 350 °C and gather data during its 1-year nominal mission, with a possible 1-year extension.

Previous Missions to Mercury:

- Mercury is a **poorly explored planet**. So far, only two spacecrafts have visited the planet:
 - ♦ **NASA's Mariner 10**, which flew past three times in 1974–5 and returned the **first close-up images of the planet**, and
 - ♦ **NASA's MESSENGER spacecraft**, which performed three flybys (two in 2008 and one in 2009) before entering orbit around the planet in March 2011.
- Mariner 10 was not only the first mission to visit Mercury, but also the first to use the gravity of one planet to reach another—a manoeuvre known as a **gravity assist or gravitational slingshot**.

Objectives of Bepicolombo:

- Investigate the origin and evolution of a planet close to the parent star;
- **Study Mercury as a planet:** Its form, interior structure, geology, composition and craters;
- Examine Mercury's vestigial atmosphere (exosphere): its composition and dynamics;
- Probe Mercury's magnetized envelope (magnetosphere): its structure and dynamics;
- Determine the origin of Mercury's magnetic field;
- Investigate polar deposits: their composition and origin;
- Why do **spectroscopic observations not reveal the presence of any iron**, while this element is supposedly the major constituent of Mercury?
- In **the absence of any ionosphere**, how does the magnetic field interact with the solar wind?
- Perform a test of Einstein's theory of general relativity.

Mercury's Magnetic Field Mystery:

- One of the objectives of the Mission is to find out **why does such a small planet possess an intrinsic magnetic field**, while Venus, Mars and the Moon do not have any!

- As Mercury is so small, scientists expected the planet's iron core to have cooled down and solidified billions of years ago, abruptly halting the churning motions of any core dynamo that would drive a magnetic field.
- However, Mariner 10 detected a substantial magnetic dipole similar to that of Earth.

Composition of BepiColombo

- The ESA-built Mercury Transfer Module (MTM) will carry the orbiters to Mercury using a combination of **solar electric propulsion and gravity assist flybys** — one of Earth, two at Venus, and six at Mercury.
- After reaching Mercury, **two separate spacecrafts** will orbit the planet.
- **Mercury Planetary Orbiter (MPO)**, built by European Space Agency (ESA), will study the surface and internal composition of the planet.
- **Mercury Magnetospheric Orbiter (MMO)**, built by Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), will study Mercury's magnetosphere, that is, the region of space around the planet that is influenced by its magnetic field.

Some Facts about Mercury:

- Mercury is the **smallest planet (in increasing order of radius: Mercury < Mars < Venus < Earth)** in our solar system. It's just a little bigger than Earth's moon.
- It is the **closest planet** to the sun, but it's **actually not the hottest. Venus is much hotter**.
- Along with Venus, Earth, and Mars, **Mercury is one of the rocky planets**. It has a solid surface that is covered with craters.
- It **has a thin atmosphere**, and it **doesn't have any moons**.
- A Day on mercury is long. Mercury takes 59 Earth days to make one full rotation.
- A year on Mercury goes by fast.
 - ♦ Because it's the closest planet to the sun, it doesn't take very long to go all the way around.
 - ♦ It completes one revolution around the sun in just 88 Earth days.
- The Sun appears two and a half times larger than on Earth; however, the sky is always black because Mercury has virtually no atmosphere to cause scattering of light.
- Unlike the Moon which is tidally locked to Earth, Mercury is **not tidally locked to the Sun**.
 - ♦ Mercury rotates one and a half times during each orbit.



MMR: RECENT DECLINE, STILL A LONG WAY TO GO

India has reduced maternal mortality rate, but still behind the SDG target.

About:

- According to the sample registration system (SRS) data released in 2018 by the Office of Registrar General of India, MMR, declined to **130 in 2014-16 from 167 in 2011-13**.
- The government attributed this improvement mainly to **rise in institutional deliveries** across the country.

What is MMR?

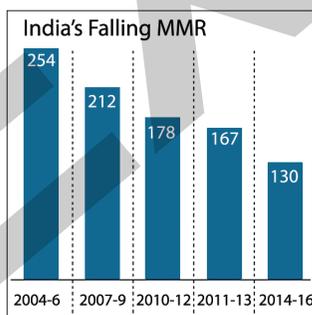
- The Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) is defined as the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.
- Maternal mortality is defined as the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy.

Current status:

- **SDG 3.1:** By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births.
- According to World Bank figures for 2015, India's MMR is better than some of its neighbours – Pakistan (178), Bangladesh (176) and Nepal (258) – and the global (216) and South Asian average (182).

Regional Variation:

- The decline has been most significant in **Empowered Action Group (EAG) states**.
- These include **Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Rajasthan, UP and Uttarakhand**.
- **The lowest MMR** of 46 was recorded in Kerala, followed by 61 in Maharashtra.
- **The southern states** are performing better than the rest of the country on MMR, with a **decline from 93 to 77**. The rate is close to **the country's MMR target of 70 by 2030**.



Reasons behind the Decline:

- With **Janani Suraksh Yojna (JSY)** under **National Rural Health Mission**, institutional births have nearly doubled. It increased from around 38% to 78% between National Family Health Survey III (2005-06) and NFHS IV.
- The web-based **Mother and Tracking System** tracked every pregnancy in the country since 2010. It sends messages to health workers and expectant mothers about ante-natal check-ups, vaccinations etc.

- NRHM also allowed **auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs)**. They administer antibiotics, intravenous fluids and drugs during emergencies under supervision.
- For C-sections, there are **first referral units (FRUs)**, which is a district or sub-divisional hospital or community health centre which has the facilities in this regard.
- The **Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA)** attended to women who were not going to hospitals for deliveries. NRHM took efforts to increase the frequency of visits by ASHAs.
- Nutritional support through **Anganwadis** was a major component.
- Besides these, the **Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK)** was implemented which entitles all pregnant women delivering in public health institutions to free delivery, including C-sections.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana** offers pregnant women and lactating mothers a **cash incentive of ₹ 5,000 for the birth of their first-born** as partial compensation for wage loss with the aim **to reduce maternal and child mortality as well as malnutrition**.
- **Other reasons:** Decline in teenage pregnancies by 50%.

Causes of Maternal Mortality:

- Primary reason is the non-institutional delivery.
- The major cause, post-partum haemorrhage is usually defined as the loss of more than 500-1,000 ml of blood within the first 24 hours following childbirth.
- Excessive internal bleeding, infections and anaemia are major causes of death during child birth, especially among rural women.
- Indirect causes, or pre-existing medical conditions deteriorating during pregnancy.

Way Forward:

- The **private sector health facilities** have to supplement governmental efforts.
- There has to be a **greater health awareness** and health-seeking behaviour among people especially on maternal health for which awareness has to be spread.
- There has to be a better understanding of **water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH)** and adequate nutrition among all sections of the population.
- Education, gender equity, poverty reduction, health system strengthening, and improvements in quality of care need to happen simultaneously.



TRANSGENDERS IN INDIA

In Haryana, only 207 are registered under the 'Third Gender' category out of more than 1.80 crore voters in the state.

About:

- It has been observed that most transgenders remain registered under the 'male' or 'female' category for voting and are not using the 'Third Gender' option available.
- Almost one-third of the 90 Assembly constituencies in the Haryana do not have a single voter registered under the 'Third Gender' category.
- This is despite a **Supreme Court order in 2014** which provided transgender the option to register themselves under the 'Third Gender' category.

'Third Gender' Recognition

- On a petition filed by the **National Legal Services Authority**, the Supreme Court recognised the transgender community as a third gender along with male and female.
- The Bench said **gender identification is essential**. It is only with this recognition that many rights such as the **right to vote, own property and marry** will be meaningful.
- Non-recognition of gender identity amounts to **discrimination under Article 15**, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex.
- By virtue of this verdict, all **identity documents**, including a birth certificate, passport, ration card and driving licence would recognise the third gender.

Major Issues Faced by Transgenders in India:

- **Discrimination:** Sexuality or gender identity often makes transgender a victim of stigmatization by the society.
- **Unacceptance by family:** Transgenders are often ousted by their own biological family or run away at an early age due to harassment.
- **Education:** Most transgender children are forced to drop out of schools as Indian schools remain unequipped to handle children with alternative sexual identities.
- **Employment:** They are economically marginalised and forced into professions like **prostitution and begging** for livelihood or resorting to exploitative entertainment industry.
- **Health:** The community **remains highly vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases** like HIV AIDS. According to a recent UNAIDS report, the HIV prevalence among transgenders in India is 3.1% (2017). Mental health issues include depression and suicidal tendencies, and violence-related stress

- **Access to Public spaces and shelter:** Transgenders face direct discrimination and denial while accessing houses or apartments.
- **Civil Status:** Possessing accurate and consistent identification documents has been challenging for transgender community.
- **Gender-based violence:** Transgenders are often subjected to sexual abuse, rape and exploitation.

Rights and Welfare Measures for Transgenders:

- **Constitutional provisions:** **Article 14** (equal protection of laws), **Article 15** (non-discrimination), **Article 19(1)(a)** (freedom of expression), and **Article 21** (life and personal liberty).
- **NALSA Judgement, 2014:** The Supreme Court in National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India & Ors recognized the third gender along with the male and female.
- **Navtej Johar v Union of India case 2018:** SC decriminalised homosexuality by partially striking down the colonial era provisions of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- **The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill 2016** seeks to provide recognition of identity of transgender person, along with measures such as prohibition against discrimination, welfare measures and creation of National Council for transgender persons etc.

Way Ahead:

- **Self-Identification:** India's law should allow individuals to self-identify their own gender rather than by medical professionals.
- **Education:** It is important to evolve an effective system to sensitize schools and universities as regards to the needs and the nature of the transgender community.
- **Employment:** Schemes and measures should be directed towards skill development among transgender communities.
- **Health:** Separate policies related to health care must be framed and communicated in all private and public hospitals and clinics. The focus should not only be on HIV prevention but also on mental health issues and measures to address alcohol and drug abuse.
- **Legal Protection:** Stringent criminal and disciplinary action must be taken against the people who commit violence against Transgender.
- **Awareness:** A multi-prolonged approach with focus on public awareness campaigns is needed to eliminate the social stigma associated with the transgender community.



MALARIA VACCINE

The world's first malaria vaccine has been launched in Malawi after concerted efforts of over 30 years to protect children from the deadly disease.

What is Malaria?

- Malaria is a life-threatening disease caused by parasites that are transmitted to people through the bites of infected female *Anopheles* mosquitoes. It is preventable and curable.
- Malaria is caused by **Plasmodium parasites**. The parasites are spread to people through the bites of infected **female *Anopheles* mosquitoes**, called "malaria vectors."
- **Five species of Plasmodium** can infect humans and cause illness:
 - ♦ *Plasmodium falciparum* (or *P. falciparum*)
 - ♦ *Plasmodium malariae* (or *P. malariae*)
 - ♦ *Plasmodium vivax* (or *P. vivax*)
 - ♦ *Plasmodium ovale* (or *P. ovale*)
 - ♦ *Plasmodium knowlesi* (or *P. knowlesi*)
- *Falciparum* malaria is potentially life-threatening. Patients with severe *falciparum* malaria may develop liver and kidney failure, convulsions, and coma.
- Although occasionally severe, infections with *P. vivax* and *P. ovale* generally cause less serious illness, but the parasites can remain dormant in the liver for many months, causing a reappearance of symptoms months or even years later.
- A **blood smear test** can help diagnose malaria. It can also help a doctor to identify the type of malaria parasite.
- The WHO African Region carries a disproportionately high share of the global malaria burden. In 2017, the region was home to 92% of malaria cases and 93% of malaria deaths.

Malaria Vaccine:

- **The Government of Malawi's** launched the world's first malaria vaccine in a landmark pilot programme.
- ***Plasmodium falciparum*** is a unicellular protozoan parasite of humans, and the deadliest species of *Plasmodium* that cause malaria in humans.
- **RTS,S/AS01**, (Mosquirix) is an injectable vaccine targeting *Plasmodium falciparum*, the most prevalent malaria strain in Africa. It is the first and only vaccine to show partial protection in young children.
- It has been developed and manufactured by British drugmaker GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) in partnership with the PATH Malaria Vaccine Initiative.
- The vaccine will be available to everyone under the age of two. After Malawi, the vaccination will be launched in Ghana and Kenya with the aim of immunizing around 3.5 lakh children annually.

- Mosquirix is also engineered using a hepatitis B viral protein and a chemical adjuvant to further boost the immune response for enhanced effectiveness.
- The WHO-coordinated pilot programme is a collaborative effort with ministries of health in Ghana, Kenya and Malawi and a range of in-country and international partners, including PATH, a non-profit organization, and GSK, the vaccine developer and manufacturer, which is donating up to 10 million vaccine doses for this pilot.

India's Initiative to Contain Malaria:

- India's malaria programme is country-owned and country-led and it is in alignment with globally accepted strategies.
- India pledged at the East Asia Summit in 2015, to eliminate the disease by 2030.
- In 2017, India launched the five-year **National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination**. This marked a shift in focus from malaria "control" to "elimination".
- The plan provides a roadmap to achieve the target of ending malaria in **571 districts out of India's 678 districts by 2022**.
- In Odisha "**Durgama Anchalare Malaria Nirakaran (DAMaN)**" initiative is launched.
- It aims to deliver services to the most inaccessible and hardest hit people of the State. The initiative has in-built innovative strategies to combat asymptomatic malaria.
- The programme is jointly implemented by Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Malaria Research (ICMR-NIMR), National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP), Odisha and Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV).
- In 2019, Indian Council of Medical Research has established 'Malaria Elimination Research Alliance-India (MERA-India)' which is a conglomeration of partners working on malaria control.
- Over the past two decades, India has made impressive progress in malaria control. The malaria burden has declined by over 80 per cent (2.03 million cases in 2000 to 0.39 million in 2018) and malaria deaths by over 90 per cent (932 deaths in 2000 to 85 in 2018).
- Further, the **National Vector Borne Diseases Control Programme (NVBDCP)** of India has developed a comprehensive framework to achieve the overarching vision of "Malaria free India by 2030".



SAME SEX MARRIAGE

Taiwan became the first Asian country to legalize same sex marriages

About:

- Taiwanese President signed the bill providing equal legal protection for marriages between same-sex couples as there is for heterosexuals couples.
- This was in the backdrop of a 2017 Judgement of the Taiwan's Constitutional court observing that same-sex couples had legal right to marry.
- Let us analyze the status of Homosexuality and same-sex marriages in India.

Homosexuality:

- Homosexuality refers to "an enduring pattern of or disposition to experience sexual, affectionate, or romantic attractions" to people of the same sex.
- The biologically-based theories for the cause of sexual orientation are favored by most experts, which point to genetic factors, the early uterine environment, or both combinations.
- Many people feel that homosexual activity is unnatural and dysfunctional; however, biological research has shown that it is an example of a normal and natural variation in human sexuality, and is not in the control of an individual.

Homosexuality in India:

- In India, references of homosexuality can be found in our ancient literatures and scriptures, which reflect that the concept was prevalent in our society since ancient time.
- **Rigveda**, one of the four canonical sacred texts of Hinduism says '**Vikriti Evam Prakriti**' (what seems un-natural is also natural), which some scholars believe recognises the cyclical constancy of homosexual/transsexual dimensions of human life, like all forms of universal diversities.
- Despite these early references, homosexuality has been considered a taboo since a very long time. This may be because marriage is considered to be a holy sacrament by Hindus, and union between persons of the same sex has been considered to be immoral and inappropriate.
- Since marriage is seen mostly from a religious angle, a gay marriage is presumed to be unholy and against God himself.

Legal Status of Same Sex Marriages:

- Netherlands was the first country in the world to legalise same sex marriages, way back in 2001.
- In Belgium and Spain, such unions got legal recognition in the years 2003 and 2005, respectively.

- Canada legalised same sex unions in 2005, South Africa in 2006, and Norway in 2009.
- The year 2010 saw Portugal, Iceland and Mexico legalising gay marriages, and since 2012, Denmark and Caribbean Netherlands gave it the legal nod.
- Since 2013, New Zealand, France, Brazil and Uruguay have also legalised same sex unions.
- In India, same sex marriages have not been legalised, however few celebrities have entered into same sex civil partnerships.

Section 377

- Section 377 of the IPC states - "Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment upto ten years..."

Breaking New Ground:

- The Supreme Court (SC) recently decriminalized homosexuality by striking off parts of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) which were held as the violation of Fundamental Rights of LGBTQ Community.
- It rejected the notion of natural and unnatural sexual relations and said that what nature gives is natural and the natural identity of an individual should be treated absolutely essential to his being.
- Article 14 of the Constitution guarantees equality before law and this applies to all classes of citizens thereby restoring 'inclusiveness' of LGBTQ Community.
- SC noted that modern psychiatric studies and legislations recognize that gay persons and transgender do not suffer from a mental disorder and therefore cannot be penalized.
- SC has noted that homosexuality is documented in 1,500 species and is not unique to humans hence it dispels the prejudice that it is against the order of nature.
- All these developments should be seen in the light of the recent judgement in which SC upheld the **pre-eminence of Constitutional morality in India**. It observed that equality before law cannot be denied by giving precedence to public or religious morality.

Problems faced by LGBT Community:

- Throughout the world such laws have led to abuses against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people including

arbitrary arrests, violence, bullying in schools, denial of access to health and harassment at work.

- Depression is high amongst members of the LGBT community and one of the primary reasons for it is the failure to lead a normal life.
- Constant police harassment of the gay community.
- Doctors need to understand health issues specific to the homosexual community, it needs to be part of the educational curriculum.

Constitutional Safeguards:

- The ideals of individual autonomy and liberty, equality for all, recognition of identity with dignity and privacy of human beings constitute the cardinal four corners of our Constitution.
- Article 21 upholds that if a person cannot enjoy his privacy then it hampers his right to dignified life.
- It violates the provision of equality before law (Article 14).
- Article 15 provides for a prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
- Petitioners argue that Section 377 is a violation to Freedom of Expression under Article 19 (1a)

Impact of SC Decision Decriminalizing Homosexuality:

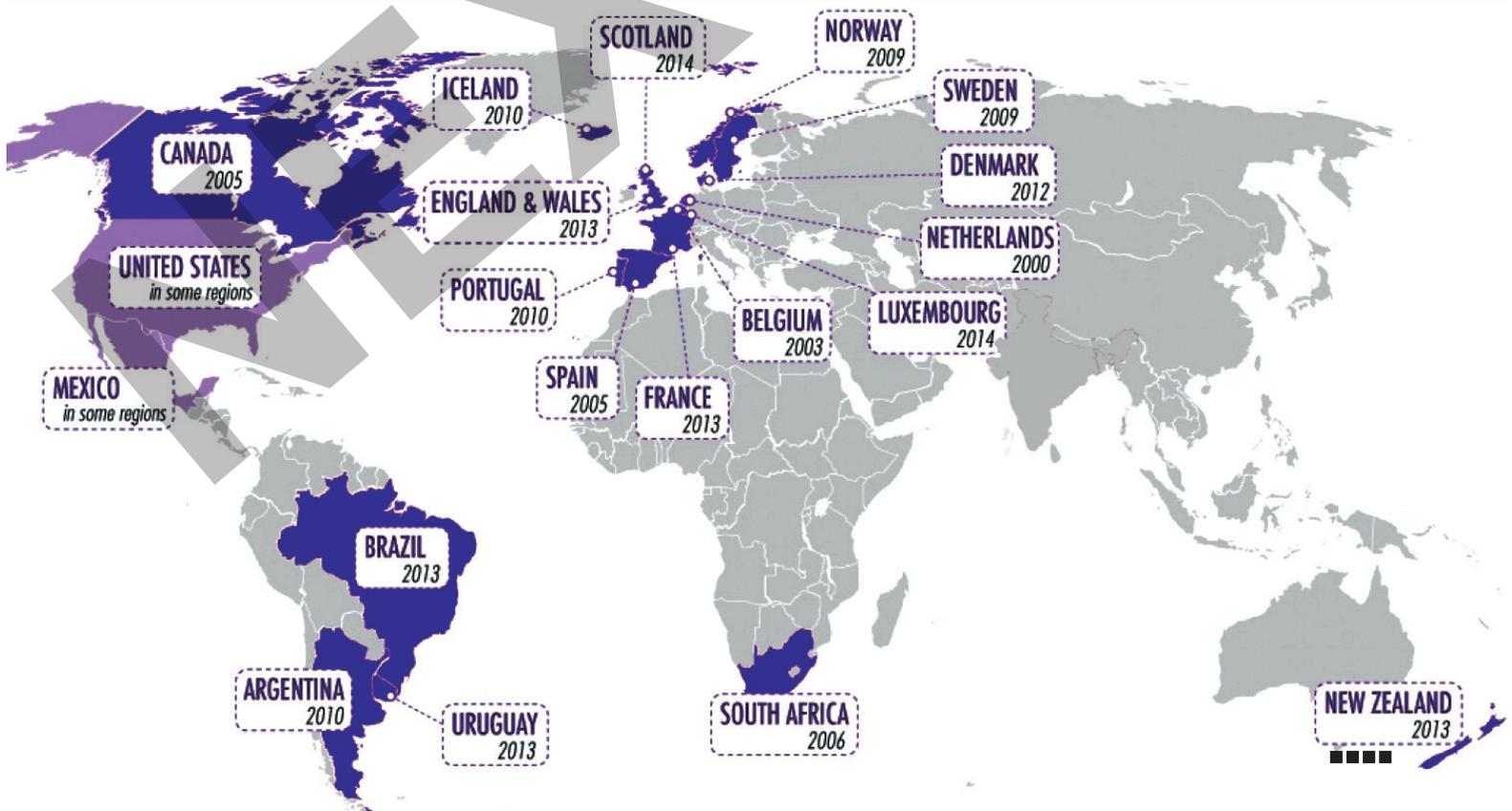
- The Supreme Court decriminalized homosexuality and acknowledged the basic human needs of the citizens.

- The decision will help the community claim equal constitutional status as other citizens.
- It also affirms their right to claim the right to adopt, marry and have a family.
- It may also prevent social exclusion with the court declaring that it was not a mental disorder. But something innate to a human being.

Way Forward:

- This judgment is a revolutionary one in a society like India. The SC has restricted itself to look into only on the matters of decriminalization of homosexuality.
- The issues like gay marriages, adoption and ancillary civil rights of the LGBTQ community are yet to be recognized, which are now left for parliament. It is advised that Parliament should step in making society at large inclusive and progressive.
- The LGBTQ community needs an anti-discrimination law that empowers them to build productive lives and relationships irrespective of gender identity or sexual orientation and place the onus to change on state and society and not the individual.
- Government bodies related to Health, and Law and Order need to be sensitised and made aware about the changed position of law to ensure that the LGBTQ community is not denied public services or harassed for their sexual orientation.

These Countries have Legalized Same-Sex Marriage



EXIT AND OPINION POLLS

It is imperative that agencies conducting opinion and exit polls constantly innovate and improve their research methodology for bridging the gap between forecasts and actual results.

About:

- The Supreme Court recently dismissed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) which sought to prohibit publication of exit and opinion polls.

What are Exit Polls?

- Exit poll is a **post-voting poll**, which is conducted just after a voter walks out after casting his or her vote.
- Such polls **aim at predicting the actual result** on the basis of the information collected from voters.
- **Section 126A** of the Representation of the People's Act, 1951, puts a ban on exit polls from the period between the commencements of the poll until half an hour after the closing of the final phase of the poll.
- Exit polls have **often proved unreliable** in India. In 2004, the exit polls wrongly predicted the BJP-led NDA coalition winning again.

What is an Opinion Poll?

- An opinion poll, sometimes simply referred to as a poll, is a kind of **voter behaviour survey** conducted to gauge the public opinion **before** voting takes place.
- Through a scientific survey, the views of a particular group of people are ascertained.

Difference between Exit Poll and Opinion Poll:

- While Opinion poll is conducted before the elections, Exit poll is conducted just after the elections.
- Opinion poll seeks to gather voters' view on a range of issues, while the purpose of Exit poll is only to assess the outcome of the election.
- Section 126 of the RPA prohibits display of any election matter by means of cinematograph, television or other similar apparatus during the period of 48 hours before the conclusion of poll. However, it is silent on 'Opinion Poll'.
- The sample used in opinion polls comprises of people who may or may not eventually vote. In contrast, an exit poll is conducted after voting is over and comprises of only those people who have voted.

Should Opinion and Exit Polls be Banned?

- Unregulated exit poll and opinion poll often **disseminate false and inaccurate predictions** about upcoming elections which influence the behaviour of voters.

- People feel that some of the surveys, if not all, are **not objective** since they are sponsored by interested parties.
- They are **against the idea of free and fair elections** according to the PIL demanding ban on Opinion and Exit polls.
- Unregulated exit and opinion polls are **damaging to the freedom to receive information** under **Article 19(1)(a)** of the Constitution.
- Sections 126, 126A and 126B were inserted in the RPA, to ensure that electors have sufficient time to think independently and exercise their right of vote without influenced by any person or survey. However, it is **difficult to achieve this objective** because there is no restriction on conducting 'Opinion Poll' or disseminating its results in electronic and print media and other similar apparatus.
- The **Election Commission opposes these polls** because it strongly suspects their integrity, having encountered the ugly reality of **paid news**.

Arguments in Support of Opinion and Exit Polls:

- Opinion and exit polls by themselves are **useful to gain insight** into what people think of the policies, programmes.
- While a fool-proof and transparent methodology needs to be adopted in surveys for ensuring objectivity and accuracy, the **apprehension** that these predictions might influence voters **appears to be exaggerated**.

Way Ahead:

- If a poll is claiming to sum up the national mood, it **should also describe its methodology** – the size of the sample, its socio-economic profile, how the data was collected (questionnaire, interview or phone), etc.
- The poll **should also disclose ownership and track record** of the organisation that conducted the survey, and the client who paid for the survey.

International Practice

- **16 EU countries** ban reporting of opinion polls, with timeframes ranging from a full month to 24 hrs. before polling day.
- **The French** have a of 24 hrs. ahead of voting day.
- **UK:** There are no restrictions on publishing results of opinion polls — however, results of exit polls can't be published until the voting is over.
- **US** allows publication of opinion polls at any time.

JUDICIAL ACTIVISM VERSUS JUDICIAL RESTRAINT

The Supreme Court should limit Judicial Activism to only the most exceptional situations, and employ Judicial Restraint as far as possible.

About:

- The recent trend in the Supreme Court is to rely more on to judicial activism rather than judicial restraint.
- This is seen in its recent judgment on ordering **time limits to burst firecrackers on Diwali**, its judgment on **linking rivers**, and in its decisions in cases relating to **freedom of speech and expression**.

Judicial Activism and Judicial Restraint:

- Judicial activism refers to judicial rulings that are suspected of being **based on personal opinion**, rather than on existing law.
- It is based on **sociological jurisprudence**, which shifts the centre of gravity of the legal system from statute to laws made by judges.
- It **gives wide discretionary powers** to judges to make laws.
- This goes against the principle of **judicial restraint** which holds that law-making is not the job of the judges, but of the legislature.
- Judicial Restraint is based on the **positivist jurisprudence**, where the centre of gravity of the legal system is statutory law, i.e., law made by the legislature.
- In recent times, the Supreme Court has **increasingly adopted the sociological school** of jurisprudence in an aggressive manner.

Arguments in Support of Judicial Activism:

- **In rare circumstances:** The usage of **sociological jurisprudence** can be justified in rare circumstances, such as in the Supreme Court's decision to **strike down Section 377 of the IPC**.
- **Limitation of Positivist approach:** Many sensitive issues need a different perspective which laws don't allow, hence judicial activism allows a judge to use her personal judgement in situations where the law fails. E.g. triple talaq case.
- **Filling the legal void:** It gives judges a personal voice to fight unjust issues which though important but evade the eye of legislature, for example, countering harassment against women at workplace through **Vishakha guidelines**.
- **Checks and balance:** It **provides a system of checks and balances** to the other government branches, like SC laid conditions for imposition of Governor Rule in states in **S.R. Bommai Case**, to bring objectivity in the application of the rule.
- **Reviewing its own judgements:** Courts maintain checks and balances on themselves through judicial review mechanism.

Any verdict can be reviewed and made better with an appeal to the court.

- **For Complete justice:** Judicial review allows a court to do complete justice in any case by using its powers under **Article 142** and taking suo-motu action based on its own appraisal of the situation.

Issues with Judicial Activism:

- **Against the spirit of 'separation of powers':** It destroys the spirit of 'separation of powers' between Parliament, Executive and Judiciary, enshrined in the constitution.
- **Impractical decisions:** In many cases, courts are often ill-equipped and lack experience to weigh the economic, environmental and political costs involved like liquor ban case.
- **Poor accountability:** The executive remains accountable to the people but judges exercise self-regulation and are insulated from any external control and thus accountable only to **themselves, and their own sense of their limits**.
- **Conflict of interest:** Sometimes when judicial activism is exercised it is done for solely selfish, political or personal reasons.
- **Undermines Parliament:** It reduces the trust people pose in the Parliament and elected representatives as frequent overreach signals executive inactivity and incompetency.
- **Undemocratic:** Judicial overreach appears as an act of **'tyranny of unelected'** in a democracy.
- **Wastage of court's time:** It is wastage of court's time, which can otherwise be used for adjudicating other important matters relating to public importance pending before the court.

Way Ahead: The need for Judicial Restraint

- However, bad a particular legislation is, it is law at the end of the day, provided it emanated from a competent legislature. Law-making is the legitimate job of the judges. Hence, judges should be restrained and not activist in their approach.
- In view of the well-established principle of **separation of powers** of the three organs of the state, **judges should not perform legislative or executive functions**.
- Each organ of the state should remain within its own domain, in order to avoid chaos.
- The judicial activism causes more harm than benefits. Therefore, it **should only be used under 'rarest of rare' cases** and that too in consultation with civil society and experts.



POCSO ACT

The issue of Child Sexual Abuse is widespread across India, impacting children of all ages, socio-economic classes and genders.

What is POCSO Act?

- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act) 2012 was established to protect the children against offences like sexual abuse, sexual harassment and pornography.
- It was formed to provide a child-friendly system for trial underneath which the perpetrators could be punished.
- The act defines a child as any person below eighteen years of age. It also makes provisions for avoiding the re-victimization of the child at the hands of the judicial system.

Child Sex Abuse in Indian Context:

- Protection of children by the state is guaranteed to Indian citizens by an expansive reading of Art. 21 of Indian constitution.
- India is also a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Child sexual abuse laws in India have been enacted as part of the nation's child protection policies.

POCSO Act, 2012:

- The POCSO Act 2012 was formulated to effectively address sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children through legal provisions.

The objectives of the POCSO Act:

- To protect children from the offences of Sexual assault, Sexual harassment, Pornography, and
- To establish Special Courts for speedy trial of such offences.

The Salient features of the Act:

- Defines the child as anyone below the age of 18. It is gender neutral law. The law protects children from both contact and non-contact sexual abuse.
- Addresses a wide range of sexual offences which include anything from complete and partial penetration, non-penetrative sexual assault, stalking of a child, showing children pornography, using the child for pornography.
- Places the burden of proof on the accused and ensures punishment for all perpetrators irrespective of age and gender.
- Does not recognize consensual sexual acts among children or between a child and an adult.
- Provides for more severe punishment, when the sexual offence is committed by a person in a position of trust or authority.

- Introduces child friendly measures and defines the role of the Police as a child protector.

Key Amendments:

- The amendment will include the death penalty in all cases of aggravated penetrative sexual assault against children below the age of 18 and thus making the Act gender neutral.
- The definition of 'sexual assault' in POCSO has been amended. It include administering hormones to children expedite their sexual maturity for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation.
- The existing definition covers 20 categories of penetrative sexual crimes against children.
- Cabinet has approved a 21 category adding sexual assault of children who are victims of calamities or natural disasters.
- The 21 categories under aggravated penetrative sexual assault cover child victims who have been subject to penetrative sexual assault by a police officer or a member of the armed forces or security forces, by a public servant, a relative, the staff of a jail or remand home or protection home, staff of a hospital, educational institution, or religious institution among others.
- The amendments extend the punishment for aggravated penetrative sexual assault from a minimum of 10 years to a minimum of 20 years, up to a maximum of life imprisonment and even the death penalty under Section 6 of POCSO Act.
- Punitive measures have been made more stringent in cases where children are used for pornography.
- The maximum punishment of death will also be applicable when sexual assault victims are children with mental or physical disabilities, in cases of repeat offenders, rape and attempt to murder, and rape during communal violence.

Conclusion:

- The data shows that less than 3% of all POCSO cases end in convictions and experts warn against the chilling effect the death penalty may have on reporting the crime.
- The amendments in the POCSO Act may protect the interest of vulnerable children in times of distress and ensure their safety and dignity.
- The amendment is expected to discourage the trend of child sexual abuse by acting as a deterrent due to strong penal provisions incorporated in the Act.



SPURIOUS LIQUOR

India is among the countries with a high number of deaths caused by spurious liquor.

What is the Spurious Liquor?

- Faulty distillation with a lethal mix of liquid jaggery and methyl alcohol resulted in spurious liquor. It is often adulterated with methanol, which is highly toxic.
- It is also called as "Hooch". It is cheaper and more potent than the state-regulated alcohol.

The causes behind the Poisonous Hooch:

- The industrial methyl alcohol or denatured spirit i.e. mixture of ethanol and methanol, is added by illicit hooch makers to save costs.
- Under unregulated conditions, methanol or methyl alcohol can be produced along with the desired ethanol.
- Methyl alcohol is extremely toxic. 10 ml of Methyl alcohol can cause blindness and 30 ml can cause death within 10 to 30 hours. It is like ethyl alcohol in taste and smell.
- Hooch is preferred by the low income group since it is cheaper and more potent than regulated liquor.

Measures to Curb on Spurious Liquor:

- A multi-pronged plan is needed to prevent the sale and consumption of toxic alcohol.
- **Recommendations by Hooch tragedy commission of Gujarat** must be implemented to address the grim situation on ground:
 - ♦ **Break corrupt nexus:** Steps should be taken to break the nexus between Police and bootleggers must be taken.
- Enhance investigative capabilities of law enforcement agencies.
- State Government should frame new specific Rules, particularly for manufacture, transport, import of methyl alcohol rules and classify it as 'poison'.
- **Elevating the standards of literacy** in slum areas and rehabilitation of addicts/offenders.
- **Capacities of the health system should be upgraded:**
 - ♦ **Proper supply of antidotes** (Ethyl alcohol, sodium bicarbonate and fomepizole) and haemodialysis should be ensured.
 - ♦ Instruments for diagnosis to the hospitals should be ensured and doctors must be trained.
- Though this subject matter comes under the jurisdiction of states, central government must constitute a commission

to look into the issue and issue some model suggestive guidelines to states to deal with it.

- Illicit liquor sale should be curbed with zero tolerance, and consumption should be discouraged through social campaigns.
- Ensure that bail is not easily granted to increase deterrence value.
- Vulnerable population should be made aware about the harm caused by such liquor. NGOs, media and civil society can play a constructive role.
- Besides, reviewing of levies on less harmful beverages is also crucial to prevent the spread of cheap, harmful ones.

Constitutional Provisions:

- Liquor prohibition under 7th schedule is a subject of state list. This provides states the power to make laws and charge duties on **alcoholic liquors for human consumption**.
 - ♦ **Item 51 of the state list** includes the following substances:
 - i. alcoholic liquors for human consumption
 - ii. opium, Indian hemp and other narcotic drugs and narcotics
 - iii. but does not include medicinal and toilet preparations containing the above substances.
- The Article 47 of the Constitution of India states that "State shall endeavor to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health".
- **The Article 37** of the Indian constitution directs the State, that, "It shall be the duty of the State to apply Directive Principles of State Policy principles in making policy laws."
- **The Article 38** of the Constitution of India directs to the State and Union Governments to secure a social order for the promotion of welfare of the people.

Way Forward:

- Those who participated in the sale of the lethal brew, and investigate any nexus with the authorities should be punished under stringent laws.
- It is vital that the capacities of the health departments be upgraded to handle victims of toxic alcohol.
- Timely treatment must be made available.

RELEVANCE OF COALITION GOVERNMENT IN INDIA

In the light of the General Election 2019, there is a need to examine the hypothesis whether single party rule is always better than a coalition government.

About:

- Many people in India are under the impression that a coalition means an unstable government and therefore, an unstable economy.
- But past experience suggest that some coalition governments took key decisions that have contributed to India's progress.

Examples of Bold Decisions by Coalition Government in India

- Implementing the recommendations of the **Mandal Commission** by giving reservation to other backward classes (OBCs)
 - The decision to conduct **nuclear tests at Pokhran**.
 - MGNREGA
 - Right to Information Act.
- In this context, let's observe the successes of coalition governments, their contribution to economic growth, and why there is reluctance to for pre-poll coalitions in India.

What is a Coalition Government?

- A coalition is formed when multiple political parties cooperate, join forces and come together which reduces the dominance of any single political party.
- This can happen prior or post elections.
- A coalition is usually formed when no single political party is able to secure a working majority in the Parliament.
- There is possibility for a deadlock to be created when two parties are even, in such situation one of the parties would need an ally to gain majority.

Types of Coalition Government:

- In comparative politics literature, we tend to distinguish between '**ideological coalitions**' and '**governance coalitions**'.
- **Ideological coalitions** emerge when different parties agree to form government based on some ideological similarities.
- **Coalitions of convenience** tend not to have coherent policy agendas and tend to be divided from within. Coalitions of convenience tend to **more likely be corrupt** and spend more money than those that are ideological because everyone has got a hand in the pot.

- A "**surplus coalition**" government features a party that already has the strength to form a government but has taken on board other coalition partners.
- **Support from Outside:** India has innovated a system of allowing a minority-party led government by receiving support in the legislature from groups without joining the government.

Arguments Against Coalition Government:

- Critics argue that coalitions are **unstable, create policy gridlock and slow growth**. The implication is that strong, majority governments are decisive and better for the economy.
- Coalitions come into existence because they are a political necessity, but different **partners may have mutually conflicting interests**. There are clear divergences between the interests of smaller and larger parties.
- **One casualty of the coalition era has been the parliament**, which has seen much greater logjam than before. The number of bills passed has decreased significantly from 360 bills in the first Lok Sabha (1952-57) to 179 under UPA-II (2009-14).
- Coalition government is actually **less democratic** as the balance of power is held by the small parties who can barter their support for concessions from the main groups within the coalition.
- Coalition government is **less transparent**, because a party has no real chance of forming a government alone, the manifestos they present to the public become irrelevant and often wildly unrealistic.
- Coalitions **provide bad governance** because they are unable to take a long term view.
- Coalition governments are **very unstable**, often collapsing and reforming at frequent intervals. This greatly **restricts the ability of governments to deal with major reforms**.
- In coalition governments, MLAs and MPs from all the parties are given portfolios/ministries and appointed as Ministers. These ministers are appointed on the recommendations of the parent party, without taking the qualification, character and criminal /clean record of the MLAs and MPs.

Arguments in Favour of Coalition Government:

I. Better Representation

- Coalition governments are not necessarily truly democratic, but they **can at least be plural** in the views that they represent.

- That possibility also arises when the parties are not adequately representative of the larger public, but only of smaller sections, regions, communities.
- In that situation, a coalition promotes better representation.

II. Regional Pluralism

- Given the nature of India's States, coalitions can be considered showcasing regional pluralism.
- To form a nationally representative government, it was **required to bring in regional parties** in the east and in the south into this coalition.

III. More inclusiveness in Policies

- Coalition governments **generate more inclusive policies** because the coalitions represent a wider array of groups and communities.
- Coalitions, because they represent different groups, create constraints on the government's ability to change policy suddenly and arbitrarily.
- Something like **demonetisation** would have been **hard to conceive** in a coalition government.

IV. Economic Growth

- Coalition governments do not seem to harm economic performance either in India or elsewhere.
- Coalition governments have hardly hindered India's transition to a high-growth trajectory since the 1980s.
- Taken together, the UPA and NDA are associated with the **fastest growth** in Indian history (growing at a CAGR of 6.4% across their tenures).
- Conversely, in the first five Lok Sabhas where Congress dominated (almost 70% of seats), growth was significantly lower (CAGR of 3.6%).
- More than just growth, there also seems to be **greater economic stability** in coalition times.
- On other key economic indicators, there is no discernible difference. For instance, current account deficits (barring the current account crisis in the early 1990s) have remained in a similar range in the pre-coalition and coalition era.

V. Positive Experience in Developed Nations

- Coalitions are **prominent in rich countries**, especially in **Europe** where the **proportional representation system** generates fragmentation.
- **Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Finland** have all been ruled by coalition governments for the **last 20 years**, shows data from the Comparative Political Data Set (CPDS).
- In 2016, **half of all OECD** (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) and European governments were **ruled by coalitions**.

- Analysing the growth rates of coalition and non-coalition governments in the OECD between 1996 and 2016 reveals no obvious pattern, but the **fastest growing economy** in the OECD (Ireland) during that period did **flourish under significant coalition rule**.

Why is there a Reluctance to form Pre-Election Coalitions in India?

- In India, there are two national-level players and several regional parties.
- In both cases, the national party seeks to expand its geographical reach across and within States.
- In such situations, these parties seek to keep their cards closer to their chest and play them after the elections based on the outcome.
- If there was a situation where there were only State parties and no all-India party, this would have enabled pre-election coalitions.
- Besides this, there is an **absence of ideological coherence** (at least in the last 25 years or so) that would bring parties together for a pre-election coalition.
- For pre-election coalitions, parties will have to tell constituents — people who have worked for a party for years and expect a reward in the form of a ticket — that they won't get tickets to contest.
- This causes unhappiness and bickering. So it is much better to say, take your ticket and contest and we will form a coalition later based on how many seats we have.

Way Ahead:

- Conventional wisdom in India supports a single party emerging as the victor in elections, and a large party as opposition for the optimal functioning of Parliament and the government.
- However, a **single-party government reduces the need to make political deals** with coalition partners, and the legislative agenda of the government can be passed without any hold-outs.
- Given perverse incentives created by the **anti-defection law**, and in the **absence of a proper check from the legislature**, India needs coalition governments **to check executive overreach**.
- Coalitions also provide periods of greater **economic growth, less economic volatility and more foreign investment**.
- There is **more credibility** to the government's policies, because it has a harder time making radical changes.
- Coalitions are **able to act when they have to**, but they **make fewer big changes**. For some that is frustrating and for some that is safety.

2nd BRI FORUM

China hosted 2nd Belt and Road Forum to gain international cooperation.

About:

- The 3-day forum was conducted to garner **international cooperation** amidst criticisms surrounding implementation of Belt and Road Initiative by China.
- Compared to the first forum held in 2017, current one saw increased attendance.
- **Attendees:** 37 Heads of State or Government, including President of Russia and Pakistan, and 5,000 representatives from 150 countries participated in the forum.
- **Non-attendees:**
 - ♦ **The US** did not attend the forum because of the worsening relations with China and concerns related to BRI.
 - ♦ **India:** Reason – Among the other issues, Territorial Sovereignty is a big concern, as CPEC (a flagship of the BRI) passes through Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK). This is the second time that India has not officially participated in the BRF.
- **Exclusion of BCIM:** In the **Joint Communiqué** of the BRF, **South Asia** is covered by three major undertakings—
 - ♦ China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC)
 - ♦ Nepal-China Trans-Himalayan Multi-dimensional Connectivity Network,
 - ♦ China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)
 - ♦ It excludes **Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar** Economic corridor from the list of projects covered by the BRI umbrella.

Background:

Belt and Road Initiative:

- BRI is Often referred to as **China's Marshall Plan** or **21st Century Silk Road**. It consists of **two main components** –
 - ♦ An overland **Silk Road Economic Belt** connecting China with Central Asia and beyond, and
 - ♦ An ocean-based 21st Century **Maritime Silk Road** to China's south.
- It was announced in 2013 and enshrined in the Communist Party Constitution in 2017.
- From **South-east Asia** to **Eastern Europe** and **Africa**, it aims to connect **71 countries** that account for **half the world's population** and a **quarter of global GDP**.
- Geopolitical and economic motivations behind the initiative-

- ♦ BRI is one of the main planks of Chinese statecraft under Xi, alongside the **Made in China 2025** economic development strategy.
- ♦ It serves as pushback against the **U.S.'pivot to Asia.'**
- ♦ Through it, China aims to put itself at the center of global economic affairs through improving hard infrastructure, soft infrastructure, and even cultural ties.

Evolution of the BRI Concept:

- **Projects:** In 2013, the BRI was focused solely on building **infrastructure projects**, however it now has a **much broader framework**, which includes **financial and humanitarian aid projects**.
- **New members:** New countries such as **Italy** (first from G7) and **Luxembourg** have brought into the project.
- **Funding Model:**
 - ♦ While initially funds were procured from the China-headed **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank**, and several other financial institutions within the country,
 - ♦ Now there is a push for **"third-party market cooperation"** under which investments are shared by more than one country.
 - ♦ International institutions like the International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank and the World Bank are being welcomed to participate in BRI projects.
- **Trade:** The trade volume between China and countries joining the BRI has surpassed 6 trillion US dollars, with more than 80 billion US dollars of Chinese investment in those countries.
- Now, China will also promote **"green" development**, amid warnings that some of the massive projects are causing environmental damage in Asia.
- **Procedural changes** – Chinese President vowed zero tolerance for corruption and called for **adoption of 'internationally acceptable standards'** in the **tendering process**.

Expansion of the BRI's Reach:

- **Asia:** In China's immediate periphery, BRI is booming, particularly in Southeast Asia.
- **Africa:** The BRI's expansion to Africa is a relatively new development, and is finding support along the eastern coast of the continent.

- **Europe:** BRI is experiencing a healthy growth of interest from Europe, despite some pushback from EU and some countries. While some of the smaller European countries remain highly interested, bigger nations particularly Germany and France have been most vocal in expressing concerns.

India's Concerns with CPEC and BRI:

- **Territorial aspect:** BRI undermines India's **sovereignty** in the form of **CPEC** which runs through the disputed territory of **Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK)** and overrides India's strategic concerns.
 - ♦ BRI also undermines India's contribution to old Silk route.
- **Military disadvantage:** Although, promised otherwise by China, CPEC section can be used as a military base against India in times of war.
- **Means to dominate Asia:** India views BRI through a geo-economic strategy of '**String of Pearls**' whereby China creates unsustainable debt burdens for its Indian Ocean neighbours and potentially takes control of regional choke points.
- **Strategic:** South Asia has assumed a special focus of the BRI. India fears possible Chinese imperialist motives in these nations.
 - ♦ Using its "aid" as leverage, China has secured its **first military base** in the East African **Port of Djibouti** and attained strategic **port of Mombasa** and has constructed a railway line linking the port to Nairobi in Kenya.
- **Debt-trap Diplomacy:** China's funding pattern is problematic. The terms of interest and repayment are far less generous than the vastly concessional assistance/aid provided by institutions like the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. China's taking control of **Sri Lanka's Hambantota port** in 2017 on a 99-year lease as debt swap and similar situations in nations like **Maldives, Pakistan** flag concerns about the project.
- **Lack of transparency:** While the focus primarily on the construction of roads, bridges, electrical power projects and dams, the terms for such assistance given by China are opaque.
- **Targets Indian Ocean:** China's enhanced presence in Indian Ocean, challenges India's presence in the region.
 - ♦ With CPEC, China can have a robust naval commanding position at the mouth of the Gulf.
 - ♦ China will have direct access to Indian Ocean for its trade related transportations.
- **Economic:** Till now, trade between nations hasn't been affected because of the initiative but the apprehension remains.

Way Ahead: Options available with India

With respect to China

- **Joining with caveats:** India can lay down the specific terms and conditions and can help guide BRI with its own inputs. As

the third largest economy in Asia, its word will carry weight.

- **Compromise:** Both countries can arrive at an understanding wherein they do not object to investments in PoK and Arunachal Pradesh, respectively. This will detach territorial issues from restricting benefits for the population of both nations.
- **Alternative engagement with China:** China has opposed re-opening of Himalayan land ports for trade between Tibet and India. As an alternative to CPEC, India can renew negotiations to urge China to open up such links across the Indo-Tibetan belt.
- **Mutual encirclement:** As a means to increase presence around China's neighbors like Mongolia and Philippines, India can aggressively work on reviving relations with them.

With respect to Pakistan

- **Highlighting drawbacks of CPEC:** China has shown open disregard for international rules on multiple occasions. India can use such issues and conditions of other debt trapped nations to pursue Pakistan against Chinese investment under the disguise of BRI.

With respect to other Nations

- **Clearer stand:** India need to garner more support from neighboring countries by clarifying that India is **not opposed to infrastructure development** in the region, but it is only concerned about the strategic implications of certain Chinese-led initiatives.
- **Developing strategic assets:** India can invest in and develop its strategic assets—like the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, for instance—to project power across the Indian Ocean.
 - ♦ **Ports like Chabahar**, leased to India for 10 yrs by Iran, can be strategically important.
 - ♦ India is also seeking to use the Iranian port of **Bandar Abbas**, further west of Chabahar
 - ♦ On national territory, India is building dedicated freight corridors, industrial corridors and a series of ports under the **Bharat Mala project**.
- **International convergence:** Convergence between the strategic interests of India and other regional actors is needed.
 - ♦ Currently, India is working closely with the US, Australia and Japan to form a "**quadrilateral**" to increase trade and counter China's influence across numerous countries in Asia and Africa.
- **Transit and Transport Corridor:** As a rival to CPEC, India, Iran and Afghanistan are setting up a Transit and Transport Corridor.
 - ♦ Under this, IRCON International, the wholly owned subsidiary of Indian Railways, is constructing a railway line from Chabahar to Zahedan, which will be linked to Iran's domestic rail network.



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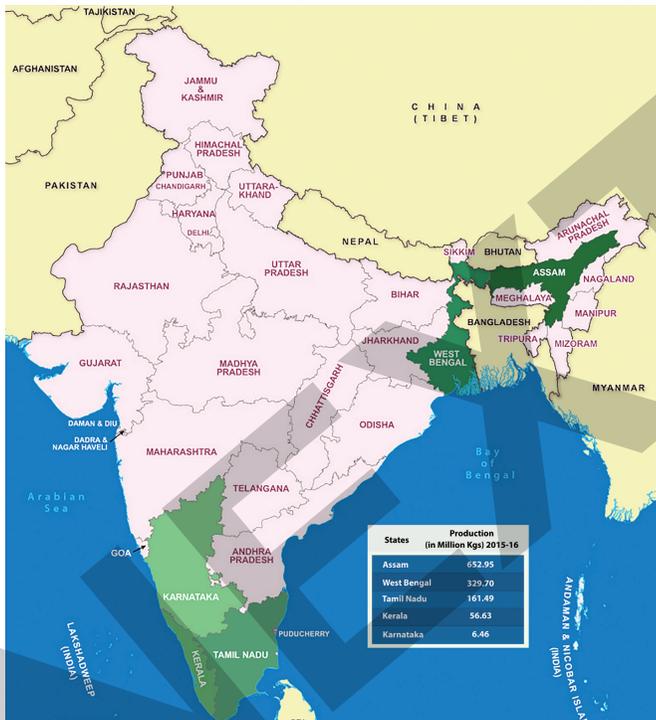
ECONOMY

INDIAN TEA INDUSTRY: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

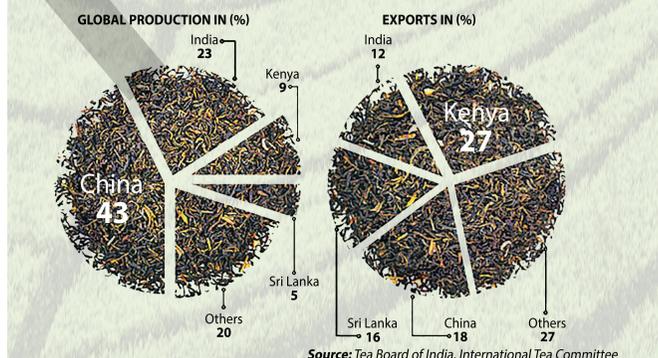
Indian tea is facing stiff competition from cheaper and at par in quality Kenyan and Sri Lankan tea.

About:

- **Tea growing areas of India:** With suitable climatic and socio-economic condition North-East states of India accounts for 3/4th of total Indian tea production.
- Major Tea producing States are Assam (52.0%), West Bengal (25.8%), Tamil Nadu (14.5 %) and Kerala (5.3%).



INDIA ACCOUNTS FOR A FOURTH OF GLOBAL TEA PRODUCTION AND OVER A TENTH OF EXPORTS



The ideal climatic conditions for the production and growing of tea are as follows:

- **Temperature:** 21°C to 29°C is ideal for the production of tea. High temperature is required in summer. The lowest temperature for the growth of tea is 16°C.
- **Rainfall:** 150-250 cm of rainfall is required for tea cultivation.
- **Soil:** Ideally, it likes deep, light, acidic and well-drained soil. The soil should be rich in humus.
- **Land:** Tea cultivation needs well drained land. Stagnation of water is not good for tea plants. Heavy rainfall but no stagnancy of water, such mountain slopes are good for tea cultivation.
- In south India, tea productivity is better because of the almost uniform climatic condition. In North India, winter is cold, therefore, the tea bushes go in dormant stage, therefore, productivity goes down in winter months.

The Darjiling and Sikkim Himalayas

- The British, taking advantage of the physical conditions such as moderate slope, thick soil cover with high organic content, well distributed rainfall throughout the year and mild winters, introduced tea plantations in this region.
- As compared to the other sections of the Himalayas, these along with the Arunachal Himalayas are conspicuous by the absence of the Shiwalik formations.
- In place of the Shiwaliks here, the 'duar formations' are important, which have also been used for the development of tea gardens.

Problems of Tea Industry:

- Down turn trend in the **price of tea** both in global market and in India due to over production.
- The poor quality of India's tea production,
- Existing trade barrier, outmoded techniques used by cultivators and industrialists
- Low level of investment,
- Old tea bushes,
- Low wage,
- Changes in consumer taste and preferences,
- Strikes and lockout of tea industry
- **Challenge of oversupply**, which is dampening prices. While tea production in India logged a compounded annual growth rate of 3.2% between 2012 and 2017, consumption increased by a mere 1.7%.

Opportunities to Indian Tea Industry:

- **Huge domestic market:** India is the biggest consumer of the tea, but has more potential, as per capita consumption of tea is still lower than other tea consuming countries.
- **Leaf tea factories in Cooperative sector:** The small tea growers and Bought Leaf Factories are new model in tea industry, which can lower down the cost of production. The government should promote brought leaf tea factories in the cooperative sector.
- **Organic and Value added Tea:** Tea blended with flavors like fruits; herbal tea into tea like ginger, lemon; Chewable tea added with folic acid, calcium and other vitamins are new areas to think of.
- **Use of ICT:** Now a day, ICT tools becomes quick medium to share information, market intelligence, government schemes, weather updates, latest development in world, etc.
- **Alternative incomes:** like Tea oil, extracted from tea seeds, is the other area to generate income.
- **Tea tourism:** Tea producing areas like Darjeeling, Upper Assam, Cachar, Nilgiri, etc. have a number of tea gardens which could be promoted for tea tourism.
- **Aggressive promotion:** The country can get back its place among our traditional tea markets of Russia and other CIS nations by diversification of tea products, quality upgradation and aggressive brand and logo campaign.
- **Government support:** The government should give incentive to closed gardens and provide long-term, low interest loans to revamp them. The tea plantation in non traditional area should be emphasized. The cooperative sector should be promoted to come in the tea industry.

Conclusion:

- The Indian tea industry is giving **employment opportunity** directly and indirectly employment to the nearly one percent of the population and about 10 per cent people, respectively.
- The industry has good of potential in **domestic market**. The industry should explore the international market for value added products.
- But, some inherent problems are linked with the industry, therefore, due attention is required to remove hurdles of the tea industry.

THE INDIAN ACCOUNTING STANDARD (IND AS) 116

The government has notified a new accounting standard Ind AS 116.

About:

- It has been notified by the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs**.

- **Ind AS 116** is the equivalent of **IFRS** (International Financial Reporting Standards) 116.
- It sets out the principles for recognition, presentation and disclosure of leases.
- Ind AS 116 is to be effective from **April 1, 2019**.

Need for Accounting Standards

- Accounting standards are common set of principles, standards and procedures that define the basis of financial accounting policies and practices.
- Accounting standards improve the **transparency and reliability** of financial statements. Accounting standards also prescribe necessary disclosure requirements regarding accounting practice followed by the firm.
- **Comparability:** As all business firms are required to follow same set of accounting principles, it will allow for inter-firm and intra firm comparison.

Objective of Ind AS 116:

- The objective of this Standard is to prescribe the accounting treatment **for property, plant and equipment**.
- Now, users of the financial statements can discern information about an entity's investment in its property, plant and equipment and the changes in such investment.
- The principal issues in accounting for property, plant and equipment are the recognition of the assets, the determination of their carrying amounts and the depreciation charges and impairment losses to be recognized in relation to them.

Benefits:

- It will bring in more **transparency** in recognition and disclosures about leases in companies' balance sheets.
- It is expected to have a **significant impact** on various industries, including aviation where airlines mostly operate planes on lease.
- It would prevent "**window dressing**" of accounts.

International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)

- IFRS are a set of accounting standards developed by the **International Accounting Standards Board (IASB)**.
- These are becoming the global standard for the preparation of public company financial statements.
- The IASB is an **independent** accounting standard-setting body, based in London. It consists of 15 members from nine countries.

June, 2019

H1B VISA

Recently, USA proposed to hike in H-1B application fee.

About:

- The H-1B visa is a **non-immigrant visa**.
- It allows US companies to employ **foreign workers** in **speciality occupations** that require theoretical or technical expertise.

Argument for Increasing Visa Fee:

- Foreigners **hurt American workers** by competing for jobs and driving down wages. This will incentivize the firms to hire American workers. Increased fee may replace the foreigners with the domestic American workers.
- The increased **revenue** is supposed to increase funding for the expansion of **apprentice programmes**.
- The expanded apprentice programmes will train American youths in **technology related activities**, such as information technology, health care and advanced manufacturing.

Impact of Fee Hike on India:

- The past experience shows that the Indian IT companies, which account for a large number of H-1B applications, are likely to face the **additional financial burden** because of this proposed increase.
 - ♦ Most Indian IT services companies are heavily investing in **hiring local talent** in the US.
 - ♦ Due to the lack of availability of talent in the US, it is forcing the companies to look at hiring in near shore locations such as Canada and Mexico.
 - ♦ Moreover, the companies are also heavily investing in **STEM programmes** in the US to develop IT talent.

WAYS AND MEANS ADVANCES (WMA)

Recently, RBI has proposed a rule-based approach in fixing new Ways and Means limits for the state governments, replacing the previous expenditure-based system.

About:

- RBI provides **short-term loan** to the Central and state governments to bridge **temporary liquidity** mismatches. The **temporary loan facility** is called Ways and Means Advances.
- The system of WMA was introduced to ensure **fiscal discipline** and to establish a reasonable **mechanism** of financing the day-to-day requirements of the government.
- According to Section 5(1) of the FRBM Act 2003, the Central Government shall not borrow from the RBI except by way of Ways and Means advances to meet temporary cash requirements.

- The limit for WMA and the rate of interest on WMA will be mutually agreed between RBI and the government from time to time.
- **Types:** There are two types of WMA for State Governments:
 - ♦ **Special WMA:** These are secured advances provided against the pledge of Government of India dated securities.
 - ♦ **Normal WMA:** After the exhaustion of the special WMA limit, the State Government is provided a normal WMA. The normal WMA limits are based on three-year average of actual revenue and capital expenditure of the state. The withdrawal above the WMA limit is considered an overdraft.
- Ways and Means advances are repayable in each case not later than **three months** from the date of making that advance.
- **Overdraft:**
 - ♦ Any amount drawn by State in excess of WMA is overdraft.
 - ♦ No State is allowed to run an overdraft with the RBI for more than 10 continuous working days.
 - ♦ In case an overdraft appears in the State's account and remains beyond 10 continuous working days, the RBI and its agencies stop payments on behalf of the State.
- **The Interest Rate:**
 - ♦ On WMA - Repo Rate and
 - ♦ On overdraft - 2% above the Repo Rate.
- When 75 per cent of WMA is utilized, the RBI would trigger fresh floatation of government securities.

Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003

- FRBM Act 2003 is an act of parliament to institutionalize financial discipline, reduce India's fiscal deficit, improve macroeconomic management and the overall management of the public funds.
- **Objectives of FRBM Act, 2003:**
 - ♦ to introduce transparent fiscal management systems
 - ♦ to introduce a more equitable and manageable distribution of the country's debts over the years
 - ♦ to aim for fiscal stability for India in the long run.
- **Targets/Provisions of Act:**
 - ♦ Elimination of Revenue Deficit by 2007-08. Bring down the fiscal deficit to a 3% of the GDP by 2007-08.
 - ♦ Three more documents would be placed along with the budget documents viz. Macroeconomic Framework Statement, Medium Term Fiscal Policy Statement and the Fiscal Policy Strategy Statement.
 - ♦ However, due to the 2007 international financial crisis, the deadlines for the implementation of the targets in the act was initially postponed and subsequently suspended in 2009.
- In year 2016, Government set up a committee to review the FRBM Act under the chairmanship of **Shri N.K. Singh**, which gave its report in year 2017.

REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (RCEP)

Copper and Aluminum associations of India have voiced concerns about India joining the RCEP. As joining, RCEP will pave the way for zero duty on imports, crippling the domestic sector.

About:

- If the grouping comes into existence, it will be the **world's largest trading bloc**.
- It has members from Asia and Asia-Pacific regions.
- This means a zero-customs duty zone in a geography that contributes –
 - ♦ 34% of global gross domestic product (GDP) and
 - ♦ 40% of world trade.
 - ♦ Almost half of the world's population.

What is RCEP?
Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a proposed free trade agreement with 16 nations:

10 Asean nations	6 others
Brunel Cambodia Indonesia Laos Malaysia Myanmar	Philippines Singapore Thailand Vietnam Australia China India Japan South Korea New Zealand



Scope of RCEP:

- Trade in goods,
- Trade in services,
- Investments,
- Economic and technical cooperation,
- Competition and
- Intellectual property rights.

Why India should Join RCEP?

- RCEP will be in continuation with India's 'Look East Policy' and the subsequent 'Act East Policy'.
- It will help tap a **large geographical area** in South East Asia and beyond.
- It will **not** make our policy only **Europe** and **North America centric**.
- There will always be a sense of fear and anxiety among industry. But, the **experience of LPG reforms** shows that industry has adjusted well even when markets had been opened up.
- RCEP will give Indian exporters a window to be a part of **global value chains**.
- It will give India a chance to stall some of **unfair practices** such as doling out subsidies unethically and stalling Indian pharmaceutical products, among others, on the pretext of quality control.

Concerns in Joining RCEP:

- **It is not truly comprehensive in nature:**
 - ♦ RCEP members want India to eliminate or significantly reduce customs duties on maximum number of goods it traded with them.
 - ♦ India's huge domestic market provides immense opportunity of exports for RCEP countries.
 - ♦ But, **lower level of ambitions in services and investments**, a key area of interest for India, does not augur well for the agreement that seeks to be comprehensive in nature.
- India needs to be cautious while negotiating the pact as **trade deficit** is increasing with several of the RCEP member nations, which would impact domestic manufacturers.

Do You Know?

Under pressure from industry, the government has asked three entities to independently assess the RCEP's gains and losses:

- Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations,
- Rupa Chanda, Professor at IIM Bangalore to look into services aspects only and
- Centre for Regional Trade, New Delhi.

Trade Imbalance

- **\$55.3 Billion:** Merchandise exports to the region in Apr-Jan FY19
- **\$145.9 Billion:** Imports during the same period, leaving a trade deficit of \$90.6 billion
- **\$53.4 Billion:** Trade gap with China in FY19
- **\$38 Billion:** Exports to 15 APAC nations under RCEP last year

The Hurdles



- **India's major** proposals, which have been rejected by the RCEP countries, include a more business-friendly visa regime, and an RCEP Business Travel Card aimed at facilitating liberal movement of professionals and tourists
- **India not** competitive in infrastructure and manufacturing services and is unlikely to make gains in these under the pact, as per a govt think tank

According to premier think tank

- ♦ India is likely to **gain only \$2-10 billion** by **exporting services** to 15 Asia-Pacific countries under the proposed mega regional trade agreement.
- ♦ The likely gains from services exports **will not compensate** for the **higher amount of goods imports**, especially from China, under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade pact.

Way Forward:

- To take advantage of such Free Trade Agreements, there is need to develop strong manufacturing capabilities.
- Given the situation, India needs to **intensify its bilateral engagement** with several countries in an attempt to seek further improvements in their offers, particularly on movement of professionals and IT-related Services.



2

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

ARMS TRADE TREATY

US President to withdraw US from Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

About:

- Continuing US's drift from multilateralism, President Donald Trump has announced that the US will withdraw from the ATT.

Background:

- Advancing his America First policy, this the third major arms-related agreement from which he has pulled out the since joining office in January 2017.
- Earlier, the US has withdrawn from UNESCO, the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INFT), which bans nuclear-tipped missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 km, and The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (the agreement on de-nuclearizing Iran that was made by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, Germany and Iran).

Reasons for Withdrawal:

- Undermines US's sovereignty:** According to the US, treaty amounts to international gun control, and is a threat to America's second amendment right to bear arms.
 - However, during the treaty negotiation, it was made clear that the pact would not threaten the right to bear arms afforded by the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
 - It has no authority over national gun control laws.
 - Nevertheless, U.S. gun-rights organizations, led by the National Rifle Association, have alleged that the treaty would impose limits on U.S. domestic gun sales.
 - The US is the world's top arms exporter. Its weapons sales are 58% higher than those of Russia, the world's second largest exporter.
- Major arm exporters are non-signatories:** The US alleges that the treaty fails to truly address the problem of irresponsible arms transfers because other top arms exporters – **including Russia and China - have not signed up to it. India too is not a signatory.**
- Discriminate usage:** The US has criticized that some groups have attempted to use the treaty to overturn sovereign national decisions on arms sales, specifically pointing to attempts to block the UK's sale of weapons to Saudi Arabia.
 - The sale of arms to Saudi Arabia by western countries has been highly contentious because of the use of those weapons in air strikes in Yemen that have killed and injured thousands of civilians.

Arms Trade Treaty

- Aim:** The treaty is the first global accord to regulate the sale of a broad array of conventional weapons between countries.
- Established:** It was signed in 2013, and officially came into law the following year.
- Members:** The pact has been signed and ratified by 101 countries so far - including Germany, France and the UK. **The US is among another 29 nations that signed the treaty but have not ratified it to make it law.**
- Requirements under the treaty:**
 - States have to monitor their arms exports, and **ensure their weapons sales do not break existing arms embargoes.**
 - Nations also expected to ensure the weapons they export **do not end up being used for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes or terrorist acts.**
 - In events of irregular arms transfers, nations **are expected to stop the transfer.**

India's Reservations with ATT

- Tilts toward exporting countries:** As evident from the following, ATT favors exporting countries:
 - Article 7 gives exporting State parties the discretionary **power to question the motives** of a sovereign arms-importing state. Such discretion is unchallenged and is liable to be a geopolitical call.
 - The treaty fails to consider the possibility that exporting states may use arms to violate international humanitarian law by targeting civilians or using arms for illicit purposes.
 - Article 11 **overlooks responsibility of exporting states** in cases where the exporting state has prior knowledge of diversion of arms or is complicit in the diversion.
 - Treaty has been critiqued for being an instrument to level the playing field for Western arms suppliers and block competition from countries like Russia and China to protect their own industry.
- Does not include non-state actors:** India's foremost security concern is the issue of terrorism, which is inextricably linked with possession of illicit arms by non-state actors. However, ATT fails to address the issue of transfer of arms to non-state actors.

INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD

India's Jagjit Pavadia is re-elected to the UN's International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) with the highest margin.

About:

- Jagjit Pavadia has been a member of the INCB since 2015.
- The tenure period for current win will be from March 2020 to March 2025.

International Narcotics Control Board:

- It is the **independent and quasi-judicial** monitoring body for the implementation of the **United Nations international drug control conventions**.
- **Establishment:** In 1968 in accordance with the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961.
- **Members:** 13 members who are elected by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
- **Tenure:** Each of the 13 members is elected for a five-year term and serves in **their personal capacity, not as government representatives**.
- **Headquarter:** Vienna.
- **Mandate:** Ensuring adequate supplies of narcotics are available for medical and scientific purposes while combating their diversion as well as the illicit drugs manufacture and trafficking.
- **Publication:** An annual report providing a comprehensive survey of the drug control situation in various parts of the world is submitted to ECOSOC.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF MULTILATERALISM AND DIPLOMACY FOR PEACE

Recently, 24th April was marked as International day for multilateralism and diplomatic peace.

About:

- **On April 24 2019**, the first official International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace was celebrated.
- The UN's GA officially approved the day of observance through resolution A/RES/73/127.
- The International Day is a reaffirmation of the UN Charter and its principles of resolving disputes among countries through peaceful means.

Multilateralism

- In international relations, multilateralism refers to an **alliance of multiple countries pursuing a common goal**.
- It is principally associated with the era after World War II.
- During the time, multiple multilateral agreements led primarily by the United States were negotiated.
- **Examples:** The World Trade Organization (in trade) and (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (security)).

- It also acknowledges the use of multilateral decision-making and diplomacy in achieving peaceful resolutions to conflicts among nations.

INDIAN NAVY IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

Navies of US, India, Japan, Philippine demonstrated joint presence in South China Sea.

About:

- **Group Sail:** Indian Navy conducted six-day long Group Sail with the naval ships of Japan, the Philippines and the U.S. in the South China Sea.
- **Indian ships participated:** INS Kolkata, a guided-missile destroyer, and INS Shakti.
- The ships conducted formation exercises, communication drills, passenger transfers and held a leadership exchange aboard JS Izumo (Izumo-class of helicopter destroyer of US).
- **On its route, Indian ships also participated in the**
 - ♦ International Fleet Review (IFR) as part of the 70th anniversary celebrations of the People's Liberation Army (Navy).
 - ♦ Phase I of the maritime security field training exercise under the aegis of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus).

Significance:

- **China's presence:** In recent years, China's growing assertiveness in the South China Sea has been a source of concern for these countries.
- Citing nine-dash line, China claims nearly the entire sea under its jurisdiction.
- **Joint effort:** The sail-through is the first of its kind engagement in South China Sea. It highlighted coordination among like-minded Indo-Pacific navies and their presence in the region.
- However, a combined PASSEX (passage exercise) does not assert strategic intent as much as a high-end joint exercises by nations.

SLAVERY IN MODERN WORLD

Britain through its Modern Slavery Innovation Fund (MSIF) is set to fund six anti-slavery projects around the globe.

About:

- Under Modern Slavery Innovation Fund Britain pledged £4 million to support global anti-slavery projects.
- Six organizations, such as charity Anti-Slavery International and the United Nations University, a research institution, will share aid money from The Modern Slavery Innovation Fund.

- A grant of up to 800,000 pounds each has been announced for new projects, including one in India (Freedom Fund).
- **The funding will also be used**
 - ♦ to run workshops on modern slavery in South Africa,
 - ♦ improve support for survivors in India,
 - ♦ develop an online data hub to boost anti-slavery policies.
- In total, the British government has committed 200 million pounds to combat modern-day slavery overseas.
- In 2015, it also passed the **Modern Slavery Act** to crack down on traffickers, force businesses to check their supply chains for forced labor, and protect people at risk of being enslaved.

Modern Slavery Innovation Fund:

- **Established:** 2016
- **Corpus:** 33.5 million pound
- **Managed by:** the UK Home office
- **Objective:** To support international projects find innovative ways to end modern slavery.
- **Target:** High risk countries from where victims are regularly trafficked to the UK

Do You Know?

- Global Slavery Index defines modern slavery as “situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, and abuse of power or deception.”
- According to **ILO's Global Estimate of Modern Slavery**, there are 40 million people in modern slavery and 152 million in child labour around the world.
- **GSI 2018:** Ranked India 53th (=North Korea) out of 167 countries. 8 million people are living in modern slavery in India.
- **Target 8.7 under SDG 8:** Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.

Indian laws:

- Indian Penal Code of 1861: Abolished slavery in British India making enslavement of humans a criminal offense.
- Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1976: As a means to sustenance, allows transfer of little capital to every person coming out of slavery.

CHAGOS ISLANDS

UN General assembly has strongly condemned British occupation of Indian Ocean territory.

About:

- The UN passed a resolution demanding the UK to end colonial control over the Chagos archipelago and return its control to Mauritius unconditionally within 6 months.
- The resolution dealt whether the dispute is a matter of decolonisation or a bilateral sovereignty issue. Since the decolonization of Mauritius was not conducted in a manner consistent with the right to self-determination, the Assembly affirmed, the continued administration of the Archipelago constitutes a wrongful act.
- India, along with 115 nations voted in favour of UNGA resolution.
- The draft resolution was submitted by Senegal on behalf of the members of the Group of African States.
- Earlier, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in its advisory opinion has rejected UK's claim of sovereignty over Chagos Islands.

Background:

- Britain purchased the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965 for £3m, creating a region officially known as the British Indian Ocean Territory.
- It pledged to cede the islands when these are no longer needed for defense purposes.
- Between 1967 and 1973, islands' entire population was evicted to make way for a joint military base with the US in Diego Garcia.
- US planes have been sent from the base to bomb Afghanistan and Iraq.
- The facility was also reportedly used by the CIA to interrogate terrorism suspects.
- In 2016, the lease for the base was extended until 2036.

Line of Arguments:

- **UK:** It has maintained that Mauritius gave up the territory freely in return for a range of benefits.
- **Mauritius:** It maintains that prior to independence in 1968, Mauritius had no legal competence, as a state, to give any consent to the detachment of the Chagos Archipelago from its territory.
- The right to self-determination and territorial integrity were a fundamental part of customary international law in 1965 when Mauritius was dismembered.

Effectiveness of the Resolution:

- Mauritius has agreed if given control of the islands, it will allow the military base to continue operating in accordance with international law.
- But, as the resolution is non-binding, it would not be enough to force the UK to give up its claim.

- However, it is bound to create a political toll on the UK and draining its support in the General Assembly.
- Mauritius is now working to challenge UK membership of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission.

International Court of Justice

- It is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations (UN).
- **Establish:** In June 1945 by the Charter of the UN.
- **Headquarter:** The seat of the Court is at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands).
- Of the six principal organs of the UN, it is the only one not located in New York.

Mandate:

- **Contentious cases:** To settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by States and;
- **Advisory proceedings:** To give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies.
- **Composition:** 15 judges, who are elected for term of office of nine years by the UNGA and UNSC.
- Its official languages are English and French.
- Justice Dalveer Bhandari is the fourth Indian judge to be elected to the ICJ after B.N. Rau, Nagendra Singh and R.S. Pathak.

MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

Iran slams US plan to designate Muslim Brotherhood a terror group

About:

- US President Donald Trump has urged the State Department to designate the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) a foreign terrorist organization.
- **Consequences of Designation:**
 - ♦ It will become a crime for any American to assist the group.
 - ♦ Brotherhood's members active in political parties in several countries would be banned from the United States.

Muslim Brotherhood: It is one of the world's oldest and most influential Islamic movements. It was founded in Egypt in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna.

- Banna rejected the Western model of secular, democratic government.
- He wanted an Islamic religious revival that would enable the Muslim world to catch up to the West and break free of colonial rule.

- **Sphere of influence:** Its loose network encompasses movements and political parties across the Middle East and North Africa that vary in their doctrines and strategies.
- In Syria, the movement helped an armed uprising in 1982 in Hama city that was crushed by a forceful armed campaign.
- In Jordan, it was part of a political opposition grouping which won seats in 2016 elections.
- Several political parties in Turkey, Tunisia and Jordan consider themselves as part of the Muslim Brotherhood or have ties to it.
- Qatar also hosts prominent Brotherhood figures. Owing to which, nations like UAE, Egypt, S. Arabia and the US have cut diplomatic ties with Qatar, and imposed an economic embargo in 2017.
- **Banned in countries:** They are currently banned in many countries – Egypt, Syria, Russia, Saudi Arabia, UAE and more.
- **Reason for the ban:**
 - ♦ **Political activism:** Challenging absolute monarchies and authoritarian governments of the region, MB has called for democratic elections across Arab.
 - ♦ **Existential threat:** Nations are alarmed that Muslim Brotherhood parties might rise to power through elections.
 - ♦ **Ideological competitor:** Most Sunni dominant nations like S. Arabia and UAE holds Brotherhood's Islamic ideology as a threat to the idea of the nation-state and region's stability.
 - ♦ **Link with Al Qaeda:** It is argued that the Brotherhood and Al Qaeda are essentially part of the same movement since both envision societies grounded in Islam.
- In April 2019, the US has also declared Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards a foreign terrorist organization.

Background:



History of Violence:

- **Early militancy:** Brotherhood was involved in the active struggle against British occupation, and also cooperated with the Free Officers movement to liberate Egypt from the monarchy.

June, 2019

- ♦ **Difference of opinion:** After 1952, tension arose between the Free Officers (led by Gamal Abdel Nasser) and the Muslim Brotherhood.
- ♦ Naseer envisaged preferred a socialist, secular pan-Arab movement, while the Brotherhood rejected egalitarianism and nationalism as un-Islamic and called for the implementation of sharia.
- ♦ **Ban:** An assassination attempt was made on Nasser in 1954, following which brotherhood was banned.
- ♦ **Moved away from violence:** The Brotherhood renounced violence in 1970s at the insistence of Anwar al-Sadat, Nasser's successor.
- ♦ **Violent spin-off groups:** Since 2013, some members of the Brotherhood have broken off to form organizations that carry out acts of violence.
- ♦ Two of those groups, Hasm and Liwa al-Thawra, have been designated as terrorist organizations by the US.
- **Linkage with Other Organizations:**
 - ♦ **Hamas:** The militant Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. The US has designated them a terrorist organization.
 - ♦ **Al Qaeda:** Ayman al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian co-founder and now leader of Al Qaeda, is a former Brotherhood member. Many members who were frustrated with the Muslim Brotherhood's nonviolence have joined Al Qaeda.
- **Linkage with democracy:** The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt began winning seats in the Parliament in the 1980s, under President Hosni Mubarak.
 - ♦ It earned popular support by providing social services such as pharmacies, hospitals, and schools where security state failed.
 - ♦ In April 2011, it founded a political party known as Freedom and Justice Party.
 - ♦ The party came to power in Egypt's first modern free election in 2012.
 - ♦ Mohammed Morsi was made the President whose tenure was marked by widespread frustration with economic mismanagement and poor governance.
 - ♦ His administration was ousted by the military in July 2013.
- **Renewed ban:** A violent crackdown followed in which Morsi, much of the Brotherhood's leadership, and thousands of its supporters were arrested, and more than one thousand supporters were killed.
 - ♦ The military-backed government banned the Brotherhood once again at the end of 2013, excluding it from mainstream political channels.

NANGARHAR

An Afghan security forces raid against Taliban fighters in eastern Nangarhar province mistakenly killed a family of six.

About:

- **Location:** It is one of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan, located in the eastern part of the country.
- **Capital:** Jalalabad
- **Recent violence:** Afghan security forces launched a raid against Taliban fighter in the region.
 - ♦ With this, Afghan and international security forces have now killed 305 civilians in the country.
 - ♦ The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UAMA) has expressed concern over heavy toll on civilians in the region.
- **Casualties:** It was the deadliest Afghan province for US forces in 2017-18.
- **Strategic point for IS:** Nangarhar was the base camp for IS from where it controlled its South Asia operations, mainly recruitment of young men from the region. Many youths from India and Sri Lanka joined their operations in Nangarhar.
 - ♦ Clashes between Taliban and Daesh have displaced over 13,000 families from here.

CANADA'S GARBAGE

Philippines ships Canada's garbage back amid diplomatic row.

About:

- The Philippines is the latest Southeast Asian nation to take issue with developed nations for using the region as dumping grounds for waste.
- Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte has sent an estimated 1,500 tons of garbage back to Canada.
- He has ordered to leave the garbage in Canada's territorial water if it fails to accept them.

Background:

- **Issue:** Between 2013 and 2014, an Ontario company illegally dumped as many as 103 containers filled with hazardous waste.
- The Philippines made several diplomatic protests to Canada since a 2016 court ruling that the garbage be returned.
- Non-acceptance from Canadian government deepened the diplomatic row which led to Philippines recalling its diplomats.
- **Canada's argument:** The waste exported was a private commercial transaction done without the government's consent.
- However, Canada later agreed to take back the dozens of shipping containers, but did not give a timeline.
- **International environmental law:** Under the Basel Convention, which was ratified in the Philippines in 1994, waste shipments from countries that export waste must first obtain consent from the receiving country to discourage the shifting of waste from country to country.
 - ♦ However, consent is not necessary if the shipments are labeled as "for recycling."

Developing Nations as Dumping Ground:

- **Reasons:** Developing countries are the preferred destination for waste shipments because compared to developed countries most have
 - ♦ weaker regulations and
 - ♦ lower environmental standards.
- **Trend:** Southeast Asian countries have increasingly become the destination for waste exports from developed countries.
- Malaysia is the world's biggest importer of plastic waste. It replaced China after the country banned waste imports in 2017.
- **Indian case:** India has a massive pile of e-waste of its own but it has also become the dumping ground for other developed countries.
- **Reverse Trend:**
 - ♦ Malaysia has ordered return of as much as 3,000 tonnes of waste back to the countries of origin.
 - ♦ Thailand has issued a temporary order to prohibit imports of electronic and plastic waste.
 - ♦ Vietnam is attempting to prohibit waste imports by suspending the issue of licenses.

Basel Convention

- **Establishment:** The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal was adopted in 1989 and came into force in 1992.
- It was formed in response to a public outcry following the discovery of deposits of toxic wastes imported from abroad in Africa and other developing nations.
- **Mandate:**
 - ♦ Reducing trans-boundary movement of hazardous wastes to a minimum.
 - ♦ Treating and disposing hazardous wastes as close as possible to their source of generation
 - ♦ Minimising hazardous waste generation at source
- **Coverage:** hazardous wastes that are explosive, flammable, poisonous, infectious, corrosive, toxic or eco-toxic.
- **Basel Amendment:** With amendment in May 2019, it now includes plastic waste in a legally-binding framework.
 - ♦ From 2021, companies will need pre-approval to export plastic waste to any of the 187 countries signed up to the convention.
 - ♦ The United States, being the world's largest exporter of plastic waste, has not signed up to the convention so from 2021 it will be unable to legally export any to developing nations.
 - ♦ The amendment proposed by Japan and Norway, two plastic waste exporters.

AFGHANISTAN PEACE PROCESS

Engaging with Taliban

About:

- The Taliban said that the U.S. special envoy for Afghanistan should stop calling on Taliban militants to lay down their arms and tell the U.S. to end the use of force instead.
- In Kabul, President Ashraf Ghani renewed his appeal to hold direct talks with the Taliban and called for an agreement on a ceasefire.

Taliban Peace Talks:

- Two simultaneous negotiating processes for Afghanistan is going on as **Russia and the United States** back separate negotiations with different stakeholders.
- **U.S.** peace envoy has held a **series of direct talks with Taliban negotiators** in Doha, culminating in the basic framework of a possible peace deal.
- Russia holds '**Moscow Format**' meeting to discuss Afghan question.

Issues with Peace Talks:

- Held in the **absence of the Afghanistan government**. Taliban has rejected direct talks with the Afghan Government as it lacks legitimacy.
- **Non-involvement of neighbouring countries** of India, Iran and China on official levels.
- The Taliban **continues to carry out terror attacks** in Afghanistan even as its leadership talks with the U.S.
- Concerns of Afghans have remained secondary.
- It increased the **fear of loss of security and freedom** among the vulnerable groups of women, ethnic minorities, and civil society.
- The workings of Taliban politics are poorly understood.
- Two simultaneous negotiations with the US and Russia appears as a **return of great game** in Afghanistan.

India's approach towards Afghanistan Peace-Process:

- India's Afghanistan policy has **two major objectives**.
- First, **to curtail Pakistan's influence** in Kabul and deny Pakistan's state and non-state agents leverage to plot against Indian interests.
- Second, **to gain access to vast energy markets in Central Asia**.
- In order to achieve these objectives, India has been one of the staunchest supporters of a strong and independent government in Kabul since an Afghanistan that is indirectly controlled by Rawalpindi is detrimental to Indian strategic interests.

June, 2019

- India is **working in close coordination with the government** of Ashraf Ghani in almost all regional and international issues of concern.
- Echoing the Afghan stand, **India has been opposed to any outside interference** in talks with the Taliban, asserting that the peace process must be **“Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled.”**
- Earlier, India denied any support to peace talks with Taliban but later **India has given acceptance to talk with Taliban symbolically.**
- India sends non-official representation to the Moscow talks with the Taliban.

Reasons for Change in India’s Stand:

- As international talks with the Taliban leadership gain momentum, India has softened its stance towards Taliban.
- Even Russia and Iran have also softened their earlier stand over the Taliban and engage in peace talks.
- Taliban has promised to safeguard India’s investments in Chabahar to protect minorities, including Hindus and Sikhs, in Afghanistan.
- US inevitable withdrawal from Afghanistan has made India worried about the prospect of chaos and civil war.
- It is felt that it is time India recognized and negotiated with the Taliban to protect its huge investments.
- Non-involvement of India in talk with Taliban would consolidate Pakistan’s position in the future of Afghanistan.

Way Ahead:

- Despite its extensive developmental role, India remains a peripheral player in Afghan political affairs.
- Due to incoherent approach of the Trump administration, India will find itself unable to influence the situation without incurring significant costs.
- There are already growing voices in India who are now asking the government to engage with the Taliban more substantively.
- It remains to be seen how New Delhi will respond to Trump’s latest policy shifts.
- Defeatism or a lack of ambition for the India-Afghanistan relationship at this juncture would be much more detrimental to India’s interests than anything the Taliban’s return to Afghanistan’s political centre-stage can do.

COMMONWEALTH HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE

CHRI has expressed concerns over the Supreme court’s remark on the detention of ‘foreigners’ in Assam

About:

- Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) said that the Supreme court of India’s remark on the detention of foreigners in Assam was against India’s constitutional and international obligations.
- The concern is in reference to Chief Justice of India’s admonition of Assam Chief Secretary.
- Assam Chief Secretary had proposed a **methodology for the release of foreign prisoners** who have been in detention beyond their term of sentence for illegal entry.

Observations by CHRI:

- CHRI has argued that detainees languish in jail in inhumane conditions, in violation of their human rights, referring to Article 21 of the Indian Constitution.

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)

- The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) is an independent, non-profit, non-partisan, international non-governmental organisation working in the area of human rights.
- In 1987, several Commonwealth professional associations founded CHRI, since there was little focus on human rights within the association of 53 nations although the Commonwealth provided member countries the basis of shared common legal system.
- The CHRI team are mostly based in our three offices in New Delhi, London and Accra, with consultants and partner organisations spread across the world.
- CHRI’s objectives are to promote awareness of and adherence to the **Harare Commonwealth Declaration, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, and other internationally recognized human rights instruments, as well as domestic instruments supporting human rights in member states.
- It is said that the accounts from Assam indicate arbitrariness and not rule of law.
- Many of those at risk of being marked foreigners were from the bottom of the economic pyramid.
- These people are unable to sustain the complex adjudication process needed to establish their citizenship.
- Large numbers were already in detention camps, the CHRI pointed out.
- International law lays down **that deportations can take place only with the consent of the country of origin.**
- However, **India has no such agreement with Bangladesh.** Also, Bangladesh has consistently refused to accept that its citizens migrate in large numbers to India.

Plea by CHRI:

- Any **method** used must be undertaken within the rule of law frame, be a just **and fair** and designed to minimise individual hardship and tragedy.
- This is a **tragedy of growing intensity** which is gathering momentum as a result of the current National Register of Citizens (NRC) exercise in Assam.
- It also **urged the Supreme Court to not hurry** through the process of verifying the applications of 38 lakh people out the 40.07 lakh left out of the complete draft of the NRC.
- The court has set **July 2019 as the deadline** for the final list.

INDO-PACIFIC VISION OF INDIA AND ASSOCIATED CHALLENGES

The Indo-Pacific wing in the Ministry of External Affairs gives strategic coherence to India's Indo-Pacific vision

About:

- India recently set up the Indo-Pacific wing in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).
- This is seen as a natural corollary to India's Indo-Pacific vision.

Indo-Pacific Vision of India:

- India views the Indo-Pacific as a **geographic and strategic expanse**.
- Indian vision was presented by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the **Shangri-La Dialogue in June 2018**.
- His speech underscored that for India the **Indo-Pacific stretches from the eastern coast of Africa to Oceania** which also includes the **Pacific Island countries**.
- **Inclusiveness, openness, and ASEAN centrality and unity** lie at the heart of the Indian notion of Indo-Pacific.
- Security in the region must be maintained through **dialogue, a common rules-based order, freedom of navigation**, unimpeded commerce and settlement of disputes in accordance with international law.
- More **connectivity initiatives** impinging on respect for **sovereignty, territorial integrity, consultation, good governance**, transparency, viability and sustainability should be promoted.

Mechanisms to Promote the Indo-Pacific Vision:

- The **setting up of the Indo-Pacific wing** in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is a natural corollary to India's Indo-Pacific vision.

Need for Indo-Pacific wing in MEA

- Given the huge geography that the Indian definition of Indo-Pacific covers, there was a need for a **bureaucratic re-alignment** to create such a division.
- It was **to include various territorial divisions in the MEA** that look after the policies of the countries which are part of the Indo-Pacific discourse.
- This wing provides a **strategic coherence** to the Prime Minister's Indo-Pacific vision, integrating the IORA, the ASEAN region and the Quad to the Indo-Pacific dynamic.
- **Similar moves by partners in the region:**
 - ♦ **U.S.** renamed the U.S. Pacific Command to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command as well as launched the **Asia Reassurance Initiative Act**.
 - ♦ **Japan** unveiled the **Free and Open Indo-Pacific** concept was unveiled in 2016.
 - ♦ **Australia** released its Foreign Policy White Paper in 2017, which details **Australia's Indo-Pacific vision**.

- India's **Act East policy** remains the bedrock of the national Indo-Pacific vision and the **centrality of ASEAN** is embedded in the Indian narrative.
- India has been an active participant in mechanisms like the **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)**, in ASEAN-led frameworks like the **East Asia Summit**, the **ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus**, the **ASEAN Regional Forum** as well as the **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation** and the **Mekong-Ganga Economic Corridor**.
- India has also been convening the **Indian Ocean Naval Symposium**, in which the navies of the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** participate.

Indian Ocean Region on the Focus

- The integration of the IORA means that attention will continue to be focused on the IOR.
 - This can be a result of the **growing Chinese footprint in the Indian Ocean** and Chinese diplomacy in the region.
 - The Ministry of Defence and the Indian Navy also are also taking note of the developments in this region and this wing can work **in coordination** with these two organs as well.
- India has boosted its engagements with **Australia and New Zealand** and has deepened its cooperation with the **Republic of Korea**.
 - Through the **Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation**, India is stepping up its interactions with the Pacific Island countries.
 - India's **growing partnership with Africa** can be seen through the convening of mechanisms like the India-Africa Forum Summits.

- India's **multi-layered engagement with China** as well as strategic partnership with **Russia** underlines its commitment to ensuring a stable, open, secure, inclusive and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

Challenges:

- There are still challenges for India, especially how it will **integrate the Quadrilateral initiative** which got revived in 2017 **with its larger Indo-Pacific approach**.
- It will also be important for the new MEA division **to move beyond security and political issues** and articulate a **more comprehensive policy** towards the region.
- **Commerce and connectivity** in particular will have to be prioritised if India is to take advantage of a new opening for its regional engagement.
- While India has been consistently emphasising inclusiveness in the Indo-Pacific framework, it will be **challenging to maintain a balance** between the interests of all stakeholders.
- There are **differences between India's vision and the U.S.'s strategy** for the Indo-Pacific.
- Countries like **China and Russia view the Indo-Pacific with suspicion**.

Way Ahead:

- As geopolitical tensions rise between China and the U.S., the MEA's new division will have its task cut out if India's long-term political and economic interests in the region are to be preserved.
- A bureaucratic change was needed, but going forward the challenge would be to see how effectively this change manifests itself in managing India's growing diplomatic footprint in the Indo-Pacific.

IMAGE MAKEOVER OF BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

China promised a total makeover of the BRI at the second BRF due to growing complaints against the structure and implementation of the BRI.

About:

- The **Second Belt and Road Forum (BRF)** for **reviewing progress** of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was recently held in **Beijing**.
- China claimed **participation from 150 countries** at the forum.
- It was a show of China's self-confidence about its place in the world at a time of churn in global politics.
- The U.S. absence was barely mentioned, nor did the shadow of the U.S. campaign against China's "militarism", "predatory economics" and "technology theft".

- However, the structure and implementation of the BRI have **attracted negative comment**, including from some of the countries represented at the forum.

Complaints against BRI:

- Projects are selected as per Chinese priorities, with **inadequate consultation with recipients**.
- Terms are agreed bilaterally and **non-transparently** with the leadership, and benefits do not trickle down to the population.
- **Contracts go to Chinese companies**, are implemented by Chinese labour, with raw materials and products from China.
- Most projects are **over-valued and economically unviable**.
- Most financing is by Chinese loans on unrealistic terms, leading eventually to **"debt traps"**.
- Foreign companies and private investment are spurned.
- **Corruption** flourishes in the absence of transparency, labour laws are flouted and environmental compliance is lax.
- Above all, the BRI exhibits **China's geostrategic ambition** for economic dominance and political hegemony.

Image makeover of BRI by China:

- China said that it will be **guided by extensive consultation**, joint contribution and shared benefits.
- **Cooperation should be transparent**, people-centric, green and clean, with zero tolerance for corruption.
- Project evaluation, tendering, bidding and implementation would meet **international standards**.
- The **right of participating countries to define their developmental priorities** would be respected, as also their laws, sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- Foreign investment would be welcomed.
- Economic, social, fiscal and environmental sustainability of projects should be ensured, with emphasis on debt sustainability.
- In short, it was **a promise to transform the BRI**, in one fell swoop, from all that it was into all that it should have been.

Other initiatives taken by China regarding BRI:

- China sees "Belt and Road" as an overarching **framework for bilateral and plurilateral cooperation**.
- It announced a clutch of **"Belt and Road" scholarships**, training courses and exchange programmes.
- Groups of countries launched cooperation mechanisms for ports administration, accounting standards, tax administration, banking, intellectual property, sustainable cities, energy and dispute settlement, among many others.
- Some of these mechanisms were **facilitated by UN agencies**.
- China listed **283 deliverables from the forum**, comprising Chinese initiatives, bilateral and multilateral agreements, investment projects and financing arrangements.

- The message was the BRI is now more than a bunch of Chinese infrastructure projects.
- China sought to project BRI as truly a “community of common destiny” **to reshape global governance** whose members could forge plurilateral cooperation under its umbrella.

India and BRI:

- **India**, along with **Bhutan**, were the only two countries which did not attend the Belt and Road Forum from South Asia.
- China held that India’s absence would not affect the ongoing high-level India-China dialogue.
- With the **recent image makeover** attempt of BRI, the debate in India about **whether or not India should join the BRI** will probably be reignited.

Arguments in favour of India joining BRI

- **Direct access** to Afghanistan and Central Asia
- **Economic benefits**, Boost to trade, investment and business engagement
- **Security**: Development in Gilgit-Baltistan area would help to curb security threats
- **Energy**: BRI would remove the obstacles in implementation of **two major energy cooperation projects**: the **Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline** and the **Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline**. This is crucial for India’s energy security.
- It can **help improve Indo-China ties**
- Not joining BRI may lead to **isolation** of India in South Asia
- Many geopolitical issues and differences can be resolved through economic integration

Arguments against India’s joining of BRI

- **Against sovereignty**: India argues that the BRI and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project violates its sovereignty because it passes through the part of the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir that belongs to India.
- **No consultation with India**: There has been lack of consultations with India before the launch of BRI.
- Under Maritime Silk Route (MSR) China is developing ports in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan and is nothing but an **economic disguise to the “Strings of Pearls” Theory**.
- India sees BRI to be primarily **driven by broad geostrategic and geopolitical aim** to undermine U.S. hegemony.
- India has also highlighted the **unsustainable nature of Chinese projects** under BRI which have led to **‘debt-trap’** in countries like Sri Lanka and the Maldives.
- Through BRI, China is **countering the strategies of India in North East** region and is promoting its greater presence in North East India, part of which China claims as its own territory. This may have a security impact on India.

Way Ahead:

- Even as India shuns the BRI, it has no choice but to emulate China on connectivity of all kinds.
- India has to **modernise connectivity** across its land and maritime frontiers with neighbouring countries.
- The scale of the challenge has also encouraged India to consider **working with others**, especially **Japan, Australia and the United States**, in promoting regional connectivity in the **Indo-Pacific**.
- India is coming to terms with the fact that the **BRI is more than two-dimensional**. Unlike in the traditional Belt and Road projects, India has significant capabilities in the space and digital domains. But more needs to be done.

BRI: More than Belt and Road

- Under the BRI, the “belt” is about overland connectivity and the “road” referred to the maritime corridors spreading out from China’s eastern seaboard.
- The additional and inter-related dimensions of BRI are about **connectivity in outer space and the digital domain**.

MASOOD AZHAR LISTED AS A DESIGNATED GLOBAL TERRORIST

While this is a clear diplomatic victory for India, it is only the first of several steps that India needs to take its fight against Pakistan promoted terror infrastructure to closure.

About:

- Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) chief Masood Azhar was listed as a designated global terrorist by the **UN Security Council 1267 Committee** recently.
- The UN Sanctions Committee designated Azhar as a global terrorist after **China lifted its hold** on a proposal to ban him.

Why China Lifted its Technical Hold?

- China had so far **blocked four attempts** to list Azhar at the 1267 Sanctions Committee – a move interpreted as a sign of its “all-weather” relationship with Pakistan.
- However, the latest block resulted in **international criticism of China** for providing an escape route to Azhar, especially after Beijing signed off on a UN Security Council statement condemning the Pulwama attack that named JeM.
- **Post Wuhan summit** India China relations have improved and India’s persistence on Azhar has paid off.
- **Combined efforts of the US, the UK and France** to push China to change its mind, even threatening to shame it with a public vote at the UNSC.

- **China** said that it took the decision after it found no objection to the **listing proposal** by the US, the UK and France following a careful study of the **revised materials**.
- **France, the UK and the US** had moved a fresh proposal to declare Azhar as a global terrorist by the UN **in the wake of the Pulwama terror attack** in February.
- However, the **reasons** for listing **did not mention the Pulwama attack** for which the JeM had claimed responsibility.

Reasons for the Sanctions:

- Masood Azhar's **support for the JeM** since its founding.
- Being associated with the **Al-Qaeda** by recruiting for them and participating in the financing, planning, facilitating, preparing, or perpetrating terror acts.
- His role in recruiting fighters in **Afghanistan**.
- The terrorist organisation, **Jaish-e-Mohammad**, which was headed by Masood Azhar has itself been **sanctioned by the 1267 Committee in 2001**.

Significance of the Move:

- It is a **victory for India** in a decade-old diplomatic battle waged primarily by it and supported by U.S., UK and France at the UNSC towards continuous efforts on fight against terrorism.

Previous Efforts against Azhar

- In 2009, India first moved a proposal by itself to designate Azhar.
- In 2016 again India moved the proposal with the **P3 - the United States, the United Kingdom and France** in the UN's 1267 Sanctions Committee to ban Azhar, also the mastermind of the attack on the air base in **Pathankot** in January, 2016.
- **In 2017, the P3 nations moved a similar proposal again.**
- However, on all occasions **China**, a veto-wielding permanent member of the UN Security Council, **blocked India's proposal** from being adopted by the Sanctions Committee.
- A UNSC designation will **subject Azhar to an asset freeze, travel ban and an arms embargo**, thereby restricting his activities globally.
- An **asset freeze** under the sanctions committee requires that all states freeze without delay the funds and other financial assets or economic resources of designated individuals and entities.
- It demonstrates the **international community's resolve to fight against terrorism** and its enablers.
- The U.S. has **further sought sustained actions from Pakistan** against terrorism, consistent with its international obligations.

Way Ahead:

- The bigger question now will be how much action will Pakistan take against Azhar.
- Azhar could be detained soon, but like the other prominent terror-designate **Hafiz Saeed**, who **remains free despite being designated** more than a decade ago for the Mumbai attacks, the **detention may just be a lip service**.
- **Real action will mean enforcing the letter of the UNSC mandate** by shutting down Azhar's ability to operate, and of his group's ability to carry out terror attacks in India.
- This will include cutting off Azhar's recourse to funds and arms, and also ensuring he cannot travel out of Pakistan.

INDIA'S FIGHT OVER PAKISTAN'S AIRSPACE

The geopolitical tension between India and Pakistan has come at a high price not only for India's aviation sector, but also for other foreign airlines operating long-haul West-East flights.

About:

- Pakistan has recently opened one route for west-bound flights from India.
- It had shut its airspace for all civilian flights following the Indian Air Force's strikes at Balakot.
- A decision on opening a passage for planes overflying Pakistan and entering India is yet to be taken.
- The route that has been opened passes from near Mumbai and enters southern Pakistan.
- This is only one of the 11 exit and entry points between India and Pakistan.

Opening up

Pakistan's decision to activate one route will help flights from Mumbai to the U.S. and Europe



• There are 11 entry and exit points between India and Pakistan

• About 220 flights use Pakistan's airspace everyday, according to IATA

• Pakistan shut its airspace on February 26 for all airlines

• By March 27, Pakistan had resumed flight operations from all airports in the country. But transit flights and flights to India, Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok remained suspended

Impact of the Airspace Ban:

- Since the ban by Pakistan on the use of its airspace, several flights within Asia, between Asia and West Asia or Europe or the U.S. were forced to take a longer route.
- This entailed **an increase in flight duration** and **sometimes a halt for refuelling**.
- This led to an **increase in operational costs**, forcing many airlines to cancel flights or hike fares.
- Since the imposition of ban by Pakistan, the **flying time** for India's flights from New Delhi had **increased** by 1.5 hours and from Mumbai by 30-40 minutes.
- The new route will save India 8-12 minutes depending on the winds.

IATA's Appeal to Pakistan:

- The International Air Transport Association has urged Pakistan to open the airspace as soon as possible.

International Air Transport Association (IATA)

- The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is the trade association for the world's airlines.
- It represents around 290 airlines or 82% of total air traffic.
- It supports many areas of aviation activity and helps formulate industry policy on critical aviation issues.

Functions:

- To improve understanding of the air transport industry among decision makers.
- To develop global commercial standards for air transport.
- To help airlines to operate safely, securely, efficiently, and economically.
- To strive for sensible regulation.

What is Airspace and how is it Regulated?

- Airspace is the portion of the atmosphere controlled by a country above its territory, including its territorial waters.
- By international law, every state has complete and exclusive sovereignty over the airspace above its territory, including its territorial sea.
- Thus, a country's sovereign airspace corresponds with the maritime definition of territorial waters as being **12 nautical miles (22.2 km)** out from a nation's coastline.
- Airspace not within any country's territorial limit is considered international, similar to the high seas in maritime law.

However, a country may, by international agreement, assume responsibility for controlling parts of international airspace, such as those over the oceans. For instance, the United States provides air traffic control services over a large part of the Pacific Ocean, even though the airspace is international.

- The principle of airspace sovereignty was affirmed in the **Paris Convention on the Regulation of Aerial Navigation (1919)** and subsequently by various other multilateral treaties.
- Thus, under the **Geneva Convention on the High Seas (1958)** as well as under **international customary law**, the **freedom of the high seas applies to aerial navigation** as well as to **maritime navigation**.
- Vertically, airspace ends where outer space begins.
- However, there is **no international agreement on the vertical extent** of sovereign airspace.
- Every state is entitled to regulate the entry of foreign aircraft into its territory and that persons within its territory are subject to its laws.
- States normally permit foreign private aircraft to visit or fly through their territory without too much difficulty.

- Such aircraft registered in states that are parties to the **1944 Chicago Convention** are allowed into the territories of all other contracting states without prior diplomatic permission.

Chicago Convention

- It provides **five freedoms of the air**.
- The privilege of flying across a country nonstop.
- Flying across with a stop for technical purposes only.
- These two freedoms are also known as **transit rights**.
- The privilege of bringing in and discharging traffic from the home state of the aircraft or airline.
- Picking up traffic for the home state of the aircraft or airline.
- Picking up traffic for or discharging traffic from third states in the territory of the state granting the privilege.

12th EU-INDIA JOINT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

EU and India intend to renew the India-EU Science & Technology Agreement for another five years.

About:

- The purpose of the India-EU Science and Technology Agreement is to strengthen the co-operation in research and development activities in S&T fields of common interest between the research institutions of the European Union Member States and India.
- The cooperation activities include supporting joint research and development projects; exchange of scientists and experts, sharing of advanced research facilities, joint seminars, symposia and workshops, sharing of relevant information on science, technology and innovation policy, program and research & development projects.
- On areas for future cooperation, health research and bio-economy will remain high on the agenda.
- New areas of cooperation will be explored to fill the knowledge gap on climate change, on renewable energy in line with Mission Innovation aiming at reducing CO2 emissions

Background:

- The EU-India Agreement on scientific and technological cooperation was first concluded in 2001, renewed in 2010 and 2015.
- The Department of Science and Technology of the Government of India and the Directorate General Research and Innovation of the European Commission are the executive agencies of the cooperation activities and oversee the implementation of this Agreement.

June, 2019

- Recently, 7 India-EU projects on purification of water and waste water treatment, 2 on vaccines and 1 on polar sciences were launched.

CHINA PLANS NEW FOREIGN INVESTMENT LAW

China has passed a new Foreign Investment Law that will come into effect on January 1, 2020 and is a new guiding document to govern foreign investment in China.

About:

- An earlier version of the draft law was initially introduced in 2015, but was put on the back-burner due to disagreements on its content.
- Law is passed to build a market environment of fair competition" for foreign investors.

Provisions of New Law:

- It explicitly bars Chinese JV partners from stealing IP and commercial secrets from their foreign partners via protections.
- It prohibits government officials from using administrative measures to pursue forced technology transfers but also makes them criminally liable.
- Foreign investors will receive equal treatment when applying for licenses and participating in government procurement.
- State would use the Negative List to ensure pre-establishment national treatment.
- The new law guards foreign investments from arbitrary expropriation except under special circumstances for the public interest by giving "fair and reasonable compensation".

Positive Impact of Law:

- **On China:** Beijing sees the law as a tool to attract more foreign investment as its economy slows.
- It will help in trade negotiations of China with USA .Hence it would be a boost for global trade and investment.
- It is an opportunity for Indian firms to diversify their foreign investment portfolio.
- It will act as deterrent against counterfeiting and intellectual property theft and will offer new avenues for the enforcement of intellectual property protection.

Way Ahead:

- Recent move by China is a step in right direction in line with 'Washington Consensus' especially after trade war with USA. It will help in reducing tension and promoting global growth.
- However, concerns raised regarding interpretation of provisions like "special circumstances" and "for the public interest" must be addressed. The subsequent provisions of detailed implementation rules, especially their timeliness and interpretive content linking to other laws, will be critical in the successful implementation of the Law.

FIRST-EVER CHINA-PAKISTAN FOREIGN MINISTER-LEVEL STRATEGIC DIALOGUE

China and Pakistan held the first China-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue in Beijing.

About:

- In the Strategic Dialogue, both countries agreed to expedite construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).
- Further, to fight against terrorism, China asked other countries to neither apply double standards nor associate terrorism with any particular religion or country.

Background:

- India-Pakistan relations are at low point after the Pulwama attack and India's airstrike on terror camps in Pakistan.
- The Foreign Ministers' meeting was held less than a week after China put a technical hold on the proposal to list Jaish chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist in the UN Security Council 1267 committee for the fourth time.

Implications on India:

- India has to face China's opposition in UN for any action against Pakistan or against terrorist operating from Pakistan. The technical issue raised by China in declaring Masood Azhar a global terrorist for the 4th time is part of such actions.
- CPEC can be a **debt trap** for Pakistan which might further push Pakistan to act in favour of China. There is possibility of using CPEC for military purposes in future in lieu of it.
- Pakistan will continue to use Chinese support for anti-India activities.

Way Ahead:

- India should actively use the international forum like UN, FATF, G20 etc. to put pressure on China and Pakistan to stop support to terrorists.
- There is also a need to adopt Comprehensive convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) which would end the discrimination between Good terrorist and bad terrorists.

"SITUATION OF WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS" REPORT

The UN panel report was submitted before the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in its fortieth session.

About:

- The **Human Rights Council** holds no fewer than three regular sessions a year, for a total of at least ten weeks. They take place in March (four weeks), June (three weeks) and September (three weeks).

- If **one third of the Member States** requests so, the Human Rights Council can decide at any time **to hold a special session** to address human rights violations and emergencies.
- The report deals with the "Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders".

Women Human Right Defenders:

- The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders defines women human rights defenders as both female human rights defenders, and any other human rights defenders who work in the defense of women's rights or on gender issues.
- Women defenders are subject to the same types of risks as any human rights defender, but as women, they are also targeted for or exposed to gender-specific threats and gender-specific violence.
- Often, the work of WHRDs is seen as challenging traditional notions of family and gender roles in the society, which can lead to hostility by the general population and authorities. Due to this, WHRDs are subjected to stigmatization and ostracism by community leaders, faith-based groups, families and communities who consider them to be threatening religion, honour or culture through their work.

Way Forward:

- **Recognize the specific challenges:** Women defenders are more at risk of being subject to certain forms of violence and other violations, prejudice, exclusion, and repudiation than their male counterparts. It is therefore important to recognize the specific challenges this group of defenders face, in order to strengthen protection mechanisms.
- **Prompt investigation** of intimidation, threats, violence and other abuses against women human rights defenders, whether committed by State or non-State actors, should be undertaken.

SRI LANKA AND CHINA

Sri Lanka signed a \$989 million loan with China's Exim Bank to build a highway linking the centre of the Indian Ocean island to a Chinese-built seaport in Hambantota.

About:

- The loan, for a highway from the port of Hambantota to a planned industrial zone in the central region of Kandy, known for tea, spices and tourism is the single-largest approved by the China's Exim Bank for Sri Lanka.
- The agreement, signed after four years of negotiations, is part of China's latest push in Sri Lanka.

Implications for India:

- A big Chinese port project and related infrastructure are dragging the country deep into debt. These debt traps can be utilized by China to enhance its foot prints in Indian Ocean region.
- Sri Lanka last year granted a 99-year lease on Hambantota port to a Chinese firm over its inability to repay loans to Beijing for the USD 1.4 billion project. China might use Sri Lanka as a military base.
- China can use its deep pockets to influence Sri-Lanka against India and closer to it.

Way Forward:

- **Swift implementation of project** by India in Sri Lanka such as the proposed joint venture to run the Mattala airport in the island's Southern Province; an LNG terminal near Colombo, ongoing housing program etc. to make itself a reliable partner.
- Provide more financial assistance to Sri Lanka to reduce its dependence on China.
- Push Indian investment in Sri Lanka to compete with China.
- Utilize Free Trade Agreement with Sri Lanka to increase trade.
- Sri Lanka should also keep India's interest in mind while taking decisions, in line with its strategic autonomy.

ARCTIC COUNCIL

India re-elected to Arctic Council as 'Observer'

About:

- At the recently concluded **11th Arctic Council ministerial meeting in Finland**. India, along with other five nations, was re-elected as an Observer.
- **Criteria for granting Observer status:** The Observer status is granted to entities that
 - ♦ Have **capabilities to support** the objectives of the Arctic Council, and
 - ♦ Make **financial contributions**.
- Once 'Observer Status' is granted, it continues to be renewed periodically until, the Observer is engaged in activities counter to the objectives of the Arctic Council.
- India was **first** granted the Observer status in **2013**.
- As an Observer, nations are **not** allowed to take part in the **active meetings** but can participate in **side events**.
- Presently, there are **13 non-arctic states** as Observer. Some of them are China, South Korea, Singapore, Italy and Japan.
- During the meeting, **chairmanship** of the Council was passed from Finland to Iceland.

Background:**Arctic Council**

- It is an **informal intergovernmental forum** to promote cooperation in regulating the activities in the Arctic region.
- **Establishment:** In 1996 through the **Ottawa Declaration**.
- **Chairmanship:** Rotates **every two years** among the Arctic States.
- **Membership:**
 - ♦ **Member States:** Eight nations that have territories in the Arctic-Russia, the United States, Canada, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Iceland and Finland.
 - ♦ **Permanent Participants:** Six organizations representing the indigenous people of the Arctic region.
 - ♦ **Observers:** Observer status is open to non-arctic states, inter-governmental and inter-parliamentary organizations, and NGOs.
- **Decision-making:** Through **consensus** between the **eight members**, and in **consultation** with the **permanent participants**.
- **Non-binding:** The Council cannot implement or enforce its guidelines, assessments or recommendations. This responsibility belongs to each individual Arctic State. Although, it has 3 legally binding agreement among 8 member states.

Arctic Circle

- **Geographically:**
 - ♦ It is one of the five major circles of latitude that mark maps of the Earth and consists of the **region north of latitude that runs 66°30' N**.
 - ♦ It marks the **southern extremity** of the **polar day** (24 hour sunlit day) of the **summer solstice in June** and the **polar night** (24 hour sunless night) of the **winter solstice in December**.
 - ♦ Within the Arctic Circle, the Sun is above the horizon for 24 continuous hours at least once per year, in conjunction with the Arctic's Summer Solstice.
 - ♦ Likewise, in conjunction with the Arctic's Winter Solstice, the Arctic sun remains below the horizon for at least 24 continuous hours.
- **Ecologically:** Due to global warming, ice in the region is thinning making transportation and hunting difficult for roughly 4.5 million inhabitants of the region.
- **Strategically:** Arena of global power and competition
 - ♦ Owing to **vast reserves** of **oil, gas, minerals** and **fish stocks** in the region, it has become an arena of global power and competition.
 - ♦ The Arctic Council **does not prohibit the commercial exploitation** of resources in the Arctic.
 - ♦ Melting of ice in the region will open up the possibility of **new shipping routes** that can reduce existing distances.
 - ♦ Currently, the U.S. is planning to increase its presence in the Arctic to counter aggressive approach followed by China and Russia in the region.

- ♦ **Lomonosov Ridge** and the **Mendeleev Ridge** in the Arctic are two **disputed areas** which Russia claims are an extension of its continental shelf.

Arctic Circle and India

- The polar regions offer some **unique opportunities** to carry out research related to atmospheric and climate sciences that cannot be done anywhere else.
- India is one of the few countries to set up a **permanent station** in the Arctic for the purposes of scientific research.
- The **Himadri research station**, located in Ny Alesund, Svalbard in Norway, about 1200 km south of the North Pole, was started in July 2008.
- The **Goa-based National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCOAR)** is the **nodal organisation** coordinating the research activities at this station.
- Indian researchers are also studying to establish whether there is a **co-relation between Indian Monsoon and the Arctic region**.
- India is currently looking at the **opportunities** for **hydrocarbon exploration** offered in the Arctic circle with other member countries gearing up for the purpose.

CHRISTCHURCH CALL FOR ACTION

India has signed the 'Christchurch Call for Action.'

About:

- Envisioned by New Zealand's Prime Minister and French President.
- Christchurch Call for Action **aims** at stopping social media from being used to organize and promote terrorism.
- It is issued following the **Christchurch (NZ) mosque shootings of 15 March 2019**.
- **Signatories:** It is signed by the **18 signatory countries**, including **India** and **5 major tech companies** (Amazon, Facebook, Google, Microsoft and Twitter).

US as non-party: The US declined citing concerns related to freedom of expression and press.

Misuse of social media platforms by extremists organizations:

- ♦ The Christchurch mosque attack was **livestreamed** on the internet for nearly 17 minutes, showing distressing footage of the gunman firing indiscriminately at men, women and children. It was also shared extensively on a variety of internet platforms and uploaded again as fast as it was taken down.
- ♦ In the past, Facebook has been linked to ethnic violence in **Sri Lanka**.
- ♦ In **Myanmar** too, Facebook failed to prevent the platform from becoming a tool to foster genocide in the country.

- **Implementation:**
 - ♦ **Nations:** Signatory nations will adopt and enforce **laws** that will ban objectionable material, and set **guidelines** on how traditional media can report acts of terrorism without amplifying them.
 - ♦ **Companies:** The companies will accelerate **research and information sharing** with governments.
 - ♦ **Non binding:** The pledge is non-binding. It would be up to each individual country and company to decide the manner in which it would honour its voluntary commitments.
 - ♦ A definition of violent extremist content was not included in a draft version of the pledge, and it would be up to individual companies to decide on what constituted objectionable material.
- The Christchurch Call for Action summit was held alongside
 - ♦ “Tech for Humanity” meeting of Group of Seven digital ministers, and
 - ♦ France’s separate “Tech for Good” summit.
- **Divided treatment of online content:** The disagreement over the Christchurch Call highlights a long-standing tension between **Europe**, where a greater willingness to regulate Internet firms is seen, and the **United States**, where companies are given broad leeway to police themselves.

Way Forward:

- Terrorism and violent extremism are complex societal problems that require an all-of-society response.
- There is need to strengthen the partnership between Governments, society and the technology industry.

CHINA’S CHANGING STANCE ON MASOOD AZHAR

Masood Azhar has been listed as a global terrorist by United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

About:

- In a **diplomatic win for India**, Masood Azhar is now listed as a global terrorist by the **1267 Sanction Committee of UNSC**.
- This was achieved after China withdrew its hold. Earlier, China has blocked Azhar’s listing in 2009, 2016 and 2017.
- India’s first attempted to get Azhar listed in 2009, after his **Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) group was designated a terrorist outfit** by the UN.

Background:

- Masood Azhar is the founder and leader of the Pakistan-based terrorist outfit JeM which is operational in PoK.
- He has **masterminded several attacks on India**. These include attack on the **Parliament (2001)**, **Pathankot** air force base, Army camps in **Jammu and Uri**, and the latest suicide attack on a CRPF convoy in **Pulwama**.

- He formed the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) in 1999 after was released in exchange of the passengers of the hijacked flight IC-814.

Benefits of Listing:

- **Assets Freeze:** All states, without any delay, are required to freeze the funds and other financial assets or economic resources of designated individuals and entities.
- **Travel ban:** It prevents the entry into or transit of the designated individuals by all states through their territories.
- **Arms embargo:** All states are required to prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale and transfer of arms or its spare parts, and technical assistance or training related to military activities, to designated individuals and entities.
- Ban covers nation’s territories or their nationals outside their territories, or their flag vessels or aircraft.

Reasons for Change in China’s Stance:

- **Power politics:**
 - ♦ The changing geo-strategic dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region,
 - ♦ China’s mounting tensions with the US are pushing China towards calculated moves and
 - ♦ China’s continued support to Pakistan on Azhar would only have nudged India closer to the U.S.
- **Pressure from the U.S:** The US through the regular process of the UNSC has been trying to list Azhar as a global terrorist. Escalation by the U.S. of the matter in the UNSC would have compelled China to openly provide convincing reasons for its stand.
- **Changing dynamics with India:**
 - ♦ The CPEC, blockage of Azhar listing in the UNSC and India’s membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, has emerged as **bottlenecks in bilateral ties** between India and China.
 - ♦ China’s softening stand on Azhar could be aimed at **diluting India’s position** against the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
 - ♦ Later in 2019, **second round of the Wuhan Summit** is also set to take place in India.
- **Growing terror attacks:** With growing influence of Pakistan-based radical elements throughout the region, China continued support raises questions about its commitment to fighting global terror.

UNSC 1267 Sanction Committee

- It is also known as the ISIL (Da-esh) and Al Qaida sanctions committee.
- The Committee was initially established in 1999 and imposed a limited air embargo and assets freeze on the Taliban.

June, 2019

- It now oversees sanctions measures related to individuals, entities and groups, associated with the aforementioned organizations.
- Presently, it has listed 263 individuals and 83 entities in its sanctions regime.
- It **comprises** of all 15 members of the Security Council and makes its **decision by consensus**.
- It is **chaired by** a non-permanent member on a rotational basis.

APPROVAL OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE IN TAIWAN

Taiwan approved same-sex marriage in a historic first for Asia.

About:

- Approval makes Taiwan the only place in Asia with a **comprehensive law** which lays out the terms of same-sex marriage.
- **Netherlands** in 2001 become the **first country** in the world to legalize same-sex marriage.
- In 2017, the **Taiwan's Constitutional Court** had in favour of same-sex couples to have the right to legally marry.
- Taiwanese Parliament was given a two-year deadline and was required to pass the changes by 24 May.

Background:

- Taiwan's acceptance of gay and lesbian relationships began in the **1990s** when leaders in today's ruling **Democratic Progressive Party** championed the cause to help Taiwan stand out in Asia as an open society.
- Although the island has a large gay community and its annual gay pride parade is the biggest in Asia, the issue of marriage equality has bitterly divided Taiwanese society.
- In a controversial **referendum** in November 2018, 67% voted to reject same-sex marriage.

Struggle in Other Asian Countries:

- **India:** In a historic decision, in September 2018, Supreme Court decriminalized same-sex relationships. In May 2019, the first LGBT Chamber of Commerce in the country was launched. It is the first LGBT Chamber in South Asia, only the second in all of Asia.
- **Vietnam:** Decriminalized gay marriage celebrations in 2015, but fall short of granting full legal recognition for same-sex unions.
- **China:** While same-sex marriage is still illegal, homosexuality was decriminalised in China in 1997, and officially removed from its list of mental illnesses.

- Elsewhere in Asia, laws are changing to reflect more tolerant attitudes towards LGBT groups. However,
- **Brunei:** In April 2019, strict new Islamic laws that made anal sex and adultery offences punishable by stoning to death was announced, but Brunei has maintained that it will not enforce the death penalty for gay sex.

Do You Know?

- **May 17:** International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia
- The date commemorates removal of homosexuality from the International Classification of Disease of the WHO in 1990.

US-TURKEY DISPUTE

Turkish purchase of Russian S-400 further worsens Turkey-US relations.

About:

- In response to the Turkish purchase of S-400, the US has **halted delivery of US' F-35 fighter jets** to Turkey and threatened to impose more **sanctions**.

S-400 Defence System

- Russia's most advanced **long-range surface-to-air** missile defence system.
- The **radars** it relies on compromises the secrecy of the U.S.'s F-35 stealth fighter jet programme.
- **China** (first foreign buyer) procured this missile system from Russia in 2014.
- **India** too has signed a USD 5 billion S-400 air defence system deal with Russia in October 2018 and faces similar pressure from the US.

Background:

US-Turkey Relations

- Turkey and the US are **NATO allies** who have allied to counter Soviet Union during Cold War.
- However, **trust deficit** has marked their relations and often disagree on foreign policy, particularly toward the Middle East.

Other Reasons for the Conflict

- **Extradition of US preacher:** Turkey blames the US preacher and businessman Fethullah Gulen for orchestrating a **2016 coup** against the government. It is demanding his extradition from US.
- **Closeness with Russia:** Turkey wants to maintain a strong relationship with Moscow given its military footprint in Syria.
 - ♦ Turkey's intervention in Syria enjoys broad Russian backing.

- **Hostage diplomacy:** Turkey has held American hostages for years. Recently, Turkey imprisoned North Carolina pastor Andrew Brunson for almost two years under farcical charges.
- **US support to Kurdish groups:** The US and Turkey are divided over the **Syrian Kurdish militia** — the People's Protection Units.
 - ♦ YPGA enjoys U.S. support in the fight against the Islamic state, whereas it is seen by Turkey as an extension of the country's decades-old insurgent Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).
- **Attack on President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan:** There is acceleration away from democracy under authoritarian rule of President Erdogan.
 - ♦ Due to this, there is persistent attacks on the Turkish regime's human rights record.
- **Trump administration:** Trump administration has further hampered the rocky relations.
 - ♦ Trump has placed tough sanctions on Turkey in August 2018, and is advocating policies to "devastate" Turkish economy.
- **Trade:** The US has doubled tariffs on Turkish steel and aluminum, causing the Lira into freefall.
- **Stronger Turkey-Iran relations:** While the US is using all diplomatic weapons against Iran, Turkey-Iran enjoys strong relations in the region. Turkey has opposed US' sanctions against Iran.

SERBIA-KOSOVO TENSION

Tensions between Serbia and Kosovo flared after Kosovo's police raided Serb-dominated areas in the region's north.

About:

- The situation has fuelled fears of a renewal of the 1998-99 conflict that claimed more than 10,000 lives.

Reasons behind the Tension:

- **Kosovo** is a mainly **ethnic Albanian territory** that was formerly a province in Serbia. It declared independence in 2008. **Serbia has refused to recognize Kosovo's statehood** and still considers it part of Serbia.
- Serbia cherishes Kosovo as the heart of its statehood and religion. Numerous medieval Serb Orthodox Christian monasteries are in the region.
- Kosovo's majority ethnic **Albanians**, who are majority Muslims, view Kosovo as their country and **accuse Serbia of occupation and repression**.
- Ethnic Albanian rebels launched a **rebellion in 1998** to rid the country of Serbian rule. Belgrade's brutal response prompted a **NATO intervention in 1999**.
- There are **constant tensions between the Kosovo government and the Serbs**. Attempts by Kosovo to impose more control in the Serb-dominated north are usually met with resistance.

Attempts to Resolve the Dispute:

- **European Union** has mediated negotiations designed to normalize relations between Serbia and Kosovo.
- Some areas have seen results, like introducing **freedom of movement** and **multi-ethnic police**.
- An idea has been floated for **border changes**.

Way Ahead:

- Both nations must normalize ties if they want to advance toward EU membership.
- Any Serbian military intervention in Kosovo would mean a clash with NATO peacekeepers there.
- Kosovo cannot become a member of the U.N. and a functional state without resolving the dispute with Serbia.
- No breakthrough would mean prolonged instability, economic decline and constant potential for clashes.

GOLDEN CARD

UAE's new permanent residency rule to help property market

About:

- The United Arab Emirates launched a permanent residency scheme to woo wealthy individuals and exceptional talents.
- **Open to:** The "Golden Card" programme is open to investors and "exceptional talents" such as doctors, engineers, scientists, students and artists.

Need of the Scheme:

- **System till now:** Expatriates in the UAE are usually given limited duration residence permits under a sponsorship system.
- Short-term visas linked to employment hold back expatriates from investing and owning real estate in the UAE. They prefer to remit savings to their home countries instead.

Significance of the Scheme:

- **Economic:** It will attract greater foreign investment and stimulate the local economy.
- It will also increase the UAE's competitiveness and reaffirms the country's position as a global incubator.
- The benefits of the permanent residency include the spouse and children of the cardholder to ensure cohesive social ties.

"Golden Card" Visa Categories include:

- General investors who will be granted a 10-year visa,
- Real estate investors who can get a visa for five years,
- Entrepreneurs and talented professionals such as doctors, researchers and innovators 10 years.
- Outstanding students will also be permitted residency visas for five years. All categories of visas can be renewed upon expiry.





3 INTERNAL SECURITY

BLACK LIST OF INDIAN ORIGIN PEOPLE

Ministry of Home Affairs has done away with the black lists of Indian origin people.

About:

- The adverse list or 'Black Lists' of Indian origin people is maintained by Indian missions (Indian Embassies in different countries) and posts abroad.
- It contains list of Indian-origin people who have taken asylum abroad under plea of alleged persecution in India. These asylum seekers in the list are predominantly Sikhs.

Impact of the Decision:

- Such Indian-origin asylum seekers and their family members who are now not in adverse list, will be granted visa and consular services at par with foreigners of country in which they are living.
- They can also get Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) cards if they have held normal Indian visas for at least two years.

GROUP SAILING IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

Navy ships carried out Group Sail with the naval ships of Japan, Philippines and the U.S. in the South China Sea.



About:

- INS Kolkata and INS Shakti carried out Group Sail with the naval ships of Japan, the Philippines and the U.S. in the South China Sea (SCS).
- **Importance:** The group sail exercise showcased India's commitment to operating with like-minded nations to ensure safe maritime environment through enhanced interoperability.
- China, which claims a major part of the South China Sea, has disputes with most of its maritime neighbours.

SCORPENE CLASS SUBMARINE

The Fourth Scorpene Class Submarine, INS Vela, was launched recently.

About:

- INS Vela, the fourth of six Scorpene-class, also known as Kalvari-class submarine was launched recently with an aim to boost Indian capability to defend and secure the strategic sea lanes.
- The Vela submarine will undergo a number of tests conducted by the Navy before it is commissioned in the defence fleet.
- It is named Vela after erstwhile INS Vela which was first commissioned in 1973. It was India's oldest submarine when it was decommissioned in 2010.

Kalvari Class Submarine:

- It is a diesel electric attack submarine based on the Scorpene class, designed by French naval defence and energy group DCNS and manufactured by Mazagon Dock Limited, an Indian shipyard in Mumbai under Project 75.

Project 75:

- Under Project 75, MDL will manufacture six Scorpene class submarines for Indian Navy under technology transfer from DCNS. The induction of all submarines is expected to be completed by 2020.
- Under it, submarines are being built using modular approach in which different sections are built separately and later assembled on pontoons.
- **INS Kalvari**, the first submarine in Scorpene class, has already been commissioned, while others are at advance level of trial and test. The third in Scorpene series **INS Karanj** was launched in January 2019.

- The fifth Scorpene-class submarine **INS Vagir** and sixth **INS Vagsheer** are in advanced stages of manufacturing on the assembly line and will be launched soon.

NATIONAL TECHNICAL RESEARCH ORGANISATION (NTRO)

A Pakistan boat with 200 kg of heroin was seized off Gujarat coast after inputs from NTRO.

About:

- National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) is the technical intelligence gathering agency of India.
- The agency head of NTRO, along with Chiefs of Intelligence Bureau and Research & Analysis Wing (RAW), report to **the National Security Advisor (NSA) and PMO**.
- **Function:** The agency develops technology capabilities in aviation and remote sensing, data gathering and processing, cyber security, cryptology systems, strategic monitoring.
- NTRO was established in 2004, post Kargil war as a dedicated technical intelligence agency, on the recommendations of **Girish Chanda Saxena taskforce**.
- **NOTE:** In 2017, the Home Ministry issued a notification listing NTRO under the Intelligence Organisations (Restriction of Rights) Act, 1985, as demanded by NTRO.
 - ♦ After this notification, NTRO has the same “norms of conduct” as the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) as listed in the Intelligence Organisations (Restriction of Rights) Act, 1985.

Do You Know?

- The Intelligence Organisations (Restriction of Rights) Act, 1985 prevents employees of a notified agency from forming unions/associations, puts restrictions on the employee's freedom of speech, bars any communication with the press, or publishing a book or other document without the permission of the head of the intelligence organisation.
- NTRO also hires many people from the private sector and they have the same safety net and restrictions available to other spy agencies.
- The Official Secrets Act is also applicable to NTRO employees putting certain restrictions like being involved in political activities in the country.

WOMEN IN INDIAN ARMY

The Army has finally initiated the process to induct women as Soldier General Duty.

About:

- The Army has finally initiated the process to induct women as Soldier General Duty in the Other Ranks of Corps of Military Police.
- Currently there are no women in non-officer role in Army.
- Gradually they may be inducted in other branches, depending on the success of this induction.



History of Women Induction in Army

- Women were inducted into the Army as officers in 1993.
- Initially they were given only Short Service Commission and inducted in combat support branches and support services.
- Gradually Army Aviation Corps was opened up for women officers and permanent commission was offered to them in Army Education Corps and Judge Advocate General's branch.
- The demand for induction of women in a non-officer role in the Army, was accepted last year by the Ministry of Defence and the roadmap for inducting women in the Military Police was put in place.

Role of Corps of Military Police:

- Policing the Cantonments and Army Establishments
- Maintenance of Order and Discipline in the cantonments, Army Establishments.
- Maintaining the movements of Logistics, soldiers and vehicles in the cantonments during peace and war both times.
- Handling POWs.
- Controlling stragglers and refugees in war.
- Assistance to other regiments, soldiers and their families.
- Aid to Civil Police and make liaison with Civil Police, Naval police, and Air Force police.
- Investigating Cases of the Indian Army.
- Providing pilot vehicles to Division Commanders, Corps Commanders, Army Commanders and COAS.
- Providing close protection to the Chief of Army Staff.



4

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

RECONSTITUTIONS OF CABINET COMMITTEES

The Union government released the composition of eight Cabinet Committees, including two new ones.

About:

- The erstwhile cabinet committees have been reconstituted along with the constitution of two new ones, first **on Investment** and second **on Employment and Skill Development**.
- These are **extra constitutional** in emergence which means they are not mentioned in the constitution. However, they are provided under Rules of Business under article 77(3).
- They are of two types – **Standing (permanent in nature) and Ad hoc (temporary in nature)** Ad hoc committees are constituted from time to time deal with special problems.
- Cabinet Committees are **set up by the Prime Minister** as per the requirements of the situation. So their number varies from time to time.
- **Their membership** varies from three to eight. They usually include only Cabinet Ministers but non cabinet ministers are not debarred from membership or being **designated as special invitees to the committee**. Their members can be from both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.
- If the Prime Minister is a member of any such committee, he acts as the head of the committee.
- They are organizational device to reduce the workload of the cabinet. Their decision can be reviewed by the cabinet.
- In all areas delegated to the Cabinet Committees, normally the decision of the Cabinet Committee in question is the decision of the Government of the day. However, it is up to the Prime Minister to decide if any issue decided by a Cabinet Committee should be re-opened or discussed in the full Cabinet.

Eight Cabinet Committees:

1. **Political Affairs Committee** deals with all political matters related to domestic and foreign affairs including Centre-State relations and policy matters concerning foreign affairs that do not have external or internal security implications.
2. **Economic Affairs Committee** directs and coordinates the governmental activities in economic area.
3. **Appointments committee** decides all higher level appointments in the Central Secretariat, Public Enterprises, Banks and Financial Institutions.
4. **Committee on security** decides on national security issues, defence expenditure of India and matters related to atomic energy.

5. **Parliamentary Affairs Committee** looks after the progress of government business in the parliament. Also known as **Super-Cabinet**.
6. **Committee on Accommodation** determines the guidelines with regard to the allotment of government accommodation.
7. **Committee on Investment** will identify the key projects required to be implemented on a time-bound manner in different sectors.
8. **Committee on Employment and Skill Development** to provide direction to all policies, programmes, schemes and initiatives for skill development aimed at increasing the employability of the workforce.

All the committees are headed by the Prime Minister except two, Parliamentary Affairs Committee and Committee on Accommodation which are headed by the Home Minister.

Significance of Constituting 2 New Cabinet Committees:

- A Cabinet Committee can be either set up with a broad mandate or with a specific mandate. But many a times, when an activity/agenda of the Government acquires prominence or requires special thrust, a Cabinet Committee may be set up for focused attention.
- Thus the two new cabinet committees on Investment and; Employment and Skill Development is indicative on the focused attention of the government on these two areas.

CONCEPT OF ELECTION PETITION

Election Petition can be filed only after polls are over as it would affect the electoral process if filed during the elections.

What is an Election Petition?

- An Election petition is a **procedure for inquiring into the validity of the election results** of Parliamentary or local government elections.
- It is a means under law to challenge the election of a candidate in a **Parliamentary, Assembly or local election**.
- An election petition **can be filed by any candidate**, or an **elector relating to the election personally**, to the authorized officer of the High Court.
- It can be submitted **by any candidate or elector** within **45 days** of the declaration of the result.

Where is Election Petition Filed?

- Election petitions are filed in the **High Court** of the particular state in which the election was conducted.

- Therefore, **only the High Courts have the original jurisdiction** on deciding on election petitions.
- Such jurisdiction shall be exercised ordinarily by the **Single Judge of the High Court** and Chief Justice shall from time to time assign one or more Judges for that purpose.

Grounds for Filing An Election Petition:

- **On Non-Qualification:** On the date of the election a **returned candidate** (a candidate who has been declared elected) was not qualified.
- **Use of corrupt practice:** Some corrupt practice was committed by a returned candidate or his election agent.

What Constitutes Corrupt Practices?

Under **Section 123** of the **Representation of People Act, 1951**, following are considered corrupt practices:

- Bribery
- Undue influence
- Use of Force/coercion
- Appeal by a candidate or his election agent to refrain from voting on grounds of religion, race, caste, community or language.
- Use of national symbols, national emblem, national flag to further the prospect of the election.
- Publication by the candidate or his election agent of any false statement of fact either.
- Making false statements relating to elections expenditure.
- Abetting or attempting to obtain the service of government servants.
- Booth capturing by a candidate or his/her election agent.

- **Improper rejection:** that any nomination was improperly rejected
- Result was **materially affected**.

Power of High Court to declare the Election Void:

- If any of these grounds is true, the election of a particular candidate can be declared void under **section 100** of the Representation of People Act, 1951 by the High Court.

TRANSGENDER PERSONS HAVE RIGHT TO MARRIAGE

A judgment of the Madras High Court has extended enjoyment of civil rights, especially those pertaining to marriage, to transpersons.

About:

- Madras High Court in **Arunkumar and Sreeja v. Inspector General of Registration and Others (2019)** has held that transpersons have right to marriage.

- The judgment held that properly solemnised **marriage between a male and transwoman is valid** under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.
- The Registrar of Marriages is bound to register the same.
- The judgment quotes **NALSA v. Union of India (2014)**, which held that transgender persons have the **right to decide their “self-identified gender”**.
- It states that the expression “bride” occurring in **Section 5 of the Hindu Marriage Act** cannot have a static or immutable meaning.
- Thus, a transperson can also be considered a “bride” under the Hindu Marriage Act, according to the judgement.

Significance of the Judgement:

- The judgment also opens doors to the larger LGBTQ community **for availing civil rights** including **marriage, succession and inheritance**.

Obergefell v. Hodges (2015) Case

- The nine-judge Bench in **Justice (Retd.) K.S. Puttaswamy** case made a telling reference to the landmark judgment, **Obergefell v. Hodges (2015)**.
- In this case, the U.S. Supreme Court held that the “fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples **by both Due Process Clause and Equal Protection Clause** of the Fourteenth Amendment.”
- This Judgment has highlighted that **there cannot be a legal bar any more** to extending civil rights such as marriage, succession or inheritance to LGBTQ couples who have decided to get married consensually, have married in accordance with the existing laws and are not in violation of any other laws.
- The judgment shows that the judiciary is free to apply the **current meaning of a statute to present-day conditions**.
- In **Navej Singh Johar, vs Union of India (2018)** the Supreme Court decriminalised **Section 377 of Indian Penal Code, 1860** but did not examine the bundle of rights that were to naturally arise from the striking down of Section 377.
- Therefore, in this context, the present judgment is truly path-breaking for the LGBTQ community, which is denied equal protection of laws with regard to civil rights.

CASUAL VACANCY

Election Commission gave clarification on the requirement of holding bye elections to fill casual vacancies in the House of People.

About:

- Election Commission announced the bye elections to fill the three **casual vacancies** in Lok Sabha from Karnataka.
- However, it did not announce the bye elections to fill five vacancies in Lok Sabha from Andhra Pradesh.
- The Election Commission held that in the case of vacancies from Andhra Pradesh, there is no need to hold bye elections as the remaining term of the Lok Sabha is **less than one year** from the date of occurrence of vacancy.
- As the **vacancies from Karnataka** have occurred more **than one year** before the expiration of the term of House, bye elections are required to be held under **Section Representation of the People Act 1951**.

What is Casual Vacancy?

- Casual vacancy is the condition when the seat of a member of the Lok Sabha or the Rajya Sabha or a State Legislative Assembly or a State Legislative Council becomes vacant.
- It also occurs when his or her election is declared void.
- In this condition, the constituency from where the member was elected can vote for another person to fill up the vacancy.

Section 151A of the RPA 1951:

- **Section 151A** of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 mandates the **Election Commission** to fill the casual vacancies in the **Houses of Parliament and State Legislatures** through bye-elections.
- The vacancies have to be filled **within six months** from the date of occurrence of the vacancy.
- However, this is done provided the **remainder of the term** of a member in relation to a **vacancy is one year or more**.
- If the vacancy is in a seat reserved for **Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes**, the person to fill that seat must also belong to a Scheduled Caste or Tribe, as the case may be.

DECISION OF FOREIGNER TRIBUNAL TO PREVAIL OVER NRC

The Supreme Court allowed the persons whose names are not included in the NRC to produce documents related to their family tree.

About:

- Supreme Court has held that Foreigners tribunal's order declaring a person as an illegal foreigner will be binding.
- The order of the tribunal will prevail over the government decision to exclude or include the name from the **National Register of Citizens (NRC)** in Assam.

- The persons whose names are not included in the NRC in Assam **can produce documents including the ones related to the family tree**.
- They **can also seek review** of the tribunal's decision.

Foreigners Tribunal

- It was established as per Foreigners (Tribunal) Order, 1964.
- The order was passed by Government of India under **section 3 of foreigners Act, 1946**.
- The Centre can constitute foreigners tribunals whenever required to look into question of whether a person is or not a foreigner within the meaning of Foreigners Tribunals act, 1946.
- **Composition:** The Foreigners tribunal shall consist of persons having judicial experience as government may think fit to appoint.
- **Powers:** It has powers of a **civil court** while trying a suit under code of civil procedure, 1908. It includes summoning any person, requiring any document and issuing commissions for examination of any witness.

What is NRC?

- NRC was first conducted in 1951 **to enumerate Indian citizens**.
- In Assam specifically, there have been mass movements and violent agitations over the decades against infiltrators from Bangladesh and a demand to update the NRC.
- The decision to do so was taken by the Assam government in 2005.
- Following violence and police crackdown against anti-NRC protest in **Barpeta** which led to four deaths in 2010, the project was halted.
- It **resumed on a Supreme Court order**.
- The first draft of NRC for Assam was published in December 2017 and it incorporated the names of 1.9 crore out of 3.29 crore applicants.
- The final draft of the NRC on July 31, 2018 contained 2.9 crore names out of the total 3.29 crore applicants.
- The names of 40.07 lakh applicants did not find a place in the document which is heralded as final proof of being an Indian citizen in Assam.

Assam Accord:

- After a militant movement to protect Assam against Bangladesh infiltrators, the Assam Accord was **signed in 1985** between the **Government of India** and **All Assam Students Union (AASU)**.
- This led to an **amendment in the Citizenship Act, 1955**, to incorporate **Section 6A** specifically pertaining to Assam.

Section 6A of the Citizenship Act

- Section 6A says all Indian origin persons, including from Bangladesh who entered Assam before January 1966, are deemed citizens.
- Those who came between January 1, 1966, and March 25, 1971, can also get citizenship after registering themselves and living in India for 10 years.
- Everyone who entered after March 25, 1971, is to be identified as foreigner by the Tribunals and deported.
- The NRC also accepts March 25, 1971, as the cut-off date.

- Under this specific section, 100 Foreigners Tribunals have been established in Assam to identify foreigners.

Procedure to be included in NRC:

- For inclusion in NRC, a **unique legacy code** is to be submitted in the form to establish parental linkage before March 25, 1971.
- **Legacy documents** include electoral rolls up to March 25, 1971, and the 1951 NRC which was digitised and each person allotted a unique legacy code.
- Apart from legacy documents, **any of 12 other documents**, including land and tenancy record, citizenship certificate, refugee registration certificate, passport, bank or LIC document, education certificate, etc., can be submitted.
- **For married women**, a document issued by the Circle Officer or Gram Panchayat secretary could be furnished.

UNITED NATIONS NOT A STATE UNDER ARTICLE 12

The judgment was passed by Delhi High Court in a petition concerning the immunity enjoyed by the UN

About:

- The Delhi High Court has ruled that the **United Nations (UN/UNO)** is **not a State under Article 12** of the Constitution of India.
- Thus, UN is not amenable to the court's jurisdiction under **Article 226** of the Constitution.

Article 226

Article 226 of the Constitution **empowers a high court to issue writs** including habeas corpus, mandamus, certiorari, prohibition and quo-warranto for the **enforcement of the fundamental rights** of the citizens and **for any other purpose**.

- This judgment was given in response to a plea filed by a former UN employee who was found guilty of misconduct.

- The petitioner had sought permission from Ministry of External Affairs to initiate legal action against the UNO under **section 86 of Civil Procedure Code, 1908**.
- The provision provides that a foreign State may be sued in any Court with the consent of the Central government.

Immunity to United Nations:

- The Ministry of External Affairs replied that the consent of the Government of India is not required to initiate a legal suit against UNO.
- This is because it is not a foreign state and is only an Internal Organization.
- Moreover, UNO and its officials enjoy immunity under the **United Nations (Privileges and Immunities) Act, 1947**.
- It also said as **per Section 2 of Article II of the Schedule of Act, 1947**, UNO has immunity from every form of legal process except insofar as in any particular case it has expressly waived its immunity.

Arguments in Favour of the Petitioner:

- The Latin maxim **Ubi jus ibi remedium**, which means that if there is a right, then there must necessarily be a remedy attached to it, says that no one should be left remediless and the petitioner has exhausted all his remedies.
- Moreover, giving blanket immunity to any organization, the UNO in this case, makes it a judge in its own cause and is, therefore, against the basic tenets of justice delivery system.

What Constitutes a State under Indian Constitution?

- The term 'State' has been used in different provisions concerning the fundamental rights.
- Hence, **Art. 12** has defined the term for the purposes of Part III.
- According to it, the State includes the following:
 - ♦ **Government and Parliament of India**, that is, executive and legislative organs of the Union government.
 - ♦ **Government and legislature of states**, that is, executive and legislative organs of state government.
 - ♦ **All local authorities**, that is, municipalities, panchayats, district boards, improvement trusts, etc.
 - ♦ **All other authorities**, that is, **statutory or non-statutory authorities** like LIC, ONGC, SAIL, etc.
- Thus, **State has been defined in a wider sense** so as to include all its agencies.
- It is the **actions of these agencies that can be challenged** in the courts as violating the Fundamental Rights.
- According to the Supreme Court, **even a private body or an agency working** as an instrument of the State **falls within the meaning of the 'State'** under Article 12.
- According to **Article 36**, the term 'State' in Part IV has the same meaning as in Part III dealing with Fundamental Rights.



5

SOCIAL ISSUES

BAN ON LIQUOR IN MIZORAM

Mizoram has become the latest to prohibit the sale and consumption of alcohol

About:

- Mizoram government has passed the Mizoram Liquor Prohibition Bill 2019 banning the sale and consumption of alcohol for the general public after March 31.

A Brief on liquor Prohibition in India:

- In the 19th and 20th centuries the **temperance movement in India** aimed at curbing the use of alcohol in the country.
- The temperance movement had led to alcohol prohibition in India at various states, as with Manipur.
- Mahatma Gandhi was at forefront of the liquor ban movement during Independence struggle and viewed foreign rule as an obstacle to national liquor prohibition.
- When India gained independence in 1947, **prohibition was included in the Constitution of India** and the government of several states introduced it.
- The States of Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Kerala, Manipur and Tamil Nadu have previously enforced, but later repealed prohibition.
- Presently the states of Bihar, Gujarat, Nagaland, and Lakshdeep (UT) observe liquor prohibition.

Constitutional Provisions w.r.t. Prohibition of Liquor:

- Liquor prohibition under 7th schedule is a subject of state list. The **entry 51 in the State List** makes “Alcohol for human consumption” a subject matter of states. This provides states the power to make laws and charge duties on alcoholic liquors for human consumption.
- The **Article 47** of the constitution of India comes under the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP).
- The Article 47 states that “...the State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health)”. Since the Directive Principles are not-justiciable rights of the people but they are fundamental for the Government of the country.
- The **Article 37** of the Indian constitution directs the State, that, “It shall be the duty of the State to apply Directive Principles of State Policy principles in making policy laws.”
- The **Article 38** of the constitution of India directs to the State and Union Governments to secure a social order for the

promotion of welfare of the people. The Article 38(1) states that “The State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life.”

Impact of Liquor Prohibition: The liquor prohibition has both positive and negative effects on the Social and economic life of people.

Positive Effects:

- The Prohibition in the states of India that have implemented the policy, has led to **lower rates of drinking among men**, as well as a **decreased incidence of violence against women**.
- In the state of Bihar, this adopted Prohibition in 2016, the number of murders and gang robberies decreased by 20% from the previous year.
- The **number of riots** fell by 13% and **traffic accidents** were reduced by 10%.
- With respect to the economy, the **amount of spending per household rose**—a 10% increase in milk sales, a 200% increase in cheese sales, a 30% increase in two-wheeled vehicles, and a 50% increase in electrical appliances. In villages, brick houses are gradually taking the place of mud huts since state Prohibition came into effect.

Do You Know?

In cases of **‘hooch’ tragedy**, toxicity often comes from drinking **methanol** (methyl alcohol), which results in blindness, tissue damage or death.

Negative Effects:

- On economy front – Prohibiting alcohol leads to **loss of taxes and legitimate jobs**.
- It prompts **underground or black-markets** – People who want alcohol will still be able to purchase it or make it, albeit at a higher cost and purchased from shadier locations.
- The prohibition also places a heavy burden on the State to rehabilitate those left unemployed by the closure of hundreds of bars, as well as states suffer a loss of taxes coming from the regulated liquor businesses.
- **Prohibition effected on freedom of choice** – People should have the freedom of choice to decide to drink alcohol or not, as long as that freedom does not infringe on the freedom of other people.
- Therefore a law prohibiting alcohol would remove the freedom of choice.
- Similarly, to the previous reason, people should be free to harm themselves.

Indian States Practicing Liquor Prohibition

Bihar

- In Bihar, there is an alcohol ban since 1 April 2016. Sale and consumption of any type of alcohol in hotels, bars, clubs and any other place is illegal in Bihar.
- Later on 30 September 2016 Bihar High Court ruled that the ban is "illegal, impractical and unconstitutional". Although even before the High Court order came, the government had drafted a new law to keep from withdrawing the ban.
- The Supreme Court Bench stayed the high court order and ordered that the Ban on liquor and fundamental rights do not go together.

Gujarat

- Gujarat is the **only Indian state with a death penalty for the manufacture and sale of homemade liquor that results in fatalities.**
- The State of Bombay had the liquor prohibition between the year of 1948 and 1950, and again from 1958.
- After the bifurcation of Bombay State into the States of Maharashtra and Gujarat in 1960, the Gujarat State has a sumptuary law in force that proscribes the manufacture, storage, sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages. The legislation has been in force since 1 May 1960.
- The Bombay Prohibition Act, 1949 is still in force in Gujarat state. However, Maharashtra grants the licenses to alcohol vendors and traders.

Nagaland

- In Nagaland, the sale and consumption of alcohol is prohibited by the Nagaland Liquor Total Prohibition Act (NLTP) 1989. However, enforcement of the ban is lax and Indian Made Foreign Liquor is readily available.

Lakshadweep

- Lakshadweep is the **only union territory** that bans the sale and consumption of alcohol.
- Here Consumption of liquor is permitted only on the island of Bangaram. Bangaram is an uninhabited island of Lakshadweep territory.

Way Forward:

- Though, Prohibition of liquor is laudable but it has consequences. State governments should have to be prepared to deal rapidly with the management of man-made disasters such as liquor tragedies.
- Increasing the legal age of drinking and bring about uniformity in the same across all the states might be helpful to contain the negative-effects of liquor.
- There is need of **De-addiction and rehabilitation centers** that should be made easily and widely accessible and be fully functional before any decision on prohibition is taken.

- Documenting good practices tried and tested by NGOs and other institutions for managing alcohol problems not only within the country but also outside the country can be helpful in implementing the prohibition policies.
- Civil society should demand from its political parties a comprehensive policy that addresses all the related issues instead of uncritically demanding or accepting proclamations of prohibition.
- A pragmatic approach that accepts drinking as part of the social culture and aims to regulate it is likely to be a more effective stance rather than taking a moralistic or emotional view that views drinking as the purveyor of all evils.

SECTION 23 OF PCPNDT ACT UPHELD

Not keeping record of pre-natal tests is criminal: Supreme Court of India

About:

- The Supreme Court has recently upheld **Sections 23** of the Pre-conception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) (PCPNDT) Act, 1994.
- As a result, not keeping records of pre-natal tests will continue to be criminalised along with suspension of medical licenses, to ensure that objective behind the PCPNDT Act is fulfilled.

Important Provisions of the PCPNDT Act

- The Act provides for the prohibition of sex selection, **before or after conception.**
- It regulates the use of pre-natal diagnostic techniques, like ultrasound and amniocentesis by allowing them their use only to detect few cases.
- No laboratory or centre or clinic will conduct any test including ultrasonography for the purpose of determining the sex of the foetus.
- No person, including the one who is conducting the procedure as per the law, will communicate the sex of the foetus to the pregnant woman or her relatives by words, signs or any other method.
- Any person who puts an **advertisement for pre-natal and pre-conception sex determination** facilities can be imprisoned for up to three years and fined Rs. 10,000.
- The Act mandates **compulsory registration** of all diagnostic laboratories, all genetic counselling centres, genetic laboratories, genetic clinics and ultrasound clinics.
- The act was **amended in 2003** to bring the technique of **pre conception sex selection and ultrasound technique** within the ambit of the act.

June, 2019

Section 23 of the Act:

- Section 23 'criminalises' non-maintenance of medical records by obstetricians and gynaecologists and suspend their medical licence indefinitely.
- The judgement came in the backdrop of a petition filed by Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecological Societies of India (FOGSI).
- The Federation had approached the Apex Court seeking decriminalizing of anomalies in paperwork/record keeping/clerical errors in regard of the provisions of the Act.
- It had contended that the same is violative of Articles 14, 19(1) (g) and 21 of the Constitution of India.
- The petition argued that Section 23 equated anomalies in paperwork/record keeping/clerical errors on the same footing with the actual offence of sex determination.

PVTGS AND SUPERSTITION

The superstitious nature of the PVTGs often has villagers shifting locations and has led to their backwardness

About:

- Three children from Kolam tribe in Telangana died of food-poisoning.
- The Kolams, who are one among the tribes classified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG), believe that the tragedy struck as someone cast an evil eye on them.

Who are PVTGs?

- In 1973, the Dhebar Commission created Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) as a separate category, who are less developed among the tribal groups. They were later renamed as PVTG.
- 75 tribal groups have been categorized by Ministry of Home Affairs as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.
- PVTGs reside in 18 States and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- There are five PVTGs in the Andaman islands: Great Andamanese, Jarawas, Onges, Sentineles and Shom Pens.
- Among the 75 listed PVTG's the highest number are found in Odisha (13), followed by Andhra Pradesh (12).
- States/UTs submit proposals to the Central Ministry of Tribal Welfare for identification of PVTGs.
- The smallest population size among the PVTGs is that of the Sentinelese.
- The Saharia people of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan are the largest among the PVTGs with population more than 4 lakhs.
- PVTGs have characteristics like (a) a pre-agriculture level of technology, (b) a stagnant or declining population (c) extremely low literacy and (d) a subsistence level of economy.

Government Initiatives for PVTGs:

- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs implements the Scheme of "Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)" exclusively for them.
- The Andaman and Nicobar Tribal Research and Training Institute (ANTRI) has been set up to formulate policies for tribal integration and protection of PVTGs.
- The A&N (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956 provides protection to the aboriginal tribes by declaring their traditional areas as reserves and prohibited entry of all persons except those with authorisation.
- With regard to Sentinelese tribes, the A&N Administration has adopted an 'eyes-on and handsoff' policy to ensure that no poachers enter into the island.
- Recently, Odisha government in partnership with UNICEF India has launched "Jiban Sampark" to generate awareness about the development and welfare initiatives of state government among the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups of the state.

Other PVTGs in News

- Konda Reddis - Andhra Pradesh and Telangana
- Irulas - Tamil Nadu
- Dongria-Khond, Mankidias - Odisha
- Cholanaikayan - Kerala

WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH

The annual World Day for Safety and Health at Work on 28 April promotes the prevention of occupational accidents and diseases globally.

About:

- The World Day for Safety and Health at Work is an annual international awareness-raising campaign to promote safe, healthy and decent work, held on 28 April each year.
- Since 2003, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has promoted it, stressing the prevention of accidents and illnesses at work, and capitalizing on its traditional strengths of tripartism and social dialogue.
- Inspired by the ILO centenary anniversary and discussions on the future of work, the world day this year attempts to take stock of a 100 years of work in improving occupational safety and health.
- It also looks to the future for continuing these efforts through major changes such as technology, demographics, sustainable development including climate change and changes in work organization.
- **Theme:** The theme of the annual World Day for Safety and Health is "Safety and health at the heart of the future of work."

Objective:

- The main objective of this campaign is to focus international attention on the magnitude of the problem and on how the creation and the promotion of a safety and health culture can help reduce the number of work-related deaths and injuries.
- April 28 is also International Commemoration Day for Dead and Injured Workers, organized worldwide by the trade union movement since 1996.

The Issues and Challenges at Work:

- **The Factories Act** is not enforced. Under the Factories Act, 1948, the state governments are empowered to frame their respective state factories rules and enforce both the Act and the Rules in their states through their Inspectorates of Factories/Directorates of Industrial Safety and Health under the labour departments. But these measures are not adequately implemented.
- **The Dock Workers (Safety, Health and Welfare) Act, 1986 and Regulations, 1990** have been enforced only in major ports by the DGFASLI.
- The state governments are required to frame respective state regulations and enforce the provisions of the both, the Act and the Regulations, in these ports. However, till date, none of the states have framed their regulations for enforcement in these ports.
- **The Building and Other Construction Workers' Act, 1996**, is being enforced by the Labour Commissioners at the centre and at the state Level.
- The safety and health provisions under the Act are highly technical in nature and are not being enforced in true letter and spirit.
- The number of institutes in the country for research and development are limited and these too are not fully equipped for carrying out their activities effectively.
- **Lack of legislation on safety and health in agriculture** is hindering the ratification of ILO convention 155.
 - ♦ **Convention No. 155 on Occupational Safety and Health** provides for the adoption of a coherent national occupational safety and health policy, as well as action to be taken by governments and within enterprises to promote occupational safety and health to improve working conditions.
 - ♦ **Convention No. 155 entered into force** on 11 August 1983 and has been ratified by 60 countries to date. India has not ratified the convention till date.
- The agriculture sector is lacking on legislation on safety and health for workers in this sector.
- The Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises too do not have any legislation to cover the safety and health of the workers.

WORLD IMMUNIZATION WEEK

World Immunization Week, celebrated in the last week of April each year, aims to promote the use of vaccines to protect people against diseases.

About:

- World Immunization Week is celebrated in the last week of April. It aims to highlight the collective action needed to ensure that every person is protected from vaccine-preventable diseases.
- Immunization saves millions of lives and is widely recognized as one of the world's most successful and cost-effective health interventions.
- Expanding access to immunization is crucial to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

World Immunization Week 2019:

- This year World Immunization Week is celebrated on 24-30 April 2019.
- **The theme** of this year is **Protected Together: Vaccines Work!**
- The campaign will celebrate Vaccine Heroes from around the world – from parents and community members to health workers and innovators – who help ensure we are all protected through the power of vaccines.

2019 Campaign Objectives:

World Health Organization (WHO) and partners aim to:

- Demonstrate the value of vaccines for the health of children, communities and the world.
- Highlight the need to build on immunization progress while addressing gaps, including increased investment.
- Show how routine immunization is the foundation for strong, resilient health systems and universal health coverage.

Key Facts:

- Immunization prevents illness, disability and death from vaccine-preventable diseases including cervical cancer, diphtheria, hepatitis B, measles, mumps, pertussis (whooping cough), pneumonia, polio, rotavirus diarrhoea, rubella and tetanus.
- There are more than 19 million unvaccinated or under-vaccinated children in the world, putting them at serious risk of these potentially fatal diseases.
- An additional 1.5 million deaths could be avoided if global immunization coverage improves.
- Polio cases have decreased by over 99% since 1988. Today, only 3 countries (Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan) remain polio-endemic, down from more than 125 in 1988. India was declared polio free by World Health Organization in 2014.

- In India 62% of children in the age group 12-23 months were found to be fully immunized ((BCG, measles, and 3 doses each of polio and DPT)) during NFHS-4(national family health survey 2015-2016).

How does Vaccination Work?

- A vaccine usually consists of two parts and is usually given through an injection.
- The first part is the antigen, which is a piece of disease one's body must learn to recognise.
- The second part is the adjuvant, which sends a danger signal to the body and helps your immune system to respond strongly against the antigen.
- Our immune system is made of various types of cells. These cells work as defending agents against invaders and remove the harmful pathogens.
- To act against harmful invaders pathogens our immune system needs to recognise those. Vaccination works by teaching our immune system how to recognise new diseases.
- Vaccines stimulate our bodies to make antibodies against antigens of pathogens. It teaches the immune system to remember the antigens that cause infection, which leads to a faster response to the same disease in the future.

JUSTICE FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Compensation to victims is a relatively less recognised component of criminal justice.

About: Sexual Harassment

- Sexual assault involves a perpetrator coercing or physically forcing a sexual act or non-consensual touching. Sexual harassment can occur in a variety of circumstances.
- Supreme Court ordered the Gujarat government to pay ₹ 50 lakh to Bilkis Yakoob Rasool Bano, a gang-rape survivor of the 2002 communal pogrom in the State who has bravely fought her case, the Supreme Court has endeavoured to achieve restitutive justice.

Compensation to Victim:

- Compensation to victims is a relatively less recognised component of criminal justice.
- In a system that focuses mainly on the accused, an order of compensation is as recognition of the state's obligation to victims of crime, especially horrific acts.
- Handing over the fine amounts paid by the accused as part of their sentence is one aspect of such justice; another aspect is for the court to ask the government to compensate the victim from its own coffers.

- While convictions are not easy to come by in cases of mob violence, victim compensation may often be the only way to ensure some justice.

Bilkis Bano Case:

- Bilkis Yakoob Rasool Bano, a gang-rape survivor of the 2002 communal pogrom in the State.
- Ms. Bano's case is indeed a rare one. Criminal prosecution resulted in conviction and life sentences to 11 persons.
- The court found deliberate inaction on the part of some police officers and that the autopsies were perfunctory and manipulated.
- The Court noted that this is a concrete instance of state inaction and negligence that would normally justify the payment of a hefty compensation.

Provisions on Victim Compensation:

- Not every crime would have a similar set of circumstances. While convictions are not easy to come by in cases of mob violence, victim compensation may often be the only way to ensure some justice.
- The Code of Criminal Procedure was amended in 2008 to insert **Section 357A** under which every State government has to prepare a scheme to set up a fund from which compensation can be paid to victims of crime and their dependents who have suffered loss and injury and who may require rehabilitation.
- The Centre has a **Central Victim Compensation Fund**.
- On Supreme Court directions, the National Legal Services Authority has prepared a compensation scheme for women victims and survivors of sexual assault and other crimes. Many States have notified schemes on these lines.

Challenges:

- There is a mechanism to assess rehabilitation needs and pay compensation.
- It is needed to streamline the schemes and ensure that the compensation process is not done in an ad hoc manner, but is based on sound principles.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR CHILDREN

World Health Organization (WHO) has issued guidelines on physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep for children under 5 years of age.

About:

- The UN health agency also issued its first-ever guidance for how much screen time children should be allowed - limited and none at all for one-year-olds.

- The report titled as **“Guidelines on physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep for children under 5 years of age.”**
- The new guidelines issued by WHO on Wednesday said kids under 5 should not spend more than one-hour watching screens every day and infants under 1 year should not be exposed to electronic screens.

Highlights of WHO Guidelines:

For infants (less than 1 year)

- WHO does not recommend any screen time for infants under 1-year-olds.
- They should be physically active several times a day in a variety of ways. They should not be restrained for more than 1 hour at a time.
- They should have 14-17hours (0–3 months of age) or 12-16hours (4-11 months of age) of good quality sleep, including naps.

For children 1-2 years of age

- As per WHO's new guidelines, children 1-2 years of age should spend at least 180 minutes in a variety of types of physical activities at any intensity, including moderate-to-vigorous-intensity physical activity – more is better though.
- They should not be restrained for more than 1 hour at a time or sit for extended periods of time.
- Sedentary screen time such as watching TV or videos, playing computer games is not recommended for 1-year-olds and should not be more than 1 hour for children aged 2 years.
- They should get 11-14 hours of good quality sleep, including naps, with regular sleep and wake-up times.

For children 3-4 years of age

- WHO recommends spending at least 180 minutes in a variety of types of physical activities at any intensity, of which at least 60 minutes should be moderate- to vigorous intensity physical activity. They should spread throughout the day.
- They should not be restrained for more than 1 hour at a time- such as prams/strollers - or sit for extended periods of time.
- Sedentary screen time should be no more than 1 hour, less is better.
- They should have 10-13 hours of good quality sleep, including a nap, with regular sleep and wake-up times.

Benefits of Guidelines:

- WHO said following the recommendations in the new guidelines during the first five years of life is essential as it will contribute to children's motor and cognitive development and lifelong health.

- These health outcomes will contribute to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) targets 2.2 (to end all forms of malnutrition) and 3.4 (to reduce by one-third premature mortality from NCDs).
- Physical activity in children under 5 years of age is associated with health indicators such as adiposity, bone and skeletal health, cardio metabolic health, cognitive and motor skills development.
- Sleep is essential for cognitive, physical and psychosocial development, particularly in young children and is a common cause for concern amongst parents.

HONEY MISSION

KVIC distributes over 1 lakh bee-boxes under 'Honey Mission'

About:

- Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has distributed more than one lakh bee-boxes among farmers and unemployed youths across the country in less than two years under its 'Honey Mission' initiative.
- **Significance:** under this mission more than 10,000 new jobs and 25,000 additional man days have been created through the fabrication of bee boxes and honey extractors.
- **Background:** Honey Mission was launched in August 2017 in line with Prime Minister's call for 'Sweet Revolution' in 2016 while introducing Banas Honey project at Deesa in Gujarat's Banaskantha district.
- May 21 is celebrated as World Honey Bee Day.

About Honey Mission:

- The KVIC had aimed to create jobs for youths giving them an adroit pair of hands.
- The KVIC has also provided beekeepers practical training about examination of honeybee colonies, acquaintance with apicultural equipments, identification and management of bee enemies and diseases, honey extraction and wax purification, and management of bee colonies in spring, summer, monsoon, autumn and winter seasons.
- Besides giving them certificates of trained bee-keepers, the KVIC experts also delved upon honey bee species, colony organization, division of labor and life cycle of honey bees.
- Being the nodal agency of Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), the KVIC would provide loans for setting up units of processing, packaging and labelling units for the honey.
- **PMEGP:** PMEGP is a credit-linked subsidy programme launched by Ministry of MSME in 2008-09 for creation of employment in both rural and urban area of the country.





6

ENVIRONMENT, DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND GEOGRAPHY

AIR POLLUTION'S IMPACT ON FOETUS

Air pollution may harm cardiovascular system of unborn baby.

About:

- A study by Rutgers University, US has found that small unseen particles in air pollution inhaled by pregnant women may damage the cardiovascular system of the unborn baby and delay its growth and development.
- Early first trimester and late third trimester were critical windows during which pollutants most affect the mother's and foetus' cardiovascular systems.
- Exposure to the pollutants can constrict blood vessels, restricting blood flow to the uterus and depriving the foetus of oxygen and nutrients, which can result in delayed growth and development. It can also lead to common pregnancy complications, such as intrauterine growth restriction.
- Findings suggest that pregnant women, women of child-bearing years who may be pregnant, and those undergoing fertility treatments should avoid areas known for high air pollution or stay inside on high-smog days to reduce their exposure.

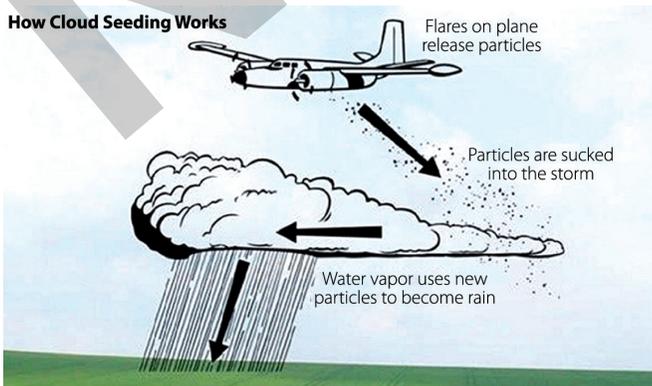
CLOUD SEEDING IN KARNATAKA

The Karnataka cabinet has approved a cloud seeding programme to be implemented in June 2019.

About:

- The decision to seed the clouds is based on the reports that there would be deficit rainfall in the state.

How Cloud Seeding Works



- As 176 taluks reel under drought, the Karnataka government is hoping to influence the upcoming monsoon and capture as much water as possible from the rain clouds using cloud seeding operations to enhance rainfall during the monsoons of 2019 and 2020.
- The project is expected to cost ₹ 50 crore each year.
- The Karnataka government is aiming to replicate the success of the 2017 Varshadhare project. The rainfall was enhanced by 27.9%.

Cloud Seeding

- Doppler radars (3 for state) keep an eye on cloud movements. Monitoring Committee identifies suitable cloud formation over areas where there is soil moisture stress or low catchment rains.
- Specialised planes spray clouds with chemicals to condense smaller moisture particles into larger rain droplets which fall as rain.
- The most common chemicals used for cloud seeding include table salt (sodium chloride), silver iodide, potassium iodide, dry ice (solid carbon dioxide).
- Liquid propane, which expands into a gas, has also been used. This can produce ice crystals at higher temperatures than silver iodide.

EMPEROR PENGUIN

The second largest Emperor penguin colony in the world has suffered a "catastrophic" breeding failure at Halley Bay colony in the Weddell Sea, Antarctic.

In News:

- The second largest Emperor penguin colony (Halley Bay colony in the Weddell Sea, Antarctica) in the world has suffered a "catastrophic" breeding failure. According to research, nearly all chicks born over three years died as their icy Antarctic habitat shrinks.

About Emperor Penguin:

- The Emperor Penguin (*Aptenodytes forsteri*) is the tallest and heaviest of all living penguin species and is endemic to Antarctica. These flightless animals live on the Antarctic ice and in the frigid surrounding waters.
- Their Average Weight is 30 kg – 66 lb and Average Height is 115 cm – 3.8 ft

Diet and Feeding:

- Emperor penguins are near the top of the Southern Ocean's food chain.
- Their forage consists of primarily the Antarctic silverfish and other fishes, Antarctic krill and some species of squid. Most prey items are small. An adult penguin eats 2 to 3 kg per day.

Breeding:

- Emperor Penguins breed almost exclusively on sea-ice near to the coast of Antarctica, rarely on land, the breeding colonies can be up to 200 km from the open sea.
- Emperor penguins are the only animals that breed during the Antarctic winter. Like most penguins, emperor parents closely share parental duties once the chicks have hatched. But only the males take on the incubation duties.

Distribution and Abundance:

- Emperor penguins breed in colonies scattered around the Antarctic continent. Colonies range in size from a few hundred to over 20,000 pairs. Most colonies are situated on the fast-ice that is locked between islands or grounded icebergs.
- Emperor penguin populations are projected to undergo a moderately rapid decline over the next three generations owing to the effects of projected climate change.

Predators:

- Leopard seals and killer whales- main predators of adult birds. Skuas - prey on eggs and chicks.

Conservation Status

- In 2012 the Emperor Penguin was uplisted from a species of least concern to near threatened by the IUCN.

MANGO SHOWERS

Mango showers help in the early ripening of fruits.

About:

- **Mango showers** is a term used to describe the occurrence of pre-monsoon rainfall.
- They occur mainly during the March- May months, i.e., before the arrival of monsoon into India. Therefore, they are also called as the **April Rains**.
- They are **notable across much of South and Southeast Asia**, including India, and Cambodia.
- **Features:** The classic features of these rains is the form of precipitation which is mainly **convective**.
- These rains generally accompany with the **thunderstorms**.
- They usually occur in the **evenings**.

- They result in the decreased temperatures in various parts of the country.
- They are difficult to forecast.
- **Significance:** These Pre-Monsoon Rains are called as **Mango Showers** in Karnataka as these rains help the early **ripening** of Mangoes.
- These showers prevent the mangoes from dropping prematurely from trees and are crucial for the mango cultivators of South India.

Different Names:

- They are called as **Blossom Showers** in Kerala as they help in the **flowering** of plantation crops like Coffee and Tea.
- They are also called as **Kalbaisakhi** rains in West Bengal as they occur in the Baisakhi month.

HEAT WAVES

EC received pleas requesting it to advance the poll timing from 7am to 5am for some phases of General Election 2019 due to heat wave.

About:

- India is go to the polls in the peak of summer. It is the responsibility of State administrations to prepare for the likelihood of a heat spike, particularly during April and May, to prevent loss of life and extreme distress to communities.

What is Heat Wave?

- A continuous spell of abnormally hot weather.
- Heat wave need not be considered till maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40°C for Plains and at least 30°C for Hilly regions.

Heat Wave:

Heat wave is considered if maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40°C or more for Plains, 37°C or more for coastal stations and at least 30°C or more for Hilly regions. Following criteria are used to declare heat wave:

(a) Based on Departure from Normal:

- **Heat Wave:** Departure from normal is 4.5°C to 6.4°C
- **Severe Heat Wave:** Departure from normal is >6.4°C

(b) Based on Actual (Absolute) Maximum Temperature (for plains only):

- **Heat Wave:** When actual maximum temperature $\geq 45^\circ\text{C}$
- **Severe Heat Wave:** When actual maximum temperature $\geq 47^\circ\text{C}$

To declare heat wave, the above criteria should be met at least in 2 stations in a Meteorological sub-division for at least two consecutive days and it will be declared on the second day.

Heat Wave Warning System by IMD		
Warning	Impact	Suggested Actions
Nil	Comfortable temperatures	No cautionary action required
Heat wave conditions at district level, likely to persist for 2 days	Heat is tolerable for general public but moderate health concern for vulnerable people e.g. infants, elderly, people with chronic diseases.	Avoid heat exposure
Severe heat wave conditions likely to persist for 2 days. With varied severity, heat wave is likely to persist for 4 days or more.	Increased likelihood of heat illness symptoms in people who are either exposed to sun for a prolonged period or doing heavy work. High health concern for vulnerable people e.g. infants, elderly, people with chronic diseases.	Avoid heat exposure— keep cool. Avoid dehydration
Severe heat wave likely to persist for more than 2 days. Total number of heat/severe heat wave days likely to exceed 6 days.	Very high likelihood of developing heat illness and heat stroke in all ages.	Extreme care needed for vulnerable people.

ISLAND PROTECTION ZONE (IPZ) NOTIFICATION, 2019

Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change has released new IPZ notification, 2019 for Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep.

About:

- The driving principle behind the new notification are Niti Ayog's proposal aimed at holistic development of the islands. The Island Development Agency has been specially constituted for this purpose.
- The new notification is also in line with the government's plans of opening up the "blue economy".
- The new notification **relaxes development norms in the islands** compared to the IPZ notification of 2011.
 - ♦ For. E.g. the IPZ notification 2011 stipulated a no-development zone (NDZ) of 200 metres from the high tide line (HTL) for all islands.
 - ♦ However, the recent notification relaxes this significantly.

- On a similar line, the government had earlier issued a **Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification 2018** that largely allows tourism and development projects located near coasts in mainland States to come up closer to the sea.

Island Development Agency

- It was constituted in 2017 for holistic development of islands in India.
- IDA is chaired by the Union Home Minister and its other members include Cabinet Secretary, Home Secretary, Secretary (Environment, Forests and Climate Change), Secretary (Tourism) and Secretary (Tribal Welfare).
- IDA has identified 10 islands, namely Smith, Ross, Aves, Long and Little Andaman in Andaman & Nicobar and Minicoy, Bangaram, Suheli, Cherium and Tinnakara in Lakshadweep, for holistic development in the first phase.
 - ♦ It was touted that CRZ Notification, 2018 will lead to enhanced activities in the coastal regions thereby promoting economic growth while also respecting the conservation principles of coastal regions.
 - ♦ It was also aimed to lead to significant employment generation.

Salient Features of IPZ 2019:

- It allows eco-tourism projects 20 metres from the HTL in smaller islands and at 50 metres in larger ones. This brings the norms for Andaman and Nicobar at par with **coastal regulation zone (CRZ) norms**.
- Temporary facilities such as shacks, toilet blocks and changing rooms are permitted on beaches at a minimum distance of 10 metres from the HTL.
- It **allows for eco-tourism activities** like mangrove walks, tree huts and nature trails in **island coastal regulation zone IA (classified as the most eco-sensitive region of the islands which includes turtle nesting grounds, marshes, coral reefs etc)**.
- The notification also allows for construction of roads, roads on stilts by reclaiming land in exceptional cases for defence installations, public utilities for strategic purposes in eco-sensitive zones.
- It states that in case construction of such roads pass through mangroves, a minimum **three times** the mangrove area destroyed during the construction process shall be taken up for compensatory plantation of mangroves elsewhere.
- These **were not allowed under the IPZ 2011 notification** which only permitted pipelines, transmission lines, trans-harbour links to be laid in the eco-sensitive zone.

Many new activities allowed in the Inter-Tidal Zone:

- The new notification also **allows a number of new activities in the inter-tidal zone** between low tide line and HTL.

- **This includes:**
 - ♦ land reclamation and bunding for foreshore facilities like ports, harbours, jetties, wharves, quays, sea links etc,
 - ♦ transfer of hazardous substances from ships to ports,
 - ♦ manual mining of atomic minerals, and
 - ♦ mining of sand for construction purposes **with permission from local authorities in non-eco-sensitive sites.**
- The 2011 notification allowed only a few activities in the inter-tidal zone like construction of huts for fisher folk and other public facilities required for traditional inhabitants.

TIGER CENSUS 2018

The fourth tiger census in India is underway

About:

- The **first tiger census was conducted in 2006.**
- Counting of the majestic tigers is done in **every four years** by the **National Tiger Conservation Authorities (NTCA).**
- Individual tigers can be easily identified from the camera images through the software that **records the animal's unique stripe pattern.**

How does NTCA conduct Tiger Census?

I. Doubling Sample Technique

- So far the census was conducted using the **doubling sample technique.**
- **In this techniques,** the first phase includes sending the forest official, guards and forest rangers to collect raw data based on pugmarks, scat, and leftover prey.
- While the second phase includes the data and images from **camera traps.** Once both the data is in place, the data is then used to identify tigers individually.

II. Use of Digital Techniques in Tiger Census 2018:

- In 2018, NTCA is going to use **an app named MSTRIPES for the proper location data feeding and filling the record more accurately.**
- **The Indian Government launched an android app named M-STRIPES (Monitoring system for Tigers – Intensive Protection and Ecological Status),** a software-based monitoring system at different tiger reserves across the country in April 2010.
- **M-STRIPES consists of primary two components:**
 - ♦ Field-based protocols for patrolling, law enforcement, recording wildlife crimes and ecological monitoring.
 - ♦ A customized software for the storage, retrieval, analysis, and reporting.
- The app will capture the forest team's route throughout the forest and assist them in uploading geo-tagged images into the database.
- The app enables managers to assess the rapidity and endemic coverage of patrols in a **GIS-based tool.**

Counting more than just Tigers:

- Tiger census is not limited to just counting tigers but also about estimating the population of **various carnivores, ungulates and other animals of India's forests.**
- For example, the 2014 census had recorded the inaugural counting of the population of India's **leopard,** which was 11,000 in numbers.

Northeast to be included for the First Time:

- Another **primary focus of the tiger census 2018 is to cover the northeast India that was not included in the previous census** because of the several reasons.
- This inclusion will surely go to **boast in the number of the tigers as compared to the census 2014.**

Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh Meetup:

- Bhutan, Nepal, and Bangladesh going to be helping hands in India's tiger census 2018 in the subcontinent.
- **First time** all these three continental countries come together to **count the number of big cats all across India,** especially in the region with mutual borders.
 - ♦ In the previous census, Nepal and Bangladesh were engaged in the counting.

Key Facts of Tiger Census 2014:

- India's tiger census in 2014 showed **an increment of 30% in the population of tiger in the country** as compared to the previous census done in 2010.
- As per the tiger census reports of 2014, **Karnataka has the highest number of population of tigers in India** in the age group of 1.5 years and elder.
- As in descending order of population of tigers, there were **340 tigers in Uttarakhand, 308 in Madhya Pradesh, 229 tigers in Tamil Nadu, 190 tigers in Madhya Pradesh, 229 tigers in Tamil Nadu, 190 tigers in Maharashtra, 167 in Assam, 136 tigers in Kerala, 117 tigers in Uttar Pradesh.**
- As per the data and **results of census 2014,** India was home to estimated **70% of the world's tigers.**

How many Tiger Reserves are there in India?

- There are about 50 Tiger Reserves in India.
- The oldest tiger reserve is **Corbett Tiger Reserve** which was declared in the year 1973 under 'Project Tiger', Whereas **Kamlang Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh** is the newest Tiger Reserve of India declared in the year 2018.

Which state has the maximum number of Tiger Reserves in India?

- **Madhya Pradesh** is the state with the maximum number of Tiger Reserves in India.

- There are 6 tiger reserves in Madhya Pradesh.
 - ♦ Pench Tiger Park
 - ♦ Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve
 - ♦ Kanha Tiger Reserve
 - ♦ Satpura Tiger Reserve
 - ♦ Panna Tiger Reserve
 - ♦ Sanjay Dubri Tiger Reserve

Recent updates of Tiger Census 2018:

- Royal Bengal Tigers have been spotted in a new location in **Odisha**.
- **Dibang Valley** in Arunachal Pradesh is another high altitude home to Royal Bengal Tiger.
- Madhya Pradesh may get back their status of **“Tiger State”** as sources have reported the presence of over 400 Royal Bengal Tiger in the state.
- Surprisingly, **palamau Tiger Reserve**, which is one of the Nine Tiger Reserve declared in 1973 **has not seen evidence of the Big Cat presence in the reserve since 2016**.

THRISSUR POORAM AND ELEPHANTS

Thrissur Pooram celebrated in the midst of an elephant issue.

About:

- Thrissur Pooram is an annual Hindu festival held in Kerala, India. It is held at the Vadakkunnathan Temple in Thrissur every year on the Pooram day - the day when the moon rises with the Pooram star in the Malayalam Calendar month of Medam.
- It is the largest and most famous of all poorams. It is an annual festival in Kerala dedicated to goddesses Durga or Kali.

History:

- Thrissur Pooram festival was started in the 18th century by Raja Rama Varma, the ruler of the Kingdom of Cochin. He was also known as the Sakthan Thampuran, who played a vital role in shaping the Thrissur city and making it Kerala's cultural capital.
- During this festival, one can see an excellent collection of elephants decorated with various golden ornaments.

Participants:

- The main temples in Thrissur such as the Paramekkavu Devi temple and the Thiruvambadi Sri Krishna temple have to pay their obeisance to Lord Shiva, the presiding deity of the famed Vadakkunnathan temple.
- These two temples oppose each other during the celebrations and their elephant teams compete with one another on the sixth day through the elephant procession, fireworks and overall cultural representation.

It's an Elephant Show:

- A grand display of the fifteen elephants is one of the most anticipated aspects of this festival. The fifteen elephants are decorated in stunning, gold-threaded work and finery.
- Fireworks are an integral part of Kerala's temple festivals, but the Thrissur Pooram is referred to as the “mother of all” firework and temple celebrations.



Elephants row in Thrissur Pooram:

- Captive elephants were paraded during Thrissur Pooram, the largest annual temple festival in Kerala, without the requisite approval from the Animal Welfare Board of India.
- The parading of elephants in festival violates laws such as the Wildlife Protection Act, the Performing Animals (Registration) Rules, 2001 and the Kerala Captive Elephants (Management and Maintenance) Rules, 2003 and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960.
- The state government made it clear that it would not intervene with the age-old practice of parading elephants during Pooram.

Other Festivals Involving Animals

- Ooru Habba in Karnataka. It involves sacrificing of animals.
- Myoko, the monsoon festival, celebrated by Apatanis, a major tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. It involves a sacrifice of animals.
- Kambala, a buffalo race in Karnataka.
- Jallikattu, the annual bull taming festival of Tamil Nadu.
- Apart from the above, there are numerous local festivals where the sacrifice of goat, sheep, chicken and other animals are made.

Do You Know?

Kingfisher bird, any of about 90 species of birds in three families (Alcedinidae, Halcyonidae, and Cerylidae), are noted for their spectacular dives into water. They are distributed worldwide but are **chiefly tropical**. The largest of all kingfishers is the **kookaburra**, known throughout Australia for its **laughing call**. The **IUCN Red List of Threatened Species** classifies most kingfishers as species of **least concern**.



7

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

MELAMINE

India extended ban on import of milk products from China on apprehensions of presence of melamine in some milk consignments from China.

About:

- Government of India has extended the ban on import of milk and its products, including chocolates, from China.
- Although India **does not import** milk, milk products from China, it has imposed the ban as a preventive measure.
- The ban will extend till laboratories at ports for testing presence of toxic chemical melamine are upgraded.
- The Indian government had **first imposed a ban** on import of Chinese milk and milk products **in 2008**, when milk and infant formula products along with other food materials were found contaminated with melamine in China.
- The ban has been extended subsequently from time to time.

What is Melamine?

- Melamine is an organic base chemical most commonly found in the form of white crystals rich in nitrogen.
- It is also called cyanuramide or triaminotriazine, and a **colourless crystalline substance** belonging to the family of **heterocyclic organic** compounds.
- Melamine is **rich in nitrogen**, a property that is similar to protein.
- Melamine is a toxic chemical used for making plastics and fertilisers, adhesives, countertops, dishware, whiteboards etc.

Misuse of Melamine in China

- Evidence of **misuse of the chemical** in China **emerged in 2007**, when more than 4,000 dogs and cats in the United States died from **kidney failure** as a result of ingesting melamine-tainted pet food.
- The substance was found in **wheat gluten** and in **rice protein** concentrate that had been imported from China and used in the United States to make the foods.
- Chinese **dairy product exports, including certain chocolate and milk products**, were also found to contain melamine and were subsequently recalled in **Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Thailand**.

Why Melamine is Added in Milk?

- In China, where adulteration has occurred, **water has been added to raw milk** to increase its volume.
- As a result of this dilution the milk has a lower protein concentration.
- Companies using the milk for further production (e.g. of powdered infant formula) normally check the protein level through a test measuring **nitrogen content**.
- The **addition of melamine increases the nitrogen content** of the milk and therefore its apparent protein content.

Milk Production in India

- India is the **world's largest producer and consumer of milk**.
- It produces around **150 million tonne** milk annually.
- **Uttar Pradesh is the leading state in milk production** followed by Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Health Effects of Melamine Consumptions:

- **According to WHO**, while there are no direct human studies on the effect of melamine, data from animal studies can be used to predict adverse health effects.
- Melamine alone causes **bladder stones in animal tests**. **When combined with cyanuric acid**, which may also be present in melamine powder, melamine can form crystals that can give rise to **kidney stones**.
- It can potentially cause **kidney failure and, in some cases, death**.
- Melamine has also been shown to have **carcinogenic effects in animals** in certain circumstances, but there **is insufficient evidence** to make a judgment on carcinogenic risk in humans.

FSSAI Regulations on Melamine:

- There is a ceiling on presence of **insecticides and metal contaminants** in milk and milk products.
- To check adulteration, food safety regulator FSSAI **has proposed** in 2017 time fixing a maximum permissible limit of melamine content in milk and related products.
- FSSAI has also proposed imposing a permissible limit of **1mg of melamine in every kg of powdered infant formula**, 0.15 mg per kg in liquid infant formula and 2.5 mg per kg in other foods.

EMIRATES MARS MISSION – HOPE PROBE

The UAE gets ready to enter the global space exploration race in 2021 through the Emirates Mars Mission project.

About:

- In July 2014, the **UAE** announced the launch of the **Emirates Mars Mission project**.
- This initiated work on developing **the first Arabic-Islamic probe to be sent to Mars by 2020**.

Scientific Objectives of the Probe Voyage:

- The main objective of the hope probe is the study the Martian atmosphere. It will be:
 - ♦ The **first probe to study climate throughout daily and seasonal cycles** – previous probes took snapshots only at a certain time of day;
 - ♦ Mars's first true weather satellite;
 - ♦ The **first to study the effects that events in the lower atmosphere**, such as changes in temperature and dust storms, can have in upper atmosphere days or weeks later;
 - ♦ The **first to examine the interaction between climate and geography**, such as links and differences between weather on the peaks of mars's massive volcanoes and in the depths of its canyons.
- The Mars science community will gain new insights about the weather on Mars, such as its famous dust storms.
 - ♦ On Earth, dust storms are brief and localised. On Mars, massive storms of red dust are known to engulf the entire planet.
- It will have a digital camera that will send back **high-resolution colour images** and an infra-red spectrometer, which **will examine temperature patterns, ice, water vapour and dust in the atmosphere**.
- It also will have an ultraviolet spectrometer which will **study the upper atmosphere and traces of oxygen and hydrogen further out into space**.

Mars is losing its Atmosphere!

- Long ago, Mars had an atmosphere that could sustain liquid water on the surface.
- But unlike Earth, Mars has been steadily losing its atmosphere over time.
- The Martian atmosphere is now so cold and thin that water can exist only as ice or vapour.
- The Emirates Mars Mission probe will study how the climate, cycles and behaviour of the lower atmosphere affect the escape of oxygen and hydrogen from the upper atmosphere.

What is Mars Like?

- Mars is a cold desert world. It is half the size of Earth.
- Mars is sometimes called the Red Planet. It's red because of rusty iron in the ground.
- Like Earth, Mars has seasons, polar ice caps, volcanoes, canyons, and weather.

- It has a very thin atmosphere made of carbon dioxide, nitrogen, and argon.
- There are signs of ancient floods on Mars, but now water mostly exists in icy dirt and thin clouds.
- On some Martian hillsides, there is evidence of liquid salty water in the ground.
- Mars has two moons. These are: **Phobos and Deimos**.
- Mars has an active atmosphere but its surface is not active. Its volcanoes are dead.
- One day on Mars is just a little longer (24.6 hours) than it is on earth.
- One year on Mars is almost twice as long as it is on earth (687 days).

BLUE ORIGIN'S MOON MISSION

Amazon's Jeff Bezos reveals Blue Origin's moon mission and lunar lander

About:

- Jeff Bezos, who heads both Amazon and **space company Blue Origin**, unveiled a lunar lander that he said would be used to transport equipment, and possibly human beings, to Shackleton Crater at the moon's south pole by 2024.
- It will be capable of carrying scientific instruments, the four small rovers, and also a future pressurized vehicle for humans.

Why South Pole of the Moon?

- The goal is to land on the Moon's South Pole, where **ice deposits** were confirmed in 2018.
- The lunar south pole is believed to be home to large deposits of water ice, which can potentially be used for life support or broken down into its constituent elements—hydrogen and oxygen—and repurposed as rocket fuel.
- For this reason, the lunar lander is fueled by liquid hydrogen so it can be refueled on the surface of the moon.
- **Shackleton Crater** is a strategic destination that was chosen for its resources.
- The crater receives almost perpetual sunlight, which can be used for solar power.

Issues with the Mission:

- **The harsh conditions on the surface** of the Moon mean that, once up there, humans need to be shielded from radiation and freezing temperatures in structures which maintain atmospheric pressure in a vacuum.
- There are still a lot of uncertainty about the lunar South Pole that needs to be resolved prior to establishing a lunar base.

- **Nature of the water ice at the poles:** Although NASA first discovered traces of ice in the lunar regolith over a decade ago, the form this ice is in is an open question—it could exist as sheets, as casing around lunar regolith, or as small grains mixed in with the dust.
- Resolving this question will require exploratory robotic missions to the lunar surface and may ultimately require new technologies to extract the water ice from the regolith.
- **Regulatory concerns:** The **UN Outer Space Treaty** explicitly states that the moon is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means. This creates something of a legal gray area for corporations.
- Is mining the moon for profit or establishing a private moon base in violation of the Outer Space Treaty?

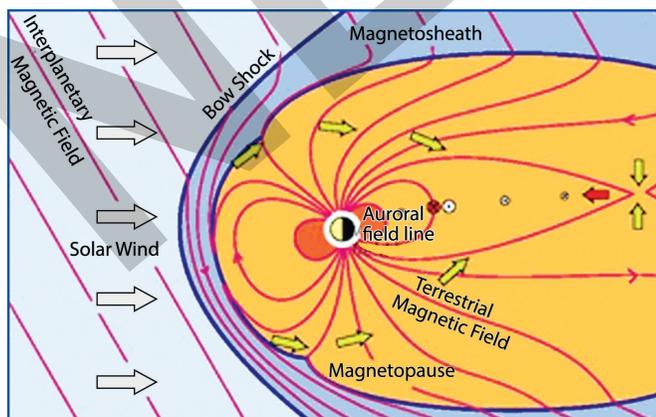


ARTEMIS MISSION

Research using data from NASA's ARTEMIS mission suggested how the solar wind and the Moon's crustal magnetic fields work together to give the Moon a distinctive pattern of darker and lighter swirls.

About:

- ARTEMIS stands for Acceleration, Reconnection, Turbulence and Electrodynamics of the Moon's Interaction with the Sun.
- It uses two of the five **in-orbit spacecraft** from another NASA Heliophysics constellation of satellites (THEMIS) that were launched in 2007.



- It allowed NASA to repurpose two in-orbit spacecraft to extend their useful science mission, saving tens of millions of taxpayer dollars instead of building and launching new spacecraft.

Mechanism of Interaction of Solar Wind and the Moon's Crustal Magnetic Fields:

- The Sun releases a continuous outflow of particles and radiation called the **solar wind**.
- The solar wind washes over the planets, moons and other bodies in our solar system, filling a bubble of space — called the **heliosphere** — that extends far past the orbit of Pluto.
- On Earth, these magnetized solar winds are deflected by the Earth's natural magnetic field.
- But unlike Earth, the Moon has no global magnetic field. However, magnetized rocks near the lunar surface do create small, localized spots of magnetic field.
- These small bubbles of magnetic "sunscreen" can also deflect solar wind particles, but on a much smaller scale than Earth's magnetic field.
- Sun's particles are deflected to the areas just around the magnetic bubbles, where chemical reactions with the regolith darken the surface.
- This creates the distinctive swirls of darker and lighter material that are so prominent they can be seen from Earth.

Importance of the Mission:

As a result of Artemis, NASA will be able to

- Establish a **sustainable human presence** on the Moon by 2028,
- Uncover **new scientific discoveries**,
- Demonstrate new **technological advancements**, and
- Lay the **foundation for private companies** to build a **lunar economy**.

BRAIN FINGERPRINTING

Recently, the Delhi High Court had directed installation of brain fingerprinting machine at Forensic Science Lab, Rohini, Delhi.

About:

- Brain fingerprinting is a **type of lie-detection technique**.
- It is an **objective** and **scientific** method to detect concealed information stored in the brain, by measuring brain waves.
- It is one of the techniques of crime detection, put to use in certain sensitive cases.

How it Works:

- **Electrodes** are placed on the scalp of the suspect who is seated in a comfortable chair in a soundproof room.
- Other ends of the electrodes are connected to an **electroencephalographic (EEG)** machine.
- EEG machine picks up the **electrical activity of the brain**.

- The suspect is presented with **investigative probes** like pictures, words or short sentences that could activate the suspect's **memory** and trigger a **response** in the EEG machine.
- When a subject recognizes and takes note of something **significant** in present context, the brain emits an **"Aha!" response**.
- This involves the **firing of neurons** in a specific, identifiable pattern known as a **P300-MERMER** that can be detected by computer analysis of the EEG signals.

Advantages of Brain Fingerprinting:

- It is more useful than the **witness testimony** in crime investigation as witness testimony provides an indirect and subjective account of this record.
- The records stored in the brains of suspects are brought into the realm of **scientific scrutiny** and **objective investigation**.
- Brain fingerprinting eliminates the chances of **deception** on the part of the witness.

Limitations of Brain Fingerprinting:

- Human memory is imperfect and limited.
- This technique is not 100% true in every case as it only detects information in the brain of a person. It may be that an innocent person maybe knowing about the crime as a third person or listener or maybe that he may be present at the crime scene.
- As the technology is costly, not all the people can use it.

Conclusion:

- The importance of this technology cannot be overruled because of the higher rates of criminal cases and also the higher rates of complexity of the cases.
- It could provide some valuable information.

JOIDES RESOLUTION (JR)

In a first, scientists have discovered the remnants of seawater dating back to the Ice Age. It was found inside rock formations in the middle of the Indian Ocean.

About:

- JR is a **research vessel** that drills into the **ocean floor** to collect and study core samples.
- It is equipped with a **drill** that can extract cores of rock over a mile long from up to three miles beneath the seafloor.
- It is a part of the **International Ocean Discovery Program** and is funded by the **National Science Foundation**.
- Scientists use data from the JR to better understand **climate change, geology** and **Earth's history**.

International Ocean Discovery Program:

- IODP is an international **marine research collaboration**.

- Under the program, following activities are carried out:
 - ♦ Use of **ocean-going research platforms** to recover data recorded in seafloor sediments and rocks.
 - ♦ Monitoring of the **sub-seafloor environments**.
 - ♦ It helps in exploring the **Earth's history and dynamism**.
- Some of the highly specialised and unique drilling platforms available under IODP –
 - ♦ JOIDES Resolution (USA),
 - ♦ CHIKYU (Japan) and
 - ♦ Mission Specific Platform (MSP-Europe).

IODP and India:

- **India** became an **Associate member** of this consortium through an MoU between Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) and National Science Foundation, USA.
- **The National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research, Goa (NCAOR)**, an autonomous institute under MoES has been designated as the **nodal agency** to act as IODP-India and the **Program Management Office (PMO)**.

Importance of IODP:

- Buried beneath the ocean floor are **records** of millions of years of Earth's climatic, biological, chemical, and geological history.
- Scientific ocean drilling allows researchers to access these records and explore, analyze, theorize, and test models.
- These models address how our planet works on **local-to-global spatial scales** and on **decadal-to-millennial time scales**.
- IODP advances understanding of Earth's past to be able to better understand and predict its future.
- It can inform decision-making about some of the most important environmental issues facing society today.
- IODP also builds intellectual capacity through the promotion of international collaboration, education, and training.

DR. LEE JONG-WOOK PRIZE

Recently, ICMR head Balram Bhargava won Dr. Lee Jong-wook Prize for public health.

About:

- The Dr LEE Jong-wook Memorial Prize for Public Health was established in **2008**.
- It is awarded to **individuals, institutions, and governmental or nongovernmental organizations** who have made an **outstanding contribution** to public health.
- This **annual** award is presented at a special ceremony during the **World Health Assembly**.

SQUARE KILOMETER ARRAY (SKA)

Recently, scientists at Cambridge have finished designing the 'brain' of the Square Kilometer Array (SKA).

About:

- Science Data Processor (SDP) consortium
- **SDP consortium**, led by the University of Cambridge in the UK, has designed the elements that will together form the 'brain' of the SKA.
- SDP is the **second stage** of processing for the masses of **digitised astronomical signals** collected by the telescope's receivers.
- The role of the consortium was to design the computing **hardware platforms, software, and algorithms** needed to process **science data** from the **Central Signal Processor (CSP)** into **science data products**.
- SDP itself will be composed of **two supercomputers**, one located in **Cape Town, South Africa** and one in **Perth, Australia**.
- SDP's **total compute power** to be around 250 PFlops – that's 25 per cent faster than **IBM's Summit**, the current fastest supercomputer in the world.

World's Biggest Radio Telescope

Australia and South Africa are competing to host the Square Kilometre Array (SKA), a huge \$2.5bn radio telescope which will be 50 times more sensitive and 10,000 times faster than any other telescope on the planet

2016: Construction begins
2024: Fully operational

Potential array stations

PROPOSED LOCATIONS
Karoo desert: SKA would extend to Ghana and Kenya
Murchison Radio Observatory: SKA would reach as far as New Zealand

2.5km
1.5 miles

Combined collecting area totals one square kilometre, but is made up of 3,000 receptors spiralling out from concentrated central core over distance of 5,000km

Radio frequency signals detected in deep space will be processed by supercomputer with power of around 1bn personal computers

2 High frequency arrays: 500MHz-10GHz

3 Low frequency aperture arrays: 70-200MHz

1 Medium frequency aperture arrays: 200-500MHz

CENTRAL LOCATION: Contains around half of total collecting area. Three types of antenna used

SKA expected to expand research on evolution of galaxies, dark energy, extra-terrestrial life and formation of black holes

Central computer will generate exabyte of data every day – more than twice information sent around internet daily

About Square Kilometer Array (SKA) Project:

- SKA project is an **international effort** to build the **world's largest radio telescope**.
- The SKA will eventually use thousands of dishes and up to a million low-frequency antennas.
- Its **unique configuration** will give the SKA unrivalled scope in observations, largely exceeding the **image resolution quality** of the Hubble Space Telescope.
- It will also have the **ability to image** huge areas of sky in parallel a feat which no survey telescope has ever achieved on this scale with this level of sensitivity.
- This global organisation is **managed by** the not-for-profit SKA Organisation.
- **Members of SKA:**
 - ♦ Organisations from **13 countries** are members of the SKA Organisation – Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, New Zealand, Spain, South Africa, Sweden, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

Importance

When complete, the SKA will enable **astronomers** to **monitor** the sky in **unprecedented detail** and survey the entire sky much **faster** than any system currently in existence.

SNAKEBITE ENVENOMING: A STRATEGY FOR PREVENTION AND CONTROL

The World Health Organisation unveiled its strategy for cutting down disabilities and deaths due to snakebites by 50% by 2030.

Snakebite: Public Health Issue

- Around 1, 00,000 people who die globally every year from snakebite, of which at least 46,000 are in India.
- It is one of the world's most **Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD)**.
- Snakebites are not just responsible for **preventable deaths**, but **disability and lasting trauma**
 - ♦ Untreated snakebites can lead to **gangrene, disfigurement of injured portion, amputation, kidney failure** leading to **multi-organ failure** or **death**, depending on varying degrees of snakebites envenoming.

Features of the Strategy:

- Availability of safe, effective treatments.
- Restoration of a sustainable market for snakebite treatment – To ensure an increase of at least 25% in the number of competent manufacturers by 2030.
- Cost mitigation to reduce the debilitating financial impact of treatment.

- Integration of treatment of snakebite envenoming into national health plans in all affected countries.
- Long-term sustainability and strong collaborative partnerships for effective control.

Aims of the Strategy:

The strategy listed the following **strategic aims** to achieve the target –

- Empower and engage **communities**,
- Ensure safe and effective **treatment**,
- Strengthen **health systems**,
- Increase **coordination, partnership** and **resources** and
- Building a sustainable, stable **market** for safe, effective anti-venoms at **reasonable cost** and **assured access** to treatment.

Way Forward:

- The WHO should create a **revolving stockpile** of anti-venoms, so that supply can be effectively ensured at the places where they are needed.
- In 80% of the snake bite cases, people get bitten on hands and feet. So,
 - ♦ Farmers to wear gum boots while working in the field.
 - ♦ People have to be careful while picking up stones, wood logs or any object lying on the ground as the reptiles might be resting under them.

Problem of Snakebite in India

- India has been consistently recognised as one of the countries with the highest mortality rate from snakebites.
- Poor access to healthcare aggravates the problem.
- To deal with the issue, the Health Ministry has issued the guidelines to be followed by all State health institutions, It recognizes.
- The earlier a patient is treated with Anti-Snake Venom (ASV), the better the outcome.
- The need to bring about a behavioural change among people regarding the occupational risks and their reduction.
- Central funds will be made available to the states for the procurement if the anti-snake venom medicine is included in the State's list of essential medicines.

GENETIC STUDY IN LAKSHADWEEP

Scientists carry out genetic study on people of Lakshadweep Islands which shows Island population had limited genetic mixing.

About:

- A **study** by the Hyderabad-based **CSIR-CCMB** (Centre for Cellular & Molecular Biology) revealed the inhabitants of the Lakshadweep Islands in the Arabian Sea share a genetic link with South Asians, especially mainland Indians.
- The authors have studied the major islands of Agatti, Andorth, Bitra, Chetlat, Kadmat, Kalpeni, Kiltan and Minicoy of Lakshadweep and demonstrated a **close genetic link of Lakshadweep islanders with people from Maldives, Sri Lanka and India.**

About the Study:

- DNA samples of 557 individuals from eight major islands for **mitochondrial DNA** and 166 individuals for **Y chromosome markers** were analysed.
- A strong **founder effect** for both paternal and maternal lineages has been found. This is a sign that the island population had **limited genetic mixing.**
- Even after regular historic interactions with people from different regions of the world, it is extremely interesting that there is only a limited **number of founders.**
- Most of the Lakshadweep islands share the haplogroups specific to South Asia and West Eurasia, except Minicoy Island that also shares haplogroups of East Eurasia. (A **haplogroup** is a genetic population group of people who share a common ancestor on the patriline or the matriline.)
- The paternal and maternal ancestors of the majority of island populations suggest their arrival from distinct sources.
- It is found that the maternal ancestry was closer to South Indian populations, whereas the paternal ancestry was overwhelmed with the haplogroups, more common in the Maldives and North of India.

Significance of the Study:

- The finding assumes significance as Andaman & Nicobar Islanders share an ancestry with the migrants of Africa. **Through earlier studies it is known that early human migration from Africa to Andaman and Australia happened through western coast of India.**
- So, it was presumed that the Lakshadweep islands might have played a major role in early human migration and expected the presence of genetic signatures of ancient people, such as Andamanese and Australian aboriginals.
- The findings would help in analysing health profiles of the migrants in the near future.

About Lakshadweep:

- **Lakshadweep** is an archipelago of 36 islands in the Arabian Sea, with a population of approximately 65,000. However, the first human settlement of this archipelago is not clear.

- The literal **meaning** of Lakshadweep is “**one hundred thousand islands**” in **Sanskrit**.
- **History:** The islands were known to sailors since ancient times and historical documents say that the spread of Buddhism to these islands happened during 6th century B.C. and Islam in 661 A.D. by Arabians. Cholas ruled the islands in 11th century, Portuguese in 16th century, Ali Rajahs in 17th, Tipu Sultan in 18th before the British Raj of 19th century.
- **Jataka stories of Buddhism** have mentioned these islands. **Arab traveller Ibn Batuta** mentioned about these islands in many of his stories.
- Presently, majority of the populations follow Islam and are ethnically similar to Malayali people of Kerala state.

Founder Effect

- The founder effect is a phenomenon that occurs when a small group of individuals becomes isolated from a larger population.
- Regardless of what the original population looked like, the new population will resemble only the individuals that founded the smaller, distinct population.
- The founder effect is due to the randomness that accompanies selecting a small group from a larger population.
- The smaller the population, the higher the chance that the small population does not represent the larger population.

IMAGINE CUP

A team of Indian students was declared second runners-up at the Microsoft Imagine Cup world finals.

About:

- **Imagine Cup:** Considered the “Olympics of Technology”, Imagine Cup is a global annual competition sponsored and hosted by Microsoft.
- Imagine Cup is a global competition that empowers the next generation of computer science students to team up and use their creativity, passion and knowledge of technology to create applications that shape how we live, work and play.
- The three-member team from Faridabad-based Manav Rachna Institute of Research and Studies developed “Caeli” (which means air in Latin) - a smart automated anti-pollution and drug delivery mask specifically designed for asthmatic and chronic respiratory patients.
- The first place went to Team EasyGlucose from the United States, which developed a cloud-powered, non-invasive, and cost-effective method of blood glucose monitoring for diabetic patients.

About Caeli:

- Caeli is a sleek, portable, easy-to-fit-inside-your-pocket nebulizer and a customized mask.
- Drug doses can be scheduled through the app.
- In case of breathing difficulties, the app allows the user to switch on the intelligent mode that provides instant relief drugs.
- The app also monitors air quality in real-time and helps choose the least polluted route to travel from one place to another.

SEROTONIN

Stress buster serotonin may help treat neurological decline

About:

- Researchers at the **Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) Mumbai** have found a novel function for serotonin (a chemical that signals between neurons).
- **The recent discovery establishes** that serotonin is involved in the generation of new mitochondria (the powerhouse of the cell) in neurons, increased cellular respiration and fuel (ATP) in the cell.

About Serotonin:

- At the level of an organism, serotonin is known to be involved in coping with stress.
- It is sometimes **called the happy chemical**, because it contributes to wellbeing and happiness. It is believed to help regulate mood and social behavior, appetite and digestion, sleep, memory, and sexual desire and function.
- **The scientific name** for serotonin is **5-hydroxytryptamine, or 5-HT**.
- It is **mainly found in** the brain, bowels, and blood platelets.
- As the precursor for melatonin, **it helps regulate the body's sleep-wake cycles** and the internal clock.
- Serotonin can impact the manner in which neurons grapple with stress and **affect the trajectory of ageing**.
- **Alzheimer's and Parkinson's:** Neuronal loss is a major cause of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. Abnormal mitochondrial functions are known to cause or contribute to neuronal death.

Significance of the Experiment:

- Unlike other cells, neurons are not generated continuously and so identifying factors that increase mitochondrial health is key to prevent ageing-associated neurological diseases.
- The experiment provides insights into how serotonin generates more mitochondria thereby giving neurons the capacity to produce more energy and the ability to cope with stress better.

- Now it is proved that serotonin reduces reactive oxygen species, thus providing neuroprotection against cellular stress.
- The new finding from TIFR raises the possibility that serotonin signalling **could be used to prevent mitochondrial abnormalities and neuronal loss**.
- This study paves the way for further research into designing therapeutic interventions.
- This may help tackle mood disorders and age-associated neurological decline.

YUVA VIGYANI KARYAKRAM (YUVIKA)

ISRO hosts first batch of teen scientists

About:

- As many as 110 teenagers, aspiring space scientists from all States and Union Territories, began a two-week residential training programme to learn about the national space programme first hand.
- They are the first batch of **young scientists or 'Yuvika' (Yuva Vigyani Karyakram)** that the Indian Space Research Organisation plans to hold every year.
- The chosen Class 9 students will spend time visiting four centres of ISRO.
- **The host centres are** Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, Thiruvananthapuram; U.R. Rao Satellite Centre, Bengaluru; the Space Applications Centre, Ahmedabad; and the North Eastern Space Applications Centre, Shillong.

About YUVIKA:

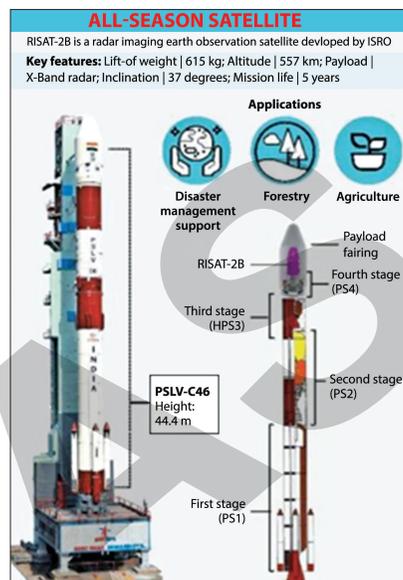
- Indian Space Research Organisation has launched a special programme for School Children called **"Young Scientist Programme"** **"Yuva Vigyani Karyakram"** (युवा विद्यनि कार्यक्रम).
- It is in tune with the Government's vision **"Jai Vigyan, Jai Anusandhan"**.
- **Aim:** The Program is primarily aimed at imparting basic knowledge on Space Technology, Space Science and Space Applications to the younger ones with the intent of arousing their interest in the emerging areas of Space activities.
- It is proposed to select **3 students each from each State/ Union Territory** to participate in this programme every year covering **CBSE, ICSE and State syllabus**.
- **Eligibility:** Those who have finished 8th standard and currently studying in 9th standard will be eligible for the programme.

RISAT-2B

ISRO puts imaging satellite RISAT 2B into orbit

About:

- India launched RISAT 2B, the **all-weather imaging satellite** that boosts the capability to image earth resources as well as enhance surveillance and security.
- **Vehicle and orbit:** The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C46) successfully placed the satellite in its orbit about 556 km.
- **Other piggyback payloads carried on board are:**



- the Vikram processor and low-cost MEMS-based Inertial Navigation System (INS) developed by Semi-Conductor Laboratory (SCL), Chandigarh, and the ISRO Inertial Systems Unit, Thiruvananthapuram.
- **Background:** In the past decade, ISRO has launched two satellites in the RISAT series, beginning in 2009 with the Israeli-built RISAT 2, and the second one, -RISAT 1, in 2012. The RISAT 1 is no longer operational.

RISAT-2B:

- The RISAT-2B is a **radar imaging earth observation satellite**, weighing 615 kg.
- **Services:** It is intended to provide services in the field of agriculture, forestry and disaster management.

Significance of RISAT-2B:

- It is an improvement over the remote sensing satellites in natural resources observation and management.
- It has a sensor called the **'Synthetic Aperture Radar'**, which takes high-quality radar images. Globally, security agencies use the images and services of such satellites.
- The **X-band synthetic aperture radar** can also provide added details such as size of objects on earth, structures, movement and change, which complements the data that is being gathered through the normal optical remote-sensing satellites.
- The biggest advantage is that ground imageries can be collected during rains and despite dust, clouds or darkness and during all seasons, thus ensuring continuous and reliable data.



8

ETHICS, VALUES & INTEGRITY

ETHICS IN DATA MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

2018 and 2019 saw some of the largest data breaches in history which has made Ethics in Data Management and Governance a need of hour.

Data 'the New Oil':

- Data is being traded as a commodity and has even been dubbed "the new oil".
- Almost 2.5 quintillion bytes of data are created daily, and that number is only going up.

Misuse of Data:

- With this rapid proliferation of data, instances of data misuse are rising.
- Data misuse is becoming a global problem that demands a far-reaching action.

Current Approach:

- Presently, the trust is on regulations. There is a surge of rules and regulations. For example, the GDPR and the California Consumer Privacy Act.
- Various universities are pushing courses on ethics because powerful tools like machine learning could alter human society and students need to understand the potential consequences.
- Organizations like Hewlett-Packard, Tata steel, Suzlon have appointed Chief Ethics Officer.

Indian Scenario:

- India is also pacing fast towards setting up tech-framework and expected to release law for comprehensive data protection soon.
- The law will regulate the managing of customers' personal data by the government and private firms set up in India and abroad. However, generally, data privacy laws have 2 aspects in common – one is Data Protection and other is Breach Notification. If either of these gets violated it would lead to punitive action. This would compel organizations to embrace transparency in their consumer data journey.

Need for Ethical Data Management:

- **For corporations –**
 - ♦ To earn their customers' trust. This in turn would determine their success.
 - ♦ Less incidence of breach of law governing data management, it may reduce the chances that an

organization is being penalized. For example, Facebook's recent data breach, if found to violate the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), could cost them 4% of their global revenue in fines.

- ♦ To create level playing field, as entity with larger data pool would be in the position to adversely affect the competition in the market place.
- **For Government:** Reinforce the faith of the people in the ideals of democracy like liberty, equality, justice etc. The state will not be seen as 'police state'.
- An ethics-driven approach to Data Governance encourages sound knowledge of data protection laws and the appropriate use of the technology that generates, analyses and propagates data.
- Clearly defined and communicated principles and practices can drive honest and appropriate behaviors.

Approach for Ethics in Data Management and Governance:

- Companies will need to go beyond data security and privacy to ensure that there is ethical handling of data within and beyond the organisation.
- Data Governance programs could benefit from ethics frameworks from the government and/or the wider public sector. For example - The UK's Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport has formulated a framework in service of its National Data Strategy.
- There should be **collective standards** and **ethical frameworks** outlining how data should be collected and used.
- There should be a '**Chief Ethics Officer**' in each organization.
- Regular **security training** and **awareness programs** for the employees of the organization can help them understand the risks involved. It would reduce the chances of error due to ignorance.

Advantages of Ethics in Data Management and Governance:

- It will preserve people's trust in the organization.
- It would help in better understanding the effects of technology, data workflows and data sharing, as well as their ethical and real-world consequences.
- It would restore the delicate balance of controls, rights, accountabilities, and processes. Ultimately, it will create confidence in data.
- It would bring transparency and ensure accountability in the collection, storage and processing of data.





9

CULTURE

KUMBH MELA

The largest peaceful congregation of pilgrims on earth

About:

- Kumbh Mela, in Hinduism, is a religious pilgrimage that is celebrated **four times over a course of 12 years**.
- The geographical location of Kumbh Mela spans over **four locations in India** and the Mela site keeps rotating between one of the **four pilgrimages on four sacred rivers** as listed below:
 - ♦ **Haridwar** on the Ganges in Uttarakhand
 - ♦ **Ujjain** on the Shipra in Madhya Pradesh
 - ♦ **Nashik** on the Godavari in Maharashtra
 - ♦ **Prayagraj** at the confluence of the Ganges, the Yamuna, and the mythical Sarasvati in Uttar Pradesh.



- Each site's celebration is **based on a distinct set of astrological positions** of the Sun, the Moon, and **the Jupiter**.
- It has been inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Mythological Significance:

- The term 'Kumbh' comes from the root 'kumbhak' (the sacred pitcher of elixir of immortality).
- There is a mention of 'Kumbh' and the bathing ritual associated with it in the **Rig Veda**.
- It speaks of the benefits of bathing at sangam during this period, elimination of negative influences and rejuvenation of mind and soul.
- Prayers for the 'Kumbh' are also expressed in **Atharva Veda** and **Yajur Veda**.

Do You Know?

- **Types of Kumbh Melas:** The Kumbh Mela (sometimes specifically called Purna Kumbh or "full Kumbha"), occurs every 12 years at a given site.
- **Ardh Kumbh ("Half Kumbh")** Mela occurs every 6 years between the two Purna Kumbha Melas at Allahabad and Haridwar only.
- **Maha Kumbh** occurs after 12 Purna Kumbh Melas i.e. every 144 years.
- **Magh Mela (annual Mini Kumbh)** is celebrated annually in the month of Magh every year at Prayagraj, except the years of 'Purna Kumbh Mela' and 'Ardh Kumbh Mela'.

Origin:

- The origin of Kumbh Mela was transcribed by the **8th century philosopher Shankara**.
- The founding myth of the Kumbh Mela points out to the **Puranas (compilation of ancient legends)**.
- It is widely believed that during Samudra Manthan Lord Vishnu (disguised as the enchantress 'Mohini') whisked the Kumbh out of the grasp of the covetous demons who had tried to claim it. As he took it heavenwards, a few drops of the precious nectar fell on the four sacred site we know as Haridwar, Ujjain, Nashik and Prayag.
- The flight and the following pursuit is said to have lasted twelve divine days which is equivalent to twelve human years and therefore, the Mela is celebrated every twelve years, staggered at each of the four sacred sites in this cycle.

Historic Evidences:

- Historic evidence points towards the **rule of King Harshvardhana (c.590-647 AD)**, as the time when Kumbh Mela **got widespread recognition** across geographies.
- Famous traveler **Hsuan Tsang** has prominently mentioned the grandeur of Kumbh Mela in his travelogue.

CHAR DHAM YATRA

Char Dham yatra begins in Uttarakhand.

About:

- The Char Dham Yatra is regarded as one of the most sacred pilgrimage destinations of the Hindus.
- The Char Dham Yatra comprises four holy sites namely **Badrinath, Puri, Rameshwaram, and Dwarka**.

- In fact, the Char Dham or four sacred pilgrims of India are located in four different directions of India.
 - ♦ Badrinath is in the North in Uttarakhand Region.
 - ♦ Puri or Jagannath Puri is in the East in Odisha.
 - ♦ Rameshwaram is in the South in Tamil Nadu.
 - ♦ Dwarka is in the West in Gujarat.
- Hindus believe that by completing the Char Dham Yatra, one gets freed from all the sins did in the past and attains moksha or salvation.

Char Dham and Adi Shankaracharya:

- Adi Shankaracharya founded four "Mathas" or monasteries as seats of Hindu religion at these four holy places comprising the Char Dham.
- He founded the **Sringeri matha** in the south (on the Sringeri Hills), the **Jyotir matha** at Badrinath in the north, the **Sharada matha** on the Dwarka coast in the West, and the **Govardhan matha** at Puri in the east.

Chota Char Dham:

- The Chota Char Dham Yatra is a relatively shorter but very important pilgrimage circuit which is located in the Garhwal part of Uttarakhand.
- It consists of **Badrinath, Kedarnath, Yamunotri, and Gangotri**.
- Each Chota Char Dham site finds their mention in Hindu religious texts such as Puranas, Vedas and also in tales associated with epics such as Mahabharata and Ramayana.
- The holy shrines of Chota Char Dham **represent all the three major sects of Hinduism**.
- The Vaishnav shrine is located at Badrinath. The Shaiva temple is located at Kedarnath. The two Shakta temples are at Gangotri and Yamunotri.

BASAVA JAYANTI

Karnataka celebrated the birth anniversary of the saint-poet who is considered by many as the founder of Lingayat dharma.

About:

The Virashaiva Tradition in Karnataka

- The **twelfth century** witnessed the emergence of a new movement in Karnataka, led by a **Brahmana** named Basavanna (1106-68) who was a minister in the court of a **Kalachuri ruler**.
- His followers were known as Virashaivas (heroes of Shiva) or Lingayats (wearers of the linga).



- Lingayats worship **Shiva in his manifestation as a linga**, and men usually wear a small linga in a silver case on a loop strung over the left shoulder.
- Those who are revered include the **jangama or wandering monks**.
- Lingayats believe that on death the devotee will be united with Shiva and **will not return to this world**. Therefore, **they do not practise funerary rites such as cremation**, prescribed in the Dharmashastras.
- Instead, they **ceremonially bury their dead**.
- The Lingayats **challenged the idea of caste and the "pollution"** attributed to certain groups by Brahmanas.
 - ♦ They also **questioned the theory of rebirth**. These won them followers amongst those who were marginalised within the Brahmanical social order.
- The Virashaivas argued strongly for the **equality of all human beings** and against Brahmanical ideas about caste and the treatment of women. They were also **against all forms of ritual and idol worship**.
- The Lingayats also **encouraged certain practices disapproved in the Dharmashastras**, such as post-puberty marriage and the remarriage of widows.
- Our understanding of the Virashaiva tradition is derived from **vachanas (literally, sayings) composed in Kannada by women and men who joined the movement**.

WHO WAS TYAGARAJA AND WHY IS HE SO CELEBRATED?

Musicians and music lovers from all over the world are gathered in Thiruvayaru to pay tribute to the singer saint.

About:

- The Aaradhana, a musical obeisance to Tyagaraja, one of the Trinity of Carnatic music, is conducted every year at Thiruvayaru in Thanjavur where the saint composer died.

Tyagaraja

- He was born in May 1767 in **Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu**.
- His parents, Kakarla Ramabrahmam and Sitamma, were **Telugu** Mulakanadu Smartha Brahmins from the Prakasam district of Andhra, who migrated to the Tamil regions a generation earlier. He was named Tyagabrahmam at birth, in **honour of lord Shiva** who is worshipped as Tyagaraja in the temple of Thiruvayaru.



June, 2019

- Very little is known about the early life of Tyagaraja. What we do know is that he began learning music at a very early age.
- His maternal grandfather was a Veena player. Tyagaraja took music training from **Sonti Venkataramayya**. But that didn't stop him from taking musical inspirations from various earlier poets.
- Tyagaraja, was an Indian composer of Karnatak songs of the genre **kirtana, or kriti (devotional songs)**, and of ragas.
- He is the most prominent person in the history of southern Indian classical music, and he is venerated by contemporary Karnatak musicians.
- Tyagaraja is said to have composed the music and words of **thousands of kriti**. In concert life he remains dominant; rarely does a concert of southern Indian music omit his works.
- He spent much of his life at the **court of Tanjore (now Thanjavur)**, where the **official language was Telugu**; thus, most of his songs have Telugu texts.
- He is considered the head of a group of three major composers who flourished at Tanjore in the early 19th century, the others being **Muthuswami Dikshitar and Syama Sastri**.
- Most of Tyagaraja's songs were in praise of Rama, who, like Krishna, is believed to be an incarnation of the god Vishnu.
- Tyagaraja became a devotee of Vaishnava at an early age and is regarded as an exponent of **gana-marga—i.e., salvation through devotional music**.
- The music of Tyagaraja's songs is **transmitted orally**. He is credited with **various musical innovations**, including the use of a structured variation of musical lines within the performance, a practice that may have been derived from improvisatory techniques.
- It started as a **temple dance** tradition called **Dasiyattam** (the dance of the maid-servants) 2000 years ago and is **perhaps the most advanced and evolved dance** form of all the **classical Indian dance forms**.
- The art was handed down as a living tradition from generation to generation **under the Devadasi system**, under which women were dedicated to temples to serve the deity as dancers and musicians forming part of the elaborate rituals.
- These highly talented artists and the **male gurus (nattuvanars)** were the sole repository of the art until the early 20th century when a renewal of interest in India's cultural heritage prompted the educated elite to discover its beauty.
- Today Bharatanatyam is **practiced by male and female dancers** all over India.
- The name Bharatanatyam is a simple **derivation from the four most important aspects of dance** (in Sanskrit). These are:
 - ♦ Bha from Bhava meaning emotion,
 - ♦ Ra from Raaga meaning music or melody,
 - ♦ Ta from Taala meaning rhythm and
 - ♦ Natyam meaning dance.
- Thus Bharatanatyam is the dance that encompasses music, rhythm and expressional dance or Abhinaya and strictly adheres to the **Natyashastra** (the scripture of classical Indian dance).
- This dance style is characterised by **a linear form of the body without any pronounced movement of the upper body** and linear spatial patterns, which make the dance form extremely dynamic and powerful.
- Four related but distinct forms conforming to the system of Bharatanatyam are:
 - ♦ **Sadir Natyam** – a solo dance form performed for centuries by devadasis in temples and eventually in the royal courts of South India, especially in Tamil Nadu
 - ♦ **Bhagavata Melam** – a group form of dance drama from Tamil Nadu, with all roles performed by men, and themes based on mythology
 - ♦ **Kuravanji** – a group dance by women, interpreting literary or poetic compositions typically on the theme of fulfillment of the love of a girl for her beloved.
 - ♦ **Kuchipudi** – a group form of dance drama from Andhra Pradesh, with all roles performed by men, and themes based on mythology.

BHARATNATYAM

U.K. opens up number of spaces to train and teach Bharatanatyam for aspirants

About:

- Bharatnatyam is slowly becoming popular in U.K. Many schools have adopted it as a part of the curriculum contributing to the school credits. There also exists a system of proper accreditation needed to teach Bharatanatyam in schools.

Bharatanatyam:

- Bharatanatyam is one of the oldest dance forms of India. It was nurtured in the **temples and courts** of southern India since ancient times.
- It originated in southern India in the state of **Tamil Nadu**.

Basic Features:

- On the surface, three aspects of Bharatanatyam are evident, as with any dance form: **movement, costume, and music**.

Movement:

- There are **two kinds of movements** in Bharatanatyam – abstract and expressive.

- The abstract movements are done to show rhythm, to provide decoration, and to create beauty. There is no purpose but movement for its own sake.
- Expressive movements convey meaning and show emotion, through a vocabulary of hand gestures, postures, and facial expressions. **Their purpose is to portray a theme or feeling, and to transmit an experience of it to the audience.**
- Movements in Bharatanatyam are often **described as geometric**, for there is much geometry in the basic postures and movements of which the dance is built.
- Bharatanatyam has a variety of characteristic movements. Along with the **rhythmic stamping of the feet, there are jumps, pirouettes, and positions where the knees contact the floor.**
- **An exceptional feature of Bharatanatyam is the movements of the eyes, which complement and highlight the movements of the body.**

Music:

- Bharatanatyam is **accompanied by music of the Carnatic style**, that has been specialized for dance. The music is specialized in a few ways.
- **The musical group for a dance performance includes someone capable of doing nattuvangam**, that is, calling out rhythmic syllables that denote dance movements, and striking cymbals on particular beats as cues to the dancer.
 - ♦ This skill usually belongs to dancers and dance teachers, and not to concert musicians.
- Music that is composed for dance **items typically makes use of rhythmic patterns (talas) and melodies (ragas).**

Nritta, Nritya, Natya:

- At the functional level, the dance has three aspects:
 - ♦ **Nritta:** Abstract dance movements with rhythm, but without expression of a theme or emotion. Also called pure dance.
 - ♦ **Nritya:** Interpretive dance, using facial expressions, hand gestures, and body movements to portray emotions and express themes.
 - ♦ **Natya:** The dramatic aspect of a stage performance, including spoken dialogue and mime, to convey meaning and enact narrative.
- Despite some overlap between natya and nritya, they differ in that **natya does not include dance, and nritya does not include speech.**
- While Bharatanatyam includes the mimetic and narrative aspects of natya, it **does not use spoken dialogue.**
- In different Bharatanatyam numbers, the balance between nritta, natya, and nritya varies. In general, the **dominant aspect of Bharatanatyam is nritya.**
- Another way to distinguish nritta and nritya is by the facial expressions of the dancer. Nritta is usually done with a smile,

and despite eye movements, the face maintains a stable emotion. In nritya, various expressions cross the dancer's face, showing different emotions. All the parts of the face may be active in displaying the emotions.

Natyashastra:

- It is often referred to as the Bible of Indian classical dance.
- It is said that the Gods and Goddesses pleaded Brahma (the creator, as per Hindu Mythology) for the creation of another Veda, that was understandable by common man.
- So, Brahma created the **fifth Veda**, which is a combination of the existing four vedas (Rig, Yajur, Sama, and Atharva Veda).
- He propagated this veda on earth through **Sage Bharatha**, who wrote it down as Natyashastra.
- Brahma took pathya (words) from the Rig veda, Abhinaya (communicative elements of the body movements) from the Yajur Veda, Geeth (music and chant) from the Sama Veda, and Rasa (vital sentiment, an emotional element) from Atharva veda, to form the fifth veda – the Natya Veda.
- Bharatha, together with groups of Gandharvas and Apsaras performed Natya, Nritta, and Nritya before Lord Shiva (the Lord of Divine Dance).
- Thus Natya became the authoritative form of classical Indian dances. The term “Bharatanatyam” partly owes its name to Sage Bharatha.

Do You Know?

- While a number of India's dance forms, like Manipuri, Mohini Attam, Yakshagana, and Kathakali, **can be considered variations of the system of Bharatanatyam**, they are not as firmly rooted in it.
- **Rukmini Devi's** desire to restore the full spiritual potential of the dance motivated reforms that led to what was known as the **Kalakshetra style of Bharatanatyam.**

Eight Forms of Famous Indian Classical Dance

Bharatanatyam – Tamil Nadu. Bharata Natyam is considered to the oldest form of dance and mother of all other style of classical dance in India.

Dance	State
Kathak	Uttar Pradesh
Kathakali	Kerala
Kuchipudi	Andhra Pradesh
Manipuri	Manipur
Odissi	Orissa
Sattriya	Assam
Mohiniyattam	Kerala

June, 2019

CARNATIC MUSIC

175th birth anniversary 175th of Maha Vaidyanatha Sivan on May 26

About:

- Maha Vaidyanatha Sivan (1844-1893) is considered one of the great composers in the field of Carnatic music.
- He has composed the longest ragamalika kriti set to the 72 melakarta ragas. This one composition runs to 86 pages as published by the Adyar Library in 1937.
- He had also composed and performed several pallavis in the most difficult talas, such as Simhanandana tala and Lakshmisra tala.

Origins and History of Carnatic Music:

- The history of the system of music that prevailed in India from ancient times goes back to the Vedas. The earliest treatise is found on music is the Natya Sastra of Bharata.
- Other treatises on music after Bharata, such as the Brihaddesi of Matanga, Sangeeta Ratnakara of Sharangadeva, Sangeet Sudhakara of Haripala, Swaramelakalanidhi of Ramamatya, etc., provide us a lot of information about the different aspects of music and its development during the different periods.
- The ancient Tamils of South India had also developed a highly evolved system of music with its **solfa methods**, concordant and discordant notes, scales and modes, etc.
- The Tamil classic of the 2nd century A.D. titled the **Silappadhikaram** contains a vivid description of the music of that period.
- The **Tolkappiyam**, **Kalladam** and the contributions of the **Saivite and Vaishnavite** saints of the 7th and 8th centuries A.D. In **Haripala's "Sangeeta Sudhakara"**, written in the **14th century A.D.**, the terms Carnatic and Hindustani are found for the first time.
- **The South Indian Music**, flourished in Deogiri the capital city of the Yadavas in the middle ages, and after the invasion and plunder of the city by the Muslims, the entire cultural life of the city took shelter in the Carnatic Empire of Vijayanagar under the reign of Krishnadevaraya. Thereafter, the music of South India came to be known as Carnatic Music.
- The advent of Purandaradasa, in the year 15th century, marked a very important landmark in the development of Carnatic music. Purandaradasais called as **"Carnatic Sangeeta Pitamaha"**.
- Carnatic music was mainly patronized by the local kings of the Kingdom of Mysore, Kingdom of Travancore, and the Maratha rulers of Tanjore in the 18th through 20th centuries.
- During the 19th century, the city of Chennai (then known as Madras) emerged as the locus for Carnatic music.

- The birth of the Musical Trinity – **Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Syama Sastri** – at Tiruvarur between the years 1750 to 1850 A.D. ushered in an era of dynamic development in Carnatic music.

Nature of Carnatic Music:

- The main emphasis in Carnatic music is on vocal music. Most compositions are written to be sung, and even when played on instruments, they are meant to be performed in a singing style.
- Like Hindustani music, Carnatic music rests on two main elements: **rāga**, the modes or melodic formula, and **tāla**, the rhythmic cycles.

The Main Musical Forms of Carnatic Music:

Gitam:

- Gitam is the simplest type of composition. Taught to beginners of music.
- Gitas have been composed in Sanskrit, Kannada and Bhandira bhasha.

Suladi:

- Suladis are of a higher standard than the gitam.
- The Suladi is a talamalika, the sections being in different talas.
- The theme is devotional.

Svarajati:

- This is more complicated than the gitas.
- It consists of three sections, called **Pallavi, Anupallavi and Charanam**.
- The theme is devotional, heroic or amorous.

Jatisvaram:

- Very similar to the svarajati in musical structure, this form has no sahitya or words.
- The piece is sung with solfa syllables only.
- It is noted for its rhythmical excellence and the jati pattern used in it.

Varnam:

- The Varnam is a musical form in Carnatic Music.
- There are two types of varnams, one called the **Tana Varnam** and the other called the **Pada Varnam**.
- While the former is a musical/concert form, the latter is purely a dance form.

Kirtanam:

- The Kirtanam is valued for the devotional content of the sahitya.
- Clothed in simple music, the kirtanam abounds in Bhakti bhava.
- It is suited for congregational singing as well as individual presentation.

Kriti:

- The Kriti is a development from the Kirtana.
- The kriti as a musical form has many features in common with the Dhrupad of Hindustani music.

Pada:

- Padas are scholarly compositions in Telegu and Tamil.
- They are composed mainly as dance forms.

Javali:

- A javali is a composition belonging to the sphere of light classical music.
- Sung both in concert programmes and dance concerts.
- This form resembles the Thumris of Hindustani Music.

Tillana:

- The Tillana, corresponding to the Tarana of Hindustani music, is a short and crisp form.
- It is mainly a dance form, but on account of its brisk and attractive music, it sometimes finds a place in music concerts as a conclusion piece.

Pallavi:

- This is the most important branch of creative music.

Tanam:

- This is a branch of raga alapana.
- To sum up; the outstanding feature of Carnatic music is its raga system, in the concept of which, the ideal or 'absolute music' is reached, and the highly developed and intricate tala system, which has made it extremely scientific and systematic and unique in all respects.

Instruments:

The major instruments used in the Carnatic music are:

- The tambura
- Saraswati veena
- Venu flute
- Mridangam
- The ghatam
- Kanjira
- Morsing
- Violin
- Mandolin
- Nadaswaram
- Santoor

Prominent Personalities of Carnatic Music:**Vocalists:**

- M.S. Subbu lakshmi
- Balamurali Krishna
- Chembai Vaidya natha Bhagavathar

- Semmangudi Sinivasalyer
- M.L.Vasantha Kumari
- M.D. Ramanathan
- G.N. Balasubramaniam
- Ariyakudi Ramaniya Iyyengar.
- Prominent composers

Composers in Carnatic Music:

- **Purandara Dasa** is referred to as the **Pitamaha** of Carnatic music as he formulated the basic lessons in teaching Carnatic music, and in honour of his significant contribution to Carnatic music.
- The contemporaries Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar, and Syama Sastri are regarded as the Trinity of Carnatic music.
- Prominent composers include Arunachala Kavi, Annamacharya, Narayana Theertha, Vijaya Dasa, Jagannatha Dasa, Gopala Dasa, Bhadrachala Ramadas, Sadasiva Brahendra and Oottukkadu Venkata Kavi.
- Other composers are Swathi Thirunal, Gopalakrishna Bharathi, Neelakanta Sivan, Patnam Subramania Iyer, Mysore Vasudevachar, Koteeswara Iyer, Muthiah Bhagavathar, Subramania Bharathiyar, Kalyani Varadarajan, and Papanasam Sivan.

Similarities and Difference between the Hindustani and the Carnatic Styles of Classic Music**Similarities:**

- The Hindustani and the Carnatic styles have the same basic elements of swara, raga and tala.
- Hindustani music originated in the Vedic period, while Carnatic music originated during the Bhakti movement. Thus both are having great association with religion.
- Carnatic is one of two main sub-genres of India classical music that evolved from ancient Hindu traditions. The other sub-genre is Hindustani music, which prevalent in North India.
- Both the music evolved with Sanskrit language scripts in itself and through Vedic traditions.
- The central notions in both these system is Raga, sung to a rhythmic cycle or tala.

Differences:

- The Hindustani music is earlier than Carnatic music in origin. It synthesizes with Vedic chants, Islamic traditions and Persian style.
- Carnatic is comparatively pure and was developed in 15th - 16th century during Bhakti movement and also get boost in 19th - 20th century.
- Main emphasis in Carnatic music is on vocal music and most compositions are to be sung, involving gayaki style.

- In Hindustani music vocal- centric group is required. Many instruments are designed to accompany the singer.
- The major vocal forms of Hindustani music are Dhrupad, khayal, Tarana, Thumri, Dadra and Gazals.
- While Carnatic music embraces several varieties of improvisation consist of Alpana, Niraval, kalpnaswaram and Ragam Thana pallavi.

KOLATTAM: DANCE OF DEVOTION

Kolattam is a popular folk dance belonging to the state of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

About:

- The term **kolattam** comes from combining the words **kol** meaning stick and **aattam** meaning play.
- It is the name of a charming dance form practised by groups of **young girls**, with pairs of wooden sticks artistically painted red and green being **struck against each other by each individual participant**.
- This dance is associated with festivals of cultural and religious significance.
- Kolattam is mentioned in Kanchipuram as '**Cheivaikiyar**' which testifies its rich heritage and antiquity.
- According to tradition, an omnipotent asura called Basava was controlled by a handful of graceful girls who danced the kolattam to enchanting music. **This has since been celebrated as kolatta jaathirai in Tamil Nadu.**



Legends Associated with Kolattam:

- According to another legend, **Goddess Parvati** underwent severe penance for nine days to enable the devas to win over an **asura named Bhandra**.
- Unable to withstand her mighty penance, her maidens danced the kolattam before Shiva's companion, Nandi the bull, to obtain his grace and reduce the severity of Parvati's penance.
- Yet another legend **ascribes the origin to Lord Krishna**, who danced with the gopis – or cowherdesses – of Brindavan. It is still celebrated as the daandiya raas (with daandiya meaning "stick") in much of North India.

- **Basava, or Nandi, the "vehicle" and companion of Shiva, is the centre of the Kolattam festival** that commences with the new moon on Deepavali (Diwali) and ends on the full moon day.
- Even **men take part in the kolattam**, which is practised all over the country and is **known by various names:**
 - ♦ kaliyal adithal in Malayalam,
 - ♦ thandalaasya in Sanskrit, and
 - ♦ sundiyaraas in Rajasthani.
- It is also known as rasaleela in Gujarat, celebrating the dance of the gopis and Lord Krishna in Brindavan.

Various forms of Kolattam:

Podikazhi Aattam:

- This is a popular dance in honour of Lord Muruga, and is prevalent among the **fisher folk of Tamilnadu.**



- The name is derived from the use of small sticks while dancing, by eight to sixteen men dressed in traditional costumes.
- The dancers stand in pairs facing each other, with one hand on their hip and the other used for striking the sticks against those of the opposite pair.
- The movements of their feet and the striking of the sticks match the rhythm of the folk song glorifying Muruga, rendered by the women of the village, to the musical rhythms produced by the cymbals, dolak, madhalam, sruthi, and thaalam.
- The dancers decorate themselves with colourful garments, flowers, shells, conchs, and coral garlands, and smear their whole body with sandal paste and kumkum (the red powder that is also used to make a mark on one's forehead).

Pinnal Kolattam:

- The players tie their sticks to coloured ropes and weave them into a braid as they dance by systematically changing positions.
- They end up with different designs of braids, as they interweave the ropes in tune with the music.
- This dance calls for great dexterity, as one wrong move could undo or mess up the entire braid.



PUPPETRY IN INDIA – TYPES AND KEY ASPECTS

Indian puppetry is a subject as varied as the many cultural traditions of the Indian subcontinent.

About:

- Egyptians are probably the earliest known puppeteers. Puppetry in India must have originated earlier than 5th century B.C.
- In Srimad Bhagvata, the God Almighty has been likened to a puppeteer who with three strings-Sattva, Rajas and Tamas-manipulates all the beings in the created universe.
- Several literary sources report the existence of puppetry in ancient times. Puppetry is mentioned in the **Mahabharata** (dated from the 9th century BCE, it reached the written form in the 4th century BCE), in **Panini's grammar** (4th century BCE), and in **Patanjali's texts** (2nd century BCE).
- In the 2nd century the **Tamil poet Tiruvalluvar** mentioned about 'marionettes moved by strings' in his compositions. The mention of the '**pavai koothu**' in the Tamil epic **Silappadhikareita** by **Ilango Adigal** is also very significant regarding the history of puppetry.

Types of Puppets:

- There are four main types of puppets **glove, rod, shadow and string**. They are differentiated based on the different ways of manipulation of puppets.

Glove Puppets

- The glove puppets, also known as hand puppets, are worn on hands just like a glove. **The middle finger and thumb act as hands of the puppet and the index finger acts as the head.**
- Glove puppets are widespread in **Odisha (sakhī kundhei)**, **Kerala (Pava-kathakali)**, **Tamil Nadu (pava koothu)**, **Uttar Pradesh (Gulabo-Sitabo)** and **West Bengal (benir putul)**.



- Most of the puppetry traditions from the south of India narrate epic stories. In the north there are interesting exceptions such as the **Gulabo-Sitabo glove puppetry from Uttar Pradesh** portrays the quarrels between the domineering Gulabo and the submissive Sitabo, both married to the same man.
- Glove puppets in **Kerala (Pava-kathakali)** are very colorful and created like a kathakali actor who wears heavy and mask-like facial make-up, headgear and colorful costumes.
- **Kundhei nach, the glove puppets of Orissa**, are made of three wooden pieces consisting of the head and the two hands with holes for inserting fingers. The puppeteer plays on the dholak with one hand and manipulates the puppet with the other.

Rod Puppets:

- The rod puppets are manipulated by rods of various types and sizes. These puppets have mostly **three joints**. The heads, supported by the main rod, is joined at the neck and both hands attached to rods are joined at the shoulders.
- Due to the **absence of legs** the puppets are draped in a saree or dhoti as per the character. The puppet movements are highly dramatic.
- **West Bengal** has a rich tradition of rod puppetry called **putul nach (dancing dolls)**, a very peculiar style for the large dimensions of the puppets that can reach up to 1.2 metres and weigh up to ten kilograms.
- In **Orissa Kathi Kandhe** is the art of Rod Puppetry. The Orissa Rod puppets are **much smaller in size**, usually about twelve to eighteen inches. Stories based on mythology, fantasy and social themes are adopted by the rod puppeteers.
- The traditional Rod puppet of **Bihar** is known as **Yampuri**. These puppets are made of wood. These puppets are in one piece and have no joints.



Shadow Puppets:

- Shadow puppets are **flat puppets** that are operated against the rear of a tightly stretched white cloth screen with a **strong source of light behind it**.
- They are **cut out of leather**, which has been treated to make it translucent.
- The Shadow puppet theatre is practiced in the states of Andhra Pradesh (Tholu Bommalata), Karnataka (Togalu Gombeyata), Kerala (Tolpavakoothu), Maharashtra (chamadyache Bahulya), Orissa, and Tamil Nadu (Tolpavaikoothu).
- **Tholu Bommalata, Andhra Pradesh's** shadow theatre has the richest and strongest tradition.
- They are **coloured on both sides** and throw coloured shadows on the screen. Traditionally, vegetable dyes are used for colouring the puppets.



- In **Kanataka**, the leather or shadow puppets are locally called togalu (leather) gomme-atta (puppet dance) of Karnataka. These puppets are **mostly small in size**.
- **The puppets however differ in size according to their social status**, for instance, large size for kings and religious characters and smaller size for common people or servants.
- The **Ratnagiri area of Maharashtra** has a shadow puppetry art known locally as **Chamadyache Bahulya**. These shadow puppets have no jointed limbs and are delicately coloured with vegetable dyes.
- **Orissa's Ravanachhaya** shadow puppetry is the most theatrically exciting puppet show. These puppets are **smaller in size**, the largest not more than two feet have no jointed limbs. The puppets are made of deer skin and are conceived in bold dramatic poses.
- They are **not coloured**, hence throw opaque shadows on the screen. The manipulation requires great dexterity, since there are **no joints**.

String Puppets:

- String puppets, more precisely known as marionettes, can be made of different materials such as wood and terracotta.
- The number of strings can vary according to the tradition; more strings translate in a major and more complex range of attainable movements.
- Marionettes are widespread in India from North to South, celebrated traditions are reported from Rajasthan (kathputli), West Bengal (tarer putul nach), Maharashtra (kalasutri bahulya), Odisha (gopalilila kundhei), Karnataka (yakshagana gombeyata), Kerala (nool pavakothu), Tamil Nadu (bommalattam), Andhra Pradesh and Telangana (koyya bommalata, keelu bommalata, and sutram bommalata).
- Kathputli marionettes from Rajasthan are noteworthy for their fine decoration and costumes inspired by medieval Rajasthani style and for the stories they perform. Kathputli shows narrate stories of Rajput heroes, one of the few exceptions from the usual Hindu epic plots.
- Tamil Nadu has a famous tradition of marionettes known as **bommalattam** ('doll dance'); this style is reported also from bordering areas of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.
- **The large marionettes (about 90 centimetres per ten kilograms) are peculiar** because they are moved by strings attached to a ring worn by the puppeteers on their head, and arms are moved by rods manipulated from above.
- **This tradition has noble ancestry:** Bommalattam was patronized by the Thanjavur court in the 18th and 19th centuries.



Conclusion:

- Puppetry has been in India a means of entertainment and a form of cultural and religious dissemination. In the post-colonial period, the high-speed modernization wave that invested India put many of the puppetry traditions at risk of extinction; several government and private initiatives contributed to save endangered styles, but many are still struggling to survive in the age of internet.
- So far modernity threatened the very survival of traditional puppetry, but a more conscious use of contemporary means and opportunities is actually the key to preserve this rich heritage of India.

THE HISTORIC ENSEMBLE OF ORCHHA

MP's Orchha makes it to tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

About:

- The architectural heritage of Orchha town in Madhya Pradesh which depict peculiar style of the Bundela dynasty have been included in UNESCO's tentative list of world heritage sites.
- It has been added following a proposal sent by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to the UN body.
- **Importance:** According to the rules, to be a part of UNESCO's World Heritage sites, the heritage or any historical site first has to be on the tentative list.

About Orchha:

- **Location:** Orchha is situated on the banks of the Betwa river.
- **Built by:** Orchha was built by king Rudra Pratap Singh of Bundela dynasty in the 16th century.
- The ancient town is famous for its Chaturbhuj Temple, Orchha fort complex, Raja Mahal among others.
- The Bundela architecture has Mughal influence since the two dynasties were very close.
- The famous King of Bundela dynasty Veer Singh Dev was a close friend of Mughal emperor Jahangir and fought wars as Akbar's aid.
- Orchha is also famous for its two elevated minaret called Saavan and Bhadon and its four palaces -- Jahangir Palace, Raj Mahal, Sheesh Mahal and Rai Praveen Mahal -- and for its concept of open bungalows, stone work windows, animal statues depicting the culture of Bundelkhand. It is the only place in India where Lord Ram is worshipped as a king with a dedicated temple in his name called Sri Ram Raja Mandir.
- In India, the group of monuments in Hampi and the Champaner-Pavagadh archaeological park have remarkable parallels to the historic ensemble of Orchha in terms of the concentration of temples, monuments, landscape features.





10 MISCELLANEOUS

BHARATI SCRIPT

Bharati is being proposed as a common script for India

About:

- The Roman script is used as a common script for many European languages (English, French, German, Italian etc.), which facilitates communication across nations that speak and write those languages. Likewise, a common script for the entire country is hoped to bring down many communication barriers in India.
- Developed by researchers at IIT Madras over the last decade, Bharati is a unified script for nine Indian languages.
- The scripts that have been integrated include Devnagari, Bengali, Gurmukhi, Gujarati, Oriya, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and Tamil.
- English and Urdu have not been integrated so far as Urdu and English alphabet systems have a very different phonetic organisation. But that does not mean a mapping is not possible.
- The team has now gone a step further since developing the script: it has developed a method for reading documents in Bharati script using a multi-lingual optical character recognition (OCR) scheme.
- The team has also created a finger-spelling method that can be used to generate a sign language for hearing-impaired persons.
- In collaboration with TCS Mumbai, the researchers have found a way for persons with hearing disability to generate signatures using this finger-spelling technique.
- In general, optical character recognition schemes involve first separating (or segmenting) the document into text and non-text. The text is then segmented into paragraphs, sentences words and letters. Each letter has to be recognised as a character in some recognisable format.
- The scripts of Indian languages pose a problem for such a character recognition because the vowel and consonant-modifier components are attached to the main consonant part.
- This difficulty is removed in the Bharati script which can be easily read.
- In Bharati characters, these different components are segmentable by design. So OCR works quite accurately and gives almost 100% accuracy even with mild noise added.



Optical Character Recognition (OCR)

- The process of OCR is most commonly used to turn hard copy legal or historic documents into PDFs.
- Once placed in this soft copy, users can edit, format and search document as if it was created with a word processor.

BAN ON IMPORT OF CHINESE MILK PRODUCTS

Government of India has extended the ban on import of milk and its products, including chocolates, from China.

About:

- Although India does not import milk or milk products from China, it has imposed the ban as a preventive measure.
- The ban will extend till laboratories at ports for testing presence of toxic chemical melamine are upgraded.
- The Indian government had **first imposed a ban** on import of Chinese milk and milk products **in 2008**, when milk and infant formula products along with other food materials were found contaminated with melamine in China.
- The ban has been extended subsequently from time to time.

Reasons for the Ban:

- **Presence of Melamine:** The ban was imposed on apprehensions of presence of melamine in some milk consignments from China.

What is Melamine?

- Melamine is an organic base chemical most commonly found in the form of white crystals rich in nitrogen.
- It is also called **cyanuramide** or triaminotriazine, and a **colourless crystalline substance** belonging to the family of **heterocyclic organic** compounds.
- Melamine is **rich in nitrogen**, a property that is similar to protein.
- Melamine is a toxic chemical used for making plastics and fertilisers.

Misuse of Melamine in China

- Evidence of **misuse of the chemical** in China **emerged in 2007**, when more than 4,000 dogs and cats in the United States died from **kidney failure** as a result of ingesting melamine-tainted pet food.
- The substance was found in **Chinese wheat gluten** and **rice protein** concentrate.
- Chinese **dairy product exports, including certain chocolate and milk products**, were also found to contain melamine and were subsequently recalled in **Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Thailand**.

- **To modernise labs to test Melamine:** Food regulator FSSAI had recommended extending the ban until all labs at ports are modernised to test the chemical melamine. However, it has not mentioned any timeline for upgradation of that capacity of all laboratories.

Why Melamine is Added in Milk?

- In China, where adulteration has occurred, **water has been added to raw milk** to increase its volume.
- As a result of this dilution the **milk has a lower protein concentration**.
- Companies using the milk for further production (e.g. of powdered infant formula) normally check the protein level through a test measuring **nitrogen content**.
- The **addition of melamine increases the nitrogen content** of the milk and therefore its apparent protein content.

Do You Know?

- India is the **world's largest producer and consumer of milk**.
- It produces around **150 million tonne** milk annually.
- **Uttar Pradesh is the leading state in milk production** followed by Rajasthan and Gujarat.

FSSAI Regulations on Melamine

- To check adulteration, food safety regulator FSSAI has proposed in 2017 time fixing a maximum permissible limit of melamine content in milk and related products.

FSSAI

- **The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** has been established under Food Safety and Standards 2006.
- It lays down science based standards for food articles and regulates their **manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import** to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption.
- **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW)** is the **Administrative Ministry** for the implementation of FSSAI.
- There is a ceiling on presence of **insecticides and metal contaminants** in milk and milk products.
- FSSAI has also proposed imposing a permissible limit of **1 mg of melamine in every kg of powdered infant formula**, 0.15 mg per kg in liquid infant formula and 2.5 mg per kg in other foods.

SLAVERY IN MODERN WORLD

Britain through its Modern Slavery Innovation Fund (MSIF) is set to fund six anti-slavery projects around the globe.

About:

- A grant of up to 800,000 pounds each has been announced for new projects, including one in India (Freedom Fund).

- The funding will also be used
 - ♦ to run workshops on modern slavery in South Africa,
 - ♦ improve support for survivors in India,
 - ♦ develop an online data hub to boost anti-slavery policies.
- In total, the British government has committed 200 million pounds to combat modern-day slavery overseas.
- In 2015, it also passed the Modern Slavery Act to crack down on traffickers, force businesses to check their supply chains for forced labor, and protect people at risk of being enslaved.

Background:

- **Concept:** Global Slavery Index defines modern slavery as "situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, and abuse of power or deception."
- **Industries affected:** seafood industry, cannabis factories, forced begging, sex industry and more.
- **According to ILO's Global Estimate of Modern Slavery**, there are 40 million in modern slavery and 152 million in child labour around the world.
- **GSI 2018:** Ranked India 53th (equal to North Korea) out of 167 countries. 8 million people are living in modern slavery in India.
- **Target 8.7 under SDG 8:** Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.

Indian Laws

- **Indian Penal Code of 1861:** Abolished slavery in British India making enslavement of humans a criminal offense.
- **Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1976:** As a means to sustenance, allows transfer of little capital to every person coming out of slavery.

Modern Slavery Innovation Fund

- **Established:** 2016
- **Corpus:** 33.5 million pound
- **Managed by:** the UK Home office
- **Objective:** To support international projects find innovative ways to end modern slavery.
- **Target:** High risk countries from where victims are regularly trafficked to the UK
- **Funding:**
 - ♦ **First Phase (2017-19):** 6 million pound for 10 projects
 - ♦ **Second phase (2019-2021):** 4 million pound for 6 projects.



11

CURRENT AFFAIRS QUESTIONS

Multiple Choice Questions

- With reference to Golden Rice, consider the following statements:
 - It has been modified to have enhanced levels of β -carotene.
 - It helps to prevent vitamin A deficiency.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
- With reference to Bacillus thuringiensis Cotton, consider the following statements:
 - Bt cotton is an insect-resistant transgenic crop.
 - It is designed to combat Yellow Rust.
 - Bt cotton occupies greater than 95% of India's cotton acreage.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - 1 and 2 only
 - 2 and 3 only
 - 1 and 3 only
 - 1, 2 and 3
- With reference to International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC), consider the following statements:
 - It is a multimodal transportation established in 2000 by India, Russia and Iran.
 - It aims to link Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf to the Black Sea.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
- Which of the following can be the potential impact on India due to US sanctions on Iran?
 - Increase in Current Account Deficit (CAD).
 - Increase in inflation.
 - Depreciation in rupee.
 - On the revenue side, higher oil prices mean less revenue for the states as tax is ad valorem.Select the correct answer using the codes given below:
 - 1, 2 and 3 only
 - 2, 3 and 4 only
 - 1, 3 and 4 only
 - 1, 2, 3 and 4
- Recently, an Indian consortium comprising OVL, IOC and Bharat Petroresources Ltd (a BPCL company), picked up 10% in the Lower Zakhum offshore oil field. This oil field is located in which country?
 - Oman
 - Iran
 - Saudi Arabia
 - United Arab Emirates
- With reference to Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017, consider the following statements:
 - Women working under the organized sector are now entitled to paid maternity leave of 26 weeks, up from 12 weeks.
 - Mothers who adopt a child below the age of 3 months will receive maternity leave of 12 weeks.
- Creche facility made mandatory for organisations with 10 or more employees.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - 1 and 2 only
 - 2 and 3 only
 - 1 and 3 only
 - 1, 2 and 3
- Which of the following can be used for cloud seeding?
 - Table salt (sodium chloride)
 - Silver iodide
 - Dry ice
 - Liquid propaneSelect the correct option using the code given below:
 - 1, 2 and 3 only
 - 2, 3 and 4 only
 - 1, 3 and 4 only
 - 1, 2 and 4 only
- With reference to Thrissur pooram festival, consider the following statements:
 - It is an annual Hindu festival held in Kerala.
 - It was started in the 18th century by Raja Rama Varma.
 - It involves sacrificing of animals and a buffalo race.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - 1 and 2 only
 - 2 and 3 only
 - 1 and 3 only
 - 1, 2 and 3
- With reference to H-1B visa, often seen in news, consider the following statements:
 - It is an immigrant visa given by USA.
 - It allows US companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
- With reference to the Indian Accounting Standard (Ind AS) 116, often seen in news, consider the following statements:
 - It is notified by Ministry of Finance.
 - The objective of this Standard is to prescribe the accounting treatment for property, plant and equipment.
 - It would prevent "window dressing" of accounts.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - 1 and 2 only
 - 2 and 3 only
 - 1 and 3 only
 - 1, 2 and 3
- With reference to Ways and Means advances (WMA), often seen in news, consider the following statements:
 - RBI provides short-term loan to the Central and state governments to bridge temporary liquidity mismatches. The temporary loan facility is called Ways and Means Advances.
 - According to Section 5 (1) of the FRBM Act 2003, the Central Government shall not borrow from the RBI except by way of Ways and Means advances to meet temporary cash requirements.

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3. The limit for WMA and the rate of interest on WMA is set in the annual budget by central government.
- 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) 1, 2 and 3
- 12.** With reference to Women Entrepreneurship in India:
1. India ranks 12 out of 59 countries in Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs (MIWE) 2018.
 2. Ministry of Women and Child Development has launched the Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP), on the occasion of International Women's Day in 2018.
- Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
- 13.** Consider the following statements with reference to the Arctic circle:
1. It consists of the region north of latitude that runs 66°30'N.
 2. Lomonosov Ridge and the Mendeleev Ridge in the Arctic are two disputed areas which Russia claims are an extension of its continental shelf.
- Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
- 14.** With reference to the airspace of a country, consider the following statements:
1. It includes territorial waters also.
 2. Vertically, airspace ends where outer space begins.
 3. There is no international agreement on the vertical extent of sovereign airspace.
- 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) 1, 2 and 3
- 15.** Which of the following refers to Shangri-La Dialogue?
- (a) An initiative for Asia-Pacific countries to talk about security in the region.
 - (b) Diplomatic dialogue between India and Singapore related to tourism.
 - (c) International collaboration to facilitate economic development of African region.
 - (d) An initiative of the United Nations to address the problem of cyber theft.
- 16.** With reference to the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), consider the following statements:
1. It is an intergovernmental organisation working in the area of human rights.
 2. India is a party to it.
- 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
- 17.** With reference to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, consider the following statements:
1. It exempts plastic waste from the legally-binding framework.
 2. Under it, waste shipments from countries that export waste must obtain consent from the receiving country.
 3. Consent is not necessary if the shipments are labeled as for recycling.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3
- 18.** Recently, MERA India was in news. Which of the following option correctly describes it?
- (a) MERA India is an initiative of Ministry of External Affairs launched during the Bhartiya Pravasi Divas.
 - (b) MERA India was launched by the NGO Pratham, to improve the quality of primary education in rural India.
 - (c) MERA India is a conglomeration of partners working on malaria control, established by Indian Council of Medical Research.
 - (d) None of the Above.
- 19.** Nanganhar recently seen in the news is located in which of the following country?
- (a) Uzbekistan (b) Syria
(c) Afghanistan (d) Iran
- 20.** Indian Navy conducted six-day long Group Sail with the naval ships of which of the following countries?
1. Japan 2. China
 3. South Korea 4. Australia
 5. Philippines
- Select the correct answer using the code given below:
- (a) 1 and 5 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only
(c) 2 and 3 only (d) 2, 4 and 5 only
- 21.** With reference to the Chagos archipelago often seen in the news, consider the following statements:
1. It is a disputed island between France and Mauritius.
 2. It is located in the Indian Ocean.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Bot 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
- 22.** With reference to the International Court of Justice, consider the following statements:
1. It consists of 15 judges elected for a term of 9 years.
 2. Its official languages are English and French.
 3. It gives advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by authorized United Nations organs.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3
- 23.** Consider the following statements with reference to the 'Arctic Council':
1. The Council was established in 1996 through the Ottawa Declaration.
 2. Non-arctic states, inter-governmental and inter-parliamentary organizations and NGOs can get the Observer Status of the Arctic Council.
 3. India has been recently re-elected as an Observer, which was granted first time in 2011.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 2 Only (b) 1, 2 and 3
(c) 2 and 3 Only (d) 1 and 2 Only

24. The Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders report is released by which of the following?

- (a) United Nations
(b) Human Rights Watch
(c) European Court of Human Rights
(d) Human Rights First

25. With reference to tea plantation in India, consider the following statements:

- The temperature for tea plantation should not be greater than 21°C and lower than 16°C.
- In south India, tea productivity is better because of the almost uniform climatic condition as compare to North India.
- The soil should be rich in humus.

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) 1, 2 and 3

26. Arrange the following major tea producing states in descending order of tea production in India:

- Assam
- West Bengal
- Tamil Nadu
- Kerala

Select the correct option using the code given below:

- (a) 1-2-3-4 (b) 2-1-4-3
(c) 3-1-2-4 (d) 4-1-2-3

27. Which of the following countries share border with Libya?

- Tunisia
- Nigeria
- Chad
- Egypt
- Algeria

Select the correct option using the codes given below:

- (a) 1, 2, 3 and 4 only (b) 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
(c) 1, 2 and 5 only (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

28. With reference to Responsibility to Protect (R2P), often seen in news, consider the following statements:

- It is a doctrine that first obligates individual states and then the international community to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.
- It is a set of principles based on the idea that sovereignty is not a privilege, but a responsibility.

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

29. With reference to National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF), consider the following statements:

- It has been set up as a trust to raise debt to invest in the equity of infrastructure finance companies.
- It is a sovereign wealth fund.
- Its objective is to maximize economic impact mainly through infrastructure development in commercially viable greenfield projects only and not in brownfield and stalled projects.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

30. Which of the following countries have not signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)?

- India
- North Korea
- China
- Israel

Select the correct option using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1, 2 and 3 only
(c) 2, 3 and 4 only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

31. BepiColombo, often seen in news, is related to which of the following?

- It is a genetically modified organism developed to survive in harsh environment.
- It is European Space Agency's mission to mercury.
- It is the new SI unit equivalent to one ampere second.
- It is the species which is debated to have existed in pre historic era.

32. With reference to planet Mercury, consider the following statements:

- Mercury is the smallest planet in our solar system.
- It is the hottest planet since it is closest to the sun.
- Mercury is a rocky planet with thin atmosphere and no moon.

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) 1, 2 and 3

33. With reference to Maternal Mortality, consider the following statements:

- The Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) is defined as the number of maternal deaths per 10,000 live births.
- Maternal mortality is defined as the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy.

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

34. With reference to transgender in India, consider the following statements:

- Supreme Court order in 2014 provided transgender the option to register themselves under the 'Third Gender' category.
- Non-recognition of gender identity amounts to discrimination under Article 15, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex.
- Kerala is the first state to formulate a transgender policy in 2015.

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) 1, 2 and 3

35. Which of the following is/are regulatory bodies for higher education system in India?

- University Grant Commission (UGC)
- All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)
- Council of Architecture (COA)

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Select the correct option using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

36. Consider the following statements with reference to Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in India:

1. The share of women in workforce has been gradually falling over the last 30 years.
2. The decline in LFPR has been sharper in rural areas.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

37. With reference to National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination, consider the following statements:

1. It is a five year plan, launched in 2017.
2. It marked a shift in focus from malaria "control" to "elimination".
3. It make the sputum smear test mandatory for the patients showing symptoms of malaria.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 2 Only (b) 1 and 3 Only
(c) 2 and 3 Only (d) 1 and 2 Only

38. Consider the following statements regarding Tiger reserves in India

1. Kamlang Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh is the newest Tiger Reserve of India
2. Madhya Pradesh has the highest number of Tiger Reserves in India.

Select the correct statement from the codes given below:

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

39. Consider the following statements regarding Tiger Census

1. The first tiger census was conducted in 2006.
2. Tiger Census in India is carried by Wildlife Institute of India.
3. Census will cover the North East Region of India for the first time.
4. Bhutan, Nepal, and Bangladesh will help India count number of tigers during the census.

Select the correct statement from the codes given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only
(c) 2, 3 and 4 only (d) none of the above

40. Recently, Christchurch Call for Action was in news. Consider the following statements:

1. It aims at stopping social media from being used to organize and promote terrorism.
2. It was envisioned by New Zealand's Prime Minister and French President.
3. It was signed by the 18 countries, including India and 5 major tech companies.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 2 Only (b) 1, 2 and 3
(c) 2 and 3 Only (d) 1 and 2 Only

41. Consider the following statements regarding Island Development Agency

1. It was constituted in 2017 for holistic development of islands in India.
2. IDA is chaired by Prime Minister of India.
3. IDA has focused on the holistic development of all the Island territories of India.

Select the incorrect statement from the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 and 3 only
(c) 2 and 3 only (d) all of the above

42. Consider the following statements regarding Island Protection Zone (IPZ) Notification, 2019:

1. IPZ notification covers all the island territories of India.
2. Notification prohibits any kind of activity including tourism in the most eco-sensitive zone, island coastal regulation zone IA.

Select the correct statement from the codes given below:

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

43. Consider the following statements regarding Heat Waves

1. Heat waves condition is declared based on twin criteria of actual temperature and departure from normal temperature.
2. Heat wave is considered if maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 45°C or more for Plains and coastal regions.

Select the correct statement from the codes given below:

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

44. Consider the following statements regarding Emperor Penguin

1. The Emperor Penguin is the tallest and heaviest of all living penguin species and is endemic to Arctic.
2. They have been listed under the Critically Endangered category by IUCN.

Select the correct statement from the codes given below:

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

45. Consider the following statements regarding PCPNDT Act

1. The Act provides for the prohibition of sex selection, before or after conception.
2. Adverstising for sex determination facilities has been made a criminal offence under the Act.
3. Non-Maintenance of Medical Records by obstreticians has been made a civil offence under the Act.

Select the correct statement from the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 and 3 only
(c) 2 and 3 only (d) all of the above

46. Consider the following statements with reference to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offence Act, 2012:

1. The Act defines the child as anyone below the age of 16.
2. It is gender neutral law.
3. Recent amendment to the act, extended the maximum punishment to death penalty.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 2 and 3 Only (b) 1, 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3 Only (d) 1 and 2 Only

47. Consider the following statements regarding Mango Showers or Pre-Monsoon rainfall
- Such kind of rainfall is specific to India only because of its peninsular position.
 - Orographic rainfall is the most important feature of them.
 - Mango Showers are also known as April Showers.
- Select the correct statement from the codes given below:
- (a) 1 and 3 (b) 2 only
(c) 3 only (d) None of the above
48. Double sample and M-STRIPEs techniques are used for:
- Counting the number of tigers in an areas.
 - For measuring the amount of blood sugar.
 - Measuring the amount of different nutrients under Soil Health Card Scheme.
 - Counting the number of waterfowls in a wetland.
49. Consider the following statements regarding Basava Jayanti.
- It is celebrated in both Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.
 - Basava is the founder of Lingayat dharma.
 - Lingayats worship Shiva in his manifestation as a linga
- Which of the following statements is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3
50. With reference to Lingayats, consider the following statements:
- They challenged the idea of caste and the "pollution" attributed to certain groups by Brahmanas.
 - They argued strongly for the equality of all human beings.
 - Virashivas are different from Lingayats.
 - Lingayats were against all forms of ritual and idol worship.
- Which of the following statements is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2 (b) 1, 2, 3 only
(c) 1,2 and 4 only (d) 3 and 4 only
51. With reference to Bharatnatyam, consider the following statements.
- It originated in the state of Andhra Pradesh.
 - This dance style is performed without any pronounced movement of the upper body.
 - The dance style is characterised by a linear form of the body.
 - It is practiced by only female dancers.
- Which of the following is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 and 3 only
(c) 3 only (d) 4 only
52. With reference to Carnatic Music consider the following statements.
- Gitam, Saladi and Sarnam are musical forms of Carnatic music
 - The main emphasis in Carnatic music is on vocal music.
 - Like Hindustani music, Carnatic music rests on three main elements only.
- Which of the following is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 only (d) 1, 2 and 3
53. Consider the following statements, regarding the differences of the Hindustani and the Carnatic styles of classic music
- The Hindustani music is earlier than Carnatic music in origin.
 - Hindustani music originated in the Bhakti period, while Carnatic music originated during the Vedic movement.
- Which of the following is/are correct
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
54. Which of the following pair is correctly matched:
- Pava-koothu – Kerala
 - Yampuri – Odisha
 - Tholu Bommalata – Andhra Pradesh
 - Togalu Gombeyata – Tamil Nadu
55. Consider the following statements regarding The Char Dham Yatra
- The Char Dham Yatra comprises four holy sites namely Badrinath, Puri, Rameshwaram, and Dwarka.
 - Badrinath is in the North in Kashmir Region and Rameshwaram is in the South in Karnataka.
 - Puri or Jagannath Puri is in the East in Odisha and Dwarka is in the West in Gujarat.
- Which of the following statements is/are correct:
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2, 3
56. Consider the following statements regarding Kolattam, dance of devotion.
- It is a popular folk dance belonging to the state of Andhra Pradesh only.
 - Basava or Nandi, the "vehicle" and companion of Shiva is the centre of the Kolattam festival
 - It is also known as rasaleela in Gujarat, celebrating the dance of the gopis and Lord Krishna in Brindavan.
- Which of the following statements is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 3 only
57. Consider the following statements regarding Kumbh Mela festival.
- The geographical location of Kumbh Mela spans over six locations in India
 - Haridwar, Ujjain and Varanasi were few among them.
 - Maha Kumbh occurs after 6 Purna Kumbh Melas.
- Which of the following statements is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only (d) None of the above
58. Consider the following statements with regard to India's engagement in the Arctic region:
- India set up the Bharati research station in Svalbard, Norway in July 2008.
 - The Goa-based National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCOAR) is the nodal organisation coordinating the research activities at this station.
- Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

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59. Consider the following statements regarding Tyagaraja
1. The Aaradhana, a musical obeisance dedicated to Tyagaraja.
 2. Tyagaraja, was an Indian composer of Karnatak songs of the genre kirtana, or kriti
 3. He spent much of his life at the court of Sri Krishna devaraya where the official language was Kannada
- Which of the following statements is/are correct
- (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 3 only (d) None of the above
60. Consider the following statements regarding various forms of Kolattam.
1. In PODIKAZHI AATTAM the players tie their sticks to coloured ropes and weave them into a braid as they dance by systematically changing positions.
 2. PINNAL KOLATTAM is a popular dance in honour of Lord Muruga and is prevalent among the fisher folk of Tamilnadu.
- Which of the following statements is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
61. Consider the following statements with reference to Arms Trade Treaty:
1. It is the first global accord to regulate the sale of a broad array of conventional weapons between countries.
 2. India is a signatory but has not ratified yet.
 3. The treaty does not prohibit unauthorized and non-State actors to use arms.
- 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) 1, 2 and 3
62. Consider the following treaties/agreements:
1. Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
 2. Arms Trade Treaty
 3. Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty.
 4. North Atlantic Treaty Organization.
- From which of the above treaties the U.S has withdrawn / declared its withdrawal recently?
- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only
(c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
63. Consider the following statements:
1. The year 2019 marked the celebration of the first official 'International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace'.
 2. It was officially approved under the UN general Assembly's resolution.
- 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
64. Consider the following statements with reference to RISAT-2B:
1. It is a radar imaging earth observation satellite.
 2. It is the all-weather imaging satellite.
 3. It is intended to provide services in the field of agriculture, forestry and disaster management.
- Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
- (a) 2 and 3 Only (b) 1, 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3 Only (d) 1 and 2 Only
65. With reference to the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), consider the following statements:
1. The members of INCB are elected by the UN General Assembly for a period of five years.
 2. INCB members serve in their personal capacity, independently of Governments.
 3. Once elected INCB members are not eligible for re-election.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 3 only (b) 1, 2 and 3
(c) 2 only (d) 1 and 2 only
66. Which of the following country introduced the system of 'Golden Card' Visa:
- (a) USA (b) UAE
(c) Germany (d) UK
67. The objective(s) of Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is/are:
1. The social objective of providing employment.
 2. The economic objective of producing saleable articles.
 3. The wider objective of creating self-reliance amongst the poor and building up of a strong rural community spirit.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3
68. Consider the following statement with reference to 'Honey Mission':
1. Under the mission, Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has been distributing bee-boxes among farmers and unemployed youths across the country.
 2. The mission was launched in August 2017.
- Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
69. Consider the following statements with reference to Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP):
1. It is a credit-linked subsidy programme.
 2. The programme was launched by the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.
 3. Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is the nodal agency of the programme.
- Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
- (a) 2 Only (b) 1, 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3 Only (d) 1 and 2 Only
70. Which of the following organisation releases the "Global Slavery Index"?
- (a) Amnesty International
(b) World Economic Forum
(c) Walk Free Foundation
(d) World Bank
71. Consider the following statement with respect to the Election Commission of India (ECI):

- Chief Election Commissioner of India can be removed from office as in case of a judge of the Supreme Court of India. Whereas, Election Commissioners can be removed by the President of India on the advice of CEC.
- The budget of Election Commission of India falls under the 'charged' expenditure'.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

72. Consider the following statements with reference to the Scorpene Class Submarines:

- These are nuclear powered attack submarines.
- Under Project 75, Mazagon Dock Limited will manufacture six Scorpene class submarines for Indian Navy.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

73. Consider the following statements with respect to the cabinet committees:

- The members of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha can become member of cabinet committees.
- The non-cabinet ministers are not debarred from membership.
- The Prime Minister acts as the head of all the cabinet committees.

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) 1, 2 and 3

74. Consider the following statements:

- Liquor prohibition under 7th schedule is a subject of Concurrent list.
- Prohibition of consumption of intoxicating drinks and drugs which are injurious to health, is one of the Liberal-Intellectual Principles under DPSP.
- Gujarat is the only Indian state with a death penalty for the manufacture and sale of homemade liquor that results in fatalities.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only (b) 1, 2 and 3
(c) 3 only (d) 1 only

75. Consider the following statements with reference to the 'Democracy Index':

- It is compiled by UK-based Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).
- It compares the government in countries based on 60 indicators arranged in five broad categories.
- There are four regimes – full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes and authoritarian regimes.
- India falls in the group of flawed democracies with rank 41 out of 167 countries.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 2, 3 and 4 Only (b) 1, 2 and 3 Only
(c) 2 and 3 Only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

76. Election Commission of India (ECI) conducts elections for:

- The offices of the President and Vice President of the country,
- Lok Sabha,
- Rajya Sabha,
- State Legislative Assemblies,

- State Legislative Councils and
- Panchayats.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 2, 3 and 4 Only (b) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6
(c) 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

77. Which of the following government schemes are aimed directly at reducing Maternal Mortality in India?

- The Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram
- PM AASHA
- Swadhaar Greh Scheme
- Laqshya

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1 and 4 only
(c) 1, 3 and 4 only (d) 3 and 4 only

78. Consider the following statements with respect to National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO):

- NTRO comes under the purview of the Intelligence Organisations (Restriction of Rights) Act, 1985.
- The Intelligence Organisations (Restriction of Rights) Act, 1985 prevents employees of a notified agency, to exercise some of the 'Fundamental Rights' granted by the Constitution of India.
- NTRO cannot hire people from the private sector.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 (b) 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 (d) 1 and 2

79. Consider the following statements:

- India is the largest producer and consumer of the milk, with Uttar Pradesh is the leading state in milk production.
- India has banned the import of milk and milk products from China, on the apprehensions of presence of Melamine in some milk consignments from China.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

80. Consider the statements with reference to Melamine:

- Melamine is rich in Nitrogen, a property that is similar to protein.
- Melamine is a toxic chemical used for making plastics and fertilisers, adhesives, countertops, dishware, whiteboards etc...
- According to WHO, there are direct human studies on the effect of melamine, which found the substance carcinogenic.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 (b) 2 only
(c) 3 only (d) 1 and 2

81. Consider the statements with reference to Bharati Script:

- It is a 'unified script' for all Indian languages, developed by the researchers at IIT Madras.
- Optical Character Recognition (OCR) works with almost 100% accuracy while reading documents in Bharati script.

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

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82. Consider the following statements with respect to Modern Slavery Innovation Fund (MSIF):
1. The fund was established to support international projects find innovative ways to end modern slavery under International Labour Organization (ILO).
 2. It will target the African countries from where victims are regularly trafficked to the UK.
- Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
83. Which of the following statement is NOT correct, with reference to ARTEMIS Mission?
- (a) The findings of the mission will help in laying the foundation for private companies to build a lunar economy.
 - (b) The Mission was commissioned by the Space Company Blue Origin.
 - (c) The Mission uses two of the five in-orbit spacecraft from NASA's Heliophysics constellation of satellites (THEMIS).
 - (d) The data collected from the mission has helped in understanding "how the Moon has a distinctive pattern of darker and lighter swirls?"
84. Consider the following statements with reference to the solar winds:
1. These winds fill a bubble of space, called the heliosphere that extends far past the orbit of Pluto.
 2. These are continuous outflow of particles and radiation from the surface of the sun.
 3. These solar winds are deflected by the Earth's natural magnetic field.
- Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
- (a) 2 only (b) 2 and 3
(c) 1, 2 and 3 (d) 1 and 2
85. Consider the following statements with reference to the historical town of Orchha in Madhya Pradesh:
1. The architectural heritage of Orchha town in Madhya Pradesh depicts peculiar style of the Bundela dynasty.
 2. The Bundela architecture has Mughal influence since the two dynasties were very close.
 3. In India, the group of monuments in Hampi and the Champaner-Pavagadh archaeological park have remarkable parallels to the historic ensemble of Orchha in terms of the concentration of temples, monuments, landscape features.
- Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 Only (b) 1 and 3 Only
(c) 1, 2 and 3 (d) 2 Only
86. Which of the following statement is correct?
- (a) Amazon and Space X unveiled a lunar lander would be used to transport equipment, and possibly human beings, to Shackleton Crater at the moon's South Pole by 2024.
 - (b) Shackleton Crater is a strategic destination, which receives almost perpetual sunlight.
 - (c) The lunar lander is solar powered so that it can be recharged on the surface of the moon.
 - (d) The UN Outer Space Treaty is silent over the claims of sovereignty by means of occupation.
87. Consider the following statements regarding the inhabitants of Lakshadweep:
1. The Buddhism spread to these islands during 6th century B.C.
 2. According to a study by CSIR-CCMB (Centre for Cellular & Molecular Biology), the inhabitants of the Lakshadweep Islands demonstrate a close genetic link with people from Maldives, Sri Lanka and India.
- Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
88. Which of the following statement with reference to Serotonin is NOT correct?
- (a) It is a chemical that signals between neurons.
 - (b) It is found only in brain.
 - (c) It is sometimes called the happy chemical, because it contributes to wellbeing and happiness.
 - (d) None of the above.
89. Consider the following statements with reference to YUva Vigyani Karyakram (YUVIKA):
1. It is a special programme launched by Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
 2. The Program is primarily aimed at imparting basic knowledge on Space Technology, Space Science and Space Applications.
 3. It is proposed to select 3 students each from each State/ Union Territory to participate in this programme every year covering CBSE only.
 4. Those who have finished 8th standard and currently studying in 9th standard will be eligible for the programme.
- Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
- (a) 2, 3 and 4 (b) 1, 2, 3 and 4
(c) 1, 2 and 4 (d) 1, 3 and 4
90. Consider the following statements with reference to World Immunization Week:
1. World Immunization Week is celebrated in the last week of April each year.
 2. The theme of World Immunization Week, 2019 was "Protected Together: Vaccines Work!"
- Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
91. Consider the following statements with reference to World Day for Safety and Health at Work:
1. It is an annual international awareness-raising campaign to promote safe, healthy and decent work, held on 28 April.
 2. Since 2003, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has promoted it.
 3. The theme of 2019 was "Safety and health at the heart of the future of work."
- Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2
(c) 1 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3
92. Consider the following statements with reference to the HOPE Probe:
1. It will be the Mars' first true weather satellite.
 2. The UAE is planning to send the Probe to Mars by 2020.

- Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
 (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
 (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
- 93.** Consider the following statements with reference to Mars. Select the option which is incorrect.
 (a) Unlike Earth, Mars has been steadily losing its atmosphere over time.
 (b) The Martian atmosphere is so cold and thin that water can exist only as vapour.
 (c) Like Earth, Mars has seasons, polar ice caps, volcanoes, canyons, and weather.
 (d) Mars is sometimes called the Red Planet. It's red because of rusty iron in the ground.
- 94.** Consider the following statements with reference to International Ocean Discovery Program (IODP):
 1. IODP is international marine research collaboration.
 2. India is the Associate Member of IODP.
 3. National Institute of Oceanography, Goa has been designated as the nodal agency to act as IODP-India.
 Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
 (a) 1 and 2 (b) 1 only
 (c) 1, 2 and 3 (d) 1 and 3
- 95.** Select the correct statement, among the options given below:
 (a) Hawaii, USA will host the Square Kilometer Array (SKA).
 (b) Square Kilometer Array (SKA) project is an international effort to build the world's largest radio telescope.
 (c) India is not part of the SKA Project.
 (d) Science Data Processor (SDP) consortium, led by NASA has designed the elements that will together form the 'brain' of the SKA.
- 96.** Consider following statements with reference to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs):
 1. PVTG is separate category, which are less developed among the tribal groups.
 2. Among the 75 listed PVTG's the highest number are found in Madhya Pradesh, followed by Andhra Pradesh.
 3. Tribal groups have been categorized by National Commission for Schedule tribes as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.
 Which of the statement(s) given above is/are NOT correct?
 (a) 1 only (b) 1, 2 and 3
 (c) 2 and 3 (d) 2 only
- 97.** Which of the following statement is NOT correct?
 (a) Article 226 of the Constitution empowers a high court to issue writs for the enforcement of the fundamental rights of the citizens only.
 (b) A foreign State may be sued in any Court with the consent of the Central government.
 (c) Article 12 has defined the term 'State' for the purposes of Part III of the Constitution.
 (d) Even a private body or an agency working as an instrument of the State falls within the meaning of the 'State' under Article 12.
- 98.** Recently, 'Imagine Cup' was in news. Select the correct option, among the following statements related to Imagine Cup:
 (a) It is a grand innovation challenge on inclusive Smart Cities, organized by the NITI Aayog.
 (b) It is a mixed gender T20 cricket game, aiming at breaking stereotypes in the game of cricket.
 (c) It is a global annual competition sponsored and hosted by Microsoft.
 (d) None of the Above.
- 99.** Consider following statements with reference to Election Petitions:
 1. An Election petition a means under law to challenge the election of a candidate in a Parliamentary, Assembly or local election.
 2. Only the High Courts have the original jurisdiction on deciding on election petitions.
 3. An election petition can be filed by any candidate, or an elector relating to the election personally.
 4. Election Petition can be filed only after polls are over.
 Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
 (a) 1, 2, 3 and 4 (b) 4 only
 (c) 2 and 3 (d) 2, 3 and 4
- 100.** Consider the following statements with reference to the Black List of Indian Origin People:
 1. The list is maintained by Indian missions/Indian Embassies in different countries and posts abroad.
 2. Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs has done away with this list.
 Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?
 (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
 (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWERS

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. (c) | 2. (c) | 3. (a) | 4. (a) | 5. (d) | 6. (a) | 7. (d) | 8. (a) | 9. (b) |
| 10. (b) | 11. (a) | 12. (d) | 13. (c) | 14. (d) | 15. (a) | 16. (b) | 17. (b) | 18. (c) |
| 19. (c) | 20. (a) | 21. (b) | 22. (d) | 23. (d) | 24. (a) | 25. (b) | 26. (a) | 27. (d) |
| 28. (c) | 29. (a) | 30. (a) | 31. (b) | 32. (c) | 33. (b) | 34. (d) | 35. (d) | 36. (c) |
| 37. (d) | 38. (c) | 39. (b) | 40. (b) | 41. (c) | 42. (d) | 43. (a) | 44. (d) | 45. (a) |
| 46. (a) | 47. (c) | 48. (a) | 49. (c) | 50. (c) | 51. (c) | 52. (b) | 53. (b) | 54. (c) |
| 55. (c) | 56. (b) | 57. (d) | 58. (b) | 59. (b) | 60. (d) | 61. (c) | 62. (a) | 63. (c) |
| 64. (b) | 65. (c) | 66. (b) | 67. (d) | 68. (c) | 69. (b) | 70. (c) | 71. (a) | 72. (b) |
| 73. (a) | 74. (c) | 75. (d) | 76. (d) | 77. (b) | 78. (d) | 79. (c) | 80. (d) | 81. (b) |
| 82. (d) | 83. (b) | 84. (c) | 85. (c) | 86. (b) | 87. (c) | 88. (b) | 89. (c) | 90. (c) |
| 91. (d) | 92. (c) | 93. (b) | 94. (a) | 95. (b) | 96. (c) | 97. (a) | 98. (c) | 99. (a) |
| 100. (c) | | | | | | | | |

Subjective Questions

GS Paper 1

- Q.1** Puppetry does not found its roots in Indian culture, but it is adopted by Indians and now thrives well with regional characteristics. Analyze. **(15 marks)**
- Q.2** Discuss the contributions made by Tyagaraja in the field of art and culture. **(10 marks)**
- Q.3** "India accounts for a fourth of global tea production and over a tenth of exports but recently Indian tea is facing stiff competition from cheaper and at par in quality Kenyan and Sri Lankan tea in global market." Discuss the problems faced by tea industry in India. Also, suggest some steps that should be taken by government of India to support tea industry. **(15 marks)**
- Q.4** "According to the sample registration system (SRS) data released in 2018 by the Office of Registrar General of India, Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), declined to 130 in 2014-16 from 167 in 2011-13 but still far behind the SDG target of 70." Discuss the problems faced by India to achieve the target in desired time. Also, suggest some steps that should be taken to reduce MMR. **(15 marks)**
- Q.5** On a petition filed by the National Legal Services Authority, the Supreme Court recognised the transgender community as a third gender along with male and female. Discuss how this judgment helps transgender community? Also, what are the other major issues faced by transgenders in India and suggest some steps that should be taken to overcome them? **(15 marks)**

GS Paper 2

- Q.6** "Escalating tension between Iran and the United States has once again exposed India and Iran to new set of challenges to take their energy and trade ties forward." In the light of the given statement discuss how US sanctions on Iran affect India. Also suggest some steps that India can take to balance its relation with both Iran and USA as both being important to India strategically and economically. **(15 marks)**
- Q.7** "If the higher judiciary is brought under RTI, the ordinary citizen would be empowered to seek details of judicial appointments and transfers, which may open a judicial Pandora's Box." Discuss. **(10 marks)**
- Q.8** In the past exit polls have often proved unreliable in India as there had been instances when exit polls had predicted the verdict of an election incorrectly. In your opinion should the exit polls be banned in India? **(10 marks)**
- Q.9** "The Supreme Court should limit judicial activism to only the most exceptional situations, and employ judicial restraint as far as possible." Discuss. **(15 marks)**
- Q.10** "Contrary to popular perceptions, coalitions are associated with periods of greater economic growth, less economic volatility and more inclusive policies." In the light of the given statement discuss why is there still reluctance to form pre-election coalitions in India? **(10 marks)**

- Q.11** Despite many landmarks judgments by the Supreme Court and various High Courts for the betterment of transgender persons, they still are not able to enjoy their civil and political rights fully. In the above context discuss the challenges faced by them. Also, suggest the necessary steps to improve their condition. **(15 marks)**
- Q.12** Election Commission of India (ECI) proved its efficacy time and again by successfully fulfilling its role and duties enshrined by the Constitution of India. Describe some of the important measures taken by the ECI to modernize the electoral process. Also, suggest some reforms that need to be taken urgently. **(15 marks)**
- Q.13** Though 2nd Belt and Road Forum tried to address some of the issues which arose in the implementation of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Still, the core issues remain unaddressed, which is preventing countries like India and USA to join the BRI. Comment **(15 marks)**
- Q.14** "Lack of ambition for the India-Afghanistan relationship at this juncture would be much more detrimental to India's interests". In the light of this statement discuss the changing perception of India regarding the Afghanistan Peace process. Also discuss the challenges and opportunities for India in the process. **(10 marks)**

GS Paper 3

- Q.15** Recently, Reserve Bank of India has proposed a rule-based approach in fixing new Ways and Means limits for the state governments, replacing the previous expenditure-based system. What do you understand by Ways and Means Advances and how is the new approach different from the previous one? **(10 marks)**
- Q.16** How can genetically modified crops contribute to food security, sustainability and climate change? What are the reasons hindering the successful implementation of genetically modified (GM) food crops in India? **(15 marks)**
- Q.17** Discuss the importance of Island Protection Zone in opening the 'Blue Economy' to the islands of Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep. **(10 marks)**
- Q.18** The participation of women in the workforce in India is one of the lowest globally. What are the prominent reasons for it? Also, briefly discuss the steps taken by the government to improve the condition, with particular emphasis on Women Entrepreneurship. **(15 marks)**
- Q.19** Social media has become a tool in the hands of terrorists to spread their ideology. In the light of the given statement discuss the effectiveness of Christchurch Call for Action in preventing the misuse of social media. **(10 marks)**

GS Paper 4

- Q.20** Data has become "new oil", therefore for effective data management the approach should not only be legal but also ethical. Comment. **(10 marks)**



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AIR-6
AMIT JAIN



AIR-7
INDERVEER SINGH



AIR-10
CHIRAG JAIN



AIR-12
DEVDARSHDEEP



AIR-13
PRATIBHA VERMA



AIR-19
PRASHANT PATEL



AIR-20
MANAS SINGH



AIR-22
KSHITI SAXENA



AIR-27
W ABHIJIT JINCHANDRA



AIR-28
NEERAJ KR TIBRIWAL



AIR-33
KHANDEKAR KUNDALIK



AIR-35
AYUSH JAIN



AIR-36
CHIRANJEEV P JAIN



AIR-39
GANESH U R



AIR-44
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ADITYA



AIR-48
ABHIMANYU



AIR-52
NARENDRA RAWAT



AIR-54
HITESH K. MEENA



AIR-57
VIVEK C. YADAV



AIR-62
VIKAS YADAV



AIR-66
ANIKET M. WANVE



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SAHIL SINGH



AIR-79
SARVESH SONWANI



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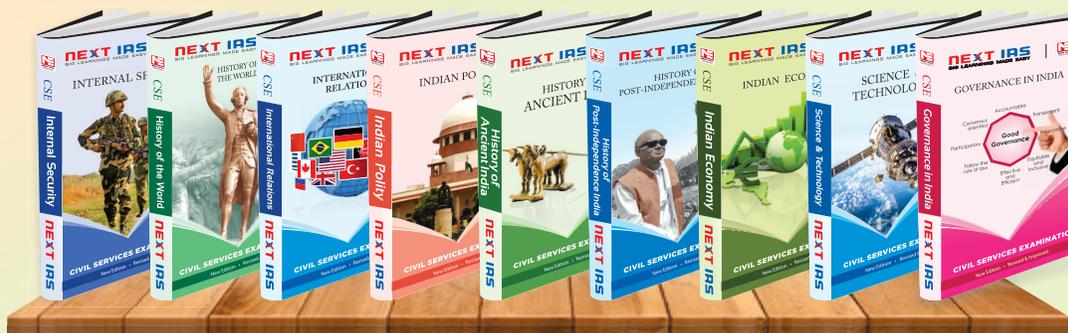
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