Daily News Updates for 1st July 2019

From the columns of *The Hindu*:

1. Trump and Kim met for the third time in an year and agreed to resume stalled nuclear talks
2. Nagaland will initiate its own version of NRC, Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN) from 10 July
3. Centre to celebrate two years of GST today
4. After Bihar, Uttar Pradesh braces for AES season
5. Special Rhino Protection Force deployed in Kaziranga National Park
6. TRIFED signed an agreement to partner with Amazon's Global Selling Program to promote the artistic risches of India's adivasis communities
7. Indian Navy has lined up several mega deals for helicopters, submarines and patrol aircrafts.
8. WHO brings in norms on self-care interventions
9. World's first Wildlife Tech Lab was launched in Kenya

News for UPSC Mains 2019:

U.S. President Donald Trump Steps into North Korea, in a Historic First


Nagaland Set to Begin its Variant of NRC from July 10

Nine Dead, 564 Hospitalised in This Year’s Heatwave in Maharashtra, says DHS Data


After Bihar, Uttar Pradesh Braces for AES Season

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/after-bihar-up-braces-for-encephalitis-season/article28235818.ece

Cooperative Helps takes Tribal Crafts to Amazon’s Global Marketplace


A Thumbs Down to Unilateralism

https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/a-thumbs-down-to-unilateralism/article28236197.ece

Among Members: on G-20 Osaka Summit

https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/among-members/article28236194.ece

New Framework: on SEBI's Norms for Mutual Fund Investments

https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/new-framework/article28236195.ece

Start with Preventive Care
Procedural Concerns in Focus as GST Enters Third Year


Why Nuclear When India Has An ‘Ocean’ of Energy


WHO Brings in Norms on Selfcare Interventions


From the columns of The Indian Express:

S. Koreans React with Hope, Scepticism

The geopolitics of Indo-Pacific: How India and others Interpret the Term

A Digital Power
New Returns System, Single Refund Window, E-invoice Ready for Rollout

Note:
News Analysis for the following topics will be updated by today's evening:

1. Indigenous Tribes and National Parks of Nagaland
   (Context: Nagaland Set to Begin its Variant of NRC from July 10)

2. Role of TRIFED in Protection and Betterment of Adivasis
   (Context: Cooperative Helps takes Tribal Crafts to Amazon’s Global Marketplace)

3. Takeaways From 2019 Summit of G-20
   (Context: Among Members: on G-20 Osaka Summit)

4. Role of Preventive Care in the Health Sector
   (Context: Start with Preventive Care)

5. PT 2020 Special

Stay Tuned for More Updates.
Jai Hind
UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Keep Studying

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express
1. Rajasthan First State to Implement Biofuel Policy: (GS-II(Policies) & GS-III(Environment))

Theme: Biofuel Policy

- Rajasthan has become the first State in the country to implement the national policy on biofuels unveiled by the Centre in May 2018.
- The desert State will lay emphasis on increasing production of oilseeds and establish a Centre for Excellence in Udaipur to promote research in the fields of alternative fuels and energy resources. A Biodiesel Plant of the capacity of 8 tonnes a day had already been installed in the state with the financial assistance of the Indian Railways.
- The State Rural Livelihood development council will also encourage women’s Self Help Groups to explore the scope for additional income through the supply of Bio-diesel.

National Policy on Biofuels:

- The Policy categorises biofuels as "Basic Biofuels" viz. First Generation (1G) bioethanol & biodiesel and "Advanced Biofuels" - Second Generation (2G) ethanol, Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) to drop-in fuels, Third Generation (3G) biofuels, bio-CNG etc. to enable extension of appropriate financial and fiscal incentives under each category.
- The Policy expands the scope of raw material for ethanol production by allowing use of Sugarcane Juice, Sugar containing materials like Sugar Beet, Sweet Sorghum, Starch containing materials like Corn, Cassava, Damaged food grains like wheat, broken rice, Rotten Potatoes, unfit for human consumption for ethanol production.
- Farmers are at a risk of not getting appropriate price for their produce during the surplus production phase. Taking this into account, the Policy allows use of surplus food grains for production of ethanol for blending with petrol with the approval of National Biofuel Coordination Committee.
- With a thrust on Advanced Biofuels, the Policy indicates a viability gap funding scheme for 2G ethanol Bio refineries of Rs.5000 crore in 6 years in addition to additional tax incentives, higher purchase price as compared to 1G biofuels.
- The Policy encourages setting up of supply chain mechanisms for biodiesel production from non-edible oilseeds, Used Cooking Oil, short gestation crops.
- Roles and responsibilities of all the concerned Ministries/Departments with respect to biofuels has been captured in the Policy document to synergise efforts

Expected Benefits:

- Reduce Import dependency
- Cleaner Environment
- **Health Benefits**: Prolonged reuse of Cooking Oil for preparing food, particularly in deep-frying is a potential health hazard and can lead to many diseases. Used Cooking Oil is a potential feedstock for biodiesel and its use for making biodiesel will prevent diversion of used cooking oil in the food industry.
Municipal solid waste management: It is estimated that, annually 62 MMT of Municipal Solid Waste gets generated in India. There are technologies available which can convert waste/plastic, MSW to drop in fuels. One ton of such waste has the potential to provide around 20% of drop in fuels.

Infrastructural investment in Rural Areas

Employment Generation

Additional Income to Generation: By adopting 2G technologies, agricultural residues/waste which otherwise are burnt by the farmers can be converted to ethanol and can fetch a price for these waste if a market is developed for the same. Also, farmers are at a risk of not getting appropriate price for their produce during the surplus production phase. Thus conversion of surplus grains and agricultural biomass can help in price stabilization.

Source: Various

Cabinet Clears Bill to restore the provisions of SC/ST Act:

GS-II | 02 July, 2019

National and Political Issues

1) Cabinet Clears Bill to restore the provisions of SC/ST Act:

Theme: SC/ST Act (GS-II)

The Supreme court had introduced the provision of anticipatory bail by reading down the Section 18 of Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 in march 20, 2018 to protect people against arbitrary arrests. SC also issued other guidelines to protect people against arbitrary arrests under the Act. They are:

- public servants could be arrested only with the written permission of their appointing authority, while in the case of private employees, the Senior Superintendent of Police concerned should allow it.
- A preliminary inquiry should be conducted before the FIR was registered to check if the case fell within the ambit of the Act, and whether it was frivolous or motivated.

The ruling was greeted by a storm of protest from Dalit groups, which said the order diluted the law. Facing pressure from Dalit leaders within the ruling alliance as well as from the Opposition, the Centre has decided to introduce a Bill to restore the original provisions of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, which the Supreme Court had struck down in a March ruling.
The Amendment Bill seeks to insert three new clauses after Section 18 of the original Act:

- The first stipulates that for the purposes of the Act, “preliminary enquiry shall not be required for registration of a First Information Report against any person.”
- The second stipulates that the arrest of a person accused of having committed an offence under the Act would not require any approval.
- The third says that the provisions of Section 438 of the Code of Criminal Procedure — which deals with anticipatory bail — shall not apply to a case under this Act, “notwithstanding any judgment or order of any Court.

2) Misadventures in Education:

Theme: Educational Reforms (GS-II)
Features of the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) Bill:

- The fundamental aim of the draft bill is to abolish the existing University Grants Commission (UGC), the country’s apex body that distributes funds to public universities based on certain criteria.
- This job of distributing funds to universities will be directly taken over by the Union Ministry of Human Resources Development.
- The draft bill, instead creates a new body, the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI).
- This new commission will have unbridled powers over all colleges and universities across the country, including the authority to shut them down and at worst, jail the college or university authorities for up to three years if the commission finds that they disobeyed its orders and refuse to pay the penalty.
- The only exceptions will be the Institutions of National Importance, which are mostly institutes like the IITs.

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has attracted much attention in recent weeks for two reasons.

- First, it put out for public consultation the draft Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) Bill, which seeks to replace the University Grants Commission. In response, it received 10,200 suggestions/comments from various stakeholders. Thousands of concerns have been aired by academics, policy makers, and civil society on the HECI Bill, particularly because it is silent on concrete reasons to replace the UGC.
Unlike UGC, HECI will not have grant functions and would focus only on academic matters. HECI will also be backed with penal powers to order closure of institutes that violate set norms, imposition of fines where necessary and provisions for imprisonment up to three years where necessary.

Concerns about the HECI Bill:

- The draft HECI Bill makes the problem worse through over-centralisation and enhanced political interference.
- The move to entrust all grant-giving powers to the Ministry can lead to politicisation of grant allocation and more interference by the bureaucracy.
- Further, instead of preserving autonomy, the Bill allows the Chairperson of the new Commission to be a member of the Central government, something expressly prohibited in the UGC Act.
- The bill also transgresses the autonomy of higher educational institutions by allowing micromanagement, for instance, on syllabi.
- The new over-arching body does not involve the States sufficiently and or accommodate the diverse needs of the country.
- Therefore, it would have been better off if the government addressed the loopholes in the UGC.

However, there are some problems with the UGC. Both the National Knowledge Commission Report (2006) and the Yashpal Committee on Higher Education (2009) made a solid case for bringing in a new regulator.

- Second, the Right to education (Amendment) Bill, 2018, was passed by the Lok Sabha on July 18 and is now before the Rajya Sabha. It seeks to:
  - To do away with the no-detention policy
  - Reintroduce testing for Classes V and VIII
  - Students who fail this exam would be given a chance to re-appear after two months from the date of declaration of results. In case they still cannot pass, the states will have the option of detaining them.

The Right To Education (RTE) Act:

- The Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002 inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine.
- It means that every child has a right to full-time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards.
- It came into effect on 1 April 2010.

- The RTE Act provides for:
  - Every child in the age group of 6-14 has the right to free and compulsory education in a neighbourhood school, till the completion of elementary education.
  - Private schools will have to take 25% of their class strength from the weaker section.
and the disadvantaged group of the society through a random selection process. The government will fund the education of these children.

- **No donation and capitation fee** is allowed.
- **No admission test or interview** either for child or parents.
- **No child can be held back**, expelled and required to pass the board examination till the completion of elementary education.
- There is provision for the establishment of commissions to supervise the implementation of the act.
- A fixed **student and teacher ratio** is to be maintained.
- All schools have to **adhere to rules and regulations** laid down in this act, failing which the school will not be allowed to function. Three years moratorium period has been provided to school to implement all that is required of them.
- **No admission test or interview** either for child or parents.
- **No child can be held back**, expelled and required to pass the board examination till the completion of elementary education.
- All schools have to **adhere to rules and regulations** laid down in this act, failing which the school will not be allowed to function. Three years moratorium period has been provided to school to implement all that is required of them.
- **Norms for teachers training and qualifications** are also clearly mentioned in the act.
- All schools except private unaided schools are to be managed by School Management Committees with 75% of parents and guardians as members.

### Detention policy:

- The Right to Education (RTE) Bill 2018 does **away with the policy that children cannot be detained till they complete elementary education in Class VIII**.
- The amendment gives **States the option of holding regular examinations** either at the end of Class V or Class VIII, or both.
- **Students who fail this exam would be given a chance to re-appear after two months** from the date of declaration of results.
- In case they still cannot pass, the **States will have the option of detaining them**.

#### Consequences of Detention:

- This would potentially **push out many children** who are unable to meet standards because they have been deprived of quality education.
- The no-detention policy was to be implemented together with continuous assessment, which would help identify learning deficiencies and correct them.
- However, the education system has failed to provide continuous assessment and so the government is falling back on examinations and detention, which can lead to students becoming discouraged and higher dropout rates.

### What is ‘No-Detention’ policy?

- As per the No-Detention Policy under the Right to Education Act, **no student can be failed or expelled from school till the completion of elementary education** covering classes 1 to 8. All the students up till Class 8 will automatically be promoted to next class.
- The essence of the policy is that children should not be ‘failed’ and detained up to Class 8. There are **no “examinations”** in the narrow traditional sense of the word up to Class 8. Instead, the Act mandates a **process of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE)** to assess and evaluate the student’s learning.

### Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE):

- It is an alternative to regular examination, in which pupil will be comprehensively
evaluated on the basis of curricular, extra-curricular activities and behavior. But none of the students will be detained.

- This evaluation is based on grading system rather than Marks or percentage. This provision is not being implemented

**Reasons why ‘no-detention policy’ is criticized**

1. **Negative impact on the standard of education:** Most of the schools in interior places are running without any teachers. Hence, if the ‘no-detention policy’ continues, it will leave a negative impact on the standard of education in India and force the children to face more harsh future.

2. **No reward for hard work:** This policy has led to students developing a lackadaisical attitude, with there being no risk of failing. It also makes no distinction between good and bad students, and between those who work hard and those who don’t. Thus it makes no effective way to implement a good level of teaching and learning.

3. **Apathy from teachers:** With the policy in place, the Education Department does not take steps to revamp itself and the teachers do not take the pain to ensure a good education for the children.

4. **Dark future of students:** Students coming from poor economic background face problem in their coming life because of no good education in the schools.

5. **Will affect the women empowerment programs:** The girls especially will face a major problem if not getting a proper education in the schools.

6. **Zero academic outcomes:** If no merit is checked while giving promotion to another class, the children will never learn the importance of studying and acquiring knowledge. It will lead to a poor academic outcome in classes.

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Question is whether the no-detention policy will improve the learning outcomes of children if it is brought back.

**Why No-detention policy seems a practical failure?**

It is the no-detention policy because of which we have achieved near universalization of enrolment at elementary education level. It is a successful policy in this sense. But for improved learning outcomes, this policy needs to be supplemented by other provisions of RTE Act, 2009, such as;

- Pupil teacher ratio (PTR)
- Infrastructure
Separate Toilets for Girls and Boys

Funding in Education:

- It is another reason why RTE is not being implemented in true letter in spirit. Allocation of funds for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan always remained below the actual estimated requirements. Quality related intervention accounted only for 9% of the total approved budgets in FY 2016-17.
- States like Kerala spent nearly all their allocated budget for education on quality in 2016-17.

Way forward:

The phenomenon of poor learning outcomes is the product of many factors which influence learning, and should not be conveniently pinned to the door of the no-detention policy. The steps that can be taken to improve learning outcomes can be:

- Measuring learning level outcomes of all children on a regular basis,
- Catalysing a “performance-driven culture” and rewarding high performers at every level,
- Changing stakeholders’ mindset and preparing them for new provisions, in which parents were made responsible or accountable for full attendance of their children.
- There is a need to find long term solution to the issues plaguing the education system in India.
- Keeping in view the targets under SDG4: Quality Education, there is need to increase budgetary allocation for Education.
- A greater level of seriousness on all sides is the need of the hour. It is high time steps are taken to remove the other flaws that exist.
- RTE Act 2009, needs to be implemented in its true letter and spirit. New Education Policy is need of the hour.

3) Scaled up solutions for future of water scarcity

Theme: Water scarcity

Precious evolutionary living resources, natural infrastructure, are going extinct. While we thoughtlessly build artificial infrastructure, we forget that this kills natural infrastructure which took evolution aeons to create and cannot be engineered. We are missing the essential point that this is our lifeline on the planet. Forests, rivers, mountains, aquifers and soil are being lost at an alarming rate. Today, India is in the midst of a suicidal water crisis as urban and rural landscapes go thirsty.

Over the years, activists, scientists and experts from across India working on bottom-up schemes to revive and rejuvenate lakes, wetlands, streams and other small water bodies. While these movements have brought about a significant change at the local level, the scale of our water problems is much larger

The scale of loss of water:

There are two intractable issues:

- First, cities today are vast agglomerations that continue to spread, with bursting populations of tens of millions. They are huge parasites on water, food, energy and all other resources. High densities of our cities do not allow for water harvesting to fill the gap.
- Second, in our global market economies, the products and services that are derived from natural
infrastructure have often led to the terminal loss of the source itself. The global free market, and with it the scale of human intervention, now exceeds the scale of the planet. These resources (forests, mountains, floodplains and rivers) are often lost to the greed of governments, institutions, corporations and individuals. This is long-term loss for short-term gain.

River floodplains

- Our research shows that floodplains of rivers are exceptional aquifers where any withdrawal is compensated by gravity flow from a large surrounding area and can be used as a source of providing water to cities.
- Floodplains are formed over millions of years by the flooding of rivers with deposition of sand on riverbanks.
- Some floodplains, such as those of Himalayan rivers, contain up to 20 times more water than the virgin flow in rivers in a year.
- Since recharge is by rainfall and during late floods, the water quality is good.
- If we conserve and use the floodplain, it can be a self-sustaining aquifer wherein every year, the river and floodplain are preserved in the same healthy condition as the year before.
- The Delhi Palla floodplain project on the Yamuna is an example of this. By utilising 20 sq.km of the river length and running at half its capacity, it provides water to almost a million people daily.
- Piezometers and a control system have been installed to monitor water levels and other parameters through the year, to ensure sustainable withdrawal.
- Besides, it provides huge revenue to the Delhi Jal Board.
- Preserving the floodplain in a pristine condition is essential for this scheme to work.
- Land on the floodplains can be leased from farmers in return for a fixed income from the water sold to cities.
- The farmers can be encouraged to grow orchards/food forests to secure and restore the ecological balance of the river ecosystem.

Natural mineral water:

- Currently, mineral water is brought from faraway mountain springs, putting huge pressure on the mountains.
- It is packaged and consumed in plastic bottles that end up in landfills. Forested hills are a result of evolution over millions of years.
- They are not polluted and sit on a treasure of underground aquifers that contain natural mineral water comparable to that found in a mountain spring.
- This is because the rain falls on the forest and seeps through the various layers of humus and cracked rock pathways, picking up nutrients and minerals and flows into underground mineral water aquifers.
- Our research shows that the water in these aquifers is comparable to several international natural spring mineral waters.
- It also shows that if a scheme of ‘conserve and use’ is applied correctly, it would allow a forest (like Asola Bhatti in Delhi) to be sustained as a mineral water sanctuary.
- About 30 sq.km of the forest could then provide enough natural mineral water to 5 million people in the city.
- The Aravalli forested hills can provide mineral water to all major towns of Rajasthan. This water can substantially improve the health of citizens and preserve forests at the same time.
- The marvel is that we can provide quality natural mineral water for all from a local forest tract for
20 times less than the market price and yet reap great economic returns.

- Such non-invasive, local, large-scale ‘conserve and use’ projects till now have not been part of our living scheme.
- They change the relationship between nature, water and cities.
- They differ in scale from the small, community-driven projects of check dams, water harvesting and lakes and can service large populations.
- Unlike large-scale dams, these projects work with nature rather than against it. They can be used around the globe.
- Finally, these evolutionary resources once lost, will be lost forever.

Solutions for Water Scarcity:

- **Education:** There are plenty of opportunities out there that people can use in order to learn more about the world around them. By educating those who are not dealing with water scarcity, they can be in a position to help. Those who are dealing with it can get educated on how they can prevent the problem from becoming even worse in the future.
- **Recycle Water:** There are plenty of technologies out there that allow you to recycle rainwater and other water that you may be using in your home. Consider learning about how you can recycle water. Not only does it help to prevent scarcity, but it can save you some money as well.
- **Advance Technology Related to Water Conservation:** There has been a lot of work in the world of water conservation, but there is also a lot that needs to be done in order to ensure that the rest of the world is able to conserve water. Putting money and effort into conservation could be life-saving.
- **Improve Practices Related to Farming:** Farming and irrigation are often a huge culprit when it comes to water scarcity. Because of that, we need to improve practices so that we don’t use as much water and those who are using water are using it to its fullest potential. Technology also needs to advance in this manner.
- **Improve Sewage Systems:** Clean drinking water starts with a good sewage system. Without proper sanitation, the water in an area becomes ridden with disease and any number of other problems. By improving the sewage systems in these areas, we can prevent water scarcity from becoming any worse.
- **Support Clean Water Initiatives:** There are organizations located all over the world that are looking to bring clean water to areas that don’t have it.

Source: TH

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**Data Localisation is no solution**

GS-II | 02 July, 2019

**Data Localisation is no solution**

**Theme:** Data Protection: Right to Privacy and National Security [GS-II(Governance) & GS-
Introduction:

- Calls for data are not new. It has been a mainstream of Indian policymakers demands from foreign technology companies.
- The Justice Srikrishna committee in its report accompanying the draft personal Data protection bill released on July 27 notes that eight of the top 10 most accessed websites in India are owned by U.S. entities. This reality has often hindered Indian law enforcements when investigating routine crimes or crimes with a cyber element.
- Police officials are forced to rely on a long and arduous bilateral process with the U.S. communication providers.

The draft Personal Data Protection Bill, 2018

- It has provisions to protect personal data as an essential facet of information privacy.
- The objective of the Bill is to balance the growth of the digital economy and use of data as a means of communication.
- The Bill applies to the personal data which have been processed within India, by persons or agencies governed by Indian Law.
- The Bill also brings within its ambit the processing of personal data by data fiduciaries or data processors located abroad in connection with business or profiling of data principals within the territory of India.
- The proposed law defines personal data as information relating to a natural person.
- Breach of personal data involves unauthorised or accidental processing of personal data that compromises the confidentiality, integrity or availability of personal data to a data principal.
- Data fiduciaries should retain personal data "only as long as may be reasonably necessary to satisfy the purpose for which it is processed".
- The Bill allows processing of personal data for “prompt action” only if it is necessary for any function of Parliament; or any State Legislature to render service or benefit to citizens; or in response to any medical emergency to the data principal; or in cases of epidemic, outbreak of disease, disaster or breakdown of public order.
- The Bill includes the ‘right to be forgotten’, which is the right of a data principal to restrict or prevent continuing disclosure of personal data by a data fiduciary.
- The Bill calls for a copy of user data to be mandatorily localised in India, it will “boost” law enforcement efforts to access data necessary for investigation and prosecution of crimes.
Criticism on Data localization:

- The Indian law enforcement relies on an out-dated Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) process to obtain data stored by U.S. This scenario will not change even after technology companies relocate Indian data to India.
- Localisation can provide data only for crimes that have been committed in India, where both the perpetrator and victim are situated in India.
- Transnational terrorism, cybercrimes and money laundering that the committee rightly highlights will often involve individuals and accounts that are not Indian, and therefore will not be stored in India.
- The data protection bill is an opportunity for India to be a partner under the CLOUD Act.

CLOUD(Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data) Act?

- Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data (CLOUD) Act, passed by the U.S. Congress seeks to de-monopolise control over data from U.S. authorities.
- The law will for the first time allow tech companies to share data directly with certain foreign governments having an executive agreement with the U.S.

This, however, requires an executive agreement between the U.S. and the foreign country certifying that the state has robust privacy protections, and respect for due process and the rule of law.

Why India need to partner with US?
1) TRAI calls for zero telecom equipment imports by 2022

Theme: Indigenous telecommunication equipment manufacturing

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has called for imposition of import duties on telecom products outside the ambit of the Information Technology Agreement (ITA-1) and incentivising their local design and manufacturing with an aim to eliminate India’s dependence on imported telecom gear by 2022.

- Suggesting that India aim at net zero imports of telecommunications equipment by 2022, the TRAI recommended the setting up of a ₹1,000 crore fund for promoting research and innovation in the sector.
- The regulator has suggested that the progress of indigenous telecommunication equipment manufacturing be monitored by Department of Telecommunications (DoT).
- It is planned to have a dedicated unit in DoT to be made responsible for the facilitation and monitoring of telecommunication equipment design, development, and manufacturing in the country.
- It was proposed to create a Telecom Research and Development Fund (TRDF), with initial corpus of ₹1,000 crore for promoting research, innovation, standardization, design, testing, certification and manufacturing indigenous telecom equipment.
- Subsequently, Telecom Entrepreneurship Promotion Fund (TEPF) and Telecom Manufacturing Promotion Fund (TMPF) need to be set up.
- To address security concerns, TRAI had suggested that the telecom service providers be
incentivised for deploying indigenous telecom products beyond the quantities to be mandated under the preferential market access policy.

- India as a signatory to the World Trade Organisation’s ITA-1 has a zero-duty commitment on 217-odd electronic items in the list. But it is under no obligation to allow duty-free imports of ICT items outside the ITA-1.

Benefits:

- Local manufacturing of network equipment will reduce imports and create self-reliance and job opportunities.
- Currently, India imports 90% of its requirements. If the recommendations are to be implemented, it would enable Indian telecom equipment manufacturing sector to transition from an import-dependent sector to a global hub of indigenous manufacturing.

Source: TH

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Latin America seeks more missions

1. Latin America seeks more missions

Theme: India relations with Latin America

Details

- India had made a promise in 2010 that it will open three new embassies in Latin American nations
- Shashi Tharoor Minister of State for External Affairs in the UPA Ministry, announced in the Dominican Republic that India would open missions in that country, Ecuador and Uruguay.
- These three countries have opened diplomatic missions in India, but India has not reciprocated the gesture
- India does not have missions in Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, Ecuador, Costa Rica and El Salvador, though they have missions in India.

Embassy is not important:

- Instead of spending millions to keep ambassadors, security teams, and other support staff resident in a foreign country, presidents and prime ministers can now conveniently communicate directly on matters of urgency and importance.
- Cellular phones, e-mails and video-conferencing technology enables world leaders, government officials and bureaucrats to communicate and coordinate directly with one another.
- If person-to-person contact is a must, air travel allows an official to be anywhere in the world in less than a day. Some countries designate special envoys to take advantage
- The use of special envoys to cover specific countries and/or issues is certainly more cost-effective
Embassy is important

1. Why is LA important for India?:

- In 2016-17, India exported more to Mexico ($3.5 billion) than to neighbours such as Thailand ($3.1 billion), Myanmar ($1.7 billion) and Iran ($2.4 billion) or traditional trade partners Russia ($1.9 billion) and Canada ($2 billion).
- India’s trade with the Dominican Republic ($900 million) was more than the trade with Portugal, Greece and some other European countries.
- India beat China in export of pharmaceuticals to Latin America. India’s exports were $651 million in comparison to China’s $404 million in 2016. In fact, in the last five years, India has been exporting more pharma to Latin America than China.

2. Pacific Alliance:

- The Pacific Alliance (Spanish: Alianza del Pacífico) is a Latin American trade bloc, formed by Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, which all border the Pacific Ocean.
- These countries have come together to form an area of integration with the purpose of ensure a complete freedom in the movement of goods, services, capital, and people.
- India’s Role:
  - India enjoys an observer status at the annual summit of Pacific Alliance
  - A key area for collaboration for PA and India could be understanding the impacts of El-Nino and its common approach against this weather pattern. Countries dependent upon agriculture and fishing, particularly those bordering the Pacific Ocean, are the most affected by El-Nino. All PA states have coasts along the Pacific.
  - Pacific Alliance is turning out to be an integrated market and it opens up opportunities for India in SMEs sector, trade facilitation, science & technology innovation and export of Indian pharmaceutical products.

The Indian elephant has already engaged the tigers of Asia. It is now the turn of the pumas of the Pacific

3. Differences between Chinese and Indian outward FDI:

- Indian FDI is largely fuelled by supply and demand and private companies, whereas the Chinese one is mostly led by government
- India’s FDI goes mostly to the developed world and to manufacturing and services, whereas Chinese FDI is mainly geared to developing countries and mining,
- India’s comparative advantages lie in its corporate governance and management, whereas China’s are in government strategy and economic diplomacy.

Conclusion

- A combination of government initiatives and private ventures and diplomatic engagements have to
be increased if we have to realise the full potential of India-Latin America Countries ties.  
• Specifically, establishing or maintaining an embassy is a clear sign to the host government of a commitment to deepening bilateral relations.

Source: TH

U.S.-China trade war can make Indian products competitive, says CII report
GS-III | 02 July, 2019

1) U.S.-China trade war can make Indian products competitive, says CII report

Theme: Trade War

In News:

• With the U.S. imposing an additional 25% duty on imports worth $34 billion from China, certain Indian products may become more competitive. India can focus on several goods for expanding its exports to the U.S. and China after the increase in duties by both countries on imports from each other.
• An analysis by the industry chamber revealed that India should focus on the U.S. market for items in the categories of machinery, electrical equipment, vehicles and transport parts, chemicals, plastics and rubber products.
• Top exports from India to the U.S. which are covered in the list of items for which the tariffs have been raised include pumps, parts of military aircraft, parts for electro-diagnostic apparatus, passenger vehicles of 1500-3000 cc, valve bodies and parts of taps.
• It was noted by the Confederation of Indian Industries that countries such as Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia have increased their exports of these products to the U.S. in recent years and that India could also increase the exports with concerted efforts.

Way forward:

• The US has raised tariffs for 818 product lines for imports from China. Considering this and India’s current exports, the products such as intermediate parts for the defence and aerospace sector, vehicles, and auto parts and engineering goods have a higher export potential.
• Sectors like apparel and textiles, footwear, toys and games and cell phone manufacturing are becoming competitive industries in India and need to be encouraged.
• Trade talks with the U.S. needs to be strategised taking into account India’s competitive advantage in these products.
• Foreign Direct Investments from the US should be encouraged by boosting confidence of US firms in India’s business climate which might necessitate addressing their concerns regarding non-tariff barriers in India for better long term outcomes.
• In the domestic industry, it is important for India to enhance productivity while adding technology to its domestic production in the identified products.

2) Solar duty may do more harm than good

Theme: Safeguard Duty

In news:

• The government has accepted the Directorate General of Trade Remedies’ (DGTR) recommendation of imposing 25% duty on solar cells imported from China and Malaysia for the period between July 30, 2018 and July 29, 2019.

What is Safe Guard duty:

Safeguard duty is tariff barrier imposed by government to ensure that imports in excessive quantities do not harm the domestic industry. It is temporay.

Why was the safeguard duty introduced?

• The import duty prima facie has been placed in order to encourage local solar panel manufacturers in the country in a push to the ‘Make in India’ effort.
• The government implemented a 25% safeguard duty on solar cell imports from China and Malaysia for the period between July 30, 2018 and July 29, 2019. Thereafter, the duty is to decrease to 20% for the six months following that period, and further to 15% in the subsequent six months.

Issue:

• Safeguard duty on solar panels from China, Malaysia offers little to domestic makers
• More than 10,000 MW capacity of solar panels are imported annually from China and Malaysia, the safeguard duty would also hurt existing projects that have already factored in the cheaper imports into their pricing, according to industry players and analysts.
• The increased tariffs will be ultimately passed on to the customers, hampering the adoption of clean energy.
• It would increase cost of solar power, making it less attractive to buying utilities, and thus jeopardising the pace of growth of development of solar power.
• Further the duty does not provide any relief to developers in SEZs. Thereby defeating the very purpose of a safeguard duty, which is to protect and promote domestic industry.
• The imposition of safeguard duty for a short period of two years is unlikely to lead to any significant increase in the domestic solar module/cell manufacturing capacity in the near term.

Way forward:

• The government could procure solar power generated from units only using domestically manufactured panels at competitive rates.
• It is logical to exempt SEZs from such safeguard duties, considering that it is being implemented to protect the domestic industries from cheap imports.
• For projects already bid out, the amendment to bidding norms approved in April 2018 allowing
pass-through of changes in taxation, duties and cess would allow the developers to pass through the tariff increase to off-takers.

- The move could create doubt in the mind of developers, dampen investors interests, and question the viability of ongoing projects. The government must provide clarity on the pass through of such additional duties to keep the general sentiment optimistic.

3) The problem at the WTO

Theme: WTO Crisis

WTO and it’s evolution:

- World Trade Organization, as an institution was established in 1995.
- It replaced General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) which was in place since 1946.
- In pursuance of World War II, western countries came out with their version of development, which is moored in promotion of free trade and homogenization of world economy on western lines.
- This version claims that development will take place only if there is seamless trade among all the countries and there are minimal tariff and non-tariff barriers.
- That time along with two Bretton wood institutions – IMF and World Bank, an International Trade Organization (ITO) was conceived.
- ITO was successfully negotiated and agreed upon by almost all countries. It was supposed to work as a specialized arm of United Nation, towards promotion of free trade. However, United States along with many other major countries failed to get this treaty ratified in their respective legislatures and hence it became a dead letter.
- Consequently, GATT became de-facto platform for issues related to international trade. It has to its credit some major successes in reduction of tariffs (custom duty) among the member countries. Measures against dumping of goods like imposition of Anti-Dumping Duty in victim countries, had also been agreed upon. It was signed in Geneva by only 23 countries and by 1986, when Uruguay round started (which was concluded in 1995 and led to creation of WTO in Marrakesh, Morocco), 123 countries were already its member.
- The WTO officially commenced on 1 January 1995 under the Marrakesh Agreement, signed by 124 nations on 15 April 1994, replacing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which commenced in 1948. It is the largest international economic organization in the world.
- India has been member of GATT since 1948; hence it was party to Uruguay Round and a founding member of WTO. China joined WTO only in 2001 and Russia had to wait till 2012.

Principles of the Trading system:

1. Non-Discrimination:

   - Most Favoured Nation: Treating other nations equally- Under the WTO agreements, countries cannot normally discriminate between their trading partners. If they grant some country a special favor (such as a lower customs duty rate for one of their products), then they’ll have to do the same for all other WTO members.

Some exceptions are allowed. For example:

- Countries can set up a free trade agreement that applies only to goods traded within the group —
discriminating against goods from outside.

- Or they can give developing countries special access to their markets.
- Or a country can raise barriers against products that are considered to be traded unfairly from specific countries. And in services, countries are allowed, in limited circumstances, to discriminate.

- **National Treatment**: Treating foreigners and locals equally.

This principle of “national treatment” (giving others the same treatment as one’s own nationals) is also found in all the three main WTO agreements (Article 3 of GATT, Article 17 of GATS and Article 3 of TRIPS).

National treatment only applies once a product, service or item of intellectual property has entered the market. Therefore, charging customs duty on an import is not a violation of national treatment even if locally-produced products are not charged an equivalent tax.

2. **Free Trade**: Lowering trade barriers is one of the most obvious means of encouraging trade. The barriers concerned include customs duties (or tariffs) and measures such as import bans or quotas that restrict quantities selectively. From time to time other issues such as red tape and exchange rate policies have also been discussed.

3. **Predictability**: Through binding and Transparency. With stability and predictability, investment is encouraged, jobs are created and consumers can fully enjoy the benefits of competition — choice and lower prices. The multilateral trading system is an attempt by governments to make the business environment stable and predictable.

4. **Promoting Fair Competition**
5. **Encouraging development and economic reforms**

**Major agreements of WTO:**

1. **Agreement on Agriculture**: WTO’s agreement on agriculture was concluded in 1994, and was aimed to remove trade barriers and to promote transparent market access and integration of global markets. Agreement is highly complicated and controversial; it is often criticized as a tool in hands of developed countries to exploit weak countries. Negotiations are still going on for some of its aspects.

   Agreement on agriculture stands on 3 pillars viz. Domestic Support, Market Access, and Export Subsidies.

   - **Domestic Support**: It refers to subsidies such guaranteed Minimum Price or Input subsidies which are direct and product specific. Under this, Subsidies are categorized into 3 boxes:
     
     **I. Green Box**: Subsidies which are no or least market distorting includes measures decoupled from output such as income-support payments (decoupled income support), safety – net programs, payments under environmental programs, and agricultural research and-development subsidies.
     
     **II. Blue Box**: Only ‘Production limiting Subsidies’ under this are allowed. They cover payments based on acreage, yield, or number of livestock in a base year. ‘Targets price’ are allowed to be fixed by government and if ‘market prices’ are lower, then farmer will be compensated with difference between target prices and market prices in cash. This cash shall not be invested by farmer in expansion of production.
III. Amber Box: Those subsidies which are trade distorting and need to be curbed.

The Amber Box contains category of domestic support that is scheduled for reduction based on a formula called the “Aggregate Measure of Support” (AMS).

The AMS is the amount of money spent by governments on agricultural production, except for those contained in the Blue Box, Green Box and ‘de minimis’.

It required member countries to report their total AMS for the period between 1986 and 1988, bind it, and reduce it according to an agreed upon schedule. Developed countries agreed to reduce these figures by 20% over six years starting in 1995. Developing countries agreed to make 13% cuts over 10 years. Least – developed countries do not need to make any cuts.

As we can note that Subsidies were bind to levels of 1986-1988, there was inequality at very beginning of the agreement. At that time subsidies which latter came under ‘Amber Box’ were historically high in western countries. In developing countries, including India these subsidies were very limited. It is only now under pressure of Inflation in prices of agricultural Inputs, and wide differences between market prices and Minimum support Price, subsidies have grown to this level. In effect developed countries are allowed to maintain substantially higher amount of trade distorting subsidies.

De-Minimis provision:

- Under this provision developed countries are allowed to maintain trade distorting subsidies or ‘Amber box’ subsidies to level of 5% of total value of agricultural output. For developing countries this figure was 10%.
- So far India’s subsidies are below this limit, but it is growing consistently. This is because MSP are always revised upward whereas Market Prices have fluctuating trends. In recent times when crash in international market prices of many crops is seen, government doesn’t have much option to reduce MSP drastically. By this analogy India’s amber box subsidies are likely to cross 10% level allowed by de Minimis provision.

- **Market Access:** The market access requires that tariffs fixed (like custom duties) by individual countries be cut progressively to allow free trade. It also required countries to remove nontariff barriers and convert them to Tariff duties.
- **Export Subsidies:** These can be in form of subsidy on imgs of agriculture, making export cheaper or can be other incentives for exports such as import duty remission etc. These can result in dumping of highly subsidized (and cheap) products in other country. This can damage domestic agriculture sector of other country.

These subsidies are also aligned to 1986-1990 levels, when export subsidies by developed countries was substantially higher and Developing countries almost had no export subsidies that time.

- But USA is dodging this provision by its Export credit guarantee program. In this, USA gov. gives subsidized credit to purchaser of US agricultural products, which are to be paid back in long periods. This is generally done for Food Aid programs, such as (Public Law-480) under which food aid is send massively to under developed countries. India also received this Aid in 1960’s. But this is only at concessional rates and credit options. But this results in perpetual dependence on foreign grain in recipient countries and destroys their domestic agriculture. So this is equally trade distorting subsidy, which is not currently under ambit of WTO’s AOA.
There is little doubt that subsidies and support to agriculture should be controlled and better targeted. WTO negotiations also claim to work towards this direction, but inherent conflicting and vested interest of few countries are too influential in WTO. Every country has different requirements and different product mix, so enough flexibility is must in any agreement. Further, right to food is a global movement and is guaranteed by numerous UN conventions. So, ensuring food security is a domestic concern of a nation, international community can just advice but can’t coerce other sovereign country. Thus, India has to made its expenditure much more effective, with dynamic policy and resist any outside pressure which is misdirected towards negative results for Indian people.

Special safeguard mechanism:

- A Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM) would allow developing countries to impose additional (temporary) safeguard duties in the event of an abnormal surge in imports or the entry of unusually cheap imports.
- Debates have arisen around this question, some negotiating parties claiming that SSM could be repeatedly and excessively invoked, distorting trade. In turn, the G33 bloc of developing countries, a major SSM proponent, has argued that breaches of bound tariffs should not be ruled out if the SSM is to be an effective remedy. SSM is quite important in a scenario in which west has significant powers to subsidize their production and in turn, exports.

TRIPS (Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights):

- The Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) is an international agreement administered by the World Trade Organization (WTO) that sets down minimum standards for many forms of intellectual property (IP) regulation as applied to nationals of other WTO Members. It was negotiated at the end of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1994.
- It remains an issue between Developed and developing countries. TRIPS was fine tuned in favor of developing countries in 2003, as part of Doha development agenda, when all members agreed to compulsory licensing in certain cases. However, now U.S. and Europe remain unhappy about current strict terms of patent allowed by TRIPS.

3. TRIMS (Trade Related Investment Measures):

- The Agreement on Trade-Related Investment Measures (TRIMS) recognizes that certain investment measures can restrict and distort trade. It states that WTO members may not apply any measure that discriminates against foreign products or that leads to quantitative restrictions, both of which violate basic WTO principles.
- A list of prohibited TRIMS, such as local content requirements, is part of the Agreement.
- Recently India was dragged to WTO by U.S. over former’s specification of Domestic Content Requirement in relation to procurement of Solar Energy cells and equipments.

4. General Agreement on Trade In Services:
The GATS was inspired by essentially the same objectives as its counterpart in merchandise trade, GATT: creating a credible and reliable system of international trade rules; ensuring fair and equitable treatment of all participants (principle of nondiscrimination); stimulating economic activity through guaranteed policy bindings; and promoting trade and development through progressive liberalization.

While services currently account for over 60 percent of global production and employment, they represent no more than 20 per cent of total trade (BOP basis). This — seemingly modest — share should not be underestimated, however. Many services, which have long been considered genuine domestic activities, have increasingly become internationally mobile. This trend is likely to continue, owing to the introduction of new transmission technologies (e.g. electronic banking, tele-health or tele-education services), the opening up in many countries of long-entrenched monopolies (e.g. voice telephony and postal services), and regulatory reforms in hitherto tightly regulated sectors such as transport. Combined with changing consumer preferences, such technical and regulatory innovations have enhanced the “tradability” of services and, thus, created a need for multilateral disciplines.

Services negotiations in the WTO follow the so-called positive list approach, whereby members’ schedules of specific commitments list all of the services sectors and subsectors where they undertake to bind the market opening and the granting of national treatment to foreign service suppliers, apart the listed barriers that remain. Sectors and sub-sectors not included in the schedule are exempt from any obligations as regards market access and national treatment.

West is pushing hard to move from positive list approach to negative list approach. In negative list approach, services where GATS is not applicable will have to be negotiated, agreed upon and specified. India is against this concept as it will throw open almost whole Indian services sector to western multinational giants.

Negotiations in services under GATS are classified in 4 modes, interests of different countries depend upon this classification:

I. **Mode 1** – It includes cross border supply of services without movement of natural persons. For eg. Business Process Outsourcing, KPO or LPO services. Here, it’s in India’s interest to push for liberalization given its large human resource pool and competitive IT industry.

II. **Mode 2** – This mode covers supply of a service of one country to the service consumer of any other country. E.g. telecommunication.

III. **Mode 3** – Commercial presence – which covers services provided by a service supplier of one country in the territory of any other country. This opens door of relevant sector in one country to investments from another country. Accordingly, it is in west’s interest to push for liberalization here. There has been sustained pressure to open up higher education sector, insurance sector, Medical sector etc through this mode.

IV. **Mode 4** – Presence of natural persons – which covers services provided by a service supplier of one country through the presence of natural persons in the territory of any other country. E.g. Infosys or TCS sending its engineers for onsite work in US/Europe or Australia. Here again it’s in India’s interest to push for liberalization. In 2012, India dragged the US to the World Trade Organization’s (WTO’s) dispute settlement body (DSB) over an increase in the professional visa fee (H1B/L1).

**Present Issue:**

- WTO is facing existential crisis during a time when developed economies have adopted
protectionist attitude.

- The U.S. has systematically blocked the appointment of new Appellate Body members (“judges”) and de facto impeded the work of the WTO appeal mechanism.

- With only four working members out of seven normally serving office in July 2018, the institution is under great stress

- If no appointment is made, it will simply be destroyed by December 2019, with only one remaining member to tackle a massive number of disputes that are also increasingly hyper technical.

U.S.’s ire:

- U.S. rejected the idea of ITO, and four decades later herself drove the agenda to establish World Trade Organisation (WTO).

- U.S. has been proven isolationist and protectionist. It doesn’t embrace those ideas which challenge her leadership.

- At the Doha round of trade negotiations the U.S. destroyed the negotiation process in formulating excessive demands that no country was prepared to meet.

- Most recent examples of U.S. ire against its very creations NAFTA and TPP, also against NATO and UNESCO are proof of her hard-headed wish for uncontested leadership against multilateralism.

Dispute Settlement Crisis at WTO:

- The U.S. has systematically blocked the appointment of new Appellate Body members (“judges”) and de facto impeded the work of the WTO appeal mechanism.

- With only four working members out of seven normally serving office in July 2018, the institution is under great stress.

- If no appointment is made, it will simply be destroyed by December 2019, since the Appellate Body requires a core of three members to decide a dispute.

- The U.S. is not willing to be judged by an independent multilateral quasi-judicial institution.

Other Concerns Related to Dispute Settlement at WTO:

- Over the politicisation of the Appellate Body appointment and reappointment process.

- The quasi-attribution of permanent Appellate Body seats to the U.S. and the European Union (EU).

- There is concern that China may be on its way to having a permanent seat.

- The “Overreaching” or judicial activism of United States.

- The WTO dispute settlement mechanism is not a world trade court. The process remains political and diplomatic. In trade wars, the objective is not to settle a dispute; it is to win the battle.

- The very existence of an appeal mechanism is now paradoxically questioned at a time the global community criticises the absence of the same mechanism in Investor-State Dispute Settlement.

Who could be WTO’s saviour?

- China is trying to establish herself by its assertiveness in rule based WTO system.

- China, EU, and to some extent India, and a few others, is now the main supporter of multilateralism.

- The recent EU-China proposal to promote the reform of the WTO is said to combat “unilateralism and protectionism” but might well fail to address unfair trade issues raised against China itself.
Conclusion:

- The world has changed and multilateral institutions now have to embed these changes. This WTO crisis might well be the final battle to retain control over a Western-centric organisation.
- The time has come for the emerging economies and the developing world to have a greater say in how to shape multilateralism and its institutions.

Way Ahead:

- WTO needs to strengthen the dispute settlement mechanism as there are issues in appointment of judges in new appellate body.
- WTO needs to enhance discussion mechanism by introducing wider consultations. It has been a long-standing complaint by the smaller participants that the consultations or decision making is limited to the green room of DG of WTO.
- There is a need of free trade is required more by developing countries like India than developed countries.

Source: TH

J&K tense ahead of SC hearing on Article 35A

1. J&K tense ahead of SC hearing on Article 35A

Theme: Article 35A

In news: Last week, the State government, currently under Governor’s Rule, moved a plea in the Supreme Court to defer the hearing on a clutch of petitions challenging the validity of Article 35A of the Constitution, citing the upcoming panchayat and urban local body elections.

Article 35A:

- Article 35A lets the J&K Legislature decide the “permanent residents” of the State, prohibits a non-J&K resident from buying property in the State and ensures job reservation for its residents.
- Legislature a carte blanche to decide who all are ‘permanent residents’ of the State and confer on them special rights and privileges in public sector jobs, acquisition of property in the State, scholarships and other public aid and welfare. The provision mandates that no act of the legislature coming under it can be challenged for violating the Constitution or any other law of the land.

How did it come about?
Article 35A was incorporated into the Constitution in 1954 by the order of the then President Rajendra Prasad on the advice of the Jawaharlal Nehru Cabinet.


The Presidential Order was issued under Article 370 (1) (d) of the Constitution. This provision allows the President to make certain “exceptions and modifications” to the Constitution for the benefit of ‘State subjects’ of Jammu and Kashmir. Therefore, Article 35A was added to the Constitution as a testimony of the special consideration the Indian government accorded to the ‘permanent residents’ of Jammu and Kashmir.

The parliamentary route of law making was bypassed when the President incorporated Article 35A into the Constitution.

Article 368 (i) of the Constitution empowers only the Parliament to amend the Constitution.

A five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in its March 1961 judgment in Puranlal Lakhanpal vs. The President of India discusses the President’s powers under Article 370 to ‘modify’ the Constitution. Though the court observes that the President may modify an existing provision in the Constitution under Article 370, the judgment is silent as to whether the President can, without the Parliament’s knowledge, introduce a new Article. This question remains open.

ISSUE:

• A writ petition filed challenges the validity of both Article 35A and Article 370. It argues that four representatives from Kashmir were part of the Constituent Assembly involved in the drafting of the Constitution and the State of Jammu and Kashmir was never accorded any special status in the Constitution.
• Article 370 was only a ‘temporary provision’ to help bring normality in Jammu and Kashmir and strengthen democracy in that State, it contends. The Constitution-makers did not intend Article 370 to be a tool to bring permanent amendments, like Article 35A, in the Constitution.
• The petition said Article 35 A is against the “very spirit of oneness of India” as it creates a “class within a class of Indian citizens”. Restricting citizens from other States from getting employment or buying property within Jammu and Kashmir is a violation of fundamental rights under Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution.
• Another petition has challenged Article 35A for protecting certain provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution, which restrict the basic right to property if a native woman marries a man not holding a permanent resident certificate. “Her children are denied a permanent resident certificate, thereby considering them illegitimate,” the petition said.
• The National Conference argues that if the law goes, with it all other presidential orders passed since the 1950s will also become redundant and reopen the debate around the issue of accession.

2. Amendments will dilute RTI

Theme: Right to Information Act

RTI:

• Right to Information is an act of the Parliament of India to provide for setting out the practical regime of the right to information for citizens and replaces the...
erstwhile Freedom of information Act, 2002. Under the provisions of the Act, any citizen of India may request information from a “Public authority” (a body of Government or “instrumentality of state”) which is required to reply expeditiously or within thirty days.

- The Act also requires every public authority to computerize their records for wide dissemination and to proactively certain categories of information so that the citizens need minimum recourse to request for information formally.
- RTI was passed by parliament on 15 June 2005 and came fully into force on 12 October 2005.

Objective of the Right to Information Act:

- To empower the citizens, Promote transparency and accountability in the working of the Government, contain corruption, and make our democracy work for the people in real sense.
- It goes without saying that an informed citizen is better equipped to keep necessary vigil on the instruments of governance and make the government more accountable to the governed.
- The Act is a big step towards making the citizens informed about the activities of the Government.

In news:

- A Committee headed by retired Supreme court Judge Justice BN SriKrishna submitted its report on “Data Protection Frame work” to Union Minister of Electronics and Information Technology. The committee was constituted by the union government in July last year to deliberate in July Last year to deliberate on a data protection framework.

Issue:

- The Chief Information Commissioner is warned by the Central Information Commissioner, that “The Right to Information Act will be rendered absolutely useless in securing access to public
records pertaining to public servants.

- Terming the amendments as unconstitutional, he noted that the Justice Srikrishna panel had not consulted the Central Information Commission before making its recommendations.
- The Justice Srikrishna panel’s draft Personal Data Protection Bill, 2018 proposes to amend section 8 of the RTI Act, which allows certain types of information to be exempted from disclosure. This allows certain types of information to be exempted from disclosure. This includes “information which relates to personal information the disclosure of which has no relationship to any public activity or interest, which would cause unwarranted invasion of the privacy of the individual unless the central public information Officer or the state Public Information Officer or the appellate authority, as the case may be, is satisfied that the larger public interest justifies the disclosure of such information”.
- The proposed amendment would instead exempt “information which relates to personal data which is likely to cause harm to a data principal, where such harm outweighs the public interest in accessing such information having due regard to the common good of promoting transparency and accountability in the functioning of the public authority.
- If amended, the section would “expand scope of denial of information with several ambiguous and very wide expressions”, as the Bill contains no definitions for “common good”, “Promotion”, “transparency”, “harm” or even “Privacy”.
- Since there is ambiguity with respect to the definitions, “harm” could be interpreted as “mental injury”, “loss of reputation, or humiliation” and “any subjection to blackmail or extortion”. Any of these could be used to reject information, as even embarrassment could be considered as “mental injury”, thereby diluting the very objective of the Act.

Source: TH

World Bank has launched the world’s first public bond created and managed using only blockchain

GS-III | 02 July, 2019

World Bank has launched the world’s first public bond created and managed using only blockchain

Theme: Blockchain Bonds

Block Chain Technology:

The blockchain is an incorruptible digital ledger of economic transactions that can be programmed to record not just financial transactions but virtually everything of value.”

For more understanding:
Microsoft Excel Sheet file in your computer or laptop with the details of some of your transactions is known as a ledger. If your Excel file is copied to hundreds of your friend's computers and connected to each other forming a network is known as distributed ledger. And if there will be a technology to update this Excel sheet whenever you or your friends update a ledger. Therefore, blockchain is nothing but a digital ledger. That is a book containing accounts to which debits and credits are posted from books of original entry. A blockchain is an anonymous online ledger that uses a data structure to simplify the way we transact. Without the help of third party blockchain allows users to manipulate the ledger in a secure way. It protects the identities of the users. This way blockchain is a more secure way to carry out transactions. Each list of records in a blockchain is called a block. That is why it is known as blockchain because the various growing list of records i.e. blocks are linked and secured.

Advantages of Blockchain technology:

- The data that are entered in blockchain based systems are immutable which prevent against fraud through manipulating transactions and the history of data. Therefore, all the transactions can be investigated and audited easily.
- Blockchain mechanism brings everyone to the highest degree of accountability. Therefore, solves the problem of manipulation.
- The data that belongs to us we can own it that is online identity and reputation will be decentralized.
- Cryptocurrencies will take the power from the government to control the value of
currencies and hand it to people.
- It will allow middleman-free way to exchange asset.
- It provides durability, reliability, and longevity with decentralised network.

Challenges of Blockchain technology:

- To verify all the transactions huge power i.e. electricity is required.
- There should be security about the private key. Every time private key must remain secret because revealing it to third parties is equivalent to giving them control over the bitcoins secured by that key. Also, it is necessary to have a back up of the private key so that it can be protected from accidental loss. We know that if it is lost ones cannot be recovered and the funds secured by it are lost forever.
- We know blocks in a chain must be verified by the distributed network and it can take time. So, transaction speed can be an issue.

Is Blockchain technology safe to use:

- It is clear that no doubt blockchain architecture can significantly bring down the costs and reduce inefficiencies in the financial sector. As, it allows two parties to execute a transaction without any intermediary. Without any human intervention blockchain allows financial institutions to execute and verify transactions discretely. And transactions are continuously maintained and verified in ‘blocks’ of records.
- With the advancement of technology and the development of society the main goal of the government is to provide a method for a secure way of transactions. Whether methods are advanced or new technologies are emerging but the goal is same. As, blockchain allows consumers and suppliers to connect directly, removing the need for a third party.

In news:

- The World Bank has launched the world’s first public bond created and managed using only blockchain in order to test how the technology might improve current bond sales practices.
- BONDI: The project is called ‘BONDI’ (Blockchain Operated New Debt Instrument), which is also reference to the Bondi Beach in Sydney.
- Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA) has been mandated by the World Bank to be the sole arranger of the bond.
- It is a Kangaroo bond (foreign bonds issued in Australia in local currency).

Benefits of Blockchain Bonds:

- The launch of the blockchain bond is an initial step in moving bond sales away from manual processes towards automation.
- Blockchain technology could help in cutting down bond settlement time “from T+2 days currently to T+2 minutes”.
- The technology has potential to deliver substantial cost savings as intermediary activities can be eventually reduced or removed.
- It also improves the reputation of crypto-technologies which are currently viewed suspiciously.
Rebooting the system for a skills upgrade

GS-III | 02 July, 2019

Theme: The Report of the standing Committee on Labour

Introduction:

- The Report of the standing committee on Labour (2017-18) headed by Kirti Somaiya, on the “Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and Skill Development Scheme” of the Ministry of skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). It was submitted to parliament few months ago.
- The Report presents the weak condition of Vocational education system in India.
- Small shops, basements, tin sheds and godowns. These are not random work places but places where private Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) are running in the country.

Explaining the Scale up:

- The ITIs were initiated in the 1950s. In a span of 60 years, until 2007, around 1,896 public and 2,000 private ITIs were set up.
- In a 10 year period from 2007, more than 9,000 additional private ITIs were accredited.
- The National skill development corporation today has more than 6,000 private training centres.
- Private training partners have mushroomed at the rate of five a day and it is clear that the government has been unable to regulate private institutions for quality.
- Private sector engagement in skill development has been taken up a stand alone private training partners and not employees. The later could have made the system demand-driven. Meanwhile, the lack of a regulator for skill development, with teeth, has led to poor quality affiliation,
What are the concerns and findings of the Somiya committee report:

The somiya committee report is scathing in its tone and specific in details. It outlines instances of responsibility outsourcing, no oversight, connivance and ownership tussle between central and state governments.

- There is number of ITIs increasing rapidly about they disregard norms and standards.
- Due to short term courses, vocational training centres open and close frequently they are more prone to a dilution of standards.
- With the increase in number of institutes, government has been unabale to regulate private institutions for quality.
- Placement in NSDC training has been less than 15%.
- Private sector engagement in skill development has been taken up by private training partners and not employers. The employers could have made the system demand-driven.
- The lack of a regulator for skill development has led to poor quality affiliation, assessment and certification.
- There are instances of responsibility outsourcing, no supervision, illegal activities and an ownership tussle between the central and state governments.
- The QCI did not follow accreditation norms created by the National Council for vocational training (NCVT). The NCVT is just a stump with no role in actually assessing quality.
- The future of 13.8 lakh students in these substandard ITIs is at risk. If the same exercise were extended to other skill development schemes, the picture would be grimmer.
- The report also reinforces disturbing findings of a national survey by the research institute (NILERD) of the Planning Commission in 2011 about private ITIs: had fewer classrooms and workshops for practice; and their teachers were very poorly paid.

Way Forward:

- There has been a tremendous push by the government for private sector talent in government; perhaps it is worth considering talent from the open market to fill up higher posts in skill development.
- Institutional reforms such as moving the office of the Directorate general of employment from the Ministry of Labour to the MSDE would help. It would also complement the Directorate General of Training already under MSDE.
- There should also have mandatory rating system for the ITIs, published periodically.
- A ranking of the ITIs on several parameters such as the one done by the National Assessment and accreditation council in tertiary education.
- The ITIs have internal issues such as the World Bank and the government can meet the financial needs for skill development.
- As recommended by 12th plan reimbursable industry corridor (RIC)- a 1-2% pay roll tax that will be reimbursed when employers train using public/private infrastructure and provide data.

Source: TH
Need for digitizing land records in India

Theme: Digitisation of Land records

Introduction:

- The Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto has often pointed out that a modern market economy requires a strong system of property rights. India is a mess on this front. Land titles are presumptive rather than conclusive.

Details:

- That is one reason why some have estimated that nearly two-thirds of all pending cases in Indian courts are related to property disputes. NITI Aayog has said that such property cases take an average of 20 years to settle.
- The result is that millions of Indians cannot use their principal asset as collateral to borrow from the formal financial system. The poor suffer the most.

Government steps to digitise Land records:

- The Union government has been busy trying to address this problem for almost a decade.
- The United Progressive Alliance government led by Manmohan Singh kicked off the National Land Records Modernization Programme in August 2008 aimed to modernize management of land records, minimize scope of land/property disputes, enhance transparency in the land records maintenance system, and facilitate moving eventually towards guaranteed conclusive titles to immovable properties in the country.
- It is now part of the Narendra Modi regime’s flagship Digital India initiative. The broad aim:

  - To modernize land records management,
  - Reduce the scope for property disputes,
  - Make land records more transparent and
  - Move towards conclusive property title

The progress over the past decade has been uneven, with some states, such as Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, doing better than the others. Recent study of 100 land parcels in five villages spread across two tehsils showed that the new digitized land records do a good job in reflecting ownership of land, but less so when it comes to recording encumbrances and area of land parcels.

State Government Initiatives:

Some of the most interesting work of sorting out the land titling mess has been done by state governments, as has been the case with labour law reforms as well. Three are worth mentioning here.
First, the Bhoomi Project in Karnataka led the way even before the Union government got into the act.

The state government began to digitize land records at the turn of the century.
The relevant document—the record of rights, tenancy and crops—has been made available through kiosks. The need to pay bribes to get access to this basic information in government offices has been done away with.

Second, the Rajasthan legislature passed the Rajasthan Urban Land (Certification of Titles) Act in April 2016.

This law ensures that the state government is a guarantor for land titles in Rajasthan, and will provide compensation in case of issues of defective title. The guarantee is based on certification provided by the Urban Land Title Certification Authority, which will verify ownership of any property for a fee.

Third, Andhra Pradesh has taken a leap into the future. Its state government has tied up with a Swedish firm to use new blockchain technology to prevent property fraud. As in all other trades, blockchain will allow participants in a distributed ledger to check the ownership of a land parcel.

Almost 66% court cases in the country are related to land disputes costing a whopping Rs.58000 crore in litigation, both civil and criminal. Land Records digitization can help accelerate India’s GDP by as much as 1.3%. Latest news is coming from Kerala, which is on verge of completion of land records digitization.

Conclusion:

The Indian push to digitize land records and establish conclusive rather than presumptive titles should have been completed by now. The government has now pushed the year of completion to 2021. The delay may have been avoidable, but is understandable. Clear land titles will ease a lot of constraints from making it easier for the poor to borrow from the formal financial sector to easing commercial land acquisition for infrastructure projects instead of the misuse of eminent domain. And, even as computerization continues, some more attention should be paid to the possibilities offered by new technologies such as blockchain.

Source:

The Andhra Pradesh government has announced Mukhya Mantri Yuva Nestam scheme to provide unemployment allowance
| 02 July,2019

The Andhra Pradesh government has announced Mukhya Mantri Yuva

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Nestam scheme to provide unemployment allowance

Theme: Unemployment Allowance

The Andhra Pradesh government has announced Mukhya Mantri Yuva Nestam scheme to provide unemployment allowance of Rs 1000 per month to the unemployed youth (between 22-35 years of age) through DBT using Aadhar.

Unemployment in India:

- **ILO report "World Employment and Social Outlook Trends - 2018"**: The number of unemployed persons in India is expected to rise from 18.3 million in 2017 to 18.6 million in 2018 and 18.9 million by 2019. At the same time, unemployment rate is expected to remain static at 3.5%
- World Bank in its comprehensive report on India’s economy opines that India needs to create a lot of salaried jobs (formal jobs) to meet the working population demands and step up its growth to a middle-income country.
- About 65 percent of the population in the country has an average age of less than 35 years. A large section of unemployed within this can become a demographic burden for India.

The case of Unemployment allowance in India:

- Social security, social insurance, employment and unemployment comes within concurrent list. Therefore, both Centre and States can make laws over it.
- MGNREGA is the only law in India that guarantees 100 days of employment to all in rural areas.
- However, several states like Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Puducherry, etc. have started to provide unemployment allowances to their youths based on degrees possessed by them.
- Universal Basic income irrespective of employment status has also been proposed as an idea.

Justification for Unemployment allowance:

- A safety net will be available to youth during times of unemployment and they can hold on to get better jobs.
- According to Keynesian concepts, when the economy falls into recession it needs increased consumer spending, which is provided by a surge in benefits to the unemployed. This government spending creates a large multiplier effect on the economy as it boosts aggregate demand.
- It will give purchasing power to the people who are likely to spend it locally, helping local business which will further help in creation of jobs and more taxable income.

Criticism against Unemployment allowance:

- It adds to the fiscal deficit of the government.
- It penalizes workers/employed people.
- The Unemployment allowance raises the cost of hiring.
- A large amount of public money is also wasted because of bureaucratic costs involved in
devolution and administration of such allowances. Higher taxes eventually leads to tax evasion and other frauds.

- Jobless insurance is a subsidy and an incentive to stay unemployed. Various economists have argued that generous or lengthy jobless benefits artificially inflate the unemployment rate.

Way Forward:

- There are three demographic groups in urgent need of jobs i.e. a growing number of better educated youth; uneducated agricultural workers who wish to leave agricultural distress behind; and young women who are better educated than before.

Following steps can be taken to create job for them:

- A better industrial and trade policy is required. Steep fall in tariffs after 1990s and inverted duty structures (higher duty on intermediate goods compared to finished products) have damaged MSMEs which have huge potential of job creation.
- Special packages should be provided to labour-intensive industries such as food processing, leather and footwear, wood manufacturers and furniture, textiles and apparel and garments to create jobs.
- Urban development can be aligned with manufacturing clusters to create jobs. Infrastructure investment (like AMRUT) by the government always creates many jobs.

Source:

Reforming the Civil Services

| 02 July, 2019

Reforming the Civil Services

Theme: Lateral Entry Scheme

Introduction:

- A recent move by the Centre seeking applications from ‘outstanding individuals’ to fill in 10 posts of Joint Secretary, has caused anxiety amongst bureaucrats.
- A retired bureaucrat has filed a writ petition in the supreme court against the decision.

Some apprehensions:

- Many serving IAS officers think this move may cause threat to their primacy.
- This move may end a “neutral and impartial” civil service with the likely induction of loyalists and politically indoctrinated persons into the system.
- This may mark the “privatisation of the IAS”. Private business houses may “plant” their people in
order to influence government policies.
• The political leadership, by creating a ‘divide and rule’ mechanism, would further demoralise the ‘steel frame of governance’.

How the Secretariat functions?

• The key officials in the secretariat decides on, how an abstract idea is to be given a concrete, implementable shape.
• Higher bureaucracy in the secretariat often has to examine proposals received from specialised departments/corporations.
• With the consultation of other ministries/departments they prepare a cohesive note to facilitate the Minister concerned or the Cabinet to take a final decision.
• The detailed procedures have been formulated for proper functioning which requires both expertise and experience.
• Though the original proposal is often prepared by technical experts, after the file moves through this long internal and hierarchical process, the final decision rests with the higher bureaucracy and finally the Minister/Cabinet.

Generalist v. specialist:

Generalist View:

• The best leadership is provided by generalists who have a breadth of understanding and experience.
• Specialists, no matter how competent, tend to have a narrow vision and are not equipped to take a broader view.
• The domain knowledge has to feed into policy-making, but that can be accomplished by domain experts advising the generalist leader in decision-making.
• In this view, a good IAS officer can head the Department of Agriculture as competently as she would the Department of Shipping.

Specialist view:

• Specialists like engineers, doctors, agricultural scientists, etc. have always had a substantial say not only in the decision-making process also in its implementation.
• Secretaries to the Departments of Atomic Energy, Science & Technology, Scientific and Industrial Research, Health Research, and Agricultural Research have always been scientists of eminence.
• Similarly, in departments like the Railways, Posts, etc., all senior positions are manned by Indian Railway or Postal Service officers.
• Generalised bureaucracy is not equipped to comprehend complex economic and technical issues in order to properly aid and advise the Minister. For increasingly complex matrix of decision-making is, specialists are more efficient than generalists.

How issues can be solved?

• The government must ensure that only candidates, the likes of whom are not available in the existing system, are appointed.
If they turn out to be truly outstanding, there should be provisions to induct them permanently in the government, with approval of the UPSC, and consider them for higher postings.

Ideas have also been advanced for IAS and other officers to gain work experience, for a limited period, in the private sector.

These fears can be reduced by letting the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) handle the recruitment process, after defining the job requirements more explicitly.

Conclusion:

- The apprehensions on lateral entry are based on perceptions, a reality check is necessary. Also this is a bold decision that should be given a fair trial.
- The lateral entry scheme, if implemented properly, may foster more competitive spirit, break the complacency of the higher civil servants and eventually prove to be a pioneering initiative in public interest.

Source:

Decoding the DNA Bill

Theme: DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2018

Introduction:

- The DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2018 has been introduced in India’s Parliament, with a view to creating a national DNA database for use by the police in solving crimes and identifying missing persons.
- Although DNA can be an important tool here, in solving crimes, it is important that there are safeguards to protect human rights and prevent miscarriages of justice.
- Further, creating large databases is often not a cost-effective way to solve more crimes, and limited resources must be targeted effectively.
- Forensic DNA profiling is of proven value in solving cases involving offences that are categorized as affecting the human body (such as murder, rape, human trafficking, or grievous hurt), and those against property (including theft, burglary, and dacoity).
- The aggregate incidence of such crimes in the country, as per the statistics of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for 2016, is in excess of 3 lakhs per year.
- Of these, only a very small proportion is being subjected to DNA testing at present. It is expected that the expanded use of this technology in these categories of cases would result not only in speedier justice delivery but also in increased conviction rates, which at present is only around 30% (NCRB Statistics for 2016).
Key features:

• DNA regulation board:
  - The board will certify labs authorized to carry out DNA testing and lay down procedure and guidelines for collection, storage, sharing and deletion of DNA information.
  - The Secretary of the Department of Biotechnology has been made the ex-officio chairman of the proposed DNA Regulatory Board.

• National DNA Data Bank:
  - A National DNA Databank and certain regional DNA Databanks will store DNA profiles received from DNA labs in a specified format.

• Limited purpose of identification:
  - The Bill states that DNA data contained in any DNA labs and Databank “shall be used for the purpose of facilitating identification of the person and not for any other purpose”. It will only be made available to facilitate the identification of persons in criminal cases.

• Safeguard against misuse:
  - The Bill states that disclosure of DNA information to unauthorized persons, or for unauthorized purposes, shall lead to penalties up to three years in jail or up to Rs 1 lakh as fine. The proposed legislation will enable cross-matching of DNA of persons reported missing and unidentified dead bodies and also for establishing the identity of victims during mass disasters. It seeks to ensure that DNA test results are reliable and the data is protected from misuse or abuse in terms of people’s privacy rights.

Criticism on DNA Bill:

The Forensic Genetics Policy Initiative published its report, “Establishing Best Practice for Forensic DNA Databases”. A comparison with the DNA Bill reveals a number of important issues.

• Using DNA effectively during criminal investigations requires proper crime scene examination, trained and reliable policing, a trusted chain of custody of samples, reliable analysis, and proper use of expert evidence in court.
• Without these prerequisites, a DNA database will exacerbate rather than solve problems in the criminal justice system: for example, by leading to miscarriages of justice through (false matches or misinterpretation or planting of evidence, and diverting resources) from more important priorities.
• Because many errors occur before samples get to the laboratory, the requirement for laboratory accreditation in the Bill should include quality assurance for crime scene examination.
• Consideration should be given to an independent forensic science regulator to ensure oversight of both laboratory quality assurance and crime scene examination.
• There is also a need for elimination databases for police, crime scene examiners and laboratory workers, whose DNA may contaminate the evidence they touch.
• The Bill’s proposed DNA Regulatory Board is still too powerful and insufficiently transparent or
The Board’s responsibilities for privacy protections need an independent regulator: the easiest way to achieve this would be prior adoption of a privacy or data protection bill (which includes a role for a data protection officer).

Issues needed to be addressed:

- A number of other privacy protections are also missing from the Bill. These include the need to restrict DNA profiling so that it uses only non-coding DNA, a commonly used international standard for one, which prevents the use of parts of the DNA which code for personal characteristics, including medical conditions. Rightly, the Bill includes provisions for the destruction of DNA samples and removal of innocent people’s DNA profiles from the database. Any international sharing of DNA profiles should also be covered by a privacy or data protection law, and meet international human rights standards.
- Activists and lawyers criticized this bill on the following grounds:
  - Activists and lawyers have argued that India does not have a data protection law and that information like ancestry or susceptibility to a disease, or other genetic traits, is liable to be misused.
  - It has also been argued that DNA tests have not led to an improvement in conviction rates in countries where legislations is already being followed.

Way Forward:

- In countries like UK, DNA data of a recordable offence can be kept for only six year. This can also be adopted in India for better results.
- The Law Commissions report related to scientific collection of data need to be incorporated. Maintenance of strict confidentiality with regard to keeping of records of DNA profiles and their use as recommended by Malimath report can be followed.
- The important safeguards and a cost-benefit analysis are still lacking for this Bill. The Bill needs further improvement, and full parliamentary scrutiny should be utilised to achieve that end.
- An independent ethics board should be set up.

Source:

27 resorts in Nilgiris jumbo path to be shut

| 02 July, 2019 |
The Supreme Court has ordered the Tamil Nadu government to shut down illegal resorts operating in the elephant corridor in the Nilgris district to curb incidents of human-animal conflict and reduce animal fatalities.

The Bench gave the State government a 48-hour deadline to seal or close 27 commercial establishments after perusing a report submitted by the Nilgris District Collector on a total 39 resorts.

The Bench had earlier, while making it clear that the elephant corridor was off-limits for resorts or any construction activity, directed the Collector to file a report about the details of the existing resorts and how they came to be there.

The owners of some of these hotels and resorts have also filed appeals in the apex court against a Madras High Court order against them in this regard.

Nilgiris:

- The Nilgiri Mountains form part of the Western Ghats in western Tamil Nadu of Southern India.
- At least 24 of the Nilgiri Mountains’ peaks are above 2,000 metres (6,600 ft), the highest peak being Doddabetta, at 2,637 metres (8,652 ft).
- Kotas are an ethnic group who are indigenous to the Nilgiris mountain range in Tamil Nadu, India. They are one of the many tribal peoples indigenous to the region. Others are the Todas, Irulas and Kurumbas.
- The Nilgiri Hills are part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (itself part of the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves), and form a part of the protected bio reserves in India.

Source:

SC alters Lodha’s BCCI proposals

Theme: New constitution for BCCI

- The Supreme Court has finalised the new Constitution for the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), rejecting the ‘one State-one vote’ recommendation of the Justice R.M. Lodha Committee and altering the cooling-off period for cricket bosses.
New Constitution:

- Softening the rigour of the recommendations, a three-judge Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra, disagreed with Justice Lodha that cricket could prosper only if the BCCI was represented by every State and Union Territory.
- The former CJI had relegated cricket associations to the status of associate members.
- Instead, the court restored full BCCI memberships to three associations in Gujarat and Maharashtra each.
- They are the Maharashtra, Mumbai and Vidarbha cricket associations in Maharashtra and the Baroda and Saurashtra cricket associations in Gujarat.
- To utilise territoriality as a basis of exclusion is problematic because it ignores history and the contributions made by such associations to the development of cricket and its popularity.
- But the Bench agreed that the National Cricket Club and the Cricket Club of India did not deserve to be full members in BCCI.
- The court gave Services Sports Control Board, the Railways and the Association of Universities full membership in the BCCI.
- In case of varsities, the court described them as a nucleus for encouraging the game of cricket among players of the college-going generation.
- The Bench saw eye-to-eye with Justice Lodha’s conclusion that the game will be better off without cricketing oligopolies.
- To this end, the court supported the recommendation of the Lodha panel that cricket administrators should undergo a cooling-off period before contesting elections to BCCI or State...
Cooling-off must be accepted as a means to prevent a few individuals from regarding the administration of cricket as a personal turf.

But the Bench struck a balance. Justice Lodha had suggested that the cooling-off period should kick in for a cricket administrator after his every tenure of three years in office.

Instead, the court said an administrator needs to cool-off only after two consecutive terms of six years in office, whether in BCCI or a State association or a combination of both.

Six years in continuation, is a sufficiently long period for experience and knowledge gained to be deployed in the interest of the game without at the same time resulting in a monopoly of power.

Anti-trafficking legislation in India: Does the antitrafficking Bill addresses trafficking?

Theme: Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018

Introduction:

- Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018, was passed in Lok Sabha.
- On the recommendation of the Justice Verma Committee, Criminal Law (Amendment) Act was passed by the Lok Sabha in 2013.
- Section 370 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was substituted with Sections 370 and 370A, which defined trafficking and laid out the punishment for it.
- However, mere criminalisation of trafficking is not enough — several laws have not been implemented in letter and spirit in the absence of a comprehensive legislative framework.
- In the case of trafficking, data show that despite the 2013 law, there has been an increase in the number of victims of human trafficking.

Positive aspects of the Bill:

- Multipronged approach:
  - Approaches to prevention, rescue and rehabilitation to create a robust policy framework against trafficking
  - It places at its core the rights and welfare of victims of human trafficking.
  - There are aggravated forms of trafficking which have been introduced, such as trafficking for the purpose of begging, or bearing a child, or for the purpose of marriage or under the pretext of marriage by administering narcotic drugs, hormones, or chemical substances for the purposes of early sexual maturity, and so on. The prosecution under these offences will be made timely and efficient by special public prosecutors.
  - Protection to witnesses and confidentiality of victims by recording their statements through video conferencing and by in camera proceedings • Time-bound trials and repatriation of victims.

- Rescue and Rehabilitation:
  - A rehabilitation fund has been introduced for the first time. This will be used for the physical, psychological and social well-being of victims.
Capacity building of victims by providing capital, infrastructure, education and skill development to empower them to access justice and to prevent further trafficking.

National Anti-Trafficking Bureau:

The National Anti-Trafficking Bureau will coordinate with authorities in foreign countries and international organisations, and facilitate inter-State and trans-border transfer of evidence and materials.

It will strengthen the intelligence apparatus to improve the collection, collation and dissemination of operational intelligence.

The Bureau will also coordinate actions and enforcement by various bodies or authorities established under this Bill.

There will be State and District Anti-Trafficking Committees which will arrange for appropriate training and sensitisation of functionaries of all personnel.

Breaking the Network:

It is crucial to note that trafficking is an organised crime.

In order to break the organised nexus, at the national and international levels, the Bill proposes attachment and forfeiture of property and to remit the proceeds of crime in the rehabilitation fund.

It will also freeze bank accounts of those whose funds have been utilised to facilitate trafficking. By doing this, the Bill handicaps the organised trafficking networks.

The Bureau will also develop and monitor a database on every crime under this Act.

Systematic surveillance of offenders will, in about three years, not only help prevent trafficking but pre-empt it.

Criticism of the Bill:

The Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018, fails in its fundamental purpose, i.e. it does not address the issue of trafficking.

Outlaws legitimate activity:

Offence of “trafficking for the purpose of begging”. Employing or causing someone to beg is already a criminal offence under anti-begging laws.

Similarly, unauthorised immigration of citizens and foreigners is dealt with under the Passports Act, 1967, and the Foreigners Act, 1946, respectively.

Illegal migration does not involve elements of ‘trade’ in human beings or trafficking. To term it an “aggravated form of trafficking” is questionable in itself.

The Bill also states that “whoever solicits or publicises electronically, taking or distributing obscene photographs or videos or providing materials or soliciting or guiding tourists or using agents or any other form which may lead to the trafficking of a person shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment.” Means a remote possibility of would be trafficking is sufficient to prosecute persons and shut down websites.

Such clauses of the Bill have little to do with trafficking and more do to with imposing surveillance and restricting freedoms through punitive overkill.

Interplay with existing laws:
Existing laws have not been overruled or repealed. In order to try offences under the Bill, the prosecution will have to first prove the subsections of Section 370, that the victim was received or transferred for the purposes of exploiting her/him by using force, abduction, deception, etc. Only then the provisions of the Bill take effect.

For the police and the courts, implementing the numerous anti-trafficking laws will be a nightmare. Only persons accused of trafficking will benefit from the legal mess.

Instead of strengthening the existing anti-trafficking laws, the Bill calls for another law, one that is uncalled-for and sloppily drafted. The Bill clashes with existing laws, which will lead to confusion.

The term ‘victim’ appears several times in the Bill but is shoddily defined. A victim is one who is ‘rescued’ by the raiding police. So, those rescued by NGOs, parents, friends, and so on are not victims.

Other Loopholes:

The Bill is silent on many types of trafficking, such as trafficking for supply chains, commercial surrogacy, clinical trials, human organ trade, intergenerational trafficking, orphanage tourism and sex tourism.

Traffickers get themselves ‘rescued’ by the police so that they can keep an eye on the rescued victims and silence them.

In the absence of clarity, such traffickers who operate hand in glove with the police will be the first to get themselves ‘rescued’ and claim hefty compensations, rehabilitation, small capital for business, and worse, an absurd immunity for committing serious offences that are punishable.

No new courts or judges are mentioned to expedite justice. The district courts are neither exclusively dedicated to trafficking cases nor will they address such cases on priority. This move will only undo the gains of the past many decades of evolving more sensitive and specialised courts such as Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act courts, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences courts, and family courts.

Conclusion:

The Bill is well-intentioned and has many positive features, but need a review on many provisions.

The anti-trafficking Bill aims to solve an institutionalised socio-economic problem with a ‘crime and punishment’ model, relying on police stations, courts and jails.
located at a distance of 12 billion light-years.

The galaxy, from a time when the universe was only 7% of its current age was found using the Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT) in Pune.

GMRT:

- GMRT is an array of thirty fully steerable parabolic radio telescopes of 45-metre diameter.
- GMRT is a very versatile instrument for investigating a variety of radio astrophysical problems ranging from nearby Solar system to the edge of observable Universe.
- It is operated by the National Centre for Radio Astrophysics.

The galaxy:

- The distance to this galaxy was determined using the Gemini North telescope in Hawaii and the Large Binocular Telescope in Arizona.
- The galaxy is perceived as it looked when the universe was only a billion years old.
- This also means that the light from this galaxy is almost 12 billion years old.

Radio galaxies:

- Radio galaxies are very rare objects in the universe.
- These are types of active galaxy that are very luminous at radio wavelengths.
- They are colossal galaxies with a supermassive black hole in their centre.

Source:

A climate for green funds

A climate for green funds

Theme: Climate Financing

Introduction:

A recent HSBC Global Research report found India to be the most vulnerable of the 67 countries assessed for their vulnerability to and preparedness for climate change risks. The need to address the challenge of climate change is more urgent than ever.

India’s Efforts:

- India is making big efforts in that direction. But more needs to be done.
- The India aims to source 175 GW of power from renewables by 2022 and for nearly 57 per cent of
total electricity capacity to come from non-fossil fuels by 2027.

- India’s other INDCs and national, federal steps towards climate change and resilience building cannot be ignored.

Climate Financing:

- **Need:**
  - A climate-resilient economy cannot be a priority only for the government. Companies, regulators, banks and financial institutions need to be part of the effort.
  - It has been estimated that approximately $100 trillion of additional investment will be required between 2016 and 2030 to sync the imperatives of global development with that of addressing the challenge of climate change.
  - Financing clean energy infrastructure, sustainable transport, energy efficiency and waste management are among the key imperatives today.
  - Knowledge sharing across regions and institutions is critical to ensure that initiatives that are successful in one location get replicated expeditiously. All of this will require billions of dollars worth of investments.

- **Who can Finance?**
  - Banks and financial institutions are key intermediaries between investors who are keen to put more of their cash into low-carbon, sustainable projects and those requiring capital.
  - Globally, green finance is gaining prominence as a medium to raise funds for environment-friendly and climate-resilient projects.
  - The appetite for green investment opportunities is growing with European and US investors, in particular, committed to increasing their climate-related holdings.
  - In India the concept of green financing is nascent. Take the green bond market. Green bond issuance in India rose sharply last year — to more than $4 billion from $1.3 billion in 2016.
  - While this is a welcome development, it is just a drop in the ocean against India’s climate change-related investment needs.

- **What India should do to receive climate financing?**
  - Measures to encourage green-bonds could help raise finances needed to “green” India’s economy. These could include steps to reduce some of the regulatory constraints that currently hamper international investments as well as local pools of capital.
  - There is scope for guidelines asking provident funds, pension funds and insurance companies to invest a portion of their assets under management in green bonds.
  - The government could offer tax incentives to encourage mutual fund and other onshore investors to invest in local green bonds.
  - Currently, there is no incentive for onshore investors to buy labelled green bonds or make green investments.
  - India could also look at issuing a sovereign green bond, like France did to great effect last year. This would help push climate-change considerations into the limelight and provide a welcome market benchmark.
  - Allowing banks to claim “priority sector benefits” on their green investments would also help.
  - These steps could help India to draw in more of foreign capital — this would be especially welcome given that global investors are increasingly factoring climate change into their assessments of a
Conclusion:

- Amid all the issues that concern us — poverty, education, employment, health — it is easy to forget that global warming is one of the most critical challenges we face. We need to do a lot more and a lot sooner or risk an environmental crisis.

Source:

**Poverty, not poor**

**Theme: Decriminalisation of begging**

**Introduction:**

- The Delhi High Court has struck down as unconstitutional the provisions of the law which sanction punitive action against beggars, including imprisonment.
- **Colonial legacy:**
  - Twenty-five sections of the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, which was extended to Delhi and serves as the template for other state laws criminalising begging, are off the books.
  - These stigmatising provisions recalled the targeting of allegedly “criminal tribes” in British colonial territories and should never have been allowed to infest the statute books of a democracy.

**Delhi High Court Observations:**

- In its observation court has sought to dispel the idea of begging as a disease — which leads to its stigmatisation and criminalisation — and to regard it as a symptom.
- The underlying disease is the failure of the state to protect citizens who fall through the social security net.
- The court has clarified what should have been obvious to generations of policymakers — that criminalising begging attacks the fundamental right of the most vulnerable, the poorest of the poor, to regain access to basic necessities like food and shelter.
- The very real problem of organised begging rackets will have to be addressed by other means, perhaps based on the law of trafficking.
- The ruling has accepted the basic premise of the PIL, that poverty cannot be a crime.

**Way forward:**
Poverty is a failing of the state and a civilised society must regard the poor not as criminals to be sentenced, but as candidates for protection. There is a need to reduce rising inequalities and establish an egalitarian society. The decriminalisation of those who fail usually has positive effects. For instance, Portugal, which decriminalised drug use and possession in 2001, has achieved the lowest rate of drug-related social costs, like death and crime, in the European Union. But part of its solution was to redeploy budgets spent on enforcement to the support of addicts. A similar step with regard to beggars — spending aggressively on rehabilitation — would yield similar outcomes, and turn what was regarded as a social problem into a dividend.

Railways Focus Misplaced: CAG

Theme: Redevelopment of Railways

Introduction:

- The Indian Railways (IR) is the fourth-largest railway network in the world – in terms of size, its total track length being 1,21,407 kilometer. It operates more than 13,000 passenger trains on a daily basis.
- It is currently the 8th-largest employer in the world, with more than 1.3 million employees but trains running late has been a common scenario across the country.
- CAG observation on modernization of railways had brought the focus back on this key priority area of government as highlighted in the Budget. It is the continual endeavour of Indian Railways (IR) to take measures for modernisation of railway passenger coaches, strengthening and upgradation of security infrastructure and stations and improvement of catering facilities.
- The focus of Railways' modernisation plans for its stations is mainly on improving the façade and passenger facilities, rather that removing bottlenecks to ensure timely movement of trains.
- The latter should be one of the most important parameters to judge the quality of service being provided to the passengers, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has said in its report tabled in Parliament.
- Important activities such as providing platforms with adequate length for easy boarding of long trains, providing adequate facilities for stabling trains and for their maintenance in stations, and adequate yard capacity significantly contribute to timely arrival and departure of trains, the CAG pointed out.

Blockage of lines:

- During a review of the existing infrastructure at 15 selected stations, the audit noticed that infrastructure such as platforms, washing pit lines and stabling lines at the stations were not augmented to match the increase in number of trains handled in all these stations.
- Non-availability of adequate washing pit lines and stabling lines led to movement of empty trains to other depots for maintenance purposes. This caused blockage of lines.

Longer platforms can solve the problem:

- Before taking up modernization/redevelopment of stations and constructing new buildings, the possibility of further expansion of the stations by adding more platforms needs to be considered.
- The modernisation/ redevelopment of stations should also address infrastructural constraints and

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UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

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works such as construction of additional platforms, stabling and washing pit lines and remodelling of yards should be included in its scope, it recommended.

- Of the 2,436 trains handled by the 15 stations as of March last year, 638 are being run with 24 or more coaches every day. To accommodate these longer train rakes, there should be platform of adequate length and adequate facilities of stabling and washing pit lines.

**Modernisation of railway passenger coaches and speed:**

- Large scale proliferation of Linke Hofmann Busch (LHB) coaches
- Improvements in EMU (Electric Multiple Unit) / MEMU (Mainline Electric Multiple Unit) rakes
- Speed of train coaches
- Manufacture of electric train set coaches
- Mid-Life-Rehabilitation (MLR) of coaches
- Model Rake Coaches
- New coaches and train services with better amenities
- Safety and security in Railway stations:
  - Provision of CCTV cameras has been made over 394 railway stations. Installation of CCTV cameras is also under progress over 983 stations with allocation of budget under Nirbhaya Fund.

**Railway Protection Force (RPF) Security helpline 182,** installed to assist Railway Passengers especially women in distress, is planned to be upgraded by making it automated. This Information Technology (IT) enabled upgraded system shall make the distress response efficient by introducing features like automated phone call system, acknowledgement through SMS, computerized registration of complaint and further processing, voice recording, monitoring of call attending and optimum call capacity utilization.

**What is the solution by CAG Report?**

- The comprehensive report by CAG gives a number of suggestions to the railway ministry. It suggested that the modernisation/redevelopment of stations should address infrastructural constraints and works such as construction of additional platforms, stabling and washing pit lines, remodelling of yards etc. should also be included in the scope of modernisation/redevelopment of stations.
- The CAG report states that all Zonal Railways need to prepare comprehensive Master Plans for stations with heavy passenger traffic, identify constraints of station line capacity and devise measures to be taken to address these constraints on priority.
- It is also desirable to increase the length of all the platforms at major stations so as to accommodate trains of 24 or more coaches.
- It is also desirable that railways need to create additional platforms/ pit lines of adequate length where the number of platforms is not adequate for handling the trains originating/ terminating/ passing by the station.

Source:
Department of Telecom approves the principles of net neutrality

Theme: Net Neutrality

In news:

The Telecom Commission, the highest decision-making body in the Department of Telecom has recently approved the principles of net neutrality recommended by TRAI last year.

What is Net Neutrality:

- The basic principles of net neutrality is that nobody owns the internet and it is free and open to all and that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) must treat all internet traffic equally without any regard to the type, origin or destination of the content or the means of its transmission.
- According to TRAI net neutrality principles, any form of discrimination or interference in the treatment of content, including practices like blocking, degrading, slowing down or granting preferential speeds or treatment to any content is prohibited.

Significance:

- **Big victory for open internet movement**: specially coming at a time when USA recently repealed net neutrality rules.
- **Implications for future of internet in India**: India is expected to have more than 500 million
internet users; hence the acceptance of net neutrality rules will have far reaching implications for the future of internet in India.

- **A Progressive move**: The government’s decision is being seen as progressive as mobile operators, ISPs and social media companies cannot engage in, or seek, preferential treatment of content thus it will not allow any operator or ISP to create a monopoly on the internet.

- **Important for Innovation and Ease of doing business**: Net neutrality is crucial for innovation, competition and the end consumers that provide a level playing field to content providers and startups.

- **Exceptions to critical, new and emerging services**: such as autonomous driving, tele-medicine, disaster management, etc. which may require prioritized internet lanes and faster than normal speeds. A committee will look into the possible exceptions for critical services.

- **Provides enforcement and monitoring mechanism**: Government has decided to form a multistakeholder body for monitoring and enforcement of Net neutrality.

### Way Forward:

- Internet must remain an open platform unhindered by any entity so that users and customers have a choice to access content of their liking.
- India must align with other like-minded countries to promote an open internet, for instance India recently signed an MoU with European Union to promote net neutrality.

### Source:

**SAARC devepement Fund partnership conclave held at delhi**

| 02 July, 2019 |

**Theme: SAARC development fund**

- SDF’s Partnership Conclave 2018 was held in New Delhi. More about the news
- The event aims towards Strategic growth in the South Asian region through project collaboration and Regional integration and proposes to:

  - Solicit Cross-Border project Co-Financing under social, economic and infrastructure windows for SDF in SAARC member States.
  - Build partnership with various organisations like the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) for fund mobilisation and investment in SAARC member states

- The larger aim is to convert the SDF into a regional bank by strengthening its credit portfolio so that it could get lender’s status. It will help raise funds from the capital market through various instruments like bonds etc.
SAARC development fund (SDF):

- It was established by heads of all eight SAARC member states during 16th SAARC summit at Thimphu, Bhutan in April 2010.
- Its Secretariat is located at Thimphu, capital of Bhutan. Its Governing Council comprises finance ministers of these eight countries.
- It was created as umbrella financial mechanism for all SAARC developmental projects and programmes.
- Its core objectives are to promote welfare of the people of SAARC region, improve their quality of life and accelerate economic growth, social progress and poverty alleviation in the region.
- It funds projects in South Asia region via three windows viz. Social Window, Economic Window and Infrastructure Window.
- The SDF has a total corpus of $1.5 billion with the total capital base currently at $497 million. Of this, more than 100 million has been committed.

Opportunities of SDF:

- **Economic integration of south Asia:** According to a World Bank study, the South Asia Region needs to invest between $1.7 trillion and $2.5 trillion to close its infrastructure gaps mainly in energy, power, transportation, telecom and environment.
- **SDF can play a major role in ensuring physical as well as financial connectivity.** Thus, an efficient regional value chain would be developed on the lines of ASEAN tigers.
- **Dedicated project development agency:** It may fill the vacuum of a dedicated project development agency in the south Asian region which is a major cause of delay in project implementation.
- **Reforming global financial architecture:** It may add to India's continuing effort to reform global financial architecture by presenting an inclusive model of development to the world.
- **Opportunity for South-South cooperation:** SDF can also invest in countries of South-east Asia, Africa and Latin America like ADB and other multilateral financial agencies. It would provide India an opportunity to claim leadership of the global south.

Challenges:

- **Lack of financial resources:** SDF lacks membership of economic powerhouses like China, Japan, USA as in other multilateral financing agencies like ADB, AIIB etc.
- **Power asymmetry between India and other neighbouring countries:** India is disproportionately big as compared to other SAARC members both in territorial extent and economic, political and military strength, hence a sense of apprehension exists among its neighbours.
- India has many unresolved outstanding issues like border disputes and river disputes with its neighbours that also doesn't inspire confidence for sustained cooperation.
- **Security challenges** like cross border terrorism and armed insurgent movements also create problems for investments.
- **Presence of China** in the region with its deep pocket throws a major challenge for India to secure investment opportunities in the neighbourhood in particular and the developing world in general.

Way forward:
SAARC minus X model: Developing small models at sub-regional level as a template to replicate, for example Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA), South Asian satellite, etc. have been developed without Pakistan's cooperation.

Gujral doctrine: Unilateral support to smaller neighbours without expectation of reciprocity is very important to inspire confidence which would help in taking them on board for regional cooperation. Also resolve outstanding issues on priority basis with all the neighbouring countries.

Converging efforts of other regional groups like BIMSTEC, South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC).

Source:

More Assembly seats for Sikkim

More Assembly seats for Sikkim

- The Home Ministry has moved the Union Cabinet to increase the number of seats in the Sikkim Assembly from 32 to 40.
- The Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will soon decide on the proposal. Background:
- A petition was moved in the Supreme Court that Limboos and Tamangs were not adequately represented in the Assembly, and the court in 2016 directed the Home Ministry to take action.
- The tribal community nursed a sense of deprivation of their political and fundamental rights, ever since they had been declared a Scheduled Tribe in 2003 under Article 342 of the Constitution.
- There are 90,000 Limboo-Tamangs.
- By the Delimitation Act, 2002, the number of seats in an Assembly can be readjusted only on the basis of the first census after 2026.
- The Second Schedule to the Representation of People Act, 1950 and Section 5A of the Representation of People Act, 1951 have been amended to change the Assembly strength.
Bhutias-Lepchas:

- Sikkim has 12 seats reserved for Bhutias-Lepchas.
- It is not because they are a Scheduled Tribe, but as a sequel to a political agreement in 1973 between the Government of India, the former Chogyal (King) of Sikkim and political parties.

Significance:

- The seats are being increased to accommodate the Limboo and Tamang communities, notified as Scheduled Tribes in January 2003.
- Of the eight new seats, five will be reserved for them.
- If approved, it will be the first expansion of the Assembly since Sikkim merged with India in 1975.

Limbu:

- They are Kirati people indigenous and native to their homeland himalayas, hills, mountainous and plains regions

Tamang people:

- Tibeto-Burman ethnic group
Bhutias:

- They are a community of people of Tibetan ancestry, who speak Lhopo or Sikkimese, a Tibetan dialect.
- The Bhutias are spread out over Nepal, Bhutan, and in northern West Bengal, especially in the towns of Kalimpong and Darjeeling.
- The Bhutias as recognized as Scheduled Tribes in the states of Sikkim, West Bengal and Tripura.

Lepchas:

- They are among the indigenous peoples of Sikkim.

Tendong Lho Rumfaat (Prayer of the Tendong Mountain):

- It is a festival of the Lepcha people of eastern Nepal and north-east India.
- The festival occurs usually in the month of August.
- As per the Lepcha mythology, it was believed that the entire tribe was saved from 40 days and 40 nights of great deluge caused by continuous rain which drowned the entire Mayel Lyang, the modern day Sikkim.
- During the festivities, people make a model of the Mountain in facade of their homes and worship it.
- It is exclusively made of nine stones and the people dance and sing wearing mask to get the blessings of the almighty.

Source:

Refocusing on Africa: New strategy
| 02 July, 2019

Refocusing on Africa: New strategy

Theme: India-Africa Narions relations

Introduction:

- Prime Minister recently returned from a tour of Rwanda, Uganda and South Africa that included the BRICS Summit in South Africa and outlining of 10 guiding principles for India’s engagement in Africa.

10 guiding principles for India’s engagement in Africa:

1. Africa will be at the top of India’s priorities.
India’s development partnership will be guided by Africa’s priorities. India will keep her markets open and make it easier and more attractive to trade. India’s experience with the digital revolution to support Africa’s development. Agriculture; Africa has 60% of the world’s arable land but only 10% of global output. India Africa partnership will address the challenges of climate change. Cooperation in combating terrorism and extremism; keeping our cyberspace safe and secure; and, supporting the UN in advancing and keeping peace. Work with African nations to keep the oceans open and free for the benefit of all. Make Africa a nursery for the aspirations of Africa’s youth. Work together for a just, representative and democratic global order that has a voice and a role for one-third of humanity that lives in Africa and India.

India’s refocused Africa strategy:
- Refocused Africa strategy builds on India’s soft power in historical, trade, and cultural links, particularly with the western edge of the Indo-Pacific.
- India aims to secure her foothold on the continent, secure access to resources, build markets for Indian goods and services, and support India’s global ambitions.
- The new strategy is also focused on building alliances and differentiating India from China as a development partner, at a time when several countries in the Indo-Pacific have fallen into a debt trap with China.
- India has tried to differentiate itself by engaging with its diaspora and private sector links to build development partnerships, where India has a comparative advantage in English language training and research.
- India has also initiated a series of India-Africa forums and is working with Japan on an Asia Africa Growth Corridor.
- India has committed about 150 credit lines worth $10 billion as development fund but with lower disbursement rates than China.

About Rwanda:
- It is an important gateway to Africa with which India has a strategic partnership.
- Rwanda is the present chair of the influential African Union, where common positions are adopted by the continent.
- It is the third-fastest growing economy in Africa.
- Rwanda has been a linchpin of the West’s engagement in Africa, giving it an outsized voice in the power corridors of Europe and North America.
- Rwanda has signed on to China’s Belt and Road Initiative with 15 huge investment projects.

To solidify this strategic relationship with Rwanda:
- India would open a high commission in Rwanda
- Signed seven MoUs, including in defence
- Provided two credit lines of $100 million each for irrigation works and industrial parks

About Uganda:
- Uganda currently chairs the East African Community, a grouping of six countries with a common market and free trade arrangements with other countries.
India with Uganda:

- Prime minister of India addressed the Ugandan parliament (a first by an Indian prime minister) as well as a business event.
- India committed two credit lines for over $200 million, and announced several capacity building and training programmes.
- Also extended cooperation on training between Uganda’s military and the Indian Army.

Way forward:

- India is putting Africa at the top of its priorities and is keen to build partnerships that will liberate its potential rather than constrain its future. Still the questions about the efficacy of tools for implementation remain.
- India’s development partnerships are notorious for their low disbursement rates and slow delivery. Only 4% of Indian grants in 2017-18 were committed to Africa.
- Credit lines to Africa have a 40 per cent disbursement rate, and of the $10 billion in credit promised between 2015-20, only $1.5 billion have been committed through 2019 and an even smaller fraction disbursed.
- India’s new concessional financing scheme, which subsidises private Indian companies bidding on African infrastructure projects, shows no signs of functioning a year after its announcement.
- As India seeks to implement its new strategic partnership with Africa and the is need to convince countries that it can not only commit but also deliver.

Source:

Centre comes to Kerala’s aid

Theme: Kerala flood

- Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday conducted an aerial survey of flood ravaged Kerala and announced an immediate relief of Rs. 100 crore as the State braced for another spell of heavy rain after a fresh low pressure area developed in the Bay of Bengal.
- State authorities said the death toll in the recent monsoon rain rose to 38 and more than
1,00,000 people had been shifted to 1,026 relief camps.

- The Union Minister’s announcement of aid came as the first response to the State’s plea for Rs. 1,220 crore from the National Disaster Response Fund.

**National Disaster Response Fund:**

- National Disaster Response Fund is defined in Section 46 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 (DM Act) as a fund managed by the Central Government for meeting the expenses for emergency response, relief and rehabilitation due to any threatening disaster situation or disaster.

- NDRF is constituted to supplement the funds of the State Disaster Response Funds (SDRF) of the states to facilitate immediate relief in case of calamities of a severe nature.

- The DM Act defines “disaster” to mean ‘a catastrophe, mishap, calamity or grave occurrence in any area, arising from natural or man-made causes, or by accident or negligence which results in substantial loss of life or human suffering or damage to, and destruction of, property, or damage to, or degradation of, environment, and is of such a nature or magnitude as to be beyond the coping capacity of the community of the affected area.’

- The July 2015 guidelines states that natural calamities of cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloud burst, pest attack and cold wave and frost considered to be of severe nature by Government of India (GoI) and requiring expenditures by a state government in excess of the balances available in its own SDRF will qualify for immediate relief assistance from NDRF.

- In the event of a disaster of ‘a severe nature’, in which the funds needed for relief operations exceeded the balances in the SDRF account, additional assistance would be provided from the NDRF after following prescribed procedures.

- The financial assistance from SDRF/NDRF is for providing immediate relief and is not compensation for loss/damage to properties/crops. In other words, NDRF amount can be spent only towards meeting the expenses for emergency response, relief and rehabilitation.

- For projects exclusively for the purpose of mitigation, i.e., measures aimed at reducing the risk, impact or effect of a disaster or threatening disaster situation a separate fund called National Disaster Mitigation Fund has to be constituted.

**Features of NDRF:**

- The primary purpose of NDRF is to supplement the SDRF, in case there is a calamity of “severe nature” which requires assistance over and above the funds available under SDRF.

- NDRF is located in the “Public Accounts” of Government of India under “Reserve Funds not bearing interest”
Kerala’s Case:

- The Centre had earlier sanctioned Rs. 80 crore and another Rs. 18.24 crore assistance to the State.
- Singh called the flood situation serious and unprecedented in the history of the State.
- Later, Mr. Singh told the media that the Centre was convinced about the losses Kerala had suffered.
- According to him, it was the worst floods the State had experienced since 1924. The tourism and agriculture sectors had suffered badly.
- Large tracts of paddy and cash crops and banana plantations were damaged. The infrastructure sector, including roads and buildings, were damaged and power lines had snapped, he said.
- The rain-related calamities, he said, had rendered hundreds homeless and around 1,00,000 people had to be sheltered in relief camps.
- Offering all support, Mr. Singh said the government would consider the demands for additional relief assistance after a detailed evaluation by an inter-ministerial team.
- A high-level team, headed by him, would evaluate the report of the inter-ministerial team. More men from the National Disaster Response Force would be deployed in Kerala, if required, he added.
- The Minister, who visited a relief camp in Paravur taluk, said the people in the camps were satisfied with the arrangements made for them and none complained about any inadequacies.

The National Disaster Response Force:

- The National Disaster Response Force is a unit created by the government for the purpose of specialised response to natural and man-made disasters.
The NDRF works under the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) which lays down the policies, plans and guidelines for disaster management.

The NDRF consists of eight battalions of Central paramilitary forces – two battalions each from the Border Security Force (BSF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) for the purpose of specialist response in disaster situations.

These eight NDRF battalions would be positioned at Arrakonam (Chennai), Mundali (Bhubneshwar), Greater Noida, Chandigarh, Barasat (Kolkata), Guwahati (Assam), Pune (Maharashtra) and Gandhinagar (Gujarat).

In addition, 16 Regional Response Centres (RRCs) of NDRF battalions are being set up across the country to enable immediate response to natural calamities.

Source:

Anti-begging Act and Criminal Tribes: Legacy of injustice

Theme: Anti Begging Act

Introduction:
The Delhi High Court has strike down as unconstitutional the provisions of the law which sanction punitive action against beggars, including imprisonment.

Criminal Tribes Act:

- The colonial regime believed that there are groups of communities which are criminal by birth, nature, and occupation.
- The Act unleashed a reign of terror, with its systems of surveillance, police reporting, the separation of families, detention camps, and forced labour.
- More than six decades after independent India repealed the Act and the “denotified tribes” still continue to suffer from stigma.
- It was one example of colonial laws that dehumanised communities and ways of life. • Nomadic and itinerant communities were labelled Criminal Tribes because, due to their movements and lifestyle were difficult to track, surveil, control, and tax

What does the Begging Act do?

- Definition of begging in this Act include “soliciting or receiving alms, in a public place whether or not under any pretence such as singing, dancing, fortune telling, performing or offering any article for sale” and “having no visible means of subsistence and wandering about in any public place in
such condition or manner, as makes it likely that the person doing so exist soliciting or receiving alms.”

- It gives the police the power to arrest individuals without a warrant and to magistrates the power to commit them to a “certified institution” for years.
- It strips them of their privacy and dignity by compelling them to allow themselves to be fingerprinted.
- The Act also authorises the detention of people “dependant” upon the “beggar” (read: family), and the separation of children over the age of five.
- Certified institutions have absolute power over detainees, including the power of punishment, and the power to exact “manual work”

Prejudice and Stigmatization:

- It is clear that the purpose of the Act is not only to criminalise the act of begging, but to target those whose nomadic patterns of life do not fit within mainstream.
- It is based on philosophy of the poorhouses of 19th century Europe; first criminalise poverty, and then making it invisible by physically removing “offenders” from public spaces.
- It punishes people for the crime of looking poor. For these people, the constitutional guarantees of pluralism and inclusiveness do not exist.

Instances of using of the Begging Act as a weapon:

- On the eve of Common Wealth Games 2010, Delhi government took beggars off the streets lest their presence embarrass the nation in the eyes of foreigners.
- Such operations are also a regular part of preparing for national events, such as Independence Day and Republic Day.
- Recently, a prominent institution put up spikes outside its Mumbai branch, to deter rough sleeping, though they were removed after public outrage.

The judicial view:

- In its judgment (Harsh Mander v. Union of India and Karnika Sawhney v. Union of India), Delhi HC held that the Begging Act violated Article 14 (equality before law) and Article 21 (right to life and personal liberty) of the Constitution.
- It also held that under Article 21 of the Constitution, it was the state’s responsibility to provide the basic necessities for survival to all its citizens.
- Poverty was the result of the state’s inability or unwillingness to discharge these obligations. Therefore, the state could not turn around and criminalise the most visible and public manifestation of its own failures.

Way Forward:

- It is as significant and important as a judgment delivered by the same court more than nine years ago, when it decriminalised homosexuality (Naz Foundation v. NCT of Delhi).
- Both Naz Foundation and Harsh Mander recognise that our Constitution is a transformative Constitution, which seeks to undo legacies of injustice and lift up all individuals and communities to the plane of equal citizenship.
- Other High Courts should also question such colonial legacies. A court can strike down an unconstitutional law, but it cannot reform society.
It is the task of the Legislative Assembly and the government to replace this punitive structure with a new set of measures to rehabilitate and integrate the most vulnerable and marginalised members of our society.

Source:

**ISRO set to launch its TV channel**

**Theme: ISRO**

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will have a year-long Vikram Sarabhai centenary celebration starting in August 2019 to honour the visionary scientist and its legendary founding father.
- In a few months' time, it plans to roll out a dedicated ISRO TV channel showcasing space applications, developments and science issues, targeting young viewers and people in remote areas in their language.
Sarabhai, the architect of the Indian space programme, the first ISRO chief and renowned cosmic ray scientist, was born on August 12, 1919.

ISRO's tributes to Sarabhai start with naming the first Indian moon landing spacecraft of the Chandrayaan-2 mission ‘Vikram’. The mission is planned for early 2019.

A chair each at Sarabhai's two alma maters, Cambridge University and Gujarat University, as also at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), would be set up, apart from giving awards, scholarships and fellowships in the country and abroad.

Sarabhai was only 28 when he sowed the seeds of a space agency around the late 1940s and 1950s.

Sivan said 100 lectures by science luminaries would be held across the country and in association with the International Astronautical Federation, the global space networking body. Space clubs, knowledge centres and talk shows are also among the plans.

As it strengthens its public outreach, ISRO will shortly start allowing the public to watch satellite launches from its Sriharikota launch centre.

Vikram Sarabhai:

- Sarabhai was considered as the Father of the Indian space program; he was a great institution builder and established or helped to establish a large number of institutions in diverse fields.
- He was instrumental in establishing the Physical Research Laboratory (PRL) in Ahmedabad: after returning from Cambridge to an independent India in 1947, he persuaded charitable trusts controlled by his family and friends to endow a research institution near home in Ahmedabad.
- Thus, Vikram Sarabhai founded the Physical Research Laboratory (PRL) in Ahmedabad on November 11, 1947. He was only 28 at that time. Sarabhai was a creator and cultivator of institutions and PRL was the first step in that direction. Vikram Sarabhai served of PRL from 1966-1971.
- He was also Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission. He along with other Ahmedabad-based industrialists played a major role in the creation of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.

Indian Space Program:

The establishment of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) was one of his greatest achievements.

- Vikram Sarabhai was successfully convinced the government of the importance of a space programme for a developing country like India after the Russian Sputnik launch. Dr. Sarabhai emphasized the importance of a space program in his quote: Homi Jehangir Bhabha, widely regarded as the father of India’s nuclear science program, supported Dr. Sarabhai in setting up the first rocket launching station in India.
- This center was established at Thumba near Thiruvananthapuram on the coast of the Arabian Sea, primarily because of its proximity to the equator.
- After a remarkable effort in setting up the infrastructure, personnel, communication links, and launch pads, the inaugural flight was launched on November 21, 1963 with a sodium vapour payload.
- As a result of Dr. Sarabhai’s dialogue with NASA in 1966, the Satellite Instructional Television
Experiment (SITE) was launched during July 1975 – July 1976 (when Dr. Sarabhai was no more).
• Sarabhai started a project for the fabrication and launch of an Indian Satellite. As a result, the first Indian satellite, Aryabhatta, was put in orbit in 1975 from a Russian Cosmodrome.
• Sarabhai was very interested in science education and founded a Community Science Centre at Ahmedabad in 1966. Today, the Centre is called the Vikram A Sarabhai Community Science Centre.

Source:

Growth vs development and its concern to the Indian economy

Introduction:

The overall GDP, after several quarters of low growth, there has been a strong pick-up in the last quarter of 2017-18. If this momentum is maintained, the growth rate (2018-19) will certainly be above 7%.

• Major concerns are- External environment, reviving the banking system, Impact on the fiscal position.
• Agricultural growth may at best be equal to what it was last year. As the monsoon has been somewhat below expectations — the overall rainfall was deficiency.
• The services sector may perform better because public expenditure will be maintained at a high level.
• As of the industrial sector, the data for the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) shows substantial improvement.
• The correlation between the IIP and national income data on manufacturing is poor.
• The problems of the goods and services tax (GST) may have been largely overcome.

Issues:

1. External environment:

• Trade wars have already started and can get worse.
• The U.S. has raised duties on several products such as steel and aluminum.
• China has retaliated as duties for some of its products has been raised.
• India has also been caught in this exchange.
• Iran, which have a direct impact on crude oil output and prices. India benefited from the fall in crude prices earlier but this position has reversed.
• India’s trade deficit has always remained high.
• The fall in crude oil prices had also affected the export growth.
• With the rising of trade deficit and some outflow of capital, the rupee has depreciated.
2. Reviving the banking system:

- According to the RBI’s latest report on financial stability, shows that the gross non-performing asset (NPA) ratio of scheduled commercial banks rose.
- The high NPA level has a dampening effect on the provision of new credit. In fact, credit to the industrial sector has slowed down considerably.

**Solution:**

- Recapitalization of banks.
- Asset reconstruction companies, have been made to resolve the NPA issue.
- Medium-term banking reforms.

3. Impact on the fiscal position:

- Central government’s fiscal has been within limits.
- There are two aspects of the fiscal which need to be kept under watch. – One relates to GST. It is estimated that GST revenues are currently running behind budgetary projections.
- The second concern relates to the impact of the proposed minimum support prices (MSPs) for various agricultural commodities. The MSPs have been raised sharply in the case of some commodities.

**Solution to MSP:**

- **Madhya Pradesh model** - where the State pays the difference between market price and MSP. But this can turn out to be a serious burden if market prices fall steeply. This is apart from the administrative problems involved in implementing the scheme.
- The other alternative is for the government to procure excess production over normal production so that market prices rise. This alternative may be less burdensome. However, this alternative will not work if the MSP is fixed at a level to which the market price will never rise.

**Conclusion:**

- The expected growth rate of 7.3-7.4% may be reassuring. It may even be the highest in the world economy.
- It is below of what is needed to raise job opportunities and reduce poverty.
- It is true that the external environment is not helpful.
- Hence a stronger push towards a much higher growth is very much the need of the hour.
Breaking the Radcliffe barrier: India, China, Pakistan Triangle
Theme: India-China-Pakistan

Introduction:

- China’s envoy to Delhi visited Punjab. After watching the popular flag-lowering ceremony, he expressed his hope for “peace, friendship and cooperation” between India and Pakistan.

Details: There are a number of factors that can lead this triangular relationship in a more positive direction.

- First factor, Beijing’s interest in making the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the flagship project of China’s expansive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), more profitable by extending it to India.

- China has affirmed that CPEC is not an exclusive bilateral project; it can be turned into a more broad-based regional initiative.

- Afghanistan and Iran are eager for such an extension. Whereas, the Central Asian Republics are very much part of the BRI.

- There might be ways in which the political differences between India – China, especially the critical one on CPEC’s transit through Kashmir, can be bridged.

- If China returned to genuine neutrality on the Kashmir question, it would be a lot easier for Delhi to set aside its sovereignty argument on CPEC.

- The differences on economic and other issues in relation to BRI can easily be overcome through focused negotiations on specific projects.

- Second factor, the difficult macroeconomic situation that Pakistan finds itself in today and the potential role that commercial cooperation with India could play in alleviating it.

- Pakistan should let India export its goods to Afghanistan and Central Asia through Pakistan. That could bring hard currency through transit fees and boost the Pakistani industries.

- Such transit trade could help make Pakistan into a commercial hub between South and Central Asia, including China’s western regions.

- Third factor, China’s growing political and economic influence on Pakistan.

- Pakistan has become more dependent than ever on China’s support due to her rapidly deteriorating relations with the US.
At the same time, China’s stakes in the stabilisation of Pakistan and Afghanistan, given its restive Muslim-majority Xinjiang province, are rising. Beijing is playing a more active role in Afghan peace-making and to encourage Pakistan’s reconciliation with India. China’s stakes in sub-regional economic integration in the north western marches of India looks real.

Finally, any such sub-regional economic integration must necessarily come down to the Radcliffe Line that divides the Punjab.

Punjab, which was historically at the heart of trans-regional trade routes, is now a dead end. Over the last two decades, repeated efforts were made to change Punjab’s economic condition. Chief Ministers of both parts of Punjab and the central governments of Delhi and Islamabad tried to negotiate agreements to liberalise cross-border religious pilgrimages and trade in goods and energy. But the barrier at Radcliffe Line remained as daunting as ever.

Conclusion:

The “new Pakistan,” and the willingness of the Indian Prime Minister to consider a “fresh start” in bilateral relations suggests there might be an opportunity to try and turn the Radcliffe Line into a commercial bridge. Chinese ambassador’s visit to the India-Pakistan border may just be a random diplomatic event. Or, Beijing may well have realised that it is Punjab that holds the key to unfreezing India-Pakistan relations.

Source:

Proxy Voting by NRIs

Theme: Election reforms

Recently, the Lok Sabha passed the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill, 2017 to allow for the proxy voting by the Non-Residential Indians through amendment in Section 60 (special procedure for voting by certain classes of persons).

Details:

As of now, overseas Indians are free to cast their votes in the constituencies where they are registered. The Bill seeks to give them the option of proxy voting, which till now is only available to service personnel.
The proposal includes a provision that made it mandatory for NRIs to nominate a new person every time they vote in an election, unlike service personnel who are allowed to nominate a permanent proxy.

On the direction of the Supreme Court of India the Election Commission constituted a committee for ‘Exploring Feasibility of Alternative Options for voting by Overseas Electors’, which expressed the feasibility of both proxy voting and e-postal ballot.

It is not clear yet how NRIs will nominate their proxies. The Election Commission will lay down the procedure by amending the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, after the Bill is passed by both Houses of Parliament.

The bill also proposes to replace the term 'wife' with 'spouse' (in case of service voters), thus making the provision gender neutral.

**Criticism of the Proxy Voting:**

- Vulnerable nature of the process of using a proxy can amount to malpractices and misuse, like-
  - The proxy voters might not choose to cast their votes according to the will of the NRI who assigns the proxy.
  - The loss of secrecy while using the mechanism is a major drawback.
  - It might also lead to purchasing of the votes.

- **Implementational Challenges**: Moreover, the Indian Diaspora abroad is spread in different parts of the world, which will pose an implementation challenge when it comes to proxy voting. Further, the registration of NRI voters has been relatively lower than their number, so more important is to extend registration facilities.

- **Monetary Influence** - Only the parties with sufficient financial resources will be able to roll out significant promotional campaigns abroad, which may tilt the balance of power against smaller, regional parties. Also, there is no adequate mechanism to track how much is spent by these parties outside India.

- **Discrimination against Domestic migrants**- It might increase the discrimination amongst the migrants who still do not have the voting rights, and also amongst various categories of non-residents.

**Conclusion:**

- Along with the challenges and concerns related to proxy voting, it is also important to understand that NRIs are a large stratum of our population, large enough to not be overlooked.
- Apart from that, history stands as a testimony to their contribution to Indian economy as well as India’s bilateral or multilateral agreements. Where on one hand they have an impact on India they are also in turn impacted by the events in the country. Thus, steps like proxy voting are considered.
- There are various alternative ways to proxy voting, viz. Personal voting (setting up booth at the embassy itself), e-voting, etc.

**Source:**
India and Pakistan should encourage bilateral trade

Theme: India-Pakistan Bilateral relations

Introduction:

- There is rising concern about declining trade between India and Pakistan due to escalation in tensions along the borders. So there is need for concerted efforts on both sides to ease tensions through people-centric measures.
- Over the last five years, the bilateral trade trajectory has been volatile.
- From a high of $2.70 billion in 2013-14, it fell to $2.40 billion in 2017-18. During this time, while Pakistan’s exports to India were (and have been) fairly consistent, India’s exports decreased.
- Overall, India still manages to have a significant trade surplus with Pakistan (about $1.4 billion in 2017-18)

Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) Study on informal trade:

- Informal trade between India and Pakistan is almost twice the value of formal trade between the two countries.
- Informal trade is broadly defined as all trade between two countries that should be included in the national income statistics, according to conventional national income accounting, but is not.

What drives informal trade?

- Factors such as high tariffs, political tension, infrastructure impediments, and ease of trading goods via third countries have generated a thriving industry for informal trade between the two South Asian giants.
- Pakistan’s negative list of 1,209 items as the most important factor pushing informal exports from India.
- Items on the negative list are those that are not allowed to be imported from India.
- More than one in every two items exported informally to Pakistan were on Pakistan’s negative list.

Which commodities are traded?

- Real jewellery, including gold, diamond and precious stones, accounted for the largest share of 23% of informal exports from India to Pakistan. It also included chemicals, tyres, alcohol and tobacco products, among several others.
- While India’s imports from Pakistan included items such as dry fruits and spices
- Informal exports from India to Pakistan in 2012-13 stood at $3.9 billion, much higher than the just
over $2 billion worth of formal exports.

- Informal imports, on the other hand, from Pakistan valued $0.7 billion, slightly more than formal imports of $0.5 billion.

How does informal trade take place?

- Most of informal trade between the two countries were also found to be via a third country, in particular Dubai. About 68% of India’s informal export to Pakistan was found to be routed via Dubai.

Land or water route?

- The efficiency of transport of goods via two routes o the Delhi-Lahore route o the Delhi-Mumbai-Dubai-Karachi-Lahore route
- Found that the latter route was 2.75 times more efficient in terms of transport per transaction cost incurred per container-kilometre.
- Higher transaction cost per-tonne-per-kilometre on the direct route is because of factors such as limited number of items that can be exported via road route, cumbersome customs checks at Attari/Wagah customs station, transaction costs in the form of bribes incurred in getting customs clearances, physical examination of goods and poor infrastructure, among others.
- While the total cost of shipping would still be lower in the formal channel, given the fact that the distance is one-tenth of the route via Dubai, predictability and comfort encourages traders to incur these high costs.

Area of Co-operation:

- In textiles, while there is an existing bilateral engagement, there is potential for raw materials (raw cotton, fabric dye), grey fabric (polyester, chiffon, nylon), blended fabric (cotton-polyester-viscose blend for denim) and stitched clothes (track suits and sports wear) from Indian hubs such as Surat (Gujarat) and Tiruppur (Tamil Nadu) to Pakistan’s major production centre at Faisalabad and its Lahore and Karachi markets.
- Similarly, from Pakistan, there is a huge demand for salwar-kameez-dupatta made of lawn fabric and wedding attire (shararas).
- Given Pakistan’s expertise here, the demand in India for Pakistani fabric and designs as well as the cost benefits attached with trading between India and Pakistan, there is significant scope for collaboration.
- Pakistan’s sports goods manufacturing sector is emerging as an original equipment manufacturer for major global brands. Sialkot is a global manufacturing hub for professional-level goods such as footballs, hockey sticks, quality leather goods, and weightlifting and cycling gloves, some of which is imported by India. Also, footballs manufactured here were used in the FIFA World Cup.
- However, manufacturers in Sialkot require quality raw materials or semi-finished products to produce these goods.
- India can play a key role here in exporting raw material and semi-finished goods such as latex, rubber, and football bladders, which would work out to be more economical for Sialkot than sourcing them from other countries such as Thailand.
- In terms of finished goods, sportswear made of lycra is in demand in Pakistan.
Pakistan’s surgical instruments manufacturing industry, again based in Sialkot, is noted for its expertise. Pakistan is a major supplier of these instruments to the U.S., Germany, France and Belgium.

India, on the other hand, is a large medical market which imports these instruments from these developed countries at high rates. Direct imports from Pakistan to India in this area would ensure considerable cost benefits in terms of economics and logistics. To strengthen value chain linkages, India can potentially increase the supply of stainless steel to Pakistan, a major raw material used in instrument manufacturing, or even import semi-finished products.

How to improve relationship?

First, it is important to alleviate fears, misconceptions and the trust deficit in the trading community.

Second, business-to-business linkages need to be formed and strengthened between actual traders.

Third, SAARC business traveller visas must be implemented in practice.

There also needs to be focus on other issues such as key items in the textiles and clothing sector, border infrastructure and security, improved connectivity by sea and air.

Sporting events could play a pivotal role in boosting people-to-people relations on both sides of the Punjab border.

More people-level contacts and educational exchanges between the two nations could help pave the way for long-term peace and stability in the region.

Conclusion:

Tariff and non-tariff barriers should be addressed and steps should be taken towards increasing awareness and building confidence among the trading communities.

So, if appropriate measures are taken, a significant share of informal trade can be diverted to formal channels. The benefits of direct trade is much more than informal.

Source:

How India should close the financial gender gap  
| 02 July,2019  

How India should close the financial gender gap

Theme: Gender gap

Introduction
The World Bank’s latest Global Findex data proves that India has made rapid strides in improving access to formal financial services.
In 2014, just 53% of adults had a formal account. Today, more than 80% do. At the same time, it has cut its gender gap in financial access from 20 percentage points to six.

How has India surged ahead of its emerging market peers?

- The government has made financial inclusion and expanding the formal sector a top priority.
- The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) programme—launched in 2015 with a mission to provide a basic account to every adult—has enrolled more women than men.
- Before that, millions of women were deterred from going to banks because of the long distances involved. In general, women have a more restricted “economic geography” than men, making brick-and-mortar banks harder to access.
- Under the PMJDY, banks went door-to-door enrolling customers, and held camps in villages. It also increased the number of banks’ business correspondents (BCs or bank mitras), bringing services closer to more households.

The government has also mandated that certain defined benefit schemes, such as Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY), distribute payments to accounts in a woman’s name—with benefits being deposited directly in the recipients’ Aadhaar-linked accounts.

Aadhaar and the India Stack’s biometric eKYC verification capability make it easier for women, who possess the required documents less often than men, to establish their identity to a bank. Bringing all these initiatives together, the government has made a major policy thrust toward digital payments since demonetization. The widespread rollout of Aadhaar enabled customers to use digital BC payment points in addition to ATMs and service terminals. With this consistent focus, India has led a massive expansion of financial access.

However, closing the gender gap is difficult because the root causes go way beyond access:

- PMJDY has opened more than 100 million new bank accounts, but many of them are inactive or carry a zero balance.
- More women have been enrolled, but a larger gender gap persists in account usage. And beyond account ownership, in terms of credit and insurance usage, the gender gap remains high.
- Increasing usage is a complex problem and there are many barriers to overcome. But the achievements of the past few years in banking millions of new customers, and research conducted into the economic, technological and cultural context shows us where to start on the road ahead.

Ways to reduce the gender gap:

- First, we need to put smartphones into the hands of more women.
- The mobile phone is still the most promising empowerment tool for financial inclusion, and yet, fewer than half of adult women in India own a mobile phone, compared to 73% of men.
- One reason for this technological divide is that smartphones are not marketed as an empowerment tool, but rather as an entertainment and social media platform. In India, as in other emerging markets, many women have internalized social fears that smartphones will expose them to “bad influences”, leading to sexual harassment or broken marriages.
Second, when women gain access to digital financial services over mobile, many face a three-step learning curve at once:

- Becoming familiar with using a smartphone;
- Understanding how credit, insurance, and other financial products work; and,
- Often, using an interface that’s not even written in their native language.

It’s long been a goal of inclusion efforts to improve women’s financial literacy, but the second lesson is that these efforts must also improve women’s digital literacy.

- Third, financial products are often not structured, distributed, or bundled to meet the needs of women.
- Financial responsibilities differ between men and women, who are generally tasked with backstopping and stretching the family budget.
- Bundled solutions of savings, credit, and insurance could be designed to be more relevant to women’s financial lives.

**Extending Emergency Credit:**

- In markets with high card penetration, customers often have the option of linking their checking accounts to a credit card account for extra liquidity.
- In emerging markets, adding microcredit to accounts could help women cover unexpected expenses and emergencies in their day-to-day management of the household finances.
- Women also go through more life transitions than men, moving in and out of the workforce more frequently, so making it easier to reactivate dormant accounts could increase usage.

**Way forward:**

- Many of these solutions involve re-bundling traditional financial services with new customer experiences, based on innovative business models. In nearly all markets, fintech has led the way on this re-bundling, partnering with incumbent banks and mobile network operators to distribute and scale their offerings.
- A final lesson is for incumbent providers and governments to leverage the fintech ecosystem to customize products for the needs of specific market segments, such as low income or rural women. These partnerships could make it more viable to market small-ticket, low-cost, large-scale financial services.

- As the world nears the long-held goal of universal financial access, we can see the road ahead for eliminating the gender gap in basic access and increasing usage among all customers, by making financial services more digital, flexible, and relevant to both men and women’s lives.
- There is a need to realize that women will not be hired just because they are women, no matter what the company’s diversity policy is. They will be hired because they are good at their work, and they are just as capable as the men who apply, and that is what we are trying to get them ready for.
Digitization of courts

1. Digitization of courts
Theme: Judicial Reforms

In news:
- The Supreme Court took a giant step towards digitization of courts across the country by launching three applications to facilitate e-filing of cases, making digital payments and service of judicial notices through smartphones to the litigants.
- The applications – e-courts services, E-pay and NSTEP (National Service and Tracking of Electronic Processes) would pave the way of quality and speedy justice to litigants.

Details:
- E-courts services, the litigants and the lawyers would be able to file petitions in almost 17,000 district and ‘taluka’ courts in the country by using their computers and mobile phones.
- E-pay would enable the litigants to pay court fees, costs imposed by courts, maintenance in matrimonial cases through digital means.
- NSTEP: court staffers would be provided Smartphones. So they are entrusted with the task of serving court summons and notices on litigants. The NSTEP would be connected to GPRS and the judges would be able to ascertain the fact whether the court staff has visited the place to serve the summons or not. Significance

Significance:
- It paves the path of quality, quantity, affordability and cost-effectiveness.
- It helps in achieving the goal of digital inclusion by computerizing courts

2) Modi’s big-ticket announcement is Ayushman Bharat
Theme: National Protection Health Scheme

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the launch date for his ambitious health insurance scheme.
- The Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Abhiyan (PMJAA), touted as the world’s largest healthcare scheme, aims to provide a cover of Rs.5 lakh per family annually, benefiting more than 10 crore poor families.
- It will be launched on September 25.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Abhiyan (PMJAA):
The government-sponsored health insurance scheme will provide free treatment for up to Rs.5 lakh a family a year in any government or empanelled private hospitals all over India. It is meant to help the poor and the economically deprived, the scheme will be available for 10.74 crore beneficiary families and about 50 crore Indian citizens.

Significance:

- Healthcare experts said Ayushman Bharat was an attempt to ensure that universal healthcare reached the weaker sections of society and it could raise the ratio of people availing primary and secondary healthcare.
- It is really good to see that the government is actively working on rolling out the policy on the ground.
- The government has made this a technology-driven initiative, which is a great step to ensure transparency and effective implementation, and at a grander scale, this initiative would encourage more work in development of overall health infrastructure in the country.
- Growing healthcare infrastructure in the country will help 50 crore poor people access medicines and essential drugs.
- Besides addressing the challenges of geographic inaccessibility and unaffordability, Ayushman Bharat has the potential of creating a cost-effective digitised health economy and catapulting India to the league of developed nations.

Concerns:

- But the current framework of the scheme will not be beneficial for people who need tertiary care as the remunerations under the scheme will not be sufficient to avail value-based healthcare.
- Under the scheme, tertiary healthcare service providers will be forced to cut cost at every level, which will lead to offering substandard healthcare to patients under the scheme.
- They may not be able to avail the necessary medication, technology and clinical expertise to get the best outcome and will soon lose confidence in the system.

Way Forward:

- Today, nearly 80% of the healthcare in India is provided by the private healthcare system and to meet the burgeoning healthcare needs of Indian population through value-based medicine, the country needs a synchronised effort by both the private and public sectors.
- The healthcare sector has noted that the government should look at mandatory universal health cover for all sections of society, which will increase the pool and allow cross-subsidy between the government and the private sector.

Source:

No child left behind | 02 July, 2019
Theme: Nutrition and Health:

Introduction:

- India is home to the largest number of malnourished children in the world, a report, advocating that the country needs to frame policies with a focus on reducing health and social inequities.
- The urgency to address poor nutrition in India, especially among children, adolescent girls and women is compelling, and re-confirmed in virtually every survey — from NFHS-4 in 2015-16, to the Global Nutrition Report 2016 and the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2017, which ranks India at 100 out of 119 countries, with a low overall score of 31.4.
- Among children less than 5 years, wasting (low weight for height), continues to be 21% in the 2017 index— it was 20% in 1992. There has been a reduction in stunting (height for age) – from 61.9% in 1992 to 4% in 2017, reported in the GHI 2017.
- Mortality among children less than 5 years old has declined to around 5% from 11% during the same period, according to both the GHI and the NFHS.
- However, 25% of India’s children less than 5 years old are still malnourished.
- The fact is that around 190.7 million people in India sleep hungry every night, and over half of adolescent girls and women are anaemic, and the conclusion is obvious — despite a 7% compound annual growth rate over the last decade and the various programmes to improve nutrition, levels of under-nutrition are unacceptably high.

No time to waste:

- Need to address immediately:
  - This grim reality lead to a renewed emphasis to address the various forms of poor nutrition: stunted, wasted, anaemic and underweight children; anaemic girls and women, especially in the 15-49 age group.
  - The recently announced flagship program of the Ministry of Women and Child Development will be anchored through the National Nutrition Mission (NNM), or Poshan Abhiyaan, with its own specific budget of ?9,046 crore and a proposed World Bank loan of $200 million, to ensure convergence among the various programmes of the government.
  - Additionally, NITI Aayog has worked on a National Nutrition Strategy (NNS), isolated the 100 most backward districts for stunting and prioritised those for interventions.

Address the structural and systemic issues:

- The optimistic view says that exploring new models to address the structural and systemic issues on a priority basis, learning from what has worked or not, and single-minded focus on implementation will be critical to delivering better nutritional outcomes and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals, to which India is a signatory.
- Initiatives like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, where implemented, will contribute positively to nutrition outcomes, and well-structured public-private partnerships could be the catalyst.

The overhaul of capacity and capability in three existing programmes, designed to reach populations most at risk, should be the first priority — namely:
The National Nutrition Strategy (NNS) has set very ambitious targets for 2022 and the Poshan Abhiyaan has also specified three-year targets to reduce stunting, under-nutrition and low birth weight by 2% each year, and to reduce anaemia by 3% each year. Both the NNS and the NNM have recognised the criticality of working collaboratively across Ministries; yet both are silent on the constructive role that the private sector, development agencies and civil society can and must play in realising these ambitious goals. Success in this domain will be driven by coordinated action on multiple fronts, but there are at least three urgent priorities.

Key Nutrition strategies and interventions:

Convergence between different Ministries will be a crucial aspect in making the mission successful.

Way Forward:

Three priorities that will improve the present situation:

- One, to adequately re-engineer the ICDS, MDM and PDS for greater effectiveness:
  - This is an ideal initiative for public-private partnerships as the strength of good private sector companies is in creating and designing frameworks, structures, processes and metrics for action, implementation and tracking.
  - For example, involving the best nutritionists to work with local communities on calorie and nutrition dense supplementary foods, using easily available local ingredients that are within the ICDS and MDM budget guidelines, and produced by self-help groups, could easily be anchored by the relevant private sector and development agencies, working with State governments, and considered a corporate social responsibility initiative.
  - The key advantages of this disaggregated supply model are that it engages local communities, generates employment and ensures minimal leakage as it works with and inside the community.
  - This will also ensure that space and other constraints of lack of hygiene at Anganwadi Centres do not become impediments in the supply of nutritious food.

- Two, To mandate and scale staple food fortification comprising edible oil, wheat, rice and dairy products, in addition to salt.

- There is persuasive evidence from several countries of the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of largescale staple food fortification to address “hidden hunger” or micro-nutrient deficiencies.

- The success of micro-nutrient fortified food is that it does not entail a change in
behaviour. Considerable work will also have to be done to make fortified rice and wheat available through the PDS.

- This requires addressing the supply chain capability to deliver — another excellent PPP initiative, that has been piloted in several States for edible oil and wheat flour and can easily be replicated.
- Mandatory fortification with micro-nutrients often sparks to think about it is that these universally consumed staple foods become the carriers of vitamins and minerals that people need but do not get in sufficient quantity from the food they consume.

- Three, multiple campaigns designed to inform, communicate and educate on nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive behaviours like breast feeding, diet diversity, hand-washing, de-worming, safe drinking water, hygiene and sanitation. Nutrition has to be “marketed” and made interesting, engaging, simple and personally relevant and this is an expertise where the private sector can meaningfully contribute. The approach, commitment and resources therefore have to be inter-generational, multi-sector, multidimensional and multi-year. To simplify a complex issue, the challenge for India is to simultaneously address insufficient and poor diets, inadequate hygiene and sanitation and better management of disease and infections.

Source:

Gaganyaan: Indian into space by 2022

Theme: Gaganyaan

Introduction:

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi announcing that an Indian astronaut would go into space by 2022, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has finally got a definitive timeline for a project it has been working on for the last 15 years.

Timeline: From an idea to a plan

Preparations have been going on since 2004, when the manned space mission was first endorsed by the ISRO Policy Planning Committee; there was lack of clarity on when exactly the mission would be launched, the target initially in was 2015.

- 2004: ISRO Policy Planning Committee recommends manned space mission
- 2006: National committee comprising 80 scientists and technocrats endorses proposal
- 2007: First public announcement of the human space programme
• 2009: Another experts’ committee, discusses the desirability and feasibility of the programme and expresses support
• 2010: Failure of GSLV-D3 and Failure of GSLV-F06
• 2014: Successful testing of experimental flight of GSLV Mk-III; this also successfully tests an experimental crew module, demonstrating re-entry capability
• June 2017: First ‘developmental’ flight of GSLV Mk-III
• July 2018: First successful flight of the crew escape system or “pad abort” test.
• August 15, 2018: Prime Minister announces manned mission to take place before 2022
Challenges:
A manned space mission is very different from all other missions that ISRO has so far completed. In terms of complexity and ambition, even the missions to the Moon (Chandrayaan) and Mars (Mangalyaan) are nowhere in comparison.
For a manned mission, the key distinguishing capabilities that ISRO has had to develop the ability to bring the spacecraft back to Earth after flight, and to build a spacecraft in which astronauts can live in Earth-like conditions in space.
Over the years, ISRO has successfully tested many of the technologies that are required, but many others are still to be developed and tested.

The rocket: GSLV Mk-III:
- The spacecraft carrying human beings, called crew module, is likely to weigh in excess of 5 to 6 tonnes.
- ISRO's main launch vehicle, the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, which carried the Chandrayaan and Mangalyaan missions too, can carry payloads that are barely up to 2 tonnes, and that too only to orbits at about 600 km altitude from the Earth's surface.
- That is why the development of GSLV Mk-III, a launch vehicle with capabilities to deliver much heavier payloads much deeper into space, was necessary.
- After three decades of efforts, mainly concentrated at developing an indigenous cryogenic engine
to power the rocket, ISRO successfully tested GSLV Mk-III, now called LVM-3 (Launch Vehicle Mark-3), in an experimental flight in December 2014.

- June 2017, ISRO successfully launched the first “developmental” flight of LVM-3, which carried the GSAT-19 satellite into space.
- The LVM-3 is the declared launch vehicle for taking the manned crew module into space. Over the next few years, many more flights of GSLV are scheduled.

Re-entry & recovery tech:

- The satellites launched by ISRO including Chandrayaan and Mangalyaan, normally meant to remain in space, even when their life is over.
- Any manned spacecraft, however, needs to come back. This involves mastering of the highly complicated and dangerous re-entry and recovery ability.
- While re-entering Earth’s atmosphere, the spacecraft needs to withstand very high temperatures, which is created due to friction.
- Also, the spacecraft needs to reenter the atmosphere at a very precise speed and angle, and even the slightest deviation could end in disaster.
- The first successful experimental flight of GSLV Mk-III on December 18, 2014, also involved the successful testing of an experimental crew module that came back to Earth after being taken to an altitude of 126 km into space.
- The Crew module Atmospheric Re-entry Experiment (CARE) spacecraft re-entered the atmosphere at about 80 km altitude and landed in the sea near the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Crew Escape System

- This is a crucial safety technology, involving an emergency escape mechanism for the astronauts in case of a faulty launch.
- The mechanism ensures the crew module gets an advance warning of anything going wrong with the rocket, and pulls it away to a safe distance, after which it can be landed either on sea or on land with the help of attached parachutes.
- Recently, ISRO completed the first successful flight of the crew escape system. A simulated crew module weighing about 3.5 tonnes was launched from Sriharikota.

Life Support:

- The Environmental Control & Life Support System (ECLSS) is meant to ensure that conditions inside the crew module are suitable for humans to live comfortably.
- The inside of the crew module is a twin-walled sealed structure that will recreate Earth-like conditions for the astronauts.
- The ECLSS maintains a steady cabin pressure and air composition, removes carbon dioxide and other harmful gases, controls temperature and humidity, and manages parameters like fire detection and suppression, food and water management, and emergency support.
- While the design and configuration of the ECLSS and the inside of the crew module has been finalised, other components and systems are in the process of being tested.
- Ground testing will have to be followed by tests in the space orbit while simulating zero gravity.
Astronaut training

- In the early part of the planning, a proposal for setting up an astronaut training centre in Bangalore was floated. Initially targeted by 2012, it is yet to take off.
- While ISRO still plans to set up a permanent facility, the selected candidates for the first manned mission will most likely train at a foreign facility.
- Candidates will need to train for at least two years in living in zero gravity and dealing with a variety of unexpected experiences of living in space.
- Some training would also be imparted at the Institute of Aerospace Medicine of the Indian Air Force at Bengaluru.

Budget

- During the early years of planning, the cost of India’s first manned space mission was estimated at about Rs 12,400 crore. But that was for a mission to be launched in 2015.
- The mission would now be completed for less than Rs 10,000 crore.
- Recently, the government approved the funding for the next 10 flights of GSLV Mk-III at an estimated cost of Rs 4,338.2 crore. This was supposed to take care of GSLV Mk-III missions till 2024.

Conclusion:

- If India does launch the Gaganyaan mission, it will be the fourth nation to do so after the United States, Russia and China.
- These developments will help ISRO in perfecting the cryogenic technology for sending up heavier and heavier payloads and will reduce India’s dependency on other countries to launch heavier satellites.

The rocket: GSLV Mk-III

- The spacecraft carrying human beings, called crew module, is likely to weigh in excess of 5 to 6 tonnes.
- ISRO’s main launch vehicle, the PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle), which carried the Chandrayaan and Mangalyaan missions too, can carry payloads that are barely up to 2 tonnes, and that too only to orbits at about 600 km altitude from the Earth’s surface.
- That is why the development of GSLV Mk-III, a launch vehicle with capabilities to deliver much heavier payloads much deeper into space, was necessary.
- After three decades of efforts, mainly concentrated at developing an indigenous cryogenic engine to power the rocket, ISRO successfully tested GSLV Mk-III, now called LVM-3 (Launch Vehicle Mark-3), in an experimental flight in December 2014.
- June 2017, ISRO successfully launched the first “developmental” flight of LVM-3, which carried the GSAT-19 satellite into space.
- The LVM-3 is the declared launch vehicle for taking the manned crew module into space.
Over the next few years, many more flights of GSLV are scheduled.

Re-entry & recovery tech

- The satellites launched by ISRO including Chandrayaan and Mangalyaan, normally meant to remain in space, even when their life is over.
- Any manned spacecraft, however, needs to come back. This involves mastering of the highly complicated and dangerous re-entry and recovery ability.
- While re-entering Earth’s atmosphere, the spacecraft needs to withstand very high temperatures, which is created due to friction.
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Source:

“Proxy job data being cited doesn’t provide an accurate picture”

Theme: Employment Issues

Concerns:

The biggest concern for the country right now is the lack of jobs and employment data.

Unemployment and underemployment are growing. The small producers and the informal sector
have done poorly over the last two years, and both agricultural and manufacturing have been performing poorly.

- But more long run damage is likely from India’s global image taking a hit due to a spate of incidents of hatred towards minorities.
- The increasing divisiveness and incidents of hatred directed at minorities, which are being covered by the international media are giving India a bad image and can hurt tourism and also foreign investment.
- Overall, India’s investment to GDP ratio has been going down.

Employment data:

- The government has suspended quarterly labour force surveys by the Labour Bureau, and we also don’t have the NSSO’s employment-scenario surveys anymore.
- It is using proxies like EPF or New Pension Scheme data which are not representative enough for a large nation like ours.
- In India, the trouble is a huge amount of employment is in sectors that are not formally registered. So unless you directly go to households, like the National Sample Survey does, and check what’s happening there, you do not get an accurate picture.
- However, the good news is that the government is planning to release annual data on employment, starting quite soon.

Human resource

- A growing expertise deficit hurts policy making because there are some parts of economic policy, such as exchange rate management and fiscal policy that have lots of subtle needs, which a politician or career bureaucrat is likely to miss out on.
- The absence of expertise also hurts the global image and that can have a negative fallout on the economy in the long run.
- Mistakes in economic policy can happen with any government. But there will be fewer of those if we have talented professionals at the helm.

Trade skirmishes could escalate to currency wars

- This is a risk and deserves to be heeded. India seems stable enough to be able to weather the fallout of a currency war.

Taper tantrum

Taper tantrum is the term used for the 2013 surge in U.S. Treasury yields, which resulted from the Federal Reserve’s use of tapering to gradually reduce the amount of money it was feeding into the economy.

International Economic Association

- It is a Non-Governmental Organization that was founded in 1950.
- Its aim from the beginning has been to promote personal contacts and mutual understanding among economists in different parts of the world through the organization of scientific meetings, through common research programs and by means of publications of an international character on problems of current importance.
India need Smart urbanization

| 02 July, 2019

India need Smart urbanization

Theme: Urbanization

Context:

- Residents of Bhavanpur, a village about 15 km outside Ahmedabad, have been protesting against their inclusion in the city’s urban area by the local urban development authority.
- Similar protests have been observed in villages elsewhere in Gujarat. It’s a strange trend, the fruits of urban development seemingly rejected.
- Meanwhile, pollution in India’s urban areas seems to have sparked off a reverse migration. Farmers from Haryana who had migrated to Delhi and Gurugram for work to escape an agricultural crisis are increasingly going back to their farms during winter, unable to take the toxic pollution. And it’s not just big cities.
- India’s urbanisation template is clearly ripe for change.

A rising number of Urban Population:

- Over 34% of India’s current population lives in urban areas, rising by 3% since 2011. More importantly, while existing large urban agglomerations (those with a population above 50 lakh) have remained mostly constant in number since 2005, smaller clusters have risen significantly (from 34 to 50 clusters with 10-50 lakh population).
- By some estimates, India’s urban population could increase to 814 million by 2050. And yet, cities look and feel downtrodden, riven with poverty and poor infrastructure, with little semblance of urban planning.
- With an increase in urban population will come rising demands for basic services such as clean water, public transportation, sewage treatment and housing.

Urban Development policy must correct Historical Mistakes:

- Our urban policymakers also need to be cognisant of the historical context of our urban development.
- Our cities have been witnessing to multiple transitions over the last century, with barely any time to recover and adapt — the British creation of three metropolitan port cities, combined with the rollout of the railway network, transformed India’s urban landscape, relegating erstwhile prominent Mughal-era towns such as Surat and Patna into provincial backwaters.
- The creation of hill stations in northern India and the advent of the plantation economy, along with
industrial townships (such as Jamshedpur) transformed trading networks.

- Finally, the creation of cantonments and civil lines areas, along with railway stations, in our major cities led to the haphazard growth of urban areas away from bazaars and towards railway terminals. Transforming them into neatly organised urban spaces will not be easy.

Smart Cities Mission: Implementing at a required pace?

- Meanwhile, on the ‘Smart City’ front, while over 90 ‘Smart Cities’ have identified 2,864 projects, India lags on implementation, with about 148 projects completed and over 70% still at various stages of preparation.
- Finally, there is still an outstanding shortage of over 10 million affordable houses (despite the government taking encouraging steps to incentivise their construction).
- The annually recurring instances of floods in Mumbai, dengue in Delhi and lakes on fire in Bengaluru paint a grim picture.
- While work continues, admittedly slowly, on the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor project and the bullet train, urban India’s challenges remain manifold.

Governance issues in Urban development:

- One primary problem is that of the definition of what’s urban. Urban development comes under State governments, with the Governor notifying an area as urban based on parameters such as population, density, revenue generated for the local administration and percentage employed in non-agricultural activities.
- This notification leads to the creation of an urban local government or municipality, classifying the area as a “statutory town”. With such a vague definition, discretionary decisions yield a wide variance in what is considered a town.
- The Central government considers a settlement as urban:
  - If it has a urban local government, a minimum population of 5,000;
  - over 75% of its (male) population working in non-agricultural activities; and
  - population density of at least 400 per sq. km
  - it has a urban local government.

Low Levels of Investments at Local level:

- Poor Capacity Building: Another issue is the low level of urban infrastructure investment and capacity building. India spends about $17 per capita annually on urban infrastructure projects, against a global benchmark of $100 and China’s $116.
- Governments have come and gone, announcing a variety of schemes, the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission included, but implementation has been mostly inadequate, with exploration of financing options limited as well.
- For example, Jaipur and Bengaluru collect only 5-20% of their potential property tax — how can urban local bodies be sustainable without enforcing this? Meanwhile, urban institutions also suffer from a shortage of skilled people.

Issue of urban Migration: Need of Effective policies:

- There needs to be a systemic policy to deal with urban migration. Internal migration in India is very closely linked to urban transitions, with such migration helping reduce poverty or prevent
households from slipping into it. Urban migration is not viewed positively in India, with policies often bluntly seeking to reduce rural to urban migration.

- Preventing such migration can be counterproductive — it would be better to have policies and programmes in place to facilitate the integration of migrants into the local urban fabric, and building city plans with a regular migration forecast assumed.
- Lowering the cost of migration, along with eliminating discrimination against migrants, while protecting their rights will help raise development across the board.
- Consider Delhi. While historically, urban policy sought to limit urban migration, this is now changing with a focus on revitalising cities nearby such as Meerut, building transport links and connectivity.

Towards a new model: New Urbanisation Policy

- Perhaps we need a different model of urbanisation. The announcement of a new urbanisation policy that seeks to rebuild Indian cities around clusters of human capital, instead of considering them simply as an agglomeration of land use, is a welcome transition.
- We need to empower our cities, with a focus on:
  - land policy reforms,
  - granting urban local bodies, the freedom to raise financing and
  - enforce local land usage norms.

Key areas to have fulfil Smart city mission

- Socio economic aspect
- Physical components
- Institutional mechanism

If these three objectives are woven together and in each other, it is easy to diversify and address number of problems like mobility, development of physical infrastructure, ICT, health, and economy. The main aim of the smart city mission is to ensure better quality of life.

Source:

Government released 'Digital North East: Vision 2022'

| 02 July, 2019

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Theme: Digital North East: Vision 2022

In News?
Recently government released 'Digital North East: Vision 2022', that aims to leverage digital technologies to transform lives of people of the northeastern states and enhance the ease of living.

Details:

- Under the Digital India programme government had earlier taken various digital initiative in North east such as: State Wide Area Network, Common services centre, National Knowledge Network, SMS based agricultural extension services etc.

The Vision document aims to consolidate all the disparate digital initiatives with a view to restructure, refocus, and fast track implementation in a synchronised manner.

- Launched under the Digital India programme it will be coordinated by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and will be implemented by various central
The document identifies eight digital thrust areas - digital infrastructure, digital services, digital empowerment, promotion of electronics manufacturing, promotion of IT and IT enabled services including BPOs, digital payments, innovation & startups, and cyber security.

It seeks to utililise the strengths and opportunities in the North East Region (NER):

- **Strategic location:** The Act East policy of the government places the NER in very advantageous position to open up e-trade and commerce with the neighbouring countries and the ASEAN region.
- **Literacy rate:** Literacy rate in NER are higher than the rest of India which provides pool of an easily skill-able workforce.
- **Distinct Seismic Plate:** As per the Seismic Zoning Map of India, some of the North East States reside in a different seismic zone compared to rest of India, making it an ideal destination for call centres, disaster recovery stations for Tier 3 and Tier 2 cities.
- **Cultural heritage:** The North East Region is home to more than 220 different tribes and communities, each having their unique culture, languages, handicraft and tradition. Digital repositories of such artefacts will create opportunity for massive digitisation.
- **Natural resources:** The abundance of natural resources provides scope for developing industries in herbal products, Ayurveda, fruit processing, precision agriculture etc.

The north eastern region is uniquely placed vis-à-vis the digital profile of India and the region has inherent strengths to be built upon and possess vast opportunities to be tapped for the overall development of India.

Source:

Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) study found the wide presence of GM ingredients in packaged food

| 02 July, 2019 |

Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) study found the wide presence of GM ingredients in packaged food

**Theme: Genetically modified food**

Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) study found the wide presence of GM ingredients in packaged food items sold in India.

**What are GM foods?**
GM foods involve taking genes (DNA) from different organisms and inserting them in food crops for the purpose of enhancing its productivity or increasing its immune power or nutritional and aesthetic values. There is a concern that this ‘foreign’ DNA can lead to risks such as toxicity, allergic reactions, and nutritional and unintended impacts.

Safety of GM Foods

Safety of GM crops and products has been a matter of concern for human health. Risk assessment on a case-by-case basis is critical for a country-level decision to allow or restrict GM foods because various GMOs have different genes, which are inserted in multiple ways. Also, studies used to evaluate the risk must take into account different populations and geographies.

Safety of GM foods in India

In 2017, a Parliamentary Committee report that examined the impact of GM crops on environment and human and animal health identified huge gaps with respect to the safety of GM crops. It noted the following key issues:

- There has been no Indian scientific study carried out so far to study the impact of GM crops on human health.
- The government should reconsider its decision to commercialize GM crops in the country as it has not been scientifically proven that GM crops have no adverse impact on human health. It is relying solely on studies that have not been done in India rather than on our own population and in the context of our climate and environment.
- It is very late in the day for the FSSAI to take a decision to label GM foods imported into the country. However, the committee strongly recommends that labeling on GM foods must be done with immediate effect.

Draft notification on labeling of GM foods:

- It was issued by FSSAI in May this year which mandates that any food that has 5 per cent or more GM ingredients, shall be labeled, provided this GM ingredient constitutes the top three ingredients in terms of percentage in the product.
- Despite these, most GM foods studied did not disclose the fact on the label. A few also made false claims of being GM free. Nearly 65% of the samples that were found GM positive did not disclose its genetically modified ingredients.

Criticisms against FSSAI:

- Against draft labeling regulations: The exemption limit of 5 per cent in the draft notification of labeling is very relaxed compared to other countries such as the EU, Australia and Brazil, which have limits at or below 1 per cent. Also it is very difficult for government to quantify the GM content in all foods as the tests are prohibitively expensive and technically cumbersome.
- FSSAI has not allowed any GM food on paper but has failed to curb its illegal sales: Since 2007, GM soybean and canola oils are being imported in India without the approval of FSSAI though GEAC had permitted its import.

Regulatory issues in the approval process for GM processed foods:
Since 1989, the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has been responsible for approving commercial cultivation of GM crops as well as the manufacture, import and selling of processed foods made from GM ingredients. So far, Bt cotton has been approved for cultivation.

In response, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) requested the MoEF&CC to continue regulating processed foods until the FSSAI was ready to do so in a scientific manner. The notification was kept in abeyance until 2016, making the GEAC responsible for approvals of processed foods, with no accountability of the FSSAI in practice despite Section 22 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (FSS Act) stating that GM foods shall not be manufactured, sold, distributed or imported until the FSSAI approves them.

Meanwhile, in 2013, the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011 were amended to mandate that packages containing genetically modified foods bear the words ‘GM’ on its principal display panel.

This rule was inconsistent with the fact that GM foods are not allowed in India and in fact created the false perception that GM food was allowed.

The FSSAI’s new draft labeling regulation of April 2018 aims to address the issue through labeling of GM foods.

Way Forward:

- The FSSAI must identify all GM products being sold in the market and prosecute companies and traders responsible.
- It must set up a safety assessment system for approval of both domestic and imported GM foods.
- India’s GM labeling regulations must be based on stringent exemption limit and qualitative screening as an enforcement tool meaning that all products wherein GM ingredients are used must be labeled even if the final product does not contain GM DNA or protein. The threshold limit for GM labeling exemption should be set at one per cent GM DNA and not on the weight of the ingredient.

Source:

Seeing through the smoke
| 02 July, 2019

Seeing through the smoke

Theme: Tobacco related Causes

Details:

- Traditionally, people have been using conventional products such as cigarettes, bidis and chewable tobacco.
Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of deaths worldwide. It is reported to kill an estimated seven million people every year. On average, tobacco users lose 15 years of their life. Up to half of all users will die prematurely due to tobacco-related causes by any year or time estimation. Most of these deaths will be in middle- and low-income nations, accounting for almost 80% of all tobacco-related deaths.

India is the third largest tobacco producer and the second largest consumer of tobacco worldwide. Tobacco-related mortality in India is estimated at upwards of 1.3 million people, with one million being attributed to smoking and the rest to smokeless-tobacco use.

Heated Tobacco Products:

- In the last decade, tobacco control in the form of restrictions and curbs being imposed by governments across the globe has taken centre stage, which in turn has affected the profits of tobacco firms.
- The tobacco industry is also attempting to maintain profits and keep people addicted by introducing new high-tech “heated tobacco products”, or HTPs, sticks of tobacco that are heated and look very similar to conventional cigarettes.
- These are being targeted at youth, who are being fed with the idea that they are less harmful than cigarettes because they do not burn tobacco and so produce lower levels of multiple toxicants (the main cause of smoking-related diseases).
- For example, the product, IQOS, is now available in 38 countries with the backing of a large transnational tobacco firm.
- And to sell it, there are boutique stores that have opened globally.
- The imagery used is of a clean, white and modern product with a suitable logo and tag line.
- While the claim is that the levels of harmful chemicals are much lower when compared to cigarette smoke, it must be noted that all the evidence supporting these claims is being driven by the tobacco lobby.
- Historically, there is strong evidence that studies backed by tobacco companies cannot be trusted.

‘Equally harmful’

- The World Health Organisation says “there is no evidence to demonstrate that HTPs are less harmful than conventional tobacco products”.
- The European Respiratory Society is clear that heated tobacco products are “harmful and addictive; undermine smokers’ wish to quit, and are a temptation for non-smokers and minors”.
- An expert scientific panel has advised the Food and Drug Administration to vote against applications by the tobacco giant to sell IQOS in the U.S. because there is no evidence that it is less risky than smoking cigarettes.

India

- The company now wants to bring IQOS to India, by marketing it as an aspirational product.
- India is a very young country. Half of its population is under the age of 25; two-thirds are less than 35 years.
- The promotion and marketing of HTPs is with the clear intent of attracting new tobacco users and not just to get smokers to swap.
- Some of those new users will inevitably be young people.
India has been a pioneer in tobacco control, having enacted the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, and launched a dedicated National Tobacco Control Programme in 2007-08.

Conclusion

- Choosing between two evils is still an evil.
- On the one hand you have traditional tobacco products readily available in the market while on the other you are introducing a new tobacco product with the aim of attracting youngsters.
- The bottom line is to keep margins and sales up in a market which is young and has immense business potential.
- Central and State governments need to prevent the sale and marketing of HTPs just as many States have prohibited the sale of electronic cigarettes.

Source:

Keralaâ€™s Trauma: A test for Indiaâ€™s Disaster management

Theme: Disaster Management

The unprecedented severe floods in Kerala unleashed by heavy rain, overflowing rivers, brimming dams and massive landslips has overwhelmed the State government and rescue agencies, as they struggle to make a complete assessment of the devastation.

Disaster and response to it

- More than 160 people have died and several are missing. A large number of people moved to relief camps.
- The State government faces the challenging task of rescuing people who are trapped in farflung houses in several districts and providing them food and water until the teams gets to them.
- Tourism has been badly affected. In Munnar, the blooming of the Neelakurinji flower, which occurs every 12 years, was expected to draw in the crowds.
- The town remains cut off now, with the spill from the Madupetty dam destroying livelihoods.
- Relief efforts are going on using a combination of boats and aircraft from the Air Force, the Navy and the Coast Guard and legions of rescue personnel, to get all the stranded people to safety.
- The State government has acted quickly to make online contributions to the Chief Minister’s Distress Relief Fund possible through a dedicated portal.
Support groups from neighbouring States such as Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have begun sending relief material, although the disruption to road connectivity has left a lot of it stranded at the inter-State borders.

What more can be done?

- Volunteer efforts can be better targeted if the district authorities in Kerala put out advisories on the nature of relief needed, and the locations and the modalities of transfer.
- Many control rooms have been opened, but integrating the mechanism by merging the various phone numbers into three or four, at one per region, and allocating sufficient phone lines, will help citizens use them more easily.
- Disaster management units in other States too should assist those working on the ground to deal with Kerala’s catastrophic floods; apart from helping, they will gain valuable experience as well.
- The task of reconstruction will have to be addressed, covering public buildings, residential homes, roads and other infrastructure.
- A subsidised housing programme may be needed in the worst-hit areas, with tax breaks offered to residents.

Need for a long-term plan:

- There is a dire need for a long-term comprehensive plan. A disaster management plan for dam failure should be in place.
- The Western Ghats, an eco-sensitive mountain range, is prone to degradation. Landslide-prone zones, mostly those receiving over 20 cm rainfall and at a 30-degree gradient, can be easily identified and people relocated.
- In the wake of the tragedy, there have been calls to implement the Madhav Gadgil Committee report on the Western Ghats.
- The 2011 report had recommended the zoning off of ecologically fragile areas, with no developmental activity allowed in areas classified as falling under zone 1.
- It was vigorously opposed in Kerala, with critics saying that it was impractical to do so in a densely populated State.
- In the Periyar basin, the committee against river pollution asserts that the unfolding disaster has been long due because of unchecked encroachments even on the floodplains of the river.
- There have been demands for the removal of toxic waste stockpiled in the industrial units, which were allowed to be set up along the Periyar’s banks in violation of environmental norms.
- The time has come to carry out floodplain zoning on a war-footing.
- There is a proposal of a comprehensive insurance policy — at zero premiums or for a nominal fee, for poor families living in vulnerable areas. Had the proposal been implemented, it would have eased the burden on victims during this flooding.
- The recent amendment to the Kerala Conservation of Paddy Land and Wetland Act which has eased the norms for the conversion of wetland for other land uses would also prove disastrous, as paddy fields, even when left barren, would cushion the impact of flooding.
- Equally important is a policy to preserve the remaining hills and wetlands, as they serve as water storing systems.

Conclusion:

- Kerala flood is a lesson worth of learning for India’s disaster management system.
- India, having more than 7500 km of coastline, should have a strong disaster early warning and
Sovereignty and sensitivity

Theme: India-Bhutan Relations

Introduction:

- The National Assembly of Bhutan was dissolved and an interim government was appointed this month ahead of the election, which will be completed by October-end, marking 10 years of democracy in Bhutan.

- The Border Roads Organisation, which helps build Bhutanese roads under Project Dantak, decided in July to make reflective stickers on the road sides and railings, in shades of the Indian tricolour, it raised red flags among the Bhutanese on social media.

- Citizens were worried that this was an attempt by India to impose its flag on their countryside. Eventually, the stickers were changed to blue and white.

- In April last year, the Department of Roads had to remove a board which read “Dantak welcomes you to Bhutan” at the Paro international airport. On an arterial highway, another board that credited the “Government of India” had to be painted over.

- The incident was a blip in India-Bhutan relations, but it is a clear indicator of heightened sensitivities in the Himalayan kingdom as it heads to its third general election.

- India has been an all-weather friend of Bhutan since the latter’s independence. It was India who supported Bhutan’s admission in the United Nations and has been with the tiny Himalayan nation since decades assisting it for having a distinct place in the global sphere.

- Assured by India for its distinct identity and autonomy since India’s independence Bhutan has been in the good book of India since the very beginning though with exceptional aberrations in bilateral relations.

- Even smaller than Nepal in size and population, Bhutan or Druk Yul (Land of thunder dragon) is mostly dependent on India, its southern neighbour, with which it has greater geographical and socio-cultural proximity

Sovereignty and self-sufficiency for Bhutan:

- The present Bhutanese government achieved the 8% GDP growth, along with a construction and management system. Cooperation between the states can create an expert and integrated national structure, to manage any kind of natural disaster
tourist boom in Bhutan.

They were successful in stabilising the rupee-ngultrum crises as well as for economic reforms. But Bhutan failed to curb the national debt, owed mostly to India for hydropower loans. Competing parties in the forthcoming elections are giving top priorities to “sovereignty, security and self-sufficiency” of Bhutan.

This election comes days after India-China stand-off in 2017 in the Bhutan-claimed area of Doklam. Therefore, the election candidates advocate a Bhutanese foreign policy that is less dependent on India.

Another party has a similarly worded campaign manifesto title: “For a self-reliant Bhutan: our concern, our responsibility”.

It can be concluded that, the concerns over India’s or any other country’s presence in Bhutan’s domestic and foreign policy are not being dismissed.

Steps that can take by India:

- India must step lightly and thoughtfully around the upcoming Bhutan’s national election.
- Government’s decision to cut cooking gas subsidy just before the 2013 elections in Bhutan has often been shown as proof of Indian interference. This should not be repeat.
- The government should keep high-profile visits at an arm’s length from the election process; especially given that there will be several such visits after the National Assembly is chosen.

Revisiting policies and issues that had followed:

The preceding months may also be a useful gape to revise India’s Bhutan policy and address several issues that have come up in the past few years — for example, the hydropower projects where delays in constructing and commissioning in Bhutan by Indian companies have led to the country’s burgeoning national debt.

- India’s power-surplus status and the advent of other renewable energies like wind and solar power will make it more difficult for Bhutan to ensure that its hydropower sector becomes profitable.
- Unless India finds ways to help, it will be accused of the same sort of “debt-trapping” that China is accused of today.
- India also needs to focus on policing cross-border trade. The goods and services tax still hurts Bhutanese exporters, and demonetisation has left lasting scars on the banking system.

Dealing with China:

- China shares a contiguous border of around 470 kms with China. China does not have official diplomatic relations with Bhutan. The biggest issue between India and Bhutan will remain how to deal with China.
- The Doklam crisis has brought home many realities for the Bhutanese establishment. Doklam, which has long been discussed as part of a possible “package solution” to the Bhutan-China border dispute, could become a point of India-China land dispute, with Bhutan becoming a hapless spectator in the middle.
- China’s actions since last June, to build a permanent military presence above the stand-off point, mean that Bhutan has a much-reduced advantage in any forthcoming negotiations on the issue.
- Experts point out that China’s actions since last June, to build a permanent military presence above the stand-off point, mean that Bhutan has a much-reduced advantage in any forthcoming
negotiations on the issue.

Conclusion:

- India's effective neighbourhood approach will prove conducive towards building a cohesive and durable relationship with Bhutan in the coming days. Our bilateral political relations with Bhutan have matured over the years and are characterised by close trust and understanding and extensive cooperation in the field of economic development, particularly in the mutually beneficial sector of hydroelectric power.
- Despite Bhutan's assertion of sovereignty and democracy, which is viewed by others a turning away from India, Indo-Bhutan relations will continue to prevail on good note in the coming days.
- As such, India is known for its devotion to democracy and its contribution towards a democratised world. Empirically, India has advocated and supported sovereignty and right of self-determination of nations across the world.
- The hydropower projects, where delays in construction and commissioning by the Indian companies took place, have led to the Country's increase in the national debt. The tariffs need to be re-negotiated.
- Moreover, in India advent of wind / solar makes it more difficult for Bhutan to ensure that its hydropower sector becomes profitable. Considering this legacy of Independent democracy, India should refrain from interfering in sovereign matters of Bhutan.

Source:

Slum policies

| 02 July,2019

Slum policies

Theme: Urbanization related issues

Context:

India’s rapid urbanization has been proceeding apace for decades and there is growth of Slums in the urban areas and for thousands who come to the cities every day, cheap housing in slums is often the springboard to better lives.

Urbanisation refers to the population shift from rural to urban residency, the gradual increase in the proportion of people living in urban areas, and the ways in which each society adapts to this change. It is predominantly the process by which towns and cities are formed and become larger as more people begin living and working in central areas.
Urbanization trends - 3

- Slums
  - Unhygienic conditions
    - Communicable diseases
    - Non-Communicable diseases
- Migration
  - Overcrowding
    - Stretching of overburdened systems
      - Injuries
      - Stress
      - Mental illness
- Illiteracy
  - Unemployment
    - Poverty
    - Crimes
- Life style modification

Migration-cobweb
How should India address this issue?

- First, India must get its numbers right as there are no concrete figures on these temporary and semi-permanent settlements.
- Slums have a fluid definition and legal pedanticism leads to exclusion of people.
- The 2011 Census estimated 65 million people in slums, a marked shortfall from the UN-HABITAT’s 2014 estimation of 104 million.
- Current slum policies primarily focus on housing, relocation or in-situ development of multi-storey complexes, which free up swathes of prime real estate. But in doing so we miss out on the brewing socio-economic distress in slums.
- Over 70% of families in slums live in debt.
- The difference between their monthly earnings and expenses is less than Rs.1,000 leaving them vulnerable in case of educational, vocational, social or health emergencies.
- Moreover, with no access to formal financial systems, any borrowing comes from private money lenders at high interest rates.
- For many, even water and electricity are disproportionately more expensive as they are forced to rely on the grey market rather than on formal, subsidised channels.

What could this lead to?

- The cumulative effect is that residents end up staying in the same slums for an average of 21 years. When families did move out of their slums, it was towards “cheaper,” worse-off slums.
- This is perhaps due to the rapidly changing profile of entry level jobs.
- Undergraduate or technical certificates can only provide low-paying jobs. Much like their parents, the youth earn less than their more-educated peers who don’t live in slums.

Way forward

- A nuanced slum policy, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach is the need.
- In many established slums, political patronage has produced concrete houses, title deeds, piped water and regularised electricity. Here, economic opportunities and employment are key.
- On the other end, slums resembling tented refugee camps need housing and basic amenities.
- Until these nuances are considered, ambitious but slow-to-implement housing schemes will do little for the welfare of slum dwellers.

Source:

Simultaneous elections not soon

| 02 July, 2019 |
Simultaneous elections not soon

Theme: Simultaneous elections

Context:

- Chief Election Commissioner O.P. Rawat’s view that it is not possible to hold simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies soon.
- It is a humongous task ahead of the Election Commission.

 Arguments in favour of simultaneous elections:

- The country is perpetually in election mode, resulting in a lack of adequate focus on governance.
- The second contention is that scattered polling results in extra expenditure.

Reasons compelling postponement of simultaneous elections:

- Along with a legal framework under which the extension or curtailment of the term of any Assembly is constitutionally permissible, simultaneous elections would demand a massive increase in the number of electronic voting machines (EVMs) and voter-verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) units. Ensuring the availability of VVPATs everywhere poses a logistical challenge.
- According to CEC altering the term of an Assembly needs an amendment to the Constitution.
- Mizoram, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan assemblies are going to end their term between December and January. A new batch of VVPAT units is expected only by the end of November.
- It takes a month for first-level checking, rendering the possibility of using them in the next round of elections remote.
- Simultaneous elections will require the use of 24 lakh EVMs, needing the procurement of 12 lakh EVMs and an equal number of VVPAT units, according to its estimate.
- These figures ought to give pause to the plan to hold simultaneous Assembly elections with the next Lok Sabha polls.

Other issues:

- A wide political consensus, as well as legislative cooperation from various parties at the Centre and in the States, is required for holding simultaneous elections.
- It is natural that parties that control legislatures constituted in recent months or years would resist any curtailment of their tenures, while those in the Opposition may prefer simultaneous polls if it means Assembly elections being advanced.

Conclusion:

- Simultaneous polls pose too big a legal and logistical challenge to be implemented now.
- Given the procedural and logistical challenges that holding of simultaneous elections pose, it would be far more productive for political parties to focus on basic electoral reforms and find ways to curb excessive election expenditure.
Strong wage policies needed to promote inclusive growth in India

02 July, 2019

Theme: ILO’s India Wage Report

Context:

- The report depicts that though India’s economy in the past two decades saw an annual average GDP rate of 7 percent, low pay and inequality persists in the country.

Wage inequality and gender wage gap still persist:

- The overall wage inequality in India declined since 2004–05; however, it continues to remain high.
- The decline in overall wage inequality could be attributed to the doubling of the wages of casual workers between 1993–94 and 2011–12.
- On the other hand, the increase in wage inequality for regular workers stabilised in 2011–12 in comparison to 1993–94 and 2004–05.
- Despite a decline from 48 percent in 1993-94 to 34 percent in 2011–12, the gender wage gap is still steep. The wage gap exists for all kind of workers – regular and casual, urban and rural.
- Women employed as casual workers in the rural economy earn the lowest in India, which is 22 percent of what urban regular male workers earn.

Estimates of National sample survey office (NSSO):

- The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) estimates indicate that the real average daily wage doubled between 1993–94 and 2011–12.
- There was a boost in wages of the most vulnerable categories including workers in rural areas, informal employment, casual workers, female workers and low-paid occupations. However, disparities remain there.
- As per the Employment and Unemployment Survey (EUS) of the NSSO, in 2011–12, the average wage in India was about Rs 247 per day, and the average wage of casual workers was Rs 143 per day.
- Only a limited number of salaried workers, mostly in the urban areas, and the highly-skilled professionals earned higher average wages.

Workers still earn less than the indicative national minimum wage:
Despite India being one of the first countries to introduce minimum wages through the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, challenges still exist in providing a universal wage floor for all workers.

- The minimum wages are set by state governments for employees in selected ‘scheduled’ employment and this has led to 1709 different wage rates across the country; and these rates are applicable only for estimated 66 percent of wage workers.
- A national minimum wage floor was introduced in 1990s which has progressively increased to Rs 176 per day in 2017.
- In 2009–10, around 15 percent of salaried workers and 41 percent of casual workers earned less than the national minimum wage.
- Nearly 62 million workers are still paid less than the indicative national minimum wage.

Recommendations and Way Forward:

- The ILO report puts out several recommendations to improve the current minimum wage system through strong wage policies.
- Some of these are extending legal coverage to all workers, ensuring full consultation with social partners on minimum wage systems, simplifying minimum wage structures, and taking stronger measures to ensure a more effective application of minimum wage law.
- One of the recommendations calls for collection of statistical data on a timely and regular basis.
- Complementary actions needed to address how to achieve decent work and inclusive growth, such as, fostering accumulation of skills to boost labour productivity for sustainable enterprises, promoting equal pay for work of equal value and strengthening social protection for workers.

Source:

Educating people about climate change

Theme: Climate Change and awareness

Introduction:

Climate change has the potential to disrupt and reshape lives. There are several alarming predictions about its impact. Vulnerable populations should be made aware of the potential risks and how to cope with them.

Global findings and India

- The UN Sustainable Goals Report, 2018 notes that climate change is among the key factors in rising hunger and human displacement.
- The World Health Organisation estimates that climate change will cause an additional 250,000
deaths per year between 2030 and 2050, due to malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress. Much of this loss will be accounted for by low-income groups in developing nations, including India. The World Bank projects that climate change could cost India 2.8% of its GDP, and diminish living standards for nearly half the population, in the next 30-odd years.

Need of awareness:

- Do vulnerable groups know the manifestations of climate change, and are they aware that it could potentially affect the health, livelihoods and lives of their families and communities, of present and future generations?
- Is there sufficient awareness about its causes, especially about anthropogenic contributions?

Various initiatives:

- In 1991, the Supreme Court directed the Central government and all State governments to provide compulsory environmental education to all students in schools and colleges.
- This directive was reiterated in 2003 (M.C Mehta v. Union of India).
- Corporate organisations, research and education institutes, NGOs and foundations have committed themselves to educating people about climate change and providing the know-how for mitigation, adaptation and resilience building.
- These initiatives target urban and rural populations including school going children.
- Their thrust ranges from inculcating the concept of environmental sustainability to driving home the impact of climate change on food, water, nutrition and health.

Effectiveness of initiatives:

- Climate change seems to find low weight in everyday lives and conversations.
- Most of the country’s plans for vulnerable populations are directed towards poverty alleviation, improving living standards, enhancing access to education, sanitation, healthcare and ensuring human rights. Climate change finds little mention.
- It must receive greater prominence because the lives of a large number of the population are at risk. It is important that they know how to address and minimise the risks they face.

Way Forward:

- At present, climate change does not find specific mention in Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013.
- If it were to be articulated and specified as an activity for corporate social responsibility (CSR), schedule VII (of Companies Act 2013) would then need to be amended to include climate change as an area for investment.
- Rather than be implied in the umbrella term of environmental sustainability, organisations may be encouraged to view it with increased importance and clarity and lend more weight to creating awareness, mitigation and resilience-building.
- Scaling up current initiatives of the corporate and social sectors to regional or national levels would be an early, albeit challenging, solution.
- The National CSR Data Portal reports corporate spends on environment, animal welfare and conservation of resources to be Rs. 801 crore in 2014-15 and Rs. 912 crore in 2015-16. It shows that the business organisations are willing to invest in issues related to the environment.
- Similarly, the film industry could consider ways to incorporate key aspects of climate change in
films, writers could introduce climate change in adult and children’s literature, and gaming companies could develop games on this theme.

Source:

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Economi partnership(RCEP) and India

| 02 July, 2019

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Economic partnership(RCEP) and India

Theme: The Economics Of Regional Comprehensive Partnership

Introduction:

- Negotiations on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), among 16 Asian and Pacific Ocean countries, have entered a decisive phase. And it would like to see a “substantive agreement” on the trade deal by the end of this year.
- Most potential member-countries of the grouping comprises the 10 ASEAN members and their Free Trade Agreement partners, Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and Republic of Korea.
- At a meeting in Singapore, countries which still have issues with the outline of the agreements reached so far may be told politely to step aside and allow a smaller group to go ahead with finalising the RCEP, with the option to join it at a later date.
- India is among the countries that will have to take a call at this point considering the seriousness of the situation.

Do you Know:

- RCEP will provide a framework aimed at lowering trade barriers and securing improved market access for goods and services for businesses in the region.
- In 2017, prospective RCEP member states accounted for a population of 3.4 billion people with a total Gross Domestic Product (GDP, PPP) of $49.5 trillion.
- It is approximately 38-39 percent of the world’s GDP with the combined GDPs of China and Japan making up more than half that amount.
- RCEP’s share of the global economy could account for half of the estimated $0.5 quadrillion global GDP (PPP) by 2050.
- The grouping envisages regional economic integration, leading to the creation of the largest regional trading bloc in the world.
- RCEP recognises the importance of being inclusive, especially to enable SMEs leverage
Importance of Signing and Ratifying of RCEP Agreement:

- RCEP needs to be understood as a “comprehensive” agreement, which helps tap the economic complementarities that get generated due to the interlinkages among various segments of trade.
- These inter-linkages are particularly important when India endeavours to integrate with a region, which has been the most successful region of the world in terms of thriving regional value chains (RVCs).
- These RVCs necessitate freer movement of professionals across countries in the region.
- This is especially crucial in a scenario when the vector of India’s demographic dividend is concomitant to the vector of the “aging” population in most RCEP countries.
- This skill-matching needs to be focused in the realm of RCEP negotiations by signing an RCEP Agreement on Movement of Natural Persons Harnessing Regional Skill-Complementarities.
- All these may or may not add up to trade deficit. It is worth highlighting that trade deficit needs to be viewed in the context of its affordability. For instance, just as an individual loan and usage of credit cards are deficits at the micro level, but can be very helpful if it can be afforded by the individual, the trade deficit needs to be approached at the macro level.
- Finally, analysts suggest that there are enormous export gains that could accrue to India from RCEP under varying scenarios.
- This assumes even greater importance since our focus has been on products with favourable terms of trade for India.
- This implying that per-unit foreign exchange realization from these products will be greater than perunit foreign exchange expenditure on imports of similar products within intra-industry trade pattern.

Way Forward:

- If India is out of the RCEP, it would make its exports price uncompetitive with other RCEP members’ exports in each RCEP market, and the ensuing export-losses contributing to foreign exchange shortages and the subsequent extent of depreciation of the rupee can only be left to imagination. Some of the sectors that have been identified as potential sources of India’s export growth impulses under RCEP to the tune of approximately $200 billion. Exports include processed food, gems and jewellery, metal manufactures, refined petroleum, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, leather goods; textiles and clothing, automobiles and parts, electrical machinery, and parts of aircraft and spacecraft, etc.
- There are more compelling trade and economic reasons for RCEP to become India-led in future, than otherwise. India would get greater market access in other countries not only in terms of goods, but in services and investments also. India must play its due role to get its due place in the regional economic configurations.
- At a time when the U.S. has broken from the global consensus on multilateral trade agreements, an Indian walking out would endanger the united message that RCEP countries, which represent 40% of global GDP, would wish to send out.
- It would also be a sharp departure from India’s Act East slogan to its extended outreach to ASEAN.
What does the falling rupee mean for you and economy?

02 July, 2019

What does the falling rupee mean for you and economy?

Theme: Inflation

Context

• With the rupee recently weakening past ₹70 to a dollar and hovering about that level since, concerns over the impact of the devaluation on economic indicators are intensifying.
• This is again fueled by stubbornly high oil price.

| Inflation:
Inflation is the rate at which the general level of prices for goods and services is rising and consequently, the purchasing power of currency is falling. Central banks attempt to limit inflation and avoid deflation in order to keep the economy running smoothly. |

What happens to inflation?

• One of the first visible effects of currency depreciation is the country’s imports become more expensive and exports cheaper.
• It takes more rupees to pay for the same quantum of imports and fewer dollars for a buyer to pay for the same quantity of exports.
• More expensive imports are likely to drive inflation upward, especially in India where img products constitute a large part of our imports.
• In addition, a depreciating rupee also impacts the oil import bill since it costs more rupees per barrel of oil, which plays its own part in pushing inflation up.

What happens to GDP growth?

• This is a more complex issue given the number of factors that affect GDP growth.
• On the one hand, costlier imgs and the subsequent increase in the prices of finished goods should have a positive impact on GDP. But the consequent decrease in demand due to higher prices could nullify this.
• This is best explained using the textbook formula of aggregate demand equaling the sum of household consumption of goods and services, investment, government expenditure on goods and services, and exports minus imports.
• A depreciating rupee certainly affects the exports and imports, since exports are likely to receive a boost while imports could flag somewhat.
• It remains to be seen what impact a reduction in household consumption would have on demand, especially when the festive season is nearing.
What does this mean for the citizens?

- A depreciating rupee means higher prices of goods and services, costlier petrol and trips abroad turning more expensive.
- On the flip side, the domestic tourism could grow as more tourists visit India since their currency now buys more here.
- In the medium term, export-oriented industries may also create more jobs.

Source:

Beyond words, India â€“ Pak Relations

Theme: India-Pakistan Relations

Context:

Since the Prime Minister Imran Khan’s swearing-in ceremony in Pakistan, there have been many substantive exchanges between New Delhi and Islamabad.

Details:

- In his first statement after the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf emerged as the single largest party, Mr. Khan singled out India as a foreign policy relationship he hoped to work on, offering to walk “two steps for every one step” that India took.
- Indian Prime Minister responded with a phone call, and they spoke of a shared vision of “peace and development”.
- The Indian High Commissioner presented the Pakistan PM a cricket bat with the signatures of the Indian team members.
- The new appointee on the Pakistan Cricket Board has said that resuming bilateral cricket is high on the leader’s agenda for improving people-to-people ties.
- A delegation led by a Minister in Pakistan’s caretaker government came to Delhi to attend Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s funeral.
- The Pakistan’s new Foreign Minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, said Mr. Khan had received a congratulatory letter from Mr. Modi calling for the two countries to pursue “constructive engagement”.
- Khan tweeted that trade and resolution of differences through dialogue are the “best way” to “uplift the people in the subcontinent”.
- All these gestures confirm that both the Prime Ministers are at least sticking by diplomatic courtesy against the backdrop of an otherwise bitter relationship.
Existing Situation:

- There appears to be very little trust in any quarter of both capitals. Both leaders face political realities that could inhibit them from taking any major risks.
- Modi, who dealt with the Pathankot airbase attack just days after his visit to Lahore in December 2015, may well prefer to avoid such overtures, especially with Lok Sabha elections due in less than a year.
- Khan, who commands a thin majority in Parliament, and has frequently criticised his predecessors for close ties with India, may choose to remain conservative.

Way forward:

- Well-chosen words, however, will not be enough. The steps needed are clear.
- To kick start, the situation at the Line of Control urgently needs attention, and a restoration of the ceasefire would be a major move forward for both countries.
- Khan could earn Pakistan an economic breather if he adheres to the international Financial Action Task Force’s demands on ending terror financing. He would earn more goodwill by directly addressing India’s concerns on the support to terrorists in Pakistan, and those being pushed over the LoC.
- These actions could set up an even bolder move, no matter how unlikely it currently seems: for Mr. Modi to agree to restore the SAARC process by attending the long-delayed summit due in Islamabad this year.
- Much work, preferably behind the scenes, is needed if both the Prime Ministers hope to realise any of the objectives they have spoken of over the past month. India and Pakistan must build on diplomatic courtesy to restore equilibrium to ties.

Source:

Chandrayaan-1 data confirms Presence of Ice on Moon: NASA

| 02 July, 2019

Chandrayaan-1 data confirms Presence of Ice on Moon: NASA

Theme: Chandrayyan-1

Ice Deposits on Moon:

- NASA Scientists have found frozen water deposits in the darkest and coldest parts of the Moon’s polar regions using data from the Chandrayaan-1 spacecraft that was launched by India 10 years ago.
- The ice deposits are patchily distributed and could possibly be ancient, according to the study
At the southern pole, most of the ice is concentrated at lunar craters, while the northern pole’s ice is more widely, but sparsely spread.

Chandrayaan-1:

- It is India's first mission to the moon.
- Includes a lunar orbiter and an impactor.
- Launched by a modified version of the PSLV-C11.
- Launched On 22 October 2008 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
- It is a remote sensing satellite
- Weight: 1,308 kilograms (590 kilograms initial orbit mass and 504 kilograms dry mass
- Mission Period: Over a two-years
- Mission Cost: The estimated cost for the project is Rs. 3.86 billion.
- Aim: Survey the lunar surface to produce a complete map of its chemical characteristics and 3-
  dimensional topography. The polar regions are of special interest, as they might contain ice.
- Payloads: The mission includes five ISRO payloads and six payloads from other international space agencies including NASA, ESA, and the Bulgarian Aerospace Agency, which are being carried free of cost.
- With the successful launch of Chandrayaan-1, India became the sixth nation to send a mission to the moon.

NASA’s Moon Mineralogy Mapper (M3) is testimony

- M3, aboard the Chandrayaan-1 spacecraft, launched in 2008 by the Indian Space Research
Organisation (ISRO), was uniquely equipped to confirm the presence of solid ice on the Moon.

- Scientists used data from NASA’s Moon Mineralogy Mapper (M3) instrument to identify three specific signatures that definitively prove there is water ice at the surface of the Moon.
- It collected data that not only picked up the reflective properties we would expect from ice, but was also able to directly measure the distinctive way its molecules absorb infrared light, so it can differentiate between liquid water or vapour and solid ice.
- Most of the new-found water ice lies in the shadows of craters near the poles, where the warmest temperatures never reach above minus 156 degrees Celsius.
- Due to the very small tilt of the Moon’s rotation axis, sunlight never reaches these regions.

Importance of the discovery:

- Previous observations indirectly found possible signs of surface ice at the lunar South Pole, but these could have been explained by other phenomena, such as unusually reflective lunar soil.
- Learning more about this ice, how it got there, and how it interacts with the larger lunar environment will be a key mission focus for NASA and commercial partners, as humans endeavour to return to and explore the Moon.
- This brings scope for presence of surface water accessible as a resource for future expeditions to explore and even stay on the Moon.

Source:

Finmin to PSB CEOs: check NPA frauds or face action

Theme: Non Performing Assets

- In a stern warning to bankers, the finance ministry has asked chief executives of public sector banks (PSBs) to check all NPA accounts exceeding Rupees 50 crore for fraud, else face criminal conspiracy charges, according to official sources.

- This missive comes in the light of arrest of Bhushan Steel’s erstwhile promoter Neeraj Singal by the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) for alleged siphoning of funds.

- The sources said that bankers could be held accountable under Section 120B of Indian Penal Code if they fail to report fraud in an account which is later unearthed by investigating agencies.

‘Criminal proceedings’:

- If the investigating agencies find diversion of funds in those defaulting accounts, bankers may be liable
to face criminal proceedings, the sources said, adding that this advisory is like an extra precaution to keep bankers from getting into legal tangles.

• More than a dozen companies undergoing bankruptcy resolution are being reviewed by banks and investigating agencies for fraudulent activities, including diversion of funds.

• Indian banks are facing mounting non-performing assets or bad loans, especially at PSBs, which have reached more than 8 lakh crore rupees.

• In addition, several banking frauds have been unearthed, including the Rupees 14,000-crore scam at PNB, carried out allegedly by diamond jeweller Nirav Modi and his associates.

• A senior government official confirmed the development and said that some discrepancies had been pointed out in the case of a steel-maker and a real estate firm among 10-12 companies.

• There were some imgs and lenders have been asked to provide transaction details of last five years. If required, banks will also undertake forensic audit.

**Associate firms involved**

• Similar modus operandi has been used by other promoters also, there had been intelligence imgs on associate companies being used for similar transactions.

• SFIO is also looking into the books of companies which are currently undergoing debt resolution adding that this had been done on the basis of specific imgs provided by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

• During the resolution process, the extensive audit of bankrupt companies has thrown up financial irregularities in several cases.

• In June 2017, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had identified 12 stressed accounts, each having more than Rupees 5,000 crore of outstanding loans and accounting for 25% of the total non-performing assets (NPAs) of banks for immediate referral under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

• In August, RBI had sent a list of 28 more firms to lenders for resolution by December 2017. These accounts also have some firms from the second list and those where later banks filed cases in NCLT (National Company Law Tribunal).

• The NCLT benches handle banks’ bad debt resolution under the IBC.

• Banks have to undertake a two-year transaction audit when they start the resolution process through IBC.

• In case there are any issues or specific information, banks also conduct a forensic audit.

• In August 2017, the SFIO was given powers to arrest people for company law violations.

• SFIO is a multidisciplinary organisation having experts for prosecution of white-collar crimes and frauds under company law.
Pulling back from the brink

Theme: Global Warming

A group of scientists has published a paper in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences deliberating on how the Earth might move into a high temperature "hothouse earth" pathway from where there would be no return.

**Earth’s equilibrium:**

- We are living in a delicately equilibrated earth where the temperature is just right for ecosystems to flourish.

- The Holocene, the current geological epoch, which began about 12,000 years ago, is the stable epoch during which Homo sapiens settled and developed agriculture and other technological innovations. These led to social and economic transformations, which have brought the world to this juncture.

- Human activity, supported by the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, led to an increase in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that are now causing global warming.

- This time period, the epoch when humans play a dominant role in shaping the earth systems, is being referred to as the Anthropocene.

- The delicate equilibrium of the biosphere has to do with processes that amplify or dampen warming. For instance, melting of Greenland ice increases open waters that absorb more sunlight and then increase warming and cause further melting. This is a positive feedback.

- With the increase in carbon dioxide (CO2), chemical-weathering increases and removes CO2 from the atmosphere over geological time — an example of a negative feedback.

- When positive feedbacks become stronger than the negative ones, the system may change abruptly and get pushed out of equilibrium.

- The earth and its systems have shifted between alternative states through long-term processes over its geological history. Now, it appears we are approaching some critical thresholds.

**Tipping point:**

- The paper identifies a threshold beyond which the earth’s systems are no longer able to stabilise at intermediate rises in temperature.
It is pointed out that technology trends and decisions taken in the next decade or two will determine the path of the earth system over the next hundreds of thousands of years.

A geophysical tipping point is a threshold beyond which a system moves from one stable state to another. This study indicates that crossing a threshold (roughly determined to be about 2º Celsius warmer than pre-industrial times) would lead to the tumbling of a series of tipping points, like a set of domino effect.

The destruction of the Amazon forest due to wildfires, the loss of permafrost with warming, the weakening of CO2 absorption by the oceans or the melting of polar ice caps, among many other slow-moving catastrophes, are examples.

If many tipping points tumble beyond 2ºC (as suggested by the scientists), it would irrevocably disrupt ecosystems and societies and there would be runaway climate change, taking us to a hothouse earth.

The authors identify three clusters of tipping-linked cascades, out of human control, that could happen over time with rising temperatures:

- Atmospheric concentrations of CO2 (now over 400 ppm) are responsible for global average temperatures that are about a degree Celsius higher than at pre-industrial times. To find another time on earth with these levels, we need to go back some 3-4 million years to the mid-Pliocene, when sea levels were 10-22 m higher. The authors consider this stage to remain accessible only if there is a great deal of concerted effort in a remarkably short period.

- In the mid-Miocene (about 15-17 million years ago), CO2 concentrations were 300-500 ppm and sea levels were 10-60 m higher than today. This is where the earth is possibly headed with continuing GHG emissions.

- Even if the Paris Agreement of 2015 is implemented and we managed to keep warming below 2º C or even 1.5º C, the risk of a cascade of feedbacks that pushes the earth into the hothouse path may be unavoidable.

Way forward:

- Technological solutions alone are insufficient. Fundamental shifts in social values and economic mores are essential. The changes required and ways to make them in an ethical manner are still being debated, with a lot of uncertainty on whether these can be accomplished.

- In order to stabilise the earth, we would have to recognise and then carry out deliberate, sustained action to secure earth systems and also adapt to a warmer world. Some of these feedback effects, such as loss of Arctic ice, could be reversed over a few hundred years, but others such as Antarctic ice would take much longer.

- Global emissions have risen by 1.4% last year. Deep cuts in GHG emissions, increasing carbon sinks, finding ways to remove CO2 and perhaps even deflecting solar radiation to modify the energy balance would all be needed along with adapting to living in a warmer world.

- Given history and the state of the biosphere, some scientists are not hopeful about avoiding the hothouse path. Others believe that it could still be avoided and the earth could stabilise at a rise below 2º
• Incremental changes along with increasing contributions from renewables and improvements in energy efficiencies would not be sufficient. There should instead be major changes in technological innovation, behaviour, values and governance. This is an unprecedented challenge for humanity.

Source:

State can stop voluntary retirement of doctors’

Theme: Scarcity of Doctors

• The State can stop government doctors from taking voluntary retirement in public interest, the Supreme Court has ruled.

• The fundamental right to retire is not above the right to save lives in a country where government hospitals cater to the poorest, a Bench of Justices Arun Mishra and S. Abdul Nazeer said in its judgment.

• The concept of public interest can also be invoked by the government when voluntary retirement sought by an employee will be against public interest.

Scarcity of doctors:

• The court said public health was suffering from a scarcity of doctors. Qualified doctors did not join the public service, and even if they did so, they chose voluntary retirement and went into lucrative private practice.

• It said the poor could not be put in peril by a paucity of specialists in government hospitals. The State governments had an obligation “to make an endeavour under Article 47 to look after the provisions for health and nutrition.

• The doctors, as citizens, had certain fundamental duties under Article 51(A) towards their fellow citizens. The right to practise a profession under Article 19(1)(g) was subject to the interest of the general public, the court said.

• The ruling is based on an appeal by the Uttar Pradesh government against the Allahabad High Court’s decision to allow Dr. Achal Singh, who was working as Joint Director, Medical, Health and Family Welfare, in Lucknow, to voluntarily retire with effect from March 31, 2017.

• Though the High Court allowed Ms. Singh to retire, it rued the way government doctors were seeking voluntary retirement almost every day in the State.
The High Court said the government healthcare sector needed senior doctors as they were “absolutely necessary to run the medical services which are part and parcel of the right to life itself.”

In search of greatness (GS Paper-III)

Theme: Science Education

Scientific achievement will only happen in a culture which celebrates great art, philosophy, sports.

The Fields Medal:

- The Fields Medal, popularly seen as the equivalent of a Nobel Prize, is awarded once in four years to two-four mathematicians below the age of 40.

- No Indian has yet won it although it was also in 2014 that for the first time an Indian-origin Canadian-American mathematician, Manjul Bhargava, was awarded.

- In the recently announced prize for 2018, an Australian mathematician of Indian origin, Akshay Venkatesh, was awarded.

Unpleasant questions:

- Though it is a matter of pride that the two winners are of Indian origin, the question it raises is “has the country contributed anything to their growth as mathematicians?” Would Prof. Bhargava and Prof. Venkatesh have produced the work that won these prizes if they had studied and worked in India?

- This problem is not unique to mathematics. It is the same case with respect to the Nobel Prizes in science. Indian-origin scientists have won the Nobel in physics, chemistry and medicine, but post-Independence, work done in India has not led to a science Nobel.

What really is the problem?

- If Indians studying and working abroad can have a great impact, then obviously the problem has to do with our systems of education and research.

- While it is true that being abroad brings greater visibility to one’s work, it is also the case that for a country which claims to have the third largest scientific manpower in the world, our creative contribution to science has been way below par.
This is a paradox considering the many brilliant scientists who work in Indian institutions, including the universities.

The contrast:

- We can look at other fields in which we have produced world beaters. Chess and badminton are paradigmatic examples of how a whole generation of youngsters not only took to these sports, but under intense, and many time brutal, competition succeeded in coming to the top. These are not isolated cases; there is a systematic creation of groups of individuals who are reaching the pinnacle in these sports.

- Similarly, we have global leaders in music, arts and literature. It is surprising that we have managed to be so original, creative and productive in the global domain in fields which have had very little support either from the government or the corporate sector.

- Having invested all our energy in science education right from early schooling, we have only managed to produce collective mediocrity in these fields year after year.

Reasons for mediocrity

- The revolution in chess and badminton was possible through great personal sacrifices of the players and their families. In many cases, securing even minimal funds from government or the private sector was difficult and the perseverance of parents, as well as the hard work of the children and the coaches, made this revolution possible.

- The training for science begins from a state-sponsored and socially sanctioned education system right from primary school. At every step there are numerous scholarships, cash awards and incentives given to students to excel in these subjects.

- Although achieving greatness in science is not like that in sports or music, it is nevertheless important to understand why our contribution in science does not match this enormous cultural capital in addition to significant funding invested in science.

- There are three reasons that contribute to this culture of mediocrity.
  - Nature of school education
  - State of science administration
  - The cultural response to the idea of excellence

What is the problem?

- While all over the world, children are becoming more independent in terms of their intellectual practices, students in India are becoming more and more like little soldiers marching from one class to another tuition.
- Right from their homes to their schools, it is the unending process of teaching a person or group to accept a set of beliefs uncritically.
- Science education is not egalitarian and is designed to keep people out rather than embrace diversity and multiplicity of background, language and talents. This is done in the name of merit, and yet it is precisely this merit that we lack on the global stage.
Funding agencies like the Department of Science and Technology and a host of others which disburse hundreds of crores of rupees for research in science are not held accountable to the results of that funding.

Many projects worth crores end up with some minor publications.

Worse, that personal contacts and networks are still important in securing funds and other incentives in science in India today.

Great science will only arise in a culture which celebrates great music, art, literature, philosophy, sports and so on. But, countless artists and musicians struggle to survive in spite of creating great work. There is no monthly salary, provident fund and pension for some of the greatest artists, performers, writers and others, yet they continue to produce work of greater quality than the average academic institutions in India.

Way forward:

- Great work in any domain is not produced in isolation. Greatness is deeply cultural and arises from a particular attitude and not subject competence alone.
- For great work to be possible in science, the larger society has to produce great work in art, literature, humanities and so on. But we have produced a science ecosystem which does not seem to understand this, nor recognise how this bias has only contributed to mediocre science.
- Our education system must stop reducing the notions of competence and merit only to that of science, thereby denying the greatness inherent in so many other domains.
- The myopic vision of science, the hegemony of science education and the unprofessional cult of Indian science administration must discontinue in order to win Fields medal or Nobel prizes in science for our country.

Source:

Retrograde move (GS Paper-I)  
| 02 July, 2019

Retrograde move (GS Paper-I)

Theme: Sacrilege Act

The Punjab Cabinet has decided to amend the law to make acts of sacrilege against the holy books of major religions punishable with life imprisonment. It approved amendments to the Indian Penal Code (IPC) as well as the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) to make sacrilege (violation or misuse of what is regarded as sacred) of religious texts punishable with life imprisonment.

Issue:

- The decision of Punjab Cabinet is unprogressive and is filled with undesirable consequences.
It may also set off a needless storm of legislation in the rest of India to satisfy to different groups.

**Background:**

In 2016, amendments were passed by the Punjab assembly specifically aimed at curbing acts of sacrilege targeting the Guru Granth Sahib. The Centre had then returned the Bills, saying that protecting the holy book of only one religion would make it discriminatory and anti-secular.

The earlier Bill was introduced by the Shiromani Akali Dal government following allegations of desecration of the holy book.

The current proposal is a slightly expanded form of amendments passed by the Punjab Assembly in 2016.

**Details:**

The proposal now cleared by the Cabinet aims to also cover the Bible, the Koran and the Bhagvad Gita.

The law will introduce a new section (Section 295-AA) in the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Currently, Section 295-A of IPC i.e, ‘blasphemy law’, criminalises “deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings”.

**Is there a need for a new law?**

- Section 295-A of IPC itself encompasses the provision to protect religious books from damage, insult and sacrilege.

- While upholding its constitutional validity in 1957, the Supreme Court had clarified that the section “punishes the aggravated form of insult to religion when it is perpetrated with the deliberate and malicious intention of outraging religious feelings”.

- It is true that one limb of any blasphemy law, is aimed at preserving public order; and miscreants can fan disorder and tension by malicious acts such as damaging or desecrating a holy text. This can be invoked to jail someone for three years. Providing for a life term for the same offence in relation to religious texts would be grossly disproportionate.

- ‘Sacrilege’ itself is a vague term, and would render the section too broad.

- There is a history of misuse of laws aimed to protect religious sentiments, and those that seek to punish persons who promote enmity between different groups. They have a chilling effect on free speech, and give a handle to anyone claiming to be outraged to pursue provoking prosecutions.

**Conclusion:**

As prior permission of the Central or State government is needed to prosecute someone under such sections, a consequential amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure will be required. There is a case to read down Section 295-A and Section 153-A of the IPC that give scope to prosecute people in the name of protecting the feelings of a section of society. There is no case whatsoever to enhance jail terms.
Neela Kurinji plants:

- Neelakurinji is a tropical plant species.
- It is native to Shola forests in Western Ghats.
- It is also seen in Shevroys Hills in Eastern Ghats, Anamalai hills and Agali hills in Kerala and Sanduru hills in Karnataka.
- It grows at height of 30 to 60 cm on hills slopes at an altitude of 1300 to 2400 meters where there is no tree forest.
- Purple-blue colour Neela kurinji plants blooms only once in 12 years.
- It is rarest of rare plant species that grows in Western Ghats and does not grow in any other part of the world.
- It has been categorized as endangered species.

NITI Aayog- Five Thematic Reports on Sustainable Development in Indian Himalayan Region:
The NITI Aayog released the five Thematic Reports on Sustainable Development in the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR), listing the challenges in all the defined 5 thematic areas. The reports discuss the significance, the challenges, the ongoing actions and a future roadmap. the NITI Aayog had set up 5 Working Groups to prepare a roadmap for actions in 5 thematic areas that are quite significant for the Himalayas. These areas were:

1. Inventory and Revival of Springs in Himalayas for Water Security
2. Sustainable Tourism in Indian Himalayan Region
3. Transformative Approach to Shifting Cultivation
4. Strengthening Skill & Entrepreneurship Landscape in Himalayas
5. Data/Information for Informed Decision Making

These working groups were constituted after the NITI Aayog recognised that mountains require specific solutions for resilience building that address socio-economic and environmental challenges in the mountain setting.

- Government permits oxytocin sale through private chemists:

  - The Union Government permitted private retail chemists to sell Oxytocin with effect from September 1, 2018.
  - Earlier, through a notification dated April 27, 2018, the government stated that the sale of Oxytocin through private retail chemists would be banned from July 1, 2018. However, fearing shortage of Oxytocin in the market, the government deleted the provisions of its April 27 notification stating that the Oxytocin would be sold through government chemists only.
  - As per the recent notification, with effect from September 1, 2018, oxytocin will be moved from Schedule H to Schedule H1.

  - Drugs under Schedule H can only be sold against a prescription by a registered medical practitioner.
  - Under Schedule H1, the retailer has to maintain a separate register giving the name and address of the prescriber, the patient, the drug and the quantity supplied. These records have to be maintained for three years and be available for inspection. Schedule H1 was introduced in 2013 to prevent misuse of third and fourth generation antibiotics.
Oxytocin: Oxytocin, a hormone naturally produced in the human body, is manufactured as a drug that is usually administered to a woman during pregnancy in the third stage of labour to prevent excessive bleeding. Oxytocin is administered to “prevent and treat” postpartum haemorrhage (PPH), which is the leading cause of maternal mortality across the world according to World Health Organization (WHO). PPH accounts for about 35 percent of all maternal deaths.

**President, Governor and Article 156:**

**Context:** President by exercising his authority under Article 156 of the constitution, has appointed Governors of seven states including Bihar, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Sikkim, Meghalaya, and Tripura.

**Governor:**

- Nominal head of a state
- 7th Constitutional Amendment Act: The same person can be the Governor of two or more states.
- The governor is appointed by the president for a term of 5 years.
- Governor can be removed from his office before completion of his term by President on the advice of the prime minister.

Source:

**Strengthening federal link**

| 02 July, 2019

**Strengthening federal link**

**Theme: Fiscal and Co-operative federalism**

**State Finance Commissions (SFC):**

- The State Finance Commission (SFC) is a unique institution created by the 73rd and 74th
Constitutional Amendments (CAs) to rationalise and systematise State/sub-State-level fiscal relations in India.

- Its primary task is to rectify growing horizontal imbalances in the delivery of essential public services to citizens. But there has been inadequate appreciation of the significance of this institution by the Union, States as well as the professional community.
- At a regular interval of 5 years, under Article 243 I of the Constitution, State Finance Commissions are to be constituted.
- The purpose is to assign it the task of reviewing the financial position of the Panchayats and making recommendations on the sharing and the assignment of various taxes, duties etc.
- It is also to look at grants-in-aid to be given to the Panchayats from the Consolidated Fund of the State.
- The Conformity Acts of the Constitution Amendment Act are required to provide for the composition of the Commission, the qualification for its Members and the manner of their selection.

Importance of State Finance Commissions SFCs:

- The task of the SFC to correct horizontal imbalances is extremely onerous when compared with the UFC(Union Finance Commission) as SFCs have to consider nearly 2.5 lakh local governments to promote minimum essential services in rural and urban areas.
- An SFC is the institutional agency to implement the golden rule of cooperative federalism that every citizen should be assured minimum public goods irrespective of her choice of residence.
- Article 280(3) has been amended to add clauses (bb) and (c) in order to take measures to augment the resources of panchayats and municipalities on the basis of the recommendations “made by the finance commission of the state”.
- These sub-clauses affirm the organic link between local governments and SFCs to fiscal federalism.
- The federalist development state of India can grow only through a process of evolutionary policy making which works towards cherished goals.
- Articles 243G and 243W give mandate of planning “for economic development and social justice”.

Present State of State Finance Commissions:

- Article 243I of the Constitution mandated the State Governor to constitute a Finance Commission within one year of the Constitutional Amendment came to force.
- That means, this is to be constituted before April 24, 1994 and thereafter every five years.
- Till date, only Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala have submitted their fifth SFC reports.
- Many States are yet to cross the third SFC stage.
- The seriousness, regularity, acceptance of recommendations and their implementation are conspicuously absent and moreover the composition of SFCs reveal the overwhelming presence of serving and / or retired bureaucrats rather than academics.

Problems being faced by SFCs:

- For historical reasons, UFCs, particularly from the third, have chosen a restrictive role of staying away from plan and investment allocations.
- SFCs normally could not do this although some have chosen the UFC path
- Now that the Planning Commission has been dismantled, the 15th UFC has to spell out its
It is important to disabuse the notion among several politicians, policymakers and even experts that SFCs and the local governments they deal with have an inferior constitutional status when compared to the UFC.

The SFC is undoubtedly modelled on the UFC created under Article 280 and exemplified in Articles 243I and 243Y.

While the UFC is tasked with rectifying vertical and horizontal imbalances at the Union-State level, the SFC has to perform the same with reference to State/sub-State-level institutions.

The Constitution treats a local government on a par with a State government, especially when it comes to sharing of financial resources.

SFCs face a crucial problem of reliable data:

- The financial reporting system of the Union and States is well laid down.
- On the other hand, local governments with no proper budgetary system are in deep disarray.

Constitutional Provisions Ignored by The States:

- Articles 243G and 243W talks about planning for economic development and social justice, Article 243ZD mandates that every State constitute a District Planning Committee for spatial planning and environmental conservation at the sub-State level.
- That means, the Constitutional Amendment left the task of adequately empowering the local Govts. to discharge constitutional obligations to the States.

Failure of Union Finance Commissions (UFCs):

- UFCs have failed to play a hand-holding role in placing decentralised governance properly in the cooperative federal map of India.
- The hard truth is that no UFC has done its homework in reading and analysing SFC reports.
- Without presenting a consolidated account of the reality at the sub-State level or highlighting which report went wrong, where and how, no UFC can legitimately guide States or contribute to improving the goals of constitutional amendments.

Way Forward:

- All the terms of reference of UFCs (since the 11th)iterate the need for suggesting measures to augment the resources of panchayats and municipalities as a core task.
- Both centre and state must sit together to make a concrete approach to redeem the situation and work towards a good local governance system.
- Their well-designed grant scheme to incentivise States was not given a fair trial.
- Till now, SFCs have not been provided with the necessary environment to play their rightful role in Indian fiscal federalism. A great opportunity to build regional equity in India should not be undermined but to enhance the opportunity towards the Fiscal and Cooperative Federalism.

Source:
NITI Aayog launched 5 Thematic Reports on Sustainable Development in Indian Himalayan Region.

Theme: Sustainable Development in Indian Himalayan Region

- NITI Aayog has launched 5 Thematic Reports on Sustainable Development in Indian Himalayan Region. The reports from the five working groups discuss the significance, the challenges, the ongoing actions and a future roadmap.
- Recognizing the uniqueness of the Himalayas and the challenges for sustainable development, NITI Aayog had set up 5 Working Groups (WGs) in June 2017 to prepare a roadmap for actions in 5 thematic areas.
- The themes include:
  - Inventory and Revival of Springs in Himalayas for Water Security.
  - Sustainable Tourism in Indian Himalayan Region.
  - Transformative Approach to Shifting Cultivation.
  - Strengthening Skill & Entrepreneurship Landscape in Himalayas.
  - Data/Information for Informed Decision Making.

Highlights of the report: Immediate Challenges:

- Nearly 30% of springs crucial to water security of people are drying and 50% have reported reduced discharge.
- Himalayan Tourism growing annually at 6.8% has created huge challenge related to solid waste, water, traffic, loss of bio-cultural diversity etc.

Recommendations:

- Spring Mapping and Revival, using 8 steps protocol be taken up across Himalayan States in phased manner.
- Apply carrying capacity concept to all major tourist destinations; implement and monitor tourism sector Standards and apply performance based incentives for States faring well on the standards.
- Assessment of nature & extent of Shifting Cultivation area, improved policy coherence, strengthened tenurial security & improved access to related programs/schemes are other key recommendations to transform shifting cultivation.
- Strengthening of skill & entrepreneurship will require focus on identified priority sectors where mountains have advantage, investment in trainers, assessors and training centers in industry partnership.
- Having a Central Data Management Agency for Himalayas to provide data with high fidelity scenario while addressing data sharing, access, authenticity and comparability issues will
Call for Action:

- **Setting Up a Himalayan Authority**: Setting up of a Himalayan Authority for coordinated and holistic development of entire Himalayan region.
- **Launching of “Himalaya Calling”**: An Awareness to Action Campaign as people’s movement.
- Setting up of Mission on Spring Water Management in Himalayas, National Mission/Program on Transforming Shifting Cultivation in North Eastern States, demand driven network of skill and entrepreneurship development Centers in Himalayan States among others.

Way Forward:

Other reforms Needed:

- With the projected arrival of tourists in IHR States to more than double by 2025, urgent actions will be needed to address critical issues of waste management and water crisis in addition to other environmental and social issues.
- In the north eastern States, thousands of the households continue to practice slash and burn (shifting cultivation) that need to be addressed in view of ecological, food and nutritional security.
- Predominantly unskilled workforce remains a challenge for the mountains as well that need high priority to address migration of youths. Also challenges related to data availability, data authenticity, compatibility, data quality, validation, user charges for Himalayan States need addressal for informed decision making at different levels of governance.

Source:

Accepting help

| 02 July, 2019 |

Accepting help

Theme: National Disaster management

Various governments have made specific offers to Kerala, from about Rs. 700 crore from the UAE to about Rs. 35 lakh from the Maldives. But the Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson has remarked that “in line with the existing policy”, the Central government would meet requirements in Kerala through “domestic efforts”.

Background:

- Since 2004, India has refused relief aid from many countries including Russia, United States and Japan for devastating natural disasters across Uttarakhand (2013-floods) and Kashmir.
In 2004, post the devastating tsunami which devastated vast swathes of the Tamil Nadu and Andaman & Nicobar coast, killing over 12,000, a policy was instated by the then UPA government that assistance from other countries’ governments would not be accepted. The context of that decision was India’s superpower dream. India had felt that this would strengthen its case for seeking to be a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and also hasten the prospect of superpower status by 2020.

The reasons stated were that the Indian government felt that India has the capacity to handle disasters. And secondly, accepting from any one government opens the floodgates for others as well, and it would be diplomatically difficult to refuse from some while accepting from others.

Even in 2013, when the United States government offered their paltry and seemingly insulting assistance of $150,000 (Rs 90 lakhs) for the flood victims in Uttarakhand, the then Finance Minister said it would instead reach out to multilateral aid agencies like the Asian Development Bank and World Bank for relief, instead of individual foreign governments.

As a general policy in case of rescue and relief operations, India has followed the practice that it has adequate ability to respond to emergency requirements. However, this international disaster relief policy is only limited to foreign governments and not individuals and non-profits dealing in charity.

The aid from NRIs in foreign countries or NGOs working in the disaster management sector would be accepted through the remittance route.

**National Disaster Management Plan:**

- The National Disaster Management Plan put out in 2016 states that India will not appeal for foreign aid in the wake of a disaster. But “… if the national government of another country voluntarily offers assistance as a goodwill gesture in solidarity with the disaster victims, the Central Government may accept the offer.”
- The condition applies that the Union Home Ministry would consult the MEA and assess the requirements “that the foreign teams can provide”.

**Issue:**

- The policy of not accepting foreign assistance has not taken India even one step towards fulfilling its ambitions.
- There is confusion about the Government Policy. Is it laid out in the NDMP document that has an opening message from Prime Minister? Or is it based on the decision of the UPA government to refuse aid or assistance in the wake of the 2004 tsunami — a decision born out of a sense of false pride and a misplaced sense of shame, that became a sort of convention thereafter.
- It is not only this mismatch between convention and written document that has created space for the current controversy. The old fear of the spies who would come with the package, interfere in the country’s internal affairs, and also take away valuable information.
- India does not want foreigners with huge UN salaries to come and destroy the morale of its relief workers.

**Way forward:**

- Irrespective of what was agreed upon in the past, democracies should be supple enough to respond to emergencies in ways that benefit the greater common good.
It serves well no citizen of India for the government to stand on mere precedent or pride to turn down genuine offers of help, in terms of funds or expert teams or to even ask for help.

There is no shame in taking help, just as there should be no hesitation in offering it. India has a longstanding tradition of rushing help elsewhere. India has proven its donor credentials in disaster-hit nations like Haiti ($5 million after the 2010 earthquake) and Pakistan ($25 million following the 2005 earthquake) in the recent past.

It needs for technology and best practices can be obtained from the UN by careful planning and consultations.

Offers of aid from foreign governments must naturally be scrutinised to see if they compromise national security and other interests. In the case of bilateral assistance, India needs to examine offers case by case. Refusing the assistance out rightly may have a negative impact on India’s relations with such countries.

Conclusion:

- The debate on whether foreign assistance should be accepted for relief and reconstruction work is an unnecessary distraction for the Central and State governments at a time of a grave crisis. The need now is to use all assistance, Indian and foreign, to rebuild Kerala. The Centre-State politics, if any, must be kept aside. The government should not just gracefully accept the assistance for Kerala, it should junk the 2004 precedent. Taking aid from countries for disaster relief is no sign of weakness.

Source:

Article 35

Article 35A of the Constitution is now being vigorously contested with its constitutional validity being challenged before the Supreme Court. It has managed to create widespread legal and political controversy, despite it not even finding a mention in the regular sequential text of the Constitution.

What is Article 35A?

- Article 35A is a provision incorporated in the Constitution giving the Jammu and Kashmir Legislature a carte blanche to decide who all are ‘permanent residents’ of the State and confer on them special rights and privileges in public sector jobs, acquisition of property in the State, scholarships and other public aid and welfare.
- The provision mandates that no act of the legislature coming under it can be challenged for violating the Constitution or any other law of the land.
How did it come about?

- Article 35A was incorporated into the Constitution in 1954 by an order of the then President Rajendra Prasad on the advice of the Jawaharlal Nehru Cabinet.
- The controversial Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order of 1954 followed the 1952 Delhi Agreement between Jawaharlal Nehru and the then J&K Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah, which extended Indian citizenship to the 'State subjects' of J&K.
- The Presidential Order was issued under Article 370 (1) (d) of the Constitution. This provision allows the President to make certain "exceptions and modifications" to the Constitution for the benefit of ‘State subjects’ of Jammu and Kashmir.

Need for review:

- The ‘classification’ created by Article 35A has to be tested on the principle of equality as it treats non-permanent residents of J&K as ‘second-class’ citizens. Such persons are not eligible for employment under the State government and are also debarred from contesting elections. Meritorious students are denied scholarships and they cannot even seek redress in any court of law.
- The major sufferers are women who marry outside J&K. Though they retain their Permanent
Resident Certificate, their children cannot be permanent residents. This restricts their basic right of inheritance. Further, the issues of refugees who migrated to J&K during Partition are still not treated as 'State subjects' under the J&K Constitution.

Way Forward:

This matter requires the active participation of all stakeholders. It is necessary to give confidence to the residents of J&K that any alteration in status quo will not take away their rights but will boost J&K’s prosperity as it will open doors for more investment, resulting in new opportunities. Article 35A, which was incorporated about six decades ago, now requires a relook, especially given that J&K is now a well-established democratic State.

Source:

POSHAN Abhiyan
| 02 July, 2019

- **POSHAN Abhiyan**: POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission) was launched on 8th March, 2018.

**Objectives**: The programme through use of technology, a targeted approach and convergence strives to reduce the level of Stunting, Under-nutrition, Anemia and Low Birth Weight in Children, as also, focus on Adolescent Girls, Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers, thus holistically addressing malnutrition.

**Aims**: POSHAN Abhiyaan aims to ensure service delivery and interventions by use of technology, behavioural change through convergence and lays-down specific targets to be achieved across different monitoring parameters over the next few years.

**Coverage**: To ensure a holistic approach, all 36 States/UTs and 718 districts will be covered in a phased manner by the year 2020.
Trouble in the hills

Theme: Western Ghats ecology
The catastrophic monsoon floods in Kerala and parts of Karnataka have revived the debate on whether political expediency trumped science.

Seven years ago, the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel issued recommendations for the preservation of the fragile western peninsular region.

Madhav Gadgil, who chaired the Union Environment Ministry’s WGEEP, has said the recent havoc in Kerala is a consequence of short-sighted policymaking and warned that Goa may also be in the line of nature’s fury.

**Westren ghats ecology conservation**

- At issue in the Western Ghats — spread over 1,29,037 sq km according to the WGEEP estimate and 1,64,280 sq km as per the Kasturirangan panel — is the calculation of what constitutes the sensitive core and what activities can be carried out there.
- The entire system is globally acknowledged as a biodiversity hotspot.
- The goal has to be sustainable development for the Ghats as a whole.

**What needs to be done?**

- The issue of allowing extractive industries such as quarrying and mining to operate is most contentious.
- A way out could be to create the regulatory framework that was proposed by the Gadgil panel, in the form of an apex Western Ghats Ecology Authority and the State-level units, under the Environment (Protection) Act, and to adopt the zoning system that it proposed.
- A moratorium on quarrying and mining in the identified sensitive zones, in Kerala and also other States, is necessary to assess their environmental impact.
- This can keep incompatible activities out of the Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZs)
The role of big hydroelectric dams, built during an era of rising power demand and deficits, must now be considered afresh and proposals for new ones dropped.

Way Forward:

- The State governments that are mainly responsible for the Western Ghats — Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Goa and Maharashtra — must go back to the drawing table with the reports of both the Gadgil Committee and the Kasturirangan Committee, which was set up to examine the WGEEP report.
- The task before them is to initiate correctives to environmental policy decisions.
- Public consultation on the expert reports that includes people’s representatives will find greater resonance now, and help chart a sustainable path ahead.

Source:

Another step in the battle against leprosy

1) Another step in the battle against leprosy

Theme: Leprosy

The Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018, seeks to make a start in amending some of the statutes. It attempts to end the discrimination against leprosy persons in various central laws: The Divorce Act, 1869; the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939; the Special Marriage Act, 1954; the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955; and the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act of 1956. The Bill eliminates leprosy as a ground for dissolution of marriage or divorce. The amendments introduced in the Bill omit the provisions which stigmatise and discriminate against leprosy-affected persons. The Bill is meant to provide for the integration of leprosy patients into the mainstream.

- Leprosy is a chronic infectious disease caused by Mycobacterium leprae. It usually affects the skin and peripheral nerves, but has a wide range of clinical manifestations.
- The disease is characterized by long incubation period generally 5-7 years and is classified as paucibacillary or multibacillary, depending on the bacillary load. Leprosy is a leading cause of permanent physical disability.
- Timely diagnosis and treatment of cases, before nerve damage has occurred, is the most effective way of preventing disability due to leprosy.
- The WHO asked South-East Asian countries, including India which accounted for 60% of such cases worldwide in 2015, to focus on preventing disabilities in children.
Serious Concerns that need to address:

- Over 110 Central and State laws discriminate against leprosy patients. These laws stigmatise and isolate leprosy patients and, coupled with age-old beliefs about leprosy, cause the patients untold suffering.
- The biased provisions in these statutes were introduced prior to medical advancements. Now, modern medicine specifically, multi-drug therapy (MDT) completely cures the disease.
- According to WHO, leprosy affected 2,12,000 people globally in 2015.
- **India** alone reported **1,27,326 new cases**, accounting for **60% of new cases globally**.
- Of the new cases, 8.9% were children and 6.7% presented with visible deformities. The remaining 10,286 new cases (5%) were reported by 92 countries. Thirty countries reported zero new cases.
- India is among the 22 countries considered as having a “**high burden for leprosy**” along with high transmission by WHO.
- Lack of awareness, myths, socio-cultural beliefs, and the stigma attached to leprosy are perhaps the **most pressing problems** before public health activists today.

Amendments that added now: Already proposed by various Institutions:

- The Rajya Sabha Committee on Petitions, in its 131st Report on ‘Petition praying for integration and empowerment of leprosy-affected persons’, had examined various statutes and desired that concerned Ministries and State governments urgently wipe clean the anachronistic and discriminatory provisions in prevalent statutes.
- The Law Commission of India, in its 256th Report, ‘Eliminating discrimination against persons affected by leprosy’, had also recommended removing the discriminatory provisions in various statutes against leprosy patients.
- The proposed law follows a National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) recommendation a decade ago to introduce amendments in personal laws and other statutes.
- It is in keeping with the UN General Assembly Resolution of 2010 on the ‘Elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members’ that it was introduced. India has signed and ratified the Resolution.

Recent Government Initiatives:

- The Government announced the three-pronged strategy for early detection of leprosy cases in the community was introduced in 2016 under the National Health Mission, especially in the hard-to-reach areas.
- A special Leprosy Case Detection Campaign was carried out in 2016. As a result, more than 32000 cases were confirmed and were put on treatment.
- In addition, persons who are in close contact with the patients were also given medicine to reduce the chances of occurrence of the disease in them.

Conclusion:

- There is a need to call for a collective effort to completely eliminate the ‘treatable disease’ of leprosy from India.
- Anti-Leprosy Day was celebrated all over India on 30th of January. On this event, a campaign
named as the ‘Sparsh’ Leprosy Awareness Campaign, is being organized in all the Gram sabhas all through the nation.

- Mahatma Gandhi had an enduring concern for people afflicted with leprosy. His vision was not just to treat them, but also to bring them to mainstream to our society.
- India, which is among the endemic countries, has been advised to include strategic interventions in national plans to meet the new targets, such as screening all close contacts of persons affected by leprosy; promoting a shorter and uniform treatment regimen, and incorporating specific interventions against stigmatisation and discrimination.
- As a country, we have to leave no stone unturned to not just reach the last mile but also to work together to eliminate the social stigma attached with this disease.

2) Odisha approves proposal for legislative councils

Theme: Legislative councils

The Odisha government has approved a proposal for setting up a legislative council in the state. A resolution will be brought in the monsoon session of the Odisha legislative Assembly. The proposed legislative council will have 49 members. The members of the proposed council will get salary and allowance as given to the members of the legislative Assembly.
What are the Legislative Councils, and why are they important?

- India has a bicameral system i.e., two Houses of Parliament. At the state level, the equivalent of the Lok Sabha is the Vidhan Sabha or Legislative Assembly; that of the Rajya Sabha is the Vidhan Parishad or Legislative Council.
- A second House of legislature is considered important for two reasons: one, to act as a check on hasty actions by the popularly elected House and, two, to ensure that individuals who might not be cut out for the rough-and-tumble of direct elections too are able to contribute to the legislative process.

Why do we need a second house?

- Opposition to the idea of Legislative Councils is centred on three broad arguments. One, they can be used to park leaders who have not been able to win an election. Two, they can be used to delay progressive legislation. Three, they would strain state finances.
- Opinion in the Constituent Assembly was divided on the question of having a Legislative Council. The idea was backed on the above grounds; it was also suggested that having a second chamber would allow for more debate and sharing of work between the Houses.

Creation of a legislative council:

Under Article 169 of the constitution, Parliament may by law create or abolish the second chamber in a state if the Legislative Assembly of that state passes a resolution to that effect by a special majority.

Strength of the house:

As per article 171 clause (1) of the Indian Constitution, the total number of members in the legislative council of a state shall not exceed one third of the total number of the members in the legislative Assembly of that state and the total number of members in the legislative council of a state shall in no case be less than 40. (The exception is J&K, where the Legislative Council has 36 members vide Section 50 of the constitution of the state.)

How are members of the Council elected?

- About 1/3rd of members are elected by members of the Assembly, another 1/3rd by electorates consisting of members of municipalities, district boards and other local authorities in the state, 1/12th by an electorate consisting of teachers, and 1/12th by registered graduates.
- The remaining members are nominated by the Governor from among those who have distinguished themselves in literature, science, art, the cooperative movement, and social service. Legislative Councils are permanent Houses, and like Rajya Sabha, one-third of their members retire every two years.

Do Rajya Sabha and Vidhan Parishads have similar powers?

- Not really. The constitution gives Councils limited legislative powers. Unlike Rajya Sabha which has substantial powers to shape non-financial legislation, Legislative Councils lack the constitutional mandate to do so. Legislative Assemblies have the power to override
suggestions/amendments made to a legislation by the Council.

- Also, while Rajya Sabha MPs can vote in the election of the President and Vice-President, members of Legislative Councils can’t. MLCs also can’t vote in the elections of Rajya Sabha members.

Source:

ISRO telemedicine nodes for soldiers in high-altitude areas

Theme: Telemedicine Nodes by ISRO

- In a major effort to improve emergency medical support to soldiers posted in high-altitude areas, especially Siachen, the Integrated Defence Staff of the Defence Ministry and the ISRO signed a MoU to set up telemedicine nodes in critical places across the country.

- ISRO will establish 53 more nodes in the first phase over and above the existing 20, in various
Battling Siachen’s extremity:

- As part of this, in addition to a functioning node on the Siachen glacier, four more nodes are being established to enable medical consultation between soldiers deployed on the glacier and medical echelons in the rear.
- During winter months, many of the remote posts are cut off for several months because of adverse terrain and extreme weather, making emergency evacuation near impossible.
- Communication through satellite-enabled telemedicine nodes will be a paradigm shift in the delivery of lifesaving health care till the weather clears up and movement is possible.
- This joint initiative by ISRO and the Armed Forces Medical Services will transform the reach of telemedicine to soldiers, airmen and sailors in remote and isolated posts.

Source:

Economy has come a long way: Jaitley

Theme: IMF report on Indian Economy

Finance minister Arun Jaitley cited the report given by International Monetary Fund (IMF) report on India in 2018. He said India had improvements in indicators such as inflation, fiscal deficit, current account deficit, infrastructure, power sector, and allocation of natural resources.

- The system has been substantially cleaned up and made more transparent. Decisiveness has led to easier decision making and made the economy stand out before several other countries.
- The IMF report, however, also had a segment on the impact of demonetisation, an assessment of GST implementation, and an analysis of the government’s banking reforms.
- The abrupt money supply shock due to cash shortages (following demonetisation announcement) exacerbated the growth slowdown.
- Uncertainty and disruptive cash shortages put a damper on consumer and business sentiment. As a result, high frequency indicators for consumption (e.g., sales of two wheelers) and production (e.g., industrial production, manufacturing and services PMI, and production of cement) saw strong declines.
- The impact on growth appears to have been more severe and longer lasting than anticipated with a disproportionate impact on the informal sector.
- The Government of India is undertaking a significant recapitalisation of PSBs to enhance regulatory capital and provide "growth capital" to boost lending to the economy.
The Banking reforms roadmap, announced alongside the recapitalisation, lacked details on measures to improve PSB governance and operations. The plan's impact on bank's credit provision is unclear and implementation have been costly.

Source:

BNHS to open its first regional centre near chilika lake

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), one of India's premier avian research institutes, will start operating its regional centre on the campus of Wetland Research and Training Centre near Chilika Lake. The BNHS has been active in avian research in the Chilika Lake, which hosts nearly one million birds with 97 species being intercontinental migratory in nature during the winter season. The centre will carry out research on avian disease by collecting samples and monitor the Nalabana Bird Sanctuary.
Chilika Lake:

- Chilika lake is a brackish water lagoon.
- It is situated in Odisha district, on the east coast of India, at the mouth of the Daya river, flowing into the Bay of Bengal.
- It is the largest coastal lagoon in India and the second largest coastal lagoon in the world.
- It is the largest wintering ground for migratory birds on the Indian sub-continent. The lake is home to a number of threatened species of plants and animals.
- Chilika lake is the first Ramsar site in Asia to be removed from the Montreux record.

Source:

Article 35 A and the basic structure

| 02 July, 2019 |

1) Article 35 A and the basic structure

Doctrine of Basic structure:

- The basic structure doctrine is an Indian judicial principle that the Constitution of India has
certain basic features that cannot be altered or destroyed through amendments by the parliament.

- Key among these "basic features", are the fundamental rights granted to individuals by the constitution. The doctrine thus forms the basis of a limited power of the Supreme Court to review and strike down constitutional amendments enacted by the Parliament which conflict with or seek to alter this "basic structure" of the Constitution.
- The basic structure doctrine applies only to constitutional amendments.
- The basic features of the Constitution have not been explicitly defined by the Judiciary, and the claim of any particular feature of the Constitution to be a "basic" feature is determined by the Court in each case that comes before it.
- The basic structure doctrine does not apply to ordinary Acts of Parliament, which must itself be in conformity with the Constitution. The Article further exempts such legislation from being annulled on the ground that they infringe one or the other of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

Article 35A:

- Article 35A was inserted into the Constitution as part of a raft of amendments made through a 1954 presidential order, imposed under Article 370.
- Broadly, it empowers Jammu and Kashmir (J&amp;K) to not only define a class of persons as constituting “permanent residents” of the State but also allows the government to confer on these persons special rights and privileges with respect to matters of public employment, acquisition of immovable property in the State, settlement in different parts of the State, and access to scholarships or other such aids that the State government might provide.
- The Article further exempts such legislation from being annulled on the ground that they infringe one or the other of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution.
- According to a petition to the supreme court, this immunity granted to J&amp;K’s law is discriminatory, and, therefore, Article 35A should be declared unconstitutional.

Can Article 35A of the constitution be struck down? If yes, should it be?

- The case, there’s little doubt, is freighted with political meaning. But when we look beyond the interests of politics, the issues aren’t especially contentious. As a matter of simple legal construction, it ought to be obvious to the court that the petition deserves a resounding dismissal. Any other verdict, which so much as entertains the notion that Article 35A is expendable, will impinge on basic tenets of constitutional interpretation, and will damage the most solemn promises that lie at the heart of the Indian federation.
- India’s Constitution, as the political scientist Louise Tillin has explained, establishes a form of asymmetric federalism, in which some States enjoy greater autonomy over governance than others. This asymmetry is typified by Article 370 — a provision, as Ms. Tillin writes, which was debated for over five months before forming part of the Constitution as adopted in 1950. In its original form, Article 370 accorded to J&amp;K a set of special privileges, including an exemption from constitutional provisions governing other States. What’s more, in accord with J&amp;K’s Instrument of Accession, it restricted Parliament’s powers to legislate over the State to three core subjects: defence, foreign affairs and communications. Parliament could legislate on other areas only through an express presidential order, made with the prior concurrence of the State government. Where those subjects went beyond the Instrument of Accession, the further sanction of the State’s Constituent Assembly was also mandated. Finally, the Article also granted the President...
the power to make orders declaring the provision inoperative, but subject to the condition that this
authority could be exercised only on the prior recommendation of the State’s Constituent
Assembly.
- However, with the disbanding of J&K’s Constituent Assembly in 1956, the question of suspending
Article 370 was rendered moot. In the process, the asymmetry in India’s federalism was fortified.
That this is the case can also be gleaned from a reading of Article 368, which contains the ordinary
powers of constitutional amendment as applicable to other parts of India. One of the provisos to
the clause (ironically made through the same presidential order which introduced Article 35A)
makes it clear that changes made to the Constitution under Article 368 will not mechanically apply
to J&K. For such amendments to apply to the State, specific orders must be made under Article
370, after securing the J&K government’s prior assent. What’s more, such amendments will also
need to be ratified by the State’s Constituent Assembly.

Basic arguments:

- The petitioner in the supreme court makes two basic arguments. Article 35A, it claims, could not
have been introduced through a process outside the ordinary amending procedure prescribed
under Article 368. Even assuming that the President possessed this power, the petitioner asserts,
Article 35A infringes the Constitution’s basic structure. Both these claims, however, suffer from
fundamental flaws.
- As we have already seen, Article 370 is as much a part of the Constitution as Article 368. That the
framers were deeply cognisant of the fact that the Constitution accorded J&K exceptional status is
free of any doubt. It is particularly clear from the address made by N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar, the
chief drafter of Article 370, to the Constituent Assembly on October 17, 1949: “Kashmir’s
conditions are… special and require special treatment,” he said— “it is one of our commitments to
the people and the Government of Kashmir,” that in matters outside the scope of the Instrument of
Accession no additions would be made “except with the consent of the Constituent Assembly
which may be called in the state for the purpose of framing its Constitution.

The structure:

- It is equally fallacious to suggest that Article 35A can somehow be subject to a basic structure
the powers of amendment under Article 368 are not plenary and that the Constitution’s basic
features cannot be abrogated, was based expressly on an interpretation of the text of Article 368.
- Its logic doesn’t extend reflexively to amendments made under Article 370, a provision, which in
and of itself, is essential to maintaining India’s federal structure. Besides, more than six decades
have elapsed since Article 35A was inserted, and by now vast tracts of properties would have
doubtless changed hands.
- In such cases, where constitutional amendments create vested rights in persons, as the Supreme
Court held in Waman Rao v. Union of India, an amendment made prior to the decision in
Kesavananda cannot be susceptible to a basic structure challenge. To hold otherwise would have
consequences far more devastating than might immediately be apparent.

way forward:

- Article 35A, now requires a relook, especially given that J&K is now a well-established democratic
state.
If Article 35A is to be removed, it must be removed as an expression of the will of the people, through a political process which includes the people of J&K in the discussion.

2) Council conundrum

Second chamber in States

- Odisha's plan calls for a national policy on the utility of a second chamber in states.
- Legislative council: the constitution provides for the abolition or creation of legislative councils in states. Accordingly, the parliament can abolish a legislative council or create it, if the legislative assembly of the concerned state passes a resolution to that effect, such a specific resolution to that effect. Such a resolution must be passed by the state assembly by a special majority, that is, a majority of the total membership of the assembly present and voting.

Advantages of Having legislative council in the state:

- **Check against hasty legislation**: The advocates of second chambers in the States emphatically assert that the second chambers in the States would be necessary to protect the interests of the people against the hasty and ill-considered legislation initiated and passed by the lower Houses.
- **Accommodation of Election Shy Talent**: Moreover, elderly, experienced and sober individuals, cannot bear the ordeal of electioneering neither campaign nor are they keen to indulge in vicious party politics. But presence of such an element in the legislature of a State not only adds to its grace, but also exercises a sobering, ennobling and, purifying influence on the politics of the State. The legislative councils do accommodate such mature and serene personalities not only through the nominated quota at the disposal of Governor but also through the quota reserved for teachers and the graduates.
- Initiation of Non-controversial bills in upper chambers
- Thorough discussion on the bills by more mature and seasoned members

Arguments against Legislative councils:

- **Backdoor entrance of the defeated members**
- **Costly Institution**: Advocates of Unicameralism points out that Bicameralism in the state would be expensive experiment and big drain on the state's exchequer.
- **Heterogeneous chamber**: The composition of the Legislative Council also has entailed a very severe criticism. A blend of direct election, indirect election and nomination makes the Council a hotchpotch of representation. A chamber so heterogeneously constituted, neither serves the purpose of a revisory chamber nor acts as an effective brake against hasty legislation.
- It was not representative of the people
- **Not a effective check**: It was emphasized that powers of the Legislative Councils are limited to the extent that they can hardly impose any effective check on the Assemblies. Whether a Bill is liked by the Council or not, it is apt to be passed maximum after four months' delay if the Assembly so decides. A check on hasty and ill-considered legislation emanating from the Assembly is possible in case the Council detain a Bill for a longer period.

As regards Money bills, only fourteen days' delay can be caused by the Council, which is more or less a formality rather than a barrier in the way of Money Bill passed by the Assembly.
odisha position:

- If there was any real benefit in having a Legislative Council, all States in the country should, and arguably would, have a second chamber. The fact that there are only seven such Councils suggests the lack of any real advantage, apart from the absence of a broad political consensus on the issue. Now Odisha wants to join the group of States that have an Upper House. The State Cabinet has approved a 49-member Legislative Council, accepting the report of a committee set up in 2015 to study the functioning of the second chamber in other States and make recommendations.

way forward:

- Graduates are no longer a rare breed; also, with dipping educational standards, a graduate degree is no guarantee of any real intellectual heft. And then again, why should graduates be privileged as people’s representatives in a democracy? Today, legislatures draw their talent both from the grassroots level and the higher echelons of learning. There are enough numbers of doctors, teachers and other professionals in most political parties today. This case to be considered.
- National policy on having an Upper House in State legislatures to be framed by the Union government, so that a subsequent government doesn’t abolish it.

Source:

New copters to enable tech transfer
| 02 July, 2019

New copters to enable tech transfer

Theme: Technology Transfer and related Issues

The defence ministry is shortly expected to release project-specific implementation guidelines for the 111 naval utility helicopters to be procured under the strategic partnership (SP) model. However, foreign companies say there is still some clarity required on crucial legal, liability and technology transfer issues.

Salient features of Strategic partnership policy:

- The policy is intended to institutionalise a transparent, objective and functional mechanism to encourage broader participation of the private sector, in addition to DPSUs/OFB, in the manufacture of defence platforms and equipment such as aircraft, submarines, helicopters and armoured vehicles.
- It will serve to enhance competition, increase efficiencies, facilitate faster and more significant absorption of technology, create a tiered industrial ecosystem, ensure development of a wider skill base and trigger innovation, leading to reduction in dependence on imports and greater self-
reliance in meeting national security objectives.

- four segments were identified for acquisition under this route:

1. Fighter aircraft
2. Helicopters
3. submarines
4. Armoured fighting vehicles (AFVs)/main battle tanks (MBTs)

- All procurements under the SP model would be executed by specially constituted empowered project committee (EPC) to ensure timely execution.

Way forward:

- There are two important issues that need clarity. One is legal that foreign companies can't sell a submarine or fighter jet to a private company. Global regulations do not allow that. It has to be to a government-owned company, so there has to be a government-to-government component in the end.
- The other issue was about the liability of the end product. For a foreign company to stand guarantee to the finished product built by a local company is a problem. There has to be a back-end mechanism to enable foreign company.
- The Defence acquisition council cleared the general as well as project-specific implementation guidelines for the naval helicopters that would lay emphasis on transfer of technology and high absorption of indigenous content. The guidelines and qualification guidelines are yet to be communicated to the industry.

Source:

**Article 35A, Asian games, India breaks into top 100 in UNâ€™s E-Government index**

1. Article 35A was inserted into the constitution as part of a raft of amendments made through a 1954 presidential order, imposed under Article 370.
2. Article 35A empowers Jammu and Kashmir to not only define a class of persons special rights and privileges with respect to matters of public employment, acquisition of immovable property in the state, settlement in different parts of the state, and access to scholarships or other such aids that the state government might provide.
3. The FSSAI constituted a group of experts from health and nutrition sector to look into the issue of labelling. The expert panel will be headed by B. Sasikeran and others are Hemalatha and Dr. Nikhil Tandon.

**Asian games**
4. Hima Das and Muhammed Anas bagged a silver each in the women's and men's 400m at the Asian games.
5. Dutee chand won the women's 100m silver at asian games
6. Fouaad Mirza won silver in equestrian men's jumping event to become the first indian to claim an individual medal in the sport since 1982.
7. The Indian tennis duo of Rohan Bopanna and Divil sharan clinched the Gold medal for India. They beat Kazakhstan's Denis yevseyev and Aleksandr Bublik 6-3, 6-4 in the men's doubles tennis event.
8. shooter Rahi sarnobat has become first Indian woman to win a gold medal in shooting at the Asian games.
9. India breaks into top 100 in UN's E-Government index: India has jumped 22 places to break into the top 100 of the United Nation's E-Government Index 2018. India, which was ranked 118 in 2014, jumped 11 places to be ranked 96 in 2018. Its overall score was 0.5484. The survey is released by the United Nations in every two years. The 2018 edition: 'Gearing E-Government to Support Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies' was launched on July 19. Denmark, with an index value of 0.9150, topped the 2018 E-Government Development Survey. It was followed by Australia with 0.9053 score and the Republic of Korea with a value of 0.9010.

Source:

How dams can control floods

| 02 July,2019 |

How dams can control floods

Theme: Purpose of Dams

- world over, dams are constructed mainly for the puposes of Irrigation, power generation, and flood control.
- While the first two roles are acknowledged, the role of dams in flood control has always been underestimated.
- It is unfortunate that in both irrigation and hydel projects, flood control is completely ignored.
- Authorities always look to store the maximum amount of water in reservoirs during the monsoon season, which is then used for irrigation and generation of electricity during the summer months.

International practice:

- It is an internationally accepted practice that the water level of a reservoir should be kept below a certain level before the onset of the monsoon season. This is so that when the monsoon rains come, there is space to store the excess rainwater and also so that water can be released in a regulated manner, thus preventing floods downstream when there is heavy inflow to the dams. For example, Thailand wisely brought down the water level in the dams in the country to below 60% of the storing capacity before the rainy season.
It is unfortunate that the maximum amount of water is stored in reservoirs even before the close of the monsoon, only to ensure greater electricity generation and irrigation. How the reservoir water was managed in the dams prior to the Kerala floods requires no explanation. While earlier too there was no practice of keeping space for greater storage of water, rainfall has never been as torrential as it was this year. Hence, there were no floods either.

It is difficult to predict what will happen during the ensuing northeast monsoon in Kerala in case of heavy inflow. Whatever be the extra quantity of electricity produced and area of land irrigated because of the risky storage of water in our dams, that cannot compensate for the loss of human lives, infrastructure and agricultural land. Nor can the agony caused by such destruction be compensated for. The estimated loss to the State runs into thousands of crores. It will take years to rebuild Kerala.

What is the practice at present?

At present, the task of dam and water management is vested with the Public Works Department, the Electricity Board, and the Irrigation Department. Even in normal conditions, given contradictory opinions from various departments, it is difficult to implement decisions. Hence, the State Dam Security Authority, if competent, should be entrusted with the task of water management in reservoirs and with taking decisions in emergency situations.

What is the Need of the Hour:

- In 2015, Hydropower generation was only 16.6% of the world's total electricity production. The tendency to hold the maximum amount of water in our reservoirs and ignoring the high risk involved can be attributed to our over-dependence on hydel projects to produce electricity. So, the need of the hour is, one should think about non-conventional sources for electricity generation such as solar, wind, and tidal power. For example, solar generation in Kochi airport can be copied in similar large-scale projects.
- We have to reduce dependence on dams for power generation.
- The State government, the State Dam Security Authority and the National Water Commission should all be prepared to take bold decisions together on water management so that there are no such devastating floods in the future.

Source:

The big squeeze
| 02 July, 2019

The big squeeze
Theme: Iran Issue
Present day status of Iran:

- Iran is reeling under the impact of re-imposed sanctions after the U.S. walked out of the nuclear deal.
- There is strain between moderate and hard-line sections within the Iranian leadership. Recently, Finance minister was removed.
- The Iran currency rial lost over 50% of its value this year, it pushed up the prices. It compelled consumers to convert their savings into gold and other assets.
- In July, The president Rouhani had dropped central bank governor.

After the Iran nuclear deal, Tehran managed to double its oil exports, climb out of a deep recession and contain inflation.

what happened subsequent to economic sanctions:

- Iran is prohibited from using U.S. currency, it faces a bar on trade in cars, metals and minerals.
- The new central bank chief, announced a relaxation of foreign exchange rules. He also declared reopening of currency markets.
- Next round of sanctions will kick-in by November, which are aimed at impeding Iran's energy exports and financial dealings with its central bank.

Iran as a strategic location:

Iran is situated in such a strategic location, one side Persian Gulf, Gulf of Hormuz and other side Caspian Sea.

- Iran is important for India for energy diversification. India imports 80% of its energy requirements, so it cannot dependent only on one country.
- To ensure peace in Afghanistan and subsequent reconstruction Iran is the key to India.
International north south transport corridor (INSTC) goes through the caspian sea and Iran is the important country.

Chabahar is the natural gateway to India into Afghanistan and central Asia. Iran has heavily invested in Chabahar by establishing rail connectivity with Afghanistan as well as expanding the port of Chabahar. Since Chabahar lies just 1000 Kilometers of Kandla, Gujarat, a direct shipping route can be opened between India and Chabahar.

Asghabat agreement: The Ashgabat agreement is a multimodal transport agreement between India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Oman, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for creating an international transport and transit corridor facilitating transportation of goods between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf.

Access to central Asia.

Global market concern:
The global community must weigh in to ease U.S.-Iran tensions. There is little appetite in the U.S. for a direct military confrontation; Iran too is under no illusion about its military capability. But there remains the risk of an Iranian blockade on the Strait of Hormuz, the passage for about a third of global seaborne oil shipments. It would disrupt supplies and cause panic in global markets.

Way Forward:

- The European Union should exert diplomatic pressure to renew talks.
- A fresh nuclear agreement appears to be a remote possibility at this stage. Conversely, even small relief from economic sanctions would bring some leverage at home for the beleaguered Mr. Rouhani. Recent protests have reflected a yearning for progress and greater freedom among ordinary Iranians. The centrist President should help advance such an agenda.

Source:

Restoring dignity: Leprosy, a social stigma

| 02 July, 2019 |

Restoring dignity: Leprosy, a social stigma

Theme: Leprosy

- The union cabinet has cleared the personal laws (Amendment) bill that seeks to strike down leprosy as a ground for divorce by making amendments in divorce acts. Under the provisions of Indian Divorce act, it is a legitimate ground for divorce.
- India was officially declared to have eliminated leprosy in 2005, when new cases fell to less than 1 per 10,000 of leprosy affected people in the world (58%). Poverty and stigma have kept patients hidden and unrested.
What to you Understand by Leprosy?

- It is an infectious disease of the skin, nervous system and caused by bacteria.
- It is transmitted via person contact, through a cough or contact with fluid. It is not highly contagious.
- It leads to nerve and skin damage with terrible disfigurement and disability.
- today leprosy can be cured, if treatment begins early.
- Antibiotic therapy is the main stay. surgery can also be performed and it is also known as Hansen's disease.
- it primarily affects the skin and nerves outside the brain and spinal chord.
- It usually takes about 3 to 5 years. In some cases upto 20 years for symptoms to appear, after coming into contact with leprosy causing bacteria.

what are the recent developments?

- The introduction of a Bill in Parliament to remove leprosy as a ground for seeking divorce or legal separation from one’s spouse.
- The other was the Supreme Court asking the Centre whether it would bring in a positive law conferring rights and benefits on persons with leprosy and deeming as repealed all Acts and rules that perpetuated the stigma associated with it.

An affirmative action law that recognises the rights of those affected and promotes their social inclusion will serve a legal purpose.

More on these developments:

- Supreme court was hearing writ petitions seeking to uphold the fundamental rights of people with leprosy and the repeal of discriminatory laws against them.
- The 256th Report of the Law Commission came up with a number of suggestions, including the repeal of discriminatory legal provisions.
- It listed for abolition personal laws and Acts on beggary. The report cited the UN General Assembly resolution of 2010 on the elimination of discrimination against persons with leprosy.
- The resolution sought the abolition of laws, rules, regulations, customs and practices that amounted to discrimination, and wanted countries to promote the understanding that leprosy is not easily communicable and is curable.

challenges:

- Undetected new cases
- problems with leprosy integration , the presence of leprosy in children.
- obsolete discriminating laws and paucity of education and training for livelihoods.

way forward:

- The campaign to end discrimination against those afflicted, and combating the stigma associated with it, is decades old. While governments may have to handle the legislative part, society has an even larger role to play.
- It is possible to end discrimination by law, but stigma tends to survive reform and may require more than legal efforts to eliminate.
Jatropha powers India's first biofuel flight

Theme: Bio-fuel

- A blend of oil from jatropha seeds and aviation turbine fuel propelled the country’s first ever bio jet fuel-powered flight between Dehradun and Delhi. The 43-minute flight was operated by SpiceJet’s Bombardier Q-400 aircraft, with 20 officials and five crew members on board.
- The indigenously developed fuel has been nearly eight years in the making by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) lab based in Dehradun along with the Indian Institute of Petroleum (IIP).

25-75 Mix:

This plane had carried blend of 25% of bio jet fuel (derived from jatropha seeds) and 75% of aviation turbine fuel (ATF) in one of the two engines of of plane, while other carried only ATF. This flight was technological demonstration that bio jet fuel can be used in flights. International standards permit a blend rate of up to 50% biofuel with ATF.

Reduction in cost:

The blend of bio jet fuel and ATF has potential to reduce fuel costs by 15-20%.

Jatropha:

- Jatropha is drought-resistant perennial plant that can grow in marginal or poor soil.
- Jatropha plant seeds which are very rich in oil (40%).
- It burns with clear smoke-free flame.
- By-products of its seeds like press cake is good organic fertilizer.
- Jatropha also has medicinal properties and is used for diseases like cancer, piles, snakebite, paralysis, etc.

What is the goal of International Air transport Association(IATA):

- It is committed to an average annual improvement of 1.5% in fuel efficiency from 2009 to 2020. At the same time, it also kept a cap on net aviation carbon emissions from 2020(carbon neutral growth).
- It also plans for reduction in net aviation carbon emissions of 50% by 2050, relative to 2005.
- It also set a target of 1 billion passengers flying on aircraft using a mix of clean energy and fossil fuels by 2025.
Way Forward:

- The Infrastructure to mass-produce bio jet fuel and to deliver it at the air ports.
- Fuel companies have fasten their work to bringing sustainable ways to manufacture biofuel for aircraft.
- Government to make a framework on special policy for using the Biofuel.

Source:

Satya Tripathi
| 02 July, 2019

- Satya Tripathi appointed as assistant secretary-General of United Nations and will head the New York office of United Nations Environment programme.
- The Union Ministry of Earth Sciences has proposed to set up a Cyclone Warning Centre in Thiruvananthapuram.
- The National Green Tribunal has formed a committee to look into whether sub regional plans for protection of Natural Conservation Zones (NCZs) were consistent with the regional plan prepared by the National Capital Region Planning Board. The committee will comprise the secretaries of Ministry of Environment and Forests and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Chairman of Central Pollution Control Board, National Remote Sensing Centre, Indian Space Research Organisation and the secretaries of Urban Development Departments of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi.
- The fourth edition of Asian electoral stakeholders forum (AESF-IV) was held at Colombo, Sri Lanka to discuss the state of elections and democracy in the region. This was the First time AESF was held in South Asia. It was jointly organised by Election Commission of Sri Lanka and Asian network for free elections (ANFREL). The theme of AESF was "Advancing election Transparency and Integration: Promoting and defending democracy Together".
- Zinc deficiency affects the immune system and makes children, particularly, more vulnerable to malaria, lung infections and deadly diarrhoeal diseases
- August 29 celebrated as National sports Day.
- Holobatrachus tigerinus has been designated as vulnerable species by the IUCN.
- Bakshali Manuscript contains the oldest recorded origins of the symbol “zero”. Chaturbhuj temple, Gwalior has the oldest known representation of the circular symbol.
- ‘Smartnet’ is an initiative of the union government to support the development of cities across India.

Source:
India, World Bank sign loan agreement to scale-up India’s energy efficiency programme:

1) India, World Bank sign loan agreement to scale-up India’s energy efficiency programme:

Theme: Energy efficiency programme

Details:

- The Union Government and World Bank signed a $220 million loan agreement and an $80 million guarantee agreement for the India Energy Efficiency Scale-Up programme.
- The programme will be implemented by the Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL).
- It will help in scale-up the deployment of energy saving measures in residential and public sectors, strengthen EESL’s institutional capacity and enhance its access to commercial financing.
- The programme will largely tackle the financing, awareness, technical and capacity barriers faced by new energy efficiency programmes and support the Union Government’s UJALA programme.
- It will help increase private sector participation in energy efficiency, including through private sector energy service companies.
- The investments under the programme are expected to help avoid lifetime greenhouse gas emissions of 170 million tons of CO2 and contribute to avoiding an estimated 10 GW of additional generation capacity.
- This would be over 50 percent of the National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency target of 19.6 GW indicated in India’s Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Accord.

Importance:

- The energy efficiency programme is one of the several steps taken by the Union Government to meet its climate change commitments to reduce carbon intensity by 33-35 per cent by 2030.
- It will help India meet its NDC commitments and move further towards a more resource-efficient growth path.
- The financing under the India Energy Efficiency Scale-Up Program will not only help EESL to continue achieving the results under its existing initiatives but also strengthen its institutional capacity and ability to meet its future expanding needs by leveraging private energy service companies (ESCO) industry and increased access to a wider range of external commercial financing sources.

2) India’s most polluted : 30% have no clearance

Theme: Pollution

Status of India’s pollution control:

- A good number of India’s most polluted cities are not too keen to clean up their act, according to a list maintained by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).
- Of the 102 cities singled out by the Centre for their alarming pollution levels, only 73 have
 submitted a plan of remedial action to the CPCB.
- Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Nagpur and Jaipur are among the prominent cities that are yet to submit their plans.
- the World Health Organisation said that Delhi and Varanasi were among 14 Indian cities that figured in a global list of the 20 most polluted cities in terms of PM2.5 levels.

way forward:
- These so called ‘Non-attainment cities’ were among those marked out by the CPCB and asked – as part of the National Clean Air Campaign (NCAP) – to implement 42 measures aimed at mitigating air pollution. These included steps such as implementing control and mitigation measures related to vehicular emissions, re-suspension of road dust and other fugitive emissions, bio-mass, municipal solid waste burning, industrial pollution, and construction and demolition activities. The aim of pollution mitigation measures was to cut overall pollution in these cities by 35% in the next three years.
- The National clean air programme (NCAP) also envisions setting up 1,000 manual air-quality-monitoring stations (a 45% increase from the present number) and 268 automatic stations (from 84 now). “Some cities submitted plans but didn’t fill out particulars, such as timelines, and so they had to be returned.

Note: The non-attainment cities are those that have fallen short of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for over five years.

3) Drying of River Ganga

Theme: SANDHI initiative
- SANDHI (Science and Heritage Interface), a science-culture initiative uses technology for preservation, archival, development and scientific exploration of our heritage.
- Under this SANDHI initiative IIT-Kharagpur carried a study on river systems and its relationship with settlement systemAccording to recent conducted by IIT-Kharagpur , River Ganga has witnessed unprecedented low levels of water in several lower reaches in last few summer seasons.
- It used combination of satellite images of ground water levels of Ganga, numerical stimulations and chemical analyses to draw the conclusion.
- Drying of Ganga river in recent years during summer seasons is possibly related to ground water depletion in gangetic aquifers.
- In forthcoming summers, for next 30 years, ground water contribution to river Ganga will continue decreasing. This trend can lead to food scarcity for 115 million people in Ganga basin.

Importance of Initiative:
- It can help general public understand wider implications of ground water depletion.
- It also helpful to Policy makers and Global change community.
- The study provides quantitative data for future planning of water resources projects in Ganga basin.
3) Millions risk malnutrition as CO2 levels climb: study

Theme: Impact of Climate change:

- Research says that rising levels of carbon dioxide in the air threaten to sap wheat, rice, and other staple grains of valuable nutrients, raising the spectre of mass malnutrition.
- On current trends, higher CO2 concentrations could reduce iron, zinc and protein levels in the crops that feed the world by up to 17% by mid-century.
- The global food system is also vulnerable to rising temperatures, prolonged drought, and other forms of extreme weather driven by climate change.
- Impacts include reduced crop yields, heat-stressed livestock, and shifts in the quantity and location of commercially-fished ocean species.
- Wheat, rice and maize together account for roughly 40% of protein, zinc and iron supply in the diet worldwide.
- It is found that nearly 2% of the global population could become zinc deficient.
- Hundreds of millions of people could become newly deficient in these nutrients, primarily in Africa, Southeast Asia, India and the Middle East. These are in addition to the billions of people already deficient that could see their condition worsen.

Impact on Health:

Protein, along with the minerals iron and zinc, are essential nutrients for normal human growth and development. Zinc deficiency affects the immune system and makes children, particularly, more vulnerable to malaria, lung infections and deadly diarrhoeal diseases. A lack of iron increases the likelihood of mothers dying during childbirth, can lower IQ, and causes anaemia, or a drop in red blood cells.

Way Forward:

- All countries should stick to targets of Paris agreement.
- Co-operation of global countries in bringing sustainable technology to mitigate climate change.
- Focussing on alternative energy resources and fasten the research on exploring Bio-fuels.
- Using public transport
- Planting trees through National Green high way mission.

Source:

Pieces of the Asian dream
| 02 July, 2019

1) Pieces of the Asian dream
India vs China in maintaining relations with ASEAN nations

Introduction:
From the informal Narendra Modi-Xi Jinping summit at Wuhan on April 27-28 to Prime Minister Modi’s keynote speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on June 1, to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in June 9 at the Chinese port city of Qingdao, all have sparked a lot of analysis as to what kind of strategic positioning India is gearing itself into at a time when the U.S. and China are caught up in geopolitical rivalry in the Asia-Pacific.

Tug of war:
The reality is that the tug of power between India and China continues to impact sea lanes and chokepoints, with these two Asian giants pursuing interests in the littoral states spread across the Indo-Pacific.

While India pursues influence through heightened diplomatic, bilateral and military engagement, China has started to garner influence through hard investments in cash-strapped littoral nations suffering from massive infrastructural deficits.

China way of Influence over ASEAN nations:
- China’s heavy investments in ASEAN nations have brought these nations closer into its orbit of influence to the point where despite an international ruling against its activities in the South China Sea (SCS), the ASEAN as a bloc agreed to cooperate with China on a Code of Conduct instead of pursuing the international ruling.
- The influence of China on certain ASEAN states like Cambodia has been such that during the 2016 ASEAN ministerial meeting, Phnom Penh refused to endorse the joint communiqué if it referred to the international court ruling against Beijing. China is today Cambodia’s largest provider of foreign aid and has invested in dams, oilfields, highways, textile operations and mines.
- In the Philippines, President Rodrigo Duterte has been seeking rapprochement with China, especially after 2016, when U.S. legislators blocked the sale of about 26,000 M4 rifles. Beijing provided rifles worth about $3.3 million to the Philippines police and guns worth $7.35 million to fight against extremists in the city of Marawi.

Although India enjoys cordial relationship with all ASEAN nations, it is unlikely that diplomatic hobnobbing alone will help garner the grouping’s support for its Indo-Pacific strategy against China’s raw cash power and growing military presence. ASEAN’s trade with China far surpasses that with India, and Chinese foreign direct investment in ASEAN is nine times higher than India’s.

India also has so far failed to provide any concrete plans for its immediate neighbourhood in South Asia, with countries like Nepal and Sri Lanka demonstrating interest in partnering with China. Souring of
relations with Nepal due to the 2015 fuel blockade and failed strategic interventions in Sri Lanka have both undermined India's regional leadership. On the other hand, China's multibillion dollar investments in Sri Lankan ports and cities have inched the country much closer to China, and last year Sri Lanka handed over its Hambantota port to China on a 99-year lease. Under its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has over the years promised billions to littoral states in the Indian Ocean Region to build a series of ports, something resource-constrained India will find difficult to match.

Positive sign for India:

- The overt-assertiveness of China has driven many countries in East and Southeast Asia to seek friendship with India, and today Indonesia and Singapore are looking to bolster relations with India.
- ASEAN has a cultural affinity with India with its shared religious diversity, ancient ties and a sizeable Indian diaspora in countries like Singapore and Malaysia. After the U.S., India enjoys global soft power through its art, literature, music, dance and cinema.
- India is perceived by many in East Asia as a friendly democracy, making the country a safe ally to have in the long run.
- Japan has significantly increased its engagement with India and the two countries enjoy robust military ties.
- India and Australia have initiated the ‘2+2’ dialogue signalling Canberra’s interest in deepening a maritime security partnership with India.

India- China positive relations:

- This has so far been the year of the India-China reset. At the SCO Summit, Mr. Xi renewed China’s agreement with India on sharing data on the cross-border flow of waters from the Brahmaputra during the flood season.
- The two countries signed a protocol that would enable all varieties of rice exports from India to China, a demand India has been pressing for quite some time to rectify its adverse balance of payments against China.
- Mr. Xi has also suggested a trade target of $100 billion by 2020, signalling a gradual thaw in relations.

Way Forward:

- India still has to develop a strategy to leverage its soft power and optimise its military power to effectively counter China’s cash and hard power.
- With a strategic partnership with China, India can better pursue its own regional groupings like the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) initiative.
- Since India can’t match China’s resource spending, strategic understanding with China can help streamline regional connectivity projects and help India gain influence in the region.
- India have to Increase engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), developing friendship with China, maintaining cordial ties with Russia, pursuing interests with Australia and engaging more with the U.S.

2) Easing tensions

Theme: U.S - Mexico Trade pact
The United States and Mexico reached a breakthrough bilateral trade agreement. It replaces the decades-old North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

- **What is NAFTA:**
  - North American Free trade agreement is an agreement signed by Canada, Mexico, and the United States, creating a trilateral trade bloc in North America. The goal of NAFTA was to eliminate barriers to trade and investment between the U.S., Canada and Mexico.
  - Tariffs related to agriculture, textiles and automobiles gradually phased out.
  - NAFTA was supplemented by two other regulations i.e, the North American agreement on Economic co-operation (NAAEC) and the North American Agreement on labour co-operation (NAALC).
  - These agreements were intended to prevent businesses from relocating to other countries to exploit lower wages, lenient worker health and safety regulations, and looser environmental regulations.
  - The implementation of NAFTA on January 1, 1994, brought the immediate elimination of tariffs on more than one-half of Mexico's exports to the U.S. and more than one-third of U.S. exports to Mexico.

**Background of Trade war:**

- since the time of presidential elections, Mr. Donald Trump was threatening other countries on the name of imposing tariffs on various countries and he is more concern about job security of American citizens. so to increase revenue of Country and increase the production domestically, to go with protectionism, Mr. Trump started trade war with the other nations. Mr. Trumps believed that American industry will do better behind a wall of protectionism.
- Mr. Trump have complaints about Chinese practices. even though U.S. has significant concerns about Chinese economic practices, such as China’s aggressive approach to acquiring intellectual property from American businesses, it has not imposed tariffs on China alone. EU and Canada has also attracted high tariffs. Also, Trump places a high priority on bilateral trade deficits.

**What U.S did till now:**

- US increased 25% duties on Chinese machinery, electronics and hi-tech equipment, including autos, computer hard drives and LEDs. United States has slapped stiff 25% tariff on US $50 billion worth of Chinese goods. It has accused China of intellectual property (IP) theft and unfair trade practices.
- Trump administration to levy steep tariff on steel imports may hit India’s domestic steel market. Recently, US had proposed to impose tariffs of 25% on steel imports and 10% on imported aluminium to protect domestic steel industry from cheap imports. It had clubbed India as steel non-mature country with other steel surplus nations.
- Imposed of steep tariffs on steel and aluminium imports from Canada, European Union and Mexico on national security grounds.
Other countries counter to U.S.:

- China initiated anti-dumping and anti-subsidy investigations regarding sorghum from U.S.A. China also had announced plans to hike tariffs by 25% on 106 imports from the U.S. The Chinese move was in response to a U.S. announcement of a 25% tariff on 1,333 Chinese imports.
- India notified higher tariffs on several items imported from the U.S. Agricultural products such as apples, almonds, chickpeas, lentils, and walnuts.
- European Union also began to charge import duties of 25% on a range of U.S. products in response to U.S tariffs imposed on EU steel and aluminium.
- Mexico had joined hands with other economies such as Canada, China and the European Union to impose retaliatory tariffs against the U.S.

What's in the new U.S.-Mexico agreement?

- According to the new agreement, 75% of all automobile content must be made regionally, which is higher than the current level of 62.5%.
- Further, 40-45% of such content must be manufactured using labour that costs at least $16 an hour.
- The U.S. hopes that this will discourage manufacturers from moving their facilities to Mexico, where labour is available at rates lower than in the U.S.
Lesson to the other countries:
Mexican’s decision could set an example for other countries which have resorted to retaliatory tariffs to deal with Mr. Trump’s aggressive trade war against them.

- The market reaction was probably a sign of relief, riding on hopes that tit-for-tat tariff wars between the U.S. and its trade allies could now draw to a close.
- It is worth noting that Mexico had earlier joined hands with other economies such as Canada, China and the European Union to impose retaliatory tariffs against the U.S.
- The bilateral deal between the U.S. and Mexico offers hope of winding down global trade wars.

Way Forward:

- The best way to win the trade war against the U.S. may simply be to accept “defeat” by refusing to double down on retaliatory tariffs. The reason for such a response is simple. Retaliatory tariffs can only cause further harm to the world economy by increasing the burden of taxes on the private sector, which is crucial to spur growth and create jobs.
- Further, there is no reason for America’s trading partners, in an attempt to protect their domestic producers, to repeat Mr. Trump’s mistake of depriving domestic consumers of access to useful foreign goods. The right response to Mr. Trump’s trade war will be to abstain from any mutually destructive tit-for-tat tariff regimes while simultaneously pushing for peace talks.

Source:

Manned space mission before 75th I-Day: ISRO chief

Theme: Gaganyaan Mission

The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) unveiled the details of the Gaganyaan mission for manned space flight before 2022. It will be India’s first human space flight programme.

- On Independence day, Prime minister announced that this manned space mission will take Indian astronauts to space on board ‘Gaganyaan’ by 2022.
- Prior to the actual launch of this manned mission by 2022, the ISRO will launch two unmanned Gaganyaan missions.
- GSLV Mk-III launch vehicle, having the necessary payload capability for this mission, will be used to launch Gaganyaan.
The spacecraft will be placed in a low earth orbit of 300-400 km.
The spacecraft will comprise of a crew module and service module that constitute an orbital module.
It weighs approximately 7 tonnes, and will be carried by a rocket.
The mission will send a three-member crew to space for a period of five to seven days.
The total programme cost is expected to less than ?10,000 crore.

Objectives of Gaganyaan Mission:

- Enhancement of science and technology levels in the country
- A national project involving several institutes, academia and industry
- Improvement of industrial growth
- Inspiring youth
- Development of technology for social benefits
- Improving International collaboration

way forward:

- While ISRO has perfected the engineering aspects of the mission, bioscience is a new field for ISRO and will require collaboration and support from other organisations.

Source:

Over 99% Of demonetised notes were returned: RBI

Over 99% Of demonetised notes were returned: RBI

Theme: Post demonetisation

- The Reserve Bank of India’s annual report for 2017-18 said more than 99% of the Rs. 500 and Rs. 1,000 notes withdrawn from circulation in November 2016 had been returned to the central bank.
- RBI has completed the processing of demonetised Rs 500 and 1000 banknotes; 99.3 percent of the notes worth Rs 15.31 lakh crore have been returned to banks.
- The value share of the ?2,000 notes fell from 50.2% to 37.3% since FY’17 as more new ?500 and ?200 notes were pumped into the system in FY’18.
- Increase in high value currency: The value share of high demonetisation notes (?500 and ?2000) went up from 72.6% in FY’17 to 80.2% in FY’18. This is close to the 86.4% in(?500 and ?1000) in FY’16.
- The value of banknotes in circulation increased by 37.7 percent since demonetization to Rs 18,037 lakh crore as at March-end 2018.
- With more circulation of Rs 500 new banknotes over the last one year, the share of Rs 2000
banknotes declined to 37.3 percent by value as on March 2018 as compared to 50.2 percent in 2017.

- The share of Rs 500 note, in terms of value, increased from 22.5 percent in 2017 to 42.9 percent in 2018.
- The share of newly introduced Rs 200 banknotes in the total value of banknotes in circulation was 2.1 percent as at end-March 2018.

Counterfeit Bank notes:

- As per the RBI, counterfeit or fake notes detected in Specified Bank Notes (SBNs) decreased by 59.7 and 59.6 percent in the denominations of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000, respectively.
- In comparison to the previous year, there was an increase of 35 percent in counterfeit notes detected in the denomination of Rs 100, while there was a noticeable increase of 154.3 percent in counterfeit notes detected in the denomination of Rs 50.

Source:

Challenges at BIMSTEC

| 02 July, 2019 |

Challenges at BIMSTEC

Theme: SAARC vs BIMSTEC

- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) summit in Kathmandu will be another milestone for India after the BRICS-BIMSTEC Outreach Summit hosted by it in 2016, as the grouping has gradually emerged as a key vehicle to take forward India’s regional, strategic and economic interests.

What is BIMSTEC:

- Founded in 1997, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is an international regional organisation of seven nations of South Asia and South East Asia.

- The member countries of the Summit include Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan, and Nepal. All these seven countries lie near the Bay of Bengal.

- Initially, the bloc included just four member states and was called BIST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation).

- Myanmar was included later and the group was renamed BIMST-EC.

- The name was changed to BIMSTEC with the admission of Nepal and Bhutan at the 6th
Ministerial meeting in Thailand in February 2004.

- The first BIMSTEC summit was held in Thailand in 1997; second was held in 2008 in India; and the third was held in 2014 in Myanmar.
- Nepal is the current Chair of the BIMSTEC. Nepal assumed the chairmanship in 2014.
- The grouping accounts for 22 percent of the global population, and has a combined GDP of USD 2.8 trillion.

What Makes India Interest towards BIMSTEC:

Two major factors have driven India’s interests in the BIMSTEC forum.

- A key reason for India to reach out to its BIMSTEC neighbours has been the stagnation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The stagnation of SAARC limited both the scope of India’s growing economic aspirations as well as the role it could play in improving regional governance.
- Two recent instances underscore its failed attempts. At the 18th SAARC Summit in Kathmandu, in 2014, India proposed the SAARC Motor Vehicles Agreement. However, this could not progress due to resistance from Pakistan. This compelled Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal (BBIN) to sign the BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement in 2015. Pakistan also opted out of the ambitious SAARC Satellite project proposed by India, leading to a change in its name to the South Asia Satellite.

The main motivation for India to push BIMSTEC is thus not Pakistan; rather, it is in the country’s interest to ensure that the region does not lag behind and that an unstable neighbourhood does not drag its growth. India’s desire to link South Asia to the economically dynamic Southeast Asia is also part of this strategy.

Challenges:

- India is currently the largest contributor to the BIMSTEC secretariat’s budget. India’s annual contribution was Rs. 2 crore (or 32% of the total secretariat budget) for 2017-18. With the secretariat planning to strengthen its capacity by increasing human resources and the number of officials representing each member state, India may need to consider allocating more resources. India’s generosity would be a key test of its commitment to the subregional grouping.
- Another issue would be for India to counter the impression that BIMSTEC is an India-dominated bloc, a problem that it faced for a long time in SAARC.
- Another strategic challenge for India is that China has long desired to be part of the SAARC grouping. Some SAARC members also have their own interests in bringing China into the equation: they want it to balance India’s dominance. China has observer status in SAARC. When this was given, it only increased the demand to make China a full member of SAARC.

Way Forward:

- Incase of SAARC — while India was wary of the smaller neighbours ‘ganging up’ against it, the smaller neighbours were worried that closer integration might lead to India’s domination. India should Remove the suspicion in the minds og BIMSTEC nations by more cordially engaging with
them.

- Today, most of the smaller neighbours are more willing to engage so as to benefit from India’s economic rise. Nonetheless, for internal political reasons, the same issue may re-emerge and pose hurdles in the progress of BIMSTEC. To moderate such suspicions, India will need to show sensitivity to the concerns of smaller neighbours.
- India will have to carefully navigate the emerging regional geopolitics, as many of the elements that made SAARC hostage to political rivalry and turned it into a defunct mechanism can re-emerge in BIMSTEC.

Source:

Kudumbashree:

1) Kudumbashree:

- Government of Kerala launched Kudumbashree in 1998, to wipe out absolute poverty from state through concerned community action under the leadership of local self-government.
- Largest women empowering projects in the country.
- It covers 50% of the households in Kerala.
- A Government agency having a budget and paid staff and is responsible to the department of local self-government.
why kudumbashree now?

- workers of the Kudumbashree have so far cleaned more than 1.1 lakh flood-hit houses in Kerala.
- It can be described as a fine model of community service by the self-help group in post disaster reconstruction.

2) Union Cabinet approves Earth Sciences Ministry’s umbrella scheme ‘O-SMART’

Theme: O-SMART

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs gave its approval for implementation of an umbrella scheme ‘Ocean Services, Technology, Observations, Resources Modelling and Science (O-SMART)’.
- The CCEA the scheme for implementation during the period from 2017-18 to 2019-20 at an overall cost of Rs 1623 crore.
- The scheme covers a total of 16 sub-projects, which address ocean development activities such as services, technology, resources, observations and science.
Background:

In accordance with the Ocean Policy statement enacted in November 1982, the Ministry has been implementing a number of multi-disciplinary projects in the field of ocean development primarily to:

- Provide a suite of Ocean Information services
- Develop technology for sustainable harnessing the ocean resources
- Promote front-ranking research
- Conduct ocean scientific ocean surveys

The Ministry has also achieved several major milestones under various programs including according pioneer status on deep-sea mining of Poly-Metallic Nodules (PMN) in an area of 75,000 square kilometers in the central Indian Ocean (CIO). The Ministry has also been providing a number of ocean information services to various coastal stakeholders including fishermen, coastal states, offshore industry, navy and coast guard. Some of the services have also been extended to neighbouring countries of the Indian Ocean Region. India’s ocean-related activities are now extended from the Arctic to the Antarctic region covering large ocean spaces which have been monitored through satellite-based observations. India has also established state-of-the-art early warning systems for ocean disasters such as tsunami, cyclones and storm surges.

India has also signed the Antarctic Treaty System and joined the Commission of Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) for harnessing the resources. The technologies for harnessing the ocean resources are at various stages. Some of them have been matured and operational like low-temperature thermal desalination for islands. Besides, the ministry has been monitoring the health of coastal waters of India including shoreline changes and the marine ecosystem.

Key Missions of O-SMART:
Significance of O-SMART:

- The services provided under the O-SMART scheme will provide a number of economic benefits to the user communities in the coastal areas including the coastal states and ocean sectors such as shipping, fisheries and offshore industry.
- Currently, five lakh fishermen community are receiving daily information through mobile phones about things like allocation of fish potential and local weather conditions in the coastal waters. The move will help in reducing the search time for fishermen, resulting in saving of fuel cost.
- The implementation of the scheme will help address issues related to Sustainable Development Goal-14, which emphasises on the conservation of the oceans and marine resources.
- The scheme will also provide the required scientific and technological background for implementation of various aspects of the blue economy.
- The state-of-art early warning systems established under the scheme will help in effectively dealing with ocean disasters such as storm surges and tsunami.
- Besides, the technologies developed under the scheme will help in harnessing the vast ocean resources of both living and non-living resources from seas across India.

Source:

Nilgiri tahr climb the population charts

| 02 July, 2019

Nilgiri tahr climb the population charts

Theme: Nilgiri tahr

In news:

In a heartening development for conservationists, a recent census has revealed that the population of the Nilgiri thar (an endangered mountain goat) at the Murukthi National park has grown by an impressive 18% in the last two years, from 480 to 568.
Nilgiri thar:

- It's an endangered species in IUCN list
- It is listed in schedule I of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act 1972
- It is endemic to the Nilgiri hills and the southern portion of the Western Ghats in the state of Tamil Nadu and Kerala in southern India.
- It is the state animal of Tamil Nadu.

Threats for Nilgiri tahr:

In spite of its increasing population, its population faces several threats. Researchers point to the continuing spread of invasive species of flora, such as wattle and pine, and exotic weeds like scotch broom (Cytisus scoparius) and gorse, which end up diminishing grazing land.

Source:

India Committed to boosting BIMSTEC connectivity: PM
02 July, 2019

1) India Committed to boosting BIMSTEC connectivity: PM

Theme: Khatmandu Declaration:

- The 4th BIMSTEC Summit concluded in Kathmandu on August 31, 2018 with the signing and adoption of the Kathmandu Declaration by all the seven members. The Summit began on August 30, 2018 in Kathmandu, Nepal.
- **Theme 2018**: 'Towards a Peaceful Prosperous, and Sustainable Bay of Bengal Region'.
The 18-point Kathmandu Declaration is expected to enhance the effectiveness of BIMSTEC Secretariat by engaging it in various technical and economic activities in the region. During the Summit, foreign ministers of BIMSTEC member countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of **BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection**.

**Kathmandu Declaration:**

- The Declaration stresses **ending poverty from the region by 2030** in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

- The declaration includes issues such as **agricultural technology exchange**, **fight against terrorism**, **gradual reduction of the impact of climate change**, **increase trade and investment**, and **ease the visa processing** for the people of BIMSTEC member states.

- It strongly condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and stressed that there can be no justification whatsoever for any act of terrorism.

- It underlines the importance of multidimensional connectivity as a key enabler to economic integration for shared prosperity of the region.

- It highlights the importance of trade and investment as one of the major contributing factors for fostering economic and social development in the region.

**Highlights of PM Modi’s speech:**

- There is a big opportunity for connectivity- Trade connectivity, economic connectivity, digital
connectivity, transport connectivity, and people to people connectivity.

- The region had become a meeting point for India's 'Neighbourhood First' and Act East policies.
- PM Modi reiterated India’s commitment to enhance its National Knowledge Network in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal, in the field of digital connectivity.
- He invited all the BIMSTEC member countries to participate in the International Buddhist Conclave 2020 as the Guests of Honor. India will host the Conclave in August 2020.
- He announced the establishment of the Centre for Bay of Bengal Studies at Nalanda University for research on arts, culture, maritime laws and other subjects.

2) U.S.-India 2+2 talks:

- The first U.S.-India 2+2 dialogue next week in Delhi will discuss regional and strategic issues of Asia and will also have some real outcomes.
- The Trump administration is mindful of India's legacy ties with Russia, but does not appreciate its continuing defence co-operation with it.
- U.S. is not sure of granting a waiver to India from sanctions if India went ahead with the planned purchase of S-400 missile defence system from Russia.

S-400 Defence System:

- The S-400 Triumph air defence system integrates a multifunction radar, autonomous detection and targeting systems, anti-aircraft missile systems, launchers, and command and control centre. It is capable of firing three types of missiles to create a layered defence. The system can engage all types of aerial targets including aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles(UAV) and Ballistic and cruise missiles within the range of 400 Km, at an altitude of upto 30 Km. The system can simultaneously engage 36 targets.
- The S-400 is two is more effective than previous Russian air defence systems and can be deployed within five minutes. It can also be integrated into the existing and future air defence units of the Air Force, Army, and the Navy.

2+2 Dialogue:

- 2+2 dialogue between India and U.S. was agreed during visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to U.S. in June 2017.
- It is similar to India-Japan 2+2 dialogue Format between foreign and defence secretaries and ministers of the two countries. It replaces earlier India-US strategic and commercial dialogue.
- The dialogue aimed enhancing strategic coordination between both countries and maintaining peace and stability in Indo-Pacific region.
- It puts strategic, defence and security relationship between two countries at forefront and centre stage.
- It insulates India-US strategic relationship from feuds over trade issues and deep divide on economic integration policies as trade and commercial issues that collided with strategic relationship between both countries disussed in strategic and commercial dialogue earlier.

Way Forward:

U.S. administration expected some concrete outcomes such as concluding an enabling agreement on communication and expanding the scope of military exercises. Operationalizing India-U.S. partnership in Asia would be part of the 2+2 agenda.
Speeding up the adoption process

Theme: On the Juvenile Justice Amendment Bill of 2018


- Chapter 8 of this Act deals with adoption. Subsection (1) of Section 56 of the Act says “adoption shall be resorted to for ensuring right to family for the orphaned, abandoned and surrendered children.” Section 63 of the Act states that the adoption is final on the issuance of the adoption order by the court concerned. Subsection (2) of Section 61 of the Act provides that “the adoption proceedings shall be held in camera and the case shall be disposed of by the court within a period of two months from the date of filing the adoption.”

Present Issues:

- An affidavit filed by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights shows that of 203 special adoption agencies audited, merely eight deserved positive reviews. It has been observed that there is an inordinate delay in issuing adoption orders by the courts due to the heavy workload.

- As of July 20, 2018 there are 629 cases for adoption pending in various courts across the country. Due to delay in issuing of adoption orders by the courts, children continue to stay in childcare institutions, even after getting a family.

Juvenile Justice (care and Protection of children) amendment Bill 2018:

- It proposes to amend the Juvenile Justice Act to empower the District Magistrate, instead of the court, to issue adoption orders.

- This would ensure timely processing of adoption cases and provide orphaned, abandoned and surrendered children with familial care and protection.

Way Forward:

Future of the country depends on our children, so, It is an urgent need to speeding up the adoption process.
process. Timely proceeding of adoption cases would provide needy children with deserving families.

**August's PT Point**

| 02 July, 2019 |

- **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)** is a serious form of pneumonia. It is caused by a member of the coronavirus family of viruses (the same family that can cause the common cold), so it is also called SARS-CoV. It infects both humans and animals (livestock, birds, etc.). It had spread like a pandemic in Hong Kong in March 2003, and from there it transmitted to several other countries.

- **Zika virus**: Zika virus is vector borne disease. It is transmitted by aedes aegypti mosquitoes, which also transmits dengue. The zika virus also spread through blood transfusion and sexual contact. Now there is no specific treatment or vaccine currently available to treat zika.

- **Rohingya**: The Rohingya people are a stateless Indo-Aryan-speaking people who reside in Rakhine State, Myanmar. It was clarified by the Indian government that Rohingya were “illegal
migrants” and not “refugees”. India is not a signatory to UN Convention on Refugees.

• **M- STriPES**: It is a Monitoring System for Tigers Intensive Protection and Ecological Status, a mobile monitoring system for forest guards.

• **The Global Tiger Initiative (GTI)** program of the world Bank, using its presence and convening ability, brought global partners together to strengthen the tiger agenda.

• **Common Service Center (CSC)** and National Health Accounts (NHA) signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to implement the Ayushman Bharat scheme through 3 lakh Common Service Centers (CSCs) across the country. Ayushman Bharat-National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS) aims to cover over 10 crore poor vulnerable families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) providing coverage of up to Rs. 5 lakh (per family per year) for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.
• Lok Sabha has passed Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2018 to bring relief to the home buyers and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The Bill replaces ordinance promulgated in this regard and amends the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.
Union Government has imposed **safeguard duty of 25% on import of solar cells** (whether or not assembled in modules or panels) from China and Malaysia. The move is aimed at helping domestic solar cell manufacturing sector. But it could affect existing projects dependent on cheap imports and hike solar power tariffs in India since around 90% of panels sector uses solar cells made in China and Malaysia.

**Safeguard Duty** is tariff barrier imposed by government on the commodities to ensure that imports in excessive quantities do not harm the domestic industry. It is mainly temporary measure undertaken by government in defence of the domestic industry which is harmed or has potential threat getting hared due to sudden cheap surge in imports.

**Core industries** are main or key industries of the economy. In most countries, these particular industry are backbone of all other industries. In India, there are eight core sectors comprising of coal, crude oil, natural gas, petroleum refinery products, fertilizers, steel, cement and electricity.
• **Rajasthan** became first state in the country to implement National Policy on Biofuels unveiled by Union Government in May 2018.

• **Zika virus** is vector borne disease transmitted primarily by Aedes aegypti mosquitoes, which also transmits dengue. It can also spread through blood transfusion and sexual contact. It is capable of causing serious birth defects i.e. neurological disorders and foetal deformation known as Microcephaly in which infants are born with abnormally smaller heads.

• **TESS**: NASA’s new planet hunting Spacecraft Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) has become operational and has started collecting data after its successful launch in April 2018. TESS mission is led by Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s (MIT) Kavli Institute for Astrophysics and Space Research. It is designed to find potential planets orbiting stars close to Earth.
Gaofen-11: China successfully launched Gaofen-11, an optical remote sensing satellite, as part of the country’s high-resolution Earth observation project. Gaofen means “high resolution” in Chinese. It is ambitious space project of China that aims to launch seven high-definition observation satellites before 2020.

Concessional Financing Scheme (CFS): Union Cabinet has approved first extension of Concessional Financing Scheme (CFS) for another five years from 2018 to 2023 to support Indian Entities bidding for strategically important infrastructure projects abroad. The scheme also has been liberalized, allowing any Indian company, irrespective of ownership eligible to benefits of it.
Union Cabinet has approved policy framework to permit exploration and exploitation of unconventional hydrocarbons such as Shale oil/gas, Coal Bed Methane (CBM) etc. It will be carried out under existing Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs), CBM contracts and Nomination fields to encourage existing contractors in licensed or leased area to unlock full potential of unconventional hydrocarbons in existing acreages.

Seva Bhoj Yojna: Union Ministry of Culture launched Seva Bhoj Yojna, a new scheme to provide financial assistance on purchase of specific food items by Charitable Religious Institutions (CRIs) for free distribution among people. Under this scheme, Centre’s share of Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) and Interstate GST charged on raw food materials purchased by the religious institutions will be refunded.

Lok Sabha has passed Commercial Courts, Commercial Division and Commercial Appellate Division of High Courts (Amendment) Bill, 2018.
Logo for Geographical Indication (GI): Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) under Ministry of Commerce and Industry has unveiled tricolour logo for geographical indication (GI) certified products. The logo has tagline “Invaluable Treasures of Incredible India” printed below it.

Strategic Trade Authorisation-1 Status (STA): The US has given India Trade Authorisation-1 Status. STA allows for license exception with regards to exports from the US.

Mukhyamantri Yuva Nestam: Andhra Pradesh Government has approved Mukhyamantri Yuva Nestam, an unemployment allowance scheme to provide Rs 1000 per month unemployed youth in state.
Integrate to Innovate Programme: Invest India under Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) in partnership with energy companies has launched Integrate to Innovate Programme for startups in energy sector. It is three-month programme for startups in the power sector aims to foster collaboration between startups and large corporations of the energy sector.

Kadaknath chicken meat from Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh has received Geographical Indication (GI) tag from Chennai based Geographical Indication Registry and Intellectual Property India. Kadaknath or Kali Masi (flowl with black flash) is unique breed of chicken that is complete black colour.

WOW (Wellness of Women) mobile application: FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO), the women’s wing of Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has launched WOW (Wellness of Women) mobile application aimed at creating awareness on preventive healthcare for women across the country.
• **Pingali Venkayya**: 141st birth anniversary of freedom fighter and designer (architect) of Indian National Flag. Pingali Venkayya was observed on August 2, 2018. India’s National Flag (tricolor) is based on Swaraj flag of Indian National Congress designed by Pingali Venkayya.

• **Move Hack**: NITI Aayog has launched global mobility hackathon Move Hack to crowdsource solutions aimed at future of mobility in India. It is envisaged as one of largest hackathons globally. It is first platform in the world that has enmeshed public transport, private transport, road safety, multimodal connectivity and new age transport technologies such as zero emission vehicles and intra city aerial transport spearheaded by Government.

• **Supersonic endo-atmospheric interceptor missi** Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) conducted successfully tested supersonic endo-atmospheric interceptor missile developed under Ballistic Missile Interceptor Advanced Air Defence (AAD) System from.
Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill, 2017: Lok Sabha has unanimously passed Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill, 2017 by two-thirds majority. The constitutional amendment bill seeks to grant National Commission on Backward Classes (NCBC) constitutional status at par with National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCSTs).

Shaur Nahin mobile app: The mobile application is initiative of department of environment science and technology in association with National Informatics Centre (NIC), Himachal Pradesh. The app will enable general public to report cases of noise pollution.
• **World’s first single-chromosome yeast**: Researchers from China’s Centre for Excellence in Molecular Plant Sciences have claimed to have created the world’s first single-chromosome yeast while not affecting the majority of its functions.

• **National Sports University Bill, 2018**: Lok Sabha has passed National Sports University Bill, 2018 by voice vote to set up the country’s first National Sports University in Imphal (west), Manipur that will provide sports education, research and coaching. The Bill replaces National Sports University Ordinance, 2018 promulgated by President in May 2018 to protect interests of students who already have been enrolled in National Sports University.

• **Digital Literacy Library**: Social networking giant Facebook has launched “Digital Literacy Library” to help young people build skills they need to safely enjoy online technology. The lessons can be found on Facebook’s Safety Center as well as on Berkman Klein’s Digital Literacy Resource Platform.
Social Media Communication Hub: Centre has notified Supreme Court that it has withdrawn proposal for setting up ‘Social Media Communication Hub’. This comes after apex court had issued notice to centre earlier and had termed Government’s proposal to monitor online data using this hub akin to ‘creating a surveillance state’.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY): Union Government has announced that it has reached target of providing 5 crore free LPG connections under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY). It aims at providing clean-cooking fuel to poor households, who are otherwise vulnerable to various health hazards associated with indoor air pollution and bringing in qualitative charges in living standards.
Ace Indian shuttler P V Sindhu finished second best winning silver medal at World Championships 2018 of Badminton in women’s singles category held at Nanjing, China.

The GST (Good and Services Tax) council in its 29th meeting held in national capital New Delhi has approved cash incentives to promote Digital transactions. The GST Council meeting was chaired by Interim Finance Minister Piyush Goyal. It has announced 20% cashback for digital transactions paid on business-to-consumer transactions using RuPay and BHIM platforms, subject to cap of Rs 100 per transaction.
• Union Finance Ministry has further extended deadline on imposing import duty hike on 29 products, imported from United States (US) by 45 days till September 18, 2018 from earlier August 4, 2018.

• Ajay Data: The nominating committee of Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) has selected Ajay Data as new council member of Country Code Supporting Organisation (ccNSO). With this, he becomes first Indian to get selected as a member of ccNSO, which is policy development body of ICANN for ccTLD (country code top-level domains) issues and represents all country code top level domain operators from around the world.
Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, 2018: President Ram Nath Kovind has given assent (under Article 111) to Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, 2018 passed by Parliament. With this assent, this Bill becomes law that will deter fugitive economic offenders to evade legal process in India and flee the country. The law aims to serve as an effective, expeditious and constitutional way to stop these offenders from running away.

Chandrayaan-2: Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has postponed Chandrayaan-2, India’s second mission to moon to January 2019. Chandrayaan-2 is India’s most challenging and complicated mission as it involves an orbiter, lander and rover.

IMPRINT-II: Union Ministry of Hume Resource Development (MHRD) has approved 122 new
research project proposals worth Rs 112 crore for funding under its IMPRINT-II (Impacting Research Innovation and Technology) scheme. IMPRINT is first of its kind MHRD supported scheme to address major science and engineering challenges and boost original scientific and technological research in 10 technology identified domains in the country.

• **RISECREEK**: Computer scientists from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras have developed first of family of six industry-standard microprocessors under Project Shakti. The initial batch of 300 chips have been named RISECREEK and have been fabricated at Intel’s facility at Oregon, US for free to run Linux operating system. Project Shakti was started in 2014 as IIT-M initiative and part of it is funded by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

• **Maitree 2018**: Joint military exercise Maitree 2018 between Indian Army and Royal Thai Army was conducted in Thailand from 6 to 19 August 2018. It contributed immensely in developing mutual understanding and bonhomie between armies of both countries in order to counter terrorism.
• **Xingkong-2**: China successfully tested its first cutting-edge hypersonic “waverider” flight vehicle (aircraft) Xingkong-2 (Starry Sky-2). Waverider is flight vehicle that flies in atmosphere and uses shockwaves generated by its own hypersonic flight with air to glide at high speed. Currently, United States and Russia have been carrying out similar experiments.

• **Parliament** has passed Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Third Amendment) Bill, 2017 that seeks to provide constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC).
Startup India launched Startup Academia Alliance programme to fulfill Government’s mission to promote spirit of entrepreneurship in the country. It is unique programme to foster mentorship opportunity between academic scholars and startups working in similar domains.

The world’s first-ever thermal battery plant owned by Bharat Energy Storage Technology Private Limited (BEST) was inaugurated in Amravati, Andhra Pradesh. This plant aims to create new energy storage form that is expected to have commercial applications, while also maintain low carbon footprint and less dependent on external factors like weather.

Tokyo 2020 will be first Olympics to use facial recognition technology to increase security around all venues. For this, games organisers have partnered with Japanese telecommunications and information technology giant NEC to develop the first system of this kind to be implemented at an Olympics games.
• According to recent study, earth is at the risk of entering an irreversible hothouse condition – where the global temperatures will rise by four to five degrees even if targets under 2015 Paris climate deal are met.

• The Union Home Ministry has excluded 29 inhabited islands in Andaman and Nicobar from Restricted Area Permit (RAP) regime under the Foreigners (Restricted Areas) Order, 1963 till December 2022. This decision aims to increase footfalls and promote tourism. Government is also planning to open 11 other uninhabited islands to foreigners.
Union Government, NABARD and National Water Development Agency (NWDA) have signed revised Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) for funding of central share of 99 prioritized irrigation projects under Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) through Long Term Irrigation Fund (LTIF).

All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), a premier institute of Ayurveda under the AYUSH Ministry has signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with IIT Delhi to boost research in traditional medicine and streamline hospital care facilities in the country.

India’s largest bank State Bank of India (SBI) has launched its Multi Option Payment Acceptance Device (MOPAD) for digital payments convenience of merchants and consumers. It aims at providing digital convenience to customers and ease of doing business for merchants at the same time. SBI will roll-out this new initiative on all SBI PoS terminals in a phased manner.
Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry has launched Niryat Mitra mobile application for exporters and importers of the country. The app developed by Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO), the largest exporters organisation of the country. The app provides wide range of information required to undertake international trade right from policy provisions for export and import, applicable GST rate, available export incentives, tariff, preferential tariff, market access requirements – SPS and TBT measures.

Pakistan and Russia have signed contract on admission of service members of Pakistan in Russia’s Military Training Institutes.

Government has informed Lok Sabha that Non-Resident Indians (NRI) cannot file Right to Information (RTI) applications to seek governance-related information from Central government departments. It mentioned that only citizens of India have the right to seek information under the provisions of RTI Act, 2005 and NRIs are not eligible to file RTI applications.
• Delhi High Court has declared 25 sections of Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959 which have been extended to Delhi, as “unconstitutional”. With this, it has struck down legal provision criminalising begging in national capital.

• Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve in Himalayan state of Sikkim was included in UNESCO designated World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR), making it 11th Biosphere Reserve from India to achieve this recognition.
World Bio-fuel Day (The International Biodiesel Day) is observed every year on August 10 to create awareness about the importance of non-fossil fuels i.e. Green Fuels or Bio-fuels as an alternative to conventional fossil fuels. Bio-fuels are renewable, bio-degradable, sustainable and environment friendly fuel. It can be seen as an alternative to conventional fossil fuels.

Rekha Sharma (54) was appointed as chairperson of the National Commission for Women (NCW).
Parliament has passed Homoeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Bill, 2018 to replace Ordinance promulgated by President in May 2018. It amends Homoeopathy Central Council Act, 1973 which sets up Central Council of Homoeopathy and regulates homoeopathic education and practice.
From the columns of *The Hindu:*

1. Mekadatu drinking water project to claim 52.5 sq km of Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary
2. Excise Department in Kerala launches "Vimukhti" initiative to fight against drug menace
3. Government released a draft Biological Data Storage, Access and Sharing Policy of India to improve sharing of biological research data
4. Lok Sabha passed the Indian Medical Council (Amendment) Bill, 2019
5. Union government to roll out a platform e-Foreigners Tribunals (e-FTs) to digitally store the data of persons declared foreigners by the Foreigners Tribunals.
6. Bangladesh seeks to synergy ties with India
7. NITI Aayog proposed the establishment of giga factories in India for the manufacture of lithium-ion batteries in the next couple of years.
8. According to a World Bank analysis, high trading costs impact liquidity of Indian equities.
9. Union government ratified the convention to curb base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS) by companies.
10. Rising heat stress could cost 80 million jobs by 2030: U.N.

News for UPSC Mains 2019:

**Union Minister opposes U.P. move to shift 17 OBCs to SC list**

**SC pulls up Kerala on Malankara church row**
https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/sc-pulls-up-kerala-on-malankara-church-
Water conservation project gets nod

Mekedatu to claim 52.5 sq km of forest
https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/mekedatu-project-to-claim-525-sq-km-of-core-forest-area/article28265460.ece

Govt. bats for sharing biological research data

Monsoon deficit not yet a concern: Agriculture Minister

Reclaiming the space of non-violence
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/reclaiming-the-space-of-non-violence/article28264397.ece

Not by wishful thinking
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/not-by-wishful-thinking/article28264404.ece
Teachers and quotas
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/teachers-and-quotas/article28264382.ece

Trump in North Korea
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/trump-in-north-korea/article28264387.ece

No home even a decade after the war
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/no-home-even-a-decade-after-the-war/article28264443.ece

Healthcare’s primary problem
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/healthcares-primary-problem/article28263232.ece

Why policemen kill themselves
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/why-policemen-kill-themselves/article28263242.ece

Bangladesh seeks to synergise ties with India

Lithium-ion giga units mooted
https://www.thehindu.com/business/lithium-ion-giga-units-mooted/article28264696.ece
High trading costs impact liquidity of Indian equities: study

Centre ratifies convention to curb company profit shifting
https://www.thehindu.com/business/centre-ratifies-convention-to-curb-company-profit-shifting/article28264714.ece

From the columns of *The Indian Express*:

**Government Introduces Teachers' Reservation Bill in Rajya Sabha**

**10 Ways to Solve Things, Want the 11th From You: PM to young IAS Officers**

**Behind Iran's Nuclear Defiance**

**How Global Warming Could Impact Jobs in India**
Terms of Estrangement

Ocean's Eleven

Fund-starved NBFCs Seek Dedicated Liquidity Window

Non-members Back OPEC's Extension of Cuts in Production

Note:

News Analysis for the following topics will be updated by today's evening:

1. Impact of Global Warming on Employment in India
   (Context: How Global Warming Could Impact Jobs in India)
2. Changing Relations between U.S. and North Korea
   (Context: Trump in North Korea)
3. Recreating Satyagraha as a Political Philosophy
   (Context: Reclaiming the space of non-violence)
4. PT 2020 Special

Stay Tuned for More Updates.
Jai Hind

Keep Studying

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express
Daily News Updates for 4th July 2019

From the columns of *The Hindu*:

2. A new app is set to be launched in this month in which Supreme Court judgements can be read in all the vernacular languages.
3. Centre told the Delhi High Court not to change the existing definition of rape, that is gender-specific.
4. The Central government has asked private port operators along the Arabian coast to maintain strict security protocol declared by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.
5. According to an audit report by Comptroller and Auditor General, the aim of harnessing green power is defeated by improper planning and lack of monitoring.
6. Nations Green Tribunal (NGT) asked the Gujarat government to deposit an amount of Rs. 75 crore in an escrow account for air pollution.
7. South Central Railway (Headquarter: Secunderabad Railway Station) began the construction of the longest electrified tunnel between Cherlapalli and Rapuru stations.
8. Centre decided to constitute an "inter-disciplinary, high quality" research team to ascertain the cause of acute encephalitis syndrome (AES).
9. Supreme Court asked Meghalaya to transfer Rs. 100 crore to Central Pollution Control Board for not acting against illegal mining.
10. Union Cabinet approves the Code on Wages Bill.
11. NASA tests launch-abort system for moon mission
12. 27% of children with disabilities have never been to school: UNESCO
News for UPSC Mains 2019:

Soon, read SC judgments in your language

Do not alter the existing definition of rape, Centre tells High Court

Improper planning, lack of monitoring defeating aim of green power, says CAG

Mumbai marooned
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/mumbai-marooned/article28275516.ece

The primacy of the elected
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-primacy-of-the-elected/article28275565.ece

A scheme for farmers that have not reached most farmers
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-scheme-for-farmers-that-has-not-reached-most-
Iranian oil imports have not stopped: Govt.

USTR team to visit Delhi next week

Ex-officials cast doubt on poll result
https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/ex-officials-cast-doubt-on-poll-result/article28277127.ece

NASA tests launch-abort system for moon mission

27% of children with disabilities have never been to school: UNESCO

From the columns of The Indian Express:
Our Electricity Future

Govt May Give Leg-up for Disaster Insurance

Why Disability Pension Tax Upsets Veterans

Wage Code Bill gets nod; Minimum Wage to be linked to Skills, Geographical Regions

The Church Dispute in Kerala: What SC ordered, the Government failed to do

Artificial Gravity
Spectrum of Possibilities

Note:

News Analysis for the following topics will be updated by today's evening. Today, we will focus on topics from Polity that are seen in the current affairs.

1. The new Wage Code Bill
(Context: Wage Code Bill gets nod; Minimum Wage to be linked to Skills, Geographical Regions)

2. CAG and its Functions
(Context: Improper planning, lack of monitoring defeating aim of green power, says CAG)

3. PM-KISAN Scheme
(Context: A scheme for farmers that have not reached most farmers)

(Context: 27% of children with disabilities have never been to school: UNESCO)
Stay Tuned for More Updates.

Jai Hind

Keep Studying

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express

PT Pointer 1

PT Pointer 2

PT Pointer 3

A working group to Review the regulatory and supervisory framework for Core Investment Companies (CIC) was set up by the Reserve Bank of India.

The group will be headed by Tapan Ray.
PT Pointer 4

About UNESCO

PT Pointer 5

Solar Eclipse

A solar eclipse is an astronomical phenomenon that occurs when the moon comes between Earth and the sun, temporarily blocking the sunlight. It is considered to be a rare event as it is visible only from a limited area of Earth's surface. Solar eclipses occur only because of celestial coincidences.

PT Pointer 6


PT Pointer 7

About Arctic Fox

The Arctic Fox lives its whole life above the northern tree line in the Arctic tundra, it has found its way to most Arctic islands and is the only mammal native to Iceland. It may be found on the sea-ice in winter as it extends its foraging range. The southern limit of the arctic fox is partially dictated by the presence of red foxes which out-compete arctic foxes in areas where tundra turns to shrubs and trees.

IUCN Status: Least Concerned

Predators: Polar bears, wolverines, red foxes and golden eagles.

Adaptations of the Arctic Foxes that help them survive in the extreme cold climate:

- Relatively low surface area to volume ratio to reduce loss of heat.
- Thick camouflaged seasonal fur that is highly insulating.
- Thick fur on paw and tails to insulate them from snow and ice.
- Thick layer of body fat for insulation and food storage.
- They have a strong and directional sense of hearing to hear their main prey, lemmings.

PT Pointer 8
Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express
From the columns of *The Hindu*:

1. Economic Survey 2019 sets out a blueprint for $5 tn economy
2. Govt. can sell PSU land, reduce the majority stake to boost non-tax revenue: Chief Economic Advisor
3. Kulbhushan Jadhav Case verdict on July 17: International Court of Justice
4. Bengaluru puts curbs on the collection of waste. The only wet waste will be picked up during door-to-door collection and mixed waste will be rejected
5. Polavaram multi-purpose project's deadline extended by 3 years, it is now set to complete by 2022
6. Telangana's forest department to introduce the famous "Miyawaki" method of afforestation
7. China says U.S. tariffs must be lifted for a trade deal
8. Urijit Patel admits RBI was slow to take timely steps
9. Scientists find new gene linked to schizophrenia
10. Arctic mission to ‘trap’ researchers in ice to study climate

News for UPSC Mains 2019:

**Economic Survey sets out the blueprint for $5 tn economy**


**Govt. can sell PSU land, reduce majority stake to boost non-tax revenue:**

CEA

EU expertise for wind energy plants

A Japanese touch to Telangana green drive

Blue-sky visions

Expanding India’s share in the global space economy
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/expanding-indias-share-in-global-space-economy/article28286469.ece

Can the government help create jobs?
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/can-the-government-help-create-jobs/article28286499.ece

Economic Survey moots central welfare database of citizens

Scientists find new gene linked to schizophrenia
Arctic mission to ‘trap’ researchers in ice to study climate

From the columns of The Indian Express:

Life Expectancy Going Up, Survey Need to Raise Retirement Age

PM Set to Launch 30 Projects on Statue of Unity Anniversary

On the Edge of a Big League

A New Deal for Kashmir

US Drags India to WTO Over Duty Hike on 28 American Goods
Note:

News Analysis for the following topics will be updated by today's evening:

1. Key Points of Economic Survey 2019
   (Context: Release of Economic Survey 2019)

2. Potential of Wind Energy in India
   (Context: EU expertise for wind energy plants)

3. India's Presence in the Global Space Economy
   (Context: Expanding India’s share in global space economy)

4. PT 2020 Special

   Stay Tuned for More Updates.

   Jai Hind

   Keep Studying

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express

Budget Key Points for Economy

GS Paper III | 05 July, 2019

Budget Key Points for Economy
Indian Economy

Know the Terms

**Fiscal Policy**

It is the government actions with respect to aggregate levels of revenue and spending. Fiscal policy is implemented through the budget and is the primary means by which the government can influence the economy.

**Fiscal Deficit**

When the government's non-borrowed receipts fall short of its entire expenditure, it has to borrow money from the public to meet the shortfall. The excess of total expenditure over total non-borrowed receipts is called the Fiscal deficit.

Budget 2019-2020

**Key Points related to Economy:**

**Fiscal Policy**

Fiscal deficit target for the financial year 2019-2020 has been revised and set to 3.3%. The interim budget, released in February 2019 estimated the fiscal deficit for the year to be 3.4%. The budget announces that the government will borrow from abroad in external currencies.

**Banking Sector**

- The budget proposes to provide Rs.70,000 crore to the Public Sector Banks.
- The government has also set a disinvestment target of Rs. 1,05,000 crore for 2019-2020.
- The government has also proposed to levy Tax Deduction at Source of 2% on cash withdrawal exceeding Rs. 1 crore in a year from a bank account.
- The government has decided to give more powers to the Central Bank to regulate non-banking financial companies. Thus, now onwards Reserve Bank of India will have
the power to supersede the board of the shadow banks, apart from those owned by the government. The RBI will also regulate finance companies which are under the purview of the National Housing Bank.

- No charges or Merchant Discount Rate is to be imposed on customers as well as merchants. For this, necessary amendments will be made in the Income Tax Act and the Payments and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 to give effect to these provisions.
- Further, it states that business establishments with an annual turnover of more than Rs. 50 crore shall offer low-cost digital modes of payment to their customers.

**Agriculture**

The Budget allocation for the agriculture ministry has been doubled to Rs. 1.38 lakh crore this year but a large share of this allocation is dedicated for the PM-KISAN scheme. Besides, no new initiatives were put forward for the promotion of the agriculture sector. Rather, the Finance Minister repeated policy initiatives such as the online national agricultural market (e-NAM). 10,000 new Farmer producer organization and a back to the basics approach with "zero budget" or organic farming.

**Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises**

The budget proposes to allocate Rs. 350 crores for the financial ear 2019-20 for 2% interest subvention for all GST registered MSMEs on fresh and incremental loans.

**Promotion of livelihood through SFURTI and ASPIRE:** SFURTI or the Scheme of Fund for Upgradation and Regeneration of Traditional Industries aims to facilitate cluster-based development of traditional industries to make them more productive, profitable and capable for generating sustained employment opportunities. As per the budget, the scheme will focus on promoting clusters based on **bamboo, honey, and khadi.** Around 100 new clusters will be set up during 2019-20 generating opportunity for 50,000 artisans. Further, the technology upgradation of these industries will be done under the ASPIRE (Scheme for Promotion of Innovation, Rural Industry, and Entrepreneurship) scheme. 80 Livelihood Business Incubators (LBIs) and 20 Technology Business Incubators (TBIs) will be set up in 2019-20 to develop 75,000 skilled entrepreneurs in agro-rural industry sectors.
Continuation of Ujjwala Yojana and Saubhagya Yojana

Both these schemes have brought about a major impact on the lives of rural families. It is expected that by 2022, every single rural family, except those who are unwilling to take the connection will have electricity and a clean cooking facility.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G) – Under this Yojana, a total of 1.54 crore rural homes have been completed in the last five years. The second phase of this Yojana will go on till 2021-2022 and it is proposed to provide 1.95 crore houses during this 2nd phase. The houses are provided with amenities like toilets, electricity and LPG connections.

Others:

- The government has hiked import duty on gold, silver, and platinum from 10% to 12.5%.
- The budget allocation for the Home Ministry saw a rise of over 5% from the last year's allocation. A special focus has been made on disaster management, cybercrime infrastructure and freedom fighters' pension.
- An amount of Rs. 100 crores have been allocated for the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre, while the last year the allocation was Rs. 6 crores.

To read the complete budget and watch short videos on Union Budget 2019-20, visit https://www.aspireias.com/budgetsummary
**What is Investment**

An investment is a **creation or purchase of a monetary asset** that has the potential to provide income in the future or can later be sold at a higher price for a profit. Thus, it can be any mechanism that can generate income in the future. It can include purchase of goods, construction of infrastructure or the purchase of bonds, stocks or real estate property.

**Budget 2019-2020**

**Key Points related to Investment**

**Domestic Investments**

- The various measures taken to enhance the investment for infrastructure financing are:
  - To set up a **Credit Guarantee Enhancement Corporation**
  - Putting in place an action plan to deepen the market for long term bonds.
  - Proposal of enabling the FIIs/FPIs (in debt securities issued by IDF-NBFCs) to transfer or sell their investments to any domestic investor within the specified lock-in period.
- Further, the measures proposed to deepen the bond market include enabling the stock exchanges to enable them to allow AA rated bonds as collaterals and increase the user-friendliness of the trading platforms used for corporate bonds.
- The budget proposes to establish a social stock exchange which will act as an electronic fund-raising platform. It will be set up under the regulatory ambit of the SEBI. Various social enterprises and voluntary organizations will be listed on the proposed social stock exchange. This will help in raising capital for the social enterprises in the form of equity, debt or as units like a mutual fund.
- SEBI will also consider raising the threshold for a minimum public shareholding in the listed companies from 25% to 35%.
- **Know Your Customer (KYC)** norms for the Foreign Portfolio Investors will be made more investor-friendly.
- Further, the government will supplement the efforts made by RBI to get retail investors to invest in government treasury bills and securities, with further institutional development using stock exchanges.

**Foreign Direct Investment**
The budget proposes to open FDI in sectors like aviation, media (animation, AVGC) and insurance sectors after the multi-stakeholder examination.

It also proposes to keep Insurance Intermediaries to get 100% FDI.

Local sourcing norms to be eased for FDI in Single Brand Retail sector.

Government to organize an annual Global Investors Meet in India, using National Infrastructure Investment Fund (NIIF) as an anchor to get all three sets of global players (pension, insurance and sovereign wealth funds).

The statutory limit for FPI investment in a company is proposed to be increased from 24% to sectoral foreign investment limit. Option to be given to the concerned corporate to limit it to a lower threshold.

FPIs will be permitted to subscribe to listed debt securities issued by ReITs and InvITs.

NRI-Portfolio Investment Scheme Route is proposed to be merged with the Foreign Portfolio Investment Route.

Cumulative resources garnered through new financial instruments like Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs), Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), as well as models like Toll-Operate-Transfer (ToT), exceed Rs. 24,000 crore.

To read the complete budget and watch short videos on the Union Budget 2019-2020, visit https://www.aspireias.com/budgetsummary

Source: The Hindu, PIB
Budget 2019-2020

Key Points related to Infrastructure

1. The budget proposes to invest Rs. 100 lakh crore in infrastructure in the next 5 years.

2. Reiteration of the existing schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, industrial corridors, dedicated freight corridors, Bharatmala and Sagarmala projects, Jal Marg Vikas and UDAN Schemes to promote physical connectivity.

3. Upgradation in the existing scheme includes the coverage of state road networks during the second phase of Bharatmala project and enhancement of the navigational capacity of Ganga under the Jal Marg Vikas Project.

4. In order to reduce the import bill and make the freight and passenger movement cheaper, the budget talks increasing the cargo volume on river Ganga by four times.

5. Promotion of Electric Vehicles

In April 2019, Phase II of the FAME scheme was launched with an outlay of Rs. 10,000 crore for a period of 3 years.

FAME (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid (& Electric) Vehicles)

It was launched in 2015 with an aim to promote eco-friendly vehicles in the country. Its objective is to encourage faster adoption of Electric vehicles by way of offering an upfront incentive on the purchase of Electric vehicles and also by establishing the necessary charging infrastructure for electric vehicles.

In this budget, the Finance Minister has announced both direct and indirect tax incentives to promote electric vehicles in the country. The incentives will only be provided to advanced-battery-operated and registered e-vehicles. By this initiative, the government envisions to make India a global hub of manufacturing of Electric Vehicles. The budget also makes a suggestion to include solar storage batteries and charging infrastructure in the above scheme to boost our efforts. It also proposes to increase the customs duties on automobile and automobile parts had provided for exemption of customs duties on certain parts of electric vehicles.
Other measures taken to promote electric vehicles are:

- GST Council has been moved to lower the GST rate on electric vehicles from 12% to 5%
- Provision of additional income tax deduction of Rs 1.5 lakh on the interest paid on loans taken to purchase electric vehicles

6. **India’s first Common Mobility Card**

In her budget speech, the Finance Minister made a mention of India’s first indigenously developed payment ecosystem for transport, based on the National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) standards was launched in March 2019. The multi-purpose card runs on RuPay cards and can be used by the holder to pay for bus travel, toll taxes, parking charges, and retail shopping.

7. **Boost to railways**

The railways budget was merged with the general budget in 2017. The present budget mentions a need for investment of Rs. 50 lakh crores between 2018-2030 in the railway infrastructure. It proposes to use Public-Private Partnership to unleash faster development and completion of tracks, rolling stock manufacturer and delivery of passenger freight services.

8. **Focus on One Nation One Grid**

To further strengthen the connectivity infrastructure, the government will focus on building on the model of One Nation, One Grid to ensure power connectivity.

9. The Finance Minister further proposed to make available a blueprint this year for developing gas grids, water grids, i-ways, and regional airports.

10. According to the budget, **the existing National Highways Programme will be restructured to ensure a National Highway Grid** using a financeable model.

11. **Aviation sector**

The budget calls for policy interventions to develop Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) to achieve self-reliance in the aviation sector. Further, a regulatory roadmap will
be made to make India a hub for aircraft financing and leasing activities from Indian shores.

12. **Digital Connectivity**

Already existing Bharat-Net project will be speeded up with assistance from Universal Obligation Fund and under a Public Private Partnership arrangement. This project aims to bridge the rural-urban digital divide by providing internet connectivity in local bodies in every Panchayats in the country.

12. **Housing Infrastructure**

The budget proposes to take up reform measures to promote rental housing. Besides, model tenancy laws will be finalized and will be circulated to the states. The budget talks of utilizing the land held by the Central government and the Central Public sector enterprises by building public infrastructure and affordable housing using the joint development and concession mechanisms.

13. Lastly, the budget has also suggested steps to enhance the sources of capital for infrastructure financing. It has mentioned that the Credit Guarantee Enhancement Corporation will be set up in 2019-20. It also proposes to come up with long term bonds deepening markets for corporate bond repos, credit default swaps, etc., with a specific focus on the infrastructure sector.

To read the complete budget and watch short videos on the Union Budget 2019-2020, visit [https://www.aspireias.com/budgetsummary](https://www.aspireias.com/budgetsummary)

Source: The Hindu, PIB
Budget 2019-2020

Key Points related to the Social Sector

Water management

The budget proposes the constitution of a Jal Shakti Mantralaya by integrating the existing Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation and Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation. The new ministry will look at the management of our water resources and water supply in an integrated and holistic manner. Further, it has proposed a new scheme, Jal Jeevan Mission to provide Har Ghar Jal to all rural households by 2024. The government is also looking forward to exploring the possibility of using additional funds available under the CAMPA for this purpose.

Women Empowerment

It has been seen that the government in its previous tenure has made efforts to support and encourage women entrepreneurship through various schemes such as MUDRA, Stand-up India and the Self Help Group (SHG) movement. Moving forward with the same ideology of empowering the women of the new India, Budget 2019-2020 gives the title “Naari Tu Narayani” for the women of India. It represents a change in the policy-making by shifting focus from women-centric-policy to women-led initiatives and movements. The current budget also reiterates the need for gender budgeting and calls for setting up a committee for the same. The current budget also proposes to expand the women self-help group interest subvention program to all districts. It also proposes to extend the overdraft facility of Rs. 5000 to every verified woman SHG member who has a Jan Dhan bank account. Also, one woman per SHG can avail a loan of Rs. 1 lakh under the MUDRA scheme.

Youth

1. Education Sector
To further boost the system, India is working to bring in a new National Education Policy to transform India’s higher education system to one of the global best education systems.

The budget also proposes to establish a National Research Foundation (NRF) to fund, coordinate and promote research in the country.

The budget further proposes to start a program “Study in India”

It also moots for the creation of Gandhipedia portal by National Council for Science Museums to sensitize youth and society about positive Gandhian values.

2. Skill Sector

The budget talks of empowering the youth to enable about 10 million youth to take up industry-relevant skill training under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY).

The government also proposes to lay focus on new-age skills under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Yojana like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things, Big Data, 3D Printing, Virtual Reality, and Robotics, which are valued highly both within and outside the country, and offer much higher remuneration.

To read the complete budget and watch short videos on the Union Budget 2019-2020, visit https://www.aspireias.com/budgetsummary

Source: The Hindu, Pib
Daily News Updates for 6th July 2019

Budget 2019-2020 Special

From the columns of The Hindu:

1. The Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman broke away from the tradition of carrying the budget document in a leather briefcase and carried it in a bright red cloth bag calling it a "bahikhata"
2. The budget sees a hike in fund allocated for women, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.
3. The budget proposes a hike in a surcharge of taxable income from Rs. 2 crores to Rs. 5 crores by 3%, rs. 5 crore and above by 7%
4. Aadhar can now to be used to file Income Tax Returns even without a PAN card
5. Fiscal deficit target is revised downwards to 3.3%
6. The budget proposes a tax on cash withdrawals exceeding Rs. 1 crore in one year
7. Government allocates Rs. 70,000 crore for the public sector banks
8. Budgetary allocation for the Home Ministry is up by 5%. It will place special focus on cybercrime
9. Government hikes import duty on gold, silver, and platinum from 10% to 12.5%
10. No changes in the budgetary allocations have been made in the Union budget for this year
11. The budget proposes Rs. 50 crore for appointing Hindi teachers in non-Hindi speaking States.
12. Supreme Court seeks responses from the Centre on the new Aadhaar ordinance
13. According to the UN Human Rights Chief, rule of law is getting eroded in
Venezuela

14. Sri Lanka Supreme Court stays execution of drug offense convicts

News for **UPSC Mains 2019:**

**Nirmala’s maiden Budget is all about incremental measures**


**Government eases angel tax norms**


**Will Budget boost the investment rate?**

[https://www.thehindu.com/business/budget/will-budget-boost-the-investment-rate/article28299226.ece](https://www.thehindu.com/business/budget/will-budget-boost-the-investment-rate/article28299226.ece)

**Laying the base for spurring investment**


**Slew of steps to boost digital payments**

RBI can supersede NBFC board

‘Zero Budget for farmers; no drought relief’

Big boost for disaster management

‘Ownership cost of EVs to come down’

Moving strategically to a $5 tn economy

Call for port-led development
Modi 2.0 Budget bolsters investment


Falling far short of the goal

https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/falling-far-short-of-the-goal/article28299107.ece

Choosing the long view

https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/choosing-the-long-view/article28299114.ece

From the columns of The Indian Express:

Govt Steps into Aid NBFCs Hit by Liquidity Crunch, Defaults

Tax-holiday for GIFT City Extended to 10 Years to Attract Investment

Govt. Push To Make India Aircraft Leasing, Financing Hub
Not For The Farmer

She (Almost) Conquered

Govt Proposes Stock Exchange for Welfare Organisations

Breaking 'British Hangover', Bahi Khaata Comes with Baggage of Feudal Oppression

Despite Focus, Dip in Jal Shakti Ministry Outlay

Note:

News Analysis for the following topics will be updated by today's evening.
Today's edition is the Budget's Special

1. Budget Key Points for Taxes
2. Budget Key Points for the Economy
3. Budget Key Points for the Investors
4. Budget Key Points for Infrastructure
5. Budget Key Points for the Social Sector

Stay Tuned for More Updates.

Jai Hind
Keep Studying

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express
Daily News Updates for 8th July 2019

From the columns of *The Hindu*:

1. Dry spell and monsoon delay may hit cotton crop yield in Punjab and Haryana
2. Nitin Gadkari urges farmers to use alternative fuels such as biodiesel, bio-CNG. He tells the sugar mill owners to Switch to ethanol production
3. Narmada Bachao Andolan Activist Medha Patkar opposes the move to replace labour laws with codes
4. The Central government is likely to recommend to the GST council to lower the indirect tax levy on multimodal transport operators from 12% to 5%
5. Indo-Afghan trade chokes on U.S. curbs
6. Defence allocation in the Union Budget disappoints military
7. The production of Train18 got a red signal when its design was found violative of certain specifications
8. Taliban bomb kills 14 as the group holds peace talks in Qatar

News for UPSC Mains 2019:

**GS Paper 2: Karnataka crisis: CM to seek postponement of session**


**GS Paper III: Dry spell, monsoon delay may hit cotton crop yield**

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/dry-spell-monsoon-delay-
GS Paper III: Switch to ethanol production, Gadkari tells sugar mill owners

GS Paper III: State to pursue GST rate cut on multimodal transport

GS Paper III: Kanpur drain plugged but Ganga still unfit for bathing

GS Paper II: Reclaiming the Indo-Pacific narrative
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/reclaiming-the-indo-pacific-narrative/article28313334.ece

GS Paper III: No easy answer to economic slowdown
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/no-easy-answer-to-economic-slowdown/article28312955.ece

GS Paper II: Crimes that India’s statute books have failed to define
GS Paper II: Indo-Afghan trade chokes on U.S. curbs

GS Paper III: Plan for district ecopanels draws fire

GS Paper III: Red signal for Train18 production

From the columns of *The Indian Express*:

Health Ranking: Tamil Nadu Objects, NITI says Any Relook Only Next Year

Behind the Decline in Fiscal Deficit
Antifa: Why America is Talking About Group That Uses Violence With 'Fascists'

What Becoming a $5-trillion Economy Means

Note:

News Analysis for the following topics will be updated by today's evening:

1. Need for Multimodal Transport in India

(Context: State to pursue GST rate cut on multimodal transport)

2. River Pollution, its causes and solutions

(Context: Kanpur drain plugged but Ganga still unfit for bathing)

3. National Biodiesel Policy, 2018

(Context: Switch to ethanol production, Gadkari tells sugar mill owners)

4. India's aim to become a $5-trillion Economy

(Context: What Becoming a $5-trillion Economy Means)
Stay Tuned for More Updates.

Jai Hind

Keep Studying

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express

Utkarsh 22: Reserve Bank of India's 3-year Roadmap

GS Paper III | 08 July, 2019

Topic: Utkarsh 22: Reserve Bank of India's 3-year Roadmap

About Reserve Bank of India

The Reserve Bank of India acts as the central bank of India. It was established on April 1, 1935, in accordance with the provisions of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934. Initially, its central office was established in Calcutta but it was permanently moved to Mumbai in 1937. The Reserve Bank of India during the time of its establishment was privately owned but it was nationalised in 1949 and since then it is fully owned by the Government of India.
Functions

The main functions of the RBI include:

- **Monetary authority:** formulates, implements, and monitors India’s monetary policy. The main objectives of which are maintaining price stability, ensuring adequate flow of credit to productive sectors, and financial stability.
- **The issuer of currency:** issues currency and coins, and exchanges or destroys currency notes and coins unfit for circulation.
- **Banker and debt manager to the government of India:** performs merchant banking functions for central and state governments and also acts as their banker, determines how best to raise money in debt markets to help the government finance its requirements.
- **Banker to banks:** enables clearing and settlement of inter-bank transactions, maintains banks’ accounts for statutory reserve requirements, and acts as a lender of last resort.
- **Regulator and supervisor of the financial system:** protect the interests of depositors, facilitate orderly development and conduct of banking operations, and maintains financial stability through preventive and corrective measures.
- **Manager of foreign exchange:** regulates transactions related to the external sector, enables the development of the foreign exchange market (forex), ensures smooth functioning of the domestic forex market, and manages India’s foreign currency assets and gold reserves.
- **Regulator and supervisor of the payment and settlement systems.
- **Maintaining financial stability:** an explicit objective of the RBI since the early 2000s.
- **Development:** ensures credit availability to productive economic sectors, establishes institutions to develop India’s financial infrastructure, expands access to affordable financial services, and promotes financial education and literacy.

Preamble

The Preamble of the Reserve Bank of India describes the basic functions of the Reserve Bank as:

"to regulate the issue of Bank notes and keeping of reserves with a view to securing monetary stability in India and generally to operate the currency and credit system of the country to its advantage; to have a modern monetary policy framework to meet the
challenge of an increasingly complex economy, to maintain price stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth."

**Organization Structure**

The Reserve Bank's affairs are governed by a central board of directors. The board is appointed by the Government of India in keeping with the Reserve Bank of India Act.

- Appointed/nominated for a period of four years
- Constitution:
  - **Official Directors**
    - Full-time: Governor and not more than four Deputy Governors
  - **Non-Official Directors**
    - Nominated by Government: ten Directors from various fields and two government Official
    - Others: four Directors - one each from four local boards

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**PT Pointer**

**Acts Administered by the Reserve Bank of India**

- Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934
- Government Securities Regulations, 2007
- Banking Regulation Act, 1949
- Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999
- Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (Chapter II)
- Credit Information Companies(Regulation) Act, 2005
- Payment an Settlement Systems Act, 2007 and associated regulations and amendments
- Factoring Regulation Act, 2011
RBI, in its recently held board meeting, finalized a three-year roadmap to improve regulation and supervision, among other functions of the central bank. This medium-term strategy is known as **Utkarsh 22**.

**About Utkarsh-22**

It is a medium-term strategy charted out by the Reserve Bank of India. It is in line with the global central banks’ plan to strengthen the regulatory and supervisory mechanism. It is guided by the recommendations made by a committee headed by the outgoing Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Viral Acharya. The committee was formed to identify issues that needed to be addressed over the next three years. The current strategy is based on the idea that the Reserve Bank of India should play a proactive role and take preemptive action to avoid any crisis. Also known as the Vision 2022 plan, it would focus on 6 areas including financial inclusion, financial stability, and sustainable growth.

Source: The Hindu
From the columns of *The Hindu*:

1. Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is planning to travel to India in September.

2. To reduce air pollution in Delhi, the Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA) requested the Supreme Court to intervene in the “grossly inadequate” public transport the infrastructure of the city.

3. Farmers stage a protest against the Punjab Irrigation Department over its alleged inability to provide adequate water.

4. The Rajasthan Assembly passed the Rajasthan Lokayukta and Up-Lokayukta (Amendment) Bill to reduce the tenure of the Lokayukta from earlier eight years to five years.

5. The latest report on dam safety has stated there are 297 dams in Maharashtra with “rectifiable deficiencies” which need immediate attention and another 1,055 have minor issues.

6. India’s first Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IACI) Vikrant is at an advanced stage of construction and will be delivered in 2021.

7. The Supreme Court dismissed a plea to allow women to enter mosques. The Cheif Justice of India said, "Let a Muslim woman challenge it".

8. Parliament cleared the Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019 which allows voluntary use of Aadhaar as proof of identity to open bank accounts and get mobile phone connections.
9. The UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) on Monday said India and Pakistan had failed to improve the situation in Kashmir and not taken any concrete steps to address the numerous concerns raised in its earlier report.

10. The Odisha government has come up with a special ‘Witness Protection Scheme’ to provide security to witnesses facing threat during the course of a legal battle.

11. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) board, which met in New Delhi, finalized a three-year roadmap (Utkarsh 2022) to improve regulation and supervision, among other functions of the central bank.

12. The Finance Bill, 2019 has given the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) new powers to act against entities that tamper or destroy electronic databases or fail to furnish information when sought by the capital markets regulator, SEBI, who can now also impose penalties of up to Rs. 1 crore on brokers for certain violations.

13. Italy's Prosecco hills were added to the UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites.

News for UPSC Mains 2019:

GS Paper II: Netanyahu expected in Delhi in Sept.

GS Paper II: SC dismisses plea to allow women to enter mosques
GS Paper II: SC asks why the delay in setting up rights courts

GS Paper II: Reinforcing Caste Hierarchies
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/reinforcing-caste-hierarchies/article28323309.ece

GS Paper II: A regrettable conviction
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/a-regrettable-conviction/article28323305.ece

GS Paper II: A shot at economic logic
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-shot-at-economic-logic/article28323314.ece

GS Paper II: The importance of democratic education
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-importance-of-democratic-education/article28323288.ece

GS Paper II: A myopic view of foreign-made generic drugs
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/taking-a-myopic-view-of-foreign-
GS Paper II: Towards a free trade agreement
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/towards-a-free-trade-agreement/article28323247.ece

GS Paper II: UN report ‘legitimizes’ terror, says India

GS Paper II: Iran makes new threats that would reverse steps in n-deal

GS Paper III: RBI board finalises ‘Utkarsh 2022’

GS Paper III: SEBI gets teeth to probe new-age cases
https://www.thehindu.com/business/markets/sebi-gets-teeth-to-probe-new-age-cases/article28323498.ece

From the columns of The Indian Express:
Budget and the World

Where to Plant a Trillion Trees to Save Planet: Study Maps All Land Available

On the Water Front

Note:

News Analysis for the following topics will be updated by today's evening:

1. Utkarsh 22: Reserve Bank of India's 3-year Roadmap
   (Context: RBI board finalises ‘Utkarsh 2022’)

2. India-Israel Bilateral Relations
3. Human Rights Act in India

(Context: SC asks why the delay in setting up rights courts)

4. African Continental Free Trade Area

(Context: A shot at Economic Logic)

5. PT 2020 Special

Stay Tuned for More Updates.

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Source: The Hindu

UPSC Prelims 2020 Special
Prelims GS Paper 1 | 09 July, 2019

UPSC Prelims 2020 Special for 9th July (PT Pointers)

PT Pointer 1

News: Bolster public transport to reduce air pollution: EPCA

EPCA or the Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority

- EPCA is *Supreme Court mandated body* tasked with taking various measures to tackle air pollution in the National Capital Region. It was notified in 1998 by

- EPCA was constituted with the objective of ‘protecting and improving’ the quality of the environment and ‘controlling environmental pollution’ in the National Capital Region. The EPCA also assists the apex court in various environment-related matters in the region.

The functions of the EPCA are:

- To protect and improve the quality of the environment and prevent and control environmental pollution in the National Capital Region.
- To enforce the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in NCR as per the pollution levels.

PT Pointer 2

News: IIT design helps rural women in the fabrication of beads

IIT Delhi’s Rural Technology Action Group (RuTAG) took up a project with the help of the Bharatpurbased Lupin Foundation in 2012 for improving old devices used by women and evolved a new machine.

About RuTAG

RuTAG or Rural Technology Action Group was launched in 2004. It was the brainchild of the then Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India. It seeks to enable science and technology intervention to downsize technology and meet the requirements of the rural sector. It is now located in eight IITs and coordinated by the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to the Govt. of India.

PT Pointer 3:

News: No major deficiency in 1,352 dams inspected, says the report

About the Dam Safety Bill, 2018

The Dam Safety Bill, 2018 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of Water
Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Mr. Nitin Jairam Gadkari, on December 12, 2018. The Bill provides for the surveillance, inspection, operation, and maintenance of specified dams across the country. The Bill also provides for the institutional mechanism to ensure the safety of such dams.

- **Applicability of the Bill:** The Bill applies to all specified dams in the country. These are dams with: (i) height more than 15 metres, or (ii) height between 10 metres to 15 metres and subject to certain additional design and structural conditions.

- **National Committee on Dam Safety:** The Bill provides for the constitution of a National Committee on Dam Safety. The Committee will be chaired by the Chairperson, Central Water Commission. All other members will be nominated by the central government, and include: (ii) up to 10 representatives of the central government, (iii) up to seven representatives of the state governments (by rotation), and (iv) up to three dam safety experts.

- Functions of the Committee include: (i) formulating policies and regulations regarding dam safety standards and prevention of dam failures, and (ii) analysing causes of major dam failures and suggesting changes in dam safety practices.

- **National Dam Safety Authority:** The Bill provides for a National Dam Safety Authority. The Authority will be headed by an officer not below the rank of an Additional Secretary who will be appointed by the central government. Functions of the Authority include: (i) implementing the policies formulated by the National Committee on Dam Safety, (ii) resolving issues between State Dam Safety Organisations (SDSOs), or between a SDSO and any dam owner in that state, (iii) specifying regulations for inspection and investigation of dams, and (iv) providing accreditation to agencies working on construction, design, and alteration of dams.

- **State Dam Safety Organisation:** The Bill provides for the establishment of State Dam Safety Organisations (SDSOs) by the state governments. All specified dams situated in a state will fall under the jurisdiction of that state’s SDSO. However, in certain cases, the National Dam Safety Authority will act as the SDSO. These include cases where a dam: (i) is owned by one state but situated in another state, (ii) extends over multiple states, or (iii) is owned by a central public sector undertaking.

- Functions of the SDSOs include: (i) keeping perpetual surveillance, inspecting, and monitoring the operation and maintenance of dams, (ii) keeping a database of all dams, and (iii) recommending safety measures to owners of dams.
• **State Committee on Dam Safety:** The Bill provides for the constitution of State Committees on Dam Safety by the state governments. Functions of the Committee include (i) reviewing the work of the SDSO, (ii) ordering dam safety investigations, (iii) recommending dam safety measures and reviewing the progress on such measures, and (iv) assessing the potential impact on upstream and downstream states. These states will also have their representatives on the State Committee.

• **Change in functions of the bodies:** Functions of (i) the National Committee on Dam Safety, (ii) the National Dam Safety Authority, and (iii) the State Committees on Dam Safety have been provided in Schedules to the Bill. The Bill specifies that the central government can amend these Schedules through notification if deemed necessary.

• **Obligations of dam owners:** The Bill requires the owners of specified dams to provide a dam safety unit in each dam. This unit will inspect the dams: (i) before and after the monsoon season, and (ii) during and after every earthquake, flood, or any other calamity or sign of distress. Dam owners will be required to prepare an emergency action plan, and carry out risk assessment studies for each dam at specified regular intervals. Dam owners will also be required to prepare a comprehensive dam safety evaluation of each dam, at regular intervals, through a panel of experts. The evaluation will be mandatory in certain cases such as major modification of the original structure, or an extreme hydrological or seismic event.

• **Offences and penalties:** The Bill provides for two types of offences. These are: (i) obstructing a person in the discharge of his functions, and (ii) refusing to comply with directions issued under the Bill. Offenders will be punishable with imprisonment of up to one year or a fine, or both. If the offence leads to loss of lives, the term of imprisonment may be extended up to two years. Offences will be cognizable only when the complaint is made by the government, or any authority constituted under the Bill.

Source: prsindia

**PT Pointer 4:**

*News: SEBI gets teeth to probe new-age cases*
Finance Bill, 2019 has given the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) new powers to act against entities that tamper or destroy electronic databases or fail to furnish information when sought by the capital markets regulator, SEBI, who can now also impose penalties of up to Rs. 1 crore on brokers for certain violations.

New Section 15HAA - inserted in the SEBI Act - It says that if a person tampers with information to obstruct or influence an investigation, destroys regulatory data or tries to access data in an unauthorised manner then the entity could be penalised up to Rs. 10 crore or three times the unlawful gains, whichever is higher.

PT Pointer 5:

Italy’s Prosecco hills join UNESCO Heritage list

About Prosecco Hills, the UNESCO designation reads:

*The landscape is characterized by ‘hogback’ hills, ciglioni – small plots of vines on narrow grassy terraces – forests, small villages and farmland. For centuries, this rugged terrain has been shaped and adapted by man. Since the 17th century, the use of ciglioni has created a particular chequerboard landscape consisting of rows of vines parallel and vertical to the slopes. In the 19th century, the bellussera technique of training the vines contributed to the aesthetic characteristics of the landscape. The producers making up the consortium “never waivered in their belief in the uniqueness of our landscape, with its vineyard-embroidered hills and inaccessible slopes that require such hard and entirely manual labour,”*

Other newly Inscribed properties include Ancient ferrous metallurgy sites of Burkina Faso, Babylon, Iraq, Bagan, Myanmar, Jaipur City of India, Dilmun Burial Mounds of Bahrain, etc.

Source: [https://whc.unesco.org/en/newproperties/](https://whc.unesco.org/en/newproperties/)
UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express
The CRUX:

- Nagaland has decided to start a variant of NRC
- Decision to set up a Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN)
- Aim - To prepare a master list of all indigenous peoples
- To check the issuance of fake indigenous inhabitant certificates
- Exercise to be completed in 60-days deadline
- It will be monitored by the Home Commissioner of Nagaland and prepared under the supervision of each district administration
- The register (RIIN) will be prepared after an extensive survey with the help of a village-wise and ward-wise list of indigenous inhabitants based on official records.
- Hoho is the apex body of each Naga group.
- The format for making the list will mention “permanent residence and present residence” separately.
- Aadhaar number, wherever available, will also be recorded.

Provisions to Change:

- The provisional lists will be published in the villages and wards and also on the websites of the district and the State government on September 11.
- Time will be given till October 10 for any claims and objections after the publication of the provisional lists.
- The DCs will then settle the claims and objections based on official records and evidence produced.
- The list will be finalised after giving the claimants an opportunity of being heard, and each indigenous inhabitant will be given a unique identity card.
- Opportunity will also be given to the person against whose name an objection has been made.
- “No fresh indigenous inhabitant certificate will be issued after the RIIN is completed except for children born to the State’s indigenous inhabitants who will be issued indigenous certificates along with birth certificates. The RIIN database will be updated accordingly.
- The RIIN will also be integrated with the online system for Inner-Line Permit, a temporary document non-inhabitants are required to possess for entry into and travel in Nagaland.
Daily News Updates for 10th July 2019

From the columns of The Hindu:

1. Supreme Court to decide if illegal migrants can be given the status of refugees.
2. The Central Pollution State Control Board pulls up 52 firms over handling of waste.
3. The Delhi High Court said that the judiciary can't direct govt. to frame laws on marital rape.
4. The Delhi High Court asked the Railways to spell out steps taken to ensure clean drinking water.
5. Flood at Polavaram dam site sets alarm bells ringing.
6. DRDO gets clearance for missile test facility in Andhra Pradesh.
7. A full rehearsal for Chandrayaan-2 has been conducted by the ISRO.
8. Modi thanks UAE for 'Order of Zayed' honor.
9. The Supreme Court has given a deadline for 20-days for the States, Union Territories, and respective High Courts to provide it information on the status of filling up of judicial vacancies in the district and subordinate judicial services across the country.
10. Kartarpur corridor will be fast-tracked.
11. Honour Mahatma Gandhi with village walks, Modi tells MPs.
12. Taliban, Afghan negotiators agree on a road map for peace.
13. According to the International Monetary Fund, the Pakistan economy needs bold reforms.
14. The Basel Committee on Banking Supervision has said that India is compliant regarding regulation on large exposures though, in some respects, regulations are stricter than the Basel large exposures framework.

News for UPSC Mains 2019:

**GS Paper II: SC to decide if illegal migrants can be given the status of refugees**


**GS Paper III: CPCB pulls up 52 firms over handling of waste**

https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/cpcb-pulls-up-52-firms-over-handling-of-waste/article28335897.ece

**GS Paper II: Judiciary can’t direct govt. to frame laws on marital rape: HC**


**GS Paper II: HC tells Railways to spell out steps taken to ensure clean drinking water**

GS Paper III: DRDO gets clearance for missile test facility in A.P.

GS Paper III: Full Rehearsal for Chandrayaan-2 Conducted
https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-telangana/full-rehearsal-for-chandrayaan-2-conducted/article28337616.ece

GS Paper II: The growing power of the lumpen
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-growing-power-of-the-lumpen/article28335539.ece

GS Paper III: Going electric
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial-going-electric/article28335529.ece

GS Paper III: The malaise of malnutrition
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-malaise-of-malnutrition/article28335228.ece

GS Paper III: Global problem, local solutions

GS Paper II: SC deadline on judicial vacancies
GS Paper III: 88 manual scavenging deaths in 3 years


GS Paper II: Taliban, Afghan negotiators agree on a road map for peace


GS Paper II: Pakistan economy needs bold reforms: IMF


GS Paper III: India has stricter regulatory norms: Basel

https://www.thehindu.com/business/india-has-stricter-regulatory-norms-basel/article28335822.ece

From the columns of The Indian Express:

Why a corporate bond market
World Heritage Site

Why NCLAT ruling on Essar Steel matters

Automated Facial Recognition: What NCRB Proposes, What are the Concerns

One More Quota

Note:

News Analysis for the following topics will be updated by today's evening:

1. Solid Waste Management in India (GS Paper III)
   (Context: CPCB pulls up 52 firms over handling of waste)

2. DRDO and its latest achievements (GS Paper III)
   (Context: DRDO gets clearance for missile test facility in A.P.)
3. Biodiversity Conservation: Role of Local Participation (GS Paper III)

(Context: Global problem, local solutions)

4. Recent Development in Afghan Politics (GS Paper II)

(Context: Taliban, Afghan negotiators agree on a road map for peace)

5. UPSC Prelims 2020 Special (PT Pointers)

Stay Tuned for More Updates.

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Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express

UPSC Prelims 2020 Special
Prelims GS Paper 1 | 10 July, 2019

UPSC Prelims 2020 Special for 10th July (PT Pointers)

PT Pointer 1

News: SC to decide if illegal migrants can be given the status of refugees

Centre’s question came on a petition by two Rohingya men who face deportation

About Rohingyas
Rohingya is an ethnic group dominated by Muslims. They are 100 percent Bengali and speak the Chittagong dialect. They majorly resided in the Rakhine State, Myanmar. The United Nations classifies them as the most persecuted refugee groups in the world. There was an estimated about 1 million Rohingya living in Myanmar before the 2016–17 crisis during which they migrated outside the country.

Chittagong District, officially known as Chattogram District, is a district located in the south-eastern region of Bangladesh.

PT Pointer 2

News: Full rehearsal for Chandrayaan-2 conducted

About Chandrayaan-2

It is an Indian lunar mission that will go to the unexplored south-polar region of the Moon. The primary objective of this mission is to demonstrate the ability to soft-land on the lunar surface and operate a robotic rover on the surface. It will make India the fourth country ever to soft land on the lunar surface.

Initially, it was planned that the ISRO will partner with Russia to perform Chandrayaan-2. The two agencies even signed an agreement in 2007 to launch the orbiter and lander in 2013 but subsequently, Russia pulled out of mission citing financial issues, leaving India to continue with the same.

It will be the first space mission to conduct a soft landing on the Moon's south polar region. It will also be India’s first mission to explore the lunar terrain with completely indigenous technology.
PT Pointer 3:

**News:** Honour for ‘Plan Bee’ that helped save jumbos

*Plan Bee* is an amplifying system imitating the buzz of a swarm of honey bees to keep wild elephants away from railway tracks. It is implemented by the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) which earned it the best innovation award in Indian Railways for the fiscal year 2018-19. The amplified sound will be audible up to a distance of 700-800 m.

PT Pointer 4:

**News:** Kartarpur corridor to be fast-tracked

**About Kartarpur corridor**

It is a corridor that would allow the pilgrims to cross over into Pakistan from the Indian side to visit the Kartarpur Sahib shrine and return the same day.

- India had first proposed the Kartarpur Sahib corridor in 1999 when the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee took a bus ride to Lahore.
- But it was only recently that India and Pakistan agreed to construct the corridor on their respective sides so that Sikh devotees could worship at Gurdwara Nankana Sahib during the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev.
- The corridor, once built, will give Indian pilgrims easy access to the shrine in Kartarpur.
- A bridge will need to be constructed over the Ravi and there shall be no need for passports or visas.
- India will build the corridor from Dera Baba Nanak in Punjab's Gurdaspur district to the International Border.

**About the Kartarpur Gurudwara:**

- The gurdwara in Kartarpur is located on the bank of river Ravi in Pakistan.
It is about four km from the Dera Baba Nanak shrine, and about 120 km northeast of Lahore. It was here that Guru Nanak assembled a Sikh community and lived for 18 years until his death in 1539. The gurdwara was opened to pilgrims after repairs and restoration in 1999, and Sikh jathas have been visiting the shrine regularly ever since. Sikh jathas from India travel to Pakistan on four occasions every year - for Baishakhi, the martyrdom day of Guru Arjan Dev, the death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and the birthday of Guru Nanak Dev.

**PT Pointer 5:**

**News:** IRDAI for changes to TPA health norms

**About IRDAI**

IRDAI is an autonomous, statutory agency that was established under the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999. It was established on the recommendation of the Malhotra Committee Report of 1994 (Head - Former Governor of RBI, Mr. R. N. Malhotra). IRDAI was constituted to regulate and develop the insurance industry.

**Headquarter - Hyderabad**

**Functions of IRDAI:**

- Protect the rights of insurance policyholders.
- Provide registration certification to life insurance companies.
- Renew, modify, cancel or suspend this registration certificate as and when appropriate; promote efficiency in the conduct of insurance business.
- Promote and regulate professional organisations connected with insurance and reinsurance business; regulate investment of funds by insurance companies.
- Adjudication of disputes between insurers and intermediaries or insurance intermediaries.

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express
From the columns of *The Hindu*:

1. A Bill that seeks to merge 13 labour laws into one code gets approval from the Cabinet.

2. Bengal port records the country’s highest sea-level rise in 50 years

3. The Union Cabinet has approved the Inter-State River Water Disputes (Amendment) Bill, 2019 that will help adjudicate disputes relating to waters of inter-State rivers and river valleys.

4. The Indian Air Force is looking to adopt ASRAAM (Advanced Short Range Air-to-Air Missile) for its fighter fleet.

5. The Supreme Court said it would consider the plea seeking urgent hearing of a PIL petition challenging the constitutional validity of Article 370 which grants special status to Jammu and Kashmir and limits Parliament’s power to make laws for the State.

6. The Lok Sabha has cleared the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre Bill, 2019. The Bill provides for the incorporation of the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (NDIAC) for creating an autonomous regime for institutionalised arbitration.

7. An internal committee of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which was set up to review timings of different financial markets, suggested that the foreign exchange market could function from 9 am to 9 pm at present, the currency market works from 9 am to 5 pm.

8. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman clarified that the Economic Survey
and the Union Budget project different rates of nominal GDP growth for 2019-20 because they use different base figures but the two rates were consistent with each other.

News for UPSC Mains 2019:

**GS Paper II: Worker safety code Bill gets Cabinet approval**


**GS Paper III: ‘Advance timeline for waste-to-energy plant’**


**GS Paper II: Bengal port records the country’s highest sea level rise in 50 years**


**GS Paper II: Single tribunal to hear water disputes**

GS Paper III: IAF to adopt ASRAAM missile for fighter fleet

GS Paper II: Article 370: SC may consider early hearing

GS Paper II: A demographic window of opportunity
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/a-demographic-window-of-opportunity/article28363940.ece

GS Paper II: Caution needed
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/caution-needed/article28363929.ece

GS Paper III: Turning down the heat
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/turning-down-the-heat/article28363958.ece

GS Paper III: Nehru and the Kashmir quandary
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/nehru-and-the-kashmir-quandary/article28362589.ece
GS Paper III: A case for nutrition counselling

https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-case-for-nutrition-counselling/article28362705.ece

GS Paper II: India can repeal Article 370 at will: Centre


GS Paper II: Tariff tensions top U.S. agenda in meetings today

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tariff-tensions-top-us-agenda/article28363773.ece

GS Paper III: RBI panel moots change in timings for the foreign exchange market

https://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/rbi-panel-moots-change-in-timings-for-foreign-exchange-market/article28363919.ece

GS Paper III: GDP growth rates in Economic Survey, Budget consistent with each other: FM


GS Paper III: 300-member all-woman voyage to fight ocean plastic

From the columns of *The Indian Express*:

Reading the Speaker's Rulebook

Tamil Nadu Plans 10,000 Check Dams to Tide Over Water Crisis

How India Controls Locusts

Stagnant Cess Pool

Where India Stands in Battler Against Measles, How Sri Lanka Eliminated It

Battling the Squeeze
Secularism is No Spectacle

Worker Safety Code, Bill to Ban Fraud Deposit Schemes Get Nod

Self-sufficiency in Edible Oils: A Tall Order

Note:
News Analysis for the following topics will be updated by today's evening:

1. National Green Tribunal and its Significance (GS Paper II)
   Context: Delhi Govt. fails to comply with NGT order, forfeits Rs. 5 cr. (The Hindu)

2. Oilseeds Production and Food Security in India (GS Paper III)
   Context: Self-sufficiency in Edible Oils: A Tall Order (The Indian Express)

3. Inter-State Water Disputes Act and the Proposed Amendments (GS
Context: Single tribunal to hear water disputes (The Hindu)

4. **India's Fight Against Measles and the Way Forward** *(GS Paper II)*

Context: Where India Stands in Battler Against Measles, How Sri Lanka Eliminated It (The Indian Express)

5. **Article 370 of the Indian Constitution** *(GS Paper III)*

Context: Article 370: SC may consider early hearing (The Hindu)

6. **UPSC Prelims 2020 Special for 11th July 2019** *(PT Pointers)*

Stay Tuned for More Updates.

Jai Hind

Keep Studying

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express
Daily News Updates for 12th July 2019

From the columns of *The Hindu*:

1. The Supreme Court is likely to hear Ayodhya appeals from July 25.
2. The Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy announced a calamity relief fund with a corpus of Rs. 2,000 crore to provide compensation for crop loss caused by drought and cyclones.
3. The Kerala government has decided to establish a permanent hub in Palakkad for handling inter-State river water disputes in the next 3 months.
4. More than 4.23 lakh people have been displaced by floods that affected 17 of Assam’s 33 districts.
5. The Madras High Court directed the State government to ban multilayered plastic wrappers in which consumables such as milk, oil, biscuits, snacks, chocolates and medicines are sold.
6. The Union Cabinet has approved a new definition for child pornography in its amendments to the POCSO Act, which is likely to be introduced in Parliament next week.
7. The Centre proposed a model tenancy law that States and Union Territories can enact to regulate renting of premises, including setting a maximum of two months’ rent as a security deposit, a three-months notice for raising the rent and appointment of rent authorities.
8. India urged the Commonwealth to expedite the readmission of the Maldives as a member country at the 19th Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting in London.
9. India and the U.S. are set to begin formal talks on trade today.
10. The Nagaland government said that the guidelines for implementing the Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN) will be framed in consultation with civil society groups and traditional tribal bodies.
11. The Assam government will establish 200 Foreigners’ Tribunals (FTs) for handling cases of people to be excluded from the final National Register of Citizens (NRC).

12. The Centre proposed to relax the General Financial Rules (GFR) to enable all government organisations to accept “untested innovative goods and services solutions from start-ups”.

News for UPSC Mains 2019:

**GS Paper II: Urgently Look into Sale, Regulation, Consumption of e-cigarettes: HC**


**GS Paper II: SC Panel asks Odisha to Plug Road Safety Gaps**


**GS Paper II: Government Redefines Child Porn, Moots Stiff Penalties under POCSO**


**GS Paper II: A Welcome Debate on Electoral Reforms**

[https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/a-welcome-debate-on-electoral-](https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/a-welcome-debate-on-electoral-)

https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/picking-out-plastic-on-recycling-and-waste-management/article28391787.ece

GS Paper III: Jobless Growth Becomes More Systemic
https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/jobless-growth-becomes-more-systemic/article28391822.ece

From the columns of *The Indian Express*:

Define Your Environment (GS Paper II)

Delhi to Tehran via US (GS Paper II)

What can Disqualify a Legislator (GS Paper II)
Payment Service Providers Fear Shutdown, Ask Govt. to Pay the Merchant Discount Rate (GS Paper III)

**Note:**

News Analysis on the following topics will be updated by today's evening:

1. **Issue of Road Safety in India** *(GS Paper-III)*
   
   **(Context: SC panel asks Odisha to plug road safety gaps)*

   
   **(Context: Government redefines child porn, moots stiff penalties under POCSO)*

3. **Electoral Reforms in India** *(GS Paper-II)*
   
   **(Context: A Welcome Debate on Electoral Reforms)*

4. **Issue of Jobless Growth in India** *(GS Paper-III)*
   
   **(Context: Jobless Growth Became More Systemic)*

5. **UPSC Prelims 2020 Special** *(PT Pointers)*

We will also update the CRUX of the remaining important topics.

**Stay Tuned for More Updates.**
UPSC "PT" DNA (Daily News Analysis)

Jai Hind

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Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express
Context

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was passed by the Parliament.

Specific provisions

- It defines what ‘child pornography’ is ‘using a child for pornographic purposes’ and for ‘possessing or storing pornography involving a child’ is punishable.
- It has also widened the ambit of ‘Aggravated sexual assault’
- It introduced the death penalty for the rape of minors
- The Bill is gender neutral and provides for the death penalty for “aggravated penetrative sexual assault of a child” and not just a girl child.

Problems

- The introduction of the death penalty may backfire in cases of child sexual abuse and even have a catastrophic effect. Often, perpetrators of abuse are family members and having such penalties may discourage the registration of the crime itself.
- It may threaten the life of the minor as the maximum punishment for murder is also the death sentence.
- Justice J.S. Verma Committee was against the imposition of the death penalty in rape cases. The 262nd Report of the Law Commission of India also provides for the abolition of the death penalty except in terror cases.
- The death penalty diverts attention from the core issues of infrastructural apathy, procedural lapses and trial delays.
- It is the certainty of punishment rather than its severity which has deterrence in real sense.
- Even a year-and-a-half after the passage of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2018, which introduced the death penalty for rape of a minor girl, such incidents have not been under check.
- Robin Conley in his book, Confronting the Death Penalty, has observed that the death penalty may seem just and appropriate in abstract but once analysed, it is less appealing practically.
- Deterrence has to be supplemented by exhaustive measures including an overhaul of the criminal justice administration.
- As per Supreme court data, 24,212 FIRs were filed across India this year. According to NCRB data of 2016, the conviction rate in POCSO cases is 29.6% while pendency is as
The prescribed time period of two months for trial in such cases is hardly complied with.

- Supreme court has recently directed the Central Government to set up special courts in each district having more than 100 pending cases under the Act.

Source: The Hindu
The CRUX of the Article:

- This is in context of a short-duration discussion on electoral reforms that recently took place in the Rajya Sabha. It was initiated by Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Derek O’Brien,
- **Intent**: To push the subject of how to make elections freer, fairer and more representative.
- Discussion touched on 6 themes related to the Electoral Reforms, including
  - Appointment system for Election Commissioners and Chief Election Commissioner (CEC)
  - Money power
  - Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)
  - Simultaneous elections
  - Role of social media
  - Use of government data and surrogate advertisements to target certain sections of voters

1. Appointment System

- Mr. O’Brien quoted B.R. Ambedkar’s statement to the Constituent Assembly that “the tenure can’t be made a fixed and secure tenure if there is no provision in the Constitution to prevent a fool or a naive or a person who is likely to be under the thumb of the executive.” He said that there is a need to introduce a collegium system.

2. Money Power

- With respect to the role of money power in the election process, the various committees and reports that have talked about the same includes the 1962 private member’s Bill by Atal Bihari Vajpayee; the Goswami committee report on electoral reforms (1990); and the Indrajit Gupta committee report on state funding of elections (1998).
- In the Rajya Sabha, a concern was raised about the regressive impact of amending the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) and removing the 7.5% cap on corporate donations.

**Proposals:**
State funding (of political parties) based on either a National Electoral Fund or the number of votes obtained by the respective parties.
Crowdfunding in the form of small donations.
To either raise or remove the current expenditure cap to encourage transparency. It was supported in accordance with a 1975 judgement of the Supreme Court on Section 77 of the Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1951.
Expenditure on private planes etc. should be added to the candidates’ accounts and not to those of the party.
Banning of corporate donations

3. Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)

- **Issue:** Returning to ballot papers. (Associated Quote: “When technology doesn’t guarantee perfection, you have to question technology.”)
- But it has also been reported that the EVMs have reduced election-related violence in States like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.
- **Proposals:**
  - Need to count 5 machines in the beginning to strengthen public faith in Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trails.
  - Further, to increase transparency, postal ballots should be scanned before counting.

4. Simultaneous Elections

- **Issue:** Electoral fatigue, expenditure and governance.
- Thus, there is a need for simultaneous elections which is also emphasised by the Law Commission and NITI Aayog.
- The call for simultaneous elections should be seen as one for minimum cycle of elections rather than “one nation one election”.
- Dr. B. R. Ambedkar had said that accountability should hold precedence over stability.
- **Proposals:**
  - To consult constitutional experts and publish a white paper for more deliberation.
  - To establish an independent regulator to supervise and ensure inner-party democracy for internal democracy within political parties.
  - Need to introduce proportional representation system to improving the representativeness of elections.
5. Role of Social Media

Proposal: to strengthen social media regulations, there is a need to revisit the Information Technology Act

Other proposals made by the author of the article:

- Reducing the number of phases in elections by raising more security forces.
- Depoliticisation of constitutional appointments by appointing Commissioners through a broad-based collegium
- Capping the expenditure of political parties
- Giving the Election Commission of India (ECI) powers to de-register recalcitrant political parties

Challenges:

- Lack of political will that is evident from the wide gap that exists between thought and action.
- Obsession of the majority party in the government with immediate electoral gains and lack of a thinking for long-term national interests.

Thus, there is a need for the Parliament to not just “debate and deliberate but also legislate” on electoral reforms.

Topic: Electoral Reforms in India

Introduction

India is a democratic country and the election system of India is the one that sustains the democratic set-up. It plays a pivotal role in a political system especially in a democratic form of government in a country. It is used to choose the representatives of public to be sent to the governing bodies, in the case of India, it is the Parliament and the State Legislatures. Elections can also be termed as the backbone of democracy as this is the way through which the citizen of a country directly participate in framing the government which works for their welfare.

Features of Election System in India
Universal adult franchise
Joint electorate without any separate communal representation
Division of the whole country (or state) into single member constituencies
Secret ballot in which no person can know the vote of the other person
Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes
Provision to fine an election petition if any voter or a candidate feels that the election in his constituency has not been conducted fairly.

Conduction of Elections in India

In India, it’s the Election Commission of India that is responsible for the conduct of elections. Under the Article 324 of the Indian Constitution, a permanent and independent Constitutional body called the Election Commission of India is established. It is vested with the superintendence, direction and control of the entire process for conduct of elections to Parliament and legislature of every state and to the offices of the President and the Vice-President of India.

Functions of the Election Commission of India:

Administrative:

- To determine the territorial areas of the electoral constituencies throughout the country on the basis of the Delimitation Commission Act of Parliament.
- To prepare and periodically revise electoral rolls and to register all eligible voters.
- To notify the dates and schedules of elections and to scrutinize nomination papers of the candidates.
- To grant recognition to political parties and allot election symbols to them.
- To appoint officers for inquiring into disputes relating to electoral arrangements.
- To determine the code of conduct to be observed by the parties and the candidates at the time of elections.
- To prepare a roster for publicity of the policies of the political parties on radio and TV in times of elections.
- To cancel polls in the event of rigging, booth capturing, violence and other irregularities.
- To request the President or the Governor for requisitioning the staff necessary for conducting elections.
- To supervise the machinery of elections throughout the country to ensure free and
fair elections.
- To register political parties for the purpose of elections and grant them the status of national or state parties on the basis of their poll performance.

**Quasi-Judicial:**

- The Commission has the power to disqualify a candidate who has failed to lodge an account of his election expenses within the time and in the manner prescribed by law.
- The Commission has also the power for removing or reducing the period of such disqualification as also other disqualification under the law.
- It acts as a court for settling disputes related to granting of recognition to political parties and allotment of election symbols to them.

**Advisory:**

- Under the Constitution, the Commission also has advisory jurisdiction in the matter of post election disqualification of sitting members of Parliament and state legislatures.
- It advises the President and Governor on matters relating to the disqualifications of the members of the Parliament and state legislature respectively.
- Further, the cases of persons found guilty of corrupt practices in elections, which come before the Supreme Court and high courts are also referred to the Commission for its opinion on the question as to whether such person shall be disqualified and, if so, for what period.
- The opinion of the Commission in all such matters is binding on the President or the Governor (as the case may be).

**Electoral Reforms in the Past**
Conclusion

For a long time, a need is being felt to introduce reforms in the system of election in India. There is a need to improve the efficiency of the electoral process. Thus, there is a need to make a rational decision on the question of simultaneous elections and funding for the elections. There is a need to make the elections more citizen-friendly and also by giving space to the views of the general public.

Source: The Hindu

Milestone of Moon Mission -II

Context - ISRO recently announced the launch date (July 15, 2019) of Chandrayaan-2 mission, after the long delay from the scheduled launch. Chandrayan 2 India's second lunar probe and its first attempt to make soft landing on the moon. It’s an orbiter which will go around 100 km from the surface, and a Lander and Rover land in the moon. Once there the Rover will separate from the Lander and will move around on lunar surface.

REASONS FOR DELAY

- Chandrayaan-2's predecessor, Chandrayaan-1, was an Orbiter mission which was sent way back in 2008.
- According to the original schedule, Chandrayaan-2 was to be launched in 2012 itself.
- But at that time, it was supposed to be a collaborative mission with the Russian space agency, Roscosmos, which was to provide the Lander module.

The Russians, however, withdrew from the missions. [This was after Russia’s similarly-designed Lander for another mission developed problems in 2011.]

- This left ISRO to design, develop and build the Lander on its own.
- As this was new to ISRO, it had led to considerable delay from the original schedule.

Features:
Chandrayaan-2 is India’s first Lander mission. It consists of an Orbiter, Lander and Rover, all equipped with scientific instruments to study the moon. The Lander and Rover modules will separate from the orbiter and make a soft-landing on moon’s surface (either on September 5 or 6, 2019). The Lander and rover are designed to work for only 14 days (1 lunar day) while the orbiter would remain in orbit for a year.

Orbiter - The Orbiter would once again watch the moon from a 100-km orbit. The Orbiter is a 2379-kg spacecraft with 7 instruments on board. It is equipped with different kinds of cameras to take high-resolution three-dimensional maps of the surface. It also has instruments to study the mineral composition on the moon and the lunar atmosphere, and to assess the abundance of water. The Orbiter will observe lunar surface and relay communication between Earth and the Lander.

Lander - ISRO has named the Lander module as Vikram, after Vikram Sarabhai, the pioneer of India’s space Programme. The 1471-kg Lander will remain stationary after touching down on the moon’s surface. It will carry three instruments that will mainly study the moon’s atmosphere. One of the instruments will also look out for seismic activity on lunar surface.

Rover - The Rover is a 6-wheeled, Artificial Intelligence-powered and solar-powered vehicle named Pragyan, meaning wisdom. Once on the moon, the rover will detach itself from the Lander. Equipped with two instruments, it would slowly crawl on the surface, making observations and collecting data. Its primary objective is to study the composition of the moon’s surface near the landing site. It would also determine the abundance of different elements on the moon’s surface.

Significance:

With Chandrayaan-2, India will become only the 4th country in the world to land a spacecraft on the moon. So far, all landings, human as well as non-human, on the moon have been in areas close to its equator. This was mainly because this area receives more sunlight that is required by the solar-powered instruments to function. Chandrayaan-2 will make a landing at a site where no earlier mission has gone, near the South Pole of the moon. It is a completely unexplored territory and therefore offers great scientific opportunity for the mission to discover something new. Incidentally, the crash-landing of the MIP from the Chandrayaan-1 mission had also happened in the same region. South Pole - The south pole of the moon holds the possibility of the presence of water. This is one aspect that would be probed meticulously by Chandrayaan-2. In addition, this area is also supposed to have ancient rocks and craters.
A new report confirms that poverty declined in India most rapidly in high growth years. There's a lesson in that.

GS II Paper: A new report confirms that poverty declined in India most rapidly in high growth years. There's a lesson in that.


SUMMARY OF THE ARTICLE:

- Global MPI 2019 is published by United Nation Multidimensional Poverty Index (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty Development Index.
- The MPI captures both incidence and intensity of poverty tracks 101 countries assessed 68 middle income and 2 high income -1.3 billion people in world are multi dimensionally poor.

FULL COVERAGE OF THE TOPIC:

Definition of Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI):

It defines not simply by income but by number of indicators including poor health, poor quality of work.

Key Finding:

- Incidence of multidimensional poverty almost has been divided between 2005-06 and 2015-16, lifted 271 Millions out of poverty and reduced deprivations.
- Among 10 selected countries in world, India reduced their MPI values the fastest and they did not leave the poorest groups behind.
- Bihar was still the poorest state in 2015-16, with more than half of its population living in poverty. In 2015-16 four poorest states in 2015-16-Bihar, Jharkhand, U.P and M.P.
The poorest district is Alirajpur in Madhya Pradesh, where 76.5% of people are poor – the same as Sierra Leone in Sub-Saharan Africa. Only eight countries have higher rates of MPI.

Source: INDIAN EXPRESS

Draft Model Tenancy Act


Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MOHUA) released the Draft Model Tenancy Bill, 2019 which aims to regulate rental housing by a market oriented approach.

Highlights of draft:

- It mandates the landowner to give a notice in writing three months before revising rent.
- It advocates appointing district collector as rent authority and heavy penalty on tenants for overstaying.
- According to it, tenants overstaying will have to pay double the rent for two times and four times thereafter.
- The security deposit to be paid by the tenant in advance will be a maximum of two months’ rent.
- Agreements can be submitted through a dedicated digital platform.
- The Model Act lays down various rules, including that the security deposit to be paid by the tenant should not exceed two months’ rent for residential property, and should be a minimum of one month’s rent for non-residential property.

Significance:

It is expected to give a fillip to private participation in rental housing for addressing the huge housing shortage across the country.

As per Census 2011, nearly 1.1 crore houses were lying vacant in the country and making these houses available on rent will complement the vision of ‘Housing for All’ by 2022.

Source: INDIAN EXPRESS
103rd Bill
GS-II | 15 July, 2019

GS-II Paper

103 Constitutional Amendment Bill:

Introduction:

- The 103rd Constitutional Amendment Act reserves 10 per cent of jobs and places in educational institutions for citizens who fall into the ‘general’ category — those not specifically included in other categories such as SC, ST or OBC.

- It amends Article 15 to additionally permit the government to provide for the advancement of “economically weaker sections”

- It also amends Article 16 to permit the government to reserve up to 10% of all posts for the “economically weaker sections” of citizens.

- The 10 per cent reservation will be in addition to the existing cap of 50 per cent reservation for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and the Other Backward Classes, taking the total reservation to 60 per cent.

- The quota is targeted at economically weaker sections among the upper castes, with a family income ceiling of Rs 8 lakh per annum and who have less than five acres of agricultural land.

- The amendment aims to fulfil the commitments of the directive principles of state policy under Article 46, to promote the educational and economic interests of the weaker section of the society.

- ‘Youth for Equality’ has questioned the constitutional validity of the 103 constitutional
The amendment act which was passed by both the House of Parliament after being presented (124th amendment) bill, 2019.

- The example of Tamil Nadu is cited to propose that there ways and means to protect the amendment from Supreme Court declaring it unconstitutional.

- Gujarat is the first state to implement the 10% quota reserved for people from economically weaker sections proposed under the 103rd constitutional amendment act.

Amended Articles:

- Article 15 (6) is added to provide reservations to economically weaker sections for admission to educational institutions including private educational institutions, whether aided or unaided by the State, other than the minority educational institutions referred to in clause (1) of Article 30. The amendment aims to provide reservation to those who do not fall in 15 (5) and 15(4) (effectively, SCs, STs and OBCs).
- Article 16 (6) is added to provide reservations to people from economically weaker sections in government posts.
- An explanation states that "economic weakness" shall be decided on the basis of "family income" and other "indicators of economic disadvantage."

Challenges:

- The act contravenes both a Supreme Court ruling (Indira Sawhney case 1992) that reservation cannot exceed 50 per cent and the principle that backwardness for the purposes of reservation cannot be defined on economic status alone but must be rooted in social exclusion.
- The impugned amendment fails to consider that Articles 14 (equality before law) and 16 (equality of opportunity in public employment) forms the basic feature of equality, and that they have been violated with the doing away of the restraints that were imposed on the reservation policy.
- Income threshold is too high to be limited to poverty.
- A formidable challenge is determining economic backwardness as current threshold is adopted without considering any report.
- With government already reeling under burden due to scarce public resources, more reservation will only aggravate the existing problem.
- Even after years of reservation policy, there are no substantial evidences to support the achievements of the original intent of affirmative action, as the benefits haven't filtered down to the last person covered under it.
Source: The Hindu
GS-III Paper: 5G rollout:

Context

Global telecom industry body GSMA expects India to have 920 million unique mobile subscribers by 2025 which will include 88 million 5G connections. This will leave India trailing regional peers such as China, which is set to see almost 30% of its total connection base on 5G by 2025.

The term 5G is used to describe the next generation of mobile networks beyond Long Term Evolution (LTE) mobile networks.

Why in News?

- 5G technology is expected to 2020. Telcome giants such as AT&T Inc. and Verizon Communications Inc. are conducting trials of 5G fixed broadband in homes $ business.
- South Korea has finished auctioning off spectrum 5G to telcos and is set to being its launched in December.
- With 5G technology government aims to provide internet connection with speed of 10,000 Mbps in Urban areas and 1000 Mbps in rural areas.

What is 5G technology?

- 5G is a fifth generation wireless communication technology that has very high reliability, spectrum bands and speed which is around 10 plus Gbps.
- The final standard for 5G will be established by the International Telecommunications Union.

Advantages of 5G Technology:

- It supports critical applications like financial transactions and healthcare.
- It enables high-speed data services that industrial services.
- With very high speed of 5G allows to high bandwidth multimedia such as HD videos, movies download within second.
- It will facilitate the ecosystem for the Internet of Things (IoT) by enabling smart devices to exchange data seamlessly.

Disadvantages of 5G Technology:

- Technology is still in progress and research is viability is going on.
- The speed on such scale(10,000Mbps) is difficult to achieve considering the incompetent technological supports in most parts of the world.
- Developing infrastructure of 5G is expensive.
Challenges:

- India lacks strong backhaul for the transition to 5G. Backhaul is a network that links cell sites to the central exchange.
- Indian market is yet to adapt 4G completely and has not completely evolved to experience an AI revolution.

Source: Indian Express

Healing old wounds of NRC
GS-II Paper | 16 July, 2019

GS-II Paper: Healing old wounds of NRC

Context:
Deadline for the Supreme Court-monitored NRC (National Register of Citizens) in Assam approaches, the faultiness in the discourse around it have widened.

What is National Register of Citizens?

- National Register of Citizens, 1951 is a register prepared after the conduct of the Census of 1951 in respect of each village, showing the houses or holdings in a serial order and indicating against each house or holding the number and names of persons staying therein.
- The NRC was published only once in 1951.

NRC In Assam:

- The issue of its update assumed importance as Assam witnessed large-scale illegal migration from erstwhile East Pakistan and, after 1971, from present-day Bangladesh.
- This led to the six-year-long Assam movement from 1979 to 1985, for deporting illegal migrants.
- The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) led the movement that demanded the updating of the NRC and the deportation of all illegal migrants who had entered Assam after 1951.
- It set March 25, 1971, as the cut-off date for the deportation of illegal migrants.
- It was made applicable only to Assam.

Impact:
An updated NRC is likely to put an end to speculations about the actual number of illegal migrants in Assam in particular and the country in general. It will provide a verified dataset to carry out meaningful debates and implement calibrated policy measures. Publication of an updated NRC is expected to deter future migrants from Bangladesh from entering Assam illegally. The publication of the draft NRC has already created a perception that staying in Assam without valid documentation will attract detention/jail term and deportation.

Challenges:

- The parallel processes of NRC, the voters list of the Election Commission, and the Foreigners’ Tribunals with the help of the Assam Border Police, have led to utter chaos, as none of these agencies are sharing information with each other.
- Though the draft provides a window for re-verification, due to large number of people being excluded from the list, it will be very difficult to physically verify all of them.
- Since such ‘non citizens’ can resort to judicial relief to substantiate their citizenship claim, it can lead to overburdening of judiciary which already reels under large number of pending cases.
- There is uncertainty about the future of those left out from the list.
- With no end to uncertainty, NRC seems to be a process without an end.

India, as a country which follows the ideology of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’, should not be hasty in taking decisions that can disenfranchise her citizens – contradicting its centuries-followed values. There is a need for a robust mechanism of legal support for the four million who have to prove their citizenship to India with their limited means.

Source: Indian Express

**Finance Commission of India**

**GS-II | 16 July, 2019**

**GS-II Paper: Finance Commission of India**

**Context**

Cabinet approves extension of the term of the Fifteenth Finance Commission up to 30th November, 2019.
What is Finance Commission?

The Finance Commission is constituted by the President under article 280 of the Constitution, mainly to give its recommendations on distribution of tax revenues between the Union and the States and amongst the States themselves.

What are the functions of Finance Commission?

- It is the duty of the Commission to make recommendations to the President as to.
- The principles which should govern the grants-in-aid of the revenues of the States out of the Consolidated Fund of India.
- The distribution between the Union and the States of the net proceeds of taxes which are to be, or may be, divided between them and the allocation between the States of the respective shares of such proceeds.
- Any other matter referred to the Commission by the President in the interests of sound finance.

Who appoints the Finance Commission and what are the qualifications for Members?

The Finance Commission appointed by President under Art.280 of the Constitution. The Chairman of the Commission is selected from among persons who have had experience in public affairs, and the four other members are selected from among persons who:

- Are qualified to be appointed as Judges of a High Court.
- Have special knowledge of the finances and accounts of Government.
- Have had wide experience in financial matters and in administration.
- Have special knowledge of economics.

Recommendations of the Finance Commission are implemented as under:

Those to be implemented by an order of the President: The recommendations relating to distribution of Union Taxes and Duties and Grants-in-aid fall in this category. Those to be implemented by executive orders: Other recommendations to be made by the Finance Commission, as per its terms of Reference.

Why is there a need for a finance commission?

The Indian federal system allows for the division of power and responsibilities between the centre and states. Correspondingly, the taxation powers are also broadly divided between the centre and states. State legislatures may devolve some of their taxation powers to local bodies.

Source: The Hindu
Context

Palau has become the 76th country signatory country to join the International Solar Alliance.

Background:

The agreement of the International Solar Alliance was open for signature during the COP22 at Marrakech on November 15, 2016. The signatories of the agreement include India, France, Australia, UAE, UK, Japan amongst others.

About International Solar Alliance:

- The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is an alliance of more than 122 countries initiated by India, most of them being sunshine countries, which lie either completely or partly between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn, now extended to all members of UN.
- The Paris Declaration establishes ISA as an alliance dedicated to the promotion of solar energy among its member countries.

Objectives: The ISA’s major objectives include global deployment of over 1,000GW of solar generation capacity and mobilisation of investment of over US$ 1000 billion into solar energy by 2030.

What it does? As an action-oriented organisation, the ISA brings together countries with rich solar potential to aggregate global demand, thereby reducing prices through bulk purchase, facilitating the deployment of existing solar technologies at scale, and promoting collaborative solar R&D and capacity building.

When it entered into force? When the ISA Framework Agreement entered into force on December 6th, 2017, ISA formally became a de-jure treaty based International Intergovernmental Organization, headquartered at Gurugram, India.
Internet Saathi programme

GS-III | 16 July, 2019

Context:

Google and Tata Trusts are set to expand their ‘Internet Saathi’ digital literacy programme for rural women to villages in Punjab and Odisha.

Coverage: Currently, the programme has reach of 2.6 lakh villages across 18 states. On adding Punjab and Odisha the programme will now extend its reach to 20 states in India.

About Internet Saathi:

It is joint initiative of Google India and Tata Trusts.

It aims to facilitate digital literacy among women in rural India.

The programme aims to train Saathis in villages that can in turn help educate other women from their village in the use of the internet.

Significance of the initiative:

It has contributed towards bridging digital gender divide in rural India. Women trained under this initiative have started their own micro-business such as stitching, honeybee farming, and beauty parlours. Many under programme are also driving awareness for issues like girl child education, menstrual hygiene and more within their communities.

Source: The Hindu
Context:
Without adequate water, sanitation and hygiene amenities, infection control is severely compromised.

Background:
Healthcare facilities are many and varied. Some are primary, others are tertiary. Many are public, some are private. Some meet specific needs, whether dentistry or occupational therapy, and some are temporary, providing acute care when disaster strikes.

Significance:
- Whatever their differences, and wherever they’re located, adequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) amenities, including waste management and environmental cleaning services, are critical to their safe functioning.
- When a healthcare facility lacks adequate WASH services, infection prevention and control are severely compromised.

Reports Finding:
- As a joint report published earlier this year by the World Health Organization and the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) outlines, WASH services in many facilities across the world are missing or substandard.
- More than 1.5 billion had no sanitation service.

Enhancing primary health care:
- In WHO’s South-East Asia region, efforts to tackle the problem and achieve related Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets are being vigorously pursued.
- Notably, improving WASH services was deemed essential to enhancing the quality of primary healthcare services, increasing equity and bridging the rural-urban divide.

Educating the health workers:
Cleanliness in centres – Second, health authorities should increase engagement and work to instil a culture of cleanliness and safety in all healthcare facilities.

Information Campaign – Alongside information campaigns that target facility administrators, all workers in the health system — from doctors and nurses to midwives and cleaners — should be
made aware of, and made to practise, current WASH and infection prevention and control procedures (IPC).

Pre Service Training – To help do this, modules on WASH services and IPC should be included in pre-service training and as part of ongoing professional development.

Inclusive Approach – In addition, authorities should work more closely with communities, especially in rural areas, to promote demand for WASH services.

WHO Strategic Plan for WASH: 2018-2025

Strategic approaches 2018–2025

WHO is uniquely positioned to achieve impact through the following five strategic approaches, building on its existing work and established credibility and expertise.

- Develop, update and disseminate health-based guidance documents and best practice guides, norms and standards that support standard-setting and regulations at national level.
- Empower countries through multi-sectoral technical cooperation, advice and capacity building to governments, practitioners and partners.
- Monitor research and report reliable and credible WASH data to inform policies and programmes.
- Coordinate with multi-sectoral partners, lead or engage with global and regional platforms, and advocate for WASH.
- Promote integration of WASH with other health programmes for example disease programmes for cholera and NTDs.
- Respond to emerging issues such as climate change and WASH, including the impact of water scarcity on public health, and AMR.

As member states strive to achieve the flagship priorities and work towards the SDG targets, that outcomes is crucial. Indeed, whatever the healthcare facility, whoever the provider, and wherever it is located securing safe health services is an objective member states must boldly pursue.

Source: The Hindu
GS-II Paper: At the UNSC, a three point agenda.

Context

India’s singular objective as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council in 2021-22 should be to help build a stable and secure external environment.

About United Nation Security Council (UNSC)

What is it?

United Nation Security Council is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations, charged with ensuring international peace and security, accepting new members to the United Nations and approving any changes to its charter. It is only UN body with the authority to issue binding resolutions to member states. The Security Council consists of fifteen members. Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, and the United States—serve as the body’s five permanent members. The Security Council also has 10 non-permanent members, elected on a regional basis to serve two-year terms. The body’s presidency rotates monthly among its members.

Summary of the Article:

India’s singular objective as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council 2012-22 should be to help build a stable and secure external environment. India’s representation in the UNSC has become rarer. It is to be re-enter the Council after a gap of 10 years last time, in 2011-12. In total, India has been in the UNSC for 14 years.

How is a Non-Permanent member nominated?

- Each year, the General Assembly elects five non-permanent members out of a total of 10, for a two-year term.
- These 10 seats are distributed among the regions thus: five for African and Asian countries; one for Eastern European countries; two for Latin American and Caribbean countries; two for Western European and other countries.
- Of the five seats for Africa and Asia, three are for Africa and two for Asia; there is an informal understanding between the two groups to reserve one for an Arab country.
- The Africa and Asia Pacific group takes turns every two years to put up an Arab candidate.
- The 55-member Asia-Pacific Group gets to nominate one of its members for the June 2020 elections to a non-permanent seat on the UNSC.

Why it’s special?
The endorsement means that India has a “clean slate” candidature – that is there is no other contestant from the group – for the elections that will be held for five non-permanent members next year, for the 2021-22 terms.

The development is particularly significant given that Pakistan and China, both countries with which India has had diplomatic challenges at the UN, supported the move.

Afghanistan, a potential contender, withdrew its nomination to accommodate India’s candidacy based on the “long-standing, close and friendly relations” between the two countries.

India’s Demand:

India has been calling for the reform of the UN Security Council along with Brazil, Germany and Japan for long, emphasising that it rightly deserves a place at the UN high table as a permanent member. In recent times the credibility of UNSC has suffered a severe blow as it has been ineffective and inefficient in tackling the conflicts in different parts of the world such as Syria, Ukraine etc. in most of these situations UNSC has remained mere a mute spectator.

Therefore the demand for reforms in the council has become a necessity to restore its credibility and effectiveness in maintaining international peace and security.

However, at present, structural reforms of the council seem an uphill task, since it can only take place if two-thirds of UN member states vote in favour, along with an affirmative vote from all the permanent members, who enjoy the veto power. But, still the framework text for negotiation was a welcome step and it has set the reform negotiations on an irreversible path.

Source: The Hindu

National Investigation (Amendment) Bill, 2019

GS-II Paper: National Investigation (Amendment) Bill, 2019

Context

The Lok Sabha has passed the National Investigation (Amendment) Bill 2019.

Features of the Bill:

- The Bill amends the NIA Act, 2008 and provides for a national-level agency to investigate and prosecute offences listed in a schedule (scheduled offences).
- It allows for the creation of Special Courts for the trial of scheduled offences which
include offences under Acts such as the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967.

- As per the Bill, the NIA will now have the **power to investigate the following offences, in addition:**

(i) Human trafficking  
(ii) Offences related to counterfeit currency or bank notes  
(iii) Manufacture or sale of prohibited arms  
(iv) Cyber-terrorism  
(v) Offences under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908.

- **Jurisdiction:** The officers of the NIA have the same powers as other police officers in relation to the investigation of such offences, across India. In addition, **officers of the NIA will have the power to investigate scheduled offences committed outside India,** subject to international treaties and domestic laws of other countries.

- The **central government may direct the NIA to investigate such cases, as if the offence has been committed in India. The Special Court in New Delhi will have jurisdiction over these cases.** The Bill states that **the central government may designate Sessions Courts as Special Courts for the trial of scheduled offences.** The central government will **need to consult the Chief Justice of the High Court under which the Sessions Court is functioning,** before designating it as a Special Court. When more than one Special Court has been designated for any area, the cases will be distributed among the courts by senior-most judge.  

- The **state governments may also designate Sessions Courts as Special Courts** for the trial of scheduled offences.

Source: The Hindu
ISRO is in talks with processing chip manufacturers such as Qualcomm to substitute the existing Global Positioning System (GPS) with the Indian version of satellite navigation.

What is NAVIC?

*Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC)* is an independent regional navigation satellite system designed to provide position information in the Indian region and 1500 km around the Indian mainland.

**Applications:**

2. Disaster Management.
3. Vehicle tracking and fleet management.
4. Integration with mobile phones.
5. Precise Timing.
7. Terrestrial navigation aid for hikers and travellers.
8. Visual and voice navigation for drivers.

**How many satellites does NAVIC consist of?**

It is a regional system and so its constellation will consist of seven satellites. Three of these will be geostationary over the Indian Ocean, i.e., they will appear to be stationary in the sky over the region, and four will be geosynchronous — appearing at the same point in the sky at the same time every day. This configuration ensures each satellite is being tracked by at least one of fourteen ground stations at any given point of time, with a high chance of most of them being visible from any point in India.

**Is India the only country to have its positioning system?**

- The GPS is a satellite-based radio navigation system that is owned by the United States government and operated by the United States Air Force.
- Apart from GPS, there is GLONASS of Russia, Galileo of the European Union and BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (or BDS) of China.

Source: The Hindu

Chandipura Virus
GS-II Paper: Chandipura Virus

Context

Chandipura virus detected in Gujarat.

What is it?

Named after the *Maharashtra village* where the virus was first discovered, the likely vector (carrier) of the virus is the female *phlebotomine sandfly*. It has been detected in sand flies in Senegal and Nigeria, apart from India. The virus is known to cause inflammation of the brain, and progresses rapidly from an influenza-like illness to coma and death.

Chandipura virus (CHPV) belongs to the *Rhabdoviridae* family in the order *Mononegavirales* of the genus *Vesiculovirus*. Interestingly, its continuing mutating trend has enhanced its lethality to cause human infections, unlike its genetic cousin, the vesicular stomatitis virus (VSV).

Symptoms

- Sudden high fever accompanied by headaches and altered consciousness.
- Convulsions.
- Vomiting and nausea.
- Unconsciousness

Key facts

The virus *predominantly infects children between the ages of 2-16*, spreading through the bite of a sandfly, and in some cases, even the mosquito during the monsoon and pre-monsoon season. It is *distantly related to the virus that causes rabies* and is known to have a case fatality between 55-75 %.

Source: The Hindu
India needs a free and independent media for its own well-being.

GS-II Paper : India needs a free and independent media for its own well-being.

Context

Journalists are facing heightened threats around the globe, according to the 2019 World Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters without Borders.

Issue

India’s rank fell by two places on global freedom press index to be ranked 140 out of 180 countries in the annual Reporters without Borders.

Index is topped by Norway, finds an increased sense of hostility towards journalists across the world.

About

- Violence against journalists including police violence, reprisals by criminals groups or corrupt politicians is one of the most striking characteristics of the current state of this index.
- Six Indian Journalists were killed in the line of their work in 2018.
- Hostility towards the media is a defining feature of hyper-nationalist politics in many countries.

Background

Paris-based Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF), or Reporters without Borders, is a non-profit organization that works to document and combat attacks on journalists around the world.

In its 2019 index, RSF finds that hatred of journalists has degenerated into violence, contributing to an increase in fear around the world.

World Freedom Index And India:

For a country that prides itself on the strength of its democracy, India’s record in upholding the freedom of press has been consistently poor.

- The physical violence against journalists is largely responsible for India’s low ranking.
- Any investigative reporting that annoys the ruling party or any criticism of Hindutva, elicits a torrent of online insults and calls for the death of the reporter or writer responsible, most of it coming from the troll army.
- Coverage of sensitive regions, such as Kashmir, continues to be very difficult. Foreign
How MGNREGA transformed into a monument of failure

GS-II | 18 July, 2019

GS-II Paper: How MGNREGA transformed into a monument of failure

Context

- There is now a plethora of evidence that the economy has been cooling down over the last three years.
- Official data was slow to pick up the trend, but data from private sources on indicators such as sales of consumer durables and automobiles clearly show that it is largely a result of declining demand, particularly in rural areas.
- However, it was a missed opportunity, with no effort being made to increase spending in rural areas, except for the electoral promise of cash transfer to farmers.

Effect of decline in Allocation to MGNREGA

- Also disappointing was the government’s approach in dealing with most rural development programmes.
- These not only directly contribute to creating rural infrastructure and assets, but also indirectly help increase rural demand and employment. For most of these programmes, the budget expenditure was kept constant or lowered.
- Of particular importance is the all-India scheme under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).
- Its budget allocation has fallen compared to the revised expenditure of last year, and is insufficient, given the wage-payment arrears.

Weakening of MGNREGA

- The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) showed apathy towards the rural and agricultural sectors during its first term in government, and in many ways is continuing the flawed policies of the second term of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government.
- The UPA, which enacted MGNREGA and reaped political dividends for its successful rollout during its first term, contributed to the weakening of the programme as well as the changing of its basic character.
- The government kept the budget allocation low and created administrative bottlenecks that stifled the programme. This trend has continued under the NDA.
This alliance also altered the basic character of the scheme.

Original Vision for MGNREGA

- MGNREGA was envisaged as a provider of rural employment to casual workers at government-mandated minimum wages set above market wages.
- This was the case at its 2006 launch.
- The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) has been tracking wages received by casual workers employed under MGNREGA and private markets since 2007-08, when it introduced a separate category for MGNREGA work.
- This has been retained even in the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), the report of which was released recently.
- In 2007-08, the second year of MGNREGA implementation, wages under the programme were 5% higher than market wages for rural male workers and 58% higher for rural female workers.
- This was one of the reasons that the programme attracted almost 50% female workers, in contrast to the trend of declining female workforce participation since 2004-05.

Ineffective MGNREGA at present

- However, the political slugfest and flawed policies of the government have led to a situation where MGNREGA, lacking of its original character is unable to provide a stimulus to the rural economy, despite the strong evidence of it having pushed up rural wages and incomes during the first five years of its implementation.
- It also created rural infrastructure and provided much-needed employment to the country’s rural population.

Source: Live Mint

How to make the Surrogacy Bill more inclusive?

GS-II Paper: How to make the Surrogacy Bill more inclusive?

The Surrogacy Bill (Regulation) Bill,2019

The Surrogacy Bill introduced by Harshvardhan in Lok Sabha.

What is Surrogacy Bill?

The bill defines surrogacy as a practice where a woman gives birth to a child for an intending
Regulation of surrogacy

- The bill prohibits commercial surrogacy, but allows altruistic surrogacy.
- Altruistic surrogacy involves no monetary compensation to the surrogate mother other than the medical expense and insurance coverage during the pregnancy.
- Commercial surrogacy includes surrogacy or its related procedures undertaken for a monetary benefit (in cash or kind) exceeding the basic medical expenses and insurance coverage.

Purposes for which surrogacy is permitted

Surrogacy is permitted when it is:

- For intending couples who suffer from proven infertility.
- Altruistic
- Not for commercial purposes.
- Not for producing children for sale, prostitution or other forms of exploitation
- For any condition or disease specified through regulations.

Eligibility criteria for intending couple

- The intending couple should have a ‘certificate of essentiality’ and a ‘certificate of eligibility’ issued by the appropriate authority.
- A certificate of essentiality will be issued upon fulfilment of the following conditions:
  i. A certificate of proven infertility of one or both members of the intending couple from a District Medical Board.
  ii. An order of parentage and custody of the surrogate child passed by a Magistrate’s court.

Certificate of eligibility

- The couple being Indian citizens and married for atleast 5 years.
- Between 23 to 50 years for wife and 26 to 55 years for husband.
- They do not have surviving child( biological, adopted or surrogate).
- This would not include a child who is mentally or physically challenged or suffers from like threatening disorder or fatal illness.

Eligibility criteria for surrogate mother

- A close relative of the intending couple.
- Married woman having a child of her own.
- 25 to 35 years.
- Surrogate only once in her lifetime.

Registration of surrogacy clinics

- Surrogacy clinics cannot undertake surrogacy related procedures unless they are
India needs tough laws to combat terror, but the proposed amendments could be misused. The idea of designating an individual as a terrorist, as the latest amendments to the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. However, designating an individual as a terrorist raises serious constitutional questions and has the potential for misuse there is no set procedure for designating an individual a terrorist.

The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill, 2019

- The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill, 2019 was introduced in Lok Sabha.
- The bill amends the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.
- The act provides special procedures to deal with terrorist activities, among other things.

Features of the Bill

Who may commit terrorism

Under the Act, the central government may designate an organisation as a terrorist organisation if it:

(i) commits or participates in acts of terrorism

(ii) Prepares for terrorism.

(iii) Promotes terrorism.

(iv) Is otherwise involved in terrorism.
The Bill additionally empowers the government to designate individuals as terrorists on the same grounds.

**Approval for seizure of property by NIA**

If the investigation is conducted by an officer of the National Investigation Agency (NIA), the approval of the Director General of NIA would be required for seizure of properties that may be connected with terrorism.

**Investigation by NIA**

Under the Act, investigation of cases may be conducted by officers of the rank of Deputy Superintendent or Assistant Commissioner of Police or above. The Bill additionally empowers the officers of the NIA, of the rank of Inspector or above, to investigate cases.

**Insertion to schedule of treaties:** The Act defines terrorist acts to include acts committed within the scope of any of the treaties listed in a schedule to the Act. The Schedule lists nine treaties, including the Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings (1997), and the Convention against Taking of Hostages (1979). The Bill adds another treaty to the list. This is the *International Convention for Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (2005).*

Source: The Hindu

**Floor Test**

**GS-II: Floor Test**

**News**

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear a plea filed for an immediate floor test in Karnataka Assembly.

**What is a floor test?**

- A floor test is primarily taken to know whether the executive enjoys the confidence of the legislature.
- It is a constitutional mechanism under which a Chief Minister appointed by the Governor can be asked to prove majority on the floor of the Legislative Assembly of the state.
- As per the Constitution, the Chief Minister is appointed by the Governor of the state.
- When a single party secures the majority of the seats in the house, the Governor appoints
the leader of the party as the Chief Minister.

- In case the majority is questioned, the leader of the party which claims majority has to move a vote of confidence and prove majority among those present and voting.
- The Chief Minister has to resign if they fail to prove their majority in the house. This happens both in the parliament and the state legislative assemblies.
- In situations when there are differences within a coalition government, the Governor can ask the Chief Minister to prove majority in the house.

What is composite floor test?

- There is another test, Composite Floor Test, which is conducted only when more than one person stakes claim to form the government.
- When the majority is not clear, the governor might call for a special session to see who has the majority.
- The majority is counted based on those present and voting. This can also be done through a voice vote where the member can respond orally or through division voting.
- Some legislators may be absent or choose not to vote.
- In division vote, voting can be done through electronic gadgets, ballots or slips.
- The person who has the majority will form the government. In case of tie, the speaker can also cast his vote.

Governors’ discretion

When no party gets a clear majority, the governor can use his discretion in the selection of chief ministerial candidate to prove the majority as soon as possible.

Source: Indian Express
About Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)

Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) is a premier research and development organisation of the country that works under the Department of Defence Research and Development of Ministry of Defence. It was formed in 1958 by the amalgamation of the Technical Development Establishment (TDEs) of the Indian Army and the Directorate of Technical Development & Production (DTDP) with the Defence Science Organisation (DSO). It was then only a small organisation with 10 establishments or laboratories. Today, DRDO is a network of more than 50 laboratories which are deeply engaged in developing defence technologies covering various disciplines.

Vision of the Organisation

Make India prosperous by establishing world class science and technology base and provide our Defence Services decisive edge by equipping them with internationally competitive systems and solutions.

Mission of the Organisation

- Design, develop and lead the production of state-of-the-art sensors, weapon systems, platforms and allied equipment for our Defence Services.
- Provide technological solutions to the Services to optimise combat effectiveness and to promote the well-being of the troops.
- Develop infrastructure and committed quality manpower and build strong indigenous technology base.

Functions

DRDO works towards enhancing self-reliance of the country in Defence Systems. It is
primarily engaged in design and development of strategic, complex and security sensitive systems for the Armed Forces. DRDO currently works in various areas of military technology which include aeronautics, armaments, combat vehicles, electronics, instrumentation engineering systems, missiles, materials, naval systems, advanced computing, simulation and life sciences. DRDO while striving to meet the Cutting edge weapons technology requirements provides ample spinoff benefits to the society at large thereby contributing to the nation building.

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It was the first surface-to-air missile program of DRDO. It was an Indo-Swiss agreement to develop intermediate-range surface-to-air missiles which were started by India in 1962.

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**Achievements of DRDO**

It has achieved many successes since its establishment in developing major systems and critical technologies such as aircraft avionics, UAVs, small arms, artillery systems, EW Systems, tanks and armoured vehicles, sonar systems, command and control systems and missile systems. Despite dealing with a lot of issues, the major one being the shortage of funds, it has proved its competence time and again by fulfilling the needs of the Armed Forces.

Some of the major products/systems developed by DRDO and accepted/inducted by Armed Forces are:

**Platforms:**

- Light Combat Aircraft ‘Tejas’
- Remotely Piloted Vehicle ‘Nishant’
- Pilotless Target Aircraft ‘Lakshya-I’
- Main Battle Tank ‘Arjun Mk-I’
- Armoured Amphibious Dozer Mk-I
- Bridging Systems ‘Sarvatra’
Sensors:

- Airborne Early Warning & Control (AEW&C)
- Integrated Sonar System for EKM Submarine.
- Weapon Locating Radar ‘Swathi’
- 3D Low-Level Light Weight Radar ‘Aslesha’ Mk-I
- 3D Surveillance Radar ‘Revathi’
- Electronic Warfare System for Navy ‘Sangraha’
- Electronic Warfare System for Army ‘Samyukta’
- Electronic Warfare System ‘Divya Drishti’
- Electronic Support Measure ‘Varuna’

Weapon Systems:

- Akash Weapon System
- Prithvi Missile for Army and Air Force
- Supersonic Cruise Missile ‘BrahMos’
- Multi Barrel Rocket Launcher System ‘Pinaka’ Mk-I
- Heavy Weight Ship Launched Torpedo ‘Varunastra’

To read more of its achievements, read on https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wgS15oZyUTgaYBFt44aKtgLj76FAnWowo/view

Source: The Hindu

Recent Development in Afghan Politics
GS Paper 2 | 19 July, 2019

Topic: Recent Development in Afghan Politics

GS Paper 2
The CRUX of the Article:

- This is with reference to the ongoing meeting between U.S. Afghan negotiators and the Taliban in Doha, Qatar.
- The Taliban and Afghan representatives, including some government officials, agreed to a basic road map for negotiating the country’s political future.
- This can be considered to be a major step that could help propel peace efforts to end the 18 years long war.
- In a joint declaration, the two sides emphasised a need to work for reducing “civilian casualties to zero” and assuring women their fundamental rights in “political, social, economic, educational, cultural affairs”.
- This non-binding declaration might not immediately deescalate the violence in Afghanistan but it can speed up the peace process between the U.S. diplomats and the Taliban.
- The Taliban has said direct negotiations with the Afghans would start only after the U.S. announces a timeline for the withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan.

Source: The Hindu

National Green Tribunal and its Significance

About the National Green Tribunal

National Green Tribunal is a specialized environmental court that was established in 2010 under the National Green Tribunal Act. It deals with cases relating to environmental protection and the conservation of forests and that has judicial powers that allow it to exclusively decide civil environmental matters. It is guided by principles of natural justice and is not bound by the mainstream Code of Civil Procedure of 1908.

PT Pointer

Before NGT, high courts in different states used to take up important environmental cases, including suomotu ones.

The main functions of the National Green Tribunal:
1. It is responsible for the speedy and effective disposal of cases related to environmental issues, thus enforcing environmental laws.

2. It gives relief and compensation for damages to persons and property and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

3. It is a specialized body equipped with the necessary expertise to handle environmental disputes involving multi-disciplinary issues.

The National Green Tribunal is mandated to dispose off the applications within 6 months of the filing of the same. The Principal Bench of the NGT is located in New Delhi. It also sits in Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai. A petitioner can seek the review of the decision of NGT under rule 22 of the NGT rule. Further, orders of NGT can be appealed to the Supreme Court within 90 days.

**Jurisdiction of the NGT**

As per Section 14 (1) The National Green Tribunal has jurisdiction over all civil cases where a substantial question relating to environment (including enforcement of any legal right relating to environment), is involved and such question arises out of the implementation of the enactments specified in Schedule I of the National Green Tribunal Act 2010. The acts listed in Schedule 1 are:

- The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974;
- The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977;
- The Forest (Conservation) Act,
- The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981;
- The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986;
- The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991;
- The Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

The Tribunal shall hear the disputes arising from the questions referred to in subsection (I) and settle such disputes and pass orders thereon.

Appellate jurisdiction under section 16 of the Act. As per Section 15 (1) of the Act, the Tribunal may, by an order, provide:

(a) relief and compensation to the victims of pollution and other environmental damage arising under the enactments specified in Schedule 1 (including accident occurring while handling any hazardous substance);

(b) for restitution of property damaged;

(c) for restitution of the environment for such area or areas, as the Tribunal may think fit.

**Powers of National Green Tribunal**

It has the power to regulate its own procedure.

It is not bound by the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908. Even, it is not bound by the rules of evidence as mentioned in the Indian Evidence Act.

The NGT also at the time of giving orders shall apply the principals of sustainable development and also the principal that the one who pollutes shall pay.

It will have the same power as of the civil court in deciding the matter falling within it jurisdiction.

It has the power to impose both punishments as well as fine. The punishment is up to three years and the penalty is up to ten crores and for firms in can extend up to twenty-five crores.
Also the director or manager of the firm can be punished or penalized if it is found by the tribunal that the offence has been committed on the orders or with the consent of such officer of the firm.

The act also provides various kinds of reliefs in the form of compensation to the persons who are affected by the degradation of environment as the inhabitant of that particular area. For this, any person who has sustained the injury can file a suit in the National Green Tribunal. The suit can also be filed by a person who is the owner of the property to which the loss is caused. In case there is a death as a consequence of damage then the legal representative of such a person can file a case.

The period for filing a suit with NGT is up to 5 years from the date on which the cause for compensation arose.

A person can argue his own matter before the tribunal and he does not need to be an advocate to do so.

Advantages of the National Green Tribunal:

- It provides speedy and directly accessible environmental justice.
- It is a strong order enforcing mechanism. thus, if the orders of NGT are not complied with then it has the power to impose both punishment as well as fine.
- It reduces the burden of litigation in the High Courts.
- It allows for more relevant and greater expertise.
- It provides an alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.
- It offers a path for the evolution of environmental jurisprudence.

Disadvantages of the National Green Tribunal:

- It possibly takes away from mainstream jurisdictions and transfers to and from the mainstream courts could become complicated.
- Lack of benches and proper infrastructure due to which not many cases are being dealt in a time-bound manner.
- a person cannot approach the NGT for every environmental issue.
- The body should have minimum 10 judicial and expert members, out of which only 2 judicial members and 4 expert members have been appointed till date.
- Also, there is a lack of effective support from government both at the centre as well in states which leads to delays in implementing the tribunal's decision.
- Most importantly, the tribunal is not having suo-moto powers which also restricts its ambit in the area of the environment.

Some of the landmark judgements of the NGT are:

1. In the case, Ms. Betty C. Alvares vs. The State of Goa and Ors., the NGT made it clear that *Even a Foreign National Can Approach the NGT. the case was filed* by a personal of foreign nationality regarding various instances of illegal construction in the Coastal Regulation Zone of Candolim, Goa

2. In the case, Almitra H. Patel & Ors. vs. Union of India and Ors. of a complete *prohibition on open burning of waste on lands was directed by the NGT*. This case was the single biggest landmark case dealing with the issue of solid waste management in India.

Save Mon Region Federation and Ors. vs. Union of India and Ors.[8]

*Victory for Birds, Massive Hydro Power Project Loses*

Facts and Issues

- In this case, an appeal was filed by an organization named Save Mon Region Federation along with a social activist against the grant of Environmental Clearance given to an INR 6,400 crore hydro project.
- The said project was situated close to the wintering site for a bird named Black-necked Crane, which is a Schedule I species under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and features in the ‘Threatened Birds of India’ a literature produced by
The Appellants. Apart from the birds, the area was also home to several other endangered species such as the snow leopard, red panda, Arunachal macaque etc.

**Judgment**

- The Tribunal very proactively suspended the Environmental Clearance granted to the Project.
- The Tribunal Directed the EAC to make a fresh appraisal of the proposal for environmental clearance grant and asked the Ministry of Environment and Forest to make a separate study on the protection of the said bird.

**Recent Directions by the NGT**

Recently, the NGT has directed that performance guarantee of over Rs. 5 crore deposited by the Delhi government be forfeited as it has failed to comply with orders on two separate matters pertaining to pollution caused by dairies and illegal banquet halls in the city.

Also, the NGT ordered the Haryana Chief Secretary to advance the timeline for the establishment of a waste-to-energy plant in response to the alleged unscientific dumping of garbage. A few days back it asked Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh how they intend to tackle the problem of crop burning, a major contributor to air pollution in Delhi.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has asked the authorities to come up with a revised Detailed Project Report (DPR) in three months to end the discharge of industrial sludge into the Periyar river.

This shows the increasing concern with the environment and the significance NGT holds in order to deal with the legal issues concerning the country.

**Conclusion:**

NGT has done well so far but many improvements are still required to make accessible, speedy and effective resolution of environmental disputes a practical reality. The Central and State government should work in collaboration with NGT to secure the environment with better, faster enforcement of NGT orders. This is because more than 50 per cent of the cases filed in NGT relate to green clearances awarded by MoEF&CC to development projects. The government should make it more autonomous and efficient in a view to the growing concern regarding the environment and climate change. Also, there is a need for the NGT to put internal checks and balances for efficient and transparent delivery of justice. However, India is doing well when it comes to the environmental or climate change issue as compared to other developed and developing countries of the world. But many improvements are still required to make accessible, speedy and effective resolution of environmental disputes a practical reality. Thus, there is a need to strengthen NGT.

**Source:** The Hindu

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**Threat of Ebola**

**GS-II | 19 July, 2019**

**GS-II Paper: Threat of Ebola**

**Context**
The health emergency declared by the WHO can counter the risk of a global

Background

- After holding itself back on the three occasions the World Health Organizations has declared the Ebola virus disease outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.
- The announcement of the health emergency comes amid renewed concerns that the virus could spread to other countries.
- A single imported case of Ebola in Goma, a city in Congo with two million people and with an international airport bordering Rwanda, served as a trigger to finally declare a global emergency.
- Surprisingly, the spread to neighbouring Uganda last month did not seem to change the way the WHO assessed the situation.

Even when a handful of Ebola cases were confirmed in Uganda, all the infected people had travelled from Congo and there had been no local transmission or spread within Uganda — one of the criteria used by the WHO to assess if an outbreak is a global emergency.

Previous Cases

- This is the fifth time that the WHO has declared a global emergency. The earlier occasions were in February 2016 for Zika outbreaks in the Americas, August 2014 for Ebola outbreaks in western Africa, the spread of polio in May 2014, and the H1N1 pandemic in April 2009.
- Declaring an event as a global emergency is meant to stop the spread of the pathogen to other countries and to ensure a coordinated international response.

Shortage of Vaccine

- Owing to vaccine shortage, the WHO’s expert group on immunisation has recommended reducing the individual dose to meet the demand.
- What is equally important is for the G7 countries to fulfil their promise to the WHO to contain the spread.

Source: The Hindu
Across India, activists for tribal rights have said the proposed Indian forest act amendments will divest tribals and other forest-dwelling communities of their rights over forest land and resources.

**Highlights of the amendments:**

- The amendment defines *community* as “a group of persons specified on the basis of government records living in a specific locality and in joint possession and enjoyment of common property resources, without regard to race, religion, caste, language and culture.”

- *Forest is defined to include* “any government or private or institutional land recorded or notified as forest land in any government record and the lands managed by government/community as forest and mangroves, and also any land which the central or state government may by notification declare to be forest for the purpose of this Act.”

- **The amendment also introduces a new category of forests — production forest.** These will be forests with specific objectives for production of timber, pulp, pulpwood, firewood, non-timber forest produce, medicinal plants or any forest species to increase production in the country for a specified period.

**Indian Forest Act, 1927:**

- The Indian Forest Act, 1927 was largely based on previous Indian Forest Acts implemented under the British. The most famous one was the Indian Forest Act of 1878.
- Both the 1878 act and the 1927 one sought to consolidate and reserve the areas having forest cover, or significant wildlife, to regulate movement and transit of forest produce, and duty leviable on timber and other forest produce.
- It also defines the procedure to be followed for declaring an area to be a Reserved Forest, a Protected Forest or a Village Forest.
- It defines what a forest offence is, what are the acts prohibited inside a Reserved Forest, and penalties leviable on violation of the provisions of the Act.

**Concerns with regard to the present Draft Bill:**

1. The draft Bill reinforces the idea of bureaucratic control of forests, providing immunity for actions such as use of firearms by personnel to prevent an offence.
2. The hard-line policing approach is reflected in the emphasis on creating infrastructure to detain and transport the accused.
3. To penalise entire communities through denial of access to forests for offences by individuals. Such provisions invariably affect poor inhabitants, and run counter to the empowering and egalitarian goals that produced the Forest Rights Act.
4. The exclusion of ‘village forestry’ from the preview of Forest Right Act (forest official supersedes Gram Sabha) is legally contradictory and would add confusion on the ground.
Introduction

Solid waste management refers to the process of collecting and treating solid wastes. According to the Britannica, “Solid-waste management, the collecting, treating and disposing of solid material that is discarded because it has served its purpose or is no longer useful. Improper disposal of municipal solid waste can create unsanitary conditions, and these conditions, in turn, can lead to pollution of the environment and to outbreaks of vector-borne disease—that is, diseases spread by rodents and insects.”

Various sources of solid waste:

Solid waste is majorly generated in the urban areas, its various sources being:

Residential: Includes solid waste that is generated in the residences and homes. The waste includes food wastes, plastics, paper, glass, leather, cardboard, metals, yard wastes, ashes and special wastes like bulky household items like electronics, tires, batteries, old mattresses, and used oil.

Industrial: Includes solid waste that is generated by the industries. Industries are known to be one of the biggest contributors to solid waste. The waste includes housekeeping wastes, food wastes, packaging wastes, ashes, construction and demolition materials, special wastes as well as other hazardous wastes.

Commercial: Includes solid waste that is generated in commercial buildings and facilities such as hotels, markets, restaurants, godowns, stores, and office buildings. The waste includes plastics, food wastes, metals, paper, glass, wood, cardboard materials, special wastes, and other hazardous wastes.

Institutional: Includes solid waste that is generated in institutional centers like schools, colleges, prisons, military barracks, and other government centers also produce solid waste. It includes glass, rubber waste, plastics, food wastes, wood, paper, metals, cardboard materials, electronics.
Construction and Demolition Areas: It includes steel materials, concrete, wood, plastics, rubber, copper wires, dirt, and glass.

Municipal services: It includes wastes from parks and beaches, wastewater treatment plants, landscaping wastes and wastes from recreational areas including sludge.

Treatment Plants and Sites: Includes solid waste that is generated in heavy and light manufacturing plants. Among the wastes produced by these plants include industrial process wastes, unwanted specification products, plastics, metal parts just to mention but a few.

Agriculture: Includes solid waste that is generated in crop farms, orchards, dairies, vineyards, and feedlots are also sources of solid wastes which includes agricultural wastes, spoiled food, pesticide containers, and other hazardous materials.

Biomedical: Includes solid waste that is generated in hospitals and biomedical equipment and chemical manufacturing firms which includes syringes, bandages, used gloves, drugs, paper, plastics, food wastes, and chemicals.

Solid Waste Management in India

The generation of waste dates back to the origin of life form on the Earth but it has never been so unmanageable as it has grown now. As the humans started agriculture and started settling down, it produced waste but that was used by nature. Earlier, waste was recyclable and thus, whatever waste was generated it was recycled and thus an equilibrium in nature was maintained. Even till the age of plastics and packaging and industrialization, waste was valuable, whether it was generated in the rural areas or the urban areas. During that time, bullock-carts were used to bring agricultural produce into town and they collect and return the city waste for their fields. But modern mixed waste is useless.

Plastics render the land less fertile or even uncultivable, yet cities continue to dump on the outskirts. The discarded pile not only becomes a cause of pollution but it also makes the land a no man's land. It does not attract attention until the time people living around it fall ill or it creates a menace for the nearby areas. In India, the first solid waste management rules were adopted in 2000 in the backdrop of the September 1994 plague of Surat.

Background
1994 plague of Surat brought a lot of attention to the issue of solid waste management. Choked storm-drains and heavy rains during high tide in this West Coast city flooded rat burrows, and the rodents came up and out into the population. Very few died, but migrant workers fled the city, and there were huge economic losses for Surat and for Indi. Though the situation was efficiently handled by its new and dedicated Municipal Commissioner, S. R. Rao, a Public Interest Litigation was filed in the Supreme Court to ask all the States and Union Territories to follow hygienic waste-management practices. It led to the publication of a report titled "Solid Waste Management in Class 1 Cities".

At the same time, India’s Central Pollution Control Board prepared waste-management rules based on this report and discussions with our Committee. At the Court’s direction, these were issued by the Government of India’s Ministry of Environment as the country’s first Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rules 2000, issued under the Environment Protection Act 1986. Recently, the Municipal Solid Waste Rules, 2000 were modified in 2016.

**Some of the features of the Municipal Solid Waste Rules, 2016 are:**

- It extended the applicability of the rules to areas beyond Municipal areas and now it also includes urban agglomerations, census towns, notified industrial townships, areas under the control of Indian Railways, airports, airbase, Port and harbour, defence establishments, special economic zones, State and Central government organizations, places of pilgrims, religious & historical importance.
- It mandates the segregation of the waste at source
- It made the Generators responsible for segregating waste into three streams and handover segregated wastes to authorized rag-pickers or waste collectors or local bodies. The three streams should be:
  - Wet (Biodegradable),
  - Dry (Plastic, Paper, metal, wood, etc.)
  - Domestic hazardous wastes (diapers, napkins, empty containers of cleaning agents, mosquito repellents, etc.)
- It calls for the integration of waste pickers/ rag pickers and waste dealers/ Kabadiwalas in the formal system by State Governments.
- According to the rules, no person should throw, burn, or bury the solid waste generated by him, on streets, open public spaces outside his premises, or in the drain, or water bodies.
- The generator should have to pay ‘User Fee’ to waste collector
It calls for a ‘Spot Fine’ for Littering and Non-segregation
It introduces the concept of partnership in Swachh Bharat in which bulk and institutional generators, market associations, event organizers and hotels and restaurants have been made directly responsible for segregation and sorting the waste and manage in partnership with local bodies.
It makes all hotels and restaurants responsible for segregating biodegradable waste
It sets up a system of collection in which the local body needs to ensure that such food waste is utilized for composting /bio-methanation.
Even the Resident Welfare and market Associations, Gated communities and institution with an area >5,000 sq. m are required to segregate waste into valuable dry waste like plastic, tin, glass, paper, etc. at the source and handover recyclable material to either the authorized waste pickers or the authorized recyclers, or to the urban local body.
Construction and demolition waste should be stored and separately disposed off, as per the Construction and Demolition Waste Management Rules, 2016
Horticulture waste and garden waste generated from his premises should be disposed off as per the directions of the local authority.
The organiser of an event, or gathering of more than 100 persons at any licensed/ unlicensed place, should ensure segregation of waste at source and handing over of segregated waste to waste collector or agency, as specified by the local authority.
Special provision for the management of solid waste in hilly areas:- Construction of landfill on the hill shall be avoided. A transfer station at a suitable enclosed location shall be set up to collect residual waste from the processing facility and inert waste. Suitable land shall be identified in the plain areas, down the hill, within 25 kilometers for setting up a sanitary landfill. The residual waste from the transfer station shall be disposed off at this sanitary landfill.

Current Issue:
The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has pulled up 52 companies — including Amazon, Flipkart, Danone Foods and Beverages and Patanjali Ayurved Limited — for not specifying a timeline or a plan to collect the plastic waste that results from their business activities.

Plastic Waste Management in India
According to Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) estimates in 2015, Indian cities generate about 15,000 tonnes of plastic waste per day and about 70 percent of the plastic produced in the country ends up as waste. Nearly 40 percent of India’s plastic waste is neither collected nor recycled and ends up polluting the land and water. According to another source, India generates 25,940 tonnes of plastic waste daily out of which 40% remains uncollected. To deal with such an enormous amount of plastic waste the Plastic Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2011 were released initially. In 2016, it was superseded by the Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016.


Aims of the Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016:

- Increase the minimum thickness of plastic carry bags from 40 to 50 microns and stipulate minimum thickness of 50 microns for plastic sheets also to facilitate collection and recycle of plastic waste
- Expand the jurisdiction of applicability from the municipal area to rural areas, because plastic has reached rural areas also
- To bring in the responsibilities of producers and generators, both in the plastic waste management system and to introduce collect back system of plastic waste by the producers/brand owners, as per Extended Producer's Responsibility
- To Introduce the Collection of Plastic Waste Management Fee through pre-registration of the producers, importers of plastic carry bags/multilayered packaging and vendors selling the same for establishing the waste management system
- To Promote Use of Plastic Waste for Road Construction as per Indian Road Congress guidelines or energy recovery, or waste to oil etc. for gainful utilization of waste and also address the waste disposal issue; to entrust more responsibility on waste generators, namely payment of user charge as prescribed by local authority, collection and handing over of waste by the institutional generator, event organizers.

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Source: Oorvani Foundation, Bengaluru
Some of the provisions of the Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 are:

- **Gram Panchayats** to be responsible for the implementation of the rules in the rural areas.
- For the first time, the waste generators are assigned with the responsibility: *Individual and bulk generators like offices, commercial establishments, industries are supposed to segregate the plastic waste at source, handover segregated waste, pay user fee as per bye-laws of the local bodies.*
- For the first time, the persons organizing the public event has been made responsible for the management of waste generated from such an event.
- It makes a provision to ensure the collection and channelization of the plastic sheet used for packaging and wrapping to authorized recycling facilities.
- **It makes the producers and the brand owners** responsible for collecting waste generated from their products. They have to approach local bodies for the formulation of plan/system for the plastic waste management within the prescribed timeframe. *(Extended Producer Responsibility)*
- The plastic carry bag will be **available only with shopkeepers/street vendors pre-registered with local bodies** after paying the registration fee. The amount collected as registration fee by local bodies is to be used for waste management.
- Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has been mandated to **formulate the guidelines for thermoset plastic (plastic difficult to recycle).**

Further, these rules were amended in 2018. According to the new rules, state-level registration for smaller producers/brand owners operating within one or two states is required. Also, it proposes the setting up of a national registry of the producers whose presence is seen in more than 2 states.

**Conclusion**

"A clean environment is a human right like any other. It is, therefore, a part of our responsibility towards others to ensure that the world we pass on is healthy, if not healthier, than how we found it"

-Dalai Lama

As we look forward to achieving the sustainable development goals, it becomes important for us to have a wider image of the world we want to live in. The pollution created by plastic is a menace and it harms the whole ecosystem. Thus, there is a need for
individuals and companies to follow the various rules that are made for the conservation of the environment and to keep up the Swachh Bharat spirit. Thus, the recent decision of pulling up companies for non-compliance of the Plastic Waste Management rules by the Central Pollution Control Board is a welcoming move.

Source: The Hindu

Antibiotic Colistin banned in animal food industry

GS-III Paper: Antibiotic Colistin banned in animal food industry

News

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has issued an order prohibiting the manufacture, sale and distribution of colistin and its formulations for food-producing animals, poultry, aqua farming and animal feed supplements.

What is Colistin?

- According to the WHO, Colistin is a “reserve” antibiotic, which means it is supposed to be considered a “last-resort” option in treatment and used only in the most severe circumstances, when all other alternatives have failed.
- However, this strong antibiotic has been “highly misused” in India’s livestock industry to prevent diseases and as promote growth of such animals.
- Medical professionals have been alarmed by the number of patients who have exhibited resistance to the drug.
- Most are not aware of the presence of colistin, since it comes mixed in the feed. A bulk of colistin (nearly 95%) is imported from China.

Alarm for India

- A 2017 global study on antibiotic use in farm animals projected the consumption of antibiotics through animal sources to nearly double during 2013-2030.
- This means India’s AMR problem is expected to worsen due to the consumption of antibiotics through animal sources.
- The study ranked India the fourth largest consumer of antibiotics in food animals.
In view of falling interest rates, the government has increased the time period by 1 month for doubling the money invested in Kisan Vikas Patra (KVP) to **9 years and 5 months**.

**Kisan Vikas Patra (KVP)**

- KVP is a saving certificate scheme which was first launched in **1988** by India Post wherein invested money doubled during the maturity period.
- It was discontinued in 2011 and later reintroduced in 2014. It is considered a part of the National Small Savings Fund.
- The amount (Principal) invested in KVP would get doubled in 112 months. The rate of interest is 7.6% from 29th June 2019.
- KVP certificates are available in the denominations of Rs 1000, Rs 5000, Rs 10000 and Rs 50000.
- The minimum amount that can be invested is Rs 1000. However, there is no upper limit on the purchase of KVPs.

**Refund conditions**

- KVP does not offer any income tax benefits to the investor.
- The amount of KVP can be withdrawn after 118 months (9 years and 10 months). The maturity period of a KVP is 2 years 6 months (30 months).
- Premature encashment of the KVP certificate is not permissible. The certificates can only be encashed in event of the death of the holder or forfeiture by a pledge or on the order of the courts.

Source: Economic Times
What are sovereign bonds, and what are their risks and rewards.

Context

The government has announced its plans to raise a portion of its gross borrowing from overseas markets. With the help of Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the government will finalise the plans for the overseas issue of sovereign bonds.

What exactly are sovereign bonds?

A bond is like an IOU. The issuer of a bond promises to pay back a fixed amount of money every year until the expiry of the term, at which point the issuer returns the principal amount to the buyer. When a government issues such a bond it is called a sovereign bond.

Why is India borrowing in external markets in external currency?

1. Indian government’s domestic borrowing is **crowding out private investment** and preventing the interest rates from falling even when inflation has cooled off and the RBI is cutting policy rates.
2. **If the government was to borrow some of its loans from outside India, there will be investable money left for private companies to borrow**; not to mention that interest rates could start coming down.
3. A sovereign bond issue will **provide a yield curve** a benchmark for Indian corporates who wish to raise loans in foreign markets. This will help Indian businesses that have increasingly looked towards foreign economies to borrow money.
4. Globally, and especially in the advanced economies where the government is likely to go to borrow, the **interest rates are low** and, thanks to the easy monetary policies of foreign central banks, there are a lot of surplus funds waiting for a product that pays more.
5. **In an ideal scenario, it could be win-win for all:** Indian government raises loans at interest rates much cheaper than domestic interest rates, while foreign investors get a much higher return than is available in their own markets.

What is the controversial part?

- The current controversy relates to **India’s sovereign bonds that will be floated in foreign countries and will be denominated in foreign currencies**.
- This would differentiate these proposed bonds from either government securities (or G-secs, wherein the Indian government raises loans within India and in Indian rupee) or Masala bonds (wherein Indian entities — not the government — raise money overseas in
rupee terms).
- The difference between issuing a bond denominated in rupees and issuing it in a foreign currency (say US dollar) is the **incidence of exchange rate risk**.
- If the loan is in terms of dollars, and the rupee weakens against the dollar during the bond’s tenure, the government would have to return more rupees to pay back the same amount of dollars. If, however, the initial loan is denominated in rupee terms, then the negative fallout would be on the foreign investor.

**Why are so many cautioning against this move?**

1. The **volatility in India’s exchange rate is far more than the volatility in the yields of India’s G-secs** (the yields are the interest rate that the government pays when it borrows domestically). This means that although the government would be borrowing at “cheaper” rates than domestically, the eventual rates (after incorporating the possible weakening of rupee against the dollar) might make the deal costlier.

2. **Borrowing outside would not necessarily reduce the number of government bonds the domestic market will have to absorb**. That’s because if fresh foreign currency comes into the economy, the RBI would have to “neutralise” it by sucking the exact amount out of the money supply. This, in turn, will require selling more bonds. If the RBI doesn’t do it then the excess money supply will create inflation and push up the interest rates, thus disincentivising private investments.

3. Based on the unpleasant experience of other emerging economies, many argue that a **small initial borrowing is the thin end of the wedge**. It is quite likely that the government will be tempted to dip into the foreign markets for more loans every time it runs out of money. At some point, especially if India does not take care of its fiscal health, the foreign investors will pull the plug on fresh investments, creating dire consequences for India.

Source: Indian Express
Organ donation is the donation of biological tissue or an organ of the human body, from a living or dead person to a living recipient in need of a transplantation. Transplantable organs and tissues are removed in a surgical procedure following a determination, based on the donor’s medical and social history, of which are suitable for transplantation. Such procedures are termed allotransplantations, to distinguish them from xenotransplantation, the transfer of animal organs into human bodies.

Transplant organ Act 1994

The Transplantation of Human Organs Act serves as the primary legislation governing the processes of organ donation and organ transplantation in India. Passed in 1994, it is aimed at the regulation of storage, removal, and transplantation of different types of human organs that can be used for therapeutic purposes. The Act also focuses on the prevention of illegal commercial dealings in various human organs.

The provisions of the transplantation of Human Organs Act

- The Act defines brain death as an accepted form of death. The Act also defines the process and the criteria meant to be used for the purpose of brain death certification.
- It allows the transplantation of the human tissues and organs from the living donors as well as cadavers after brain death or cardiac death.
- The Act defines the criteria for regulatory and the advisory bodies in order to monitor the transplantation activity as well as their constitution.
- Living donors according to this Act are classified as either non-related donor or near relative.
- The Act authorizes organ donation after the process of brain death.
- All non-governmental organizations, trusts and registered societies working for organ and tissue removal, transplantation or storage needs to be registered to work in such industries.
- The central government is going to maintain a complete registry of all donors as well as recipients of different types of human tissues and organs.

Why is illegal organ trade growing in India?

Illegal organ trade is common in India that is carried out in various hospitals and medical centers. There is always a high demand for various types of organs since a large number of patients are waiting for them who are in various stages of organ failure. India lacks a national registry for patients who are waiting for different types of cadaveric organs.

Some experts believe that over the years the illegal organ trade has flourished extensively in India since it is easier to technically get away with such an act in this country. India has a strong
culture of corruption and bribery as well as the practice of profiteering over moral and ethical considerations. Along with it, there is the belief that poor men and women in India are expendable and that they can be desperate enough to sell their bodily organs to rich people in search of food for themselves and their loved ones.

Conclusion

The government should properly regulate the various healthcare centers in the country to make sure that there is no illegal organ trade going on under any circumstances. The government should see to it that such tendencies should be curbed and doctors supporting such acts should be arrested and penalized if necessary. Various public bodies and non-profit organizations should come together to work on developing the cadaver organ transplant program as it offers a stable and steady supply of organs for all those who need them. Finally, the whole process of organ trade should be heavily regulated by all the state governments of India.

Source: The Hindu
Topic: Human Rights Act in India

Introduction

According to the United Nations, human rights are the rights that are inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. They can also be considered to be natural rights or rights basic to humanity.

Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination.

The emergence of Human Rights

The problem of human rights emerged as a matter of serious concern for the whole world after the Second World War (1939-45). During Nuremberg Trials (1946) some German Nazis have tried for 'crimes against humanity' apart from war crimes. The most barbarous and inhuman atrocities committed by the accused on the jews of their country were termed 'crimes against humanity'. This action was based on the assumption that 'human rights' are valid by themselves; these are above the law of any nation; violation of these rights would be treated as 'crime against humanity. In 1948 the United Nations issued an elaborate list of human rights, known as 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights'. It advised its member-nations to give wide publicity to these rights in their respective countries, particularly in schools and other educational institutions. This declaration is best suited to building up a free, democratic, welfare state. It embodies the best scheme of human rights.

Provision of Indian Constitution pertaining to Human Rights

One of the driving force behind India's struggle for independence was the violation of the human rights of the Indians by the Europeans. Thus, the framers of the Indian Constitution
made an attempt to protect the rights of its citizens by outlining Fundamental Rights in the Constitution.

Various Fundamental Rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution are:

(a) **Right to equality** (Articles 14-18)

(b) **Right to freedom** (Articles 19-22)

(c) **Right against exploitation** (Articles 23-24)

(d) **Right to freedom of religion** (Articles 25-28)

(e) **Cultural and educational rights** (Articles 29-30)

(f) **Right to constitutional remedies** (Article 32)

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**Legislation for Human Rights in India**

The International Human Rights Laws lays down the obligations of Governments to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts, in order to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups.

Pertaining to the same, India passed the Protection of the Human Rights Act in 1993.

**Features of the Protection of the Human Rights Act, 1993**

- It provides for a National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), State Human Rights Commissions (SHRC), as well as **Human Rights Courts**.
- Under the Act, the chairperson of the NHRC is a person who has been a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.
- The Act provides for **two persons having knowledge of human rights** to be appointed as members of the NHRC. Under the Act, chairpersons of various commissions such as the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, and National Commission for Women are members of the NHRC.
Under the Act, the chairperson of an SHRC is a person who has been a Chief Justice of a High Court.

The Act states that the chairperson and members of the NHRC and SHRC will hold office for five years or till the age of seventy years, whichever is earlier.

The Act provides for a Secretary-General of the NHRC and a Secretary of an SHRC, who exercise powers as may be delegated to them.

Recently, a bill was moved to amend the 1993 Act and it was approved by the Union Cabinet in August 2018. The Protection of Human Rights (Amendments) Bill, 2018 was aimed to provide better protection and promotion of human rights in the country.

**Salient Features of the Amendment bill, 2018:**

1. It proposes to include “National Commission for Protection of Child Rights” as deemed Member of the Commission;
2. It proposes to add a woman Member in the composition of the Commission;
3. It proposes to enlarge the scope of eligibility and scope of selection of Chairperson, National Human Rights Commission as well as the State Human Rights Commission; and
4. It proposes to incorporate a mechanism to look after the cases of human rights violation in the Union Territories.
5. It proposes to amend the term of office of Chairperson and Members of the National Human Rights Commission and State Human Rights Commission to make it in consonance with the terms of Chairperson and Members of other Commissions.

The Amendment will strengthen the Human Rights Institutions of India further for effective discharge of their mandates, roles, and responsibilities. Moreover, the amended Act will be in perfect sync with the agreed global standards and benchmarks towards ensuring the rights relating to life, liberty, equality, and dignity of the individual in the country.

**Issue:**

The Supreme Court sought a response from the Centre, the States and the Union Territories on the prolonged delay for over quarter of a decade to establish exclusive human rights courts in each district and appointing special public prosecutors in them. Though the Human Rights Act provide for the establishment of special courts to try cases related to human rights violations, it has been observed that still there is a lack of such courts. According to the Section 30 of the Act, the State government in concurrence
Conclusion

With an increasing number of cases of lack of tolerance amongst the humans, the proper implementation of the laws become highly important. India has always been quick enough to voice its opinion for humanity and human rights but there has been an increase in the incidences of human rights violation. Thus, there is a need that the special courts must be set up and also, it is ensured that the trials carried out in those courts are affordable, effective and speedy in nature.

Source: The Hindu

Sucking up surplus

GS-III Paper: Sucking up Surplus

SEBI needs financial autonomy to remain effective as the chief markets regulator.

Context

The Centre’s decision to clip the wings of the Securities and Exchange Board of India has not gone down too well with its members. Yet, the Centre is refusing to budge. In a letter dated July 10, SEBI Chairman Ajay Tyagi said the Centre’s decision to suck out SEBI’s surplus funds will affect its autonomy.

Background

- As part of the Finance Bill introduced in Parliament, the Centre had proposed amendments to the Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992 that were seen as affecting SEBI’s financial autonomy.
- To be specific, the amendments required that after 25% of its surplus cash in any year is transferred to its reserve fund, SEBI will have to transfer the remaining 75% to the government.
On Friday, the government rejected the plea from SEBI's officials asking the government to reconsider its decision, thus paving the way for further conflict. *Prima facie*, there seems to be very little rationale in the government's decision to confiscate funds from the chief markets regulator.

**Impacts**

- For one, it is highly unlikely that the quantum of funds that the government is likely to receive from SEBI will make much of a difference to the government's overall fiscal situation.
- So the amendment to the SEBI Act seems to be clearly motivated by the desire to increase control over the regulator rather than by financial considerations.
- This is particularly so given that the recent amendments require SEBI to seek approval from the government to go ahead with its capital expenditure plans.
- A regulatory agency that is at the government's mercy to run its financial and administrative operations cannot be expected to be independent.
- Further, the lack of financial autonomy can affect SEBI's plans to improve the quality of its operations by investing in new technologies and other requirements to upgrade market infrastructure.

**Long term Impacts**

- This can affect the health of India's financial markets in the long run. In the larger picture, this is not the first time that the government at the Centre has gone after independent agencies.
- The Reserve Bank of India and the National Sample Survey Office have come under pressure in recent months, and the latest move on SEBI adds to this worrisome trend of independent agencies being subordinated by the government.
- The Centre perhaps believes it can do a better job of regulating the economy by consolidating all existing powers under the Finance Ministry.
- But such centralisation of powers will be risky.

**Conclusion**

Regulatory agencies such as SEBI need to be given full powers over their assets and be made accountable to Parliament. Stripping them of their powers by subsuming them under the wings of the government will affect their credibility.

Source: The Hindu

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Kashmir Mediation
GS-II Paper: Kashmir Mediation

Context

Facing a furore in Parliament over the issue, the government has clarified in no uncertain terms that Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not request U.S. President Donald Trump to “mediate or arbitrate” on the Kashmir issue.

Response by government

- Addressing Parliament, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said India remains committed to its policy of discussing all outstanding issues with Pakistan only bilaterally, and assured the House that Mr. Modi did not raise this with Mr. Trump at their recent meeting in Osaka during the G-20 summit.
- In making the claim that has been roundly denied by New Delhi, Mr. Trump breached several well-laid diplomatic protocols, including one against discussing privileged conversations with a leader, during a public conversation with another.

New Realities

- For New Delhi, it may be time to recognise that Mr. Trump’s comments are a sign of new realities in international diplomacy, where leaders care less about niceties and more about open communication.
- Mr. Modi will have to prepare accordingly for some plain-speaking when he visits the U.S. and meets with Mr. Trump, as he is expected to, in September this year.
- In the short term, the government’s decision to address the claim by Mr. Trump will have nipped any repercussions in the bud.

Way Forward

The government should pursue the issue through diplomatic channels with the U.S. government, and determine whether Mr. Trump made the comments out of confusion or deliberately.

Source: The Hindu
How India intends to make its dams safer

The Dam Safety Bill was recently introduced in the Lok Sabha.

Dam Safety Bill, 2019

- The Bill provides for surveillance, inspection, operation and maintenance of dams to prevent disasters, and institutional mechanisms to ensure safety.
- It applies to over 5,000 dams across the country, many of which are currently in poor conditions.
- It has been met with significant opposition, particularly from several states that claim the bill oversteps the Centre’s mandate.

Which dams are covered?

- All dams in India with a height above 15 metres come under the purview of the bill.
- Dams between 10 to 15 metres of height are also covered but only if they meet certain other specifications in terms of design and structural conditions.

National Dam Safety Authority

- The bill provides for the formation of a NDSA which will be responsible for implementing the policies of the NCDS, and will resolve issues between State Dam Safety Organisations (or SDSOs) and dam owners.
- The NDSA will also specify regulations for the inspection of dams and will provide accreditation to the various agencies working on the structure of dams and their alteration.

State Dam Safety Organisations (SDSOs)

- The bill will also result in the establishment of SDSOs, and State Committees on Dam Safety (SCDSs).
- The jurisdiction of the SDSOs will extend to all dams in that specific state.

How does Bill change the functioning of dams?

- If the bill is made into a law, then dam owners will have to provide a dam safety unit in each dam.
- The dam safety unit will be required to inspect the dam before and after the monsoon session, and also during and after natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods.
- The bill requires dam owners to prepare emergency action plans. Risk-assessment studies will also have to be undertaken by owners.

Issues with bill
**Successful Launch of Chandrayan 2.**

GS-III | 22 July, 2019

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**Context**

- The 640-tonne GSLV Mk-III rocket successfully injected the 3,850-kg Chandrayaan-2 composite module into the Earth’s orbit.
- With the successful launch all eyes are now on September 7 when the lander and rover modules of the spacecraft will make a soft landing on the surface of the moon.

**Chandrayaan-2: India’s first lander mission**

- Chandrayaan-2 consists of an **Orbiter, Lander and Rover**, all equipped with scientific instruments to study the moon.
- The Orbiter would once again watch the moon from a **100-km orbit**, while the Lander and Rover modules will separate and make a soft-landing on moon’s surface.
- ISRO has named the Lander module as **Vikram**, after Vikram Sarabhai, the pioneer of India’s space programme, and the Rover module as **Pragyaan**, meaning wisdom.
- Once on the moon, the rover, a six-wheeled solar-powered vehicle, will detach itself from the lander, and would slowly crawl on the surface, making observations and collecting data.

**Tasks to be accomplished**

- The mission will be equipped with two instruments, and its primary objective would be to study the composition of the moon’s surface near the landing site, and determine its...
abundance of different elements.

- One of the instruments will also look out for seismic activity on lunar surface.
- While the lander and rover are designed to work for only 14 days (1 lunar day), the Orbiter, a 2379-kg spacecraft with seven instruments on board, would remain in orbit for a year.
- It is equipped with different kinds of cameras to take high-resolution 3D maps of the surface.
- It also has instruments to study the mineral composition on the moon and the lunar atmosphere, and also to assess the abundance of water.

Chandrayaan-2 to enter uncharted territory

- With Chandrayaan-2, India will become only the fourth country in the world to land a spacecraft on the moon.
- So far, all landings human as well as non-human, on the moon have been in areas close to its equator.
- That was mainly because this area receives more sunlight that is required by the solar-powered instruments to function.
- Earlier this year, in January, China landed a lander and rover on the far side of the moon, the side that is not facing the earth. This was the first time that any landing had taken place on that side.

What differentiates Chandrayaan 2 with others?

- Chandrayaan-2 will make a landing at a site where no earlier mission has gone, near the South pole of the moon.
- It is a completely unexplored territory and therefore offers great scientific opportunity for the mission to see and discover something new.
- Incidentally, the crash-landing of the MIP from the Chandrayaan-1 mission had also happened in the same region.
- The south pole of the moon holds the possibility of the presence of water, and this is one aspect that would be probed meticulously by Chandrayaan-2.
- In addition, this area is also supposed to have ancient rocks and craters that can offer indications of history of moon, and also contain clues to the fossil records of early solar system.

Source: Indian Express
Introduction

Recently, the U.S. and North Korea met for the third time in a year but this meeting was different than their last meet in Hanoi. This time, Donald Trump, as a part of his personal diplomacy, visited the demilitarised zone or the DMZ. This is the zone that separates North Korea from South Korea. This made him the first American President to visit North Korea.

PT Pointer

Demilitarised Zone

This zone was created when the Korean War concluded on 27 July 1953. It was drawn near the 38th Parallel. The demilitarised line gave South Korea an extra 1,500 square miles of territory and created a 2-mile wide ‘DMZ’.

History of the U.S. and North Korea's Bilateral Relations

The Korean war which is known to be the first military action of the Cold War also forms the basis of the present ties between the U.S. and North Korea. During the Korean war, the U.S. supported South Korea by providing troops.

After the Korean War, the North Koreans became fearful of any future aggression by the U.S. and to present their deterrence to the world and the U.S., North Korea thought of developing a nuclear bomb and with the help of the Soviet Union, they established their first nuclear power plant at Yongbyon.

Though, it did construct a nuclear power plant but it insisted on its aim of remaining a peaceful country. It even showed its commitment by becoming a party to the Non-proliferation Treaty in 1985 and signing a bilateral agreement with South Korea in 1991. But International Atomic Energy Agency's insistence on accessing their nuclear waste sites irked North Korea and they threatened to withdraw from the Non-proliferation treaty.

Changing Ties

The Hanoi summit collapsed chiefly as the U.S. considered the compromise that North Korea offered insufficient to warrant reciprocation with sanctions relief.

Challenges

The relation between the U.S. and North Korea saw a flip after the assumption of power by Donal Trump. In 2018, Donald Trump became the first sitting President to meet Kim Jong Un in Singapore. The second meeting was in Hanoi and recently they met for the third time. The change in stance towards N. Korea was due to the accelerated tensions between the two countries in 2017. Though the North Korean leader has decided to denuclearise the peninsula, the course of action still remains unclear.

North Korea did agree to close its main nuclear facility at Yongbyon but the U.S. rejected the offer.

Conclusion
They can take small steps towards the final goal. The U.S. could demand a total freeze on North Korea’s nuclear activities, besides shutting down Yongbyon in return for providing partial reprieve from sanctions. Constructive and reciprocal confidence-building measures would mean that Mr. Trump’s personal diplomatic outreach and the momentum it created won’t be in vain.

Source: The Hindu

The new Minimum Wage Code Bill, 2017
GS Paper II | 23 July, 2019

Topic: The new Minimum Wage Code Bill

GS Paper II: Social Justice

Minimum Wages and the Indian Constitution

As per Article 43 of the Directives Principles of State Policies, the State shall endeavour to secure, by suitable legislation or economic organisation or in any other way, to all workers, agricultural, industrial or otherwise, work, a living wage, conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities.

Mains Mania

National Minimum Wage, Living Wage and Fair Wage

Minimum wage can be defined as the wage that is set by the government so as to ensure parity in income across the country and guarantee basic remuneration for the workers, especially in the informal sector.

On the other hand, the living wage is an informal benchmark that is based on the amount that is required by an individual to earn to cover the basic costs of living. It includes the cost of to ensure basic standard of living including good health, dignity, comfort and education.
Fair wage is the wage that maintains a certain level of employment while also considering the industry's capacity to pay. This is defined in the Indian Constitution.

Also, the Supreme Court has reiterated in cases such as the Sanjit Roy v/s State of Rajasthan case that any wage below the prescribed one can amount to a breach of Article 23 and can be considered as forced labour.

**PT Pointer**

Labour law in India is a concurrent subject.

For certain categories of employment, the central government is responsible to fix the minimum wage but for other categories, it is the state governments that fix it.

**Timeline of Minimum Wage Legislations in India**

In independent India, the first legislation to regulate the minimum wages was the Minimum Wage Act, 1948. The act fixed the minimum wage for certain 'scheduled employment' categories. The set wages were applicable to both skilled and unskilled workers from across the country. Under this act, the minimum age was defined to be the wage that must guarantee bare livelihood but the minimum wage was applicable only over the industries that employ more than 1,000 employees.

Other laws that have guided the minimum wages legislation in India are the Payment of Wages Act, 1936, Payment of Bonus Act, 1965 and Equal Remuneration Act 1976.

**About the Recent Minimum Wage Code Bill**

The recent code on wages bill was introduced in 2017 which aims at bringing one code in place of the four existing codes (mentioned above) that guide the minimum wages. The government had earlier brought the Code on Wages Bill, 2017 in the Lok Sabha on August 10, 2017, but it had lapsed when the 16th Lok Sabha was dissolved earlier this year.

The bill seeks to define the minimum wages that will be applicable to workers of organised and unorganised sectors, except government employees and MNREGA workers. The Bill also proposes to levy penalty ranging from Rs 10,000 to Rs 1 lakh and repeat offences would invite imprisonment along with providing for compounding of those
Features of the bill:

- The Code replaces four existing laws: (i) the Payment of Wages Act, 1936, (ii) the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, (iii) the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965, and (iv) the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.
- The code provides for a national minimum wage which can vary for different states or regions of the country.
- Central government to set minimum wages for certain employments including railways, and mines and the state government to set them for other categories.
- State governments cannot set the wage lower than the national minimum wage.
- Further, the central government may set separate national minimum wages for different states or regions of the country, thus setting up the standard based on geographical regions.
- Minimum wages to be revised by the government at an interval of five years.
- The overtime rate will be at least twice the normal rate of wages of the employee.

Benefits of fixing a National Minimum Wage:

- Increases the quality of life of the low-paid workers
- Improve labour productivity
- Brings dignity to the life of workers
- An increased incentive for people to enter the labour market and accept a job
- Discourages migration

Associated Issues:

- Can cause unemployment in the competitive markets
- Many firms cannot afford the wages
- Can lead to higher prices as firms give more wages, thus leading to inflation
- Regional imbalances in wages can reduce the effectiveness of the Code

Conclusion

Though the passage of the new wage code is a welcoming move but some issues still remain unanswered. The code is silent on the rationale to be followed to fix the national minimum wage. Also, unambiguity arises on the role of the central government in setting
up different national minimum wages. The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, prohibited employers from discriminating in wage payments as well as recruitment of employees based on gender but the Code prohibits gender discrimination only on wage-related matters and not on recruitment.

Thus, this bill seeks to consider the social diversity of our country. Most of all, the extension of minimum wage to all workers will benefit the workers involved in the informal sector, thus improving their quality of life and providing them with dignified life. This code can empower a great chunk of the working population of India.

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express

CAG and its functions
GS Paper II | 23 July, 2019

Topic: CAG and its Functions

GS Paper II: Indian Polity and Constitutions

Comptroller and Auditor General of India

The Constitution of India (Article 148) provides for an independent office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG).

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India, the head of the Indian Audit and Accounts Department and is given various responsibilities that include:

- Being the guardian of the public purse and to control the entire financial system of the country at both the levels—the Centre and the state.
- To uphold the Constitution of India and the laws of Parliament in the field of...
financial administration.

He submits his audit reports relating to the accounts of the Centre to the President and the report concerning the account of a state to its Governor under Article 151.

**Mr. Rajiv Mehrishi** assumed the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on 25 September 2017.

Dr. B R Ambedkar called the CAG to be the most important Officer under the Constitution of India

CAG is one of the bulwarks of the Indian Constitution along with the Supreme Court, the Election Commission and the Union Public service Commission.

**Term:** The CAG holds office for a period of six years or up to the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.

**Resignation:** The CAG can resign from his office by addressing the resignation letter to the President.

**Removal:** He can be removed by the President on the same grounds and in the same manner as a judge of the Supreme Court.

CAG is an important organ of the government of India and being the head of fiscal administration in the country, it becomes essential to safeguard and ensure the independence of CAG. It is ensured by the following provisions:

- *Security of tenure:* He can be removed by the President only in accordance with the procedure mentioned in the Constitution.
- *Ineligibility for further office:* For both Central and State government.
- *Determination of salary and other service conditions by the Parliament:* Salary is confirmed.

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**Removal of a judge of a Supreme Court**

A judge of a Supreme Court can be removed by the President on the basis of a resolution passed to that effect by both the Houses of Parliament with a special majority, either on the ground of proved misbehaviour or incapacity.
equal to that of a judge of the Supreme Court.

- No alteration in salary or rights in respect of leave of absence, pension or age of retirement after his appointment.
- Determination of the conditions of service of persons serving in the Indian Audit and Accounts Department and the administrative powers of the CAG is done by the President after consultation with the CAG.
- Administrative expenditure of the office of CAG is charged upon the Consolidated Fund of India.
- No minister can represent the CAG in Parliament (both Houses) and no minister can be called upon to take any responsibility for any actions done by him.

### Functions of the CAG

The Constitution (Article 149) authorises the Parliament to prescribe the duties and powers of the CAG in relation to the accounts of the Union and of the states and of any other authority or body. Accordingly, the Parliament enacted the CAG’s (Duties, Powers and Conditions of Service) Act, 1971 which was amended in 1976 to separate accounts from audit in the Central government.

### Reports Submitted by CAG:

The CAG submits three audit reports to the President

1. Audit report on Appropriation Accounts
2. Audit report on Financial Accounts
3. Audit report on Public Undertakings.

The President lays these reports before both the Houses of Parliament after which the Public Accounts Committee examines them and reports its findings to the Parliament.

### Importance of CAG

- The role of CAG is to uphold the Constitution of India and the laws of Parliament in the field of financial administration. The accountability of the executive (i.e., the council of ministers) to the Parliament in the sphere of financial administration is
secured through audit reports of the CAG.

- Thus, CAG acts as an agent of the Parliament and conducts an audit of expenditure on behalf of the Parliament. **He is responsible only to Parliament.**
- The CAG has more freedom with regard to the audit of expenditure than with regard to the audit of receipts, stores, and stock.
- The CAG has make sure that the money disbursed was made legally available to the recipient service.
- The CAG can make a discretionary propriety audit and look into the ‘wisdom, faithfulness and economy’ of government expenditure and comment on the wastefulness and extravagance of such expenditure.

Exception: The secret service expenditure is a limitation on the auditing role of the CAG as it cannot call for particulars of expenditure incurred by the executive agencies, but has to accept a certificate from the the competent administrative authority that the expenditure has been so incurred under his authority.

**Role of CAG in Auditing Public Corporations**
Depending on the extent to which it can regulate the auditing of public corporations, the public corporations can be divided into three categories:

(i) Total and direct audit by CAG

Examples: Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC), Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC), Air India, Indian Airlines Corporation, and others.

(ii) Audit by private professional auditors in consultation with the CAG and at times, supplementary audit by the CAG can conduct a supplementary audit

Examples: Central Warehousing Corporation, Industrial Finance Corporation, and others.

(iii) Audit by private auditors only. They submit their annual reports and accounts directly to the Parliament.

Examples: Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), Reserve Bank of India (RBI), State Bank of India (SBI), Food Corporation of India (FCI), and others.

In 1968, an **Audit Board**, consisting of a chairman and two members appointed by CAG, was established as a part of the office of CAG to associate outside specialists and experts to handle the technical aspects of audit of specialised enterprises like engineering,
Need of Multimodal Transport for India
GS Paper III | 23 July, 2019

Topic: Need for Multi-modal Transport in India

What is Multi-modal Transport?

Multi-modal transport refers to the cargo from its place to origin to its destination by several modes of transport where each of these modes has a different transport provider or entity responsible, but under a single contract. It integrates different geographical scales from the global to the local.

Features of Multi-modal Transport:

1. It refers to the carriage of goods by two or more modes of transport, under one contract.
2. One document and one party (a multi-transport operator) is responsible for the entire carriage.
3. The MTO may sub-contract the same. The term "combined transport" or "intermodal transport" is also used at times for the same.

Advantages of Multi-modal Transport:

1. Minimizes time loss at trans-shipment points: Multimodal transport operator maintains its communication links and coordinates that interchange onward carriage.
smoothly at transshipment points.
2. **Provides faster transit of goods**: The faster transportation of goods is made possible under Multimodal transport reduces the disadvantages of distance from markets and the tying-up of capital.
3. **Reduces the burden of documentation and formalities**: The burden of issuing multiple documentation and other formalities connected with each segment of the transport chain is reduced to a minimum.
4. **Saves cost**: The savings in money from costs resulting from these advantages are usually reflected in the through freight rates charged by the Multimodal transport operator and also in cargo insurance cost.
5. **Establishes only one agency to deal with**: The consignor needs to deal with only the Multimodal transport operator in all matters relating to goods, or delay in delivery of goods at the destination.
6. **Reduces the cost of exports**: The inherent advantages of Multimodal transport system will help to reduce the cost of exports and improve their competitive position with pricing in the international market segment.

**Source**: world bank report

**Development of multi-modal transport in India**

In a large and diverse country like India where an end to end delivery is a humongous task, multimodal transport is an effective solution.

The first Multimodal Transport Act of India was passed in 1993. It was aimed to establish a standardized regime for the multimodal transport operators (MTOs). The Director General of Shipping was identified as the competent authority under this law. This Act paved the way for MTOs to register themselves with the authority and start their operations. This provided a boost to the inland movement of traffic under a single authority. Till the early 2000s, CONCOR had a monopoly in the multimodal transport. It was only after that that the licenses were given to private companies to operate their own freight trains. Further, to encourage trade by MSMEs, Railways also started the “road-railer” system where contained vehicles can run both on roads and rail tracks. Another example of the multimodal transport is the one that is seen in Guwahati through trucks, from where air cargo is being used to transport fresh produce to the Middle East and other countries. Cargo is also being transported through Kandla port in the west via western DFC, aggregated in Palwal and then distributed via road to U.P, Punjab, and Haryana. But still, India has not seen drastic development of multi-modal transport and there are various
The major issues that have hindered the development of the multi-modal system are:

1- Issue of land acquisition for the development of logistic infrastructure and for their linkages
2- Environment and forest clearances
3 - Clearances from Railways
4- Regulatory problems
5- Poor performance of some contractors

The Current Trend

With the increasing GDP growth rate and an aim to improve India's economic growth, it has become imperative to place more emphasis on the development of logistics infrastructure. The high cost of logistics is one of the major reasons of inflation on the country, thus there is a need to reduce the cost of logistics and one of the ways of reducing it is through the development of multimodal transport system. Supporting the same view, the Government of India came up with the proposal to develop a multi-modal logistics park in 2017. Multi-modal logistics park cannot only reduce logistics cost but will also act as a logistics hub that can address the issue of the unfavorable modal mix, inefficient fleet mix and an underdeveloped material handling the infrastructure. It helps to make a transition from a trend of point-to-point freight movement to a hub and spoke model freight movement.

As a part of the development of multi-modal logistics, Varanasi is developed as a multi-modal terminal that can deal with estimated traffic of 3.35 MMT volume. The Varanasi terminal marked the first-ever post-independence movement of container cargo from Kolkata to Varanasi on the river.

India is also developing an international multi-modal project with Myanmar, also known as the Kaladan Multi-modal Project that will connect the Indian seaport of Kolkata with the Sittwe seaport of Rakhine, Myanmar.
Conclusion

India aims to achieve an investment of USD 500 billion target by 2025. One of the major targeted sectors will be multi-modal logistics. There has been a growth in the development of the multi-modal logistics sector and for this growth to continue, more private investment in logistics infrastructure needs to be encouraged along with easier regulations which can ease the sentiment of some foreign companies. There should be a continued focus on the growth of road network to improve last-mile connectivity. There is also a need to focus on the development of more multi-modal logistics parks to improve storage facilities, to reduce transport costs and to enhance the efficiency of the entire logistics network of the country. Large scale projects such as the development of large container terminals should be integrated with hinterland connectivity projects and emphasis should be placed on the last-mile connectivity network. Privatization of container operation by Indian Railways should be continued. Also, there is a need to promote privatization and foreign investment in the development of logistic infrastructure. Granting of infrastructure status to the logistics sector was a positive step but there is need to push for the development and integration of the various means of logistics to further boost economic growth in India and logistics cost. It will also improve India's global trade presence.

Source: The Hindu
Introduction

Israel is a country in the Middle East. It is located in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea.

Israel is a small country with relatively diverse topography, consisting of a lengthy coastal plain, highlands in the north and central regions, and the Negev desert in the south. Running the length of the country from north to south along its eastern border is the northern terminus of the Great Rift Valley.

The State of Israel is the only Jewish nation in the modern period, and the region that now falls within its borders is known for a rich history that dates back to the pre-biblical times. The area was then a part of the Roman Empire and, later, the Byzantine Empire before falling under the control of the fledgeling Islamic caliphate in the 7th century CE. Although the object of a dispute during the Crusades, the region, then generally known as Palestine, remained under the sway of successive Islamic dynasties until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I when it was placed under British mandate from the League of Nations.

India-Israel Relations

The relations between India and Israel can majorly be characterised into economic ties, defence ties and people-to-people ties. While India and Israel have had shared cultural traits, they established diplomatic ties only after four decades. Both nations boast a democratic system in a neighbourhood where democracy is frail or non-existent. Geographically, the main difference between the two countries is the size of the land and population: the population of India is far more than the population of Israel. Also, Israel’s size is approximately 22,072 sq. km in comparison to India’s 3,287,263 sq. km. But the two countries share the same demography in the context that they both have a vast Muslim minority that makes up 15–20 per cent of the total population.
India is Israel's 10th largest trading partner. After the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1992, civilian bilateral trade has grown to about $5 billion per year. Other areas of co-operation between the two countries include tourism as India is one of the favourite destinations for the people from Israel. The two countries also co-operate in the field of high-end technologies such as space technology and agriculture. The two countries are also known for their defence co-operation. Israel has been supplying India with various weapons systems, missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles over the last few years, making India one of Israel’s largest buyers of military hardware.

### PT Pointer

**Blue Flag Exercise**

Biannual exercise designed to strengthen Israel’s military cooperation internationally. India for the first time participated in the exercise in 2017.

### Conclusion

There have been changes in the relations between India and Israel since Narendra Modi took charge as the Prime Minister of India. He became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Israel in July 2017. To make his stance clear, he only visited Israel and not Palestine. Another important development from the Israeli point of view was that, under Modi, India abstained from voting against Israel in the United Nations in several resolutions. It was followed by a visit by Mr. Netanyahu in January 2018 to mark 25 years since the establishment of full diplomatic relations. Thus, now the relation between the leaders of both countries is now guiding the relationship between the two countries. It can also be seen in the recent decision of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to visit India before the general elections in their country.

Though this move seems to bear an influence on the vote bank for the Israeli Prime Minister, it also underlines the importance of India and its relations with India amongst the people of Israel.
The CRUX:

- India won the unanimous support of all countries in the 55-member Asia-Pacific Group at the United Nations in support of its bid for a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council for a two-year term in 2021-22.
- Even Pakistan and China supported the move.
- The 55-member Asia-Pacific Group gets to nominate one of its members for the June 2020 elections to a non-permanent seat on the UNSC.
- Now, India will need the vote of two-thirds of the 193 UN General Assembly members to win a non-permanent seat on the UNSC.
- It announced its candidacy in 2013 against possible contender Afghanistan who withdrew its nomination based on the "long-standing, close and friendly relations" between the two countries.
- India has been keen to hold the seat in 2021-22 to coincide with the 75th anniversary of Independence in 2022.
- India will also be hosting G-20 meeting in 2022.

Source: The Hindu

Impact of Global Warming on Employment in India

Topic: Impact of Global Warming on Employment in India

Introduction

India's population in 2019 is estimated to be around 1.37 billion based in the most authentic recent U.N. data, making India the second most populous country in the world. As per census 2011, 62.5% of the total population of the country fell under the age group of 15-59 and this percentage is set to increase with time. Due to such a high population in the working age group, it becomes imperative for India to look for better employment opportunities for the sustainable economic growth of the country and to reap its demographic dividend.

Global Warming and Employment Loss
Global warming is a geophysical phenomenon resulting from natural as well as man-made causes. The planet is growing warmer because of this climate change and it is impacting almost every special of our socio-economic lives. One of its many impacts can be a loss of employment. This was highlighted in a recent report 'Working on a warmer planet: The impact of heat stress on labour productivity and decent work' published by the International Labour Organisation.

According to the report, the world is set to lose global productivity equivalent to 80 million full-time jobs by 2030 and the worst effect would be seen in India with a loss of 34 million jobs. This is attributed to heat stress.

Heat stress can be defined as the heat beyond the level that the body can tolerate without suffering physiological impairment. It generally occurs at temperatures above 35°C, in high humidity. Excess heat during work is an occupational health risk and restricts workers’ physical functions and capabilities, work capacity and thus, productivity.

According to the report, the global temperature will rise by 1.5°C by the end of the century. This rise in temperature will lead to a loss of 2.2 percent of total working hours worldwide, which will be equivalent to 80 million full-time jobs or US$ 2,400 billion.

Source: ILO Report

The Indian Case

India experiences a monsoonal climate, its geographical location in the tropical and subtropical latitudes place it in a more vulnerable position to global warming. Since 1995, India has already lost 4.3% of working hours to heat stress and it is expected to lose 5.8% of its working hours by 2030. The maximum impact of the changes will be borne by the agricultural sector and the construction sector because of the outdoor nature and labour-intensiveness of these sectors.
Other impacts of heat stress include:

- Deteriorating working conditions
- More migration
- Job loss
- Food insecurity
- Issues related to health

**Conclusion**

The blanket of global warming is gradually engulfing the whole world and its impact can be seen in the socio-economic and political equations across the world. As highlighted by the recent report of the International Labour Organisation, heat stress which is a manifestation of global warming is expected to cause loss of productivity amounting to millions of jobs. This economic loss will also be substantiated by changing trends of employment and migration. Thus, there is a need to read this as a warning sign and re-affirm our actions towards reducing the impact of climate change.

Without losing much time, countries must understand the need to improve their individual and collective actions towards mitigating the impacts of global warming. Countries must fulfill their Internationally Determined National Contribution goals in time. They should make their efforts and the developed countries like the U.S. need to understand that nature has its own way of making things happen. All the countries must understand their role in preserving the environment so as to make it a better place for humans to live in. It will not only benefit us socially but also economically.

Source: The Hindu

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**National Diary Plan**

GS-III Paper | 24 July, 2019

GS-III Paper: National Diary Plan

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

Features of the Scheme:

- National Dairy Plan Phase I (NDP I) is a Central Sector Scheme.
- **NDP I will focus on 18 major milk producing states** namely Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh which together **account for over 90% of the country’s milk production**.

Objectives:

1. To help increase productivity of milch animals and thereby increase milk production to meet the rapidly growing demand for milk.
2. To help provide rural milk producers with greater access to the organised milk-processing sector.

Components:

There are three main components of NDP Phase-1. Productivity, Enhancement, Village based milk procurement systems and Procurement systems and Project Management Learning. Under the Productivity Enhancement component, the NDDB provides 100% grant-in-aid for nutrition and breeding activities. It provides financial as well as technical assistance for production of high genetic merit cattle.

Framework:

It has three components;

1. Productivity Enhancement
2. Village based milk procurement
3. Project management and Learning.
International Court Of Justice
GS-II | 24 July, 2019

GS-II Paper: International Court Of Justice

Context

International Court of Justice (ICJ) has directed Pakistan to review conviction order of Kulbhushan Jadhav and, until then, put his death sentence on hold. ICJ has also asked Pakistan to allow India consular access at earliest.

Observation made by ICJ:

Islamabad has violated Article 36 of Vienna Convention of Consular Relations, 1963, by not informing India about Jadhav’s arrest immediately after Pakistan Army had taken him into custody. India had been deprived of ‘right to communicate with and have access to Jadhav, to visit him in detention and to arrange for his legal representation’.

About ICJ

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial body of the UN. Established in 1946 to replace the Permanent Court of International Justice, the ICJ mainly operates under the statute of its predecessor, which is included in the UN Charter. It has two primary functions: to settle legal disputes submitted by States in accordance with established international laws, and to act as an advisory board on issues submitted to it by authorized international organizations.

Who nominates the candidates?

Every state government, party to the Charter, designates a group who propose candidates for the office of ICJ judges. This group includes four members/jurists of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (machinery which enables arbitral tribunals to be set up as desired and facilitates their work) also picked by the State. Countries not part of the statute follow the same procedure where a group nominates the candidates.

Each group is limited to nominate four candidates, two of whom could be of their nationality. Within a fixed duration set by the Secretary-General, the names of the candidates have to be sent to him/her.

What are the qualifications of ICJ judges?

- A judge should have a high moral character.
A judge should fit to the qualifications of appointment of highest judicial officers as prescribed by their respective states or.
A judge should be a juriconsult of recognized competence in international law.

The 15 judges of the Court are distributed as per the regions:

- Three from Africa.
- Two from Latin America and Caribbean.
- Three from Asia.
- Five from Western Europe and other states.
- Two from Eastern Europe.

Source: The Hindu

The complexities of Naga identity

GS-II Paper: The complexities of Naga identity

Context
The Nagaland government’s move to compile a Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN) opens up possibilities in the context of the decision to link the register to the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system without a consensus on the definition of an ‘indigenous inhabitant’.

Opposition from NSCN (I-M)

- The National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah), which has been engaged in peace talks with the government of India since 1997, has opposed the compilation of RIIN asserting that “all Nagas, wherever they are, are indigenous in their land by virtue of their common history”.
- The Nagaland government notified that RIIN “will be the master-list of all indigenous inhabitants” of the State.
- All those to be included will be issued “barcoded and numbered indigenous inhabitant certificates”.
- It added that all existing indigenous inhabitant certificates would become invalid once the process of compiling RIIN is completed and fresh certificates issued.
- RIIN is different from Assam’s National Register of Citizens (NRC) as exclusion or inclusion in RIIN is not going to determine the Indian citizenship of anyone in Nagaland.

- Three conditions
Since 1977, a person, in order to be eligible to obtain a certificate of indigenous inhabitants of Nagaland, has to fulfil either of these three conditions:

a) The person settled permanently in Nagaland prior to December 1, 1963.

b) His or her parents or legitimate guardians were paying house tax prior to this cut-off date.

c) The applicant, or his/her parents or legitimate guardians, acquired property and a patta (land certificate) prior to this cut-off date.

The compilation of RIIN also involves the complexities of deciding claims in respect of children of non-Naga fathers as well as non-Naga children adopted by Naga parents.

**Challenges**

1. **Cut-off date** – While the move to streamline the ILP system to curb the influx of “illegal migration” to Nagaland has been welcomed by civil society, public opinion is still divided on compiling RIIN without a consensus on the cut-off date.

2. **De-link the work of streamlining the ILP mechanism** – As the Nagaland government has begun a consultation process on RIIN, it will be under pressure to de-link the work of streamlining the ILP mechanism from the proposed register and put it on hold till the ongoing peace process concludes and the final solution is worked out.

Source: The Hindu
Mankind’s destruction of nature is driving species to the brink of extinction at an “unprecedented” rate, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) warned.

It added more than 7,000 animals, fish and plants to its endangered “Red List”.

Highlights

- Freshwater fish species globally are under grave threat according to the latest edition of the IUCN’s Red List.
- In fact, over half of Japan’s endemic freshwater fishes and more than a third of freshwater fishes in Mexico were threatened with extinction, the list of threatened species released on July 18, 2019.
- The main reasons behind this were the usual suspects, namely loss of free-flowing rivers and agricultural and urban pollution.
- It was revealed recently that two-thirds of the world’s great rivers no longer flow. Another noteworthy factor was competition with and predation by invasive alien species of fish.

About IUCN

- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is a membership Union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations.
- It provides public, private and non-governmental organisations with the knowledge and tools that enable human progress, economic development and nature conservation to take place together.
- Created in 1948, IUCN has evolved into the world’s largest and most diverse environmental network.
- It was involved in establishing the World Wide Fund for Nature and the World Conservation Monitoring Centre.

About IUCN ‘Red List’

- The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species founded in 1964, has evolved to become the world’s most comprehensive inventory of the global conservation status of biological species.
- It uses a set of criteria to evaluate the extinction risk of thousands of all species and subspecies.
- A series of Regional Red Lists are produced by countries or organizations, which assess the risk of extinction to species within a political management unit.
- The IUCN aims to have the category of every species re-evaluated every five years.
Red list categories of IUCN

Species are classified by the IUCN Red List into nine groups specified through criteria such as rate of decline, population size, area of geographic distribution, and degree of population and distribution fragmentation. They are:

- **Extinct (EX)** – beyond reasonable doubt that the species is no longer extant.
- **Extinct in the wild (EW)** – survives only in captivity, cultivation and/or outside native range, as presumed after exhaustive surveys.
- **Critically endangered (CR)** – in a particularly and extremely critical state.

Source: The Hindu

What are India’s challenges as its fertility rate falls?

GS-I Paper: What are India’s challenges as its fertility rate falls?

Higher education, increased mobility, late marriage, financially independent women and overall prosperity are all contributing to a falling Total fertility rate.

- The government’s Sample Registration System in 22 states shows that TFR for India declined to 2.2 in 2017 after being stable at 2.3 between 2013 and 2016.
- The total fertility rate has more than halved in both urban and rural areas.

What does the data say about India’s Total fertility rate?

The government’s Sample Registration System in 22 states shows that TFR for India declined to 2.2 in 2017 after being stable at 2.3 between 2013 and 2016. TFR indicates the average number of children expected to be born to a woman during her reproductive span of 15-49 years. The 2017 figure is just 10 basis points more than the replacement level of 2.1%. The replacement level is the number of children needed to replace the parents, after accounting for fatalities, skewed sex ratio, infant mortality, etc. Population starts falling below this level.

How does TFR vary between urban and rural areas?

The total fertility rate has more than halved in both urban and rural areas, falling even below the replacement level in the former where it is 1.7, down from 4.1 in 1971. In rural areas, TFR has
fallen from 5.4 to 2.4 during the same period. For rural areas, it varies from 1.6 in Delhi and Tamil Nadu to 3.3 in Bihar. For urban areas, the variation is from 1.1 in Himachal Pradesh to 2.4 in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Of the 22 states, only six have a TFR of 2 or more in urban areas. There are 10 states where TFR is below 2 in rural regions.

Why is TFR falling?

Higher education, increased mobility, late marriage, financially independent women and overall prosperity are all contributing to a falling TFR. It goes below 2 in both urban and rural areas, where girls complete schooling and reduces further as they pass college. Bihar, with the highest TFR of 3.2, had the maximum percentage of illiterate women at 26.8%, while Kerala, where the literacy rate among women is 99.3%, had among the lowest fertility rates. As more cities come up, people move for jobs and employment tenure gets shorter.

Source: Live Mint

Faltering steps in the anti-AIDS march

GS-II Paper: Faltering steps in the anti-AIDS march

Context

The joint UN programme on AIDS commonly known as UNAIDS is facing worst challenges afflicting the global AIDS response this time an existential threat questioning its very relevance.

A pivotal role

- Since its establishment in 1994, UNAIDS has been able to successfully mobilise world opinion to mount an exceptional response to an epidemic which has consumed over 20 million lives with still no effective treatment or cure.
- The UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) 2001 was a game changer with the adoption of a political resolution that itself was exceptional in many ways.
- The creation of global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the slashing of prices of AIDS drugs by Indian generics have brought treatment within the reach of many countries.
- Today some 22 million people are under antiretroviral therapy and preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV has become an achievable goal by 2020.

Antiretroviral Therapy...
What does it do?

Antiretroviral therapy is the daily use of a combination of HIV medicines to treat HIV. ART saves lives, but does not cure HIV.

- Reduces the amount of HIV in the body
- Reduces the risk of HIV transmission.
- Prevents HIV from advancing to AIDS.

AIDS – Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome

- The word AIDS stands for Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome. This means deficiency of immune system, acquired during the lifetime of an individual indicating that it is not a congenital disease.

Causes Of AIDS

- AIDS is caused by the Human Immuno Deficiency Virus (HIV), a member of a group of viruses called Retrovirus, which have an envelope enclosing the RNA genome.
- Transmission of HIV-infection generally occurs by
  1. Sexual contact with infected person.
  2. By transfusion of contaminated blood and blood products.
  3. By sharing infected needles as in the case of intravenous drug abusers.
  4. From infected mother to her child through placenta.

Mechanism

Prevention

- A widely used diagnostic test for AIDS is Enzyme Linked Immuno-Sorbent Assay (ELISA).
- Treatment of AIDS with anti-retroviral drugs is only partially effective. They can only prolong the life of the patient but cannot prevent death, which is inevitable.
- In our country the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are doing a lot to educate people about AIDS.
- WHO has started a number of programmes to prevent the spreading of HIV infection.
- Infection with HIV or having AIDS is something that should not be hidden – since then the infection may spread to many more people.
- HIV/AIDS-infected people need help and sympathy instead of being shunned by society.
The centre’s pension scheme for small traders (PMLVMDY) has been notified and being introduced on trial basis from this week. The scheme assures a minimum monthly pension of Rs. 3,000/- month after attaining the age of 60 years.

Who can enroll for this scheme?

All small shopkeepers and self-employed persons as well as the retail traders with GST turnover below Rs. 1.5 crore and age between 18-40 years.

Potential of the Scheme

The scheme would benefit more than 5 crore small shopkeepers and traders.

Simplified process of enrolment based on self-declaration as no documents are required except Aadhaar and bank account. Interested persons can enrol themselves through more than 3.25 lakh Common Service Centres spread across the country.

- Government of India will make matching contribution in the subscribers’ account. LIC has been chosen as pension fund for this scheme.

Do you know?

- Only 7.4% of the working age population in India is covered under a pension program (65% for Germany & 31% for Brazil) according to the 2017 WEF’s report on Global Human Capital.
- Demographically, India will transition slowly from a ‘young’ to a ‘greying’ country, where persons above the age of 60 would increase from 8.9% of the population now to 19.4% by 2050.
- Ramadorai Committee on Household finances – India is sitting on a ticking pension time bomb, whereby demographic dividend can become demographic concern.
India’s first dragon blood-oozing tree

GS-III Paper: India’s first dragon blood-oozing tree

News

Assam has added to India’s botanical wealth a plant that yields dragon’s blood — a bright red resin used since ancient times as medicine, body oil, varnish, incense and dye.

Dracaena Cambodiana

- A group of researchers has discovered *Dracaena cambodiana*, a dragon tree species in the Dongka Sarpo area of West Karbi Anglong, Assam.
- This is for the first time that a dragon tree species has been reported from India.
- In India, the Dracaena genus belonging to the family Asparagaceae is represented by nine species and two varieties in the Himalayan region, the northeast and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- But *Dracaena cambodiana* is the only true dragon tree species.
- The Dracaena seeds are usually dispersed by birds. But due to the large fruit size, only a few species of birds are able to swallow the fruits, thus limiting the scope of its natural conservation.
- Recent overexploitation to meet the increasing demand for dragon’s blood has resulted in rapid depletion of the plant.

Uses

- *Dracaena cambodiana* is an important medicinal plant as well as an ornamental tree.
- It is a major source of dragon’s blood, a precious traditional medicine in China.
- Several antifungal and antibacterial compounds, antioxidants, flavonoids, etc., have been extracted from various parts of the plant.
The CRUX:

- Context: Cabinet cleared the DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill once again, paving the way for its reintroduction in Parliament.
- The bill was passed in Lok Sabha in January 2019 but could not get the approval of Rajya Sabha, thus it lapsed once the tenure of the previous Lok Sabha expired last month.

First time initiated in 2003, it is the 3rd attempt by the government to enact a law to regulate the use of DNA technology.

**Topic: About DNA Technology (Use and Application) Bill, 2019**

**Purpose of the bill:**

- To create a regulatory framework for obtaining, storing and testing of DNA samples of human beings, mainly for the purposes of criminal investigations, and with the objective of establishing the identity of a person.
- To bring in a supervisory structure to oversee these practices, and frame guidelines and rules so that the DNA technology is not misused.

**Features of the Bill:**

**Key Features**

- **Use of DNA Data:** The Bill regulates DNA testing for the identification of persons, in respect of matters listed in the Schedule. This includes offenses under the Indian Penal Code, 1860, as well as offenses under other laws such as the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971, the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, and the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988.

- The Schedule also allows for DNA testing in certain civil matters. This includes matters such as parentage disputes, issues related to pedigree,
immigration or emigration, assisted reproductive technologies, transplantation of human organs, and for the establishment of individual identity.

- The bill also proposes to set up two institutional structures — a DNA regulatory board, and a DNA data bank — at the national level. Regional centers of the board, as well as the data bank, can be set up at the state level as well.

(Function of the board - to be the main regulatory authority which would frame the rules and guidelines for DNA collection, testing, and storage.

Data bank - to act as a repository of all DNA samples collected from various people under specified rules.)

- Testing of DNA samples to be carried out only at laboratories that are authorised to do so by the regulatory board.
- It also specifies the circumstances under which a person can be asked to submit DNA samples, the purposes for which such requests can be made, and the exact procedure for handling, storing and accessing these samples.
- Police can ask for DNA samples of the person accused of an offence to facilitate their investigation.
- Unless the offence is of a very serious nature, punishable by death or by imprisonment for at least seven years, the DNA sample can be obtained only on the written consent of the accused.
- It can be also be obtained if an authorised magistrate is satisfied that a DNA test is absolutely necessary for investigation of the crime.
- People who are witness to a crime, or want to locate their missing relatives, or in similar other circumstances, can volunteer to give their DNA samples, again through written consent.
- The information generated from these tests would have to be mandatorily shared with the nearest DNA data bank, which in turn, would be required to share it with the national data bank.

Reference: PRSIndia, Livemint
Source: The Indian Express
The CRUX:

Health Index 2019 by NITI Aayog

Some States and Union Territories are doing better on health and well-being even with a lower economic output.

In the assessment during 2017-18, a few large States present a dismal picture, reflecting the low priority their governments have accorded to health and human development since the Aayog produced its first ranking for 2015-16.

UP overall Health Index score - 28.61, Kerala has led the index by 74.01.

Tamil Nadu - slipped from 3rd >> 9th rank on parameters such as low birth weight, functioning public health centres and community health centre grading.

Need:

Public health must become part of mainstream politics.

Recent Central schemes like Ayushman Bharat Abhiyan are focussing on providing tertiary healthcare and reducing out-of-pocket expenses, but there is a need to strengthen the primary health care system with well-equipped PHCs as the unit.

PHC was first recommended in 1946 by the Bhore Committee

The neglect of such a reliable primary care approach even after so many decades affects States such as Bihar, where much work needs to be done to reduce infant and neonatal mortality and low birth weight, and create specialist departments at district hospitals. Special attention is needed to shore up standards of primary care in Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Assam and Jharkhand, which are at the bottom of the scale, as per the NITI Aayog assessment. The Health Index does not capture other related dimensions, such as non-communicable diseases, infectious diseases and mental health. It also does not get uniformly reliable data, especially from the growing private sector. What is clear is that State governments now have greater resources at their command under the new scheme of financial devolution, and, in partnership with the Centre, they must use the funds to transform primary health care.

Topic: Role of Primary Healthcare Centres in India

Significance of healthcare

Background of Primary Healthcare in India

Current status if primary healthcare

What needs to be done?

Conclusion
Context

If India has increased its population of tigers to an estimated 2,967 individuals in 2018-19, putting behind fiascos such as the Sariska wipe out 15 years ago, it adds to its global standing as a conservation marvel a populous country that has preserved a lot of its natural heritage even amid fast-paced economic growth.

Background

- Since the majority of the world’s wild tigers live in India, there is global attention on the counting exercise and the gaps the assessment exposes.
- The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has asserted in its report, ‘Status of Tigers in India 2018’, that 83% of the big cats censused were individually photographed using camera traps, 87% were confirmed through a camera trap-based capture-recapture technique, and other estimation methods were used to establish the total number.
- Previous estimates for periods between 2006 and 2010 and then up to 2014 indicated a steady increase in tiger abundance.

The debate regarding the numbers

- Such numbers, are the subject of debate among sections of the scientific community, mainly on methodological grounds, since independent studies of even well-protected reserves showed a lower increase.
- It is important to put all the latest data, which are no doubt encouraging, through rigorous peer review.
- Conservation achievements and some failures can then be the subject of scientific scrutiny and find a place in scientific literature to aid efforts to save tigers.

Present time situation

- There are several aspects to the latest counting operation a staggering exercise spread over 3,81,400 sq km and 26,838 camera trap locations that are of international interest, because some tiger range countries are beginning their own census of the cats.
- Even developed countries are trying to revive populations of charismatic wild creatures such as wolves and bears through a more accurate outcome measurement.
- For India’s tigers, not every landscape is welcoming, as the official report makes clear.

Divergences in population

- The less accessible Western Ghats has witnessed a steady increase in numbers from
2006, notably in Karnataka, and Central India has an abundance, but there is a marked drop in Chhattisgarh and Odisha in Buxa, Dampa and Palamau, which are tiger reserves, no trace of the animal was found.

- It is imperative for the NTCA to analyse why some landscapes have lost tigers, when the entire programme has been receiving high priority and funding for years now at ?10 lakh per family that is ready to move out of critical habitat.

Conclusion

- Ultimately, saving tigers depends most on the health of source populations of the species that are estimated to occupy a mere 10% of the habitat.
- The conflict in opening up reserves to road-building has to end, and identified movement corridors should be cleared of commercial pressures.
- Hunting of prey animals, such as deer and pig, needs to stop as they form the base for growth of tiger and other carnivore populations.
- They may only represent a ‘political population’ of a favoured animal, not quite reflective of reality.

Source: The Hindu
GS-II Paper: The limits of anti-defection

Context

- The political crisis that began in Karnataka with the resignation of 15 MLAs that took five days and multiple missed deadlines to be put to vote
- This underscored the tortuous working of India’s anti-defection law and threw up a range of associated legal and constitutional questions.
- The incident calls for an interpretation of the three provisions of the Constitution: Article 190 (vacation of seats), Article 164 (1B), and the Xth schedule of the Constitution.

Anti-Defection Law

The Tenth Schedule of Indian Constitution is popularly known as the Anti-Defection Act. Original constitution had no such provisions. It was included in the Constitution in 1985 by the Rajiv Gandhi government. The main intent of the law was to deter “the evil of political defections” by legislators motivated by the lure of office or other similar considerations.

Grounds for disqualification under the Anti-Defection Law

- If an elected member voluntarily gives up his membership of a political party;
- If he votes or abstains from voting in such House contrary to any direction issued by his political party or anyone authorised to do so, without obtaining prior permission.

As a pre-condition for his disqualification, his abstention from voting should not be condoned by his party or the authorised person within 15 days of such incident.

The 2003 Amendment

- The last step in the legislative journey of the anti-defection law came in 2003.
- A Constitution Amendment Bill was introduced in Parliament by the government of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to address some of the issues with the law.
- A committee headed by Pranab Mukherjee examined the Bill.

Pranab Mukherjee Committee Observations

- It is observed that the lure of office of profit plays dominant part in the political horse-trading resulting in spate of defections and counter defections.
- The one-third split provision which offered protection to defectors was deleted from the law on the committee’s recommendation.
The 2003 Amendment also incorporated the 1967 advice of the Y B Chavan committee in limiting the size of the Council of Ministers, and preventing defecting legislators from joining the Council of Ministers until their re-election.

Conclusion

- The anti-defection law seeks to provide a stable government by ensuring the legislators do not switch sides.
- However, this law also restricts a legislator from voting in line with his conscience, judgement and interests of his electorate.
- Such a situation impedes the oversight function of the legislature over the government, by ensuring that members vote based on the decisions taken by the party leadership, and not what their constituents would like them to vote for.
- The long drawn-out events in the Karnataka Vidhan Sabha have shown that even after three decades, the anti-defection law has not been able to stop political defections.

Source: Indian Express

Having the last word on ‘population control’.

GS II Paper: Having the last word on ‘population control’.

Context

There should be a clear understanding that offering choices and services rather than outright state control works best.

On 11 July, World Population Day, a union Minister expressed alarm over population explosion in the country, wanting all political parties to enact population control laws and declare the voting rights invalid of those having more than two children. Third child policy should not be allowed to vote and enjoy facilities provided by the government.

Scars of the past

- The damage done when mishandling issues of population growth is long lasting.
- Men used to be part of the family planning initiatives but after the excess of forced sterilisations, they continue to remain completely out of family planning programmes even
The government now mostly work with women and child health programmes.

Policy of choice

- National population policy was introduced in 2000 when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the Prime Minister.
- The essence of the policy was the government’s commitment to voluntary and informed choice and consent of citizens while availing of reproductive health care services” ailing with “target free approach in administering family planning services”.

Crucial Connections

- National Family Health Survey-4 (2015-16) women in the lowest wealth quintile have an average of 1.6 more children than women in the highest wealth quintile translating to a fertility rate of 3.2 children while 1.5 children moving from the wealthiest to the poor.
- The number of children per women declines with a woman’s level of schooling.
- Women with no chooling have an average 3.1 children , compared with 1.7 children for women with 12 or more years of schooling.

Source: The Hindu

International Tiger Day

GS-III | 29 July, 2019

GS-III: International Tiger Day

Context

Global Tiger Day, often called International Tiger Day, is an annual celebration to raise awareness for tiger conservation, held annually on 29 July.

It was created in 2010 at the Saint Petersburg Tiger Summit.

The goal of the day is to promote a global system for protecting the natural habitats of tigers and to raise public awareness and support for tiger conservation issues.

India has achieved the target of doubling tiger population four years before the 2022 deadline.
Concerns and Challenges

- India has one of the lowest per capita forest areas in the world. Forests as carbon sinks are deemed to be a major mean of controlling climate change. Depletion of forests is responsible for reduction of tiger habitats.
- **Reduced food base**: As forestlands fall to development projects, habitable land for animals that make for the tiger’s food base are also reduced.
- **Poaching**: Another issue that has hindered tiger conservation in India and globally is poaching, which will persist as long as there is an illegal market for tiger body parts.
- **Climate change**: Rising sea level as a result of climate change is on the verge of wiping out Sundarbans, one of the last remaining habitats of the Bengal tigers.

All India Tiger Estimation

- The tiger count is prepared after every four years by National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) provides details on the number of tigers in the 18 tiger reign states with 50 tiger reserves.
- However, this time the census also included data collected from the rough terrains of northeastern states which was not possible due to logistic constrains before.
- The entire exercise spanned over four years is considered to be world’s largest wildlife survey effort in terms of coverage and intensity of sampling.
- Over 15,000 cameras were installed at various strategic points to capture the movement of tigers. This was supported by extensive data collected by field personnel and satellite mapping.
- Taking a step further, authorities have attempted to digitize the records by mandating the use of a GIS based app called M-STRiPES (Monitoring System For Tigers-Intensive Protection and Ecological Status) developed by Dehradun-based Wildlife Institute of India.

Way Forward

There are several infrastructure projects that will cut through tiger corridors and habitats. The future of the big cat is uncertain if we continue to violate their habitat. Unless tigers have inviolate habitats where they can breed and flourish and there are corridors linking these breeding populations, we are isolating tigers in very small reserves which is fatal in the long run.

Source: The Hindu
TOI 270

- It is the name of the dwarf star and the planetary system recently discovered by NASA’s Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS).
- TOI 270 is about **73 light years away from Earth**, and is located in the constellation Pictor.
- Its members include the dwarf star, which is **40 per cent smaller than the Sun in size and mass**, and the three planets or **exoplanets (planets outside the solar system)** that have been named TOI 270 b, TOI 270 c, and TOI 270 d.
- These three planets orbit the star every 3.4 days, 5.7 days, and 11.4 days respectively. In this system, TOI 270 b is the innermost planet.

Nature of the planets

- Researchers expect it to be a rocky world about 25 per cent bigger than Earth.
- It is not habitable since it is located too close to the star — about 13 times closer than our Solar System’s Mercury is from the Sun.
- On the other hand, TOI 270 c and TOI 270 d are Neptune-like planets because their compositions are dominated by gases rather than rock.
- Planet d, which is suspected to have a rocky core covered by a thick atmosphere, offers a surface unfavourably warm for the existence of liquid water, thereby rendering the planet potentially uninhabitable.

About Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS)

- TESS is NASA’s latest satellite to search for planets outside our solar system, known as exoplanets.
- The mission will spend the next two years monitoring the nearest and brightest stars for periodic dips in their light.
- TESS is expected to transmit its first series of science data back to Earth in August, and thereafter periodically every 13.5 days, once per orbit, as the spacecraft makes it closest approach to Earth.
- These events, called transits, suggest that a planet may be passing in front of its star.

Source: Indian Express
The makings of a digital Kleptocracy

GS-II | 29 July, 2019

GS-II: The makings of a digital Kleptocracy

Context

- There has been public furore over the delay in the release of data, for example farmer suicides, suppression of data such as on employment, bungled migration data in the Census, and controversy over the methodology used to calculate GDP growth rates.
- These data are the backbone of policy making in India.

Suggested Use of data

- These three — information obtained through the RTI Act, administrative data and data collected by the statistical machinery of government — are examples of “data as a public good”.
- Instead, its focus is on the expanding digital footprint of people, falling costs of data generation and storage and the growing data mining industry.
- The thrust is on how to monetise these data, for example by selling data that we share with the government in trust.

Problems with Data usage

1. Toxicity

- Somewhere along the line, your mobile number and/or email ID got sold in the data market.
- Even as most of us delete these, others get trapped.
- A former Chief Justice of India was duped of ₹1 lakh recently as a result of a fraudulent email.
- In Mumbai, identity fraud was perpetrated by accessing personal data (address, phone number and Aadhaar).

2. Similar treatment like public services

- The Survey treats personal data (such as date of birth, mobile numbers and addresses) the same way as data on rainfall, temperatures and road networks.
- In the examples above, the fraudsters had to get access to people’s data. The Survey is proposing that these be sold for a price.
- Imagine the consequences of your health data being sold to private health insurance companies or your data on your earnings being sold, or data being used in the way Cambridge Analytica did.

Other faultlines
If data can be toxic, centralising and consolidating it, as advocated by the Survey, increases its toxicity exponentially.

1. Centralising the data –

- Contrary to the widely advocated principle of decentralised/disaggregated data silos as a first line of defence by data security experts, the Survey portrays decentralisation as an obstacle.
- With decentralised data, data mining companies employ sophisticated tools to combine distinct data silos to create profiles of individuals.
- Consolidating it, for example if a unique number such as Aadhaar links them, reduces the company costs for profiling and targeting.

2. Without Consent

- Often they are collected and shared without our consent or knowledge, for example, CCTVs or web browsing histories.
- When our data are used by opaque algorithms to make crucial decisions about our lives, such as shortlisting for jobs, getting health insurance or whether you were speeding, we cannot question them.

Case study of Aadhar

- Given the government’s track record on Aadhaar, these laws are unlikely to protect citizen’s rights adequately.
- Further, privacy and data protection laws will face unique implementation challenges in India.
- This is on account of low levels of tech-digital and legal literacy combined with pre-existing social inequalities which directly bear upon power relations between us (as citizens/consumers) and them (government/corporations).

Conclusion

- Even where such laws have been put in place, those societies/economies are grappling with the fallout of corporations whose practices can best be described as “digital kleptocracy”.
- The literature documents unscrupulous use of algorithms to identify vulnerable targets such as search histories of single African American mothers in the United States that are used to sell them home or education loans which it is clear they are unlikely to be able to repay.
- Thus, digital kleptocracy is a means by which rich tech companies mine poor people’s data, in fact, steal in most cases the person is unaware of their data being harvested and used for profit.
Context

Last week, the Union cabinet passed an amendment to widen the terms of reference of the 15th Finance Commission.

Background

- The Commission has now been asked to examine the possibility of setting up a mechanism for funding defence and internal security.
- As capital spending on defence continues to fall well short of what is required, it is difficult to contest the premise that it needs to be bolstered.
- But, as the creation of "secure and non-lapsable funds for defence and internal security" may end up reducing the divisible tax pool further, the move could face resistance from states, especially when several of them are arguing for a greater share in tax revenues.

Constitutional Provision

- The Seventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution specifies the separate as well as concurrent responsibilities of the Centre and state governments, with defence falling in the Union list.
- The inability of the Centre to ramp up its spending on defence indicates the limited fiscal space available to it.
- In large part, this is due to an increase in spending on items in the state and concurrent list, and a corresponding decline in spending on items in the Union list.

Reduce fiscal space for states

- In a federal structure, the Centre must address regional imbalances in the delivery of public services.
- But the bulk of this spending is routed through sector-specific transfers or centrally sponsored schemes that curb the autonomy of the states in deciding their own expenditure priorities.
- The added fiscal pressures on the Centre have, in turn, contributed to reduced fiscal space for states.

Conclusion

While the compulsions of the political economy have ensured greater central government spending on items in the state and concurrent lists, the current juncture may well be an opportune moment to rethink the spending priorities of different levels of the government. There is a need, particularly, to address legitimate concerns of states about increasing encroachment by the
Shifting strategic concerns

GS-II Paper: Shifting strategic concerns

Context

The U.S. President Donald Trump’s latest gaffe has introduced another thorn in what is now clearly an unsettled India-U.S. relationship. While India’s hand is not as strong as we sometimes believe it to be, there might be opportunities to leverage the international situation further down the road.

Perceived advantage

- If we step back and evaluate the India-Pakistan equation over the past five years, what stands out is that both sides proceeded from a perception that each holds an advantageous position.
- India’s confidence emanated from Mr. Modi’s electoral victory in 2014 that yielded a strong Central government and expectations of stable ties with all the major powers.
- Mostly overlooked in India, Pakistani leaders too have displayed confidence that the international environment was moving in a direction that opened options for Pakistan that were unavailable in the previous decade.
- This included the renewed patterns of Pakistan’s ties with the U.S. and China, with the latter reassuring Pakistan and, most importantly, the Army on their respective strategic commitments and bilateral partnerships.

Pakistan’s leverage

- China’s angle – Historically, U.S. policymakers have always sought to restore the alliance with Pakistan whenever Islamabad’s ties with China became stronger. India has borne the brunt of this recurring geopolitical dynamic.
- Afghan Situation – Much of Pakistan’s contemporary leverage can of course also be traced to the ongoing phase of the Afghan conflict. It fended off the most dangerous phase when U.S. policy might have shifted in an adversarial direction, or instability in the tribal frontier areas might have completely exploded.
- So, both India and Pakistan perceive themselves to be in a comfortable strategic position.
Need for secure and stable Pakistan

- In sum, both the U.S. and China seek a strong, stable and secure Pakistan that controls its destabilising behaviour because that undermines their wider regional interests. For the U.S., a revisionist Pakistan pulls India inward and away from potential India-U.S. cooperation on Asian geopolitics.
- For China, it undermines its industrial and connectivity projects in Pakistan, while negatively impacting India-China ties.

India’s Stand

Maintaining that India has the right and the capacity to adopt an active defence posture that is, blocking the flow of cross-border terror by proactive operations on the Line of Control (LoC) along with reserving the option for more ambitious punitive strikes in response to major terrorist attacks on Indian military targets would play an important part in shaping how third parties view Indian interests and thereby assume constructive roles in managing Pakistani behaviour.

Conclusion

If India ever asks third parties to assist in the region, it should be for a cessation of Pakistan’s proxy war in Kashmir and once an atmosphere of peace has been established, to persuade Pakistan to accept the LoC as part of a final territorial settlement similar to the offer by Indira Gandhi in the 1972 Shimla negotiations.

Source: The Hindu

Compulsory voting and associated issues

GS-II | 30 July, 2019

GS-II: Compulsory voting and associated issues

News

The Compulsory Voting Bill, 2019, was introduced by a ruling party MP in Lok Sabha. The Law Commission, in its March 2015 report on electoral reforms, had opposed the idea of compulsory voting.
Compulsory Voting

- Compulsory voting is an effect of laws which require eligible citizens to register and vote in elections, and may impose penalties on those who fail to do so.
- In practice, this appears to produce governments with more stability, legitimacy and a genuine mandate to govern.
- This in turn benefits all individuals even if an individual voter’s preferred candidate or party is not elected to power.

Why need it?

- Voting is often equated in kind to similar civil responsibilities such as taxation.
- The idea of a compulsory voting result in a higher degree of political legitimacy is based on higher voter turnout.

Is India is not ready for 100% voting?

- The government relies on the 255th Law Commission Report, which says “electoral right” of the voter includes the right to “vote or refrain from voting at an election.”
- The Representation of People Act, 1951 – the law that governs elections – too talks of “right to vote rather than a duty to vote”.
- The idea of compulsory voting in India has been rejected time and again on the grounds of practical difficulties.
- However, the issue of compulsory voting is bigger than being just a legal issue.

Conclusion

It is evident that increased participation does not necessarily guarantee quality participation or does not make a democracy with compulsory voting more vibrant. There is also a real fear that compulsory voting may lead to more vote buying by candidates especially in a country like India, where we have seen instances of cash-for-vote scams. Making voting compulsory also kills the option of not voting as a protest.

Source: The Hindu
Lok Sabha has passed The Companies (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

Highlights of the Amendment Bill

- Under the 2013 act, certain classes of public companies can issue shares only in demat form.
- The bill states this may be prescribed for other classes of unlisted companies as well.

Re-categorization of Offences

- Under the 2013 Act, there are 81 compoundable offences that carry punishments of a fine or prison terms. These offences are heard by courts.
- The Bill makes 16 of these offences civil defaults, where government-appointed adjudicating officers may levy penalties.
- Some of these offences are the issuance of shares at a discount, and the failure to file annual returns. The Bill also amends penalties for some other offences.

Corporate Social Responsibility

- As of now, companies that are required to budget for CSR must disclose in their annual reports the reasons why they were unable to fully spend these funds.

Debarring auditors

- Under the Act, the National Financial Reporting Authority can debar a member or firm from practicing as a Chartered Accountant for six months to 10 years in case of proven misconduct.
- The Bill amends this punishment to provide for debarment from appointment as an auditor or internal auditor of a company, or performing a company’s valuation, for the same period.

Change in approving authority

- Under the Act, change in period of financial year for a company associated with a foreign company, has to be approved by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).
- Any alteration in the incorporation document of a public company which has the effect of converting it to a private company, too, has to be approved by the NCLT.
- Under the Bill, these powers have been transferred to the central government.

Bar on holding office

- Under the existing Act, the central government or certain shareholders can apply to the NCLT for relief against mismanagement of the affairs of the company.
- The Bill states that in such a complaint, the government may also make a case against an officer of the company on the ground that he is not fit to hold office in the company, for reasons such as fraud or negligence.
- If the NCLT passes an order against the officer, he will not be eligible to hold office in
Context

At a time when India is reeling under hate lynching, it is sobering to remember that it took the United States Senate 100 years to approve a bill to make lynching a federal crime. Over 200 anti-lynching bills were introduced in the U.S. Congress since 1918, but all were voted down until the Justice for Victims of Lynching Act of 2018 was approved unanimously in 2018.

Problem with Lynching

- Hate lynching is designed as an act to terrorize an entire community. Though the number of murders seems small, these performative acts of violence succeeded in instilling intense fear among all African-Americans for decades.
- Modern technology – video-graphing of mob lynching, widely circulating these images through social media, and celebrating these as acts of nationalist valor have instilled a pervasive sense of every day normalized fear in the hearts of every Indian from the targeted minority community.

Significant statutes

- The Uttar Pradesh Law Commission (UPLC) took the initiative to recommend a draft anti-lynching law.
- Ordinance introduced by the Manipur government last year
- Impunity as a crime: Both the Manipur statute and the UPLC draft create a new crime of dereliction of duty by police officials, holding a police officer guilty of this crime if he or she “omits to exercise lawful authority vested in them under law, without reasonable cause, and thereby fails to prevent lynching”. Dereliction also includes the failure to provide protection to a victim of lynching; failure to act upon apprehended lynching; and refusing to record any information relating to the commission of lynching. This crime carries the penalty of one to three years and a fine.
The UPLC goes further to include also a new crime of dereliction of duty by District Magistrates. The creation of this new crime was also the key recommendation of the Prevention of Communal & Targeted Violence (Access to Justice and Reparations) Bill. Only the creation of such a crime will compel public officials to perform their duty with fairness, in conformity with their constitutional and legal duties, to ensure equal protection to all persons, regardless of their faith and caste.

Both sensitively and expansively lay down official duties to protect victims and witnesses. A victim shall have the right to reasonable, accurate, and timely notice of any court proceeding and shall be entitled to be heard at any proceeding in respect of bail, discharge, release, parole, conviction or sentence of an accused, and to file written submissions on conviction, acquittal or sentencing. Require the Superintendent of Police to inform the victim in writing of the progress in the investigation. The victim shall have the right to receive a copy of any statement of the witness recorded during investigation or inquiry and a copy of all statements and documents.

Challenges with legislation:

- Text of the United States bill records that at least 4,742 people were lynched in the U.S. between 1882 and 1968, but 99% of all perpetrators remain unpunished.
- Madhya Pradesh Cow Progeny Slaughter Prevention Act 2004 limits its scope only to cow-related lynching, and not lynching triggered by other charges. Its proposed amendments do not include any provisions to punish dereliction of duty, protect victim rights or secure compensation. All that it proposes is punishment for any act by a mob which indulges in violence in the name of cow vigilantism from six months to three years of imprisonment and a fine.
- Rajasthan has also tabled an anti-lynching bill. This prescribes higher punishments, an investigation by senior police officers, and mandatory compensation but not the critical elements of dereliction of duty or victim rights. Without these, they will make little difference on the ground.

Source: The Hindu
GS-II: Fortifying the Africa outreach

Context

President Ram Nath Kovind commenced his seven-day state visit to Benin, Gambia and Guinea-Conakry and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh arrived in on a three-day visit to Mozambique.

Economic Links

- During the past five years, Indian leaders have paid 29 visits to African countries. Forty-one African leaders participated in the last India-Africa Forum Summit in 2015, where India agreed to provide concessional credit worth $10 billion during the next five years. By 2017, India had cumulatively extended 152 Lines of Credit worth $8 billion to 44 African countries.
- India has also unilaterally provided free access to its market for the exports of 33 least developed African countries.
- India escalated its commitments to Africa in an era of low-commodity prices when most other partners, including China, have scaled back theirs.

Challenges

- The numbers are well below the potential for India-African economic synergy and are often dwarfed by the corresponding Chinese data.
- There seems to be a conspicuous disconnect between Indian developmental assistance to and India’s economic engagement with Africa.
- India’s aid being unconditional, the recipients often take it as an entitlement.

Conclusion

- Integrate the development assistance and economic engagement for a more comprehensive and sustainable engagement. It would also facilitate aided pilot projects being scaled up seamlessly into commercially viable joint ventures.
- India’s aid to Africa should be reciprocated by acknowledgement and quid pro quo in terms of and institutional preference. India cannot simply be a cash cow for Africa, particularly when its own economy is slowing down.
- We need to ask ourselves these: for all the development billions spent, how many mega-projects did Indian companies get and how many natural resources does India have access to in Africa?
- We need to take direct control of our development programme instead of handing our funds to intermediaries such as the African Union, the African Development Bank Group and the Techno-Economic Approach for Africa-India Movement (TEAM 9), whose priorities are often different from India’s.
- Our aid should be disbursed bilaterally and aligned with national priorities of the recipient.
Muslim Women(Protection of Rights on Marriage), Bill 2019

GS-I | 31 July, 2019

Context

Parliament has passed the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2019 criminalising triple talaq and will replace the 1986 Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act.

Background

The Supreme Court’s judgment in the Shayara Bano case held that the practice of talaq-e-biddat (or triple talaq) unconstitutional. After the judgement, government passed Muslim protection Bill also known as, Triple Talaq Bill in Lok Sabha but there have been criticism about the legal and procedural aspects of the bill.

Key provisions of the bill

1. The Bill makes all declaration of talaq, including in written or electronic form, to be void (i.e. not enforceable in law) and illegal.

2. Definition: It defines talaq as talaq-e-biddat or any other similar form of talaq pronounced by a Muslim man resulting in instant and irrevocable divorce. Talaq-e-biddat refers to the practice under Muslim personal laws where pronouncement of the word ‘talaq’ thrice in one sitting by a Muslim man to his wife results in an instant and irrevocable divorce.

3. Offence and penalty: The Bill makes declaration of talaq a cognizable offence, attracting up to three years’ imprisonment with a fine.

4. The offence will be cognizable only if information relating to the offence is given by: (i) the married woman (against whom talaq has been declared), or (ii) any person related to her by blood or marriage.

5. The Bill provides that the Magistrate may grant bail to the accused. The bail may be granted only after hearing the woman (against whom talaq has been pronounced), and if...
the Magistrate is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for granting bail.

6. The offence may be compounded by the Magistrate upon the request of the woman (against whom talaq has been declared). Compounding refers to the procedure where the two sides agree to stop legal proceedings, and settle the dispute. The terms and conditions of the compounding of the offence will be determined by the Magistrate.

7. Allowance: A Muslim woman against whom talaq has been declared, is entitled to seek subsistence allowance from her husband for herself and for her dependent children. The amount of the allowance will be determined by the Magistrate.

8. Custody: A Muslim woman against whom such talaq has been declared, is entitled to seek custody of her minor children. The manner of custody will be determined by the Magistrate.

Issues with the bill:

- The bill introduced in Parliament proposes a 3 year jail term for a man divorcing his wife through triple talaq. Although most Muslim women feel it is time to end the practice, they are wary of the slipshod manner in which the government has passed the bill in the Lok Sabha.
- If the aim of the law is to protect the rights of women, how is that possible with their husbands in prison? If they have children under the age of 18, who will take care of their education, health, financial and other needs? The woman will not be protected but instead be vulnerable to more abuse.
- The Bill does not provide the victimised woman any additional benefits in terms of her rights in marriage and divorce.
- Since the Bill says that triple talaq is cognizable and non-bailable, married Muslim man become vulnerable target as policemen can arrest and investigate the accused with or without the complaint from wife or any other person.

Conclusion

The legislation brings India at par with other Muslim majority states including Pakistan and Bangladesh. This was long overdue for a country that has taken pride in its adherence to the principles of secularism, democracy, and equality. Personal laws of other religious communities, Hindus and Christians, have gone through renditions to address some concerns relating to gender equality in matters of inheritance and polygamy. Despite the gains, gender equality does not permeate all aspects of civil law. This legislation presents an opportunity to put in place a civil code that steeped in equality across faiths and gender.

Source: The Hindu
What is a Whip?

GS-II | 31 July, 2019

GS-II: What is a Whip?

Context

A whip in parliamentary parlance is a written order that party members be present for an important vote, or that they vote only in a particular way.

How it is Used?

In India all parties can issue a whip to their members. Parties appoint a senior member from among their House contingents to issue whips. This member is called a Chief Whip and he/she is assisted by additional Whips.

Types Of Whip:

1. A one-line whip, underlined once, is usually issued to inform party members of a vote, and allows them to abstain in case they decide not to follow the party line.
2. A two-line whip directs them to be present during the vote.
3. A three-line whip is the strongest, employed on important occasions such as the second reading of a Bill or a no-confidence motion, and places an obligation on members to toe the party line.

Defiance of Whip:

In India, rebelling against a three-line whip can put a lawmaker’s membership of the House at risk. The anti-defection law allows the Speaker/Chairperson to disqualify such a member; the only exception is when more than a third of legislators vote against a directive, effectively splitting the party.

Importance of whips in our political system:

In the parliamentary form of Government, Whips of various political parties are the vital links of the internal organization of parties, inside the legislatures. The efficient and smooth functioning of Parliament and State Legislatures depends, to a considerable extent, upon the office of the Whip. The Whips can be rightly said to be the managers of the parties within the legislatures.

Source: Indian Express
NEWS

A renowned pharma company has launched in India Versavo (bevacizumab), a biosimilar of Roche’s Avastin is indicated for the treatment of several types of cancers.

What is Biosimilarity?

- Biosimilarity means that the biological product is highly similar to the reference product notwithstanding minor differences in clinically-inactive components.
- There are no clinically meaningful differences between the biological product and the reference product in terms of the safety, purity, and potency of the product.

Biosimilars

- A biosimilar is a biological medicine highly similar to another already approved biological medicine.
- Biosimilars are approved according to the same standards of pharmaceutical quality, safety and efficacy that apply to all biological medicines.
- Biological medicines contain active substances from a biological source, such as living cells or organisms (human, animals and microorganisms such as bacteria or yeast) and are often produced by cutting-edge technology.

Biosimilars vs generics

- Biosimilar drugs are often confused with generic drugs. Both are marketed as cheaper versions of costly name-brand drugs.
- Both are available when drug companies’ exclusive patents on expensive new drugs expire. And both are designed to have the same clinical effect as their pricier counterparts.
- But biosimilar drugs and generic drugs are very different, mainly because while generic drugs are identical to the original in chemical composition, biosimilar drugs are “highly similar,” but close enough in duplication to accomplish the same therapeutic and clinical result.
- Another key difference is that generics are copies of synthetic drugs, while biosimilars are modeled after drugs that use living organisms as important ingredients.
- But many experts hope the two will share a critical commonality and that, like generics, biosimilars will dramatically lower the cost of biologic drugs.
Report on illegal global tiger trade counts highest in India

GS-III | 31 July, 2019

GS-III: Report on illegal global tiger trade counts highest in India

NEWS

A new report has quantified the illegal global trade in tigers and tiger parts over a 19-year period between 2000 and 2018.

About the report

The new report has been compiled by TRAFFIC, a NGO working in conservation and currently in partnership with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Findings of the report

- Overall, conservative estimates of 2,359 tigers were seized from 2000 to 2018 across 32 countries and territories globally. These occurred from a total of 1,142 seizure incidents.
- Apart from live tigers and whole carcasses, tiger parts were seized in various forms such as skin, bones or claws.
- The report explains how the number of tigers was estimated from these diverse sets of seizures.
- On average, 60 seizures were recorded annually, accounting for almost 124 tigers seized each year.
- The top three countries with the highest number of seizure incidents were India (463 or 40.5% of total seizures) and China (126 or 11.0%), closely followed by Indonesia (119 or 10.5%).

Indian findings

- While the latest census has put India’s tiger population at 2,967, the Traffic report uses the 2016 WWF estimate of 2,226, with India home to more than 56% of the global wild tiger population.
- India is the country with the highest number of seizure incidents (463, or 40% of all seizures) as well as tigers seized (625).
In terms of various body parts seized, India had the highest share among countries for tiger skins (38%), bones (28%) and claws and teeth (42%).

Source: Indian Express