

IASBABA'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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PREFACE

With the present shift in examination pattern of UPSC Civil Services Examination, 'General Studies – II and General Studies III' can safely be replaced with 'Current Affairs'. Moreover, following the recent trend of UPSC, almost all the questions are issue-based rather than news-based. Therefore, the right approach to preparation is to prepare issues, rather than just reading news.

Taking this into account, our website www.iasbaba.com will cover current affairs focusing more on 'issues' on a daily basis. This will help you pick up relevant news items of the day from various national dailies such as The Hindu, Indian Express, Business Standard, LiveMint, Business Line and other important Online sources. Over time, some of these news items will become important issues.

UPSC has the knack of picking such issues and asking general opinion based questions. Answering such questions will require general awareness and an overall understanding of the issue. Therefore, we intend to create the right understanding among aspirants – 'How to cover these issues?'

This is the 37th edition of IASbaba's Monthly Magazine. This edition covers all important issues that were in news in the month of **JUNE 2018** which can be accessed from <https://iasbaba.com/current-affairs-for-ias-upsc-exams/>

Value add's from IASbaba-

- **Must Read and Connecting the dots.**
- **Also, we have introduced Prelim and mains focused snippets and Test Your Knowledge (Prelims MCQs based on daily current affairs) which shall guide you for better revision.**
- **'Must Read' section**, will give you important links to be read from exam perspective. This will make sure that, you don't miss out on any important news/editorials from various newspapers on daily basis.
- Under each news article, **'Connecting the dots'** facilitates your thinking to connect and ponder over various aspects of an issue. Basically, it helps you in understanding an issue from multi-dimensional view-point. You will understand its importance while giving Mains or Interview.

Must Read Articles: We have not included them in the magazine. Those following DNA on daily basis may follow it- <https://iasbaba.com/current-affairs-for-ias-upsc-exams/>

"Tell my mistakes to me not to others, because these are to be corrected by me, not by them."

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POLITY/GOVERNANCE

[Former President Pranab Mukherjee on Nationalism](#)

Part of: Mains Essay and GS II – Nationalism, Secularism and Tolerance

Key points:

- Secularism and inclusion were a matter of faith to the country.
- “Any attempts at defining our nationhood in terms of dogmas and identities of religion, region, hatred, and intolerance will only lead to dilution of our national identity.”
- Our national identity has emerged through a long- drawn process of confluence, assimilation, and co-existence. **We derive our strength from tolerance.** We accept and respect our pluralism. We celebrate our diversity. These have been a part of our collective consciousness for centuries.

Constitution is “not merely a legal document but a Magna Carta of socio-economic transformation.”

- It represents the hopes and aspirations of billion plus Indians. From our Constitution flows our nationalism. The **construct of Indian nationalism is constitutional patriotism**, which consists of an appreciation of our inherited and shared diversity. **The soul of India resides in pluralism and tolerance.**

Important Value Additions:

IASbaba recommends you to finish following chapters from Class 11 NCERT (Political Science) – Political Theory

- Chapter 7 Nationalism – Class 11 NCERT Political Theory
- Chapter 8 Secularism – Class 11 NCERT Political Theory

[Lateral entry into civil services](#)

Part of: Mains GS Paper II- Civil services reform

Key pointers:

- The government has opened the doors of bureaucracy to skilled people from the private sector, inviting applications for 10 senior-level posts.

The post of the joint secretary -- crucial to policy making and implementation of government programmes -- is filled by career bureaucrats, who usually join the service after passing exams conducted by the Union Public Service Commission.

- Those eligible includes "Individuals working at comparable levels in Private Sector Companies, Consultancy Organisations, International/Multinational Organisations" above the age of 40 years and with a minimum of 15 years' experience.
- The posts are also open to officials of any state or union territory government who are already working at equivalent level, and individuals working at comparable levels in public sector undertakings, autonomous bodies, universities and research institutes.
- The recruitment will be done on contract basis for three to five years. Recruitment will be made for 10 departments -- including Revenue, Financial Services, Economic Affairs, Commerce and Civil Aviation.
- The idea of lateral entry into bureaucracy has been under discussion on and off for years, but this is the first time it has been acted upon.
- The government has said it is keen on it to bring in "fresh ideas and new approaches to governance".
- The step has been hailed as a welcome step that would bring in the much-needed field experts in governance, but critics have pointed out the system can only work if the method of selection is impartial, objective and transparent.

Lateral Entry: Civil Services Reform

In news:

- The government has mooted the idea of allowing lateral entry from academia and the private sector at the joint-secretary level.
- The department of personnel and training's call for applications to fill 10 joint-secretary level posts in various departments.
- This is both welcome and inadequate to address India's governance challenges.

Background:

- The idea of lateral induction is not new.
- It was recommended by the 2nd Administrative Reform Commission, high level committees appointed by different governments and a plethora of think tanks.

Lateral entries in past:

- The Indira Gandhi government started this in the 1970s, when Yoginder K Alagh, then a teacher in Ahmedabad, was appointed the head of the Perspective Planning division of the Planning Commission.
- Other “outsiders” of note are former prime minister Manmohan Singh, economist Montek Singh Ahluwalia, who ushered in transformative economy reforms, Sam Pitroda, credited for the telecom revolution in India, and more recently, Nandan Nilekani, the co-founder of Infosys, whom the UPA brought in to head the UIDAI project.

The case for lateral entry is strong:

- Civil servants enter public service as generalists and gain experience through district and state level postings. While this offers strong grounding in grassroots realities and effective coordination, building specific domain expertise starts quite late for career bureaucrats. Frequent transfers discourage specialized knowledge. Short tenures provide little opportunity for it.
- The function and form of any governance institution is shaped by the political and economic contexts it works within. These contexts have changed dramatically over the decades. Vallabhbhai Patel’s conception of the Indian Administrative Service’s (IAS’) role as a binding agent in a newly independent nation that was wildly heterogeneous and traumatized was of its time. The old, existential threats no longer exist. Indian federalism has changed accordingly, both politically and economically. The bureaucracy is in many cases, ill-suited to the rapidly changing nature of technology-fuelled economic progress and governance.
- Lateral entry is essential to infuse fresh vigour into this closed “mandarin” system.

Positive:

- The opening up of the services is a chance to induct talented individuals who have experience and specialisation in the exact field they will be hired for.
- Those hired would be experts in their domains, would have a proven record of competence, coming from the private sector, will bring in fresh perspective and new ideas.
- People hired this way will always have the option of going back to their old jobs, and thus can stand up to their political bosses in a way that is difficult for government servants.
- The new move gives the people, who do not have the luxury to devote years to preparing for one exam, a fresh chance to serve the nation, after honing their talent in the private sector.
- At present, the numbers to be inducted are relatively small – around 40. However, this may help tide over the current deficit of middle level officers in the central government.

- It is both a workaround for the civil services' structural failings and an antidote to the complacency that can set in a career-based service.

Criticism:

This would open a side door for the government to appoint its favoured people to important posts, would promote nepotism, and could even be a way to bypass reservation for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe candidates.

Way ahead:

- Lateral entry shouldn't descend into nepotism and politicisation of bureaucracy. The recruitment and selection process must be transparent and involve an autonomous body like the Union Public Service Commission to minimize the risk of political considerations trumping merit. This is the route the UK, Australia and New Zealand have taken, and the second administrative reforms committee has recommended as much.
- The inevitable push-back from the IAS will also have to be managed.

Lateral entries are not a panacea:

Lateral entries can buttress the IAS. They cannot replace it. Technocratic skills are important. But so is the IAS' unduplicable experience of ground-level governance in India.

- From rewarding performance to curbing the culture of political patronage—reforms are necessary. Without this, the private sector talent will not be able to make up for the deficiencies of a bureaucracy low on morale, performance and reputation.
- Administrative reforms must accompany lateral entry. There should be periodic reviews of mid-career officers to weed out underperformers. IAS monopolies in ministries like home, S&T, sports, etc must go and other cadres deserve consideration too.

Connecting the dots:

- The IAS has long been an ivory tower. Opening a new door to it will prove to be a good idea, for the bureaucracy and for the country. Comment.

Restructuring of the North Eastern Council

Part of: Mains GS Paper II- Polity

Key pointers:**North Eastern Council**

- The Cabinet has decided that Home Minister will now head the North Eastern Council (NEC) while Minister-in-Charge of Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) will be the co-chair.
- Under the new arrangement with Home Minister as Chairman and Minister of DoNER as Vice-Chairman, NEC and all the Governors and Chief Ministers of the North-Eastern States as members would provide a forum for discussing inter-State matters more comprehensively and also consider common approaches to be taken in the future.
- NEC can now perform the tasks undertaken by the various Zonal Councils to discuss inter-State issues as drug trafficking, smuggling of arms and ammunition, boundary disputes etc.

About NEC:

- The Council is a statutory body with Governors and Chief Ministers of all the eight North-Eastern States as its members.
- NEC implements various projects through the State and Central agencies.

President rejects Tamil Nadu's request to release Rajiv Gandhi assassination convicts**Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Indian Polity****In news:**

- President Ram Nath Kovind rejects Tamil Nadu government's request to release the seven prisoners convicted for the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.
- In the last four years, Tamil Nadu government has written twice to the Home Ministry to pardon the convicts and release them on humanitarian grounds.
- President has rejected the request on the advice of the Home Ministry.
- The President is bound by the advice of his Council of Ministers in such matters.

Do you know?

- **Article 72** deals with power of president to grant pardons, etc., and to suspend, remit or commute sentences in certain cases
- **Article 161** deals with power of governor to grant pardons, etc., and to suspend, remit or commute sentences in certain cases

President can grant pardon, reprieve, respite and remission of punishment, or suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offence:

- (i) In all cases where the punishment or sentence is by a court martial;
- (ii) In all cases where the punishment or sentence is for an offence against a Union law; and
- (iii) In all cases where the sentence is a sentence of death.

The pardoning power of the President is independent of the Judiciary; it is an executive power.

Does India need office of Governor?

About:

The state governors of India, a product of a time long-past, have been under the scrutiny of the public eye for a long time now (especially after the high-drama which happened after recent Karnataka Elections). Yet, despite their notorious reputations, little seems to have been done.

Some of the actions taken by the Governor were part of uncertain grey area of “discretion” — partisan enough to skew the process in favour of the BJP, but not illegal enough to warrant judicial intervention.

In the aftermath, some have called upon the Governor to resign; others have suggested that the post of the Governor be reserved for non-political appointees and some questioned the need for office of Governor; and still others have urged the Supreme Court to lay down the law on how the Governor ought to act when an election yields a fractured verdict.

(The below article is excerpt from the Hindu editorials which analyzes and answers some of these questions.)

Office of Governor during colonial era and pre-independent India:

It is important **to understand the origins of the office** in the colonial British regime.

- Through the course of the early 20th century, the Indian nationalist movement managed to extract gradual and incremental reforms towards responsible government from the British rulers. These reforms culminated in the Government of India Act, 1935 which established provincial legislative assemblies elected from a limited franchise.
- However, in order to ensure that overriding power remained with the British, the Act retained the post of Governor (a holdover from the old, “diarchy” system), and vested him with “special responsibilities” that, in essence, allowed for intervention at will.

K.T. Shah (one of the most articulate members of the Constituent Assembly, or CA), wrote that the Governor would inevitably be biased in his functioning, and his actions would remain at odds with those of popularly elected Ministers.

Despite the nationalist movement's bitter experience with Governors over almost three decades, the CA chose to retain the post, and continue to vest it with discretionary power.

During CA debates, it was pointed out that the Articles dealing with the **powers of the Governor were almost verbatim reproductions of the Government of India 1935 Act.**

Defenders of the office raised two broad arguments:

- First, that there was a **dearth of competent legislators in the States**; and
- Second, that a **certain amount of centralisation of power was necessary** in a nascent state such as India.

They felt that there is need for office of Governor who would stand as a bulwark against secessionism and to act as a check upon both federalism and popular democracy.

Concerned members of the CA were assured that the **Governor would remain only a constitutional post, and would have no power to interfere in the day-to-day administration of the State.**

But, even though the framers insisted that it was only a "constitutional post", Karnataka has just been the most recent example demonstrating that the Governor has enough discretion to skew the political process in the direction that the Central government desires.

Now the question arises whether the above arguments of CA serve any valid purpose in 2018 – and if not, whether it should continue to exist. Is there a need for clearly specifying the rules governing government-formation in the Constitution itself?

Misuse of office and flaw in appointment process

There are numerous examples of the Governor's position being abused, usually at the behest of the ruling party at the Centre. The root lies in the process of appointment itself.

The post has been reduced to becoming a retirement package for politicians for being politically faithful to the government of the day. Consequently, a candidate wedded to a political ideology could find it difficult to adjust to the requirements of a constitutionally mandated neutral seat. This could result in bias, as appears to have happened in Karnataka.

The Governor has the task of inviting the leader of the largest party/alliance, post-election, to form the government; overseeing the dismissal of the government in case of a breakdown of the Constitution in the State; and, through his report, recommending the imposition of

President's rule. There are examples of the last two having been frequently misused to dismiss "belligerent" State government, but this has been checked substantially by the Supreme Court through *S.R. Bommai v. Union of India*.

Since the Bommai verdict allows the Supreme Court to investigate claims of mala fide in the Governor's report, a similar extension to cover mala fide in the invitation process could be a potential solution.

Why the office of Governor is important?

Governor: An important overseer

Under the constitutional scheme, the Governor's mandate is substantial. From being tasked with overseeing government formation, to reporting on the breakdown of constitutional machinery in a State, to maintaining the chain of command between the Centre and the State, he can also reserve his assent to Bills passed by the State Legislature and promulgate ordinances if the need arises. Further, under Article 355, the Governor, being the Central authority in a State, acts as an overseer in this regard.

Governor: An important link

In India, the balance in power is tilted towards the Union. Governor acts as a crucial link within this federal structure in maintaining effective communication between the Centre and a State. He is also "a mentor and a guide to the State governments".

As a figurehead who ensures the continuance of governance in the State, even in times of constitutional crises, his role is often that of a neutral arbiter in disputes settled informally within the various strata of government, and as the conscience keeper of the community.

Therefore the institution of Governor has a pivotal role to play within the federal structure and constitutional framework of our country. Misuse of a position of power should not serve as a justification for removing the office altogether, unless such a position has totally lost its relevance.

Connecting the dots:

- Governor has a constitutional obligation to preserve, protect and defend the constitution. They must not only be fair but also be seen to be fair. Elucidate.
- What are the functions of the Governor with regard to protecting and promoting the interests of the state concerned? Do you think governors are acting as if they are the employees of the Central government? Examine.

Controversy over Article 35A

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Indian polity; Indian Constitution

In news:

- Article 35A is often in news.
- The Article, which was unknown to the public domain till recent times, has raked up an intense debate in the country when a Kashmiri woman, Charu Wali Khan filed a petition to change the constitutional provision as she wanted succession rights in the state though she is settled outside the state.
- An NGO, 'We the Citizens' had also filed a writ petition to strike down Article 35A.
- The NDA Government wants to have a larger debate over the Article 35A challenging the constitutional validity of the clause.

What is Article 35A?

Article 35A of the Indian Constitution is an article that empowers the Jammu and Kashmir state's legislature to define "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.

It was added to the constitution through a presidential order of 1954 with the then J&K government's concurrence.

Article 35A does not allow people from outside the state of Jammu & Kashmir to work, settle or own property in the state.

(For time being, let us remember only this. Analysis part will be dealt in future once we come across any editorials or op-eds)

The genesis

A look at Article 35A, whose constitutional validity has been challenged in the Supreme Court

▪ **Article 35A** was incorporated into the Constitution by a presidential order on the advice of the Cabinet in 1954

▪ **The 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

▪ **Article 35A** bars a non-J&K resident from buying property in the State and ensures job reservation; State decides permanent residents



Pic

link:

https://d39gegkjaqduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/06/06/DEL/Delhi/TH/5_01/ec87954a_2152744_101_mr.jpg

Secularism in India

About:

The below article tries to answer how did the idea of secularism take root in India.

Background:

During colonial rule in India, England was not a secular country and there was no wall of separation between church and state.

- The "Act of Supremacy" enacted in 1534 declared that the monarch was the "Supreme Head of the Church of England". The Archbishops and other high-level church officials were appointed by the government.
- New monarchs were crowned by a senior member of the clergy, and senior bishops were represented in the House of Lords.

Much of this remains true today.

Even in British India, initially East India Company (EIC) got itself intricately entangled with the administration of religious institutions.

- Temple employees were appointed by government officials.
- Royal salutes were fired from the batteries of Fort St. George in Madras, at the celebration of Pongal, and at Ramzan.

- Under the orders of the public officer of the district, a religious offering was made at temples for a good monsoon.
- Laws were enacted which said that the “general superintendence of all lands granted for the support of mosques [and] Hindu temples” was vested in the colonial government. However, all this annoyed Christian missionaries and members of the clergy in England and India who put pressure on the government.

Religious Endowments Act of 1833

Consequently, in 1833, the Court of Directors of the EIC sent instructions to the colonial government outlining its policy towards India's religions. **(Religious Endowments Act)**

- All “religious rites” that were harmless were tolerated, however false the creed by which they are sanctioned.”
- The **interference of British Functionaries in the interior management of native temples**, in the customs, habits and religious proceedings of their priests and attendants, in the arrangement of their ceremonies, rites and festivals, and generally in the conduct of their interior economy, **were ceased**.

It was in this manner that the seeds of secularism were sown in India.

In other words, the colonial government was directed to disentangle itself from “superstitious” Indian religious institutions, because Indian religions were considered heathen and false. However, the Church of England in India was still established for a long time.

Therefore the wall of separation between temple and colonial state in India was achieved in 1863 (Religious Endowments Act). With this law the Colonial government got rid of its burden. However, this colonial vision of secularism was rejected by India's founding fathers.

Vision of India's founding fathers

After the Government of India Act, 1919, Indian legislators came to power at the provinces.

- Indian political leaders enacted the far-reaching Madras Hindu Religious Endowments Act, 1926, which virtually took over the management and administration of Hindu temples in the province.
- It established “boards” appointed by the government. Temple trustees had to furnish accounts to and obey the instructions of the boards.
- Temples' surplus funds could be spent by the boards themselves, on any “religious, educational or charitable purposes not inconsistent with [their] objects”.

Constitutional framers were inspired by the US Constitution provision which prohibits Congress from making any law “respecting an establishment of religion”.

- In the Constituent Assembly, B.R. Ambedkar drafted an establishment clause which said that “[t]he State shall not recognize any religion as State religion.”
- K.T. Shah’s draft said that the government would be “entirely a secular institution”, which would “maintain no official religion [or] established church”.

However, these clauses didn’t find their way into the Constitution. If it had, then the Madras Hindu Religious Endowments Act, 1926, could possibly have been found unconstitutional.

Later, H.V. Kamath tried to move an amendment in the Constituent Assembly to introduce an establishment clause - “The State shall not establish, endow, or patronize any particular religion.” However, his amendment was put to vote and rejected.

Current scenario

The Supreme Court has allowed governments to heavily regulate Hindu temples on the theory that the **freedom of religion does not include secular matters of administration** which are not essential to the religion.

Sometimes, the court has perhaps gone a little too far since the line between integral religious practice and non-essential secular activity is often hard to draw.

For instance, though the government cannot interfere with rituals and prayers at temples, it can regulate the amount that temples spend on such things. Even the appointment of priests in Hindu temples has been held to be a secular activity, which the government can regulate.

Conclusion:

- In a letter written in 1802, President Thomas Jefferson advanced the idea of a “wall of eternal separation between church & state” in the U.S.
- The wall of separation between temple and state in India was **first constructed by a colonial government** which wanted to distance itself from religions that it considered heathen and false.
- That wall was then pulled down by Indian leaders who felt that government entanglement in religious institutions, especially Hindu temples, was essential, even in a secular state.

Connecting the dots:

- Give your views on the right to freedom of religion as enshrined in the Indian Constitution. Do they make India a secular state?
- What is secularism? Also discuss how did the idea of secularism take root in India.

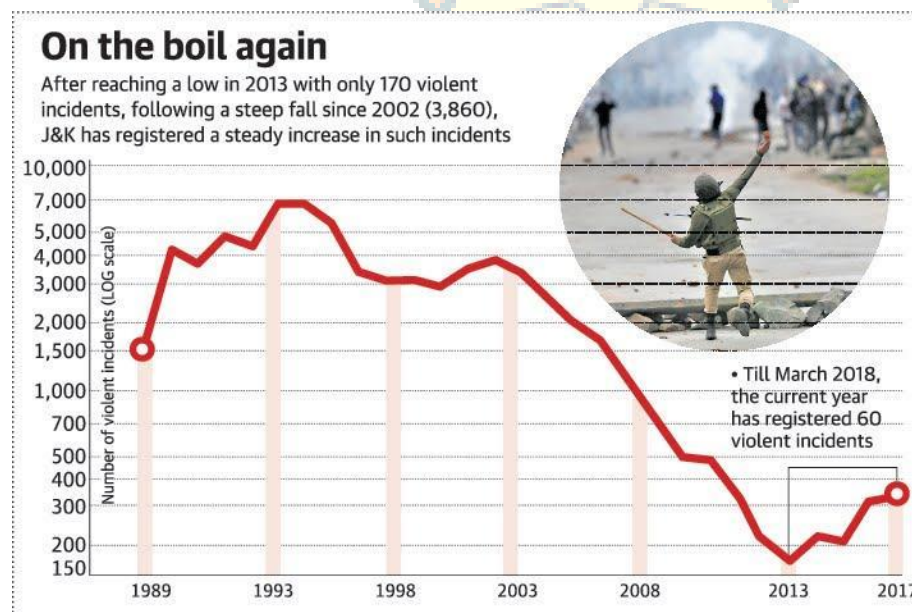
Governor's rule in Jammu and Kashmir?

J&K came under Governor's Rule.

It is alleged that Governor's rule would result in closer coordination among security forces.

- If it happens, Kashmir is likely to witness a new wave of violence.
- Army is expected to increase target-specific operations, with better coordination with the police and a likely increased inflow of intelligence inputs.
- Police forces will now be more open in giving intelligence inputs to Army as they normally come under the State government.
- This will give greater impetus to target-specific operations by the Army as the force relies on the police for local intelligence and movement of terrorists.

Army has resumed full-fledged anti-terror operations after the Suspension of Operations was called off by the Home Ministry.



Pic

link:

https://d39gegkjaqduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/06/20/DEL/Delhi/TH/5_11/3926a0b8_2185446_101_mr.jpg

Governor Rule in Jammu and Kashmir

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Indian Polity; Special provisions to Jammu and Kashmir

In News:

- Governor N.N. Vohra took charge in J&K

- Vohra issued the proclamation to impose **Governor's rule under Section 92 of the Constitution of J&K**, immediately after getting the President's approval.
- It is important to understand difference between President's Rule and Governor's rule.

Do you know?

- In all states of India, the government's failure results in President's rule. However, the process is slightly different in Jammu and Kashmir where **not the President's but governor's rule is imposed**.
- The President's rule in other states of India is imposed under Article 356 of the Constitution of India.

Important Value Additions

- Under the provision of Section 92 of the Jammu and Kashmir constitution, **governor's rule is imposed for six months, but only after the consent of the President of India**.
- Under the governor's rule, the state assembly is either kept in suspended animation or dissolved.
- If it is not possible to restore the Constitutional machinery before the expiry of this six month period, the provision of Article 356 of the Constitution is extended and the President's rule is imposed in the State.
- Article 370 of the Constitution of India states that Parliament of India and the Union government jurisdiction **extends over limited matters** with respect to state of Jammu and Kashmir, and in all other matters not specifically vested in federal governments, actions have to be supported by state legislature.
- The government of India can declare emergency in Jammu and Kashmir and impose governor's rule under certain conditions. Matters related to defence, foreign relations, communication and finance of Jammu and Kashmir are under jurisdiction of the Constitution of India.

Crux:

- Governor's rule is imposed on Jammu and Kashmir only, while the President rule on the rest of India. Both these rules are imposed if the constitutional machinery fails in the state i.e. the government of state fails to run the state constitutionally.
- Governor's rule is imposed for 6 months (in Jammu and Kashmir). If constitutional machinery is not restored within this period, then President rule is extended to this state too. (Therefore, even President Rule can be extended to Jammu and Kashmir)

Municipal governance: An analysis

About:

- It's been 25 years since decentralised democratic governance was introduced in India by the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendments, which came into force on April 24 and June 1, 1993, respectively.
- Central Government's Smart Cities mission completes three years this month.

Therefore the below article examines India's tryst with municipal governance.

Analysis:

- We know from ARC reports and previous articles that – Local governments (esp. Panchayats) are **financially constrained** and **do not have the administrative capacity** to carry out its functions.
- It is also important to explore how urban local governments are actively disempowered and depoliticised as an institution.

How are urban local governments disempowered and depoliticized?

The disempowerment and depoliticisation has happened in multiple ways.

First, elected representatives at the city-level are rendered powerless by making them subservient (subordinate) to the State government.

- i.e. in most municipal corporations, while the mayor is the ceremonial head, the **executive powers of the corporation are vested with the State government-appointed commissioner**.
- This disjuncture in municipal governance has been exploited by State governments to ensure that no city-level politician challenges their control over a city.
- Municipal corporations are further denied their political role by the continued operation of various parastatal agencies created by the State government.
- These may take the form of urban development authorities (which build infrastructure) and public corporations (which provide services such as water, electricity and transportation). These agencies, which function with a certain autonomy, are accountable only to the State government, not the local government. Even urban planning and land-use regulation (globally a quintessential local government function) is with State government-controlled development authorities.

Two, new Central government programmes are further making local governments powerless and depoliticized.

While parastatal agencies and unelected commissioners are pre-74th Amendment legacies that have not been undone, what is also worrying is the **further depoliticisation of local government in recent years**.

- Central government programmes such as the Smart Cities Mission seek to ring fence projects from local government.
- This programme mandates the **creation of special purpose vehicles (SPVs)** for Smart Cities which will *have “operational independence and autonomy in decision making and mission implementation”*.
- It further *“encourages” a State government to delegate “the decision-making powers available to the ULB (urban local body) under the municipal act/government rules to the Chief Executive Officer of the SPV”*.

The creation of parallel institutions that disempower the elected local government shows how higher levels of government distrust local politics and craftily retain control of a city's reins.

Even for performing functions that are within its purview (such as levying local taxes or undertaking civic projects above a certain budget) the local government requires State government permissions.

Hence, **municipalities are not yet autonomous units** that can be genuinely called as the “third tier” of government in India's federal system. **Even after the 73rd and 74th Amendments, India has effectively only two levels of government — Union and State.**

Three, inherent limitations in 74th Amendment provisions

While the 74th Amendment has become a guide or inspiration for civic activism in many cities, however it has certain inherent limitations.

- Many of its key provisions are not mandatory for the State government.
- The functions listed under the 12th Schedule — which a State government is expected to devolve to the local government — **do not include essential civic issues** such as urban transportation, housing or urban commons.
- The 74th Amendment also contains an **industrial township exception** whereby a municipality need not be constituted in areas which are declared as industrial townships.

These provisions have been employed by State governments to keep local governments weak.

Four, over-reliance on semi-representative bodies

- Civic activism has often been focussed on the creation of two bodies mandated by the 74th Amendment — ward committees and metropolitan planning committees.
- However, an over-reliance on such semi-representative bodies does not augur well for creating a genuinely democratic city government.

- In fact, civil society's fixation with nominating its members into ward committees can further depoliticise local governments and make them captive to the interests of certain elite resident welfare associations.

Instead of distrusting them, we must acknowledge that local governments are inherently political spaces where multiple interests compete.

The way ahead:

As cities struggle to meet the basic needs of their inhabitants, it is important to re-examine the existing modes of organising power in urban India.

Unlike the 73rd Amendment which provides for three levels of panchayats (village, taluk, and district levels), **power in urban areas is concentrated in a single municipal body** (whether it is a municipal corporation, municipal council or town panchayat). However, as Indian cities have grown exponentially over the last 25 years, with some crossing the 10 million population mark, it is important that policy makers rethink the present model of urban governance that vests power in a singular municipality.

While urban governance reforms can take multiple shapes, they must be foregrounded in the political empowerment of local government that furthers local democratic accountability.

Final crux –

Powerless mayors and city councils, severe fragmentation of governance – multiple civic bodies, parastatals – multiple civic bodies with frequent change of toothless mayors, commissioners. Local government has the least amount of capability, quality of delivery and poor processes that are being followed. Most of the laws and policies that they are following are archaic.

All these have resulted in urban local governments' active disempowerment and depoliticisation.

Connecting the dots:

- For India to make urbanisation sustainable, it must first tackle the problems of multiplicity of jurisdictions, weak revenue base and human resource capacity deficit that impact most of its cities. Analyse.
- Urban local governments are actively disempowered and depoliticised as an institution. Do you agree? Elucidate.

Centre State Relations: Andhra Pradesh versus Centre

Pending issues between Andhra government and the Centre –

- bifurcation-related Special Category Status (SCS)
- construction of a capital city
- Polavaram project
- revenue deficit and
- pull back of ₹350 crore relating to the backward areas development fund.

Other areas of contention

- Establishment of a greenfield crude oil refinery and petrochemical complex
- Railway zone
- Increase of seats in the Assembly
- Resolving anomalies in the taxation matters
- Construction of a steel plant at the YSR Kadapa district
- Establishment of the Vizag-Chennai Industrial Corridor
- the Visakhapatnam and the Vijayawada metro rail,
- the Dugarajapatnam port and
- establishment of a Greyhound Training Centre

Just know the following pointers -

- Polavaram project and Dugarajapatnam port is associated with Andhra Pradesh
- Special Category Status (SCS) is granted by National Development Council (NDC), a NITI Aayog body
- SCS is granted to States that are disadvantaged as compared to the others
- 1st State to be granted the status: Jammu and Kashmir
- Other States having the SCS status: Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim, Tripura, and Uttarakhand

Set of parameters that determine the decision:

- Hilly and difficult terrain
- Low population density or the presence of sizeable tribal population
- Strategic location along international borders
- Economic and infrastructural backwardness
- Non-viable nature of state finances

Assistance provided to the States with Special Category Status:

- Receive preferential treatment in the form of 30 percent of the Centre's budget

- Concession on excise duty and other tax breaks to attract industries and investment
- Option to avail benefits of debt swapping and debt relief schemes
- In central government-sponsored schemes and external aid, the states get it as 90 percent grants and 10 percent loans. Other states receive only 30 percent of their funds as grants.

Mandatory pre-litigation mediation in commercial dispute

In news:

- Mandatory pre-litigation mediation in commercial disputes has been introduced by the recent Commercial Courts, Commercial Division and Commercial Appellate Division of High Courts (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018, which amends the Commercial Courts Act of 2015.
- This amendment is expected to alter parties' sense of responsibility in resolving disputes.
- Mandatory pre-litigation mediation puts the ball in the court of the parties involved, rather than looking at external agencies like courts, and urges them to engage with and resolve disputes.

The meaning of mediation:

The Commercial Courts Act was legislated to improve the enforcement of contracts, as part of improving the ease of doing business.

The law defines "commercial disputes" to include regular commercial and business contracts, construction contracts, shareholder agreements, licensing agreements, etc.

The law makes changes for reduction of timelines, tightening processes and designating special commercial courts and commercial divisions to deal with these disputes, among others.

New rules:

The ordinance stipulates that no suits concerning commercial disputes will be filed under this Act unless the person filing the suit exhausts the remedy of pre-litigation mediation.

If an urgent interim relief is required, this pre-litigation mediation can be dispensed with. However, in all other cases, the mediation is mandatory and will be conducted within a period of three months (extendable by another two months with the consent of the parties).

Any settlement arrived at through mediation will have the status of an arbitral award on agreed terms and be enforceable like a decree of court. Importantly, the time limits for filing cases will pause during the time the pre-litigation mediation is underway.

Mediation:

Mediation is a process of resolution of disputes by the parties to them. It involves discussion of the conflicts, moving out of the loop of allegations and counter-allegations, and assessing where interests lie in resolving the disputes.

Options for settlement are explored and a settlement is worked out through joint evaluation. The process is managed by a neutral person called the mediator, who may evaluate the disputes and weigh in on options for settlement (a variant called conciliation) but has no authority to impose a settlement.

Other legislations:

- Mediation, and mandatory mediation specifically, is not new in India.
- The Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996, makes a settlement arrived at through conciliation enforceable like a court decree.
- Under the Code of Civil Procedure, judges can refer cases to mediation.
- The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Development Act, 2006, mandates conciliation when disputes arise on payments to MSMEs.

The Italian case:

Mediation policies in other countries mandate mediations through various mechanisms, with good effect.

Italy, which faces a high rate of pendency of cases, has adopted what is referred to as 'opt out' mandatory mediation. In 2010 and 2013, it introduced a law for pre-litigation mediation. Attempts to mediate were made mandatory for certain disputes (like partition and joint ownership of property) before a case was filed in court.

Another approach to mediation policy has been to impose costs on disputants refusing to mediate, as is done in the U.K.

Conclusion:

The ordinance is an important step in mainstreaming mediation, but it is not enough. There is a need for a comprehensive policy on mediation, rather than the abbreviated and disconnected steps so far. This policy would encapsulate the process, the role and professional responsibilities of mediators, the rights and obligations of parties in the process, and the outcome of the mediation agreement.

Connecting the dots:

- Mandatory pre-litigation mediation in commercial disputes has been introduced recently. Discuss the importance and need of having such mechanism.

Making government litigation more efficient: LIMBS

Introduction:

- LIMBS stands for Legal Information Management and Briefing System. It is a Ministry of Law and Justice initiative. The idea is to reduce government litigation, or in other word to make government litigation more efficient.
- At the moment, this is about civil cases (not for criminal cases) and is about the Union government (not the state governments).
- LIMBS is still a work in progress (not every ministry/department is part of LIMBS yet).

Background:

- The LIMBS project began internally at the ministry of railway sometime in 2013, but was soon expanded as a single platform across ministries. In July 2015, it was hosted on the NIC (national informatics centre) server.
- The law ministry, by a gazette notification in February, 2016, formally launched LIMBS to monitor cases filed against the Union government.

Benefits of LIMBS:

- Earlier, information about cases involving 64 ministries/departments was scattered in different places, typically in the form of physical files. That information is now available on a single platform, in electronic form.
- Once data are available in this form, several questions can be asked. What types of cases are these? How old are they? What is the financial implication? Can cases be clubbed? Can some disputes be settled outside court? Why did the government lose a case? Should more resources be devoted to certain courts? Is distribution of cases even across advocates? What is the track record of specific advocates?
It will thus help reduce delays in filing responses in cases, contempt notices because of such delays and consequent monetary penalties.
- LIMBS is meant to improve the Union government's handling of cases. An advocate, an arbitrator, or a new user from a ministry/department can log in. Ministry's designated nodal officer authenticates the user's credentials and only authenticated users are allowed to access the website and enter the case details.

Government being biggest litigant:

A sample survey conducted in Karnataka found that in 65 per cent of civil cases, the government was a litigant, sometimes on both sides. Government litigation crowds out the private citizen from the court system.

Much of this government litigation is in the form of appeals and this survey again found that 95 per cent of government appeals fail. In a way, they are appeals that shouldn't have been made in the first place.

One way of reducing the load on courts is to reduce the quantum of cases that come to the courts.

Conclusion:

LIMBS provides benefits ranging from advocates getting paid on time to figuring out whether government should litigate (not just appeal). It also identifies petty cases the government can simply drop. However, its scope must now be increased to include all the government departments and having similar system at states- level too.

Connecting the dots:

- Legal Information Management and Briefing System is a project to make government litigation more efficient. Its scope must now be broadened. Discuss.

National Testing Agency (NTA) to conduct exams

Part of: GS Prelims – Governance; Government schemes and Social/Welfare policies

In news:

- HRD minister has proposed to set up **National Testing Agency**, to relieve the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) of the burden of conducting multiple examinations.
- NTA would act as a robust system for the conduct of examinations. The new body will take over all examinations from the CBSE, except the 10th and 12th board examinations.
- Among the examinations that will be transferred to the NTA are the prestigious Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) for admission to engineering colleges like the IITs and NITs and the National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test (NEET) for admission to all medical colleges in the country, except AIIMS and JIPMER, Puducherry.

SOCIAL ISSUE/WELFARE PROGRAMMES

WOMEN ISSUE

Indecent Representation of Women

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Welfare and Social issue; Women issue

In news:

- Ministry of Women and Child Development has proposed to ban obscene depiction of women on the Internet and through SMS/MMS by amending the **Indecent Representation of Women Act, 1986**.
- Ministry has also suggested for stricter punishments for such crimes on par with those recommended under the **IT Act, 2008**.
- Ministry has proposed amendment in definition of the term 'advertisement' to include digital form or electronic form or hoardings, or through SMS, MMS, etc.
- Keeping in mind the technological advancements, it has been decided to widen the scope of the law.

Laws which punishes Indecent Representation of Women

- The IRW Act provides for punishment of up to two years in jail for an offence committed for the first time and imprisonment of six months to five years for a second conviction.
- Sections 67 and 67A of the IT Act lay down a punishment of three to five years for circulating obscene material and five to seven years for circulating sexually explicit material respectively.

Maternal mortality ratio drops

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Welfare and health; Social issue

In news:

- Maternal mortality ratio in the country drops to 130 from 167, according to latest Sample Registration System (SRS) data
- MMR (number of maternal deaths per 1,00,000 live births)

Do you know?

- Maternal death is the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management but not from accidental or incidental causes.

Key points:

- Kerala remains at the top with an MMR of 46 (down from 61). Maharashtra retains its second position with 61. Tamil Nadu with 66 is in the third position.
- Three States have already achieved the UN's Sustainable Development Goal of MMR 70.
- Fresh impetus is required to bring the MMR below 30 for all States.

UN India-NITI Aayog Investor Consortium for Women Entrepreneurs

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Indian Economy; Inclusive development

In news:

- The UN India Business Forum and the Women Entrepreneurial Platform of NITI Aayog formed a consortium to reduce gender disparities in start-up investments.
- The consortium aims to strengthen women's entrepreneurship by creating an enabling ecosystem for investments.
- Women entrepreneurs will be identified through key partners, including WEP, UN Women, and UNDP.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)

Part of: Prelims and GS Mains Paper II – Government schemes; Welfare and Health

About PMMVY

- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme
- Ministry of Women and Child Development
- Maternity Benefit Programme would be implemented in all the districts of the country in accordance with the provision of the National Food Security Act, 2013.
- It would provide grants-in-aid to the State Governments/ Union Territory Administrations (UTs) in a dedicated Escrow account for the purpose of direct benefit transfer to the beneficiaries.

- PMMVY is implemented using the platform of Anganwadi Services scheme of Umbrella ICDS under Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- PMMVY shall be implemented through a centrally deployed Web Based MIS Software application and the focal point of implementation would be the Anganwadi Centre (AWC) and ASHA/ ANM workers.
- The scheme is being implemented on a 60:40 cost-sharing basis with the State governments.

Status check

A look at the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana

- Under the scheme, monetary benefits are extended to all pregnant women and lactating mothers, except those in government service, for the safe delivery of the first child
- On average, eligible beneficiaries get ₹6,000 each in three instalments
- The cash incentive is provided as compensation for wage loss, so that the beneficiary can take adequate rest before and after the delivery and immunisation of her first child



Pic

link:

https://d39gegkjaduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/06/12/DEL/Delhi/TH/5_11/5945ef25_216732_1_101_mr.jpg

Under the scheme, pregnant women and lactating mothers are offered a cash incentive of ₹6,000 on the birth of their first child as partial compensation for wage loss, to reduce maternal mortality and malnutrition levels among children.

For more, refer to the link – http://www.wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/PMMVY%20Scheme%20Implementation%20Guidelines%20_0.pdf

Political under-representation of women in India

Introduction:

B.R. Ambedkar once said that “political power is the key to all social progress”. India where

women suffer substantially greater socio-economic disadvantages than Western democracies like Spain—has a cabinet that is only 22% female and a Lok Sabha that has a meagre 12% female representation.

Concentration of political power tends to lead to extractive economic institutions. Inclusive economic institutions and growth—both necessary for and dependent on social empowerment—require inclusive political institutions.

Effect of political representation on disadvantaged groups:

Social outcomes:

- Observing a member of their own group in charge of a public office changes attitudes and infuses confidence in the minority group. This may be referred to as the reporting channel. For example, a public opinion survey done by the authors in Rajasthan revealed that women in villages with a head council position reserved are more likely to be willing to report crimes to the police.
- An increase in the responsiveness of the official towards the pleas of disadvantaged groups. For example, Gender of the village council president affects the extent of investment in public goods. Data collected in 2002 revealed that in Rajasthan and West Bengal, for instance, increased female political representation led to more investment in drinking water and roads in response to complaints by local women.

Economic outcome:

A study shows a strong connection between implementation of political reservations and small-scale entrepreneurship among women.

The study noted “a growth in new women-owned establishments and associated employment of approximately 40% after political reservations were implemented” for the 1994-2005 period.

Women representation in Indian parliament:

The proportion of women in the Lok Sabha has seen only a paltry increase since independence—from 4.5% in the first Lok Sabha to the current 12% in the 16th Lok Sabha.

Way ahead:

The debate on the women’s reservation Bill is one aspect of the issue—but it’s not the only one.

- Political parties in India tend not to follow provisions in their constitutions reserving seats for women in different committees.

In several instances, when women are offered party tickets, it’s a case of the Lalu Prasad

syndrome—the woman being a de facto stand-in for a male relative rather than exercising power in her own right.

- Another hurdle is lack of education and leadership training. Additionally, since women are not integrated in any local political process initially, and, unlike men, are not part of the relevant social and power networks, women leaders are prone to inefficiencies. Given these concerns, there is a pressing need for education and leadership training to familiarize them with the local government functioning and instill in them a sense of agency.

The above two problems create a vicious cycle where socio-economic disadvantages lead to reduced opportunities for women to participate in the political process, leading to weakened representation—which, in turn, retards the process of addressing those socio-economic disadvantages.

It's a cycle that has been perpetuated for seven decades. It must be broken.

Connecting the dots:

- B.R. Ambedkar once said that “political power is the key to all social progress”, In this light discuss the socio-economic impact of poor political representation of women in India.

CHILDREN ISSUE

Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains Paper II – Welfare and social issue

In news:

- Indian government is not yet ready to sign the Hague Convention on inter-country abduction of children by parents fleeing a bad marriage.
- We had read last month ([DNA 7th May 2018](#)) about this Hague Convention on inter-country abduction.

Recap:

- Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction is a multi-national treaty that **seeks to protect children wrongfully removed by one of the parents from the custody of the other parent.**
- There has been immense pressure from the U.S. on the government to sign the treaty. However, Indian government has long held the view that the decision could lead to harassment of women escaping marital discord or domestic violence.

- In 2016, the government had decided not to be a signatory to the treaty.
- Justice **Rajesh Bindal Committee** was set up in 2017 to suggest model legislation in regard to issue of inter-country parental child abduction.

Important value additions:

- The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction or Hague Abduction Convention is a multilateral treaty developed by the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH).
- The Convention was drafted to ensure the prompt return of children who have been abducted from their country of habitual residence or wrongfully retained in a contracting state not their country of habitual residence.
- The Convention applies **only to children under the age of 16**.
- Under the Convention, contracting countries must establish a central authority to trace unlawfully removed children and secure their return to the country of habitual residence, irrespective of the country's own laws on the issue.

Do you know?

- Since Indian government is not yet ready to sign the Hague Abduction Convention, it is planning to put safeguards by setting up a **Child Removal Disputes Resolution Authority** to act as a nodal body to decide on the custody of the child as well as a **model law to deal with such disputes**.

Preventing the next health crisis: Over-nutrition and Obesity

Introduction:

Government had announced that it would release an annual “state of nutrition” report, detailing India’s level of stunting, malnutrition and feature best practices for States to scale up nutrition interventions.

Concerns:

- 26 million children in India suffer from wasting (a low weight-for-height ratio) - more than in any other country.
- Country has the second highest number of obese children in the world — 15.3 million in China and 14.4 million in India.

- Between 1980 and 2015, obesity doubled for children and tripled for adults; an additional 2.6 million children will be obese in India by 2025, a trend that will not reverse without action.
- Research shows that Indians have higher levels of body fat and lower levels of lean muscle when compared to many other populations.

The rise in obesity is deeply concerning because just as growing up underweight gives that person a lifetime of health problems so does a childhood of being overweight.

Over-nutrition: Becoming an emergency

What is ironic is that over-nutrition is emerging as an emergency in India.

- As per the recent findings of the National Family Health Survey-4 (2015-16), the Body Mass Index (BMI) of 15.5% of urban women was found to be less than 18.5 kg/m², whereas 31.3% of urban women were in the category of overweight or obese (BMI of or more than 25.0 kg/m²).
- Around 15% of urban men were underweight, while 26.3% belonged to the category of overweight and obese.

Reason— Dramatic **changes in lifestyle and dietary patterns** in recent decades have contributed to an increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases.

The potent combination of Indian **children eating more junk food** while **becoming increasingly sedentary** puts them at an even greater risk. Research has shown that early warning signs for fatty liver disease can be found in children as young as eight.

Fallout— If this double burden of undernutrition and growing percentage of obesity and associated non-communicable diseases is not controlled, it can have serious implications for the economy.

Way forward:

While tackling under-nutrition through assurance of adequate nutrition (usually interpreted as dietary calories), policy makers should also ensure appropriate nutrition (the right balance of nutrients).

- India must step up its efforts to fight overweight and obesity just as it has been doing with wasting and stunting.
- To ensure food and nutrition security, there is a growing need for a multi-sectoral approach.

- The policies and programmes of various ministries should be converged for better results.
- Apart from transforming India's agricultural practices, we also need to spread awareness about nutritious food among key target groups, including tribals, women and children.
- Policy responses should include agricultural systems that promote crop diversity (to enable dietary diversity) as well as regulatory and fiscal measures (to decrease the availability, affordability and promotion of unhealthy foods, while making healthy foods more accessible).
- India should ban the sale of junk food in and around schools. Legislators should also put into practice the results of a recent Lancet study on India. It showed that higher taxes on junk food can actually lead those on lower incomes to live healthier lives.
- We need to focus on the role of micronutrients. Deficiencies of micronutrients such as zinc, folic acid, magnesium, selenium and vitamin D needs to be given adequate attention.

The Sustainable Development Goal-2, which aims to “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”, is a priority area for India. India should link obesity and undernutrition and treat them as twinned challenges to be jointly addressed under the universal health coverage umbrella.

By tackling obesity through prevention and early care, financially debilitating NCDs can be avoided.

Connecting the dots:

- The double burden of undernutrition and growing percentage of obesity and associated non-communicable diseases can have serious implications for the economy. Discuss.
- A multi-sectoral approach is required to ensure food and nutrition security. Analyze.

The Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018: An analysis- Part II

In news:

In April, India made world news with the introduction of the death penalty for child rapists. It is unfortunate how it takes tragic incidents such as the rape of minors to remind us that the laws of the country need serious reconsideration.

The last time a major overhaul in the rape law was thought of was as a consequence of the Delhi 2012 rape and murder case. Before that, the Vishaka incident was a catalyst for the law on sexual harassment.

The ineffectiveness of reactionary lawmaking can be seen in the recently proposed amendments in the Criminal Law and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012, that were a result of the Unnao and the Kathua cases which shook the country's conscience.

New reforms proposed to the Indian Penal Code, which shall further apply to the POCSO are:

- If a person rapes a minor girl below the age of 12 years then the punishment shall be rigorous imprisonment of at least 20 years which, shall be extendable to life imprisonment or death.
Previously the punishment for the same was rigorous imprisonment for at 10 years or life imprisonment, along with fine.
- If a person rapes a girl who is below 16 years, then the punishment is rigorous imprisonment of at least 20 years, extendable to life imprisonment. The punishment for this as per the 2013 criminal amendment is rigorous imprisonment, not less than 10 years and which may extend to life imprisonment. The ordinance has suggested a few more changes, such as time-bound investigations, appeals and prior sanction from the courts for prosecution of government servants.
- The main change it suggests is in introducing the death penalty for the rape of a minor below the age of 12.

Poor implementation of the POCSO Act:

- A major provision in the POCSO is that of setting up a Special Juvenile Police unit in-charge of investigating cases of child abuse. This was conceived of as a protection against the police intimidating children, either intentionally or unintentionally. Yet, no mention of a special juvenile police unit can be found in many cases.
- Similarly, with various provisions for the security and the care of the victim under the POCSO — such as the statement of a child should be taken at the residence of a child or a place where he or she is comfortable, by a lady police officer — there's massive oversight when it comes to enforcement.
In the Kathua case, for instance, the name of the victim was highlighted and essentially advertised on all the media channels even though this is strictly prohibited both under the POCSO Act as well as the IPC under section 228 A.

Issues with death penalty:

The prospect of harsh punishments, such as the death penalty, can, in fact, be a threat to the victim. NCRB data reveals that in more than 96 per cent of child sex abuse cases, the perpetrator is a close relative or a member of the family. This is why children often find it difficult to confess. Parents often try to resolve matters of abuse themselves due to the stigma that is associated with such crimes.

Harsher punishments for the perpetrator can quickly become harsher threats for the victim, as the accused may go to any extent to protect themselves. Worried for their own safety, children may choose not to provide testimony.

Reference article: The Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018: An analysis

<https://iasbaba.com/2018/04/iasbabas-daily-current-affairs-prelims-mains-focus-24th-april-2018/>

Way ahead:

For the POCSO Act to be effective in protecting children who are sexually abused, it should go beyond relying on the death penalty as a deterrent.

- It should focus on stricter enforcement of protections for the abused children.
- Punish half-hearted investigations.
- Do away with intimidating procedures.
- Improving the overall sluggishness in the legal system.

Conclusion:

Justice is more than a punitive, knee-jerk reaction to the perpetrator of injustice. It's important to look at the systemic failures that allow child abuse to happen, prevent children who are abused from speaking up. Punishment alone is not a complete solution by any means.

Connecting the dots:

- Introducing death penalty for child rapist is a knee-jerk reaction which may hurt the victims. Way ahead instead must be to check the systemic failures. Comment.

Under-reporting of female foeticides

Part of: GS Mains Paper I- Social issues

In news:

- The National Health Profile, 2018, exposes the gross inability of law enforcement agencies in India to crack down on female foeticide.
- Between 2008 and 2016, a total of just 1128 foeticides happened in the country, says the National Health Profile. Yet, the National Family Health Survey 4 shows that the sex ratio of children born in the last five years before the survey (2010-11 to 2015-16) is just 919 girls per 1,000 births (the ideal ratio is 950).
- NHP 2018 highlights the under-reporting of foeticides (sex-selective and otherwise) in the country. The abysmally low cases filed for foeticide expose the laxity of the law enforcement system.

National Health Profile is the most comprehensive annual compilation of data on disease incidence, health infrastructure and health finance.

HEALTH

80% of Indian population pays out-of-pocket payments on medicines

Part of: Mains GS Paper II- Government interventions in key sectors

Key pointers:

- India is touted as the world's pharmacy bowl, but ironically a large chunk of its population slips below the poverty line due to exorbitantly priced medicines, mostly for cancer, injuries and heart ailments.
- A study published in *British Medical Journal* (BMJ) points out that the proportion of the population reporting out-of-pocket (OOP) payments on medicines has increased from about 60 per cent in 1993-1994 to 80 per cent in 2011-12. The study is the first ever attempt to link health expenditure to disease conditions.
- In 2011-12, OOP for medicines pushed about 3.8 crore persons into poverty, of the 5.5 crore that were impoverished due to total health costs, including lab tests, diagnostics, doctor and surgeon fees.
- Households incur the highest monthly per-capita OOP on account of cancer followed by injuries and cardiovascular diseases.

Branded Generic Drugs: Strengthening Indian healthcare

Background:

Till the year 2001, the drugs available to treat chronic myeloid leukemia (CML) — a common cancer of white blood cells — weren't satisfactory. The only treatment which provided a long-term respite was bone marrow transplant. This was not only an expensive procedure, but also complex — largely because not many centres were carrying it out at that juncture.

Then, around 2003, Glivec (scientific name — Imatinib) came into the market and revolutionised the treatment of the disease. One pill a day could control leukemia. However, due to its cost, the drug was beyond the reach of many. The cost is justified scientifically, but from a patient's perspective, it is not fair.

So, after the drug went off-patent, it was manufactured by dozens of Indian pharmaceutical companies. Today, a pack of 10 costs around Rs. 3,000.

Branded generics:

Currently, branded generics are helping to bring down the cost, apart from increasing accessibility without compromising on quality. It is a solution for an economy like ours, which doesn't follow strict regulations on quality.

Quality issues:

Branded generics is the best approach to achieve universal healthcare.

- Despite the affordability, unbranded generics cannot provide quality assurance. It is easier for branded generics to maintain quality as they follow regulations.
- Blatantly promoting generics will boomerang sooner or later, if issues around quality of such drugs are not attended. It is time we bring back 'care' into health, by ensuring quality, accessibility, availability and affordability.

Going forward:

- The regulatory system for quality checks should be extremely robust wherein not just doctors, but even the patients and pharmacists feel confident in using any medicine under a salt name.
- There should be stringent parameters to allow manufacturers to market medicines and it must be ensured that these are adhered to.
- A system should be put in place where any violation should lead to cancellation of licences or other such other stringent penalties.

Conclusion:

The onus to fulfil the vision of quality in healthcare delivery is not only on the doctors but also

on the government, drug manufacturers, hospitals and better-informed patients who would not settle for substandard quality. This is doable, not impossible.

Connecting the dots:

- Branded generics can help to bring down the healthcare cost and increase accessibility without compromising on quality. Discuss.

Organ transplant racket surfaces in Tamil Nadu

Part of: Prelims and GS Mains Paper II and IV – Health; Welfare and Ethical concerns

In news:

- An organ transplant racket has surfaced in Tamil Nadu. International patients get priority in cadaver transplants, bypassing long list of Indians.
- Three of four hearts harvested from brain-dead patients were given to foreign nationals, bypassing Indian patients on the waiting list.

Key Pointers:

About National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO)

- National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) is an all-India apex body for coordination and networking for procurement and distribution of organs/tissues and transplantation.
- NOTTO functions under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

Protocol of organ transplant –

- The protocol is that an organ should first be offered to an Indian. If no Indian is available, an NRI should be considered. The question of an international patient arises only when both decline an organ offer.
- Going by the rule book, allocation of organs to recipients on the waiting list is based on criteria that include the date of registration and the medical condition of the recipient.
- The wealth, race or gender of a person on the waiting list has no bearing on when and whether a person will receive a donated organ.

According to the Indian law, organ sales are banned and therefore no foreigner can get a local donor. Human organ transplant laws are very strict in India and the penalty incurred for organ trade is also very high.

About Transplantation of Human Organ Act (THO)

- The legislation called the Transplantation of Human Organ Act (THO) was passed in India in 1994 to streamline organ donation and transplantation activities.
- The aim of the THO Act is “to provide for the regulation of removal, storage and transplantation of human organs for therapeutic purposes and for the prevention of commercial dealings in human organs”.
- Despite the THO legislation, organ commerce and kidney scandals are regularly reported in the Indian media.

Important value additions:

- The growing disparity between the rich and poor, demand for human organs and availability of technology in the country makes the trading of organs a quick means to riches for some and a relief for others.
- Invariably Organ trade leads to exploitation of the poverty-stricken people by tempting them with financial gains to meet their immediate short-term financial needs.
- The sad reality is that India has one of the lowest organ donation rates among developed and developing nations.

Ethics first: Organ transplant racket

Introduction:

Yesterday, we read about Organ transplant racket which has surfaced in Tamil Nadu. It is alleged that International patients are getting more priority in cadaver transplants, bypassing long list of Indians.

Three of four hearts harvested from brain-dead patients were given to foreign nationals, bypassing Indian patients on the waiting list.

- We know that, **Health is a state subject, therefore State governments have responsibility for health care provision.**
- They are expected to ensure that the organs that are altruistically donated by families of brain-dead people are given to recipients ethically, and as mandated by law.

As long as there is a shortage of organs for transplantation, there will be a requirement that those organs be offered to patients on the waiting list in an ethical manner. The allocation system should be “fair.”

Next course of action:

There must be an inquiry into how allocations for organ transplants are made. Any inquiry into the allocation of hearts and lungs to foreigners should, therefore, shed light on the factors that led to the decisions, including whether registered citizens were overlooked.

It should cover such issues as the capacity of district-level hospitals to perform transplants, and arrangements to air-lift organs, since domestic patients are unable to afford flight facilities. Such measures will make it possible to utilise more hearts and lungs, and offer them to domestic recipients.

Enrolling all domestic patients through State registries should be the priority for the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation, set up by the Centre with that mandate.

Ethics first: Hospitals and professionals who engage in commerce or unethical behaviour should have no place in the system.

Connecting the dots:

- What are the Reasons behind the imbalance between the number of organs donated and the number of people waiting for a transplant?
- “Making organs a commodity is fraught with erosion of social, moral, and ethical values and is not an alternative that can be acceptable to meet organ requirements in a civilized society”. Critically analyze.

UN's Sustainable Development Goals 2018 report

Part of: GS Mains Paper III- Inclusive development

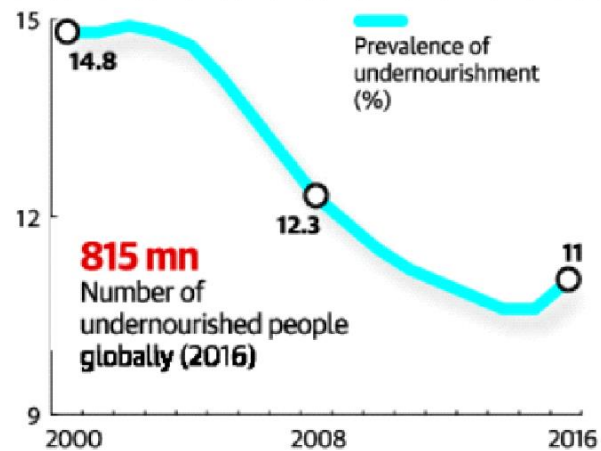
In news:

- After a prolonged decline, world hunger appears to be on the rise again.
- There are now approximately 38 million more undernourished people in the world, rising from 777 million in 2015 to 815 million in 2016
- “CONFLICT” – main drivers of food insecurity in 18 countries.
- Conflict and Climate Change (drought and disasters) are among the key factors causing this reversal in progress.

Setback in hunger eradication

Source: UN stats

The percentage of undernourished people worldwide, increased for the first time in 2016, after being on a constant decline since 2000



Pic

link:

https://d39gegkiagduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/06/22/DEL/Delhi/TH/5_07/8b3b8f35_2190471_101_mr.jpg

- Highest Economic losses was in 2017 - over \$300 billion loss - owing to three major hurricanes affecting the United States of America and several countries across the Caribbean.
- Good news - South Asia, which includes India, has seen child marriage rates plunge
- Bad news – South Asian region facing high water stress levels and fast-approaching water scarcity; air pollution level is also high
- Electricity and sanitation deficits in south Asia are still poor

About Sustainable Development Goals

17 SDGs were adopted by UN member nations in 2015. The deadline to meet them is 2030.



How to remember all 17 Goals?

I Can HELP

Yes, "I Can HELP" is your answer

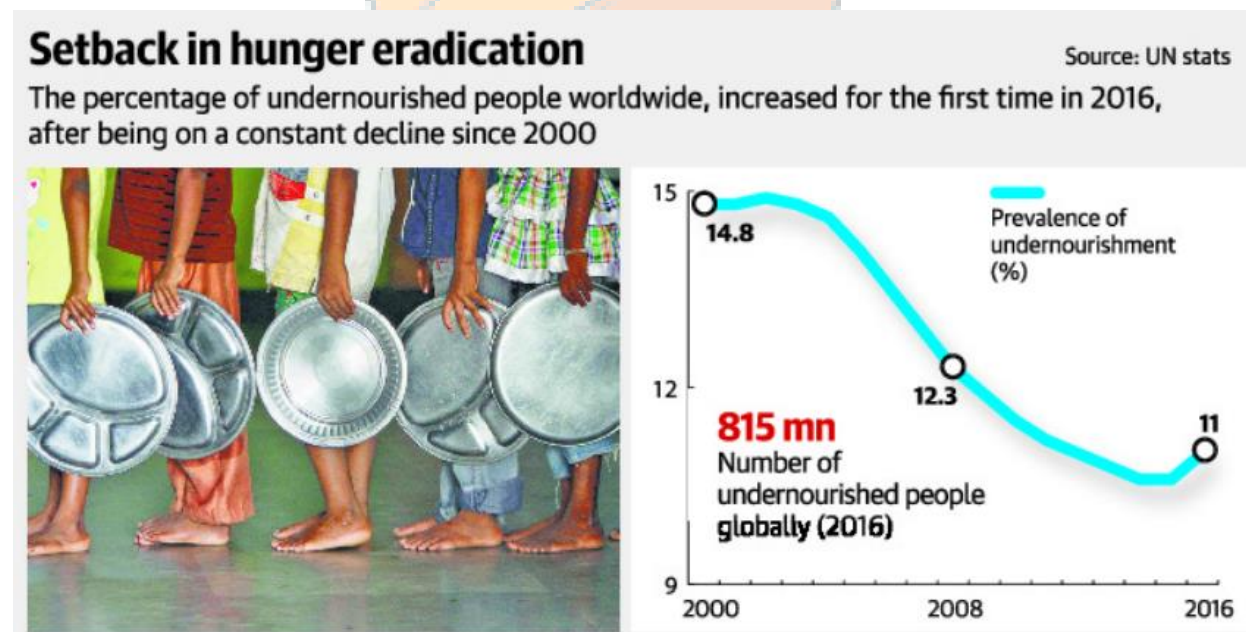
I ²	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure Inequality
Can ⁵	Clean water and Sanitation Clean Energy Climate Change Cities and Communities Consumption and Production
H ²	Hunger Health
E ³	Education Equality Economic Growth, Decent Work
L ²	Life below water Life on land
P ³	Poverty Peace and Justice Partnerships for the Goals

Tackling Malnutrition through effective dietary diversity

About:

From [22nd June DNA article](#), we know that –

- UN's Sustainable Development Goals 2018 report highlighted that - after a prolonged decline, world hunger appears to be on the rise again.
- There was a reduction in the rate of undernourishment since the year 2000 but it has registered a worrying increase in 2016. (Observe in fig below)
- Conflict and Climate Change (drought and disasters) are among the key factors causing this reversal in progress.



Pic

link:

https://d39gegkjaqduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/06/22/DEL/Delhi/TH/5_07/8b3b8f35_2190471_101_mr.jpg

Other facts highlighted by the report:

- One in four children is still affected by stunting.
- Impact of the economic downturn, many violent conflicts, fall in commodity export revenues, and failure of agriculture owing to drought and floods are all making food scarce and expensive for many.

All these represent a setback to all countries trying to meet the Sustainable Development Goal on ending hunger and achieving food security and improved nutrition.

Status in India:

- India's efforts at improving access to food and good nutrition are led by the National Food Security Act.
- There are special nutritional schemes for women and children operated through the States.
- In spite of such interventions, 14.5% of the population suffers from undernourishment, going by the UN's assessment for 2014-16.
- Wasting rates have increased from 16.5% to 25.6%, according to recent National Family Health Survey (NFHS)
- Underweight rate (36%) has remained static in the last 10 years.
- At the national level, 53% of women are anaemic, Health Ministry data show.
- Institutions such as the State Food Commissions have not made a big difference either.
- According to NFHS 2015-16, every second tribal child suffers from growth restricting malnutrition due to chronic hunger.

All this shows that the Centre and State governments are woefully short on the commitment to end undernourishment.

- Question arises whether government policies are ill-conceived?
- Whether PDS is efficient?
- Is PDS able to play better role in bringing about dietary diversity for those relying on subsidised food.
- What is the role played by rations in shaping household and nutritional security?

The way ahead:

A critical aspect of nutrient adequacy is "diet diversity", calculated by different groupings of foods consumed with the reference period ranging from one to 15 days.

It is recommended that each person should have diverse diet of at least eight food groups, that include: cereals, roots and tubers; legumes and nuts; dairy products; flesh foods; eggs; fish; dark green leafy vegetables; and other fruits and vegetables.

- But reports highlight that majority of children had food from only two/three of the eight food groups.
- NITI Aayog study also found that families below the poverty line consumed more cereals and less milk compared to the affluent. Complementing rice and wheat with more nutritious food items should be the goal.

This low dietary diversity is a proxy indicator for the household's food security too as the children ate the same food cooked for adult members.

It is time the government looks at the root cause of the issue and finds a sustainable solution for tackling malnutrition. This is possible only when the state focusses on inclusive development

by creating employment opportunities for the marginalised which would improve their purchasing power, diversify their diet and, in turn, reduce malnutrition.

Connecting the dots:

- Rate of undernourishment in Indian children has registered a worrying increase in 2016. In fact, even well fed children suffer from chronic undernourishment due to severe lack of diet diversity. Do you agree? In light of this statement, examine the need for reforms in government policies and dietary patterns.

Trace and Track mechanism to check counterfeit drugs

Part of: GS Mains Paper II- Government interventions

In news:

- The Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) has proposed introduction of trace and track mechanism for top 300 drug brands that are sold in India.
- This mechanism will be implemented across India on a trial basis to spot out counterfeit drugs.
- Under this proposal, the company will print a unique number on each strip or bottle of the drug. It will also print a phone number where the customer can dial and enter the aforesaid unique number and get the name and address of the manufacturer, the batch number, manufacturing and expiry date of the medicine.

Need:

- According to a study by the World Health Organization (WHO) in November last year, about 10 per cent of the medicines consumed in low- and middle-income countries, including India, are “substandard and falsified”.
- In February last year, a two-year-long nationwide survey was conducted under the supervision of the Central government, which found that around 10 per cent of the drugs in the government supply chain are “not of standard quality”.
This survey found around 3 per cent of drugs in retail supply chain substandard.

Bridge Course: Addressing human resources gaps in primary healthcare

In news:

A National Medical Commission (NMC) proposal in the National Medical Commission Bill and the National Health Policy 2017, proposed allowing Ayush (Ayurveda, yoga and naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and homoeopathy) practitioners to practise basic and limited allopathy on completion of a bridge course.

Faced with strong opposition from allopaths, the Union cabinet in its latest amendments withdrew the proposal and passed on the responsibility to states to utilize this as a strategy for addressing human resources gaps in primary healthcare.

Need of such a policy: Shortage of doctors

- India faces an acute shortage of allopathic doctors, with the present doctor-patient ratio at an abysmal 1:1,674.
- The last mile of healthcare delivery in India occurs through sub-centres and primary health centres (PHCs). But 61.2% PHCs have just one doctor, while nearly 7% are functioning without any. More than a third of them do not have a laboratory technician, a fifth of them do without a pharmacist.
- India's health system clearly has an acute shortage of doctors. The country needs nearly 500,000 doctors to address this shortage.

In such a milieu, unqualified medical practitioners often rule the roost. In states such as Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar, a patient faces two-third chances of getting treated by a quack.

Given the paucity of MBBS doctors in rural areas, it makes sense to leverage the ready availability of a large population of willing Ayush practitioners.

Way ahead:

With the availability of appropriate bridge courses, sound regulatory and licensing mechanisms, Ayush graduates should be given a chance to help serve India's primary healthcare needs.

- In courses like Ayurveda, nursing, physiotherapy or pharmacy, the curriculum has several strands similar to that of a MBBS course; additional training in pharmacology and basics of medicine with clinical clerkships could provide them an orientation to be able to practise "limited" allopathy. The bridge course can be delivered through premier Ayush colleges, and selected district hospitals.
- The training and curriculum for Ayush candidates can be ring-fenced, and regulatory restrictions brought in to ensure they only practise within the allowed ambit.

Examples of such programmes in the West:

- A physician assistant (PA) in the US comes out of such a programme, often taken up by paramedics and nurses, who can after a two-year course and passing a certifying exam become assistants to doctors.
- The UK model of physician associate, in a two-year training period, focuses on general adult medicine and general practice.
- In New Zealand, the Centre for Rural Health Development identifies PAs as “postgraduate healthcare professionals trained in a clinical role that complements both nursing and medicine and working under the supervision of a senior doctor”, who form an important cog in the wheel of rural healthcare.
- As of 2013 in Bangladesh, three-year training qualifies a sub-assistant community medical officer (SACMO) to practice. Incidentally, 89% of healthcare delivery in rural areas is being taken care primarily by SACMOs.
- Assistant doctors in China, clinical associates in South Africa, and assistant medical officers in Malaysia are all based on similar models.

Importance of bridge course:

The allopathic doctors’ community, led by the Indian Medical Association (IMA), should not see the move as legitimization of “quackery”.

- A bridge course can help bring Ayush candidates to speed on allopathic prescribing for a required set of conditions—this is not to make them half-way quacks but to actually practise base-level primary healthcare provisioning.
- Moreover, there are positive externalities at multiple levels in training the Ayush provider to serve a primary healthcare domain need.
Such a provider can help initiate a focus on disease prevention, a dire need considering India’s continuing burden of both communicable and (rising) non-communicable diseases.
- For a specific set of conditions defined by the government, the Ayush provider can initiate treatment, manage follow-up, and initiate referral when needed. This would ensure that standard treatment protocols are followed.

It can help address irrational medical practice, and existing rampant abuse of drugs such as antibiotics.

Conclusion:

While implementation can be at the state level, the design of the course, the legal framework, and a standardized plan should be the Centre’s responsibility.

The proposed redesign of India’s health system (Ayushman scheme) will falter in the absence of enabling innovations like a bridge course to raise a cadre of mid-level care providers to serve our primary healthcare needs.

Connecting the dots:

- Providing bridge courses to Ayush practitioners to enable them to practice basic and limited allopathy is not just need of the hour given abysmal doctor-patient ratio but will have multiple other benefits as well. Comment.

Why India urgently needs a national asylum policy?

Key Pointers:

- World Refugee Day (June 20)
- India is not a signatory to the **1951 Refugee Convention** and has **no domestic asylum law**.
- Country has done little beyond providing asylum. There have been some attempts to introduce a refugee law – latest being the Asylum Bill 2015, which was introduced as a private member's bill. However, none has gone the distance and the government continues to adopt an ad hoc approach towards this group.
- Due to their unclear legal status and lack of uniform documentation, refugees have limited access to essential services and almost no avenues for livelihood.
- India has reiterated its commitment towards the protection of refugees at various international fora, including the UN General Assembly.
- India became a signatory to the **New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants**, which was adopted by 193 countries in September 2016. In doing so, India has expressed its solidarity with those forced to flee and agreed that protecting refugees and supporting the countries that shelter them are shared international responsibilities that must be borne more equitably.

Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)

- New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants has set the stage for a **new framework for refugee protection** — the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).
- GCR is a coordinated effort **to strengthen international response to protracted refugee situations** and comprehensively **addresses all stages of refugee protection**, from reception to long-term solutions.
- Two of its key objectives are to **ease pressures on host countries** and **enhance refugee self-reliance**.

Concern: Refugee burden borne by developing countries

- GCR recognised that certain refugee situations can last for decades and acknowledges that the burden is borne largely by developing countries.

Do you know? Developing countries host over 80% of the refugee population in the world.

- Therefore, the GCR calls for support from the international community in the form of resources. (to ease pressures on host countries)
- It also seeks to establish forums to enable expertise-sharing to promote economic opportunities, decent work and job creation not just for refugees but also for the host community.
- GCR calls for States to identify gaps and opportunities for employment and income generation for refugees in a bid to enhance their self-reliance.

Since the Declaration was adopted, the **UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** has been engaging with member states, UN bodies, and non-governmental organisations to develop a plan for its practical implementation; this will be finalised by the end of 2018.

Conclusion:

India's commitment to refugee protection under the GCR is evident in its active participation in ongoing GCR consultations, where it has emphasised the need for a clear mechanism for the refugee response regime.

Therefore this is an opportune time for India to reassess the need for a national asylum policy which is compliant with the principles laid down in the GCR.

This will not only re-establish India's place as a democratic regional power committed to core humanitarian principles but will also provide refugees a chance to give back to the country that has adopted them.

Connecting the dots:

- Critically examine if India should have a law for refugees and asylum seekers.
- Recent UNICEF report presents a grim picture of condition of refugee children. What according to you should be measures taken by countries, irrespective of refugee laws, to protect the refugee children for a better future?

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

World Bank to fund Atal Bhujal Yojana

Part of: Prelims and Mains – Government schemes

In news:

- World Bank and Indian Government join hands to address concerns about depleting groundwater reserves in India.
- World Bank nod for ₹6,000 cr. scheme called the Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABHY).

Important Value Additions

About Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABHY)

- Central Sector Scheme
- to be implemented over a period of five years from 2018-19 to 2022-23
- aims to **improve ground water management** in priority areas in the country through community participation
- The priority areas identified under the scheme fall in seven States – Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh
- Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA) is regulating ground water development in 23 States/UTs.

Do you know?

- Water being a State subject, steps for augmentation, conservation and efficient management of water resources to ensure sustainability and availability are primarily undertaken by the respective State Governments.

Difference between Central sector schemes and Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)

Under Central sector schemes, it is 100% funded by the Union government and implemented by the Central Government machinery. Central sector schemes are mainly formulated on subjects from the Union List. In addition, the Central Ministries also implement some schemes directly in States/UTs which are called Central Sector Schemes but resources under these Schemes are not generally transferred to States.

Under Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) a certain percentage of the funding is borne by the States in the ratio of 50:50, 70:30, 75:25 or 90:10 and the implementation is by the State Governments. Centrally Sponsored Schemes are formulated in subjects from the State List to

encourage States to prioritise in areas that require more attention. Funds are routed either through consolidated fund of States and or are transferred directly to State/ District Level Autonomous Bodies/Implementing Agencies.

India improves in global peacefulness rankings

Part of: GS Prelims

In news:

- India's rank has marginally improved in global peacefulness, according to the Global Peace Index (GPI)
- India's GPI rank was 137 out of 163 countries in 2017, when the year 2016 was assessed. India's rank moved up to 136 for 2017.
- Pakistan's rank too has improved marginally. Pakistan's rank moved from 152 to 151.
- However, the best performer of South Asia, Bhutan, slipped from 13th to 19th position, while Bangladesh' peace index deteriorated sharply. Bangladesh moved from 84th to 93rd position.

About Global Peace Index (GPI)

- Global Peace Index (GPI) is released by Australia-based Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP).
- The GPI gauges global peace using three broad themes: the level of societal safety and security, the extent of ongoing domestic and international conflict and the degree of militarization.

Do you know?

- Peace continues to record a "gradual, sustained fall" across the world, the report noted.
- Syria remained the least peaceful country in the world, a position that it had held for the past five years.
- Iceland continues to remain the most peaceful country in the world, a position it has held since 2008.

UWIN — Unorganised Workers Identification Number

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – Welfare and social issue; Inclusive growth; Unorganised sector

In news:

- Union Ministry of Labour has called for tenders to design, develop and run the new UWIN — **Unorganised Workers Identification Number** — Platform.
- UWIN – is a **portable smart ID card** for unorganised workers.
- Centre has started work to create a national database and Aadhaar-seeded identification number system to facilitate welfare delivery to 40 crore workers in the sector.

Do you know?

- The **Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, 2008** had first mandated that every worker be registered and issued a smart ID card.

Implementing the Forest Rights Act in true spirit

In news:

As per a report- Official figures say 62 per cent of land claims made by tribals were rejected in Maharashtra.

Such rejection, though not uncommon, is *against the spirit* of The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA).

The FRA:

The Act vests a number of rights with forest-dwelling communities, including rights over forest land for habitation and cultivation, right of ownership, access to collect, use, and dispose of minor forest produce, right to govern and manage any community forest resource which they have been traditionally conserving for sustainable use.

Historically, during the colonial and post-colonial periods, forest management and access to forest resources like non-timber forest products (NTFPs) was largely driven by the principles of centralisation, exclusion and exploitation.

The FRA envisages to change this and ensure that the economic benefits of NTFPs accrue to tribal people — this is one reason that claims on forest resources should be addressed without bias.

Importance of the NTFPs:

The report of the sub-group on NTFPs and their sustainable management in the 12th Five Year Plan highlighted that NTFPs constitute one of the largest unorganised sectors in India. Almost 275 million people depend on NTFPs with a turnover of at least Rs 6,000 crore per annum.

There is a strong potential to scale up NTFP collection and processing.

However, NTFPs potential as a source of development and poverty alleviation has been deeply neglected.

Role of the FRA:

Prior to the enactment of the FRA in 2006, forest laws nationalised non-timber forest produce and regulated the market process, creating severe inefficiencies.

The FRA provides the legal basis of ownership rights over NTFPs to forest dwellers.

Case study- Vidarbha region:

The remarkable impact of ownership rights over these forest products in terms of incomes and empowerment can be observed in Maharashtra's Vidarbha region.

In the region, the community rights under FRA have been implemented at scale, with almost 5.86 lakh hectares of forests being transferred to the jurisdiction of gram sabhas.

Ownership over minor forest produce, specially tendu leaves and bamboo, has improved the economic condition of forest dwellers.

There is a significant change in their socio-economic condition due to the additional income from NTFPs.

- Migration has reduced and, in some areas,, reverse migration has started.
- Villagers also report that dependence on middlemen for loans has come down drastically as the payment for NTFPs like tendu leaves and bamboo is made before June, which helps them in their agricultural activity.
- Investment in education and health by the villagers has increased.
- The improvement in their economic condition has empowered the poor, marginalised tribal and forest dweller to be more assertive in the decision-making process at the gram sabha and panchayat level.

These are remarkable developments, wherein recognition of rights over forests and forest products seem to have kick-started a process of economic development and empowerment in one of the poorest, left-wing extremist affected parts of India.

Positive developments due to the FRA:

- The recognition of rights over forests and forest products has transferred the decision-making power to communities to decide when, where, how and to whom to sell their non-timber forest products and how to govern their forests.

- The FRA also fosters democratic control over customary forests by forest-dependent communities, ensuring more effective, sustainable and people-oriented forest conservation, management and restoration.

For instance, in the Vidarbha region, the recognition of community rights over forest resources and land has led to dramatic reduction in incidence of forest fires. The forest cover regeneration has improved and indiscriminate felling and diversion of forests has been contested.

Concern:

Unfortunately, above mentioned positive developments have been largely confined to Vidarbha, a few villages in Kalahandi district of Odisha and Gujarat's Narmada and Dangs districts.

- In the rest of the country, state governments continue to resist and create hurdles in the implementation of community rights over NTFPs and forests.
- Despite several orders from the nodal agency, the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the implementation of the provision of collective rights over NTFPs under the FRA has been weak and ineffective.
- The failure to recognise access rights of forest dwellers over NTFPs is a perpetuation of the historical injustice on India's forest-dwelling communities and a missed opportunity to democratise forest governance and improve the economic condition of marginalised forest communities.

Conclusion:

A report of the Rights and Resources Initiative (2015) suggests that if the FRA is implemented properly, it could lead to the recognition of the rights of at least 150 million forest-dwelling people over 40 million hectares of forestland in more than 1,70,000 villages. The economic impact of this could be huge in rural areas as NTFPs constitute about 20 per cent to 40 per cent of the annual income of forest dwellers.

It provides them critical subsistence during the lean seasons, particularly for tribal groups such as hunter-gatherers, and the landless. Given that most of the NTFPs are collected, used and sold by women, it would also lead to financial and social empowerment for millions of women.

Connecting the dots:

- A report suggests that if the Forest Rights Act is implemented properly, it could lead to the recognition of the rights of at least 150 million forest-dwelling people over 40 million hectares of forestland in more than 1,70,000 villages. The socio-economic impact of this could be huge in rural areas. Discuss.

SECC: Need for effective tool for counting

About:

Inclusion of Caste information in our Census

- As the 2011 Census approached, demands for inclusion of data on caste in Census increased.
- The then Union Home Minister, P. Chidambaram, opposed to collect caste data and blocked it by claiming that it was logistically impossible for the Census. But, suggested caste information could be collected via the planned Below Poverty Line (BPL) Census, later renamed the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC).
- However, hasty inclusion of the caste question in the SECC has resulted in largely unusable data.
- The government tasked former NITI Aayog chairman Arvind Panagariya to look into this, but the effort has stalled.

Can 2021 Census provide effective data on caste?

- There will be demand again for the inclusion of data on caste in 2021 Census.
- It also seems likely that once again India will be unprepared for a full caste census.
- If India really want to collect data on caste and not let the discourse about Indian society be shaped by the political exigencies of colonial India, the time to plan is now.
- Consequently, if we want information regarding the size and characteristics of various castes in India, we must continue to look to the Census of 1931.

Big question: Should India collect data on caste?

Arguments opposing Caste Census

- Some argue that simple act of asking about caste creates a chasm or rift within society.
- Part of this resistance comes from reaction to the preoccupation of colonial administrators-turned-arm-chair anthropologists who saw caste as the defining feature of Indian society.

We know that, the first Census began in 1871 under Colonial Rule.

Colonial censuses included questions about caste and used these data to divide and conquer India by first privileging Brahmins as interpreters of Indian culture and then targeting them as the roots of caste-based oppression and inequality.

Do you know?

- **G.S. Ghurye**, the early 20th century **Indian sociologist**, reacted sharply by identifying this passion for caste classification as the **source of anti-Brahmin movements**.

- **Veena Das, Indian anthropologist**, also notes that the colonial Censuses via the process of recording caste generated a conception of community as a homogeneous and classifiable community and thereby **influenced the processes of political representation**. Consequently, post-Independence Censuses have shied away from including questions about caste.
- Critics argue that - On one hand we say that India is growing and becoming a developed nation while on the other we are agreeing to the caste based census.
- Are we really trying to show to the world that we are still tied in the ropes of a caste based society? In a secular and independent country like India, is there still any scope for the old caste based census that used to be followed during the British rule?
- The policy of the government to give quotas and reservation on the basis of caste rather than on the basis of economic status is discriminatory towards people of other caste and is often condemned by the common people.

Arguments in favour for Caste Census -

- If caste information is not collected, we will have denied ourselves an opportunity to make quotas function in an equitable manner, says Prof. Indira Rajaraman (who was member of the Thirteenth Finance Commission)
- Our political systems, civil society and courts continue to assume that broad caste-based social categories — Dalits, Adivasis, Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and upper castes — defined largely using data from 1931 Census and a few special purpose surveys continue to shape economic conditions in 21st century India.
- Without accurate data at a granular level for each of these categories consisting of thousands of jatis (castes) and upjatis (subcastes), we have no way of knowing whether this is correct.

Indian society has undergone a tremendous transformation since 1931.

- Land ownership that bolstered the power of upper castes has lost its hold.
- Land fragmentation and decades of agricultural stagnation have turned many upper caste landowners into marginal farmers barely eking out a subsistence.
- While landlessness, once the bane of Dalit existence, has left the landless better poised to take advantage of rising rural wages, particularly construction wages.
- Consequently, the National Sample Survey (NSS) shows that mean consumption expenditure of forward castes is higher than that of Dalits, clusters of poverty persist among forward castes.

- According to NSS data, the bottom fourth of forward castes are poorer than the top half of Dalits.
- India Human Development Survey shows that 56% of Dalit children ages 8-11 cannot read but neither can 32% of forward caste and 47% of OBC children.

Economic growth of the past century, combined with strong affirmation action undertaken by successive governments of the independent nation, may have changed relative fortunes of various groups.

Some jatis may have managed to pull themselves out poverty and marginalisation, while others may have sunk into it. Hence, it is time to collect data that reflects the current situation.

Drawbacks of SECC

- Even though SECC was conducted in both urban and rural areas, government has released only SECC data of rural India.
- SECC collates data regarding the caste of the people. This caste related information faces the danger of being misused by political parties for their ulterior motives.
- SECC data must be regularly updated in order to remove beneficiaries who have overcome their deprivations. This will put a huge burden on the part of the government.
- Sometimes the same caste is spelt in different ways, at other times some individuals report their jati and others upjati making it difficult to create mutually exclusive categories.

Way ahead:

- India has nearly three years before the Census of 2021 and also has data from the SECC and technologies rooted in machine learning at its disposal.
- It would be possible to set up an expert group that uses the SECC data in conjunction with other data sources such as matrimonial advertisements and State-specific Scheduled Castes/OBC lists to make a comprehensive list of castes and condense them into meaningful categories via machine learning tools.
- These categories could then be validated by domain experts from the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) institutions in various States to come up with a district specific list of castes that would cover more than 90% of individuals in any given district.
- Interviewers could use this precoded list to allow respondents to self-classify with a small residual group's responses being recorded verbatim and categorised later.

It will take courage for a future government to collect data on caste and to use it to rationalise reservation policies. However, without better and more current data, our discourse on caste and affirmative action remains dominated by decisions made by the colonial administration.

Connecting the dots:

- Census in India doesn't reveal the quality of its people – it only reveals the quantity. Critically comment.
- On one hand we say that India is growing and becoming a developed nation while on the other we are agreeing to the caste based census. Critically examine the need for caste based census for India.
- If caste information is not collected, we will have denied ourselves an opportunity to make quotas function in an equitable manner. Do you agree? Elucidate.

Corporate Social Responsibility: A different model

Introduction:

The Indian Companies Act (2013) mandates that Indian corporates, public and private, must allocate at least 2 per cent of their net profits for CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility). The Act defines broadly the social framework within which companies should spend their CSR funds but beyond that, companies have the freedom to identify the projects and determine the modalities of implementation.

A significant amount on eligible CSR activities has been spent over the last three years.

Is the current individualistic model with every company doing its own thing, the optimal model for the utilisation of these statutorily sequestered funds?

Issues with current model:

- Corporates have limited experience and expertise in addressing the complexities of social development. That is not their business and whilst they may be genuinely committed to social upliftment, this is not an activity they are trained to lead or manage. They do hire resources to bridge the lacuna but there are many entities with a deeper understanding of social issues and better placed to deploy CSR funds.
- The MCA data shows that the bulk of the CSR money (almost 75 per cent) is allocated to just three sectors — education, health (including sanitation and water) and rural poverty. These are the most pressing issues facing the country.

But this focus raises questions. Is there **duplication of effort**? Are there inter se synergies to be garnered through cooperation?

- The MCA data also reveals a **skew in the distribution of the CSR funds**. Almost 40 per cent of the money goes to just a few relatively well-developed states — Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Reason- India's most profitable companies (Reliance, Infosys, [Wipro](#), ITC, IOC, HDFC) invest preponderantly in these states and Section 135(5) of the Act encourages companies to "give preference to the local area and areas around it where it operates, for spending the amount earmarked for CSR activities."

The current model, thus, aggravates rather than alleviates existing regional and social disparities.

Attitudinal shift: Increasing corporate involvement in social issues

Increasing number of Indian companies, especially large-cap professionally managed companies have woven social responsibility into the fabric of their corporate values. Their leaders have distanced themselves from the Friedmanite dictum (Business had a singular responsibility to their shareholders and that "the business of business was business").

They, of course, hold themselves responsible for their "business" but not to create value just for the benefit of "business". They acknowledge a responsibility towards stakeholders that falls outside the boundaries defined by the shareholder community.

A different model:

Corporates can pool their CSR funds into a common "CSR trust" and allow an autonomous body to manage and disburse the funds. This body should be a confederation of corporates, NGOs, domain experts and government.

CSR trust's role can be to define the CSR agenda, identify the CSR projects, select the local partners, allocate the resources and oversee implementation.

Such a collaborative model would be an improvement on the present individualistic approach.

Benefits:

- It would enable the pooling of knowledge and experience, the sharing of best practice and the leveraging of scale economies.
- It would provide a forum for learning from the grassroots experience of NGOs and the local community.
- It would facilitate back-office synergies and reduce duplication of efforts (as mentioned, CSR money is concentrated on just three sectors).

- It would allow for a more equitable geographic distribution of funds.
- It would provide a platform for the delivery of holistic solutions developed by leveraging the financial and non-financial assets of corporates and by creating development “joint ventures” between companies with complementary assets and skills. Thus, for example, a JV between Reliance JIO, TCS, Unilever and Larsen and Toubro could bring to a CSR project on education not just the hardware of a school building, tables and chairs but also Internet connectivity by Jio, IT by Wipro, marketing skills by Unilever, vocational training by Larsen and internship by all. And thereby generate sustainable income generating opportunities.

Conclusion:

The government is responsible for social development. Corporates cannot replace them in this role. But governments need help. Corporates can make a meaningful contribution especially if there is a platform that allows them to offer the totality of their skills, technology and resources. The above model for CSR provides such a platform.

Connecting the dots:

- A significant amount on eligible CSR activities has been spent over the last three years as part of CSR. The individualistic model (where each company spends and implements CSR projects individually) is not an apt model. Instead a collaborative approach should be adopted. Comment.

Ujjwala Revolution

Introduction:

- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana is a scheme of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas for providing LPG connections to women from Below Poverty Line (BPL) households.
- Last month, the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) completed two years of operation.

About PMUY

- Under the scheme, five crore (now 8 crores) LPG connections are to be provided to BPL households. The identification of eligible BPL families will be made in consultation with the State Governments and the Union Territories.
- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) aims to safeguard the health of women & children by providing them with a clean cooking fuel – LPG, so that they don't have to

compromise their health in smoky kitchens or wander in unsafe areas collecting firewood.

- The ambitious scheme also laid down a condition — that the LPG connections will be issued in the name of the women of the households.
- Encouraged by the rapid release of connections, the central government revised the target and scope of the scheme to eight crore connections by March 2020.
- Under the scheme, the union government bears the connection cost of ₹1,600 per connection, and each household pays about ₹1,500 for the stove and the first LPG cylinder. Centre to raise allocation for the project to ₹4,800 crore

Key highlights:

- Number of LPG connections has crossed 4 crore
- LPG penetration in India has risen from 56% in 2014 to 80%
- However, greater challenge for the mission lies in refills

Studying the usage of gas by PMUY customers and visiting multiple villages across the country, the following features of the programme are evident.

- One, interactions with PMUY subscribers suggest that they focus on the value that LPG generates for them and not on its cost.
- Two, the programme has also witnessed the emergence of a peer learning platform: the Pradhan Mantri LPG Panchayat. LPG Panchayats being held at village levels across India are helping more and more people appreciate the advantages of clean fuel.
- The adoption of LPG has received a boost with supplies ramping up and service improving.

Conclusion:

PMUY is a bold new initiative that aspires to fundamentally address one of the pressing energy–access, health and gender challenges in the country.

The programme has been successful in introducing a sense of urgency into the transition to modern cooking fuels and disbursing connections. But it has been less successful in introducing a sustained change because of issues around affordability and reliability of LPG supply.

Government needs to re-look at their connection focused approach, and should ensure adequate provisions for affordability, availability, and accountability.

This will propel PMUY to achieve the desired objective of not only disbursing connections but making the LPG sector a real contributor to overcoming this deep-rooted challenge affecting energy access, health, and gender disparity.

There needs to be a synergy in the Gas connection with the Electricity connection.

Connecting the dots:

- Why having an LPG connection important for woman empowerment? In this regard, do you think Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana can make a difference? Examine. Also discuss its other advantages.

Centre may scrap University Grants Commission (UGC)

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Government policies and schemes; Education Reforms

In news:

- Government is set to replace UGC with a higher education commission by repealing the UGC Act, 1951.
- Government proposes to introduce new regulator - **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)**
- The focus of HECI will be on improving academic standards and the quality of Higher Education.
- The proposed commission will have 12 members appointed by the Central Government, apart from the chairperson and vice-chairperson.

What does the draft Higher Education Commission of India (Repeal of University Grants Commission Act) Act, 2018 contain?

- HECI Bill 2018 seeks to repeal UGC Act and provides for setting up of Higher Education Commission of India.
- The draft HECI bill takes away funding powers from the proposed regulator and gives it powers to ensure academic quality.
- In other words, unlike UGC, HECI will not have grant functions and would focus only on academic matters. The ministry will deal with the grant functions.
- 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.

UGC vs HECI

1 The UGC's regulatory power included quality assessment and giving grants. The HECI will just ensure academic quality while MHRD will give grants

2 The UGC conducted inspections to assess institutions. The HECI



will practically do away with these and shift to a regime of "transparent disclosures" instead

3 The UGC published lists of bogus institutions. The HECI will be empowered to shut down substandard institutions

Pic:

https://d39gegkjaqduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/06/28/DEL/Delhi/TH/5_01/7b5a094b_2205129_101_mr.jpg

UGC to be replaced with HECI

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Government policies and schemes; Education Reforms

Fast recap:

From previous article ([28th June 2018](#)), we know that –

- Government is set to replace UGC with HECI (HECI Bill 2018 seeks to repeal UGC Act, 1951)
- Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) to focus on improving academic standards and the quality of Higher Education.
- Unlike UGC, HECI will not have grant functions and would focus only on academic matters. The ministry will deal with the grant functions.
- 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.

In today's article more differences have been highlighted –

Old versus new

How different is the proposed Higher Education Commission (HECI) from the present University Grants Commission (UGC)?

Financial and academic powers

UGC: It disburses grants to Central institutions out of its funds

Academic: UGC is mandated to promote and coordinate university education and determine and maintain standards of teaching, examination and research

HECI: No power to give grants

Academic: It will specify standards for grant of authorisation to a university or higher educational institution to commence its academic operations

Inspection

UGC

To assess financial needs or standards of teaching in an institution, UGC conducts periodic inspections

HECI

No inspections. HECI will prescribe norms on academic performance by higher educational institutions



Action on bogus institutions

UGC

Affiliations of colleges to universities can be terminated for contravention of its regulations. It can withhold grants to universities for violations of its regulations. It occasionally publishes lists of bogus institutions

HECI

It will be empowered to penalise or even shut down sub-standard institutions without affecting students' interests. If the management of the institution does not comply with the penalties, they can land in jail for up to three years.

Composition

UGC

Has a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman and 10 members appointed by the Central government, some ex-officio members and some from academia, industry. Chairman's retirement age is 65 years; term 5 years, two terms permitted

HECI

It shall comprise a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson and 12 members to be appointed by the Centre, including educationists and a member of the industry. Chairman's retirement age is 70, will hold office for five years

Disputes

UGC

In case of any dispute between the Centre and the UGC on policy, the Centre prevails

HECI

The Centre prevails

Regular staff

UGC

The UGC appoints its own staff. The present staff will be re-trained to work on fully digital mode – without physical files – at HECI

HECI

The HECI will have its own regular staff

Pic

link:

https://d39gegkjaqduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/06/29/CNI/Chennai/TH/5_13/02a39acb_ec29b1bc_101_mr.jpg

Draft law on revamping higher education governance: UGC to HECI

Introduction

- From previous articles, we know that – Government has planned to replace UGC with HECI (HECI Bill 2018 seeks to repeal UGC Act, 1951)
- We learnt about HECI and how it is different from old UGC (details provided below)
- In today's article we shall assess whether India's higher education sector is in desperate need of reform.
- Are the proposed provisions and regulator good?

Why India's higher education sector needs desperate reforms?

- consistently poor performance of Indian universities at the World University Rankings

- In spite of boasting of rich demographic dividend, rarely do 1 or 2 IITs figure in the top 100 institutes of the world.
- institutional shortcomings like the lack of quality research, less room for cross specialization, very less or non-existent industry exposure and so on.
- But clearly the genesis of all such issues can be somehow linked to our existing policy set up.

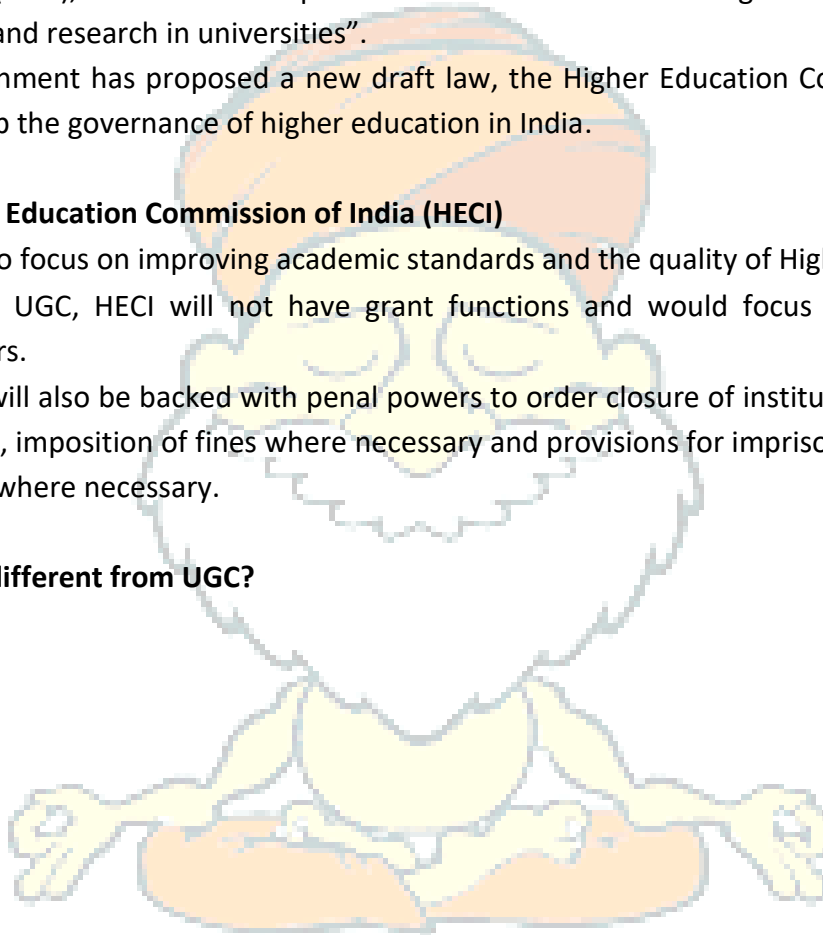
All these testify to the fact that the country's higher education regulator, the University Grants Commission (UGC), has not lived up to its mandate of "maintaining standards of teaching, examination and research in universities".

Hence, government has proposed a new draft law, the Higher Education Commission of India Bill, to revamp the governance of higher education in India.

About Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)

- HECI to focus on improving academic standards and the quality of Higher Education.
- 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.

How HECI is different from UGC?



Old versus new

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The transformation of the regulatory set up is guided by the following principles:

1. Less Government and more Governance:

- Downsizing the scope of the Regulator. No more interference in the management issues of the educational institutions.

2. Separation of grant functions:

- The grant functions would be carried out by the HRD Ministry, and the HECI would focus only on academic matters.

3. End of Inspection Raj:

- Regulation is done through transparent public disclosures, merit-based decision making on matters regarding standards and quality in higher education.

4. Focus on academic quality:

- HECI is tasked with the mandate of improving academic standards with specific focus on learning outcomes, evaluation of academic performance by institutions, mentoring of institutions, training of teachers, promote use of educational technology etc. It will develop norms for setting standards for opening and closure of institutions, provide for greater flexibility and autonomy to institutions, lay standards for appointments to critical leadership positions at the institutional level irrespective of University started under any Law (including State Law).

5. Powers to enforce :

- The Regulator will have powers to enforce compliance to the academic quality standards and will have the power to order closure of sub-standard and bogus institutions. Non-compliance could result in fines or jail sentence.

Highlights of the Higher Education Commission of India (Repeal of University Grants Commission Act) Bill 2018

1. The focus of the Commission will be on improving academic standards and quality of higher education, specifying norms for learning outcomes, lay down standards of teaching/research etc.
2. It will provide a roadmap for mentoring of institutions found failing in maintaining the required academic standards.
3. It shall have the power to enforce its decisions through legal provisions in the Act,
4. The Commission shall have the power to grant authorization for starting of academic operations on the basis of their compliance with norms of academic quality.
5. It will also have the powers to revoke authorization granting to a higher education institution where there is a case of wilful or continuous default in compliance with the norms / regulations.
6. It will also have the power to recommend closure of institutions which fail to adhere to minimum standards without affecting students' interest.
7. The Commission will encourage higher education institutions to formulate a Code of
8. Good Practices covering promotion of research, teaching and learning.
9. The constitution of the Commission is strengthened by the cooption of Chairpersons of regulatory bodies in higher education, namely the AICTE and the NCTE. Moreover the Chairpersons/Vice-Chairpersons and members will be scholars of eminence and standing in the field of academics and research, possessing leadership qualities, proven capacities for institution building and deep understanding of issues of higher education policy and practice.

10. The Bill also provides for the penal provisions, which albeit graded in nature, will cover withdrawal of power to grant degrees/ diplomas or direction to cease academic operations and in cases of wilful non-compliance, may result in prosecution sanction as per the Criminal Procedure Code with a punishment of imprisonment for a term which may extend up to 3 years.
11. There will be an Advisory Council to render advice to the Commission on matters concerning coordination and determination of standards in the country. This will be represented by the Chairpersons / Vice-Chairpersons of State Councils for Higher Education and chaired by the Union Minister for HRD.
12. The Commission will also specify norms and processes for fixing of fee chargeable by higher education institutions and advice the Central Government or the State Governments, as the case may be, regarding steps to be taken for making education affordable to all.
13. The Commission will monitor, through a national data base, all matters covering the development of emerging fields of knowledge and balanced growth of higher education institutions in all spheres and specially in promotion of academic quality in higher education.

In crux:

- HECI will not have grant functions and would focus only on academic matters. The ministry will deal with the grant functions.
- The separation between the regulator and the funder is in tune with the first principles of regulatory governance.
- The professed goal of the draft law is “autonomy for universities.” However, making the HRD ministry the fund dispersal agency strikes against this objective.
- It is true that academic institutions in the country have never been completely free from government interference. But with the HRD ministry controlling university funding directly, the dangers of political interference in the running of these institutions increase manifold.
- The proposed law also empowers the Centre to remove the HECI’s chairman and vice-chairman for reasons that include “moral turpitude” — the UGC act did not have such a provision — will raise questions about the government’s sincerity on giving autonomy to universities.

Connecting the dots:

- Higher education in India is faced with challenges that range from lack of institutional autonomy to heavy bureaucratization of policy making. In light of the given statement

and the recent 'Occupy UGC' protest, examine the need of having a new regulator Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) replacing UGC.

- With only few institutes of excellence amidst an ecosystem of mediocrity, the higher education system in India is in dire need of reforms. Do you agree. Comment.
- Why doesn't India have globally competitive institutions of education? Examine. What would it take to transform higher education in India? Analyse.

Reforming education system

Introduction

- The recent statistics on higher education in India are sobering.
- The government spends a third of its budget on education, and a further third of that on higher education. (Poor GDP expenditure on Education)

Concerns with the present education system

- Primary and secondary education are yet to be expanded for the common women.
- The children of the poorest of the poor, the ones most discriminated against on the basis of caste or religion, did not receive basic quality education, so they could not proceed to higher education.
- The ones who went did not receive quality education in the poor staffed government schools and therefore were not able to compete with the rich kids when it came to college.

Do you know?

- India is one of the countries in the world where the average good quality high school education costs more than five times the average good quality college education. In most civilised economies, the ratio is the opposite.
- Government schools account for 55 per cent of all students; government colleges for approximately 45 per cent of students.
- A private unaided higher secondary school in urban areas [NSSO survey 71st round, 2014; non-government figures inflated by 15 per cent to yield 2018 values] charges Rs 23,000. But when a person enters college he/she has to pay comparatively lesser amount as the fee.

Proposed solution

- Each student should pay for his/her college education the same he/she paid for high school education so that the government will also gain, at a minimum, Rs 13,000 crore a year, or nearly half the annual expenditure of the central government.

- Extra money should allow the government to redo the Indian education system from the primary level onwards. For example by transferring student vouchers to each child from the age of 6.
- This voucher allows each primary and secondary school student to go to a school of her choice. Government schools will be forced to perform — or perish. There will be a chain reaction to the existing defunct, feudal, and corrupt system of education in India

Arguments by the critics for the above concerns

- Why does the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009 not guarantee equal “quality” education to all? Why does it allow private schools to put a price tag on quality education? Why does it allow only restricted access to quality government schools like the Kendriya Vidyalayas?
- In most civilised economies the cost of high school education is less than the college education because in these countries, the state takes responsibility for school education. In Sweden, Netherlands, Switzerland, Norway and Canada, the enrolment in state-funded schools is as high as 80 per cent to 95 per cent.
- A voucher system legitimises and reinforces the idea that, instead of being a “public good”, school education is a commodity for sale. Government schools cannot be given the option to “perform or perish”. They must be supported to perform.
- Students from disadvantaged backgrounds face greater challenges in clearing IIT JEE and NEET because of the inability of our school curricula to meet the demands of these entrance examinations, and hence the reliance on extremely expensive coaching institutes.
- If the government schools continue to be of poor quality, the non-elite will always find it difficult to reach higher education. Instead, public-funded higher education institutions, already being pushed to generate their own income, will be encouraged to prefer those who can pay.

Way ahead

- It is important to remember that students from socially and economically disadvantaged sections continue to face disadvantages in higher education. The increase in suicides among students coming from these sections is alarming.
- Poor quality government schools make higher education out of reach for non-elite. That’s the real problem, not public-funded universities
- The educational spaces that remain equal and socially just should be kept away from the forces of evil market

Connecting the dots:

- Why doesn’t India have globally competitive institutions of education? Examine. What would it take to transform higher education in India? Analyse.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

US- Indo Pacific Command (INDOPACOM)

Key pointers:

- US military renamed its Pacific Command to US-Indo Pacific Command
- It signals the growing connectivity between India and Pacific Oceans
- The symbolic move came in recognition of the growing importance of the Indian Ocean in US strategic thinking.
- Henceforth, the US Pacific Command, or PACOM, which was formed after World War II, will be known as the Indo-Pacific Command.

America continues to invest vigorously in Indo-Pacific stability, bolstering the free and open rules-based international order that has enabled this region to grow and thrive for over 70 years.

Trump-Kim meet

Part of: GS prelims – International Relations

Key points:

- Summit was held in Sentosa island in Singapore
- North pledges to move towards denuclearization
- U.S. assures its old foe of security guarantees
- However sanctions on North Korea would stay in place for now

Operation Hodeidah: Arab coalition reaches out to India for its support

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – International Relations; India's Energy Security

In news:

- Arab coalition which is fighting to secure the **strategic Yemeni port of Hodeidah** is planning to reach out to India for its support.
- **Operation at Hodeidah** - main target is to fight terrorism that is a common enemy of both India and the UAE.

- Arab coalition expects that the operation will force the Houthi rebels in Yemen to sit down for a negotiated settlement of the conflict that has caused a major humanitarian disaster in Yemen.



Pic credits: <https://i1.wp.com/www.worshipmedia.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/saudi-led-coalition-makes-gains-in-fighting-south-of-key-yemeni-port-city-hodeida.jpg?w=780>

Do you know?

- In Yemen - the **Houthis** began as a theological movement preaching peace, but now find themselves at the centre of an international conflict.
- Houthis are Shia rebels.
- Yemen's port of Hodeidah was under the control of the Houthi rebels who are believed to be drawing support from Iran.
- The Arab coalition, led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, claims that the Iranian military has used the port to supply the Houthis with weapons and ammunition.
- Houthis are also being alleged of supporting pirates in the western Indian Ocean region.

[U.S. quits UN human rights body](#)

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – International Affairs; International institutions and fora

In news:

- United States announced its withdrawal from the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) terming it “hypocritical and self-serving.”
- Under Trump's presidency, the U.S. has withdrawn from the U.N. climate treaty and the UNESCO.

About UNHRC

- UNHRC is a United Nations body whose mission is to promote and protect human rights around the world.
- It is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system
- It meets at the UN Office at Geneva. The headquarters of UNHRC is in Geneva, Switzerland.
- UNHRC was established by the UN General Assembly in 2006. Then President George W. Bush was dismissive of the body. Under President Barack Obama, the U.S. joined it in 2009.

Caution: Don't get confused between UNHRC and UNCHR

- The United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) was a functional commission within the overall framework of the United Nations from 1946 until it was replaced by the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2006.
- On 15 March 2006, the UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to replace UNCHR with the UN Human Rights Council.
- Since the Council's inception in 2006, Human Rights Watch has been involved in strengthening its capacity to promote and protect human rights worldwide and be more responsive to the needs of victims of rights violations.

Trade war: US imports to attract high tariffs

Part of: GS Mains Paper II- International relations

In news:

- India notified higher tariffs on several items imported from the U.S.
- Agricultural products such as apples, almonds, chickpeas, lentils, and walnuts;
- Industrial inputs such as some grades of iron and steel products; -- to attract high tariffs
- Harley-Davidson motorcycles row – US tried to squeeze India to set zero import duty on Harleys

US and EU

- 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.
- The move confirms a tit-for-tat dispute that could escalate into a full trade war, particularly if U.S. President Donald Trump carries out his threat to penalise European cars.

US and China

- 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.
- However, both the countries negotiated with an agreement not to impose tariffs on each other, pulling back from the brink of a trade war.

Will US negotiate with other countries as well and make similar agreement as China's, to not impose tariffs on each other??

United Nations Commission on International Trade Law on Commercial Disputes

Introduction:

- India to participate in deliberations at the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) in New York
- UNCITRAL deliberation deals with an important issue concerning resolution of commercial disputes.

Dispute redressal mechanisms:

Commercial disputes are resolved not only through courts and arbitration but also through mediation.

- Arbitration:- It consists of hearing and determining of a dispute between parties by persons chosen by them.
- Conciliation:- It is the process of facilitating amicable settlement between parties. It can't be forced on a party not intending for conciliation.
- Mediation:- It is devised to assist disputants in reaching an agreement on their terms and conditions in arriving at a settlement. A "process whereby parties attempt to reach an amicable settlement of their dispute with the assistance of a third person (the mediator).

UNCITRAL deliberations will consider how these settlement agreements in disputes in international commercial transactions will be implemented by courts in different countries.

Key pointers:

- Mandatory pre-litigation mediation has been introduced in commercial disputes.
- Right now there are policy gaps with regard to mediation process involving cross-border disputes. Therefore adoption of the convention will address those gaps and eases mediation process which in turn helps in managing and resolving disputes that arise in their commercial transactions.

Why is this UNCITRAL important for India?

- India has lost substantial earnings as a result of international disputes being taken for resolution outside the country.
- Strengthening the dispute resolution policies will encourage dispute resolution in India, where the commercial relationship once began.
- The convention will link laws adopted by countries to recognise domestic mediation and extend them beyond their boundaries.
- Once UNCITRAL formulates principles, countries will have a consistent framework for enforcing mediation agreements made in other countries.
- The convention is opportune and will facilitate legal reform to ease dispute resolution.

Connecting the dots:

- Why having an international convention law on commercial disputes imperative for the Indian legal scenario? Discuss. Can you identify the existing alternative institutional arrangements for dispute resolution? Also discuss their merits and limitations.
- The pendency of huge number of commercial disputes cases in different courts of India demands a revolution in the field of alternate dispute resolution. Comment. What steps have been taken in this direction? Discuss.

FATF has laid out a 10-point action plan to Pakistan

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – International issue; Security

In news:

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) that monitors countries on action taken against terror-financing and money-laundering has decided to place Pakistan back on its watch list, or “greylist”.
- The decision is both appropriate and overdue, given Pakistan’s blatant violation of its obligations to crack down on groups banned by the Security Council 1267 sanctions committee. Their leaders like Hafiz Saeed and Masood Azhar continue to hold public rallies and freely garner support and donations.
- Under the 1267 sanctions ruling, banned entities can get no funds, yet Lakhvi received the bail amount, and the authorities have since lost track of him.
- Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has laid out a 10-point action plan to Pakistan for compliance with its guidelines.

Body blow

In a setback to Pakistan, global financial watchdog FATF placed it on the grey list for failing to curb terror financing

- The placement of Pakistan on the grey list could hurt its economy as well as its international standing
- China has defended its close ally, while stressing that the world should recognise "enormous efforts and sacrifices" made by Islamabad to combat terrorism



▪ **FATF:** An inter-governmental body established in 1989 to combat money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system

Pic:

https://d39gegkjaqduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/06/30/DEL/Delhi/TH/5_09/e3bb40ab_2210182_101mr.jpg

Important Value Additions:

About FATF

- It is an inter-governmental policy making body
- It aims to establish international standards for combating money laundering and terrorist financing.
- It was established in 1989 during the G7 Summit in Paris (France) to combat the growing problem of money laundering.
- It comprises over 39 countries.
- India is a member
- FATF Secretariat is housed at the headquarters of the OECD in Paris.
- Initially it was only dealing with developing policies to combat money laundering. But in 2001 its purpose was expanded to act against terrorism financing.

INDIA AND THE WORLD

India-Singapore: PM Modi's visits Singapore

Key pointers:

- PM Modi had visited Singapore.
- India has formalised a **Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA)** in nursing with Singapore which would allow nurses trained in seven nursing institutions across India to gain employment in the South-East Asian country.
- India and Singapore concluded the second review of **India-Singapore Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA)**.
- Both countries agreed to deepen their economic and defence ties as they signed eight agreements including one on logistics cooperation between their navies.

Fast recap

- PM Modi gave speech on India's defence and security outlook at the **Shangri-La dialogue in Singapore**.

The Shangri La Dialogue:

- It is the annual conclave in Singapore that brings together the region's defence ministers and senior military officials.
- SLD is a "Track One" inter-governmental security forum held annually by an independent think tank, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) and with the support of the Singapore government.
- For nearly two decades, the Shangri La Dialogue had provided a useful venue for the Indian defence establishment to engage its counterparts in Asia. Yet Delhi's participation in this forum has turned out to be erratic.

Don't forget - Shangri-La dialogue is run by the London-based think tank International Institute of Strategic Studies and funded and hosted by the Singapore government.

India-ASEAN: India needs to play a bigger role in the region

In news:

- PM Modi visited Singapore recently to focus on three increasingly interconnected themes — the strategic, economic and technological.

- On all three, there is a new dynamism to the east of India and Singapore is at the heart of it.

Rapid deterioration in US-China relations:

- Reacting to China's relentless militarisation of the South China Sea, Washington has uninvited Beijing from the world's largest maritime exercises, called **RimPac**, held every two years.
- A **trade war** between Washington and Beijing is also ongoing. There is no sign of an early resolution of the economic disputes between the world's two largest economies.
- The current conflict is not limited to the question of trade deficits but has also enveloped the **high technology sector**, which has seen growing interdependence between US and Chinese companies in recent decades.
- On the political front, Trump has accused Beijing of sabotaging the US efforts to resolve the **nuclear dispute with North Korea**. China, apparently, is quite anxious of being cut out of a political settlement in the Korean Peninsula brokered by the US.

Impact on Southeast Asian

- The Southeast Asian region had benefited immensely from traditional security cooperation with the US and the deepening economic engagement with a rising China in recent decades. The uncertain trajectory of US-China relations has cast a dark cloud over ASEAN's benign economic and political environment of the last three decades.
- Much of the region to the east of India is scrambling to adapt to the new dynamic between China and the US.

India and ASEAN: Issues

- Since the end of the Cold War, the ASEAN has sought to draw India into the region as a stabilising force. But it has been disappointed by the tentativeness of India's defence diplomacy in the region at the bilateral as well as multilateral levels. The government needs to bridge the gap between Delhi's rhetoric on being a **"net security provider"** in the region and the lack of concrete matching actions.
- The Trump Administration's approach to trade has taken the logic of globalisation for granted.
- As the South Asian region seeks to secure its interests through consolidation of trade agreements with other nations, it **finds India a frustrating interlocutor**. **Delhi is widely seen in the region as a spoiler in the trade negotiations.**

Way ahead:

- The government needs to assure the South Asian region India is flexible and prepared to bring the negotiations to an early closure.
- Concluding the long-pending review of the **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement with Singapore** will send out a positive signal to its Asian partners.
- Formal integration of the digital payments systems of the two countries is also planned. Once it is done, Indian holders of the **“RuPay” cards** will be able to make financial transactions in Singapore. Similarly, residents of Singapore could use the **local NETS cards** to make purchases in India and its e-commerce portals.
- India’s overly complex regulations prevent the full realisation of the potential for digital financial connectivity between India and Singapore. They also limit the possibilities for a greater alignment between the expansive innovation ecosystem in Singapore and the technology hubs in India.
- India needs to significantly improve the policy environment for innovation in India and discard the bureaucratic defensiveness about global engagement on advanced technologies.

An India that misses the current opportunities for technological advancement will inevitably diminish its ability to shape the regional economic, political and military order. The pace and effectiveness of adaptation to the current technological revolution will define the future power hierarchy in Asia.

Connecting the dots:

- Given rapid deterioration of relations between China and USA, it is time India plays a bigger role in the Southeast Asian region. Comment.

India-US Relations: No longer seeing eye to eye?

Introduction:

India and the U.S. “shares similar vision” of an open and secure Indo-Pacific region. However, their equation is not quite balancing out recently.

Concerns for US:

- According to US, Indian government views its relation with the U.S., Russia and China in equal measure.

- Last year, the NDA government had hinted at challenging the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and to back a Quadrilateral grouping of India, the U.S., Japan and Australia to maintain an open Indo-Pacific.
- Today, the Doklam issue has been buried, the BRI isn't as much a concern as before, and the government's non-confrontational attitude to the Maldives and Nepal indicates a softened policy on China in the neighbourhood.
- India's closer engagement with Chinese President Xi Jinping and a relationship reset with China after the Wuhan meeting.
- The Quad formation has been given less attention. India rejected an Australian request to join maritime exercises along with the U.S. and Japan this June. Indian Navy Chief also hinted that there was no plan to "militarise" the Quad.
- India's acceptance of military exercises with countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the Russia-China led grouping.
- Delay in signing of outstanding India-U.S. foundational agreements.
- India intends to continue energy deals with Iran and Venezuela in defiance of American sanctions.

Concerns for India:

There has been a surge in disputes between the two countries:

- Trade protectionism is clearly the other big point of divergence between India and the U.S.
- Several issues/disputes in World Trade Organisation (WTO)
- Disputes on the new American steel and aluminium tariffs
- the proposed cuts in H1B professional visas and cancellation of H4 spouse visas,
- disputes on India's tariffs and resistance to U.S. exports of dairy and pork products,
- disputes on Indian price reductions on medical devices, and
- Reserve Bank of India rules on data localisation on Indian servers for U.S. companies.
- The row over Harley-Davidson motorcycles, where US calling for India to scrap its 75-100% tariffs, given that the U.S. imposes zero tariffs on the import of Indian Royal Enfield motorcycles.
- India's plans to acquire the Russian S-400 missile system.

The biggest challenges to a common India-U.S. vision are now emerging from the new U.S. law called **Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act** and the **U.S.'s withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal** with the threat of more secondary sanctions.

Both actions have a direct impact on India, given its high dependence on defence hardware from Russia and its considerable energy interests in Iran.

Conclusion:

From the above differences, it is equally clear that the India-U.S. equation isn't balancing out quite the way it did last year.

Connecting the dots:

- India-US trade relation holds huge potential. However the key to tap this potential lies in focusing on reaping low hanging fruits rather than trying to address major concerns. Discuss.

U.S. nod for six more Apaches

In news:

U.S. State Department has approved the sale of six additional AH-64 Apache attack helicopters to India. The Army will operate them.

Key points: Defence deals between India and US

- AH-64 Apache attack helicopters
- Chinook heavy-lift helicopters
- C-130J Hercules
- M777 howitzer
- Harpoon anti-ship missile system

India and US: four foundational agreements

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – International Relations; India and the world

Key focus areas:

- India and US to conclude the **Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)**, one of the four foundational agreements that helps the U.S. to intensify its defence cooperation with a partner nation.
- The four foundational agreements are - Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), COMCASA, General Security Of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA).
- The U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) was recently renamed **Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM)**, symbolic of the significance U.S. attaches to India in the region.
- Apart from the foundational agreements, the U.S. is also keen on a broad based **intelligence-sharing agreement** with India as the two countries have vastly expanded their counter-terror cooperation. **(needs signing of BECA)**

- As part of improving high tech cooperation, India and the U.S. announced the ambitious **Defence Technology and Trade Initiative** and India was designated a major defence partner. But it has not made any progress.

Important Value Additions:

Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) :

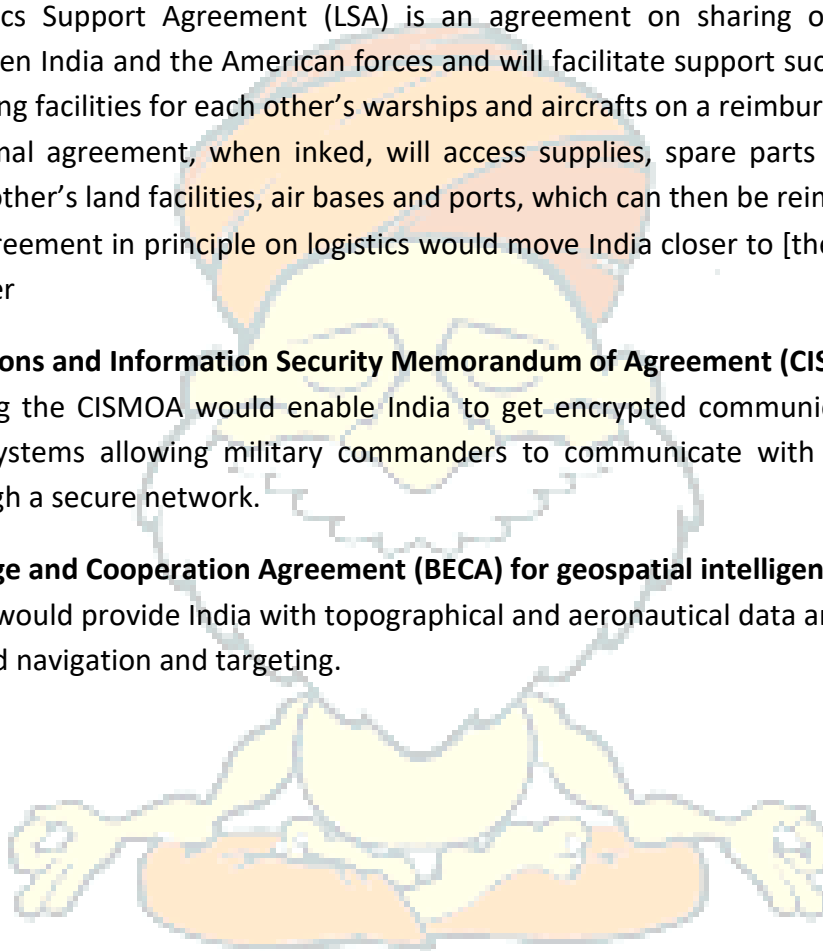
- Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) is fine tuned version of Logistics Support Agreement (LSA) is an agreement on sharing of military logistics between India and the American forces and will facilitate support such as refuelling and berthing facilities for each other's warships and aircrafts on a reimbursable basis.
- A formal agreement, when inked, will access supplies, spare parts and services from each other's land facilities, air bases and ports, which can then be reimbursed.
- An agreement in principle on logistics would move India closer to [the] US as a strategic partner

Communications and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA):

- Signing the CISMOA would enable India to get encrypted communications equipment and systems allowing military commanders to communicate with aircraft and ships through a secure network.

Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) for geospatial intelligence:

- BECA would provide India with topographical and aeronautical data and products, which will aid navigation and targeting.



High-stake agreements

Of the three foundational defence pacts between India and the United States, only one has been signed

COMCASA: The Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement facilitates transfer of encrypted communication systems, and is a key requirement for the U.S. to share high tech military hardware

COMCASA and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (**BECA**), which facilitates exchange of geospatial information, are pacts not signed yet due to severe criticism

- It was feared that signing these agreements would mean compromising India's age-old military ties with Russia and access to their weaponry systems

LEMOA: Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement. India signed the pact in 2016. The agreement gives militaries of both the nations access to each other's military facilities, without making it automatic or obligatory, mostly for the purposes of refuelling and replenishment



https://d39gegkjaqduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/06/19/DEL/Delhi/TH/5_11/2d2e188a_2183360_101_mr.jpg

Do you know?

- COMCASA and BECA are the two foundational agreements that India is yet to sign.
- It has already signed the General Security Of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA).
- The most significant of them is LEMOA, which gives both nations access to each other's military facilities. But it does not make it automatic or obligatory.
- The U.S. has been engaging India since 2002 on the foundational agreements, but successive governments have been wary of giving in to the U.S. demands.

US "zero-tolerance" policy on illegal immigration

Part of: GS Mains II – International Relations; India and the World

In news:

- Several people from South Asia, including many from India, have been detained by U.S. immigration authorities at a federal prison in Oregon for illegally entering the country.
- Trump administration's **"zero-tolerance" policy on illegal immigration** has resulted in sweeping measures such as separation of children from their families.

Fast recap: India US areas of concerns

- We have read that US not happy with India's growing engagement with the U.S., Russia and China in equal measure.
- India not admitting Quadrilateral grouping or less attention given by India towards Quad.
- India's closer engagement with Chinese President Xi Jinping and a relationship reset with China after the Wuhan meeting.
- India's acceptance of military exercises with countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).
- Delay in signing of outstanding India-U.S. foundational agreements. (In previous article we covered all 4 foundational agreements)
- Several issues/disputes in World Trade Organisation (WTO); Trade protectionism; Disputes on the new American steel and aluminium tariffs
- proposed cuts in H1B professional visas and cancellation of H4 spouse visas
- disputes on Indian price reductions on medical devices
- Harley-Davidson motorcycles row - US calling for India to scrap its 75-100% tariffs
- India's plans to acquire the Russian S-400 missile system

U.S. postpones 2+2 dialogue with India

Part of: GS Mains Paper II- International relations; India and the World

In News:

- 2+2 dialogue involving the defence and foreign ministers of India and the United States has been postponed.
- This was the second time that USA has postponed the maiden 2+2 dialogue with India.

Rift between India and US: Fast recap

- **On Iran Sanctions:** India had refused to cut down on all oil supplies from Iran. In other words, India is unwilling to accept US diktat on stopping all oil imports from Iran
- **On India's plans to acquire the Russian S-400 missile system:** Indo-US ties are also being tested over defence supplies from Russia including S-400 missile defence system and impending sanctions if India went ahead with the purchase.
- **Trade protectionism of Trump administration** has forced India to impose retaliatory measures. We recently read that India has notified higher tariffs on several items imported from the U.S.

- **Several issues/disputes in World Trade Organisation (WTO);** Trade protectionism; Disputes on the new American steel and aluminium tariffs; disputes on Indian price reductions on medical devices
- **Harley-Davidson motorcycles row** – US calling for India to scrap its 75-100% tariffs

Multiple engagements: Indian diplomacy

Background:

In his keynote address to the Shangri La Dialogue (SLD) in Singapore, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had articulated India's geopolitical conception of the Indo-Pacific.

As India becomes a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the PM will have an opportunity to expand on India's idea of Eurasia at the annual summit of the organisation in Qingdao, China.

SLD and SCO:

Like the two ideas — Indo-Pacific and Eurasia — the SLD and SCO are quite different. The SLD is a forum that brings together the Asian defence establishments and the strategic community. It is increasingly preoccupied with the sharpening maritime conflicts in the Indo-Pacific.

The SCO is an effort by China and Russia to consolidate a continental coalition in the heart of Asia.

India's engagement in all directions:

India is one of the few powers straddling the maritime and continental coalitions.

- Barely a day before PM Modi travels to the SCO summit, senior Indian officials met with their counterparts from the US, Japan and Australia in Singapore to offer an endorsement of the Indo-Pacific conception.
- India's engagement with the US and Japan (the triad) has steadily advanced through this decade.
- India continues to sit with the Russians and Chinese in a trilateral forum as well as the BRICS with Brazil and South Africa.

India is not the only one that embarks on partnerships that appear contradictory. All countries do it.

Engaging in both directions:

The principal question for Indian foreign policy is not whether India should engage both sides. It is about how best it can maximise the gains in both directions. Delhi must look for stronger ties with both the maritime and continental powers.

- Most of India's trade, investment, technology and cultural ties are currently with the maritime powers. It is in the Western world, especially in the Anglo-Saxon states, that the Indian diaspora has flourished. The US and the European powers are also increasingly important security partners for India.
- The continental construct, in contrast, is about managing India's intractable problems. Unresolved territorial disputes with China and Pakistan have resulted in the militarisation of its northern borders and blocked India's access to the inner Asian space.

SCO: New opportunities

- The SCO opens possibilities for limiting the conflict with China through greater regional cooperation on countering terrorism, religious extremism and pacifying conflict zones in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- The SCO offers a platform to construct sustained high-level engagement with Central Asia and strengthen the traditional collaboration with Russia in inner Asia.

Conclusion:

Inevitable contradictions may arise from the dual engagement. Indian diplomacy thus needs to manage contradictions. India needs a balancing act between the growing strategic partnership with the US on the one hand, and its renewed effort at holding onto Russia and advancing the complex relationship with China.

Connecting the dots:

- India needs a balancing act between the growing strategic partnership with the US on the one hand, and its renewed effort at holding onto Russia and advancing the complex relationship with China. Discuss.

18th SCO summit in Qingdao

Part of: Prelims and Mains GS Paper II- International relations; India and its neighbours

Fast recap: About SCO

- SCO is a Eurasian political, economic, and military organisation.

- It was founded in 2001 in Shanghai by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
- The headquarters in Beijing, China.
- June 2017, at a summit in Astana, India and Pakistan officially joined SCO as full-fledged members.
- Currently, China is the host and chair of the SCO.

In news:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain met in 18th SCO summit in Qingdao.
- After engaging with China in Wuhan and Qingdao, India appeared to be **rebalancing its ties with Pakistan** in order to build bridges with Eurasia, within the framework of the **eight-nation SCO**.
- India is exploring the possibility of connectivity to Central Asia through the Pakistan-Afghan corridor, under the SCO framework.
- SCO has resolved to fight terrorism, separatism and extremism with a renewed vigour in the next three years, and called for a unified global counter-terrorism front under the coordination of the UN [**UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism**].
- In the summit, the leaders also talked about the special role of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure in the fight against “the three evils” — terrorism, extremism and separatism — to ensure regional security.



Tackling terror

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation on Sunday vowed to work to stop the spread of terrorist ideology and eliminate factors and conditions that facilitate terrorism and extremism, acknowledging that there can be no justification to any act of terrorism or extremism

Plan of action

- Special role of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure in the fight against 'the three evils' – terrorism, extremism and separatism – to ensure regional security
- Fulfill the requirements of specialised UN Security Council resolutions to counter any form of financing of terrorism and providing material and technical support to it
- Acknowledge the growing threat from foreign terrorists who return from West Asia to their countries or find shelter in third countries to continue their terrorist and extremist activity within the bloc
- Call to youth not to get influenced by extremist ideologies



Clarion call: Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the plenary session of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Qingdao on Sunday. ■ PTI

The member states strongly condemn all forms of terrorism and consider it necessary to make efforts to promote the creation of a unified global counter-terrorism front with the central coordinating role of the UN on the basis of international law, without politicisation or double standards

QINGDAO DECLARATION

Pic

link:

https://d39gegkjaqduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/06/11/DEL/Delhi/TH/5_11/2e527882_2165210_101_mr.jpg

SECURE

PM Modi also spelt out his new mantra applicable to the SCO, which he termed as SECURE:

- 'S' for security of citizens,
- 'E' for economic development,
- 'C' for connectivity in the region,
- 'U' for unity,
- 'R' for respect of sovereignty and integrity, and
- 'E' for environmental protection.

Do you know?

- India and Pakistan relations have been strained after an attack on an Army camp in Uri in Jammu and Kashmir by Pakistan-based terror organisations in 2016.

[India refuses to endorse China's Belt and Road Initiative](#)

Part of: Prelims and Mains GS Paper II- International relations; India and its neighbours

Key pointers:

- More than a year after boycotting the Belt and Road Forum in Beijing, **India again refused to endorse the ambitious Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.
- After the two-day SCO summit, the eight full members signed **the Qingdao joint declaration** but India was missing from the section that referred to the BRI.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that India welcomed connectivity projects that respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations.

Background:

- The BRI, proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013, is aimed at building a trade and infrastructure network connecting Asia with Europe and Africa along ancient trade routes.
- India has staunchly opposed the project citing the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) – an important part of the BRI – that goes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).
- Citing its opposition to the CPEC, India had skipped the Belt and Road Forum in May last year, which 29 state heads had attended.

Rise in India-ASEAN naval games

Part of: Prelims and Mains GS Paper II and III - International relations; India and the World; Defence and Security

In news:

India is instituting a series of bilateral and multilateral naval exercises with Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries as part of the increasing military-to-military cooperation. This is in addition to assisting the countries in capacity-building and sale of military hardware.

Key points:

- Navies of India and Indonesia to hold their first bilateral exercise in the Java Sea.
- India will stage a new trilateral exercise with Thailand and Singapore soon.
- Navy recently conducted maiden bilateral exercises with Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT)

- Naval exercise between India and Indonesia

- India has deployed INS Kulish, a Kora class missile corvette, and one Dornier maritime patrol aircraft in recent CORPAT exercise.

Maldives asks India to remove its helicopters from Maldives

Part of: Prelims and GS Mains Paper II – India and its neighbours; International Relations

In news:

- Maldives government led by Yameen made it clear that it would like India to remove copters located in Maldives.
- India had gifted two Dhruv advanced light helicopters in 2013, of which one was operated by the Indian Coast Guard and the other by the Indian Navy, manned by six pilots and a number of maintenance ground staff.
- Yameen government has alleged that tensions over the presence of the two Indian helicopters in two strategically important locations in the Laamu and Addu atolls have been growing.

Frayed ties

Relations between New Delhi and Male have been frayed since last year, when the Maldives rushed through a free trade agreement with China, and plummeted further after President Abdulla Yameen declared an Emergency in the country in February.

Downturn in India-Maldives ties

Part of: GS Mains Paper II – India and its neighbours; International Relations

In news:

- Applications for work permits of around 2,000 Indians are pending with the Maldivian Embassy.
- During February, Maldivian President Abdulla Yameen had ordered an Emergency, which India took a strong position against it.
- After that incident, the Maldives Immigration Authority has reportedly held up thousands of work permits to Indians.

Important Value Additions:

Key concerns:

- **Turbulent Maldivian politics:** Maldives continues its descent into political anarchy with democratic institutions facing an unabated onslaught under the authoritarian regime of President Abdulla Yameen.
- **Maldives growing “closeness” with China:** Both China and Pakistan stepping up their strategic inroads into the Maldives
- **Religious radicalization:** The island-nation (Maldives) is being radicalized by the Saudi funds and influence
- **ISIS threat:** Growing Islamic radicalisation in the tiny island-nation of about four lakh people once known for its tolerant practices has many foreign governments, including India, deeply concerned.
- **No FTA with India:** Maldives and India do not have a Free Trade Agreement. However Maldives and China entered into Free Trade Agreement.
- Yameen government asked India to remove its Dhruv advanced light helicopters from Maldives (which India had gifted in 2013). Yameen government has alleged that tensions over the presence of the two Indian helicopters in two strategically important locations in the Laamu and Addu atolls have been growing.
- Work permits are not currently being issued to Indian Nationals.

India-Maldives: India cuts supply of essential commodities to Maldives

Part of: GS Mains Paper II – India and its neighbours; International Relations

Key points:

- Based on the 1981 trade agreement, India exports certain essential commodities to Maldives, whose quantities are notified every year.
- These items are exempt from any restrictions or prohibitions on Indian exports during the period of notification.
- Till last year, India had allocated largely whatever amount the Maldives government had proposed.
- However, in the latest notification, **India has lowered the limits on the export of certain essential commodities** such as potatoes, onions, and eggs.
- The notification with a sharply reduced amount of exports of essential commodities has been issued in a **backdrop in the downturn of relations**.

Do you know?

- According to Article 9 of the bilateral trade agreement, quota allocations shall be finalised by the Indian government “with due regard to the supply availability and the overall need of the Government of the Republic of Maldives”.

Fast recap:

Relations between India and Maldives have soured somewhat in recent times. The following are key concerns –

- **Turbulent Maldivian politics:** Maldives under the authoritarian regime of President Abdulla Yameen.
- **Maldives growing “closeness” with China:** Both China and Pakistan stepping up their strategic inroads into the Maldives
- **Religious radicalization:** Maldives is being radicalized by the Saudi funds and influence
- **ISIS threat:** Growing Islamic radicalisation in the tiny island-nation of about four lakh people once known for its tolerant practices has many foreign governments, including India, deeply concerned.
- **No FTA with India:** Maldives and India do not have a Free Trade Agreement. However Maldives and China entered into Free Trade Agreement.
- **Yameen government asked India to remove its Dhruv advanced light helicopters** from Maldives (which India had gifted in 2013). Yameen government has alleged that tensions over the presence of the two Indian helicopters in two strategically important locations in the Laamu and Addu atolls have been growing.
- **Work permits are not currently being issued to Indian Nationals.**

Countering China in the Indo-Pacific

Introduction:

Security cooperation between Japan, India, the US and Australia is on the rise. At the recently concluded Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the defence ministers of Japan, the US and Australia reiterated their shared commitment to the Indo-Pacific region. It was closely followed by Japan-India-US Malabar exercises in Guam. Japan, India, the US and Australia will also join Rimpac (Rim of the Pacific) exercises.

Turning Indo-Pacific security cooperation into a “counter China strategy”:

There are three possible ways-

1. Focusing on the link between Indo-China border area and the East China Sea.

If India cooperates with Japan and the US, it will not need to deal with all the Chinese fighter jets at once, because China is likely to keep some of its fighter jets to defend its eastern front. Japan and the US are willing to support India's efforts to modernize its defence in the Indo-China border area.

The US has already exported transport planes, attack helicopters, heavy-lift helicopter, ultra-light howitzers and carbines for Indian forces. Since 2014, Japan has invested in India's strategic road project in the North-East region.

There is a high possibility that in the near future India will be the most influential sea power in the Indian Ocean Region. Japan, the US and Australia will then be able to deploy more military force in the East China Sea and South China Sea to maintain the military balance against China. Therefore, these three countries should share the know-how related with anti-submarine capabilities and enhance India's military preparedness.

2. Developing infrastructure in countries of the region.

Bangladesh has already chosen Japan's Martabali port project instead of China's Sonadia port project. If the Trincomalee port project—involving Japanese assistance—in Sri Lanka succeeds, then the importance of China's Hambantota port will decline. Similarly, the Chabahar port project in Iran can mitigate the importance of the Chinese Gwadar port in Pakistan. The Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC), a result of Indo-Japanese cooperation, will also counter China's growing influence in Africa.

Japan, India, the US and the Australia can collaborate to support South-East Asian countries in the South China Sea.

3. The South-East Asian countries need to beef up their military power.

Japanese investment in India's strategic road project in the latter's North-East region will help increase India-South-East Asia trade. There is a possibility that growing India-South-East Asia trade could reduce China's influence in South-East Asia.

Conclusion:

Security cooperation among Japan, India, the US and Australia is increasingly reasonable. The time has come to proactively further this cooperation to ensure prosperity and stability in the whole of Indo-Pacific.

Connecting the dots:

- Security cooperation among Japan, India, the US and Australia can help counter China in the Indo-Pacific region. Comment.

India and Italy: to revitalise bilateral ties

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – International Relations; India and the world

In news:

- India and Italy agreed to boost cooperation in counter-terrorism and cybersecurity
- Joint Commission for Economic Cooperation (JCEC) to be held in India - to augment collaboration in areas of mutual benefit
- Italy is partner country at the Tech Summit in India (to be held in Nov 2018) - would boost cooperation in technology and innovation.
- The year also marks the 70th year of establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

India and China: China pushes “5 C” approach

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – International Relations; India and its neighbours

In news:

- China’s Ambassador to India suggested a **“5 C” approach** to bettering India-China ties with more “communication, cooperation, contacts, coordination, and control (and management of differences)”.
- China to import more sugar, non-Basmati rice and high-quality medicines from India to reduce trade imbalance.
- A new bilateral target has been set for \$100 billion by 2022.
- India agreed to facilitate the **establishment of Bank of China branch in Mumbai**.

‘India for rules-based world order’; Concept of Strategic Autonomy

Part of: GS Mains II – International Relations; India and the World

In news:

Highlights of President Kovind’s speech in Greece –

- Articulating the principles of Indian foreign policy, President Ram Nath Kovind said India wants to be a **rule framer in a multi-polar world**.
- President said – India is committed to an international order marked by robust, rules-based multi-lateral institutions; by multi-polarity in international governance; and by investment and connectivity projects that are viable, sustainable.
- President indicated that India **to maintain a non-aligned attitude** towards major power blocks in the world and also **maintain multilateral commitments**.
- He also expressed the aspiration to be “**strategic autonomous**” – the concept which was also presented by PM Modi during the recent Shangri La Dialogue in Singapore.
- President urged Europe to join hands with India which is a “**responsible power**”, to **preserve globalisation**.

What is ‘strategic autonomy’?

- Strategic autonomy denotes the *‘ability of a state to pursue its national interests and adopt its preferred foreign policy without being constrained in any manner by other states’* (possessing overwhelmingly superior power).

Does India possess strategic autonomy?

- Theoretically, only a lone superpower in a unipolar international order truly possess strategic autonomy since it is the only country that would wield overwhelming economic, industrial, military and technological capabilities and thus the power to resist pressure from all other states.
- Even superpowers become susceptible to the pressures exerted by their superpower peers in bipolar or multipolar orders, which means that their ability to be strategically autonomous is not absolute but only relative.
- It follows from this that regional powers like India are destined to be even less strategically autonomous. While they may express the aspiration to be strategically autonomous, their ability and willingness to practice it are likely to be inconsistent and variable.
- They will resist external pressure to change their policy or moderate their interest on core issues of national security irrespective of the costs involved. In the case of India, prominent examples of core national interests are Jammu & Kashmir and nuclear weapons.
- But under external pressure, regional powers like India are likely to alter their policy or moderate their interest on non-core security issues if the associated costs are calculated

to be disproportionate to the benefits that may accrue from persisting with the preferred policy or interest. A good recent example in this regard was India's decision to vote against Iran in the International Atomic Energy Agency. This decision was driven by the calculation that antagonising the United States, which was pressing India to vote against Iran, would compromise the benefits flowing from improved bilateral relations with America including in the nuclear arena.

Is strategic autonomy good?

- While strategic autonomy is the ideal that every state aspires to, most are unlikely to either possess the necessary power capabilities or enjoy a favourable international environment to practice it.
- A bipolar or a multipolar order is likely to provide greater diplomatic room for manoeuvre and thus help avoid the high costs of pursuing a policy or interest.
- Given this reality, making strategic autonomy concrete thing could prove more harmful than beneficial.

Crux:

- India aspires to be a rule framer and calls for rules-based world order.
- India wants to maintain a non-aligned attitude and also meet multilateral commitments.
- India also aspires to be “strategic autonomous” - pursue its national interests and adopt its preferred foreign policy without being constrained in any manner by other states.

Significance of SCO for India

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Qingdao, China was the first SCO summit attended by India as a full-fledged member.

Do you know?

- SCO grew out of the Shanghai Five grouping — of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan — which was set up in 1996 to resolve boundary disputes between China and each of the four other members.
- It admitted Uzbekistan in 2001, re-christened itself the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and broadened its agenda to include political, economic and security cooperation.
- It admitted India and Pakistan as full members in 2017.

Significance for India

- SCO now has about half the world's population and a quarter of its GDP. Its boundary extends southwards to the Indian Ocean.
- The SCO's relevance for India lies in geography, economics and geopolitics. India has important **economic and security interests** in these countries.
- With India having complicated ties with neighbours, it makes sense to **strengthen ties with its neighbours' neighbours**.
- With Pakistan joining the Organisation and Afghanistan and Iran knocking on the doors for membership, the logic of India's membership becomes stronger.
- **Expanding opportunities for India in Central Asia:** India's relations with Central Asian countries have been constrained by lack of overland access through Pakistan and Afghanistan/Iran, because of political and/or security reasons. SCO should help in this regard.
- Russian and Chinese officials suggested that harmonious cooperation in the SCO may **pave the way for an India-Pakistan rapprochement**, recalling that SCO membership had facilitated resolution of China's boundary disputes with Russia and Central Asian countries.

Challenging areas:

- The SCO is expected to nudge both countries to cooperate in sensitive areas. One example is the **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)** of the SCO, which coordinates cooperation for security and stability, through intelligence-sharing on criminal and terrorist activities. India and Pakistan have to find ways of cooperating in the RATS.
- **Defence cooperation** is another tricky area: enhanced linkages between armed forces is an SCO objective. India has agreed to participate in the SCO's counter-terrorism military exercises in Russia later this year, when Indian and Pakistani troops will operate together.
- Reconciling Indian and Pakistani perspectives in the **SCO's initiatives on Afghanistan** would be yet another challenge.
- The challenge for India — besides that of security and defence cooperation with Pakistan — may come from increasing Chinese dominance of the SCO.

The essence of a functioning multilateral framework is focusing on shared objectives and underplaying divergences.

Connecting the dots:

- What are the benefits that India accrues upon its full membership to SCO? Also discuss the challenges faced by the country upon such membership.

India- Seychelles: Assumption island naval base project stalled

Part of: GS Mains II – International Relations; India and the World

In news:

- Seychelles National Assembly will not ratify India's plans to build a naval base in the western Indian Ocean region.
- India had proposed to build a naval base on the strategically located Assumption island.
- Assumption Island is a small island in the Outer Islands of Seychelles north of Madagascar.
- Seychelles believe allowing Indian Naval base would infringe on the country's sovereignty.

Coast guard facility :

- Seychelles has indicated that instead of allowing India to run the base, it would like to develop a coast guard facility at the Assumption.
- The Indian project was to include a facility for Indian ships and an airstrip that would allow New Delhi to guard the energy lanes vital to India's economy.

India- Seychelles: Assumption island project

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – International Relations; India and the World

Key pointers:

- We had earlier read that - Seychelles National Assembly has refused to ratify the naval base that India has been planning to build on Assumption to provide a foothold in the western Indian Ocean.
- Seychelles believe allowing Indian Naval Military base would infringe on the country's sovereignty.
- After meeting Seychelles President Danny Faure, PM Modi announced that both the countries will continue to work together for the welfare of each other.
- However, it is not clear how both sides would take the project forward in the absence of a parliamentary ratification.

Highlights:

Seychelles President Danny Faure met PM Modi in India

- India has announced grant of \$100 million Line of Credit to Seychelles for the purchase of defence hardware. (especially to build its maritime capacity)
- Cooperation in carrying out hydrographical studies of the maritime region
- Exchange of necessary oceanic maps between two sides
- India gifted a Dornier aircraft to Seychelles.

Background:

- Diplomatic ties were established with Seychelles after its independence in 1976
- Seychelles is a small island country in the Indian Ocean comprising a group of 115 small island
- It has a population of 87,000
- Seychelles is a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society comprising of people of French, British, Indian, Iranian and Chinese descent.
- The country's strategic importance traces back to the Napoleonic era when Britain gained control over this island which straddled the trade route to the East Indies.

Defence Relation

- Seychelles has high strategic importance due to its proximity to global shipping and commerce lanes. It serves as a vital base to fight sea-terrorism and piracy.
- In 1986, India had executed '**Operation Flowers are Blooming**' in Seychelles, when on a request by then-President Rene, Prime minister Rajiv Gandhi instructed then Indian Chief of Naval Staff to dispatch the frigate **INS Vindhyagiri** to avert a coup.
- In 2009, on the request of Seychelles, India dispatched naval ships to patrol its exclusive economic zone and guard it against piracy. India has also helped Seychelles' armed forces in capacity building.
- In 2014, Indian Naval Ship **INS Tarasa** was gifted to Seychelles to help it improve its maritime security.
- Now, India gifted a **Dornier aircraft** to Seychelles.

India- Seychelles relations

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – International Relations; India and the World

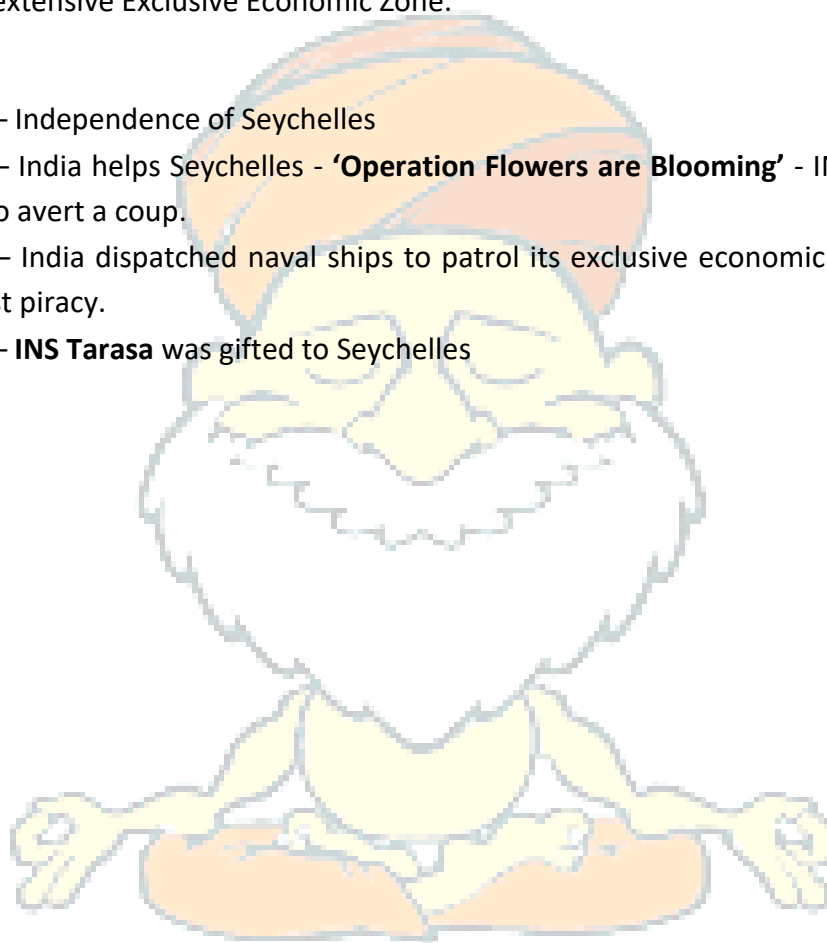
Fast Recap:

- Confusion continues over the cooperation in the development of Assumption Island.

- India has been planning to build naval base on Assumption to provide a foothold in the western Indian Ocean.
- Grant of \$100 million Line of Credit to Seychelles for the purchase of defence hardware.
- Cooperation in carrying out hydrographical studies of the maritime region.
- Exchange of necessary oceanic maps between two sides.
- India gifted a Dornier aircraft (built by HAL) to Seychelles.
- The aircraft would help to bolster the coastal surveillance of Seychelles and the policing of its extensive Exclusive Economic Zone.

Background:

- 1976 – Independence of Seychelles
- 1986 – India helps Seychelles - '**Operation Flowers are Blooming**' - INS Vindhyagiri was sent to avert a coup.
- 2009 – India dispatched naval ships to patrol its exclusive economic zone and guard it against piracy.
- 2014 – **INS Tarasa** was gifted to Seychelles



ECONOMY

RBI MPC Policy Highlights and REPO RATE

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains Paper III – Indian Economy - Monetary Policy; RBI Reforms and its functions

In News:

- The six-member monetary policy committee (MPC) of the RBI increased the repo rate by 25 basis points to 6.25%.
- This is the first rate hike in four-and-a-half years; the last was in January 2014.

Key pointers:

- **Reasons for increase of repo rate** – RBI raised rates after 4.5 years as **crude price surges** and due to **inflation**.
- **Immediate effect** – RBI lends money to commercial banks at higher rate and banks will raise their lending rates. Since, lending rates are high, people abstain from borrowing and consequently it leads to decrease in money supply in economy and decrease in inflation rate.

Do you know?

What is Repo rate?

- Repo rate is the rate at which the central bank of a country (RBI in case of India) lends money to commercial banks in the event of any shortfall of funds. Repo rate is used by monetary authorities to control inflation.
- RBI increases the repo rate during inflation and decreases it during deflation.

Important value additions:

Let's see what happens when RBI increases and decreases Repo rate –

When RBI increases repo rate

- In order to control excess money supply and inflation in the economy, central bank increases repo rate and lends to commercial banks at a higher rate.
- Now, because of increased repo rate, funds come to commercial banks at a higher cost, so in order to cover those increased costs of acquiring funds, commercial banks **increase their lending rates for loans** and advances.
- Since, lending rates are increased, people abstain from borrowing and postpone their purchases thereby decreasing demand for products and services, consequently it leads to decrease in money supply in economy and decrease in inflation rate.

When RBI decreases repo rate:


- In order to cure depression and lack of effective demand, central bank decreases repo rates and lends to commercial banks at a reduced rate.
- Because of reduced rates, commercial banks can acquire funds at a lower cost and in order to acquire new consumers and markets they pass their benefit of lower cost to consumers by decreasing their prime lending rates on loans and advances.
- Since, lending rates are reduced by banks, credit is cheap and this induces people to venture in new business activities and purchase of capital goods leading to increased demand for capital goods and increased employment rates.

Key takeaways from RBI MPC Policy


- Repo rate: 6.25%
- Reverse repo: 6%
- FY19 growth projection retained at 7.4 %
- RBI increased its inflation projection to 4.8%-4.9%
- It sees major upside risk to the inflation path as crude prices rose 12%
- Says volatile crude oil prices adds uncertainty to its inflation outlook
- Geo-political risks, financial market volatility, trade protectionism to impact domestic growth
- Adherence to budgetary targets by the Centre and states will ease upside risks to the inflation outlook

Hawkish stance


Highlights of the RBI's second Bi-monthly Monetary Policy Statement, 2018-19



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Key lending rate (repo) up by 0.25% to 6.25% ▪ Rate hike is the first in four-and-a-half-years ▪ Reverse repo rate at 6%, bank rate at 6.5% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Growth projection retained at 7.4% for 2018-19 ▪ Retail inflation at 4.8-4.9% for April-September ▪ Volatile crude oil prices add 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to uncertainty on the inflation outlook ▪ Geopolitical risks, market volatility, trade protectionism to have impact on domestic growth
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A neutral stance leaves all options open... other central banks also do the same – URJIT PATEL, RBI Governor



Pic

link:

https://d39gegkjaqduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/06/07/DEL/Delhi/TH/5_01/75e6c72c_2154768_101_mr.jpg

Co-op banks can become small finance banks

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains Paper III – Indian Economy - Monetary Policy; RBI Reforms and its functions

In news:

- RBI has decided to allow urban co-operative banks (UCB) to convert into small finance banks (SFB)
- Detailed scheme will be announced shortly.
- UCBs currently face regulation by both the RBI and the respective State governments. By turning into SFBs, they will be regulated only by the RBI.

UN India-NITI Aayog Investor Consortium for Women Entrepreneurs

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Indian Economy; Inclusive development

In news:

- The UN India Business Forum and the Women Entrepreneurial Platform of NITI Aayog formed a consortium to reduce gender disparities in start-up investments.
- The consortium aims to strengthen women's entrepreneurship by creating an enabling ecosystem for investments.
- Women entrepreneurs will be identified through key partners, including WEP, UN Women, and UNDP.

Insolvency Code: what's new

Part of: GS prelims - Indian Economy

In news:

- Last week, President Ram Nath Kovind gave his nod to promulgate the Insolvency and Bankruptcy code (Amendment) Ordinance 2018.
- In a major change, homebuyers would now be treated as financial creditors or, in other words, on par with banks.
- The amendment enables homebuyers (either as an individual or group) to initiate insolvency proceedings against errant builders.

- Homebuyers shall have the right to be represented in the committee of creditors (CoC), which takes the key decision regarding revival of the company or its liquidation.

Just know that homebuyers now treated as financial creditors.

Terms of reference of the 15th Finance Commission: Issues

Introduction:

- Most federations in the world have arrangements for the mobilisation and devolution of resources.
- In India, the Constitution provides for the appointment of a Finance Commission every five years to recommend methodology to share resources such that the fiscal space of the constituents, especially the States, is well protected.
- The terms of reference of the 15th Finance Commission are thus a matter of utmost importance to the resources available to the States of India.

Concerns:

The terms of reference of this Commission have created apprehension among States about principles of fairness and equity in the distribution of public resources for development.

Vital for unity:

- The foremost objective of the Finance Commission is an equitable distribution of financial resources between the two units of the Union.
- In the allocation of duties (7th schedule of the constitution) between the Centre and the States, fundamental tasks of enhancing human development, income growth, livelihoods, and protecting and sustaining the environment are entrusted to the States. However, although these major tasks of nation-building are the duty of the States, the resources to finance them are substantially controlled by the Centre.

Issues:

Asymmetry in the federal system:

- The States in India today neither have the resources to fulfil their tasks as laid down in the Constitution, nor do they have the right to raise such resources. There is thus a great asymmetry in India's federal system.

- The Centre's capacity to mobilise resources is far greater than that of the States, but the latter are required to undertake development expenditures that far exceed their revenue generating capabilities.
- The Constitution of India entrusts the Finance Commission with the responsibility of addressing this anomaly.

In the wake of demonetisation and GST:

- The devolution of resources by the 15th Finance Commission assumes further significance in the current environment, in which the finances of States have received a double blow in the form of demonetisation and the Goods and Services Tax (GST).
- The freedom of States to raise resources has been restricted by the introduction of the GST. They now have hardly any major tax left with them to make a difference to State resources.

Demographic differences:

- Using the population data of 2011 as the base for tax devolution should not reduce the allocation of resources to States that have successfully reduced their rate of population growth.
- These States have incurred huge fiscal costs in order to achieve a lower population growth and healthy demographic indicators. They have made substantial investments on education, health and directly on family welfare programmes.
- Many States of India today have achieved a replacement rate of growth of population or have gone below that rate in a short span of time. An immediate effect of this is a sharp rise in the proportion of elderly in the population. The care of the elderly is the responsibility of State governments.
- The enhanced costs of such care must be considered by the Commission in making its awards and in deciding the population criterion to be used.

Beyond the constitutional mandate:

The current terms of reference go far beyond the constitutional mandate of the Finance Commission.

- They intensify efforts to use the Finance Commission as an instrument of fiscal consolidation and to impose the ideological and economic agenda of the Central government on the States.
- It is not the task of a Finance Commission to recommend "road maps for fiscal management" or to impose its perception of what policies are good for the people of the States.

That is for democratically elected State governments to decide.

- The terms of reference explicitly privilege the “committed expenditures” of the Centre.

Performance-based incentives:

- The terms of reference are unprecedented in asking the 15th Finance Commission to consider proposing performance-based incentives beyond those relating to fiscal responsibility, population and devolution to local bodies.
- This reflects the viewpoint and ideological inclinations of the Central government and is an attempt to micro-manage the fiscal domain of the State governments.
- For the Finance Commission to propose “measurable performance-based-incentives” is an attack on the federal structure mandated by the Constitution.
- It is not the duty of the Finance Commission to venture into the realm of day-to-day governance. The elected governments of States will decide what policies are appropriate for our people.

Conclusion:

India’s great wealth rests in its diversity. To recognise this diversity is also to recognise that States will follow diverse paths of development.

The Finance Commission must facilitate diversity and a democratic path of development by respecting principles of equity and fairness in allocating resources between the Centre and States in India.

Connecting the dots:

- Various concerns have been raised regarding the Terms of Reference of the 15th Finance Commission. Discuss these concerns.

Terms of reference of the 15th Finance Commission: Issues Part II

Introduction:

A reliable system of intergovernmental fiscal transfers is the key to a viable and stable federal polity.

After the abolition in 2014 of the Planning Commission, which played a critical role in the Indian transfer system, the UFC has emerged as the principal agency to handle this delicate task. Article 280(3) and its first three clauses clearly spell out the core duties of the UFC: tax devolution, grants-in-aid, and augmenting the resources of panchayats and municipalities.

Concern:

Over the years, the open-ended subclause, 280(3)(d), that provides for “any other matter... in

the interests of sound finance”, has been exemplified in the Terms of References of recent UFCs.

The Terms of Reference of the 15th FC have attracted considerable public debate. Some States even held ‘conclaves’, and six of them submitted a memorandum to the President to alter clauses which allegedly violate constitutional propriety, long-standing precedents, and the “fiscal rights” of States.

Reference article: Terms of reference of the 15th Finance Commission: Issues
<https://iasbaba.com/2018/04/iasbabas-daily-current-affairs-prelims-mains-focus-12th-april-2018/>

Issues:

- The fiscal consolidation roadmaps that entail expenditure compression which ultimately reduce vital public spending on health, education, food security entitlements, drinking water, and so on disturb the finer fabric of India’s cooperative federalism — especially in the context of India’s lowest share of direct taxes in total taxes in the world, disreputable tax-GDP ratio, imprudent transgression into States’ autonomy, alarming growth of economic inequality etc.
- **Transfers to local governments:** The Terms of Reference of the 15th FC introduces “performance-based incentives” which inter-alia want, “Provision of grants in aid to local bodies for basic services, including quality human resources, and implementation of performance grant system in improving delivery of services.” This subclause is not constitutionally neat because grants to local governments constitute a separate core mandate.
- Including transfers to local governments among the “performance-based incentives”, the efforts to link local grants to the divisible pool via Article 275 are apparently ignored. The need for an integrated federal public finance that takes local governments into account in macro policymaking and in formulating strategies to ensure regional equity and for evaluating the revenue potential and fiscal capacity does not seem to have occurred to the decision-makers of the country. This omission is tantamount to tearing the web of a ‘holding together’ federation which seeks “inclusiveness” as a national goal. The Terms of Reference debate and the memorandum of the State Finance Ministers are silent on this vital issue.
- In mandating the 2011 population, no alternate compensatory device has been envisaged. From a larger cooperative federalism perspective, the issue of population should refer to demographic dividend, inter-State migration, ageing population, and the like. For example, Kerala reaped its demographic dividend long back in 2001 and now

accommodates nearly three million migrants from places like Odisha, West Bengal and Bihar. This takes a heavy toll on the State and local government resources.

Conclusion:

Indian public finance needs to be restructured to focus on local governance. In preparing the Terms of Reference for a quasi-judicial body like the UFC, it is important not to use it as a platform to impose the Union government's agenda on the States.

Connecting the dots:

- The drawing up of a Terms of Reference of a constitutional body (Finance Commission) is a serious exercise to be handled with sagacity and skill, based on proper consultations in the true spirit of cooperative federalism. Comment.

Open data, open government

Introduction

The new wave of a technological revolution will not be from pure data or access to consumer behaviour, but the application of data and their assimilation with solving social problems, enabling better governance and powering elected governments to serve their citizens better.

Key pointers:

- Data-driven governance is ushering in a new revolution.
- A real paradigm shift has begun – due to integration of Artificial Intelligence and open data.
- Consumer-behaviour is being redefined as most of the companies have access to customer's choice and information-sharing and they embrace data-driven innovation.

Concerns around privacy and consent

This “datafication” of businesses has also brought to the fore the criticality of developing data management, storage and privacy laws.

For instance, European Union introduced General Data Protection Regulation. India has adopted a collaborative model to develop privacy laws, which includes deliberations with creators of data (the consumer) and users (corporates).

Open government data

Open government data is a silent but powerful movement unfolding globally.

- Over 100 governments have already signed a charter to proactively share data collected by various government departments, for public consumption.

- Fostering collaboration, enabling creative innovations and collective problem-solving are giving accountability and transparency a shot in the arm.

Open government data means **publishing information collected by the government in its entirety**, such as government budgets, spending records, health-care measures, climate records, and farming and agricultural produce statistics.

If the advent of data-driven business models was a watershed moment, this is the real pot of gold. Unfortunately, the potential of this national asset is being grossly underutilised.

Significance of open government data

- Such data collected by governments are for citizen welfare; hence they have an implicit right to benefit from the information.
- Data sets such as government budget usage, welfare schemes and subsidies increase transparency and thereby build trust.
- It paves the way to develop technology-led innovations which can unlock massive economic value, thereby benefitting even the poorest of poor, the under-represented and the marginalised.
- Availability of data on yearly produce of crops, soil data health cards and meteorological data sets can help companies develop customised crop insurance solutions with specific risk-based pricing.
- Data points around progress in literacy rates, demographic data and density of educators can help develop customised solutions for villages.
- Similarly, information on availability of facilities in public hospitals, current occupancy rates, hospital and demographic data can pave the way for curated health-care applications.
- It can help India achieve its stated objectives to double farmers' incomes by 2022 and provide universal health coverage and micro loans to micro, small and medium enterprises among others.
- Open data can add an additional 1.5% to the country's GDP. (about \$22 billion)

India's current position

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has made some laudable efforts, including a policy around open data.

- India currently houses more than 1.6 lakh data resources and has published over 4,015 application programme interfaces (APIs) from across 100-plus departments. As a result, **India's global ranking by the Global Open Data Barometer has jumped.**

- Open Data project shows good intent but sporadic execution. Even though India publishes data points, very little of it is getting utilised by data consumers, scientists and corporates. Naturally, the socio-economic impact is limited.

The way forward: Five-point framework

5C framework can help to address the current underlying execution gaps of the Open Data project

1. The first step is to **ensure completeness of data stacks** opened for use either through machine-readable formats or direct APIs.

Completeness would imply a data set. For example, soil data cards will have data on all relevant aspects as well as current emerging technologies such as Blockchain and the Internet of Things to provide the opportunity to automate data collection.

2. **Comprehensiveness of a data stack** or various data sets is essential. For example, a comprehensive agri-data set would have digitised data sets on soil data, rainfall, crop production as well as market rates. Currently, data sets shared in India are somewhat disjointed and not comprehensive.
3. **Clustering of relevant data sets and APIs** would be the next step. This would mean combining data sets which can lead to the creation of applications such as farm insurance from weather, soil and crop cycle/sale data. Therefore, technology developers have a road map of “innovations in focus” for national development.
4. The fourth step is **building anchor cases or use-cases to encourage data usage**. A case in point is Aadhaar/identity data which has seen exponential growth (post identification in e-KYC). Taking the Aadhaar case further, its API has led to the development of market applications, an Aadhaar-enabled payment system, and direct benefit transfers among others which are clearly pushing the “financial inclusion” drive.
5. The final step would be **setting up a comprehensive governance framework** which includes **an open data council with cross-sector representation** to monitor, regulate and build usage after proportionate oversight.

The time is now ripe for the government to create a data-driven governance architecture by building digital trust in the economy and its intent.

Connecting the dots:

- Data-driven governance is ushering in a new revolution. Do you agree? Discuss how Artificial Intelligence coupled with Open data can help in good and open governance?

SEBI panel to study option of direct overseas listings

Part of: GS Prelims – Indian Economy

In news:

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has constituted an expert committee to examine the **possibility of allowing unlisted Indian companies to directly list equity overseas** while also allowing foreign companies to list directly on the Indian bourses.

Do you know?

- Companies incorporated in India can today list their debt securities on international exchanges (Masala Bonds) but their equity share capital can be listed abroad **only through the – American Depositary Receipt (ADR) or Global Depositary Receipt (GDR) – ADR/GDR route.**
- Similarly, companies incorporated outside India can access the Indian capital markets **only through the IDR route.**
- Thus, presently, direct listing of equity share capital of companies incorporated in India is **not permitted on foreign exchanges and vice versa.**

Considering the evolution and internationalization of the Capital Markets, it would be worthwhile to consider **facilitating companies incorporated in India to directly list their equity share capital abroad and vice versa.** In this regard, it has been decided to constitute an Expert Committee to look into this aspect in detail.

Important Value additions

DEPOSITORY RECEIPTS

Depository Receipt is a mechanism through which a domestic company can raise finance from the international equity market.

Companies of a country can go abroad to sell their shares in foreign capital market. When a foreign investor buys shares of domestic companies abroad (in capital market), he is issued a receipt by a custodian Bank. This receipt represents a certain number of underlying shares of domestic companies and hence they are called Depository receipts.

- The depository receipts raised by Indian companies in American market are called American Depositary Receipts (ADRs) and those that are raised in some other countries are called Global Depositary Receipts (GDR).

- The depository receipts raised by foreign companies in Indian market are called Indian Depository Receipts (IDRs).

Highlights of NITI Aayog's fourth governing council meeting

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – Indian Polity and Economy; C-S relations

In news:

- Prime Minister calls for widespread consultation on simultaneous elections in the country, keeping in view aspects such as the resulting financial savings and better utilisation of resources.
- There were no signs of amending Terms of reference (ToR) of 15th Finance Commission

Important value additions

About 15th Finance Commission's ToR

Terms of reference of 15th Finance Commission – has become a major item which has led to the controversy. It deals with distribution of revenue collected to states.

- The ToR of 15th Finance Commission has drawn protests from many states, especially from southern ones.
- They allege that the **ToR was in contradiction to the principles of Federalism** enshrined in the Constitution and also **would result in revenue loss to performing states**.
- They **oppose the ToR recommendation to use the 2011 census** to calculate population for allocation of union tax revenue in place of 1971 census, which was used by previous Finance Commissions.

Do you know?

- Fifteenth Finance Commission (FCC) is headed by **NK Singh**.
- Finance Commission is **constitutionally-mandated body** established once every five years by President to devise a formula for distributing net tax proceeds between centre and states as well as among states and local bodies.
- The recommendations of 15th Finance Commission (FFC) will come into effect from 1 April 2020.

Judiciary versus Economy: Contentions in Judiciary Adjudications

Introduction:

With an expanding economy, the **number of legal disputes** involving property, contract, labour, tax and corporate laws is **bound to increase**.

How these disputes are adjudicated by the courts will have direct consequences for the disputants and also shapes the behaviour of individuals and entities involved in production, commerce and banking.

Judicial findings also influence decision-making of government agencies, which are major actors in a developing economy. Yet, the **Indian judiciary doesn't seem to fully appreciate the economic consequences of its judgments**.

(The below article provides some case studies highlighting how judiciary has failed in economic reasoning in its adjudication and in turn failed to provide economic justice.)

Important cases:

Case 1: Power Producers Association of India v. Union of India and Ors.

- May 31, 2018 order of the Allahabad High Court ruled that bankruptcy proceedings cannot be started against a power company unless the company is a wilful loan defaulter.
- It did not factor in the issue of viability of the project. As such, the 'wilfulness' condition is hard to prove. Nonetheless, the ruling is one of the less problematic ones.

Case 2: Rameshwar and Ors v. State of Haryana and Ors (2018)

- In this case, the dispute involved 688 acres of land for which the then Haryana government had issued an acquisition notification in 2007. As soon as the notification was issued, builders and developers started approaching owners to buy their land.
- Since the official compensation was going to be meagre, many owners sold their land at throwaway prices. Later, the government decided to drop the acquisition plan.

Supreme Court held the State's decision a fraud, acted out through an unholy nexus between the officials and the builders.

As the owners sold their land under duress and on unconscionable terms, the land should have been restored to them by declaring the deals infructuous. However, the SC handed over the land to the State government.

Case 3: Uddar Gagan Properties Ltd v. Sant Singh & Ors (2016)

- In this case, at dispute were 280 acres of land under acquisition in 2005. The land was illegally transferred to developers through dubious deals approved by the then Haryana government.
- Here too, the SC handed over the land to the official agency that was an active partner in the fraud. Farmers were forced to accept paltry compensations.

Crux:

- Through such judgments, the **judiciary has failed not only to protect the legitimate rights of owners, but also to provide economic justice** enshrined in Article 38 of the Constitution.
- Moreover, the court has transferred land, a precious economic resource, from those who own, need and use it to governments who do not need it by their own accord.

It is due to the perverse incentives created by such judgments that **government agencies abuse laws and are sitting on a massive stock of unused land**, which would have been put to more productive use by its owners.

Judicial intervention in infrastructure projects

- Similarly, several infrastructure projects are being held up due to judicial interventions in the bidding process.
- Courts have failed to realise that the quality of infrastructure assets and the technical capability of contractors to deliver them are serious issues. The mere difference in prices demanded by the bidder may or may not be a decisive factor.
- Court's intervention has led to delay in project, escalating its cost far more than any possible gains from ruling in favour of the lowest price bidder.
- There are instances where Judiciary didn't opt for help of experts to assess the construction and maintenance cost rather it went on to interpret a contract and cut into its terms if found not right or reasonable.

Such judicial interventions can undermine the sense of security that comes from signing competitive bidding contracts, thereby discouraging investment.

A public good

The adjudication process can serve as a public good. However, casual and unpredictable adjudication has the opposite effect.

Shivashakti Sugars Limited v. Shree Renuka Sugar Limited and Ors (2017)

- In this landmark judgment, Judiciary admitted the role of economic reasoning in adjudication. It also pushed for the inter-discipline between law and economics to serve the developmental needs of the country.
- In situations where alternative views are possible or wherever discretion is available, the associated judges have argued for the view which subserves the country's economic interest.
- They have exhorted the courts to avoid outcomes which can have adverse effects on employment, growth of infrastructure, the economy or the revenue of the State.

The way ahead:

Economic analysis of the law and disputes is a welcome move; however courts should not go overboard.

- Treating economic growth and the revenue of the state as public purposes is walking on a slippery slope.
- While adjudicating such cases, judiciary should consider a cost-benefit analysis of a different kind.

Infringement of individual rights should be considered only if it is absolutely necessary.

The situation should be such that public purpose cannot be achieved without putting limitations on individual rights. Moreover, the degree of infringement should be minimum to realise the purpose. It should not cut too deep.

Finally, infringement should follow the proportionality principle — the social benefit must be commensurate with the seriousness of the infringement.

Connecting the dots:

- Judicial intervention in infrastructure projects and bidding process has led to delays and sense of insecurity, discouraging investment. Do you agree? Elucidate.
- Indian judiciary doesn't seem to fully appreciate the economic consequences of its judgments. Do you agree? Give your opinion illustrating through examples.

Indian startup ecosystem: Changing landscape

Background:

A slew of policies has been rolled out under the "Start Up India" scheme, launched in 2016. It is an effort to address the challenge of unemployment amongst educated youth, by encouraging them to become job creators — not job seekers.

Changing landscape:

The global start-up landscape is still dominated by the West, though a discernible shift is underway. As per the Global Start-up Eco System Report 2018, the US remains the leader with a 41 per cent share of start-ups but China is closing the gap with a 35 per cent share of the market.

A Grant Thornton-Assocham report estimates that there are nearly 10,000 start-ups in India, of which 43 per cent are tech-based ventures. Annually, close to 800 start-ups are taking root in the country. Bengaluru is one of the emerging global hubs. Flipkart, Ola, PayTm are some of the start-ups that have made it big. Start-ups are now occupying the social development space as well.

Key ingredients for a successful start-up ecosystem:

The USP of Silicon Valley, spread around San Francisco, is that-

- It is home to some of the major technology companies — Apple, Facebook, Oracle, Visa, Intel, Cisco. These companies have served as anchors for new companies, a large number of which are founded by ex-employees. The **anchor companies** end up financing start-ups, given the lower costs of research or product development, and provide access to global markets.
- The area is also home to two **world class universities**: Stanford and the University of California at Berkeley.
- There is also **no dearth of capital** with venture capitalists (VCs) providing flexible financing options.

The three key ingredients for a successful start-up ecosystem are: A thriving city, availability of talent and capital and the presence of large companies.

Indian start-up ecosystem:

No dearth of talent in the technology space:

According to the NITI Aayog, India has 2.6 million STEM graduates (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), next only to China.

The Department of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Human Resource Development have approved the establishment of 13 start-up centres, 16 technology business incubators and six research parks in technical institutions across the country.

Access to easy low-cost finance:

- Under the Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana, nearly 6.5 million loans of up to Rs 10 lakh have been sanctioned this year, with disbursement of nearly Rs 30,000 crore.

- Bank lending for larger start-ups remains a challenge because banks are averse to taking risks and charge high interest rates.
VC finance offers a good alternative. The SEBI has recently liberalised the regulatory framework for VC.
- SIDBI has established a “Fund of Funds for Start Ups” with an initial corpus of Rs 10,000 crore to finance alternate investment funds.
- Government of India has also allowed exemptions from income tax and capital gains tax up to three years for investment in start-ups.
- Philanthropic organisations like the Tata Trust have also stepped in to finance incubation labs.

What else can be done?

- Identifying start-up hubs and priority sectors- Twenty Tier 2 and 3 cities, with flourishing technology ecosystems, could be declared “National Start Up Hubs” for targeted investments to build linkages between industry, academia and finance.
- Pioneers of the Indian IT revolution could be roped in to create a pool of start-up mentors. Technologists and entrepreneurs of the Indian diaspora in the Bay area and other parts of the world could be one of the finest resources of this movement.
- A platform could be created to channelise NRI investment in technology-based startups.

Conclusion:

A “soft touch” and responsive regulatory framework will be required to support the rapidly changing technology landscape. The policies being implemented along with the suggestions made above will be right for catalysing an Indian Start Up Revolution, which could turn India’s demography to its advantage.

Connecting the dots:

- Discuss the potential and the challenges for the Indian startup ecosystem.
- The landscape of Indian startup ecosystem is rapidly changing. Critically comment.

Taking ease of doing business to the districts level

Part of: GS Mains Paper III- Inclusive development, Indian Economy

In news:

- The Centre has begun to sharpen its focus on improving ease of doing business at the districts level, having achieved some improvement at both the Central and State levels.
- As a pilot, six districts in five States have been selected for development schemes that will increase district GDP by 3 per cent.
Once the pilot is successful, it will be replicated pan India.
- By making districts a focal point of growth and increasing their GDP by 2-3 per cent, the country's GDP will grow as districts' growth is critical for the country's overall growth.

Uniquely Placed Northeast

Introduction:

The 15th Finance Commission (FC) is in the process of figuring out a fair formula for the distribution of net tax proceeds between the Union and the States, and among States.

The below article deals with how 14th FC missed to consider Northeast states as an unique entity while adopting its formula based tax devolution approach and challenges faced by Northeast due to the missed approach.

The author compares 13th and 14th FC methodology and suggests for few reforms in upcoming 15th FC, which can help special category status to develop in an equitable and efficient manner.

About 14th Finance Commission recommendations:

We know that,

- The 14th FC had adopted a **formula-based tax devolution approach**, apart from grants-in-aid for local bodies, disaster relief, and post-devolution revenue deficit grants.
- The share of devolution to the States was **enhanced to 42% from 32%**, which gave the States considerable flexibility.
- However, it dispensed with sectoral grants for elementary education, the forest sector and renewable energy sector, among others.
- **No State-specific grants were recommended.** The assumption was that a higher level of devolution would offset other requirements.

The devolution formula, therefore, is central to the approach of resource transfers.

- The 14th FC accorded 27.5% weight to the population (of which 17.5% was of the 1971 population), 15% to area, 7.5% to forest cover and 50% to income distance.

- Larger States with larger populations have a greater requirement of resources. Income distance was adopted as a proxy for fiscal capacity, and forest cover was given weightage for the first time, underscoring ecological benefits.

Northeast: A distinct entity

- The Northeast represents a distinct entity for developmental planning and has a special category status.
- Low levels of human development indices, a low resource base, and poor connectivity and infrastructure pose a different challenge which must be taken into account in the devolution formula.
- Central Ministries earmark 10% of their allocations for the Northeast. By the same logic, 10% of tax proceeds could be earmarked for vertical devolution to the region.
- With a number of centrally sponsored schemes being rolled out the obligation of State share is huge, adding to revenue expenditure. Sometimes the real burden (as in the case of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan) is far more than the mandated 10%.
- Many centrally sponsored schemes are discontinued midway, and the burden of employee salaries falls on the States.
- Maintenance of assets, such as rural roads under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, require huge expenditure, especially in hilly States. (A 20% cost disability was allowed by the 13th FC while allocating grants for road maintenance.)

Did 14th Finance Commission miss something?

- The 13th FC acknowledged the different position of the Northeast while arriving at the formula for horizontal devolution. Its twin guiding principles were equity and efficiency.
- It accorded 47.5% weight to fiscal capacity distance.
- Per capita GSDP was taken as a proxy for fiscal capacity, but States were divided into two groups, general and special category States, given that the average tax to GSDP ratio was higher for the former.
- Three-year per capita GSDP was computed separately in these two groups, weighted means of tax to GSDP ratio obtained, and per capita tax revenue was assessed for each State.
- Fiscal distance was thereafter calculated on estimated per capita revenue with reference to the highest State, which was then multiplied by the 1971 populations to arrive at the share of each State.

There was much merit in this approach, which was in contrast to the 14th FC which used per capita GSDP as an indicator of fiscal capacity uniformly for all States.

The revision of the base year to 2011-12 by the Central Statistics Office from 2004-05 also has created complications.

- Arunachal Pradesh, for instance, saw a sudden spike in per capita GSDP. This was primarily on account of the fact that 73% of the GSDP was calculated on the allocation method as compared to 34% earlier.
- This saw a jump in gross value added in mining, construction, electricity, etc., even with a negligible industrial base.

The Northeast also bears a disproportionate burden of natural disasters every year on account of rainfall.

- The 14th FC disaster relief grants bore no correlation with vulnerability but were ad hoc extrapolations of previous allocations.
- The disaster vulnerability index is highest for the Northeast; this needs to be factored in while allocating grants. (which the 14th FC missed to do)
- The region also has the highest forest cover and represents the largest carbon sink nationally. Allocating 10% for forest cover would encourage States to preserve the forests.

Terms of Reference of the 15th FC

The Terms of Reference of the 15th FC also mention performance-based incentives based on improvements in GST collection, Direct Benefit Transfer rollout, etc. This would definitely infuse a spirit of competition.

However, the performance of the Northeastern States must be benchmarked with other Northeastern States so that apples are not compared with oranges. The challenge for the Commission, as one member said, is “to strike a balance between those who need and those who perform”.

Connecting the dots:

- The Central assistance after the recommendations of 14th Finance Commission does not augur well with the reality of North Eastern State. Do you agree? What is your stand on this issue?
- The recommendations of the Fourteenth Finance Commission and the implementation of GST have transformed centre-state relations in India. Do you agree? Examine.

1 Year of GST: Assessment

Introduction:

- Today marks one year of the launch of the goods and services tax (GST)
- So what has the GST achieved?
- According to the article - it is important not to expect instant results as there will be many short comings when a complex reform is rolled out. However, it is important to assess - **Whether the economy is heading in the right direction?**

Arguments in favour of the GST

We have read from many articles that –

- GST would lead to ease of doing business
- make markets efficient;
- eliminate cascading effect;
- yield higher tax collections; and
- lead to lower prices.

With higher tax collection, the government would be able to deliver better services. Thus, the GST was presented as a win-win situation for everyone.

Performance so far:

- Businesses have not yet experienced 'ease of doing business' though some have adjusted to it.
- Industry could not fix GST prices well in time and difficulties grew right from day one.
- The IT functioning of the Goods and Service Tax Network (GSTN) has been unsatisfactory due to problems or inordinate delays in access because of the volume of traffic.
- Complexity of the tax filing system. Even though it was computerised, accounting was difficult.
- So, even though 17 taxes were replaced by one tax made up of many parts, simplification did not follow.
- The small businesses operating under the Composition Scheme (turnover between ₹20 lakh and ₹75 lakh; later the limit was raised to ₹1.5 crore) could not give input tax credit (ITC) and if anyone bought from them, then the buyer had to pay the tax that the small business should have paid. This was the reverse charge mechanism (RCM).
- Both big and small businesses faced severe difficulties.
- Small businesses were not permitted to make inter-State sales so their market became limited in case they were at the border of the State.

GST Council comes for rescue

Taking cognisance of these, the government made rapid changes during the year through the GST Council (the body set up to govern GST).

- But this only added to the confusion.

- Some components of the GST which were considered essential to its design were suspended or altered permanently.
- For example, the e-way bill (to track goods being transported) was postponed to April 2018. The RCM was suspended and may resume now.
- The tax rate for businesses under the Composition Scheme was brought down.
- Restaurants were brought under the Composition Scheme with a 5% tax rate but no ITC.

Crux:

For a year now, there have been reports every day of new problems cropping up and clarifications being sought from the authorities. In some cases, court cases are being filed.

- Prices have not fallen. GST has contributed to inflation because services are now taxed higher — the rate has risen to 18% from 15%.
- Restaurants misused the ITC and it was replaced by a different scheme. It also prompted government to legislate the anti-profiteering clause. But it is proving hard to implement; industry is resisting it.
- Even though essential goods are exempt under the GST, as basic goods and services prices rise, all prices increase. For instance, if diesel or truck prices rise, transport costs increase. All prices rise even if they are exempt under the GST, examples being the cost of cereals and vegetables.
- The tax rate structure (0%, 5%, 12%, 18% and 28%) is also so complex. There are different rates for gold and jewellery. Some petro-goods and alcohol (human consumption) are not a part of the GST. Electricity and real estate are also out of the GST.

Aspirants also faced problems in this year Prelims paper – Egg boiled (but with shell) is not under GST, Boiled egg without shell is under GST :D (Babaji is still confused who serves or sells boiled eggs with shell)

- The multiplicity of tax rates and exemptions means that the cascading effect continues.

Conclusion:

India does not have a full GST which is applicable from raw material to the final good/service. The chain is broken in many places. Partial GST may not meet the objectives effectively.

The GST is not bigger than the policy changes introduced in 1991 and hence not the biggest reform.

It is not yielding more revenue to enable governments to spend more on services for the poor.

Further, by damaging the unorganised sectors, it has set back output and employment in the economy rather than leading to a higher growth rate.

These problems emanate from introducing a very complex tax in a complex economy. In brief, while there are a few gains, the economy is not headed in the right direction because of the faulty design of the GST.



AGRICULTURE

Cess on sugar

Part of: Mains GS Paper III

Key pointers:

- The proposal to introduce a cess on sugar has been green-lighted by the Law Ministry. The cess will come into effect only if and when the GST Council approves it.
- Cess is different from GST. It used to be an additionality during the VAT (Value added Tax) regime; so it (the cess) can be applied.
- The proposal envisages the imposition of cess at a rate not exceeding Rs. 3 per kg on supply of sugar” (over and above GST at 5 per cent). The fund collected will be used to create a fund, which will enable the Centre to make prompt interventions to protect the interests of farmers, in view of the extreme cyclical nature of industry.
- Before the GST introduction, a cess was being collected under the **Sugar Cess Act, 1982**, as excise duty for the purpose of a Sugar Development Fund. The money thus collected was used to help the industry on various fronts, including settling farmer dues. This cess was subsumed in the GST.

Comprehensive Plan for Dairy Development: An assessment

Background:

A sustained growth of milk production in India, growing at a CAGR of 5 per cent between 2010-16, and the leading position of milk among all the agricultural commodities have placed dairy in the forefront of the government’s commitment to double farmers’ income by 2022.

Vision 2022: National Action Plan on Dairy Development (NAPDD)

In order to bring dairying in sync with its grand vision of doubling farmers’ income, the government formulated a comprehensive plan for dairy development — Vision 2022: National Action Plan on Dairy Development (NAPDD) — in 2017.

It envisages increasing milk production to 300 million tonnes by 2023-24. To realise the desired milk production targets, the plan projects to increase the in-milk bovine population from 88 million to 116.38 million and average milk yield per bovine from 4.35 kg/day to 7kg/day between 2015-2023.

Is it feasible?

- **Enhancing the herd efficiency ratio:**

The plan is to enhance the herd efficiency ratio (Herd Efficiency Ratio is defined as the ratio of in-milk bovine population to total bovine population) from 27 per cent to 40 per cent by 2023. At present, only Punjab has herd efficiency as high as 39 per cent.

Challenge:

Considering the today's political environment (Many State governments enforcing restrictive rules on cattle slaughter and private vigilantism on the rise causing interference with the established system of disposal of unproductive bovines), disposing of unproductive animals has become a big challenge for the farmers.

- **Increasing the milk yield per bovine:**

Vision 2022 puts special focus on increasing the milk yield of low-yielding, non-descript local cattle from 2.15 kg/day to 5 kg/day by 2023-24. It plans to upgrade 50 per cent of non-descript cattle using seven indigenous dairy breeds and another 50 per cent using 33 indigenous dual-purpose breeds.

Concern:

The plan doesn't consider upgradation by using exotic breeds such as Holstein Friesian. According to Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics 2016, the average milk yield per day of crossbreed-exotic is more than 7 kg/day; which is the required target of Vision 2022. States such as Punjab and Kerala have exhibited commendable achievements in milk production by grading up their local cattle with exotic breeds.

Way ahead: Re-visioning the dairy plan

In its present form, Vision 2022 has several infirmities and appears unrealistic in its commitment of doubling the milk production by 2023-24. The plan doesn't reflect the ground realities of milk production in India and *ignores the wide inter-state gaps* present. The entire eastern India have both herd efficiency and average milk yield below the national average of 27 per cent and 1,600 kg per year respectively. States such as Chhattisgarh, Assam, Odisha and Jharkhand are at present in a position where the rest of India was four-five decades back in terms of herd efficiency and average milk yield.

- Instead of bringing the rest of India on the same footing as Punjab in a short span, Vision 2022 should follow a more equitable and pragmatic approach to accelerate dairying in the country.
- It should first prioritise its energy and resources in shifting bovine functions more towards dairying in the eastern geography.

Just by taking up the herd efficiency ratio and milk yield to the national average in the eastern States (Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Assam and West Bengal) alone could bring additional 35-40 million tonnes of milk to the national milk pool.

Conclusion:

The hike in milk production especially in eastern states will have far-reaching socio-economic and livelihood impacts, which pragmatically should be the vision for India's dairy development.

Connecting the dots:

- The government must be more pragmatic in its dairy targets and must promote dairying in a big way in the Eastern States. Comment.

Centre allows pulses import despite overflowing godowns

In news:

- Union government is enforcing an additional import agreement with Mozambique at a time when domestic stocks are at their highest, domestic production is expected to be high and prices are crashing.
- In 2016, India has signed an MoU to double pulses imports — mostly arhar — from the east African nation over a five-year period. This obligates India to buy 1.5 lakh tonnes from Mozambique this year.
- The government has also explored the possibility of similar long-term agreements with countries such as Kenya.
- Farmers' groups have been agitating about falling crop prices.

Note: Just know that India imports pulses (esp arhar or pigeon pea) from the east African nations.

Tur (Arhar) - Kharif crop = called pigeon pea, tropical (central + southern - MH is a major producer)

Zero Budget Natural Farming: A model for the future

In news:

In early June, Andhra Pradesh government has recently announced that the State would fully embrace Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF), a chemical-free method that would cover all farmers by 2024.

With successful pilot programmes that were initiated in 2015 and partners who brought experience in different aspects needed to carry out such a transformation, Andhra Pradesh has become the first State to implement a ZBNF policy.

Natural farming:

Subhash Palekar, an Indian [agriculturist](#) who practiced and wrote many books about Zero Budget Natural Farming, developed the ZBNF after his own efforts at chemical farming failed. He identified four aspects that are now integral to his process:

- Seeds treated with cow dung and urine.
- Soil rejuvenated with cow dung.
- Cow urine and other local materials to increase microbes.
- Cover crops, straw and other organic matter to retain soil moisture and build humus.
- Soil aeration for favourable soil conditions.

These methods are combined with natural insect management methods when required.

How is ZBNF beneficial?

- In ZBNF, yields of various cash and food crops have been found to be significantly higher when compared with chemical farming.
- Input costs are near zero as no fertilizers and pesticides are used.
- Profits in most areas under ZBNF were from higher yield and lower inputs.
- Model ZBNF farms were able to withstand drought and flooding, which are big concerns with regard to climate change.
- The planting of multiple crops and border crops on the same field has provided varied income and nutrient sources.
- As a result of these changes, there is reduced use of water and electricity, improved health of farmers, flourishing of local ecosystems and biodiversity and no toxic chemical residues in the environment.

The programme can have a positive effect on many of the sustainable development goals through improvements in soil, biodiversity, livelihoods, water, reduction in chemicals, climate resilience, health, women's empowerment and nutrition.

Different from organic farming:

In early 2016, Sikkim was declared India's first fully organic State. But organic agriculture often involves addition of large amounts of manure, vermicompost and other materials that are required in bulk and need to be purchased. These turn out to be expensive for most small farm holders.

Model for other States:

- Over the years, Andhra Pradesh has supported and learned from its many effective civil society organisations such as the Watershed Support Services and Activities Network, Centre for Sustainable Agriculture and the Deccan Development Society.
- Farmer-to-farmer connections as vital to its success. Farmer's collectives such as Farmer Producer Organisations need to be established and these would be critical to sustaining the programme.
- A step-by-step increase in the area covered. The scaling up relies primarily on farmers and local groups — all in all, very much a bottom-up process.
- The approach taken to monitor the improvements is vital to understanding the outcomes of large-scale changes that are under way; this is critical to expanding the ZBNF to other States.

With its combination of delta regions, arid and hilly tribal areas, districts in Andhra Pradesh are similar to those in other parts of the country and could therefore serve as a model for replication.

Conclusion:

The world is at critical junctures on many planetary boundaries and establishing a system that shows promise in improving them while supporting people sustainably is surely one worth pursuing.

Connecting the dots:

- What do you understand by 'zero budgent natural farming' (ZBNF)? Discuss its benefits over conventional form of agriculture.

Credit Guarantee Trust for Agriculture (CGTA)

Part of: GS Mains Paper III- Indian Agriculture

In news:

- Odisha CM suggests policy framework for farm loan waivers
- Calls for a national policy on farm loan waiver
- Rather than cost sharing between Centre and States, the whole issue should be removed from political considerations, since agrarian distress and addressing is beyond partisanship
- Suggests the setting up of a Credit Guarantee Trust for Agriculture (CGTA) on the lines of the Credit Guarantee Trust for Small and Medium Enterprises (CGTSME)

- Through this, collateral-free agricultural loans of up to ₹50 lakh and collateral-free crop loans of up to ₹2 lakh can be offered, backed only by the guarantee of CGTA
- Odisha government is creating a CGTA for the State's farmers with a corpus of nearly ₹200 crore.

Important to understand CGTSME

About Credit Guarantee Trust for Small and Medium Enterprises (CGTSME)

- To facilitate easy flow of credit to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
- CGTSME was set up to strengthen credit delivery system and facilitate flow of credit to the MSE sector.
- The Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGS) was launched by the Government of India (GoI) to make available collateral-free credit to the micro and small enterprise sector.
- Both the existing and the new enterprises are eligible to be covered under the scheme.
- The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, GoI and Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), established a Trust named Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSF) to implement the Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises.

For more - https://www.cgtmse.in/About_us.aspx

Increased MSP to Farmers

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – Government policies and schemes; Social Reforms; Farmer issue

About:

- During Budget 2018 - Government had decided to offer a minimum support price (MSP) of **at least 1.5 times** the expenses borne by farmers for all crops.
- Important step towards doubling the income of our Farmers by 2022 when India celebrates its 75th year of independence.
- Niti Aayog, in consultation with Central and State Governments, had to put in place a fool-proof mechanism so that farmers will get adequate price for their produce.

In news:

- Issue: Farmers are still waiting for the announcement of the minimum support prices (MSP) for major crops.

- However, now the government is considering three NITI Aayog proposals which could shift some of the burden of enforcing MSPs to the States and even private agencies.

Do you know?

The MSP is announced by the Government of India for 25 crops currently at the beginning of each season viz. Rabi and Kharif.

However, NITI Aayog member Professor Ramesh Chand has said that Centre implementing MSP for 23 major crops.

Following are the 25 crops covered by MSP:

Kharif Crops	Rabi Crops	Other Crops
1. Paddy	15. Wheat	22. Copra
2. Jowar	16. Barley	23. De-husked coconut
3. Bajra	17. Gram	24. Raw Jute
4. Maize	18. Masur (Lentil)	25. Sugar Cane (Fair and remunerative price)
5. Ragi	19. Rapeseed/Mustard	
6. Arhar (Tur)	20. Safflower	
7. Moong	21. Toria	
8. Urad		
9. Cotton		
10. Groundnut in shell		
11. Sunflower seed		
12. Soyabean		
13. Sesamum		
14. Nigerseed		

Increased MSP to Farmers

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – Government policies and schemes; Social Reforms; Farmer issue

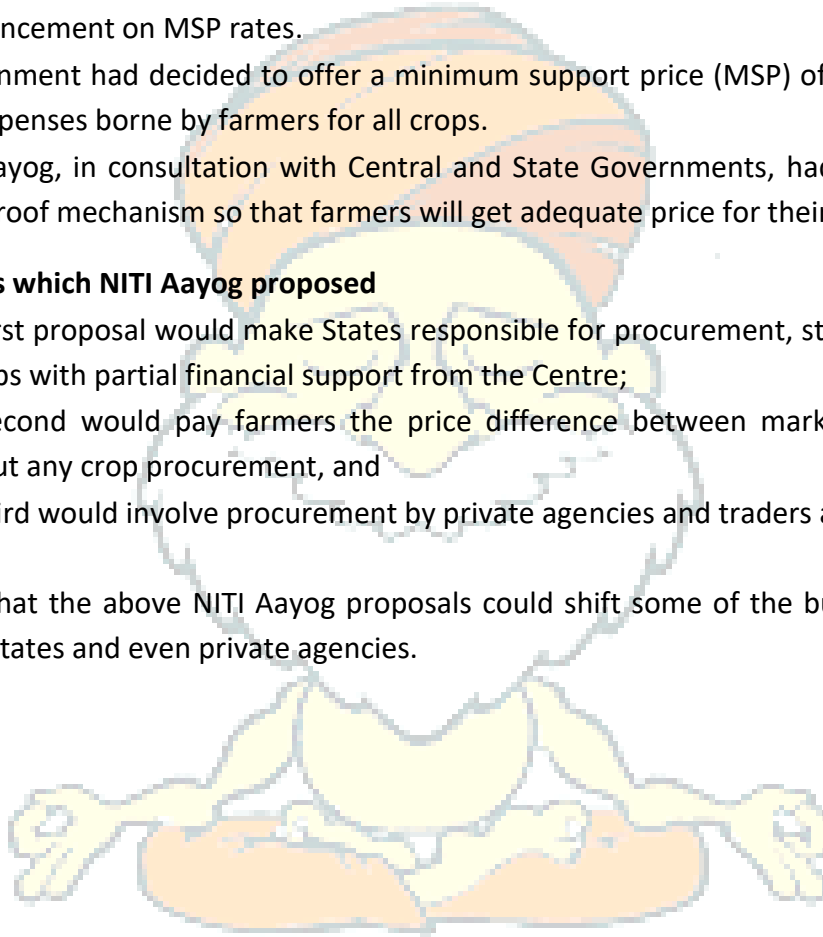
About:

- Yesterday we read that farmers' groups have started agitating on the lack of announcement on MSP rates.
- Government had decided to offer a minimum support price (MSP) of **at least 1.5 times** the expenses borne by farmers for all crops.
- Niti Aayog, in consultation with Central and State Governments, had to put in place a fool-proof mechanism so that farmers will get adequate price for their produce.

Three options which NITI Aayog proposed

- The first proposal would make States responsible for procurement, storage and disposal of crops with partial financial support from the Centre;
- the second would pay farmers the price difference between market rates and MSP without any crop procurement, and
- the third would involve procurement by private agencies and traders at MSP rates.

It is alleged that the above NITI Aayog proposals could shift some of the burden of enforcing MSPs to the States and even private agencies.



ENVIRONMENT

'Green GDP' and a 'Green skilling' programme

Part of: Prelims and Mains GS Paper III – Environment and Ecology; Pollution; Environment and Development

In News:

- Government to begin a five-year exercise to compute district-level data of the country's environmental wealth
- The data will be used to calculate every State's **'green' Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**
- The government has also launched a **'green skilling' programme** under which youth, particularly school **dropouts**, would be trained in a range of 'green jobs'.

Important Value Additions:

- **World Environment Day** on **June 5**.
- India is the host country for this year's celebration.
- The theme for the World Environment Day 2018, **"Beat Plastic Pollution"**.

About Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP)

- GSDP aims to get 80, 000 people imparted green skills and in filling the skill gaps in the environment sector.
- Green Skill Development Programme will go a long way in reaping the demographic dividend of the country; GSDP to cover nearly 5 lakh people by **2021**.

About Green GDP –

- Refer to this link ([Calculating 'Green GDP': Developing a feasible transition path to a green economy](#))

World Environment Day: Outcomes

Part of: Prelims and Mains GS Paper III – Environment and Ecology; Pollution

In news:

- In previous article, we read about **Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP)**; theme for the World Environment Day 2018 – **"Beat Plastic Pollution"**.
- India is committed to reducing the use of plastic and would join the **Clean Seas programme** — a Sweden-led initiative to reduce littering of marine ecosystems.

- Delegation of the European Union (EU) and embassies of the member states adopted a '**Green Pledge**', under which the 28 EU member-states made a commitment to green their embassies.

Miscellaneous points:

- **Animal Discoveries, 2017** – publication released by Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) lists 300 newly discovered species of fauna.
- **Plant Discoveries, 2017** – publication released by Botanical Survey of India (BSI) lists 239 newly found flora species.
- Among the States, Kerala recorded the highest number of discoveries — 66 species, sub-species and varieties of plants and 52 species of animals.

Facts about Nitrogen: largest PM2.5

Part of: Prelims and Mains GS Paper III – Environment and Ecology; Pollution

What is PM2.5?

- PM2.5 refers to atmospheric particulate matter (PM) that have a diameter of less than 2.5 micrometers, which is about 3% the diameter of a human hair.
- Fine particles can come from various sources. They include power plants, motor vehicles, airplanes, residential wood burning, forest fires, agricultural burning, volcanic eruptions and dust storms.

Key Pointers:

- **Nitrogen particles make up the largest fraction of PM2.5**
- While the **burning of crop residue is said to be a key contributor** to winter smog in many parts of North India, it contributes over 240 million kg of nitrogen oxides.
- Though **agriculture remains the largest contributor to nitrogen emissions**, the non-agricultural emissions of nitrogen oxides and nitrous oxide are growing rapidly, with sewage and fossil-fuel burning — for power, transport and industry — leading the trend.
- As fertilizer, nitrogen is one of the main inputs for agriculture.
- Agricultural soils contributed to over 70% of N₂O emissions from India in 2010, followed by waste water (12%) and residential and commercial activities (6%). Since 2002, N₂O has replaced methane as the second largest Greenhouse Gas (GHG) from Indian agriculture.
- Chemical fertilizers (over 82% of it is urea) account for over 77% of all agricultural N₂O emissions in India, while manure, compost and so on make up the rest.

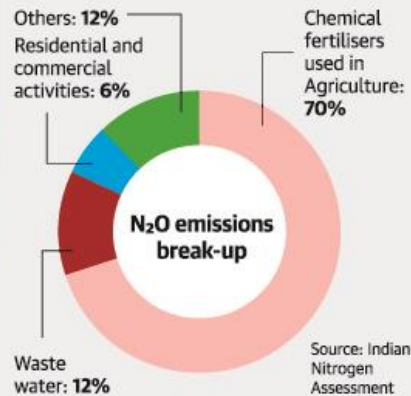
Scare in the air

Highlights from the 'Indian Nitrogen Assessment', the first ever quantitative assessment of reactive nitrogen in the Indian environment



Burning of crop residue in most parts of North India is one of the main sources of nitrogen emissions. ■ AFP

Agricultural soils remain the largest contributor of nitrogen emissions



Menace of nitrogen oxides (NO_x) pollution

- Indian NO_x emissions grew from 52% between 1991-2001, to 69% between 2001-2011
- Burning of crop residue contributes over 240 million kg of NO_x and 7 million kg of N₂O per year
- NO_x emissions from coal, diesel are growing at 6.5% per year currently

Pic

link:

https://d39gegkjaqduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/06/06/DEL/Delhi/TH/5_11/b3c0ed88_2152794_101_mr.jpg

Do you know?

- Cattle account for 80% of the ammonia production, though their annual growth rate is 1%, due to a stable population.
- India is globally the biggest source of ammonia emission, nearly double that of NO_x emissions.
- But at the current rate of growth, NO_x emissions will exceed ammonia emissions and touch 8.8 tonnes by 2055, studies highlight.
- Nutrient recovery/recycling from waste water for agriculture could cut down N₂O emissions from sewage and waste water by up to 40%.

Uranium contamination in aquifers

Part of: Mains GS Paper II- Government interventions in key sectors

Key pointers:

- Aquifers in as many as 16 States in the country are contaminated by uranium, whose presence in drinking water has been linked to chronic kidney disease by several studies, a recent study has shown.
- The main source of this contamination is natural, but groundwater depletion by extensive withdrawal of water for irrigation and nitrite pollution due to the excessive use of nitrogenous fertilisers may be exacerbating the problem, said the study.
- The WHO has set 30 parts per billion as the provisional safe drinking water standard for uranium.
- Uranium doesn't figure on the list of contaminants monitored under the Bureau of Indian Standards' drinking water specifications.

Green ambitions — on renewable energy targets

Indian government had set a target of achieving 175 gigawatts (GW) of capacity from renewable energy sources by 2022.

Recently, Union Power Minister said India would overshoot its target of installing 175 GW of renewable energy capacity to 225 GW.

However, this is a tall claim, considering India has missed several interim milestones since it announced its 175 GW target in 2015.

Do you know?

175 GW renewable energy targets by 2022 –

- 100 GW Solar
- 60 GW Wind
- 10 GW Biomass and
- 5 GW Hydro

Concerns:

- Despite renewable capacity being augmented at a blistering pace targets are missed.
- Technological and financial challenges remain: both wind and solar generation could be erratic, and India's creaky electricity grid must be modernised to distribute such power efficiently.
- To hit its 2022 target of 175 GW, 106 GW will have to be added in four years, more than twice the capacity added in the last four.

- Of the current goal of 100 GW from solar energy by 2022, 40 GW is to come from rooftop installations, and 60 GW from large solar parks. Despite being the fastest-growing renewable-energy segment so far — rooftop solar clocked a compound annual growth rate of 117% between 2013 and 2017 — India only hit 3% of its goal by the end of 2017, according to a Bloomberg New Energy Finance report.
- Homeowners aren't buying the idea of installing photovoltaic panels on their terraces because the economics does not work out for them.

India is facing its worst water crisis: NITI Aayog

Part of: Mains GS Paper I, II- Social issues, Government interventions in key sectors

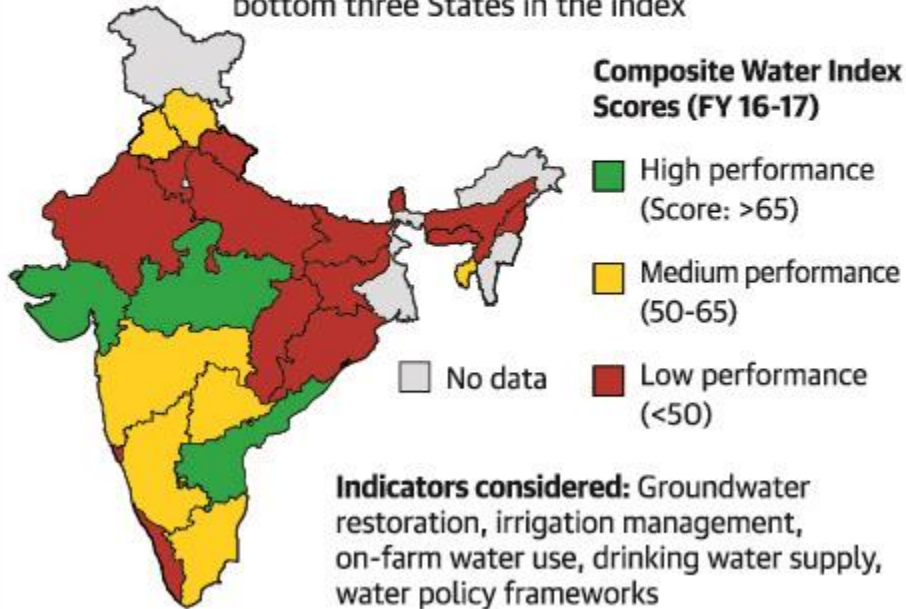
Key points:

- NITI Aayog released the results of a study warning that India is facing its “worst” water crisis in history.
- Nearly 600 million Indians faced high-to-extreme water stress and about 2,00,000 people died every year because of inadequate access to safe water.
- Worst affected cities – Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad
- Critical groundwater resources, which accounted for 40% of the water supply, are being depleted at “unsustainable” rates and up to 70% of the supply is “contaminated”.
- As per the report, titled '**Composite Water Management Index**' (CWMI) the crisis is only going to get worse. By 2030, the country's water demand is projected to be twice the available supply, implying severe water scarcity for hundreds of millions of people and an eventual 6 per cent loss in the country's GDP.

Best managing states (‘Non-Himalayan States’)	Worst managing states (‘Non-Himalayan States’)
1. Gujarat	1. Jharkhand
2. Andhra Pradesh	2. Bihar
3. Madhya Pradesh	3. Haryana

Mixed bag

Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh manage water resources effectively, according to NITI Aayog's Composite Water Index Scores. Meghalaya, Uttarakhand and Nagaland are the bottom three States in the index



Pic

credits:

https://d39gegkjaqduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/06/15/DEL/Delhi/TH/5_06/f9c9f3ab_2173869_101_mr.jpg

[NITI Aayog 'Composite Water Management Index' and Mihir Shah Committee on water management](#)

Introduction:

- In earlier article we had read about **NITI Aayog** report '**Composite Water Management Index' (CWMI)** dealing with water crisis.
- NITI Aayog had released the results of a study warning that India is facing its "worst" water crisis in history, which had implications for the health of the entire population.

Outcome of Composite Water Management Index

- According to the CWMI developed by Niti Aayog, 70% of the water resources are identified as polluted.
- If the water accessible to millions is contaminated, the problem is infinitely worse than that of availability.

- Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Punjab and Telangana have initiated reforms for judicious water use, while populous ones such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have failed to respond to the challenge.
- Tamil Nadu, which has a middling score, does well on augmentation of water sources, but is abysmally poor in ensuring sustainable use for farming.
- As per the report, CWMI the crisis is only going to get worse. By 2030, the country's water demand is projected to be twice the available supply, implying severe water scarcity for hundreds of millions of people and an eventual 6 per cent loss in the country's GDP.

Indices considered for ratings –

States were rated on the basis of –

- performance in augmenting water resources and watersheds
- investing in infrastructure
- providing rural and urban drinking water
- encouraging efficient agricultural use

Need of the hour:

Two areas that need urgent measures are **augmentation of watersheds** that can store more good water, for use in agriculture and to serve habitations, and **strict pollution control enforcement**.

Mihir Shah Committee

- In order to meet the above demands, **Committee on Restructuring the Central Water Commission and the Central Ground Water Board** (chaired by **Mihir Shah**) was constituted.
- Mihir Shah Committee has called for a **user-centric approach** to water management, especially in agriculture.

User-centric approach

- Mihir Shah Committee advocates decentralisation of irrigation commands, offering higher financial flows to well-performing States through a **National Irrigation Management Fund**.
- It also calls for awarding an index rank, which would help States feel the need to be competitive. It will also foster “competitive and cooperative federalism”.
- The Committee suggests for **robust data collection** to understand groundwater extraction patterns, as less than 5% of about 12 million wells are now under study.

- The Committee highlights that the growing pace of urbanization calls for a new management paradigm, augmenting sources of clean drinking water supply and treatment technologies that will encourage reuse. Pollution can be curbed by levying suitable costs.

Conclusion:

Therefore, all these forward-looking changes would need revamped national and State institutions, and updated laws. A legal mandate will work better than just competition and cooperation; it would make governments accountable.

Connecting the dots:

- What India needs is not interlinking of rivers but something else to achieve water, agriculture and livelihood security. Critically analyze.

To be an environmental world power

About:

- Impact of ecosystem destruction on life and livelihood is very high in South Asia.
- Distress is paramount in the northern half of the subcontinent – especially from the Brahmaputra basin to the Indus-Ganga plain.
- However, countries of South Asia have failed to come up with a concrete and coordinated plan to tackle this ecological ruin.

Need for cross-border environmentalism

Do you know? Consequences of environmental degradation do not respect national or state boundaries.

- Pollution can originate in one country but can cause damage in another country's environment, by crossing borders through pathways like water or air. Pollution can be transported across hundreds and even thousands of kilometers.
- Wind and water too don't respect national boundaries. One country's pollution quickly can, and often does, become another country's environmental and economic crisis.

Examples:

- Bihar is helping destroy the **Chure/Siwalik range of Nepal** to feed the construction industry's demand for boulders and conglomerate, even though this hurts Bihar itself through greater floods, desertification and aquifer depletion.

- Air pollution is strangling the denizens of Lahore, New Delhi, Kathmandu and Dhaka alike, **but there is no collaboration.**
- Wildlife corridors across States, provinces and countries are becoming constricted by the day, but we look the other way.

Therefore, there is a need for South Asian people to join their hands across borders to save our common ground.

As the largest nation-state of South Asian region and the biggest polluter whose population is the most vulnerable, India needs to be alert to the dangerous drift.

Unfortunately, despite being a vast democracy where people power should be in the driving seat, the Indian state not only neglects its own realm, it does not take the lead on cross-border environmentalism.

Big Concerns:

- There is a need for ecological sanity. India has to connect the dots between representative democracy and ecological sanity.
- India's environment ministry is invariably the least empowered in the major countries of South Asia.
- Inaction of governments and weakened activism.
- On water, the subcontinent is running out of the resource due to the demands of industrialisation and urbanisation, and continuation of the colonial-era irrigation model based on flooding the fields.
- Everywhere, natural drainage is destroyed by highways and railway tracks elevated above the flood line, underground aquifers are exploited to exhaustion. Reduced flows and urban/industrial effluents have converted our great rivers into sewers.

Climate change to fuel disturbances:

- Climate change is introducing massive disturbances to South Asia – most notable is rise of sea levels.
- The entire Indian Ocean coastline will be affected, but the hardest hit will be the densely populated deltas where the Indus, the Irrawaddy and the Ganga-Brahmaputra meet the sea.
- Yet, there is no proper mechanism and framework to deal and address the tens of millions of 'climate refugees', who will move inland in search for survival.

Concept of 'Atmospheric brown cloud' and 'Seet lahar'

- Scientists are studying about 'atmospheric brown cloud' and its influence on excessive melting of snows in the central Himalaya.
- This cloud is made up of 'black carbon' containing soot and smog sent up by stubble burning, wood fires, smokestacks and fossil fuel exhaust, as well as dust kicked up by winter agriculture, vehicles and wind.
- It rises up over the plains and some of it settles on Himalayan snow and ice, which absorb heat and melt that much faster.
- Seet lahar – a violent type of mudflow or ground-hugging fog that engulfs the subcontinent's northern plains for ever-extended periods in winter - is one more concern. (observe fig below)



Pic link: <http://footage.framepool.com/shoting/qf/647957811-lahar-yogyakarta-mount-merapi-ash.jpg>

The way forward:

- Environmental impact assessments have become a ritualistic farce in each country.
- The task of preserving the forests and landscapes has mostly been relegated to the indigenous communities.
- We usually see the Adivasi communities of the Deccan organising to save ancestral forests, and the indigenous Lepcha fighting against the odds to protect the upper reaches of the Teesta. The urban middle class is not visible in environmentalism, other than in 'beautification projects'.

- Tomorrow's activists must work to quantify the economic losses of environmental destruction and get local institutions to act on their ownership of natural resources.
- The activists must harness information technology so as to engage with the public and to override political frontiers, and they must creatively use the power of the market itself to counter non-sustainable interventions.

There is need for an “environmental system” inbuilt into the infrastructure of state and society. Local government needs to be empowered and elected representatives in cities and districts must be challenged to emerge as the bulwark of environmentalism.

When ‘organic environmentalism’ rises from the grassroots and makes state authority accountable, South Asia and its peoples will be protected.

Connecting the dots:

- Discuss why India should take the lead for a clean planet? Also discuss what changes are required to keep our planet safe for the future?

Sustaining earth for the future

Introduction:

India is blessed with an extraordinary richness of life. A great number of unusual and exquisite species occur in the countless ecosystems spread across our vast lands, rivers and oceans. Woven into this rich fabric of biodiversity is a stunningly vibrant and colourful tapestry of peoples, cultures and traditions.

India's unique bio-cultural life and diversity has been able to withstand difficult changes and conditions for centuries. However, with the **unleashing of unprecedented economic and environmental forces**, it is now subject to increasing wear and tear.

Ultimately, these forces could destroy our vibrant and colourful life, cultures and traditions — and in the process, ourselves.

Major concerns –

Biologists all over the world have been documenting the ongoing loss of life forms.

- Modern extinction rates are more than a thousand times greater than the rates of the geological past.
- In recent decades, populations of more than 40% of large mammals have declined and insect biomass has decreased by more than 75%.

- Natural habitats all over the world have shrunk. For these losses, our country ranks higher than most.

Anthropocene era

- According to scientists, we have entered Anthropocene era — a new period in earth's history, when humans have begun to impact environment at the global scale.
- Forests have degraded and diminished, rivers are getting vanished and our air has become unfit to breathe.
- It is not just only river Ganga which requires cleaning but all life forms including our body requires nurturing.

Concept of Half-Earth

To protect life on earth, the famous American biologist **E.O. Wilson** has described an ambitious project he calls "**Half-Earth**".

He calls for formally **protecting 50% of the earth's land surface** in order to conserve our rapidly disappearing natural heritage.

India's forest policy calls for forests to cover almost a third of the country (33%), and if we include other natural systems such as grasslands and wetlands, the area to be protected could amount to almost 40%.

In a populous country such as ours, that would be a huge achievement. Some areas could be fully protected while others might be managed by stakeholders for sustainable use and enrichment of biodiversity.

The way ahead:

We need a massive new effort to catalogue, map, and monitor life, using fundamentally different approaches.

- Current efforts to map India's biodiversity are largely restricted to forestlands, while plans for species monitoring are even more inadequate.
- Today, we have the digital tools and artificial intelligence today to efficiently catalogue, map, and monitor life's fabric in a manner never before attempted — and with the potential engagement of millions of students and citizens.
- This mapping effort would include not only all life, including cultures, ethnicities, and dialects, but also the use of biodiversity and its vulnerability to changes in land use and climate.

Therefore, effective cataloguing, mapping and monitoring life will give us a glimpse of what we have, and what is most vulnerable.

It is important to understand how society interacts with biodiversity, and how economic, social and political forces can erode the biodiversity that ultimately sustains us.

It is important to learn how myriad species interact to drive our ecosystems, and how these systems in turn maintain our soils, water and breathable air.

For instance, it is vital to learn how the wild pollinators, the microbiota of soils, and the many enemies of agricultural pests — and many other natural services — underpin our agricultural productivity and mitigate climate change.

Need for a new science?

Academic institutions need to place far more emphasis on the scientific study of life at higher levels. We also need a comprehensive inquiry into how our society is shaping as well as responding to changes in biodiversity.

A new biodiversity science is taking shape across the globe, focused on the intimate interweaving of nature with human societies. India has not been, but must be, at the forefront of this emerging science, because nowhere on Earth are natural and human systems tied together more inextricably than on the subcontinent.

Fortunately, some in the Indian science establishment, such as the Departments of Biotechnology and of Science and Technology, have recently started programmes and initiatives in the broader areas of science and society.

Several non-government think tanks in the civil society sector have strong interdisciplinary programmes in environmental sustainability.

The India Biodiversity Portal has the ambitious goal of mapping India's biodiversity with the engagement of civil society though the portal relies largely on private support.

However, the scale of the problem is so massive and its importance so vital for our future that government and private philanthropy need to bring together multiple stakeholders to develop a programme to document, map and monitor all life, and develop a new knowledge enterprise to fully explore various dimensions of biodiversity and ecosystem services and their critical link to our future.

Connecting the dots:

- In spite of environmental moments dating back to post independence years India's progress in environment conservation and management is not noteworthy. Critically discuss.
- Can biodiversity be integrated with development? Examine.

Plastic Waste Management: Requires much more**Introduction:**

Every piece of plastic ever disposed of is damaging the earth. It's lying somewhere in the earth, floating in the ocean, or been broken down into microparticles and in the food chain. Although a fraction of the plastic disposed of is recycled, most of it eventually ends up in the ocean or in dump sites outside city limits.

The best way to reduce plastic pollution is to reduce and phase out its consumption.

Rules:

India's **Plastic Waste Management Rules** (published in March 2016) called for a ban on plastic bags below 50 micron thickness and a phasing out, within two years, of the manufacture and sale of non-recyclable, multi-layered plastic.

- More than 20 Indian States have announced a ban on plastic bags.
- Cities such as Bengaluru announced a complete ban (gazette notification), in 2016, on the manufacture, supply, sale and use of thermocol and plastic items irrespective of thickness. There are stiff fines that cover manufacturing and disposal.

Results:

A Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) report has said that the above-mentioned ban is barely effective.

- Citizens need to be aware of the rules.
- Governments need to work with citizens to collect fines.
- Companies need to be held accountable in terms of their environmental and social responsibilities.
- There should be research on ways to implement these rules, waste generation quantities and trends and find innovative alternatives to plastic.

- We also need strategies to deal with the plastic that has already been disposed of. India generates an estimated 16 lakh tonnes of plastic waste annually. If sold at the global average rate of 50 cents a kg, it can generate a revenue of Rs. 5,600 crore a year.

Segregation at source:

In order to realise the potential for recycling, waste must first be segregated at source. This segregated waste should be then transported and treated separately.

As mentioned in the Solid Waste Management Rules 2016, waste has to be segregated separately at source. This includes separation of dry (plastic, paper, metal, glass) and wet (kitchen and garden) waste at source.

Collection of waste:

The primary responsibility for collection of used plastic and multi-layered plastic sachets (branded chips, biscuit and snack packets) lies with their producers, importers and brand owners.

Companies should have already submitted plans, by September 2016, for waste collection systems based on extended producer responsibility (EPR) either through their own distribution channels or with the local body concerned. Here, the onus of disposal and recycling of products and materials is with producers, rather than on taxpayers and governments. However, none of this has happened at any perceivable scale. Companies say that plastic waste is too complex or pretend to be completely unaware of these rules.

Solutions:**Implementing EPR collectively:**

The complexity of dealing with plastic waste is because of its ubiquity and distributed market. Several companies produce the same type of packaging so it is impossible for a given company to collect and recycle only its own packaging.

Instead, these companies can collectively implement EPR by geographically dividing a region into zones and handle the waste generated in their designated zones.

This strategy was used in Switzerland to recycle thermocol used for insulation of buildings. This also reduces collection, transportation and recycling costs. Companies and governments should interact and research on how to implement such plans.

Adopting innovative means:

In India, some companies have helped empower the informal recycling sector, giving waste pickers dignity and steady incomes. Another firm has worked with the informal sector and engineered the production of high quality recycled plastic.

These companies, large corporates and governments could cooperate to implement innovative means to realise the value of plastic disposed of while simultaneously investing in phasing it out.

Example- A Canadian company monetises plastic waste in novel ways. It has one of the largest chains of waste plastic collection centres, where waste can be exchanged for anything (from cash to medical insurance to cooking fuel). Through this, multinational corporations have invested in recycling infrastructure. Such collection centres, like the ones operated by informal aggregators in India, can be very low-cost investments (a storage facility with a weighing scale and a smart phone).

Conclusion:

It is time we rethink, reduce, segregate and recycle every time we encounter a piece of plastic so that it stops damaging our environment and our lives.

Connecting the dots:

- Given the huge toll of plastic waste on our environment and health, it is time to focus on plastic waste management in a more robust manner. Comment.

Plastic Waste Management (PWM) Rules

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains – Environment and ecology; Pollution

In news:

- India generates an estimated 32 million metric tonnes of packaging waste each year, of which plastic waste constitutes 16%. But only 60% of the collected plastic waste is recycled.
- According to the **Plastic Waste Management (PWM) Rules, 2016**, all States have to **annually apprise the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)** on the steps taken to reign in plastic use, whether a ban is in force, and the strength and performance of a recycler and waste-processing network.

We know that,

- The theme for the World Environment Day 2018, “Beat Plastic Pollution”.
- The theme of Earth Day 2018 is “End Plastic Pollution”.

Important Value Additions:

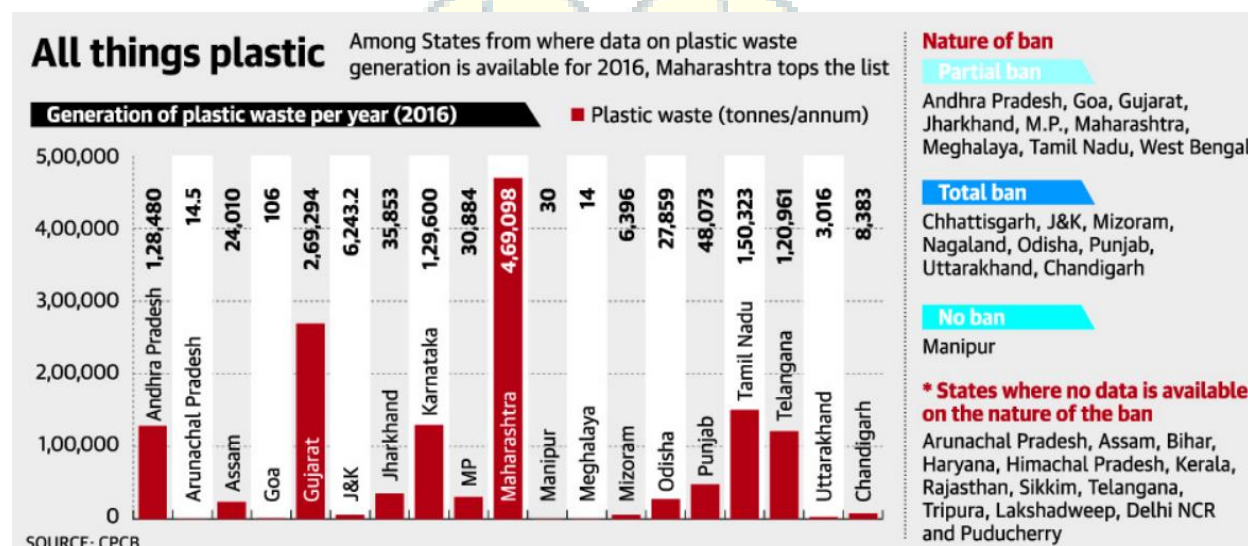
The Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 aim to:

- Increase minimum thickness of plastic carry bags** from 40 to 50 microns.

- **Expand the jurisdiction of applicability from the municipal area to rural areas**, because plastic has reached rural areas also.
- **Responsibility of local bodies and Gram Panchayat.**
- **Collect back system** of plastic waste.
- To **bring in the responsibilities of producers and generators**, both in plastic waste management system and to introduce collect back system of plastic waste.
- **Phasing out of manufacture and use of non- recyclable multilayered plastic:** to be phased out in two years' time.
- 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;

Performance (according to latest CPCB report)

- States' claim on fighting plastic only strong on paper.
- Only 24 States and Union Territories have complied with some of the above directions.
- Most states' have imposed ban only in specific towns or cities.
- Delhi, which reportedly generates the largest quantity of plastic waste in the country, has not provided information on its plastic management initiatives to the CPCB.
- The law requires that all plastic waste recyclers register themselves but there were around 312 unregistered plastic manufacturing/recycling units across India.
- Most of the States/UTs have not set up proper monitoring system for use of carry bags as per the specified guidelines.
- Maharashtra tops the list on plastic waste generation



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Roadmap for reducing vehicular pollution

Introduction:

The WHO global air pollution database report that ranked 14 Indian cities among the 15 of the world's most polluted, in terms of particulate matter (PM) 2.5 concentration. Cities provide 60 per cent to 65 per cent of India's GDP and 45 per cent to 50 per cent of our consumption. As per a World Economic Forum study, the number of million-plus urban conglomerates in India has increased from 35 in 2001 to 53 in 2011. By 2030, this number is expected to grow to 87.

Cities are often the primary avenue that allow people escape out of poverty, especially from traditional agriculture. The next two decades will only see an acceleration of migration into our cities.

Currently, the World Bank assesses health and welfare losses at 7.7 per cent of India's GDP (PPP adjusted). If these costs are unchecked, they will grow sharply in the coming decades. Hence, controlling urban pollution needs to be a key strategic objective for India.

India's urban pollution:

As measured by PM 2.5 level is already about 40 per cent above the global safe limits across major Indian cities.

70 per cent to 80 per cent of urban pollution (as measured by PM 2.5) comes from vehicular emissions, domestic activity, construction activity, industry activity and road dust. Government policy can influence all these areas but two require urgent attention and will create the largest short term impact — vehicular emissions and domestic activity.

Vehicular pollution:

Vehicular pollution contributes around 35 per cent of the total PM 2.5 emissions today. Of the total vehicular pollution, 40 per cent to 45 per cent comes from two-wheelers and another 30 per cent to 35 per cent from four wheelers.

In a future with internal combustion engines (ICE) vehicles (even post BS VI roll out), urban pollution will continue to remain 25 per cent to 30 per cent above safe global standards because of the growth in automobiles.

Addressing vehicular emissions:

It requires a multi-pronged approach. It needs to combine the already-proposed tighter emission norms (in form of BS VI), with a push for shared mobility and public transport and adoption of alternate mobility technologies.

Government policy will impact adoption that will affect both the extent and the future growth of urban pollution.

The policy roadmap:

- Incentives for adoption of alternate mobility technologies.
- Restrictions on elements that contribute negatively to strategic objectives (such as congestion charges on polluting technologies).
- Provision of enabling infrastructure.

Adoption of alternate mobility technologies:

We need to assess and refine the monetary incentives that are offered to bridge the viability gap for electric vehicles for the purpose of containing urban pollution.

These include upfront subsidies, road/registration tax, reduced taxes, and interest rate subsidy. Globally, incentives for adoption of alternate mobility technologies have been known to help — China grants a 45 per cent subsidy on vehicle purchases and Norway and Brazil have their own schemes.

Given their significance in an EV, India might need to consider pushing for battery localisation. Cell investments would need a long lead-time to materialise. Hence, the government needs to drive immediate investments by providing subsidies and tax breaks to local manufacturers along with support for research and development in the e-mobility domain.

Non-monetary incentives:

Technology choices should be rewarded with exemption from tolls/taxes, special toll lanes and other preferred access to public infrastructure.

Globally, Norway gives preference to high occupancy vehicles and China gives preferential licence access. London imposes congestion charges during working hours on weekdays to vehicles entering the city centre.

All these disincentives to traditional cars help in the push for electric vehicles.

Providing an enabling infrastructure:

There is an early need to standardise charging infrastructure/equipment to ensure interoperability and make it widespread.

European manufacturers have formed a consortium, “Ionity”, to provide interoperable charging points across the continent. Similarly, China has standardised charging infrastructure to ensure increased usage and set up 16,000 charging points across the country. The country aims to set up more than 4.8 million charging points at an investment of almost \$20 billion by 2020. China has regulations to include charging infrastructure in all residential buildings. India needs to start learning from global examples to push enabling infrastructure.

Conclusion:

The need to address urban pollution is urgent. Focusing on reducing contribution of vehicular pollution to overall urban pollution will help address the urgency.

Connecting the dots:

- Controlling urban pollution needs to be a key strategic objective for India. Discuss in brief. Also suggest how vehicular pollution can be controlled by adopting a strategic roadmap.

World Bank on impact of Climate Change

Part of: GS Mains III – Environment and Ecology; Climate Change

In news:

- If the current temperature rise continues, 600mn Indians could be affected by 2050 (according to WB)
- Indians could see a dip in living standards because of temperature rise

Key facts:

- India's average annual temperatures are expected to rise by 1°C to 2°C by 2050 (considering preventive measures are taken on lines of Paris climate change agreement, 2015). If no measures are taken, average temperatures in India are predicted to increase by 1.5°C to 3°C.
- Seven of the 10 severest or most vulnerable 'hotspots' in India would be located in Maharashtra
- The rest would be in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.
- States in the central, northern and northwestern parts of India emerge as the most vulnerable.
- India could see a 1.5% decline in its GDP by 2030.

Online Continuous Emission Monitoring Systems (OCEMS)

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains – Environment and Ecology; Pollution

In news:

- Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has directed State Pollution Control Boards (SPCB) to close down industrial units that haven't installed Online Continuous Emission Monitoring Systems (OCEMS).
- It is mandatory for a new industrial unit to install an OCEM to commence operations.
- The CPCB has since 2015 made it mandatory for industries to install OCEMS.
- Industries, particularly so-called Grossly Polluting Industries, are mandated to report their emissions to pollution control boards.
- The industries that require OCEMS include distilleries (including fermentation industry), sugar, fertiliser, pulp & paper (paper manufacturing with or without pulping), pharmaceuticals, dyes and dye-intermediates, pesticides, tanneries, thermal power plants, iron and steel, zinc, copper and aluminium smelters.

ANIMALS/NATIONAL PARKS IN NEWS

Animals/Species in news: Black Softshell turtle

Part of: Prelims - Environment and Biodiversity; Animal Conservation

In news:

- Nilssonia nigricans or **Black Softshell turtle**, which is declared extinct in the wild by the IUCN Red list, was sighted in sacred waters of temple ponds across northeast India.
- Tests at the Nagshankar temple pond in Assam have confirmed the presence of two more species — Nilssonia gangetica or **Indian softshell turtle**, classified as Vulnerable, and Chitra indica or **South Asian narrow-headed softshell turtle**, listed as Endangered by the IUCN.



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Key pointers:

- **Black Softshell turtle** (*Nilssonia nigricans*) : : IUCN status 'Extinct in the wild'
- **Indian softshell turtle** (*Nilssonia gangetica*) : : IUCN status 'Vulnerable'
- **South Asian narrow-headed softshell turtle** (*Chitra indica*) : : IUCN status 'Endangered'

Do you know?

- **Use of Environmental DNA (eDNA) technology** – This fast emerging testing tool monitors the biodiversity of an area without physically collecting specimens.
- eDNA is DNA that is collected from a variety of environmental samples such as soil, seawater, or even air rather than directly sampled from an individual organism.

Mass nesting of olive ridleys at Odisha's Rushikulya

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Animal Conservation; Environment and Biodiversity

Key Pointers

- Mass nesting of olive ridleys at Odisha's Rushikulya rookery.
- Olive ridley eggs incubate on their own by the heat of the sand under which they are buried.
- The hatchlings come out in 45 to 50 days and after that the covering of the eggs decompose and mix with the sand.

Do you know?

- Only two species of marine turtles display a unique mass nesting behavior. This behavior is known as an 'arribada'.
- Arribada- Spanish term meaning arrival; a mass nesting behavior.
- An arribada is a unique nesting phenomenon common to both the Olive ridley and the Kemp's ridley sea turtle.

This reproductive phenomenon was first observed by the scientific community in 1961. By producing large numbers of offspring most organisms like sea turtles can insure their survival even after predation occurs.

- The Olive ridley is endemic to the Pacific coasts of Mexico, Central America, and India. It is known to be a nocturnal nester.

- The Kemp's ridley is endemic to the Gulf of Mexico. It ranges from Galveston, Texas to Tampico, Mexico. Kemp's ridley turtles display unique diurnal arribadas.
- Olive Ridley: IUCN Status Endangered

Animals in news: Fast Recap from previous month's

- Australian **Koalas** (IUCN Status: Vulnerable) - an arboreal herbivorous marsupial native to Australia
- **Walrus** (IUCN status: Vulnerable) - a large flippered marine mammal; "keystone species" in the Arctic marine regions
- Rare Butterflies – **Black windmill** and **Siren butterfly** spotted in Arunachal Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh respectively. **Frosted duskywing** was spotted in Arunachal Pradesh.
- Two marsupial species – **tiny black-tailed dusky antechinus** and **silver-headed antechinus** – have been put on Australia's endangered list.
- Olive Ridley and Kemp's ridley sea turtle (in this month's news)

Animals in news:

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Biodiversity; Conservation of animals

Rare species of spider found again after 150 years

- Rare species of spider (*Chrysilla volupes*) - found in Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (WWS) located in the Western Ghats region of Kerala.
- The spider belonged to the family of jumping spiders (*Salticidae*) and scientifically named as *Chrysilla volupes*.

The world's oldest Sumatran orangutan dies

- The world's oldest Sumatran orangutan (Puan) died in Australian Perth zoo
- Born in 1956, she was noted by the Guinness Book of Records as being the oldest verified Sumatran orangutan in the world. Female orangutans rarely live beyond 50 in the wild.
- Sumatran orangutan – IUCN Status: Critically Endangered

Do you know?

- The non-human types of apes are divided into two groups: great apes — gorillas, bonobos, chimpanzees and orangutans — and lesser apes — gibbons and siamangs.

- Apes are not monkeys; they belong to different branches of the Simian infraorder, and there are several physical differences. Apes do not have tails, while most monkeys do, and apes are typically larger than monkeys.
- Apes' noses are short and broad, while monkeys' noses are more snout-like. Apes also have larger brains than monkeys, and they are capable of using tools and learning language.

National Parks/Tiger Reserves in news

Part of: Prelims - Environment and Biodiversity; Animal Conservation; Mapping

Know these names and associated states

- Dudhwa National Park, Uttar Pradesh
- Jharkhand's Palamu Tiger Reserve

Uttarakhand

- Corbett Tiger Reserve
- Rajaji Tiger Reserve
- Nandhaur Wildlife Sanctuary

Why in new?

- Elephants have been imported to the above national parks or tiger reserves from Karnataka.
- Karnataka, which has the largest elephant population in the country, captures and confines elephants in conflict with humans.
- Called Kumki elephants, they are tamed and trained in forest camps, and are now in demand in other States, for patrolling duties in forest reserves.

About Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI)

- AWBI is constituted under the provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act.
- The Animal Welfare Board of India is a statutory advisory body on Animal Welfare Laws and promotes animal welfare in the country.
- Established in 1962 under Section 4 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.

In news:

- Recently, AWBI has released a directive to all state departments that it is their responsibility to protect all strays – cattle, dogs and cats wandering on streets.
- Animal welfare officers for each district will be appointed and they would have a critical role to play in ensuring that strays are not mistreated.

Do you know?

The AWBI does not have the right to prescribe punishments or fines for violations of the PCA Act but can pursue legal action.

Functions of The Animal Welfare Board of India

- To keep the law in force in India for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals under constant study and to advise the government on the amendments to be undertaken in any such law from time to time.
- To advise the Central Government on the making of rules under the Act with a view to preventing unnecessary pain or suffering to animals generally, and more particularly when they are being transported from one place to another or When they are used as performing animals or when they are kept in captivity or confinement.

Jumbo-relocation experiment

Part of: GS Mains – Conservation of biodiversity/animal; Man-Animal Conflict

Key Pointers:

- **Anthropogenic activities:** Human habitations and barriers such as electric fences and trenches have blocked some of elephant corridors in Assam.
- Assam wildlife officials are keen on **Jumbo-relocation experiment**. But the job is easier said than done, as other elephant habitats and corridors in Assam are also under stress.
- The situation of elephants have become like football, kicked around from one part of the stadium to the other.
- Part of reserve forests and proposed reserve forests are fragmented and interspersed with villages and illegal fishermen controlling wetland areas, which the elephants used to wallow in.
- Herds have become more aggressive and conflicts are happening throughout the year.

Do you know?

- About half of 58 elephant corridors in the northeast, comprising 35% of the country's, are in Assam.

- More than 15 of these corridors, used by an estimated 9,350 elephants, are under the Northeast Frontier Railway.
- National park in news: Rajaji National Park in Uttarakhand (Jumbo-relocation experiment was tried here earlier)

Aerodrome in Chilika Lake

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Environment and Ecology; Conservation of Biodiversity

In news:

- Airports Authority of India has proposed to set up a water aerodrome in Chilika Lake for starting amphibious aircraft operations in Odisha.
- Project will most likely face a green hurdle due to possible ecological consequences.
- Chilika turns into a temporary habitat for lakhs of migratory and residential birds. If an aircraft flies at low height, there is every chance of the birds getting hit.
- Noise pollution generated by close to 10,000 boats has already taken a toll on the endangered Irrawaddy dolphins in the lake. The amphibious aircraft operation would add to the woes.

Important Value Additions

About Chilika Lake

- A brackish water lagoon; largest coastal lagoon in India and the second largest lagoon in the world.
- Spread: Puri, Khurda and Ganjam districts of Odisha
- Where: At the mouth of R. Daya—flowing into the Bay of Bengal
- Birds: Hosts over 160 species of birds
- Home to the only known population of Irrawaddy dolphins in India (IUCN Status: Endangered)

Irrawaddy dolphin @Chilika

- Irrawaddy dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*) is a highly endangered species.
- Total population of these animals in the world is estimated to be less than 7,500 with highest being little over 6,000 reported from Bangladesh.
- The population of Irrawaddy dolphins in Chilika is considered to be the highest single lagoon population with recorded head count of 155 this year.
- Chilika is the single largest habitat of this species in the world.

- The Irrawaddy Dolphin is listed in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) as well as the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS).

Belize's Reef: out of risk now

Part of: GS Prelims - Environment and Biodiversity

Key points:

- The **Mesoamerican Reef**, an underwater wonder world whose survival was considered to be at risk for years, may now be removed from UNESCO's list of threatened World Heritage Sites, thanks to bold steps to save it by activists and the Belizean government.
- Second in size only to the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, the Caribbean reef was named to the prestigious World Heritage List in 1996, but placed on endangered status in 2009 because of Belize's plans to allow oil exploration nearby.

Tiger reserves in news

- Satkosia Tiger Reserve and Sunabeda Tiger Reserve – Odisha
- Sariska Tiger Reserve – Rajasthan
- Kanha National Park, Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh

Other tiger reserves in Madhya Pradesh

- Pench
- Panna
- Satpura
- Sanjay-Dubri
- Ratnapani



Do you know?

- Kamlang Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh, is India's 50th Tiger Reserve
- Boramdev Sanctuary (of Chattisgarh) has been proposed to be India's 51st Tiger Reserve

Animal in news: Orange crocodiles

In news:

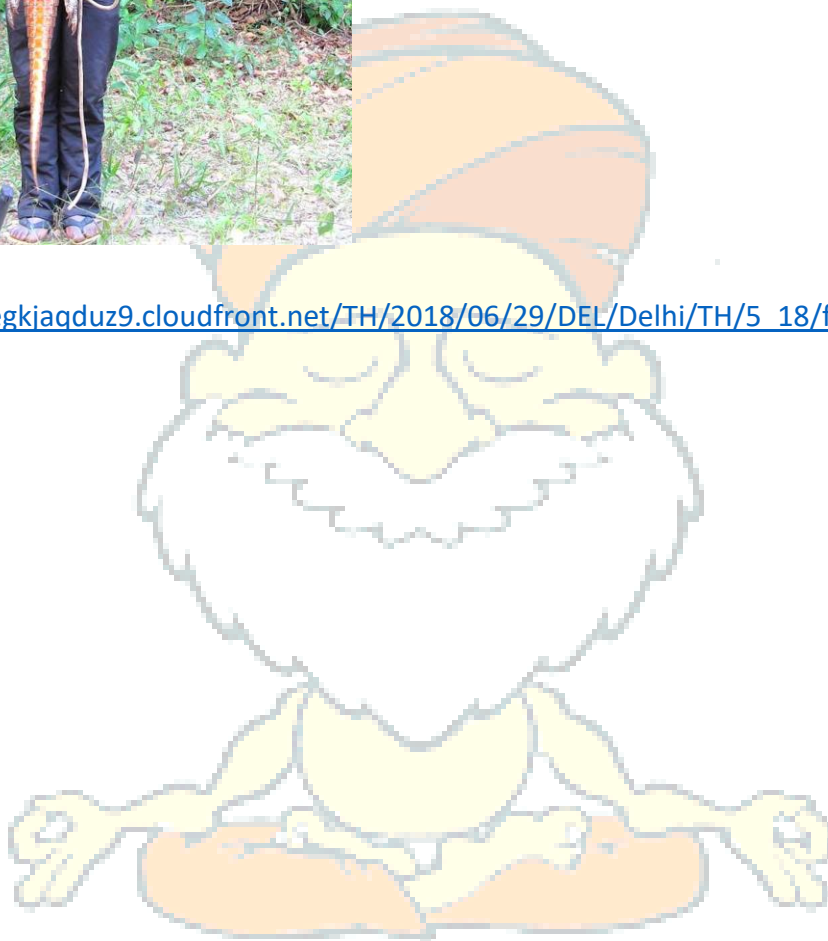
- Orange crocodiles found in West African state of Gabon
- The reptile may have changed colour due to proximity to orange bats, according to scientists
- Orange crocodiles live in caves and in the total darkness, the animals survive on a diet of bats and crickets, unlike above-ground crocodiles of the same species which feed on fish and crustaceans.
- A comparison of cave-dwelling and above-ground crocodiles confirms that they have not become separate species. However, the subterranean creatures — whether orange or normal colour — have developed a specific “genetic signature.”



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INFRASTRUCTURE/ENERGY

'Mission Raftaar'

Part of: Mains GS Paper III- Infrastructure; Transport

Key pointers:

- Indian Railways recently conducted a one-day workshop - 'Mission Raftaar'
- Mission Raftaar dealt with ways to increase the average speed of freight and passenger trains.
- 'Mission Raftaar' aims at doubling the average speed of freight trains and increasing the average speed of coaching trains by 25 kmph over a five-year period.
- Currently, the average speed of freight trains is 24 kmph and that of passenger trains, excluding suburban trains, is 44 kmph.

Providing energy access to all: India on right track

Part of: Mains GS Paper III- Energy security

Key pointers:

- India's efforts in providing energy access to those without it have come in for praise by the International Energy Agency (IEA).
- Since 2000 around half-a-billion people have gained access to electricity in India "with political effort over the last five years significantly accelerating progress".
- The **IEA in its World Energy Outlook 2017** reported that India's growth was on course to achieving "**access to electricity for all**" by 2020, which is "a colossal achievement".
- It noted that the pace had accelerated in recent years, with the country adding annually 40-million people to those with access to electricity, since 2011.

Access to clean cooking fuels:

- Around 78-crore people in India depend on biomass for cooking, but the country is making progress. Almost 3.6-crore LPG connections have been made since the government launched the PAHAL scheme in May 2016 to provide free connections to families living below the poverty line.

- The World Energy Outlook 2017 report had similarly noted that “the share of the population relying primarily on biomass for cooking fell to 59 per cent in 2015 from 66 per cent in 2011.
- Globally, nearly 300-crore people are forced to cook using wood and other fuels that produce smoke, resulting in 28-lakh premature deaths each year – twice more than the number of deaths related to malaria and AIDS combined.

Rs 500 crore fund to facilitate infrastructure investment

Part of: Mains GS Paper III- Infrastructure

Key pointers:

- The government is planning to launch the Rs 500-crore fund next month to facilitate infrastructure investments by big players like insurance and pension funds.
- A credit enhancement fund provides an additional source of assurance or guarantee that the borrower will service their loan. It can also help borrowers raise loans at lower interest rates.
- The dedicated fund will operate as a non-banking financial company (NBFC) with 49 per cent government stake.
- It has got support from investors such as India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd (IIFCL), Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).
- The initial corpus of the fund will be Rs 500 crore, and it will operate as a non-banking finance company.
- Currently, only \$ 110 billion is being invested in infrastructure, against a requirement of \$ 200 billion, leading many analysts to classify India as an infrastructure deficit country. However, he said there is a need for the private sector to be more active on the infrastructure investment front.

SoftBank decides to invest \$100 billion in solar power generation

Part of: Mains GS Paper I, III- Social issues, Inclusive growth

Key pointers:

- SoftBank Group Corp has decided to invest \$60 billion-\$100 billion in solar power generation in India.
- Japan's internet conglomerate and the Indian government are expected to reach a formal agreement.
- The company is expected to make the investment through a fund backed by Saudi Arabia's government. Saudi Arabia is the largest investor in SoftBank's Vision Fund, which raised over \$93 billion last year.
- In 2015 SoftBank pledged to invest \$20 billion in Indian solar projects with a goal of generating 20 gigawatts (GW) of energy as the majority partner in a joint venture with India's Bharti Enterprises and Taiwan's Foxconn.
- India has set a target to achieve an operational solar power capacity of 100 GW by 2022, five times current levels, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's renewable energy strategy.
- SoftBank's Vision Fund has exposure to solar energy through its investment in the world's largest such project in Saudi Arabia.

[Air India privatisation plan shelved](#)

Part of: GS prelims and Mains III – Indian Economy; Disinvestment of Air India

In news:

- After it failed to get any buyers for the debt-ridden national carrier, the government has decided not to proceed with the privatization plan.
- Last year, Union Cabinet had given its nod for the disinvestment process.

Do you know?

- Air India came into existence in 1932 as starter airline. It was nationalised in 1953.
- For many years the government had been considering the option that whether Air India should be helped in coming out of its current situation or disinvested. This is not first instance. In 2000 also it was tried for disinvestment but it was not materialised due to lack of political will. At that time, the Tatas, the actual promoters of airlines, wanted to buy it back along with Singapore Airlines.

In brief, the journey

- 1932: Founded by J.R.D. Tata as Tata Airlines – country's first scheduled airline

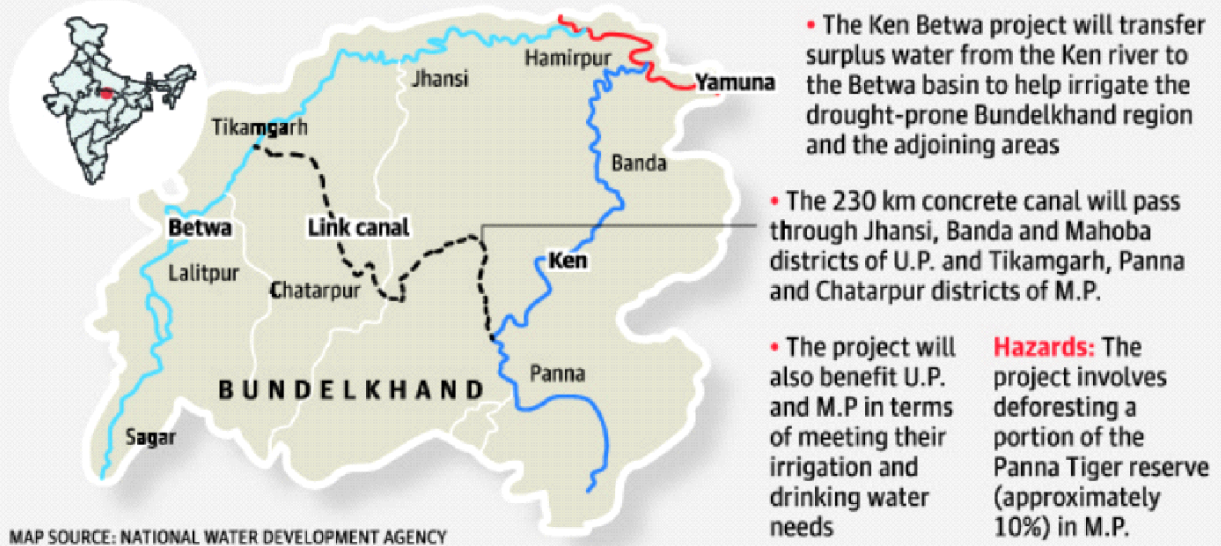
- 1946: Tata Airlines became a public limited company under the name of Air India
- 1948: Government of India acquires 49% stake in the company; starts international operation under brand of Air India International
- 1953: Air Corporation Act enacted to nationalise all existing airline assets and Indian Airline Corporation (domestic operations) and Air India International were established
- 1962: Air India International named as Air India
- 1994: Air Corporation Act repealed to allow private airlines to operate on domestic routes; Air India, Indian Airlines converted into Limited Companies under Companies Act, 1956
- 2000: Previous NDA govt drops privatisation plan after deciding to sell 51% of equity of Indian Airlines and 60% of Air India
- 2007: Erstwhile Air India and Indian Airline were merged into single entity named as National Aviation Company of India Limited (NACIL)
- 2010: NACIL renamed as Air India Limited
- 2012: UPA govt rule out AI privatisation; Turnaround plan to infuse over Rs 30,000 crore till 2021 approved
- 2017: NDA govt approves in-principle approval of Air India's disinvestment
- 2018 (Current): Present NDA government drops privatisation plan after it failed to get any buyers for the debt-ridden national carrier

India's first river interlinking project: Ken-Betwa project

Key Pointers:

- Ken-Betwa interlinking Project aims to transfer surplus water from the Ken River to the Betwa basin through concrete canal to irrigate India's worst drought-prone Bundelkhand region.
- On completion, the multipurpose project will benefit Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh in terms of meeting irrigation, drinking water and electricity needs of people across 6 districts in the two states.

Booster shot Key aspects of the ₹18,000 crore Ken Betwa river interlink project



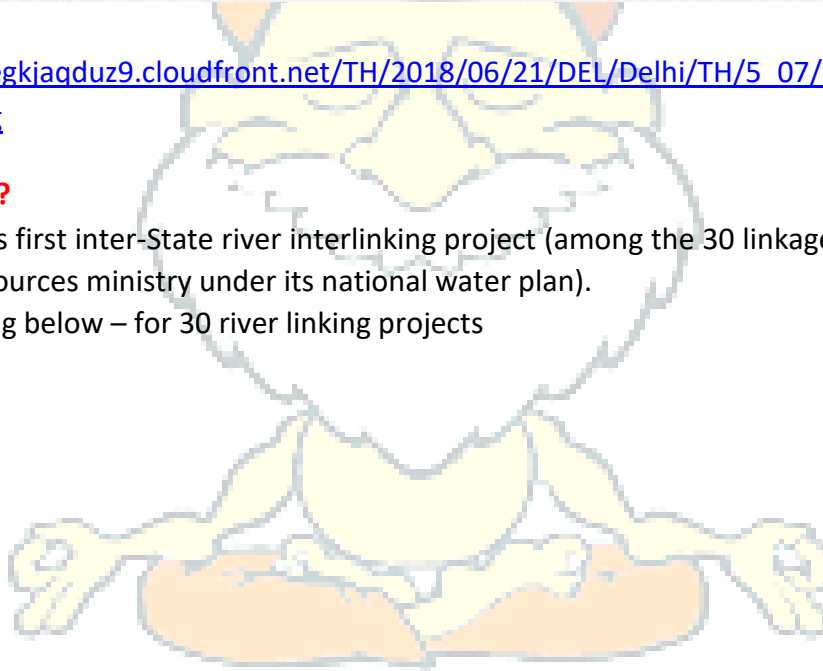
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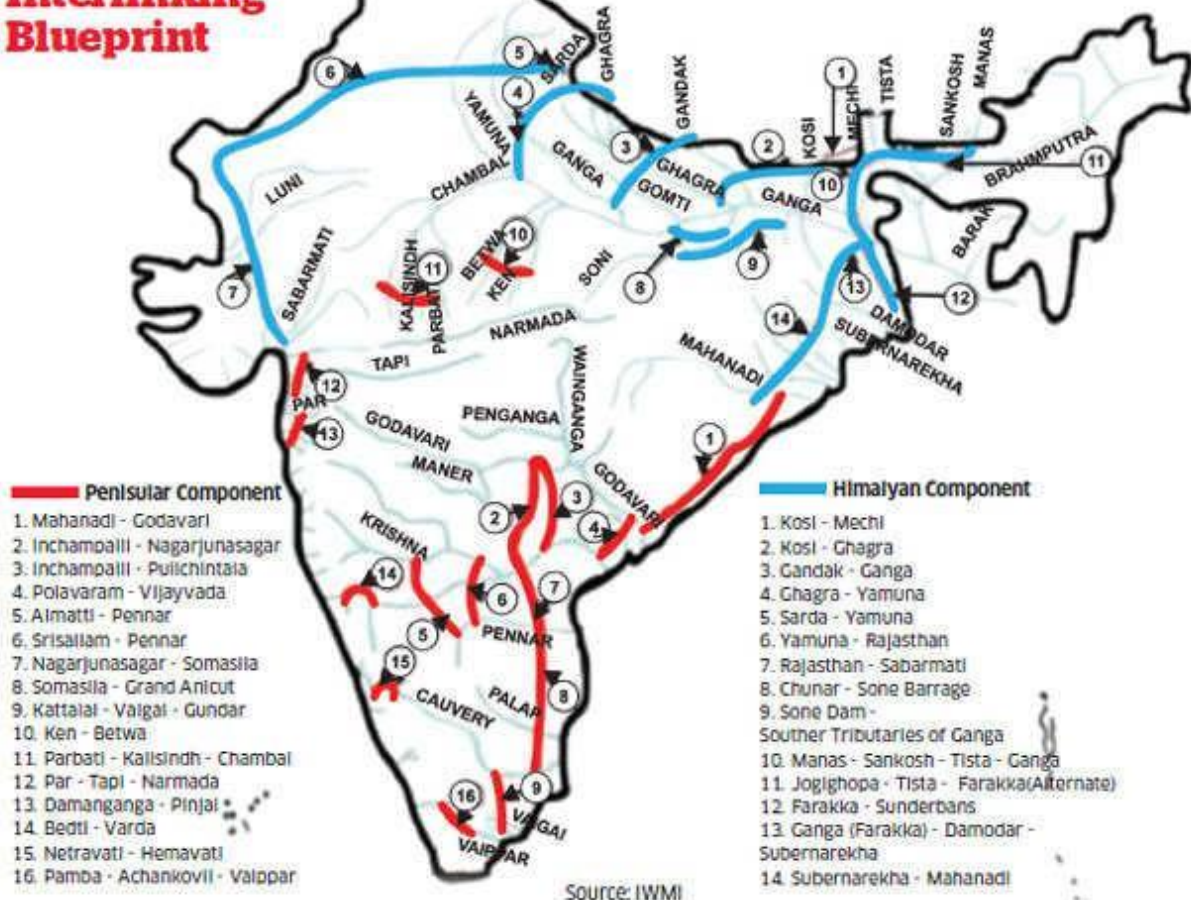
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Do you know?

- It is India's first inter-State river interlinking project (among the 30 linkages proposed by the water resources ministry under its national water plan).
- Observe fig below – for 30 river linking projects



The Grand Interlinking Blueprint



Pic link: <https://img.etimg.com/photo/49209064/interlink.jpg>

Concerns:

- Environmental, financial and feasibility impediments
- Ken-Betwa interlinking Project will be located within tiger reserve. It will submerge about 10% of the Panna Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh which has been feted as a model tiger-conservation reserve.
- Land acquisition, water sharing issues impede Ken-Betwa project

Arguments for ILR

Northern and eastern India frequently experience floods, while western and southern India have droughts and ILR could rectify that to an extent.

Around **35% of the country**, which receives annual rainfall of **750mm-1,125mm**, is drought-prone, and about **33%**, which gets annual rainfall of less than 750mm, is chronically drought-prone

Interlinking of rivers is nothing new and has been attempted with success both in India and abroad. Past examples in India include the **Beas-Sutlej link and the Periyar-Vaigai link**

ILR will increase India's utilisable surface water by 25%. Currently, only a quarter of the Brahmaputra's renewable water resources is utilisable within the basin

Over 70% of India's water is available to only 36% of its land area

By 2030, India's water supply is expected to meet only half its demand

Arguments against ILR

The feasibility of the project has not been studied in detail, nor have its economic, social and ecological implications

Loss of biodiversity and forests downstream of a donor river

The government may have to **divert money from other areas** like education and healthcare to fund this project

The water from a river flowing into the sea is not wasted as many have claimed since it performs a key ecological function

About **84% of the addition to the net irrigated area** in the last two decades has come from groundwater and **only 16% from canals**

Canals running along **10,500 km** could **displace 5.5 million tribals and farmers**

ILR is unwieldy given the inter-state disputes on inter-state rivers like Krishna, Godavari and Narmada

The Himalayan component called for the building of dams in Bhutan

Pic credits: <https://img.etimg.com/photo/49209347/first-table.jpg>

"Digital India" remains a distant dream for India

About:

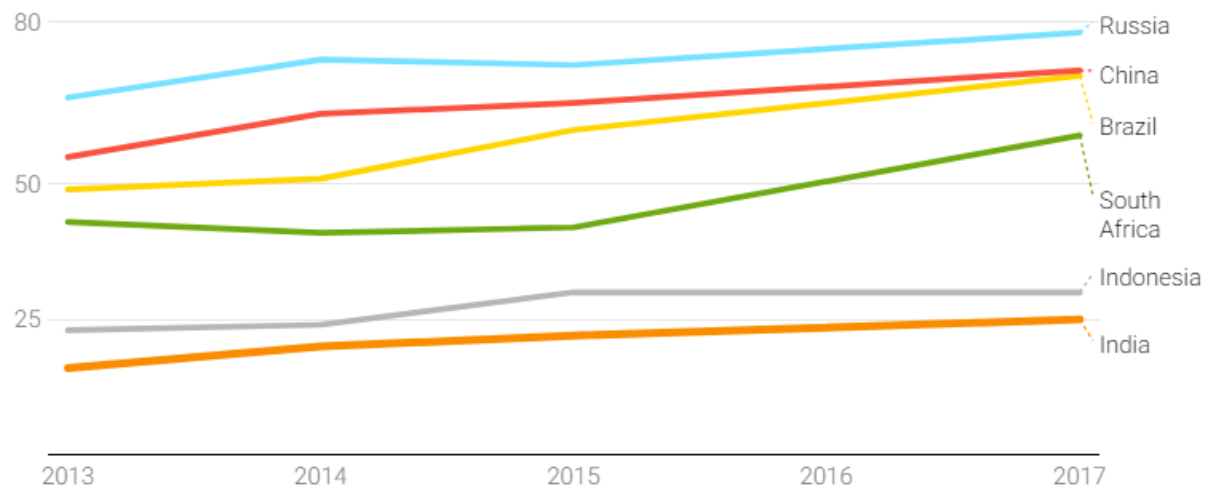
- The below article is excerpt from a survey that show why "Digital India" remains a distant dream, with a majority of Indians still living on the wrong side of the digital divide.

Concern:

- Majority of Indians live on wrong side of digital divide, shows study.
- The internet may have transformed the Indian economy in many ways over the past couple of decades, but India continues to lag behind peer countries when it comes to internet penetration.
- Only one in four Indian adults either owns a smartphone or uses the internet occasionally.
- India ranks the bottom of a list of 39 large economies considered in the survey, which include both developed and emerging markets.
- India also ranked among the very lowest, just above Tanzania, in terms of the percentage of adults owning a smartphone. Smartphones refer to mobile phones, which can access the internet and apps.
- India's progress in smartphone penetration has also been slow.

India behind other emerging economies in terms of internet usage: Pew survey

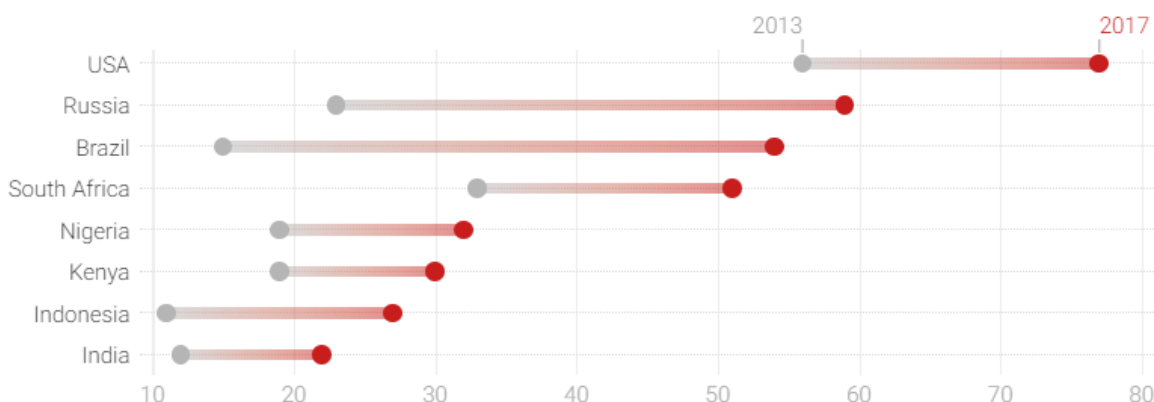
% of adults (age 18+) who use the internet at least occasionally or own a smartphone

**Reasons:**

- Although mobile penetration has gone up significantly in the country, access to the internet and smartphones has been lacklustre. This is partly owing to India's poverty, with the per-capita incomes of most countries surveyed higher than that of India.

Smartphone penetration in India has been slower than other countries

% of adults (age 18+) who own a smartphone



Source: [Pew Global Attitudes Survey](#) • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

- Yet, poverty does not fully explain the low internet penetration. Among countries with higher internet penetration are nations such as Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria and Vietnam, which are poorer than India in per-capita purchasing power parity terms.
- While the penetration of internet and smartphones in India is relatively higher among the youth—those aged 18 to 36—it is still lower compared to the internet penetration among the youth in other countries.
- Only one in five adults in India uses social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter—the lowest among all the countries surveyed.
- The survey shows that the proportion of non-smartphone users in India is among the highest among major economies of the world.

Conclusion:

India's slow adoption of smartphones has impeded the spread of internet in the country since most Indians tend to access the internet on their mobiles.

As the Pew report points out, in relatively poorer countries such as India, "mobile phones can be extremely important tools— whether (in) helping people gain access to financial services or providing the much-needed assistance with health and agricultural needs".

Yet, with low penetration of smartphones and internet, only a privileged minority is able to access digital services in the country.

Despite some progress, the share of those using digital payments remains among the lowest in India, a World Bank survey published earlier this year had showed

Connecting the dots:

- 'Digital India' remains a distant dream. Do you agree? Critically examine the statement.



SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Kickstarting the artificial intelligence (AI) ecosystem in India

Background:

We have already covered AI - very comprehensively:

- What is AI?
- Real-world examples from around us
- Applications of AI
- With regard to Indian context, what are the applications of AI and challenges
- Summary of Potential Benefits of AI and Risks

Refer to this link and revise once – [Artificial Intelligence: Potential Benefits & Risks](#)

You should be able to connect the dots - What is Artificial Intelligence? Discuss what the potential benefits are and associated risks? Also what the challenges are in adoption of AI in Indian context?

Therefore, among the challenges, we had highlighted that India fares average in the surging competition for AI technology development. There is no clearly stated policy document or vision statement for AI development.

We also know that, in February 2018, the Department of Defence Production had constituted a 17-member task-force to study the use of AI for both military applications and technology-driven economic growth.

In news:

- NITI Aayog has published an ambitious discussion paper on kickstarting the artificial intelligence (AI) ecosystem in India.
- The paper talks of powering five sectors — agriculture, education, health care, smart cities/infrastructure and transport — with AI.
- It highlights the potential for India to become an AI 'garage', or solutions provider, for 40% of the world.

Can India win the Global Artificial Intelligence (AI) race?

The below article provides the concerns/challenges that India face today with regard to AI.

Concerns

- For India, in order to catch up with China or U.S., it would first have to resolve some stumbling blocks, such as **poor data quality** and **lack of expertise in this field**.
- India would have to **develop AI tools for a range of applications**: reading cancer pathology reports, rerouting traffic in smart cities, telling farmers where to store their produce, and picking students at high risk of dropping out from school, among them.

The U.S., Japan and China have published their AI strategy documents and, importantly, put their money where their aspirations are.

China, for example, plans to hand out a million dollars in subsidies to AI firms, as well as to run a five-year university programme for 500 teachers and 5,000 students.

- The NITI Aayog **does not talk about how India's ambitions will be funded, but proposes an institutional structure** to get things going. This structure includes a network of basic and applied research institutions, and a CERN-like multinational laboratory that would focus on global AI challenges.
- **India hardly has any AI expertise today**. The paper estimates that it has around 50 top-notch AI researchers, concentrated in elite institutions like the IITs.
- Further, only around 4% of Indian AI professionals are trained in emerging technologies such as deep learning.
- India also lacks quality data in building smart AI tools and insufficient research support, especially in sectors like agriculture and health.

India is lagging the global dominance presently in the AI space ... It will take time before (it) positions itself at a global standing.

Conclusion:

India's efforts come as the AI competition between China and U.S. intensifies, with China aiming to be the world leader in the space by 2030.

India, meanwhile, is late to the game, and will probably not dominate in the field except in a few areas.

India stands a chance to compete at a global level, provided the above listed hurdles are overcome.

Despite these formidable challenges, the scope of NITI Aayog's paper must be lauded. The trick will be to follow it up with action, which will demand a strong buy-in from policymakers and substantial funds. The coming years will show if the country can manage this.

Connecting the dots:

- India is lagging the global dominance presently in the AI space. Do you agree? Suggest what policy actions are needed for India in order to dominate the global AI race.
- India aspires to become an AI 'garage', or solutions provider, for 40% of the world. Critically examine where does India stand in the global race and will India succeed to become an AI 'garage'?

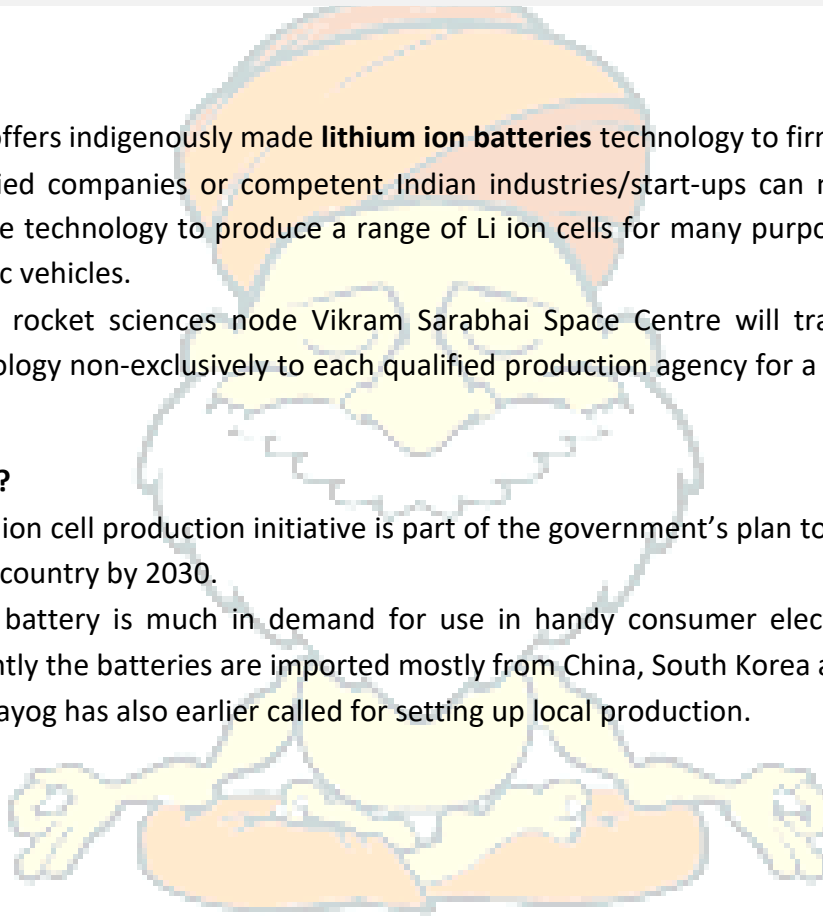
Indigenously made lithium ion batteries technology

In news:

- ISRO offers indigenously made **lithium ion batteries** technology to firms
- Qualified companies or competent Indian industries/start-ups can now use its power storage technology to produce a range of Li ion cells for many purposes, mainly EVs or electric vehicles.
- ISRO's rocket sciences node Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre will transfer its in-house technology non-exclusively to each qualified production agency for a one-time fee of ₹1 crore.

Do you know?

- The Li ion cell production initiative is part of the government's plan to achieve 100% EVs in the country by 2030.
- Li ion battery is much in demand for use in handy consumer electronics goods too. Currently the batteries are imported mostly from China, South Korea and Taiwan.
- NITI Aayog has also earlier called for setting up local production.



Power point

The advantages of Lithium ion batteries

▪ **High energy density:** This is because lithium is a highly reactive element, and a lot of energy can be stored in its atomic bonds. This is a clear advantage over a lead-acid battery or a nickel-metal hydride battery



▪ Does not need prolonged charge when new. Lithium ion cells hold their charge longer than other alternatives

▪ It has a relatively low self-discharge rate, less than half that of nickel-based batteries

▪ **Zero Maintenance**
Lithium ion cells can handle several charge-discharge cycles without any hassles

https://d39gegkjaqd9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/06/13/DEL/Delhi/TH/5_05/715eff52_2169160_101_mr.jpg

Important Value Additions:

Some of the advantages of LIBs are:

- A typical LIB is able to store 150 watt-hours electricity per kg of battery, compared to 100 watt-hours electricity in a nickel-metal hydride (NiMH) battery, and only 25 watt-hours electricity in a lead-acid battery.
- LIBs hold a charge well. They usually lose approximately 5% of their charge each month, against a 20% monthly loss for NiMH batteries.
- LIBs do not require complete discharge prior to recharging.
- LIBs are able to handle more charge/discharge cycles.
- Lithium-ion (Li-ion) batteries are less environmentally damaging than batteries containing heavy metals such as cadmium and mercury, but recycling them is still far preferable to incinerating them or sending them to landfill.

Some of the disadvantages of LIBs are:

- LIBs start to degrade the moment they leave the factory. They usually last for only two to three years from the date of manufacture, regardless of whether used or unused.
- LIBs are highly sensitive to higher temperatures. Higher temperature leads to a much faster degradation rate than normal.
- If a LIB is fully discharged, it gets totally damaged.
- LIBs are comparatively expensive.
- There exists a small possibility that if the LIB pack fails, it may burst open into flame.

Tech edge: A.P. police show the way

Part of: GS Mains III – Science and Technology; Role of Technology

In news:

- Andhra Pradesh – becomes the first State to complete automation of Crime Records Bureau
- The IT-based web/mobile application (i-App) is a revolution in data collection as it saves hundreds of man hours
- i-App cloud is now helping the police access the entire information of crimes under various IPC sections.
- The information is available at the touch of a button on mobile phones and computers helping the police to analyse trends in crime and take necessary action.

Toothpastes contribute to antibiotic resistance

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Health; Science and Technology

Do you know?

- According to a study, common ingredient found in toothpastes and hand washes could be contributing to the rise of antibiotic resistant bacteria.
- Triclosan, a compound which is used in more than 2,000 personal care products can induce multi-drug resistance.
- Overuse and misuse of antibiotics could create 'superbugs'.
- Triclosan is an antibacterial and antifungal agent found in your soap, handwash, talcum powder and even in the wall paint.
- In a world obsessed with cleanliness, antimicrobial agents like triclosan have been touted as the panacea for a disease-free world.
- But their use remains controversial: experts say indiscriminate usage of antimicrobial agents like triclosan over the years has led to bacteria developing resistance to them, leading to the need for stronger chemicals.

Indo-UN Small Satellites Programme (UNSSP):

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Science and Tech; Space programmes

Key pointers:

- India to teach satellite tech to students from abroad
- India has thrown open its satellite-building expertise to engineering graduates chosen from other countries.
- ISRO's Bengaluru-based **U.R. Rao Satellite Centre** (URSC) — until recently known as ISAC — will train the overseas students.
- Capacity-building programme was India's contribution to the world in response to a request that the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs had made to space-faring nations last year.
- The countries are marking the 50th year of the first **UN Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space** — called **UNISPACE+50**.

Operation Sagar Rani

Part of: GS prelims – Health and social issue; Science and Technology

Key Pointers:

- Operation Sagar Rani was launched by the Food Safety department last year.
- It ensures the safety of fish sold in the market and ensures that it was handled hygienically at the handling and distribution centres.
- Recently, contaminated fish preserved using formalin (formaldehyde) were seized in Kerala.
- Toxic preservatives are being used by people/traders in Kerala who are importing fish from neighbouring States.
- Unscrupulous fish wholesalers are using formalin, a toxic and carcinogenic chemical commonly used to preserve dead bodies in mortuaries, to prevent fish from deteriorating during transportation.

A DEADLY SOLUTION

WHAT IS FORMALIN

Formalin is an aqueous solution of the chemical compound formaldehyde. A mixture of formalin, methanol, ethanol and other solvents makes the embalming fluid, which is used to preserve bodies till the funeral, or at times indefinitely

HOW TO DETECT CONTAMINATED FISH

Contaminated fish will be stiff, have rubbery meat, hard scales, red gills & clear eyes. It will also not have the typical smell. If the fish feels tender, it may not have been formalin-treated. It is best to buy live fish. For further tests, the fish can be sent to the Indian Institute of Toxicology Research in Lucknow

FISH COME 'PRE-TREATED'

Some retailers in Punjab pointed out that fish supplied to them comes pre-treated with formalin. It is normally kept in ice, but formalin is used to keep the fish fresh for long. Formalin treatment prevents the fish from rotting for 15 to 20 days

THE HEALTH HAZARD

The widespread use of formalin in preservation of fish, fruits & other food items is a major threat to health. It is highly toxic, irrespective of the method of intake. Consumption of as little as 30 ml of a solution containing 37% formaldehyde can kill an adult. Studies have showed a correlation between the chemical and leukaemia

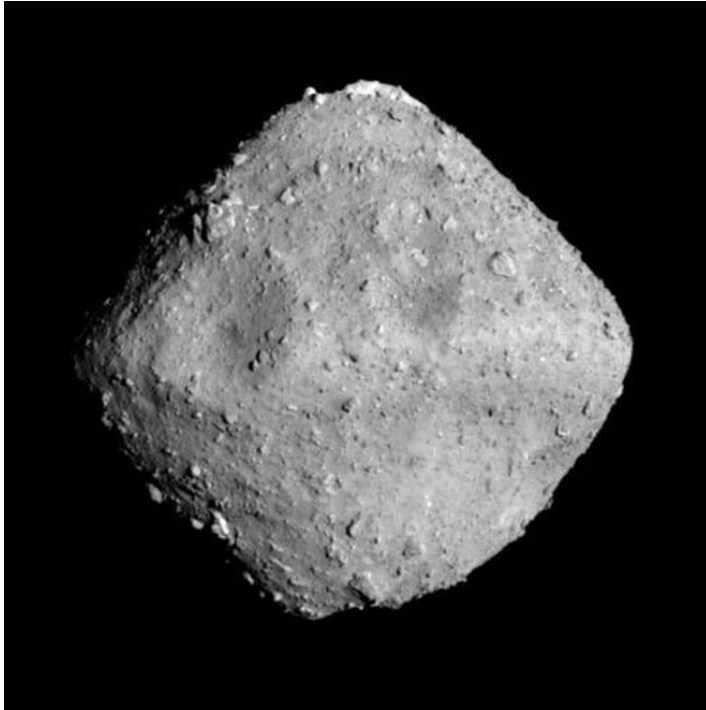
Pic: http://media2.intoday.in/indiatoday/images/stories/2011September/fish-300_092611100319.jpg

Hayabusa2 probe: Ryugu asteroid

Part of: GS Prelims – Science and Technology; Space missions

In news:

- A Japanese probe called Hayabusa2 successfully settled above the Ryugu asteroid.
- Hayabusa2 probe to collect information about the birth of the solar system and the origin of life after a more than three-year voyage through deep space.



Pic: Ryugu asteroid (https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/szvi4w/article24273216.ece/alternates/FREE_660/THJC-SPACE-JAPANPROBE)

Do you know?

- UN's International Asteroid Day on June 30, a global event to raise awareness about the hazards of an asteroid impact and technological progress to counter such a threat.

Blockchain technology

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains – Indian Economy; Science and Technology; Innovation

In news:

- Centre has proposed to set up a Centre of Excellence for blockchain technology in Hyderabad to drive innovation.

About Blockchain technology

Blockchain can be thought of as a public account ledger, an immutable, transparent and permanent one. Each transaction is recorded and stored in the ledger that is out on a public bulletin board. Every transaction adds a block to the chain of transactions and each one is evaluated by every user based on algorithms they've agreed upon. Rather than being kept in single location, a copy of the blockchain is stored on every user's server so that a user cannot

alter it without other users finding out. Even though blockchain was conceived for financial transactions, its characteristics make it an apt solution that can support voting systems.

Due to its unique attributes of trust, transparency and immutability, such a system is expected to mitigate issues like vote manipulation in political processes.

Blockchain is the backbone technology on which bitcoins run. Simply put, it is a digital public ledger that records every transaction. Once a transaction is entered in the blockchain, it cannot be erased or modified. Blockchain removes the need for using a trusted third party such as a bank to make a transaction by directly connecting the customers and suppliers.

Each transaction is recorded to the ledger after verification by the network participants, mainly a chain of computers, called nodes. While the origin of the technology is not clear, it is widely believed that a person or group of people by the pseudonym Satoshi Nakamoto, who invented bitcoins, released the technology to support cryptocurrency.

Bitcoin is just one of the applications for the technology, whose use is being tested across industries. It is witnessing a lot of traction within India, in sectors such as banking and insurance. In most of these industries, players are coming together to form a consortium to realise the benefits of blockchain at an industry level.

For example, in India, there is a consortium 'BankChain' which has about 27 banks from India (including State Bank of India or SBI and ICICI) and the Middle East as its members. The consortium is exploring using usage of Blockchain technology to make business safer, faster and cheaper.

The Institute for Development and Research in Banking Technology (IDRBT), an arm of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), is developing a model platform for blockchain technology.

Blockchain is expected to improve the efficiency of a transaction by eliminating the middlemen, while also reducing the cost of all transactions. It is also likely to increase transparency and bring down fraud as every transaction would be recorded and distributed on a public ledger.

DEFENCE

Long-Range S-400 Triumph

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Defence and Security

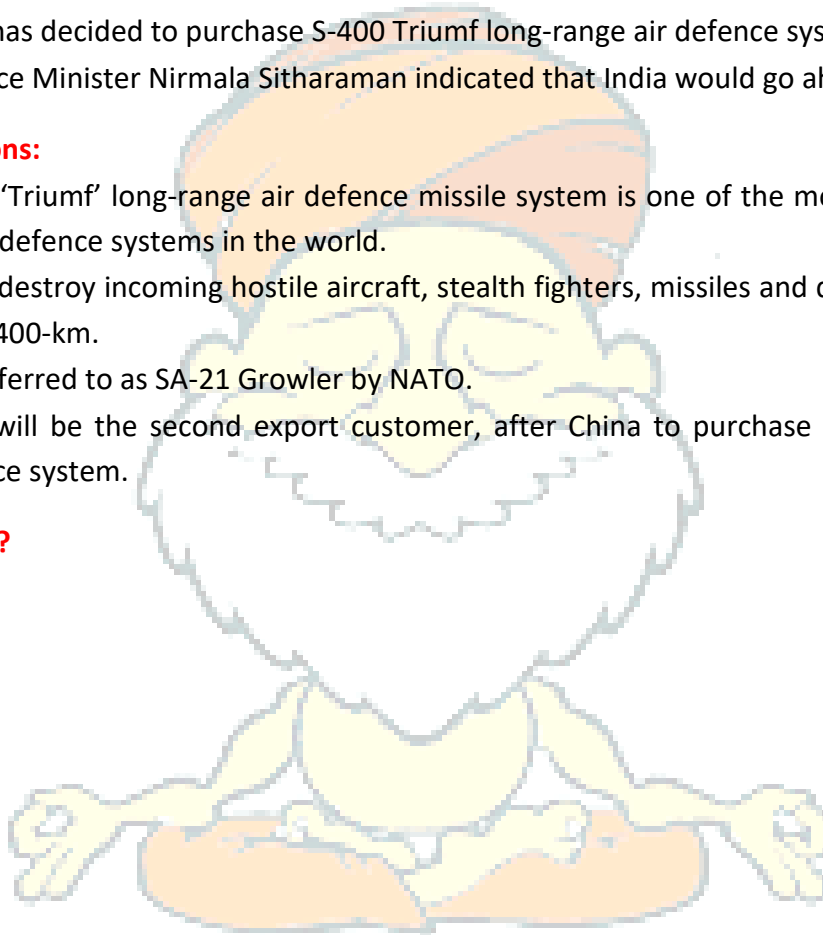
Key Pointers:

- India has decided to purchase S-400 Triumph long-range air defence system from Russia.
- Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman indicated that India would go ahead with the deal.

Value Additions:

- S-400 'Triumph' long-range air defence missile system is one of the most advanced long-range defence systems in the world.
- It can destroy incoming hostile aircraft, stealth fighters, missiles and drones at ranges of up to 400-km.
- It is referred to as SA-21 Growler by NATO.
- India will be the second export customer, after China to purchase this most advance defence system.

Do you know?



DEFENDING THE AEROSPACE FRONTIER

Multi-spectral, multi-layered air defence network being slowly erected with a wide range of sensors and weapons to detect, track & destroy incoming aircraft, drones, missiles etc

SPYDER

- Israeli low-level quick-reaction missile system
- IAF to induct 4 Spyder systems from Feb 2017 onwards
- Army to induct its own Spyder units

RANGE | **15KM**

AKASH

- Indigenous area defence missile system
- IAF already inducting 15 squadrons for ₹10,900 crore
- Army already inducting 2 regiments for ₹14,180 crore

RANGE | **25KM**

MEDIUM-RANGE SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE SYSTEM

- Joint DRDO-Israeli Aerospace Industries project
- IAF to induct initial 9 MR-SAM squadrons from 2016-17 onwards for ₹10,076 crore
- Navy also to get it for its frontline warships for ₹2,606 crore

RANGE | **70KM**

LONG-RANGE S-400 TRIUMF

- New-generation advanced Russian anti-aircraft/anti-missile system
- Defence Acquisitions Council to consider IAF proposal
- India likely to go in for 10-12 systems

RANGE | **400KM**



Defence Acquisition Council and 'Buy (Indian) IDDM' category

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Defence and Security

In News:

- Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) approved procurement of **high powered radars** for the Indian Air Force and **air cushion vehicles** for the Army and the Coast Guard.
- The 12 high power radars will be procured indigenously under the '**Buy (Indian) IDDM**' category.

Important value additions:

Do you know?

- 'Indian (Designed, Developed and Manufactured)', or **Buy (IDDM)**, this category replaces 'Buy (Indian)' as the most preferred category in the hierarchical order of procurement categories.

- Besides these two categories, the hierarchy of categories consists of '**Buy and Make (Indian)**', '**Buy and Make**', and '**Buy (Global)**', in that order.
- The 'Buy (IDDM)' category has ostensibly been devised to encourage indigenisation of defence products.

About Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)

- DAC – is the government's highest decision-making body on procurement.
- DAC is chaired by Union Defence Minister.
- To counter corruption and speed up decision-making in military procurements.

Do you know?

The decision flowing from the Defence Acquisition Council are to be implemented by the following 3 Boards –

- Defence Procurement Board headed by the Defence Secretary
- Defence Production Board headed by the Secretary (Defence Production)
- Defence Research & Development Board headed by the Secretary (Defence Research & Development)

Rise in India-ASEAN naval games

Part of: Prelims and Mains GS Paper II and III - International relations; India and the World; Defence and Security

In news:

India is instituting a series of bilateral and multilateral naval exercises with Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries as part of the increasing military-to-military cooperation. This is in addition to assisting the countries in capacity-building and sale of military hardware.

Key points:

- Navies of India and Indonesia to hold their first bilateral exercise in the Java Sea.
- India will stage a new trilateral exercise with Thailand and Singapore soon.
- Navy recently conducted maiden bilateral exercises with Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT)

- Naval exercise between India and Indonesia
- India has deployed INS Kulish, a Kora class missile corvette, and one Dornier maritime patrol aircraft in recent CORPAT exercise.

India to host first BIMSTEC war games

Part of: Prelims and GS Mains Paper II – India and its neighbours; International Relations

In news:

- India will host the first military exercise of the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) group focussing on counter-terrorism in September.
- The exercise is scheduled to be held in Pune.
- The theme includes counter-terrorism in semi-urban terrain and cordon and search, and each side will bring in some 30 soldiers.
- BIMSTEC countries held a disaster management exercise in 2017, but this is the first military exercise of the grouping.

Important Value Additions

About BIMSTEC:

- BIMSTEC was set up in 1997 and includes India, Bangladesh, Bhutan Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. (7 nations)
- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is an organization of South Asian and South East Asian countries which are dependent on the Bay of Bengal.
- Leadership is rotated in alphabetical order of country names. The permanent secretariat is in Dhaka.

India-US: Apaches deal

In news:

U.S. State Department has approved the sale of six additional AH-64 Apache attack helicopters to India. The Army will operate them.

Key points: Defence deals between India and US

- AH-64 Apache attack helicopters
- Chinook heavy-lift helicopters
- C-130J Hercules
- M777 howitzer

- Harpoon anti-ship missile system

Defence deals between India and Russian

- Russian Mi-25 and Mi-35 attack helicopters

India and US: four foundational agreements

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – International Relations; India and the world

Key focus areas:

- India and US to conclude the **Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)**, one of the four foundational agreements that helps the U.S. to intensify its defence cooperation with a partner nation.
- The four foundational agreements are - Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), COMCASA, General Security Of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA).
- The U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) was recently renamed **Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM)**, symbolic of the significance U.S. attaches to India in the region.
- Apart from the foundational agreements, the U.S. is also keen on a broad based **intelligence-sharing agreement** with India as the two countries have vastly expanded their counter-terror cooperation. **(needs signing of BECA)**
- As part of improving high tech cooperation, India and the U.S. announced the ambitious **Defence Technology and Trade Initiative** and India was designated a major defence partner. But it has not made any progress.

Important Value Additions:

Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) :

- Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) is fine tuned version of Logistics Support Agreement (LSA) is an agreement on sharing of military logistics between India and the American forces and will facilitate support such as refuelling and berthing facilities for each other's warships and aircrafts on a reimbursable basis.
- A formal agreement, when inked, will access supplies, spare parts and services from each other's land facilities, air bases and ports, which can then be reimbursed.
- An agreement in principle on logistics would move India closer to [the] US as a strategic partner

Communications and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA):

- Signing the CISMOA would enable India to get encrypted communications equipment and systems allowing military commanders to communicate with aircraft and ships through a secure network.

Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) for geospatial intelligence:

- BECA would provide India with topographical and aeronautical data and products, which will aid navigation and targeting.

High-stake agreements

Of the three foundational defence pacts between India and the United States, only one has been signed

COMCASA: The Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement facilitates transfer of encrypted communication systems, and is a key requirement for the U.S. to share high tech military hardware

COMCASA and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (**BECA**), which facilitates exchange of geospatial information, are pacts not signed yet due to severe criticism

- It was feared that signing these agreements would mean compromising India's age-old military ties with Russia and access to their weaponry systems

LEMOA: Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement. India signed the pact in 2016. The agreement gives militaries of both the nations access to each other's military facilities, without making it automatic or obligatory, mostly for the purposes of refuelling and replenishment



https://d39gegkjaqduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/06/19/DEL/Delhi/TH/5_11/2d2e188a_2183360_101_mr.jpg

Do you know?

- COMCASA and BECA are the two foundational agreements that India is yet to sign.
- It has already signed the General Security Of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA).
- The most significant of them is LEMOA, which gives both nations access to each other's military facilities. But it does not make it automatic or obligatory.
- The U.S. has been engaging India since 2002 on the foundational agreements, but successive governments have been wary of giving in to the U.S. demands.

Dhanush a.k.a Desi Bofors

Key points:

- Dhanush - indigenously upgraded artillery gun
- It is ready for induction into the Army
- Developed by the Jabalpur-based Gun Carriage Factory (GCF)
- Dhanush is an upgraded version of the Swedish Bofors gun procured by India in the mid-1980s. (The design is based on Bofors, therefore Dhanush is aka Desi Bofors)

Indigenous firepower

A look at Dhanush, an upgraded version of the Swedish Bofors gun which was procured by India in the mid-1980s



It is a 155-mm, 45-calibre gun with a range of 36 km, and has demonstrated a range of 38 km with specialised ammunition. It is also compatible with all North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) 155 mm ammunition systems

SPECIFICATIONS

Length 45 caliber

Crew 6-8

Caliber* 155 mm

Breech: Screw type

Recoil: Electro-rheological/
Magneto-rheological

Elevation: -3 to 70 degree

RATE OF FIRE

Burst: 3 rounds in 15 seconds

Intense: 15 rounds in 3 minutes

Sustained: 60 rounds in 60 min

Maximum firing range 38 km

*(DIAMETER OF THE PROJECTILE
IT SHOOTS)

Pic

credits:

https://d39gegkijagduz9.cloudfront.net/TH/2018/06/18/DEL/Delhi/TH/5_07/b6e1ba4a_218103_3_101_mr.jpg

Fast recap:

We had read about

- AH-64 Apache attack helicopters; Chinook heavy-lift helicopters; C-130J Hercules ; Howitzers; Harpoon anti-ship missile system -- (India US deal)
- S-400 Triumf; Mi-25 and Mi-35 attack helicopters – (India and Russia)
- SPYDER – (India and Israel)

Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT)

Part of: Prelims and Mains GS Paper II and III – International relations; India and the World; Defence and Security

Key points:

We had read earlier that –

- Navies of India and Indonesia to hold their first bilateral exercise in the Java Sea
- India will stage a new trilateral exercise with Thailand and Singapore soon.
- Navy recently conducted maiden bilateral exercises with Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam

Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT)

- Naval exercise between India and Indonesia
- India has deployed INS Kulish, a Kora class missile corvette, and one Dornier maritime patrol aircraft in recent CORPAT exercise.

In news:

- India and Bangladesh have also agreed to institute a Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT) as an annual feature between the two navies.
- The Navy regularly conducts CORPATs with Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand. It also conducts EEZ surveillance of Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles on their request.



DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Dam Safety Bill 2018

Part of: Mains GS Paper III- Infrastructure

Key pointers:

- The Bill proposes to help all the States and Union Territories adopt uniform dam safety procedures, which will ensure safety of dams and safeguard the benefits from them.
- It will also help in safeguarding human life, livestock and property.
- The Bill provides for proper surveillance, inspection, operation and maintenance of all specified dams in the country to ensure their safe functioning.
- It also talks about the constitution of a National Committee on Dam Safety which will evolve dam safety policies and recommend necessary regulations as may be required.
- It prescribes **setting up a National Dam Safety Authority** as a regulatory body which will discharge functions to implement the policy, guidelines and standards for dam safety in the country.
- There will also be **State-level committee on Dam Safety** to be set up by each State Government.

Background:

- There are over 5,200 large dams in India and about 450 are under construction. In addition, there are thousands of medium and small dams. Due to lack of legal and institutional architecture, dam safety is an issue of concern.
- Unsafe dams are a hazard and dam break may cause disasters, leading to huge loss of life and property, a Government statement said.

Centre-State Relations: Centre proposed Dam Safety Bill, 2018

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains – Indian Polity; Centre State Relations; Cooperative Federalism

In news:

- Centre has proposed Dam Safety Bill, 2018

- Concerns are raised by many states esp. Tamil Nadu
- Certain clauses of the Bill affected the interests of Tamil Nadu and could potentially affect the State's rights on control and maintenance of dams located in neighbouring States.
- Inputs of the State government were not sought while drafting the bill
- Dams in Tamin Nadu: Mullaperiyar, Parambikulam, Thoonakkadavu and Peruvuripallam dams (Remember just Mullaperiyar as it was often in news)

About Dam Safety Bill, 2018

- Union Cabinet approved the proposal for introduction of Dam Safety Bill, 2018 in the Parliament.
- The objective of this Bill is to help develop **uniform, countrywide procedures for ensuring the safety of dams.**
- It empowers the dam safety institutional set-ups in both the Centre and States.
- It will also help in standardizing and improving dam safety practices across the country.
- The Bill provides for establishment of National Dam Safety Authority as a regulatory body.

Disaster Management: FLOODS

Part of: GS Mains III – Disaster Management

Just know below basic procedures

BEFORE FLOODS

- Ignore rumours, Stay calm, Don't panic
- Keep your mobile phones charged for emergency communication; use SMS
- Listen to radio, watch TV, read newspapers for weather updates
- Keep cattle/animals untied to ensure their safety
- Prepare an emergency kit with essential items for safety and survival
- Keep a First Aid kit with extra medication for snake bite and diarrhoea ready
- Keep your documents and valuables in water-proof bags

DURING FLOODS

- Don't enter flood waters. In case you need to, wear suitable footwear
- Stay away from sewerage lines, gutters, drains, culverts, etc.
- Stay away from electric poles and fallen power lines to avoid electrocution
- Eat freshly cooked or dry food. Keep your food covered
- Drink boiled/chlorinated water
- Use disinfectants to keep your surroundings clean

AFTER FLOODS

- Do not allow children to play in or near flood waters
- Don't use any damaged electrical goods, get them checked
- Watch out for broken electric poles and wires, sharp objects and debris
- Do not eat food that has been in flood waters
- Use mosquito nets to prevent malaria
- Don't use the toilet or tap water if the water lines/sewage pipes are damaged

IF YOU NEED TO EVACUATE:

- Raise furniture, appliances on beds and tables
- Put sandbags in the toilet bowl and cover all drain holes to prevent sewage back flow
- Turn off power and gas connection
- Move to a higher ground/ safe shelter
- Take the emergency kit, first aid box and valuables with you
- Do not enter deep, unknown waters; use a stick to check water depth
- Come back home only when officials ask you to do so

Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES)

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains – Environment and Ecology; Disaster Management

In news:

- Odisha government entered into a collaboration with the RIMES

Important Value Additions

About RIMES

- It is an intergovernmental body registered under United Nations.
- It is a body of 48 members and collaborating countries in Asia Pacific and Africa Region, aimed at automating risk management, advisory generation and dissemination.
- RIMES evolved from the efforts of countries in Africa and Asia, in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, to establish a regional early warning system within a multi-hazard framework for the generation and communication of early warning information, and capacity building for preparedness and response to trans-boundary hazards.
- RIMES was established on 30 April 2009, and was registered with the United Nations on 1 July 2009.
- RIMES operates from its regional early warning center located at the campus of the Asian Institute of Technology in Pathumthani, Thailand.

Do you know?

- RIMES is already working with the Tamil Nadu State Disaster Management Authority.



INTERNAL SECURITY/SECURITY

Combating cyber threat: Government initiatives

Part of: Mains GS Paper II- Cyber security

Key pointers:

- To combat cyber threat, the government is coming up with more cyber security labs.
- The government has earlier launched **Digital Investigation Training and Analysis Centre (DITAC)** to tackle these crimes.
- The government launched its first DITAC in Gurugram, Haryana in 2016 in collaboration with National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO). The second one is being set up in Mohali, Punjab.
- DITACs will monitor and police cyber crimes committed through different platforms such as mobile, email, computer and social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook.
- Apart from DITACs, the government also established **National Cyber Coordination Centre**, an operational cyber security and e-surveillance agency in India.
- **National Informatics Centre** opened the fourth new data centre in Bhubaneswar, the second largest after the one in New Delhi, recently.

Background:

- Cyber attacks have grown in terms of sophistication and reach in the recent times.
- The country is witnessing growing cyber crime ranging from fraud calls to malwares that bring banking systems to a standstill.
- India was one of the worst hit countries by the WannaCry ransomware malware affecting sectors such as banking, finance and manufacturing last year.

Shifting taxonomy of violence

Issue:

India has witnessed saga of violence and conflicts.

Recent events in Thoothukudi (on May 22 and 23) have highlighted the changing nature of violence, and the inadequacy of existing rules and procedures to deal with new-era protests.

There is a need for redefining the internal security landscape as at present no one, the courts of judicature included, seems to understand the shifting taxonomy of violence.

Examples of incidents which caused law and order problems due to industry versus environment concerns –

- Sterlite's copper smelters in Thoothukudi
- tanneries spewing effluents in Kanpur
- iron mines in Goa
- Bhopal Gas Tragedy of 1984, the mother of all environmental tragedies.

Added to above list, are the escalating violence resulting from caste conflicts, such as –

- most recent Dalit uprising
- farmers' woes across the country
- rape of young women and children
- issues revolving around tradition versus modernity
- outsider versus insider syndrome, especially in the Northeast

All the above issues had resulted in highly complex violence (police firings, death of over a dozen individuals, etc) and need careful attention.

In instances of this kind, it is vital to try to determine the actual trigger that led to the violence. In many conflicts, presence of 'agent provocateurs' or outsiders especially militant elements from outside, who are pre-programmed to create chaos, has led to more violence.

Examples of such incidents –

- In Thoothukudi, the revolt was against Sterlite and its so-called disdain for the environment and the suffering of the locals.
- In Bhangar, West Bengal, for months villagers have been up in arms against a power grid project for which land had been acquired many years ago.

The conditions may be different, but the opposition remains equally intense. In both instances, we see organisations genuinely interested in the welfare of the locals initially launching the agitations, which gradually tend to be taken over by extreme right-wing and left-wing organisations. The result remains the same: widespread disruption.

Protests today are beginning to embrace entire communities. Governments and even tribunals are today viewed by protesters with deep suspicion, limiting opportunities for adjudication. Contrary judgments at different times by the High Courts and the Supreme Court have hardly helped.

This is a phenomenon seen in other protest movements elsewhere as well. In other words, this is the age of 'high voltage' revolt, basically an expression of repressed anger.

Much of this arises from an "embedded wisdom" that the system is being "manipulated" in favour of the rich, the powerful, and the big multinationals. This is something that is not confined to India alone.

Police effectiveness

Authorities need to understand the metastasising nature of the protests and signs of the growing revolt of an 'underclass' against the so-called 'elite'. The police also do not seem to have taken into consideration the kind of impetus provided to agitational methodologies by the 'digital wave'. Unfortunately, the authorities tend to look at current agitations through simple equations. They remain prisoners to Newton's Third Law. Outdated ideas can no longer explain the complex nature of today's agitations.

There is an urgent need for changes in administrative policies and police methodologies. The latter consequently find themselves severely handicapped in handling agitations, especially those agitations sponsored by today's newest 'elite', viz. the middle class.

Erection of barricades and promulgation of Section 144, have little relevance in the circumstances prevailing today.

Police effectiveness is also hampered on account of several other reasons, including that they are often outnumbered by mobilised crowds, driven by indignation and rage, predisposed towards creating disorder.

The way forward:

The police on their part need to realise that existing laws and procedures notwithstanding, merely putting faith and focus on strength is not likely to succeed. It ignores the asymmetrical measures available to today's mobs, and the limits that these impose on tactics and policies of a bygone era.

- Revamping intelligence and introduction of new methods to overcome the lacunae in intelligence collection.
- Police need to strengthen their 'contextual' intelligence to deal with today's situations.
- This involves anticipating the meaning of 'street power' – enhanced by information technology and the presence of flash mobs.
- New 'smart tactics' have to be developed.

Simply blaming the police is no answer to the growing volumes of protests everywhere.

Tackling Vigilantism and Protecting Minorities

Background:

In our previous article [[Shifting taxonomy of violence](#)], we read that –

India is witnessing saga of violence and conflicts.

The article mainly focused on incidents which caused law and order problems due to **industry versus environment** concerns –

- Sterlite’s copper smelters in Thoothukudi
- tanneries spewing effluents in Kanpur
- iron mines in Goa
- Bhopal Gas Tragedy of 1984, the mother of all environmental tragedies.

Also adding to above list, were the escalating **violence resulting from caste conflicts**, such as –

- most recent Dalit uprising
- farmers’ woes across the country
- rape of young women and children
- issues revolving around tradition versus modernity
- outsider versus insider syndrome, especially in the Northeast

All the above issues had resulted in highly complex violence (police firings, death of over a dozen individuals, etc) and needed careful attention.

The article stressed the need for redefining the internal security landscape and for new methods to deal with the above new-era protests. (You can revise previous article by clicking this link - [Shifting taxonomy of violence](#))

Apart from above incidents there are other episodes of mass communal violence – recurring **incidents of lynching** and **targeted mob violence against vulnerable groups** – have been reported from various parts of the country.

These recurring incidents are a direct challenge thrown by right-wing groups to political processes, especially electoral processes and the rule of law. (what we can all as ‘vigilante violence’)

****Vigilantism** - law enforcement undertaken without legal authority by a self-appointed group of people.

Vigilantism, at its peak?

South Asia has a long history of communal violence, but these were primarily big episodes of mass violence.

This has now given way to a smaller-scale of conflict and vigilante violence against individuals endorsed by state inaction.

According to India Spend, a data-journalism website -

- 86% of those killed in lynching incidents in 2017 were Muslims
- Supreme Court in 2017 directed all State governments to take measures to prevent vigilantism in the name of cow protection.
- However, public lynching or vigilante violence hasn't subsided.
- Majority of attacks are due to bovine related, anti-minority attacks and hate violence around festivals.

Are minorities under siege?

- The victims in cases of lynching are almost entirely from poor families and minorities.
- Minorities are continually kept under siege through targeted attacks.
- India has a poor record when it comes to prevention and punishment of the perpetrators of mass violence and/or lynchings.
- Each event of violence has hardened community boundaries and widened the divide between Hindus and Muslims.

According to the Citizens Against Hate (CAH), a civil society group report - 97% of cow-related lynchings had occurred since the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) rise to political dominance in 2014.

Most of these attacks were based on rumours sparked by accusations, often circulating on social media which take the shape of communal stereotypes of victims.

Most actors leading the charge are suspected to belong to right-wing parties who are backed by political protection.

Apart from the political reasons alluded to above, the rising trend is directly related to the **'intensification of communal polarisation'** and **'instrumentalisation of prejudice'** for political ends apparent in various government **attempts to infuse religion into politics and education**.

In the event, these acts seem to have acquired a certain degree of legitimacy in the public mind.

Conclusion

As hate crimes grow, so does the sense of impunity or licence/freedom enjoyed by the actual perpetrators to continue such injurious crimes increases. Lack of justice for victims further reinforces the vicious cycle of impunity.

The lack of public reaction to such incidents implies a degree of acceptability of violence as an expression of vengeance against 'injustices' suffered by Hindus in the past. The theory of 'Hindu insecurity' and 'Hindu persecution' comes at a time when political representation of Muslims in legislatures and administration and their presence in the public sphere is at its lowest since Independence.

Most of the incidents are not spontaneous acts of violence; there is usually systematic planning behind them.

Has active support of powerful political figures in the current establishment at the Centre and in the States has helped to build networks, gain new recruits, resources and legitimacy that right-wing groups did not have in the past?

Preventing further atrocities requires respect for the rule of law and legal institutions and strong prosecutions and expeditious punishments. Unless checked, it can cause irreversible harm to the social fabric of our society and to the tenets of democracy that have shaped and sustained the idea of India.

Connecting the dots:

- Growing hate crimes and vigilante violence needs reforms in our existing laws and legal procedures. Do you agree? Critically examine.

ETHICS

The issue of doping in sports

In news:

In the recently concluded Commonwealth Games at Gold Coast, Australia, the Indian contingent got rapped for alleged violations of the **“No Needle Policy”**. The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) has decided to implement a similar policy.

This kind of **Zero tolerance** is welcome because the culture of casual doping amongst athletes needs to change.

The reasons for the malaise are many — peer pressure, irresponsible advisers and fellow athletes, unscrupulous coaches, easy availability, poorly administered federations and, of course, human fallibility.

Background:

- India had dropped from third to sixth place on the **World Anti-Doping Agency’s (WADA)** 2016 List of Offenders.
- What makes India’s position unique is that it’s too high on this list, disproportionately so to the levels of its sporting achievement.

Rules in India:

- Indian anti-doping rules mirror the WADA code and prescribe a framework of strict liability. For this, the athlete first needs to establish how the prohibited substance entered his/her system. This burden is justifiably onerous. In reality, it disables an athlete caught in inadvertent doping.
- Inadvertent doping is due to contaminated or mislabelled supplements, misguided medical treatment and at worst, sabotage. Harmless food supplements like proteins or vitamins used by athletes are often from unreliable sources like private shops or online purchase.
- A recent initiative by the Foods and Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) to test and certify supplements is still to be fully operationalised.

Way ahead:

- The government should create a source for safe permitted supplements. It would curb accidental doping.

An athlete accused of inadvertent doping cannot get supplements tested for contamination, having no access to authorised laboratories.

The National Dope-Testing Laboratory (NDTL) is accessible only to NADA or the government.

- Any anti-doping initiative should aggressively focus not only on detection but also on education and awareness.
- Athletes, support staff, federations, sports medical personnel must be equipped with well-conceived literature, consultation and workshops.

Current efforts are inadequate. NADA's efforts need to be supplemented by a cadre of indigenous anti-doping experts.

No needle policy:

The AFI has declared that they have drawn up a two-page protocol which would be distributed to all athletes at national camps and training centres. While we await the details, a few caveats.

- As a policy, this will be separate from the Anti-Doping Rules and will have to be implemented in silos. The infringement of policy can lead to a disciplinary action but not an anti-doping sanction.
- An impenetrable infrastructure needs to be put in place first, so that cases of sabotage (simply planting a needle in a competitor's room) does not become rampant.

Restorative, rather than simply retributive justice:

- A framework must be created to constructively counsel athletes to understand the real causes, degrees of fault and administrative lapses.
- We must recognise the socio-cultural reality of our sportspersons. Quite a few are from semi-urban or rural backgrounds.
- To them, sports is the only route to a better economic status. Literacy and language are serious impediments. They are subject to the whims and dictates of administrators. Amidst such intense pressure, they compete and carry our nation's hopes. But when they err, or are accused of doing so, we disclaim all responsibility. Sports federations, more famous for politicking, must take this blame upfront.

Connecting the dots:

- Making doping a criminal offence is an unsustainable idea which would subject athletes to an already crippled criminal justice system. Restorative, rather than retributive justice should be focused on. Discuss.

Ethics first: Organ transplant racket

Introduction:

Yesterday, we read about Organ transplant racket which has surfaced in Tamil Nadu. It is alleged that International patients are getting more priority in cadaver transplants, bypassing long list of Indians.

Three of four hearts harvested from brain-dead patients were given to foreign nationals, bypassing Indian patients on the waiting list.

- We know that, **Health is a state subject, therefore State governments have responsibility for health care provision.**
- They are expected to ensure that the organs that are altruistically donated by families of brain-dead people are given to recipients ethically, and as mandated by law.

As long as there is a shortage of organs for transplantation, there will be a requirement that those organs be offered to patients on the waiting list in an ethical manner. The allocation system should be “fair.”

Next course of action:

There must be an inquiry into how allocations for organ transplants are made. Any inquiry into the allocation of hearts and lungs to foreigners should, therefore, shed light on the factors that led to the decisions, including whether registered citizens were overlooked.

It should cover such issues as the capacity of district-level hospitals to perform transplants, and arrangements to air-lift organs, since domestic patients are unable to afford flight facilities. Such measures will make it possible to utilise more hearts and lungs, and offer them to domestic recipients.

Enrolling all domestic patients through State registries should be the priority for the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation, set up by the Centre with that mandate.

Ethics first: Hospitals and professionals who engage in commerce or unethical behaviour should have no place in the system.

Connecting the dots:

- What are the Reasons behind the imbalance between the number of organs donated and the number of people waiting for a transplant?

- “Making organs a commodity is fraught with erosion of social, moral, and ethical values and is not an alternative that can be acceptable to meet organ requirements in a civilized society”. Critically analyze.

Adopting best practices for Organ Transplant

Introduction:

- We had already covered about articles which dealt with misuse of organ transplant and organ transplant racket surfacing in Tamil Nadu.
- **Issue** - International patients used to get priority in cadaver transplants, bypassing long list of Indians. (It was alleged that protocol of organ transplant was misused)

Key pointers from previous articles:

- National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) is an all-India apex body for coordination and networking for procurement and distribution of organs/tissues and transplantation.
- The legislation called the Transplantation of Human Organ Act (THO) was passed in India in 1994 to streamline organ donation and transplantation activities.
- The aim of the THO Act is “to provide for the regulation of removal, storage and transplantation of human organs for therapeutic purposes and for the prevention of commercial dealings in human organs”.
- Despite the THO legislation, organ commerce and kidney scandals are regularly reported in the Indian media.

Key pointers from today’s editorial:

Controversy: Large percentage of foreign nationals are receiving cardiac transplants from deceased donors in India, bypassing long list of Indians.

Debate: Are there any fault lines in transplantation policy in India that need immediate correction?

Do you know?

- **Christiaan Barnard** performed the first successful human heart transplant in 1967, in Cape Town, Africa.
- One of the first cardiac transplants in the world was attempted back in 1968 at Mumbai’s King Edward Memorial Hospital by **P.K. Sen** (the world’s fifth and sixth heart transplants).

- Dr. Sen's transplants as well as India's first successful cardiac transplant in 1994 (by **P. Venugopal** at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi) were performed in public institutions.

Market pressures

- Along the way, organ transplantation in India (this includes Tamil Nadu) largely became a private sector activity.
- While the act of donation is a public act and the organs a public good, from that point onwards whatever happens is largely under the private sector.
- The rules of market medicine thus dictate who the organs go to. And hospitals that invest large sums in transplantation programmes which include huge payouts to surgeons look for returns.
- The costs of heart transplant are well beyond a large majority of the local population. This is where foreigner nationals who are often able to pay such sums fit in.

Major concerns:

- Most of the hospitals (esp. private) are focusing on bypass and stenting and problems of advanced cardiac failure has been sidelined.
- There are cases and incidents where hearts of young deceased donors remaining unutilised for the lack of recipients.
- Trained cardiac surgeons did not have enough referrals and chose to leave or focus their attention on bypass surgery.

The way ahead: Need for revisiting the policy

- Organ transplantation protocol should ensure transparency.
- In other words, organs should go to those who need them the most rather than to those who can pay for them.
- Therefore there is a need for hard policy changes that include strengthening the capacity of the public sector, subsidising transplantation and perhaps enabling affirmative action in the allocation process in favour of public hospitals.
- Every fifth or sixth organ could be mandatorily allotted to a public hospital or the private centre can be asked to perform a certain proportion of transplants free.

This would also improve public trust and lead to high organ donation rates.

Connecting the dots:

- What are the reasons behind the imbalance between the number of organs donated and the number of people waiting for a transplant?

- “Making organs a commodity is fraught with erosion of social, moral, and ethical values and is not an alternative that can be acceptable to meet organ requirements in a civilized society”. Critically analyze.



MISCELLANEOUS

Classical Music: Jugalbandi

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains I – Indian Culture; Music

Do you know?

- Jugalbandi is a performance in Indian classical music, especially in Hindustani classical music, that features a duet of two solo musicians.
- The word jugalbandi means, literally, "entwined twins." The duet can be either vocal or instrumental.
- What defines jugalbandi is that the two soloists be on an equal footing.

Person in news: Bindeshwar Pathak

Part of: Prelims

In news:

- Noted social reformer and founder of Sulabh International Bindeshwar Pathak was with Japan's prestigious '**Nikkei Asia Prize for Culture and Community**' for his significant work in tackling poor hygiene and discrimination.
- The award honours people in Asia who have made significant contributions in one of the three areas: regional growth; science, technology and innovation; and culture and community.
- Former PM Manmohan Singh and Infosys chairman N. R. Narayana Murthy are among the few Indians who have won the prize in the past.

June 21: International Day of Yoga

Part of: GS Prelims

Key pointers:

- The International Day of Yoga is marked on June 21.
- The theme for the 2018 celebration, organized by the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, is 'Yoga for Peace.'

- The International Day of Yoga aims to raise awareness worldwide of the many benefits of practicing yoga.

Person in news: Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian resigns

Part of: GS Prelims

In news:

- Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian resigns

About CEA

- The Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) is the economic advisor to the Government of India.
- The CEA is the ex-officio cadre controlling authority of the Indian Economic Service.
- The CEA is under the direct charge of the Minister of Finance.
- CEA enjoys rank and pay equivalent to that of a Secretary to Government of India.
- The CEA heads the Economic Division under the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA).

Ambubachi Mela: Festival to mark the menstrual period of the goddess

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains I – Culture and Indian society

In news:

- Ambubachi Mela, a four-day fair to mark the annual menstruation of the goddess at Kamakhya temple, Assam.
- Kamakhya, atop Nilachal Hills in Guwahati, is one of 51 shaktipeeths or seat of Shakti followers, each representing a body part of Sati, Lord Shiva's companion. The temple's sanctum sanctorum houses the yoni — female genital — symbolised by a rock.
- Temple priests said the ritualistic fair celebrating the goddess' period is one of the reasons why the taboo associated with menstruation is less in Assam compared to other parts of India. The attainment of womanhood of girls in Assam is celebrated with a ritual called 'Tuloni Biya', meaning small wedding.

Person in news: Pragg

Part of: GS Prelims (Sports)

In news:

- India's R. Praggnanandhaa became the world's second youngest chess Grandmaster. (12 years, 10 months and 13 days)
- Ukraine's Sergey Karjakin remains the youngest-ever GM (12 years and seven months).



Pic: <http://www.orissapost.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/R-Praggnanandhaa.jpg>

Remembering Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains I – Indian History; Modern History

Key pointers:

- 180th birth anniversary
- He penned India's national song "Vande Mataram"
- Kapalkundala (1866) is Chattopadhyay's first major publication.
- His first novel 'Durgesh Nandini' proved that writing novel had reached an excellence under Bankim.
- Another of his great works 'Anandamath' had a great impact on the mind of the Bengalis as well as on Indians as it inspired the people with nationalism.
- Activists during the Indian Independence Movement

Model questions: Answers are provided separately at the end

GEOGRAPHY

Q.1) Seet lahar deals with -

- a) a type of cloud which is made up of 'black carbon' containing soot and smog
- b) a violent type of mudflow or ground-hugging fog that engulfs plain areas
- c) ban obscene depiction of women on the Internet and through SMS/MMS
- d) None of the above

Q.2) Laamu and Addu atolls – these 2 strategically important locations were in news recently. It belongs to which among the following countries?

- a) Sri Lanka
- b) Australia
- c) Maldives
- d) Indonesia

Q.3) Consider the following statements about Polavaram Project

1. It implements Godavari-Krishna link under National River Linking Project
2. It has been accorded national project status by the central government
3. The dam is across the Krishna River

Which of the following statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 3
- d) All of the above

Q.4) The Houthi rebels are from

- a) China
- b) Yemen
- c) Syria
- d) Ukraine

Q.5) Consider the following statements:

1. Ken-Betwa river inter-linking project is the first river link project by the Central government.
2. Dhaudhan dam is built as part of the project.
3. Surplus water in the Bundelkhand region is transferred to other areas.

Select the correct answer from the following codes

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

Q.6) Which among the following are tributaries of River Yamuna?

1. Betwa
2. Chambal
3. Son
4. Ken

Choose the appropriate code:

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

Q.7) Ken-Betwa river linking project has received the final environmental clearance. A major chunk of one of the tiger reserve/national park will get submerged. Which is the tiger reserve that we are referring to?

- a) Panna
- b) Pench
- c) Kanha
- d) Bandhavgarh

Q.8) Assumption island is located in -

- a) Madagascar

- b) Seychelles
- c) Maldives
- d) Mauritius

Q.9) Where are the Krushnaprasad, Nalaban, Kalijai, Mangalajodi, Somolo and Birds' Islands located?

- a) Godavari river
- b) Chilika lake
- c) Brahmaputra river
- d) Lakshadweep

Q.10) The 8 degree channel separate which one the following?

- a) Lakshdweep and Minicoy Islands
- b) Maldives and Minicoy Islands
- c) Andaman and Nicobar Islands
- d) Indira point and Indonesia

Q.11) Consider the following statements with reference to Maldives

1. The country has a tropical monsoon climate.
2. It is entirely made up of atolls and associated coral structures.
3. Equator passes through the country.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Q.12) India had proposed to build Military infrastructure on 'Assumption Island'. Where is Assumption Island located?

- a) Indian Ocean
- b) Red Sea
- c) Arctic Ocean
- d) South China Sea

Q.13) Consider the following statements with reference to Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Co-operation (IOR-ARC)

1. It is the only pan-Indian Ocean grouping.
2. All countries in Indian Ocean are its members.
3. Its headquarters are located in Seychelles.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q.14) Assumption Island was in news recently. It is concerned with which of the following?

- a) China's new naval base near Horn of Africa
- b) Joint Military Exercise of the ASEAN members
- c) Somalian Pirates took over the island
- d) None of the above

Q.15) Operation Cactus is associated with

- a) Maldives
- b) Seychelles
- c) Mauritius
- d) Congo

Q.16) 'Operation Flowers are Blooming' is associated with

- a) Maldives
- b) Seychelles
- c) Mauritius
- d) Congo

POLITY/GOVERNANCE

Q.17) Consider the following statements:

1. Article 35A of the Indian Constitution empowers the Jammu and Kashmir state's legislature to define "permanent residents" of its state.
2. Article 35A does not allow people from outside the state of Jammu and Kashmir to work, settle or own property in the state.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.18) Consider the following statements

1. The Chairman of the Finance Commission is the Cabinet Secretary
2. Setting up of Finance Commission is a Constitutional obligation under Article 280 of the Constitution of India

Select the correct statements

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.19) Consider the following statements with reference to Finance Commission

1. It is a quasi-judicial body.
2. The chairman of the commission is not eligible for reappointment.
3. The qualifications of the members of commission are not specified in the Constitution.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Q.20) The primary entry in the Constitution relating to water is in the –

- a) State List

- b) Union List
- c) Concurrent List
- d) None

Q.21) Which Schedule of the Constitution contains provisions of Municipal Corporation?

- a) Schedule Eleven
- b) Schedule Five
- c) Schedule Twelve
- d) Schedule Six

Q.22) Consider the following statements in regard to local governments in relation to 73rd and 74th Amendments:

1. Local government is enumerated in concurrent list.
2. The amendment made a provision for the mandatory creation of the Gram Sabha.
3. One third of the positions in all panchayat institutions are reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Which of the above given statements is/are correct?

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

Q.23) Consider the following statements

1. The Governor can pardon a death sentence prescribed by a state law
2. A Governor whose term has expired may be reappointed in the same state or any other state

Which of the above statement[s] is/are incorrect?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.24) In the Constitution of India, the provision 'to value and preserve the rich heritage of the country's composite culture' is included in the:

- a) Preamble to the Constitution
- b) Directive Principles of State Policy
- c) Fundamental Duties
- d) Fundamental Rights

Q.25) With regard to pardoning power of the President, which of statements given below is incorrect?

- a) The power to pardon is to be exercised by the President on the advice of the Union Cabinet
- b) The President cannot pardon sentences inflicted by court martial
- c) The Constitution does not provide for any mechanism to question the legality of decisions of President
- d) None

Q.26) Article 27 of Constitution of India deals with

- a) Freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion
- b) Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion
- c) Freedom to manage religious affairs
- d) Freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions

Q.27) Consider the following statements:

1. Governor's rule is imposed on Jammu and Kashmir only, while the President rule on the rest of India.
2. President Rule is not extended to Jammu And Kashmir State as Governor's rule is imposed if the constitutional machinery fails in the state.

Choose the correct code from below:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2

d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.28) Consider the following statements regarding the features Jammu and Kashmir Constitution

1. It declares the State of J&K to be an integral part of India
2. It provides for Governor's rule as appointed by President of India
3. It clarifies that the permanent residents of the state are entitled to all rights guaranteed under the Constitution of India

Select the correct statements

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

Q.29) Which of the following organization is responsible for the preparation of economic survey in India?

- a) Department of revenue
- b) Department of economic affairs
- c) Department of revenue services
- d) Department of financial services

Q.30) From the below statements about Finance Commission, identify the incorrect statement:

- a) It is a quasi-judicial body.
- b) They hold office for such period as specified by the President in his order.
- c) It is required to make recommendations to the Parliament on the distribution of the net proceeds of taxes to be shared between the Centre and the states, and the allocation between the states, the respective shares of such proceeds.
- d) None

Q.31) Which among the below is not a non-constitutional body?

- a) National Development Council
- b) Central Information Commission

- c) Central Vigilance Commission
- d) Finance Commission

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES/POLICIES

Q.32) Consider the following statements with regard to Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABHY):

1. It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
2. Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation is the Nodal Ministry for the overall policy, planning, funding and coordination of the programme.
3. It aims at providing every person in both rural and urban India with adequate safe water for drinking and cooking.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 1, 2 and 3
- d) None

Q.33) Consider the below statements:

1. Health is a state subject.
2. National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation is an all-India apex body for coordination and networking for procurement and distribution of organs/tissues and transplantation.
3. NOTTO functions under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

Which of the statements above is/are correct?

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

Q.34) Which of the following statements is/are correct about Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY)?

- a) It is a cash incentive scheme for pregnant women and lactating mothers

- b) It is a pension scheme exclusively for the senior citizens aged 60 years and above
- c) It provides an assured return of 8% per annum for 10 years
- d) Both (b) and (c)

Q.35) Consider the below statements with regard to Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)

1. It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, i.e 100% cost by Central government.
2. It is implemented in all the districts of the country in accordance with the provision of the National Food Security Act, 2013.
3. It is implemented using the platform of Anganwadi Services scheme of Umbrella ICDS under Ministry of Women and Child Development.

Which of the statements above is/are correct?

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

Q.36) Which of the statements given below is/are correct about Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)?

1. Under this scheme, monetary benefits are extended to BPL pregnant women and lactating mothers.
2. Beneficiaries will get Rs. 6000 each in three installments.

Choose correct answer:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.37) Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABHY), a ₹6,000 cr. scheme is collaboration between –

- a) India and UN Environment
- b) India and World Bank

- c) India and Israel
- d) India and IMF

Q.38) Recently, Centre had constituted a Committee to suggest a model legislation to safeguard the interest of the child as well as to deal with issue of inter-country parental child abduction. The committee is headed by –

- a) Rajesh Bindal Committee
- b) Geetam Singh Committee
- c) Preetham Reddy Committee
- d) Mahendra Lama Committee

**Q.39) 'Mission Raftaar' is related to which of the following?
Select the correct option**

- a) Women Empowerment
- b) Data protection law in India
- c) Increasing the speed of freight and passenger trains
- d) To study Artificial intelligence in military

Q.40) Committee on Restructuring the Central Water Commission and the Central Ground Water Board is chaired by –

- a) Preetham Reddy
- b) Y V Reddy
- c) NK Singh
- d) Mihir Shah

Q.41) Consider the following

1. Arecanut
2. Barley
3. Coffee
4. Finger millet
5. Groundnut
6. Sesamum
7. Turmeric

The cabinet committee on economic affairs has announced Minimum Support Price for which of the above?

- a) 1, 2, 3 and 7 only
- b) 2, 4, 5 and 6 only
- c) 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 only
- d) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 only

Q.42) Which of the following statements are correct regarding Ujjawala scheme?

1. It is a comprehensive scheme to prevent trafficking of women and children for commercial/sexual exploitation.
2. The aim is to facilitate the rescue of victims and place them in safe custody.
3. To facilitate the repatriation of cross border trafficking victims

Select the code from following:

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) None
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.43) The aim of Ujjwala Yojana is to

- a) Electrify all rural villages by 2030
- b) Provide free primary education to girl child
- c) Provide free LPG Connection to women below poverty line
- d) None of the above

INTERNATIONAL

Q.44) Consider the below statements in regard to Shangri-La dialogue:

1. It is a "Track One" inter-governmental security forum attended by defense ministers, permanent heads of ministries and military chiefs of 28 Asia-Pacific states.
2. It is held annually and run by the Singapore government.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.45) Which of the following statements is/are true regarding the Shangri La Dialogue?

1. It is the annual conclave in Singapore that brings together the region's defence ministers and senior military officials.
2. The Dialogue is organised by the London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS) with the support of the Singapore government
3. The first meeting was held in 2002.

Select the correct option

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 1, 2 and 3
- d) None of the above

Q.46) Global Peace Index (GPI) is released by –

- a) World Justice Project
- b) International Court of Justice
- c) The Office of UN Commissioner for Human Rights
- d) None of the above

Q.47) Consider the following statements about 'Hague Abduction Convention'

1. It is an international treaty to ensure the prompt return of a child who has been "abducted" from the country of their "habitual residence".
2. Under the Convention, contracting countries must establish a central authority to trace unlawfully removed children and secure their return to the country of habitual residence, irrespective of the country's own laws on the issue.
3. The Convention only applies to children under the age 16.
4. India is yet to ratify the convention

Select the correct statements

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 1, 2 and 3
- c) 1, 2 and 4
- d) All of the above

Q.48) Which of the following statements is/are true regarding the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation?

1. It is a Eurasian political, economic, and security organisation.
2. The organisation is headquartered in Astana.
3. India is a full member of the organisation since its inception.

Select the correct option

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 and 3 only
- c) 1, 2 and 3
- d) None of the above

Q.49) The Qingdao Declaration is related to which of the following organisations:

Select the correct option

- a) SAARC
- b) G7
- c) SCO
- d) None of the above

Q.50) 'Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure' is associated with which of the following organisations:

- a) SAARC
- b) G7
- c) SCO
- d) UN

Q.51) Consider the below statements with regard to BIMSTEC:

1. It was set up in 1997 and includes all the South Asian and South East Asian countries.
2. The permanent secretariat is in Dhaka.
3. India will host the first military exercise of the BIMSTEC

Which of the statements above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only

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

Q.52) LEMOA, GSOMIA, COMCASA and BECA are often in news. It deals with -

- a) Four foundational agreements that helps the U.S. to intensify its defence cooperation with a partner nation.
- b) Super Computers developed by NASA.
- c) Trade Agreements that help India and Italy to augment collaboration in areas of mutual benefit.
- d) 4 approaches suggested for India-China ties.

Q.53) Consider the following statements

1. India and the US recently signed Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)
2. U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) was recently renamed Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM)

Which of the above statement[s] is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.54) Consider the following statements

1. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Qingdao, China was the first SCO summit attended by India as a full-fledged member.
2. SCO admitted India and Pakistan as full members in 2017.

Select the correct statements

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.55) Consider the following statements

1. India is not a signatory to the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and has no domestic asylum law.
2. Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) is a new framework for refugee protection under 1951 Refugee Convention.

Which of the above statement[s] is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.56) World Migration Report 2018 is released by

- a) World Economic Forum
- b) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- c) Amnesty International
- d) International Organization for Migration

Q.57) Consider the following statements:

1. United Nations proclaimed 21 June as the International Day of Yoga.
2. The theme for the 2018 celebration is Yoga for Peace.

Choose the correct code from below:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.58) Given below are the statements regarding Financial Action Task Force (FATF), select the INCORRECT statements among them.

1. It is a body governed by UN which is involved in setting standards for anti-money laundering and combating financing of terrorism.
2. India is a member party to FATF.

Select the code from following:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) None of the above

Q.59) Consider the following statements about Financial Action Task Force (FATF):

1. It is a Paris-based multi-disciplinary and inter-governmental body whose purpose is the development and promotion of national and international policies to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.
2. It was founded at the 1989 OECD Economic Summit.

Select the correct code:

- a) Only 1
- b) Only 2
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

ENVIRONMENT

Q.60) The theme of Earth Day 2018 is –

- a) “Beat Plastic Pollution”
- b) “Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future”
- c) “End Plastic Pollution”
- d) “Nature for Water” – exploring nature-based solutions to the water challenges we face in the 21st century

Q.61) Clean Seas Campaign is -

- a) a global UN Environment initiative
- b) a Green Pledge taken by 28 EU member-states
- c) Both a and b
- d) None of the above

Q.62) Which among the following is the largest contributor to nitrogen emissions from India?

- a) Waste water
- b) Fertilizers used in Agriculture

- c) Residential and commercial activities
- d) Automobile

Q.63) Which among the following is the largest contributor to ammonia production in India?

- a) Fertilizers used in Agriculture
- b) Residential and commercial activities
- c) Automobile
- d) Cattle

Q.64) Match List I with List II and select the correct answer using the code given below the Lists:

List I

- A. Black Softshell turtle
- B. Koalas
- C. Chitra indica

List II

- 1. Endangered
- 2. Vulnerable
- 3. Extinct in the wild

A-B-C

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

Q.65) Match List I with List II and select the correct answer using the code given below the Lists:

List I

- A. Rajaji Tiger Reserve
- B. Palamu Tiger Reserve
- C. Dudhwa National Park

List II

- 1. Uttarakhand
- 2. Uttar Pradesh
- 3. Jharkhand

A-B-C

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

Q.66) Which of the following can be found as pollutants in the drinking water in some parts of India?

1. Arsenic
2. Sorbitol
3. Fluoride
4. Formaldehyde
5. Uranium

Select the correct answer using the codes given below

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

Q.67) Consider the following statements

1. Olive ridley and Kemp ridley are the only two species of marine turtles that display a unique mass nesting behaviour 'arribada'.
2. They are endemic to the Pacific coasts of Mexico, Central America, and India.

Select the correct statements

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.68) Consider the following w.r.t Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI)

1. The Animal Welfare Board of India is a non-statutory advisory body on Animal Welfare Laws and promotes animal welfare in the country.
2. It was established under the provisions of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

Select the correct statements

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2

- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.69) Among the following, which one is not an ape?

- a) Gibbon
- b) Gorilla
- c) Langur
- d) Orangutan

Q.70) Identify the wetland based on the following statements:

1. The Irrawaddy dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*) is the flagship species here.
2. It was the first Indian wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.
3. Nalbana Island is the core area of this wetland.

Select the wetland that is best suited to the above description—

- a) East Calcutta Wetlands
- b) Deepor Beel
- c) Chilika Lake
- d) Bhoj Wetland

Q.71) Irrawaddy dolphin is generally found near the coasts of

- a) Maharashtra
- b) Odisha
- c) Kerala
- d) Gujarat

Q.72) The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recently released an updated red list classifying the different species. It has changed the status of Irrawaddy Dolphins from

- a) Endangered to Vulnerable
- b) Vulnerable to Endangered
- c) Vulnerable to Critically Endangered

- d) Vulnerable to Extinct

Q.73) Rajaji Tiger Reserve is located in

- a) Rajasthan
- b) Uttar Pradesh
- c) Madhya Pradesh
- d) Uttarakhand

Q.74) The most significant strategy for the conservation of biodiversity together with traditional human life is the establishment of

- a) Botanical Gardens
- b) National Parks
- c) Bird Sanctuaries
- d) Biosphere Reserves

Q.75) Belize's Reef or Caribbean reef was in news recently for -

- a) It will be removed from UNESCO's list of threatened World Heritage Sites
- b) It will be added to UNESCO's list of threatened World Heritage Sites
- c) Belize's plans to allow oil exploration nearby and has threatened the reef
- d) None of the above

Q.76) Which of the following tiger reserves are located in the state of Odisha?

- 1. Satkosia Tiger reserve
- 2. Simlipal Tiger reserve
- 3. Kawal Tiger reserve
- 4. Pilibhit Tiger reserve

Choose the correct options

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

Q.77) Which of the following statements are correct regarding Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES)

1. It is an intergovernmental body registered under United Nations.
2. RIMES evolved from the efforts of countries in Asia and Pacific.
3. It was established aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.

Select the code from following:

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

Q.78) Which of the following industries require Online Continuous Emission Monitoring Systems (OCEMS)?

1. pulp & paper
2. sugar
3. fertilizer
4. copper and aluminium smelters
5. dyes

Select correct answer:

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

ECONOMY/INFRASTRUCTURE

Q.79) Consider the following statements about the reverse repo rate

1. It is an interest rate at which the Banks deposit their cash with the RBI
2. If reverse repo rate is increased the bank's lending rates to customers will also increase

Which of the following statements is/are incorrect?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2

- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.80) Match the following statements with the related terms given below:

1. It is rate at which scheduled banks can borrow funds overnight from RBI against government securities.
2. It is amount that banks have to maintain a stipulated proportion of their net demand and time liabilities (NDTL) in form of liquid assets.
3. It is amount of funds that banks have to keep with RBI.
4. It is rate at which banks lend funds to RBI.

Terms:

- A. Reverse Repo Rate
- B. Repo Rate
- C. Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) Rate
- D. Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)
- E. Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR)

Select the correct answer using the following codes:

- a) 1-E; 2-C; 3-B; 4-A
- b) 1-E; 2-C; 3-A; 4-B
- c) 1-C; 2-E; 3-D; 4-A
- d) 1-C; 2-E; 3-D; 4-B

Q.81) Consider the following:

1. Currently, urban co-operative banks are regulated by both the RBI and the respective State governments.
2. Currently, urban co-operative banks are regulated only by the RBI.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.82) Consider the below statements:

1. Companies incorporated in India can today list their equity share capital abroad through IDR route only.
2. Companies incorporated outside India can access the Indian capital markets only through the ADR/GDR route.

Which of the statements above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.83) Consider the following statements about Indian Depository Receipts (IDRs):

1. An IDR is a mechanism that allows foreign investors to invest in Indian listed companies in Indian rupees.
2. IDRs are Indian version of Global Depository Receipts (GDRs).

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) None

Q.84) Consider the below statements with regard to renewable energy policy of India:

1. Indian government has set a target of achieving 225 gigawatts (GW) of capacity from renewable energy sources by 2022.
2. It has set a target to achieve 100 GW solar power capacity till 2022.

Which of the statements above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.85) The Government of India has set a target of 175 GW renewable power installed capacity by the end of 2022. In this context, arrange the following renewable energy sources in the decreasing order of their specific targets:

1. Small hydro power
2. Solar power
3. Biomass power
4. Wind power

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Q.86) Consider the following crops of India:

1. Cowpea
2. Green gram
3. Pigeon pea

Which of the above is/are used as pulse, fodder and green manure?

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

Q.87) Fifteenth Finance Commission (FCC) is headed by –

- a) Preetham Reddy
- b) Y V Reddy
- c) NK Singh
- d) Mihir Shah

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Q.88) Consider the below statements with regard to lithium ion batteries:

1. They have high energy density compared to lead-acid battery or nickel-metal hydride battery.
2. They have relatively low self-discharge rate compared to nickel based batteries.

3. These batteries are less environmentally damaging than batteries containing heavy metals such as cadmium and mercury.

Which of the statements above is/are correct?

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

Q.89) Which of the following properties is true for a tooth paste?

- a) It is acidic
- b) It is neutral
- c) It is basic
- d) It is made up of Calcium phosphate, the material of tooth enamel

Q.90) Japan's HAYABUSA-2 is associated with

- a) Mission to explore exoplanets
- b) Spacecraft to observe atmosphere of Pluto
- c) Spacecraft powered by plutonium
- d) Mission to explore asteroid

Q.91) With the boom of the bitcoin – a variety of cryptocurrency – the blockchain technology has come into prominence. What does this technology promise to do, even though it is still in its infancy?

- a) Help facilitate secure, online transactions in a decentralized way
- b) Keep out malware
- c) Connect servers with common reasons for existence, remotely
- d) All of the above

DEFENCE

Q.92) Consider the following pairs and choose the correctly matched pair/s from below options:

Missile deal : : Associated country

1. SPIKE anti-tank guided missile : : India-US
2. S-400 Triumf long-range surface-to-air missile systems : : India-Russia
3. SPYDER Surface-to-Air Missile System : : India-Israel

Choose appropriate code from options below:

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

Q.93) Consider the following with regard to Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)

1. DAC is the government's highest decision-making body on procurement.
2. DAC is chaired by Union Defence Minister.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.94) Arrange the below categories from most preferred category to least in the hierarchical order of procurement categories.

1. Buy and Make
2. Buy (IDDM)
3. Buy and Make (Indian)
4. Buy (Global)

Code:

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

Q.95) Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT) is associated with which of the following countries:

- a) India, Thailand and Singapore

- b) India and Japan
- c) India and ASEAN
- d) India and Indonesia

Q.96) Consider the following pairs and choose the correctly matched pair/s from below options:

Defence deal : : Associated country

- 1. C-130J Hercules : : India-US
- 2. S-400 Triumf: : India-Russia
- 3. Harpoon : : India-Israel

Choose appropriate code from options below:

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

Q.97) Consider the following and find the correct match

- 1. Dhanush is the surface-to-surface missile and a naval variant of Prithvi missile
- 2. Dhanush is an upgraded version of the Swedish Bofors gun procured by India

Select the correct one

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

MISC

Q.98) Ambubachi Mela, a festival to mark the menstrual period of the goddess is celebrated in –

- a) Tamil Nadu

- b) Assam
- c) Arunachal Pradesh
- d) West bengal

Q.99) Ellora caves are one of the World Heritage sites in India. Which of the following statements are correct about 'Ellora caves'?

1. Ellora caves are rock cut caves made from top to bottom.
2. The most famous temple of Ellora – Kailashnath temple was made by Rashtrakutas.
3. These caves are dedicated to Hinduism only.

Select the code from following:

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 3
- d) All of the above

Q.100) Consider the following statements about 'Anandamath'

1. It is written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay
2. It was set in the background of the Santhal rebellion
3. Vande Mataram, was first published in this novel

Select the correct statements

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 3
- d) All of the above

Q.101) In which of the following Mass movement 'Vande Mataram' became a call of agitation for Indians?

- a) Swadeshi movement 1905
- b) Non Cooperation Movement 1920
- c) Civil Disobedience Movement 1930
- d) Quit India Movement 1942

JUNE MONTH CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs SOLUTIONS

1 b	35 c	69 c
2 c	36 b	70 c
3 a	37 b	71 b
4 b	38 a	72 b
5 a	39 c	73 d
6 c	40 d	74 d
7 a	41 b	75 a
8 b	42 d	76 a
9 b	43 c	77 b
10 b	44 a	78 d
11 d	45 c	79 d
12 a	46 d	80 c
13 a	47 d	81 a
14 d	48 a	82 d
15 a	49 c	83 b
16 b	50 c	84 b
17 c	51 c	85 a
18 b	52 a	86 d
19 B	53 b	87 c
20 a	54 c	88 d
21 c	55 d	89 c
22 b	56 d	90 d
23 a	57 c	91 a
24 c	58 a	92 d
25 b	59 c	93 c
26 a	60 c	94 b
27 a	61 a	95 d
28 d	62 b	96 b
29 b	63 d	97 c
30 b	64 b	98 b
31 d	65 c	99 a
32 d	66 c	100 c
33 d	67 a	101 a
34 d	68 d	